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Citation for published version:
Vaughan, C, Macarthur, J, Hunter, E & McCann, G 2021, Thinking East African: Debating federation and regionalism, 1960-1977'. in M Grilli & F Gerits (eds), *Visions of African Unity: New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unification Projects.* 1st edn, African Histories and Modernities, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 49-75. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52911-6_3

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):
[10.1007/978-3-030-52911-6_3](#)

Link:
[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Published In:
Visions of African Unity

OPEN ACCESS

CHAPTER 4

Thinking East African: Debating Federation and Regionalism, 1960-1977

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Introduction

In his 1975 book *Constitutional Law and Government in Uganda*, George Kanyeihamba reflected on the prospects for federation in East Africa. After describing the development of the East African Community (established in 1967, and focused on the pursuit of economic integration and common service provision), his initial reflections on whether the establishment of the Community had 'rekindled the desire for the East African federation' were negative. He identified little enthusiasm among East Africa's leaders for a deeper political union of the sort that had been imagined in the heady days of June 1963 when political federation briefly seemed a realistic possibility. And yet, he went on, 'in the East African Ministers and the personnel of the Secretariat, there is evidence that people have begun to think East African. The young people, at any rate the majority of them, are fully committed to the idea of political union and since these will be the leaders of tomorrow, there is as yet still hope for a federation.'[1]

To see these words in the pages of a publication in 1975 is in some ways surprising. Just two years later, the East African Community (EAC) collapsed acrimoniously, into inter-state war between Tanzania and Uganda. Yet the ideal of regional cooperation survives to the present: the EAC was re-established in 2000 and expanded with the accession of Burundi and Rwanda in 2007 and South Sudan in 2016.[2] Whilst historical and contemporary regional institutions have been

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[1] George Kanyeihamba, *Constitutional Law and Government in Uganda* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1975), 363.

[2] For the politics of present arrangements see Phillip Apuuli Kasaija, "Regional integration: a political federation of the East African countries?" *African journal of international affairs* 7, No. 1-2, (2004): 21-34; James Uagode Ikuya, "Why the Current Clamor for East African Federation Cannot Produce Unity," *Development;* 60, No. 3-4, (Dec 2017): 197-200. Sabastiano Rwengabo, "From Migration Regime to Regional Citizenry: Migration and

principally focused on various forms of economic integration, visions of deeper political unity have been consistently aired and debated in the region, even as leaders have persistently demonstrated limited enthusiasm for the practical surrender of national sovereignty to regional institutions.

Historians of the post-war 'federal moment' in decolonising Africa have argued that ideas about regional federations presented real alternatives to the nation-state model that finally emerged at independence. In East Africa, this literature focuses very much on the intellectual work of top-rank political actors - Julius Nyerere, Tom Mboya, Milton Obote and others - implicitly endorsing the widely held perception of regionalism as a top-down, elite-driven project. This high-political history also tends to imply that once the nation-state won out at independence, the federal dream and the importance of regionalist thinking was all but over.[3] In this chapter, we return to the history of regional integration in 1960s and 1970s in a wider range of East Africa's public spheres to compensate for this conceptual and disciplinary narrowness in assessing the diverse utility of East African supranational imaginary. We explore the statist politics of federation and the failed attempt to create an East African Federation in the early 1960s, and place this within a wider context of Pan-African politics. We then go beyond these corridors of power to a variety of political and cultural arenas in which Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan citizens conceived their futures simultaneously within and beyond the boundaries of their new nation-states - as East Africans. The story of the first phase of East African regionalism is not entirely one of political failure when the East African Community collapsed in 1977. It is also the story of vibrant ideas and vigorous public debate through which the meanings of sovereignty, citizenship and the very process of decolonisation were energetically contested well into the 1970s.

We contend that regionalist imaginaries provided a wide range of East African citizens with discursive resources to imagine and help engineer their various and conflicted visions of early post-colonial futures. In revealing this diversity of scales, narratives and modes of East African

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Identity Implications of the East African Common Market", *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review* 31 (2015); and for a more fully historicised perspective on common institutions see Richard Mshomba, *Economic integration in Africa: the East African Community in comparative perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[3] For the most recent discussion of approaches and debates see Chris Vaughan, 'The Politics of Regionalism and Federation in East Africa, 1958-1964," *The Historical Journal*, 62 (2019): 519-540. Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between empire and nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2014) argues along the lines suggested here: after independence in 1960 federalist visions in French West Africa were off the table. For the idea of a global 'federal moment' see Michael Collins, "Decolonisation and the 'Federal Moment'", *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24 (2013): 21-40.

regionalist thinking in different contexts - from so-called 'secessionist' groups and advocates for alternative nationalisms to urbane literary intellectuals and readers of the region's Kiswahili print cultures - we argue for the multiple and often oppositional ways in which 'thinking East African' was (and, to an extent, remains) an integral part of East African political thought. East African leaders proffered regionalism as a tool to overcome divisive 'tribalisms' ossified in the colonial era, at the same time as politically engaged writers of the region deployed supranational imaginary to criticise the sharp authoritarian and ethnic turns of those very same politicians.

Such thinking had political, cultural, geographic and demographic limitations. Thinking, or indeed being, East African was not for all. But, while still looking primarily at elite spaces of production, throwing open the doors to a wider conceptual breadth of East African regional imaginaries nourishes more complex understanding of decolonization and helps explain the tenacity of supranational thinking in East Africa today. For those who imagined spaces outside the colonially constructed nation-state, federalism was not necessarily inimical to their own postcolonial visions, but rather offered opportunities to debate the very legitimacy of the nation-state and conceive different scales of belonging and mutually constituting conceptions of layered sovereignties.

1. The colonial origins of East African regionalism

In Africa, as elsewhere in the decolonizing world, understanding the history of decolonization entails taking seriously the 'federal moment', and considering how the colonial project of binding individual colonial territories in larger federal structures was taken up by some nationalist politicians, as well as why these attempts failed.[4] Both the French and the British empires in Africa were often in practice governed regionally rather than straightforwardly as territorial states, so that in addition to imperial legal and political structures, there were also regional structures of government and law.[5] In British East Africa, white settler demands for a union of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda were taken up by Colonial Secretary Leo Amery in 1924. A series of

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[4] Cooper, *Citizenship*. See also recent critiques, eg Michael Goebel, "After empire must come nation?" https://medium.com/afro-asian-visions/after-empire-must-come-nation-cd220f1977c; Richard Drayton, "Federal Utopias and the Realities of Imperial Power", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle* East, 37 (2017): 401-406.
[5] Lauren Benton, *Rage for Order: the British Empire and the origins of International Law* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), 2016.

inquiries and commissions followed, but a strong coalition emerged in opposition to the plan and Tanganyika's Governor, Donald Cameron, argued that Tanganyika's status as a League of Nations mandate made any such project impossible given the incompatible governance structures.[6] Throughout the 1920s to 1940s, a range of East African activists ranging from the Bugandan ruler, the Kabaka, to the president of the East African Indian National Congress bitterly opposed plans for 'Closer Union' for fear that white settler power (from Kenya especially) would be irrevocably entrenched under such a scheme.[7] For East African nationalists, regionalism connoted a plot to protect British interests, especially after the successful establishment of the Central African Federation (of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) in 1953.

Despite these blockages to political union, more modest efforts to centralize the delivery of key services continued.[8] By the time of independence in the early 1960s, significant parts of government activity were administered at the East African, rather than the territorial, level, through the East African High Commission, established in 1948. It is striking how many areas of life came under the High Commission's auspices, ranging from the economic dimensions of currency and tariffs to transport through East African Railways and Airways to cultural institutions such as the East African Literature Bureau. Yet these institutions have rarely drawn the sustained attention of historians.[9] Indeed, colonial states at the time did not actively seek to draw attention to the extent of activities at the East African level in light of potential political fallout. In a 1956 book instructing *The Teaching of Civics in East African Schools, with special reference to Tanganyika*, educators were told to impress upon their students via diagrams the limited the role of the East African High Commission:

'The teacher should point out that only a small part of the circle representing each country is cut by the circle of the High Commission. This shows that only a small part of the life and Government of that country is under the control of the High Commission. All the rest of the work of each Government shown by the large area of the circle outside the High Commission circle, is quite independent of the High Commission. If the High Commission were a Federation

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[6] Michael D. Callahan, "The failure of 'Closer Union' in British East Africa, 1929-31", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 25 (1997): 267-293; Michael D. Callahan, *Mandates and Empires: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914-1931* (Sussex Academic Press: Brighton, 1999); Nicholas J. Westcott, "Closer Union and the future of East Africa, 1939-1948: A case study in the 'Official Mind' of imperialism", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 10 (1981): 67-88.

[7] John Lonsdale, 'The Depression and the Second World War in the Transformation of Kenya' in David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa and the Second World War* (London: Palgrave, 1986).

[8] David Throup, 'The Origins of Mau Mau, *African Affairs*, 84 (1985): 403.

[9] New histories of the region begin to explore some of these bodies and the ways in which they came under pressure after independence as regional unity fractured, as, for example, in Kevin Donovan's recently completed doctoral research at the University of Michigan and Patrick J. Whang, "Regional Derailment: the saga of the East African Railways", *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 12 (2018): 716-734.

then all the three circles of the three countries would be entirely inside the circle of the High Commission. … The High Commission is under the control of the three separate Governments and not the other way about.'[10]

As Tanganyika's independence approached in 1961, the High Commission became the East African Common Services Organization, establishing the principle that services would continue to be developed at the regional level after independence. And, as we shall see, nationalist leaders in East Africa became open to the possibility of something more far-reaching.

2. The rise and fall of East African federation

While colonial projects for an East African federation had been bitterly opposed by African politicians up to the 1950s fearing it would primarily protect British interests and entrench settler power, in the early 1960s East African nationalist politicians followed post-colonial leaders elsewhere in the world - such as Malaysia and the Caribbean - in enthusiastically espousing a willingness to sacrifice parts of their newly won sovereignty for the cause of unity. The 1950s and 1960s represented a high tide of debates over the definition of political community in East Africa, and its relationship to competing nationalisms, territorial boundaries, and sovereignty in the era of decolonization. While much attention has been paid to nationalist (and sub-nationalist) visions for independence, the project of an East African Federation has, until recently, remained understudied.[11]

One way of reading the history of attempts at creating a federation would support recent historiographical interventions emphasizing the potential of Pan-African ideals to inspire forms of regional integration that would transcend the nation-state and erase colonial boundaries. Yet political science literature has long recognized the ways in which regionalism in the decades of the 1950s to 1970s was conceived of by elites as a support for nation-state-building, particularly in newly independent states emerging from colonial rule, rather than offering a path beyond the nation.[12] This was true in East Africa, as elsewhere. A common emphasis on the virtues of political unity – whether national or regional – and the dangers of opposition and division was central to

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[10] Philip Clarke, *The teaching of civics in East African Schools, with special reference to Tanganyika* (Dar es Salaam: Eagle Press, East African Literature Bureau, 1956), 24.

[11] The most useful accounts are by contemporary academic observers: Joseph Nye, *Pan-Africanism and East African integration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966) and Colin Leys and Peter Robson, *Federation in East Africa: opportunities and problems* (London: Oxford University Press 1965). See also Michael Mwenda Kithinji, "An imperial enterprise: The making and breaking of the University of East Africa, 1949–1969," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 46 (2012): 195-214.

[12] For concise discussion see Fredrik Soderbaum, *Rethinking Regionalism* (London: Macmillan, 2016), 24-27.

the rhetoric and appeal of federation for centralizing leaders. Federation, in this sense, rather than existing primarily as an institutional project, can be seen more as a discursive resource for regional elites, one that reaffirmed the legitimacy of centralizers while simultaneously delegitimizing 'divisive' opposition parties.

However, visions of federation did not belong exclusively to the centralizers. Rhetoric and practice clashed in this period, for nationalists, federalists, and those who imagined alternative spaces of sovereignty, often dismissed as "secessionists" or "separatists" of nations that did not as yet exist. Competing nationalisms were being imagined across the region, from Bunyoro and Toro royalists in Uganda to partisans of a Greater Somalia and Mwambao separatists on the Kenya Coast. Yet alternative nationalisms were, by design, expansive and flexible, seeing federalism not as incompatible to their nationalist projects but rather as a potential avenue towards regional autonomy and layered practices of sovereignty, or at minimum a discursive arena for debating the assumed ascendency of the colonially constructed nation-state. Secessionists, nationalists, and regional federalists did not necessarily occupy discrete spheres of political imagination but were engaged in intellectual and political projects that overlapped as much as they competed.

2.1 Federation and Pan-Africanism

Beyond the internal regional debates identified above, the growth in elite enthusiasm for East African unity in the early 1960s, was clearly related to the growth of Pan-African sentiment more widely across the continent. In 1958 the first All Africa People's Conference held in Accra had envisioned continental unity emerging out of the initial formation of regional units – and it is worth remembering that Nkrumah himself pursued a loose version of regionalism in the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union (1958-1963), which he presented as 'the nucleus of the United States of Africa'.[13] Yet whilst for Nkrumah regional unity could only be justified as a step towards to continental unity - and soon became seen as an obstacle to that wider vision - for Nyerere, federation's leading intellectual in East Africa, regional unity was an end in itself, as well as a stepping-stone towards continental unity. Utopian Pan-African rhetoric abounded at Nyerere's speech at the June 1960 meeting of the Independent African States, where he proclaimed his support for federation in East

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[13] Nkrumah cited in M. Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism* (London: Palgrave, 2018), 92. See also Adom Getachew. *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2019.

Africa, decrying the artificial "boundaries which now divide our countries" and the "balkanization" of Africa by foreign, imperial powers. He called upon East African leaders and citizens to "refuse to recognize these boundaries not merely in words with our tongues in our cheeks, but in actual fact." However, this speech was also notable for its absence of explicit references to ideas of continental unity beyond the region and concluded with the call "Let us make 1961 East Africa's year of independence in unity."[14]

Ideological tensions and personal rivalries between Nkrumah and Nyerere meant that by 1961 Nkrumah's hostility to regionalism and federations emerged with force: the substance of his objection was that once strong federations were established at a regional level, the incentives and need for continental unity would be much reduced, given the economic benefits that would accrue from regional unity.[15] Nyerere countered that it was 'rather peculiar to argue that African Unity will be served by the continued weakness of Africa', suggesting that delay would make it more likely that small and weak states would become vulnerable to colonialism: 'do we merely wait and hope for a miracle, leaving our development and independence for ever in jeopardy, or do we make what progress we can?'[16] In a 1963 interview, Tom Mboya, one of Kenya's leading nationalist politicians and Nyerere's key partner in the federal politics of the 1960s, suggested

> We must have cooperation first before a United States of Africa is possible. We must work together in areas and federations first. I feel that to encourage regional cooperation first is bound to lead to wider cooperation.[17]

Nkrumah's hostility to federation would eventually reinforce and provide ideological support for growing Ugandan opposition to the project. Nyerere and Mboya's gradualist views would find warmer endorsement from the Organisation of African Unity's inaugural meeting in 1963, which welcomed and encouraged regionalist groupings (including East African Federation) as building blocks for political unity, whilst also maintaining a strong emphasis on territorial state sovereignty.[18]

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[14] Julius Nyerere, "East African Federation" in Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 85-98.
[15] Nye, *Pan-Africanism*, 17.
[16] Julius Nyerere, "The Nature and Requirements of African Unity", in Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 349.
[17] Tom Mboya, interview with Joseph Nye, July 29 1963, cited in Nye, *Pan-Africanism*, 17.
[18] Grilli, *Nkrumaism*, 272.

2.2 Federation and state-building

Indeed the discursive and ideological compatibility of nationalism and regionalism – with their shared emphasis on the necessity and virtue of unity in the achievement of meaningful sovereignty and independence from (neo-) colonialism – is crucial to an understanding both of the appeal of federation to centralizing political leaders in East Africa and the apparent contradictions and tensions inherent in the project. Nyerere's famous 'offer' of 1960 - to delay Tanganyikan independence in order that the three East African territories might achieve independence together as a federal unit - is well remembered in the region. Yet almost immediately Nyerere called for Tanganyikans to push for independence regardless of regional progress in a Voice of America broadcast.[19] Milton Obote followed suit, declaring: "It is not a question of Federation… it's a question of 'Let's see Africa free' so that Africans can decide what to do with their freedom."[20] After Tanganyika's independence on 9 December 1961, independence for Uganda and Kenya became a prerequisite for future discussions of federation. Yet, as Nyerere had also predicted, once raised, the flags of independence were difficult to lower.

Moreover, Nyerere's promotion of federation as a way to dissolve boundaries in the region sat uneasily with the heightened territorialization of identity, political centralization, and border securitization taking root during East Africa's "long moment" of decolonization.[21] Newly independent states inherited late colonial practices that had seen frenzied projects of mapping and demarcating borders across the region, as well as increased land conflicts that bled into new security practices and incentivized what many at the time termed "territorial consciousness" among local populations. Mobile and transterritorial practices that saw political, economic, and familial networks stretch across colonial boundaries were held up as exemplars of why federation was so necessary and inevitable. And yet, the mobility, whether rural to urban, for more permanent settlement, or as part of pastoralist or seasonal economic livelihoods, that made these wider imaginations of community possible was consistently demonized by many nationalist leaders as anti-modern and potentially subversive. Nyerere's 1960 speech on federation heralded the independence of the Somali Republic as a successful example of the erasure of colonial

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[19] Thomas M. Recknagel, American Consulate, Nairobi to the Department of State, Washington, June 22 1960, NARA, US Consulate Nairobi RG 84, UD 2843 Box 131.

[20] "Uganda Backing Nyerere's Plan", *Uganda Argus* (Kampala)*, 13 December 1961.

[21] Marc Matera, "Introduction: Metropolis Cultures of Empire and the Long Moment of Decolonization," *American Historical Review* 121 (2016): 1435-1443.

boundaries, a sad irony as would become clear in the coming years. In Kenya, imaginings of a Greater Somalia that would integrate all Somalis into one territory and allow for the secession of the Somali-dominated northern frontier were met with violent suppression, relentless derision and criminalization of mobile practices, and eventually projects of forced settlement.[22] In Uganda, complicated internal negotiations over the political relation between the nation and the many monarchies, both old and of more recent formation, led to heightened political stakes for any talk of boundaries and regional power distribution. And even in Tanganyika, Nyerere's rhetorical commitment to open borders required that concurrent practices of border securitization were presented as specific and necessary exceptions made in the national interest – exceptions for Kikuyu migrants, for some refugees, for some who claimed multiple identities, for those labeled "spies" or "seditious".[23] These policies were in fact, as Ann Stoler has argued, not so much exceptions, but rather at the core of constructions of postcolonial state sovereignty.[24]

While the rhetoric of nationalist leaders pointed to the potential for federation to erase borders, leaders never suggested that federation would erase the state apparatus or bordered geo-body of each territory. Officially-prepared maps of the proposed federation consistently presented the unit as comprised of the three states of Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda. Indeed, for the most part, enthusiasm for federation among the leading political parties in the region – Kenya African National Union (KANU), Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), and Uganda People's Congress (UPC) elites in particular – went hand in hand with enthusiasm for a centralized vision of the nation-state, which made little room for alternative claims to political identity, regularly denounced as 'tribalist' and 'backward-looking'.

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[22] Julie MacArthur, "Decolonizing Sovereignty: States of Exception along the Kenya-Somali Frontier," *American Historical Review* 124 (2019), 108-143.

[23] For exceptions for Kikuyu migrants, see TNA, Mwanza Regional Archives (Dodoma), A40/1 1957-1975 Mwanza Deportation of Destitutes. See also Jill Rosenthal, "From 'Migrants to 'Refugees': Identity, Aid, and Decolonization in Ngara District, Tanzania," *Journal of African History* 56 (2015): 261-79 and Charlotte Miller, "Who are the 'permanent inhabitants' of the State?: Citizenship policies and border controls in Tanzania, 1920-1980," (Phd dissertation, University of Iowa, 2001).

[24] Ann Laura Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006), p. 128.

Unity – as the means to development, modernity and 'progress' - was key to the political discourse of centralizing leaders. KANU politicians linked the achievement of federation to the reform of the *majimbo* constitution in Kenya, which had devolved significant powers to regional assemblies: the inevitable constitutional change prompted by federation would allow central government in Kenya the opportunity to claw powers away from the regional assemblies (even as it would demand the surrender of other existing state powers to a new federal centre). The local powers that the *majimbo* constitution to some extent tried to preserve (or invent) would thus be eradicated under an East African Federation that would (counter-intuitively) cement the sovereignty of the Kenyan state. KANU leaders also used the promise of regional unity – a vision supported by the British in so far as it promised stability and relative prosperity for the region – in order to persuade British officials to accelerate the pace of national independence in Kenya, so that federation might be achieved while enthusiasm was high. In Uganda, UPC politicians urged Buganda politicians to abandon their 'tribalism' and back the nation's entry into federation. Leading figures in the centralizing parties clearly envisaged themselves as occupying the chief offices of the federation, and the potential for a regional one-party system was also part of the enthusiastic rhetoric of mid-1963.

2.3 Federation and alternative sovereignties

It is thus all the more striking that those denounced as 'tribalists' and 'secessionists' by pro-federation centralisers often mobilized the idea of federation alongside their own claims to alternative sovereignties.[25] What Thomas Franck called a 'centrifugal' vision of federation had considerable appeal amongst competing political groupings in both Kenya and Uganda. For these groups, federation could accommodate their claims to autonomy within a system of layered sovereignty - precisely the opposite outcome to that hoped for by the centralisers discussed above.[26] For many of the so-called "secessionist" movements across Uganda and Kenya, talk of independence, in whatever territorial form it might come, was predicated on the "return" of a former sovereignty asserted to pre-date colonialism – proved through historical work and cartographic practices – before any integration into a national or federal postcolonial body.[27] Both Kenyan nationalists and Somali secessionists proffered federation as a possible antidote to the mounting conflict in Kenya's northern frontier in the 1960s, though for the latter with the specific caveat of immediate autonomy first, a fact that encouraged the British to reverse earlier sympathies with the secessionist cause and guarantee Kenya's territorial integrity ahead of independence.[28]

In commissions and political tracts across the region, many communities stressed the responsibility of the British to "fix" borders and to recognize their claims before independence. In a common refrain, from Luyia partisans in western Kenya to Bunyoro royalists in Uganda, petitioners accused exiting British officials of "handing over their sovereignty" to new nation-

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[25] This phrasing is influenced by the discussion of 'alternative' and 'competing' African nationalisms in Miles Larmer and Baz Lecocq, "Historicising nationalism in Africa", *Nations and Nationalism* 24 (2018), 893-917.
[26] Thomas M. Franck *Why Federations Fail* (New York: New York University Press, 1968).
[27] See, for example, Julie MacArthur, *Cartography and the Political Imagination: Mapping Community in Colonial Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016), 210-217.
[28] Julie MacArthur, "Decolonizing Sovereignty," *American Historical Review* 124, no. 1 (February 2019), 138.

states.[29] Turning the nationalist logic against itself, such petitions argued that if independence was necessary before East African Federation could be affected, then the recognition of smaller regional claims was necessary before any discussions of postcolonial national or federal integration. While framed in often exceptionalist terms, referencing colonial treaties, monarchical histories, and cultural nationalisms that defied colonial boundaries, these movements shared a need to legitimize their alternative claims within territorialized, sovereign discourses.

Following on from the declaration of intent to federate by Nyerere, Kenyatta and Obote on 5 June 1963 and the pledge to attain that goal within a year, KADU's leader in Kenya, Ronald Ngala, a leading player in the achievement of the devolved *majimbo* constitution, argued federation should be based not "on the maintenance of outdated and outgoing territorial concepts of imperialism of the 19th century, but upon the existence of existing entities emanating from the wishes of the inhabitants themselves to live together as revealed, for example, in the recently elected Regional Governments of the Coast, Rift Valley and the Western Region."[30] In the same letter, addressed to the regional working party on federation, Ngala asserted that the distinct history of the Coast Region, including its "separate historic ties with the United Kingdom and Zanzibar", entitled it to "the same statutes, powers and position within the proposed federation as that of Tanganyika, Uganda, Kenya and Zanzibar" – he proposed the Coast join the federation as a separate "constituent member". This would represent a powerful recognition of Coast's claims to sovereignty. In federation, Ngala saw the opportunity to redraw relations between the centre and the locality, both nationally and regionally. Kabaka Yekka politicians in Buganda made very similar claims of the desirability of Buganda's separate entry to a regional federation, provoking outrage from senior UPC politicians who emphasized that only the Ugandan national government had the legal sovereign status to contract such a relationship – anything else would threaten to pull apart the Ugandan nation altogether.

Ultimately the tensions inherent in the federal project between regional unity and national sovereignty did come to the fore. It is unsurprising that once detailed federal constitutional negotiations got underway in 1963 – which envisaged a much deeper relationship than the

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[29] For examples see KNA, GO/1/1/12, Memorandum by Abaluyia Members, "Re-union of Abaluyia," Kenya Constitutional Conference, March 20, 1962; Bunyoro Petition, *To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty the humble petition of Rukirabasaija Agutamba Omukama Sir Tito Gafabusa Winyi IV of Bunyoro-Kitara for himself and on behalf of the people of Bunyoro-Kitara* (Kampala, 1958).

[30] TNA: PRO (London), DO 168/74 President of the Coast Regional Assembly Ronald Ngala to Chairman, Working Party on EAF, 12 August 1963.

economic integration and common services legacy bequeathed by the British - the practical and political implications of shared sovereignty for newly independent states quickly derailed the project. Ugandan leaders – the least domestically secure of their fellows – were the first to articulate unease with diluting national sovereignty (with the encouragement of Ghanaian diplomats).[31] UPC leaders used their hard-nosed approach to federal negotiations to bolster a notion of Ugandan nationhood by insisting on the conception of a shared national interest and exclusive control over key questions around citizenship and freedom of movement that transcended internal divisions. Ugandan leaders have often been blamed for the failure of federal negotiations in 1963, but Ali Mazrui noted in 1965 that it was Nyerere who accelerated the trend to regional disintegration from 1964, notably by creating a separate national currency for Tanganyika, amidst concerns that economic integration without political federation would hamper Tanganyika's economic development.[32] In this sense, even for the visionary Nyerere, federation had always been a tool for nation-building. Kenyatta too significantly altered his tone during 1964, claiming the original enthusiasm for federation had simply been a ploy to accelerate Kenyan independence, and denouncing pro-federation backbenchers as undermining the sovereign will of the Kenyan government: "You have recently heard that some people want me to kneel down to Nyerere. Please Nyerere, they want me to say, I want that we should unite. Is that real government? To go to another government? I say our government must make up its own mind without being dictated to."[33]

Federation played multiple and contradictory roles in political discourse in early 1960s East Africa: it could be imagined as a borderless regional utopia, a step on the path to Pan-African unity; as an alliance of strong centralized states working to reinforce the sovereignty of the nation and its leaders; or as a vehicle for recognizing and accommodating alternative political communities than those of the colonially derived nation-state. It was a flexible idea, overlapping with nationalist projects at multiple scales and something of a black box for the divergent ambitions and agendas of rival political groupings: indeed while its indeterminacy made it attractive to a wide range of constituents, that same indeterminacy was precisely what made it so unlikely to be achieved. Yet even as the practical and institutional achievement of federation faded

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[31] Grilli, *Nkrumaism*, 275-280 has useful analysis of Ghana's role in working against East African Federation.
[32] Ali Mazrui, "Tanzania versus East Africa: A case of unwitting federal sabotage", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 3 (1965), 209-225.
[33] Dar es Salaam to Sec. of State, 3 Aug. 1964 NARA POL 3 AFR E, Box 1873.

away, ideals of regional unity were consistently voiced in the public sphere: intra-regional ties among those for whom federation retained real ideological force continued to animate political debate into the 1970s.

3. Uplighting statehood: regionalism and East African citizenries

Following the failure to federate in 1963, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda embarked upon a much more limited enterprise in 1967 to take over the functions of the East African Common Services Organisation (EACSO). This was the East African Community or EAC. Historians of the region have had relatively little to say about this first East African Community. For the historian of Tanzania, Paul Bjerk, EACSO was 'reborn as the weak and largely symbolic East African Community, which collapsed in the following decade, never having absorbed any of the sovereign powers of the individual states as Nyerere had envisioned' while another historian of Tanzania, Priya Lal, gives the subject only a brief footnote, noting that '[i]n 1967, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania came together to form the East African Community, which entailed a common market, a common customs tariff, and a shared range of public services.'[34] It is portrayed as a purely technocratic enterprise, attracting little interest at the time and barely missed when it collapsed.

More generally, the question of what a wider public thought about regional integration after the failure of attempts to create an East African Federation at the time has received virtually no substantive scholarly attention. Political science literature of the time had little to say about civil society. Where 'public opinion' was mentioned, it was often done so briefly and blandly, as an explanatory factor for either the favourable odds behind integration, or conversely a factor behind the failure of schemes. The same was true of official discussions – Colonial Office discussions in June 1961 about the new East African Common Services Organisation noted that: 'The delegates agreed that the success of the new arrangements would depend on genuine and popular support from the East African people' but it was not at all clear how such genuine and popular support would be built or its achievement measured. Some East African politicians, such as Grace Ibingira, Ugandan Minister of State and General Secretary of the UPC, went so far as to claim that

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[34] Paul Bjerk, *Building a peaceful nation: Julius Nyerere and the establishment of sovereignty in Tanzania*, (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015); Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 39fn.

regionalist thinking within populations ebbed and flowed in line with the dictates of their national leaders. 'There must be no excuse, as some started manufacturing, that it is the masses of the people who do not need Federation… my view is that the masses do accept what leaders tell them. They were told East African Union was good. They agreed. Today the same people are busy telling them it is dangerous at best, uncertain.'[35]

The idea of East African unity, we argue by contrast, continued to have significant ideological purchase in East Africa's expansive public spheres after 1963. Opinion polls conducted by the Marco Survey Company in Nairobi throughout the early 1960s attested the widespread popularity of East African Federation. 96% of Kenyan, 82.5% of Tanzanian and 88% of Ugandan respondents (1,400 equally spread across the nations in total) judged federation to be 'desirable' in 1963, with a slight upturn to 90% in Tanzania and a still significant majority of 75% in Uganda by 1965.[36] And beyond the sampling undertaken by the Marco surveys, there is a rich array of evidence to suggest the continued salience of regional imaginaries.

The history of institutional structures provides the historian with a useful entry point into the underpinnings of regionalist imaginaries. It is worth reiterating the many ways in which the British Empire in East Africa governed regionally, and the ways in which regional institutional structures continued to be developed after independence. For example, the colonial state established Makerere University College, Kampala (1949), Royal Technical College, Nairobi (1952) and University College, Dar-es-Salaam (1961) to serve inter-territorial higher educational needs as part of its postwar developmental turn. In 1963, these institutions formed the constituent colleges of the new University of East Africa (UEA), an institution devoted to educational improvement, but also repurposed for the urgent tasks of interrogating the perils of neocolonialism, driving forward Africanisation and training the next generation of Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan technocrats.

Narratives of regionalist failure shape interpretations of the UEA. Bhekithemba Mngomezulu argues that the UEA 'started falling apart as it was being instituted, thus leading to the conclusion that it was like a stillborn child'.[37] But the interpersonal connections forged at such regional institutions shaped public life in important ways, not least given the stellar career

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[35] Grace Ibingira "Political Movements and their role in promoting unity in East Africa", *Transition*, 20, 1965, 37-42.
[36] Marco Public Opinion Poll no. 13, *Who Wants and East African Federation?* (Nairobi, 1965), 1.
[37] Bhekithemba Richard Mngomezulu *Politics and higher education in East Africa: From the 1920s to 1970* (Stellenbosch 2012), 165.

trajectories of many of the elite graduates of the UEA. The structure of the university promoted connection across national origins. Studying law, for example, required residence at the single East African law school in Dar es Salaam alongside fellow students from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o recalled 'paradise' among the hills of Kampala and Makerere where he had been a student and aspiring writer at the turn of the 1960s, a precious and diverse university (and indeed Ugandan nation) subsequently destroyed in his opinion by Idi Amin in the 1970s. 'Makerere was a place where different races, communities and even religions seemed able to work together... It was a place where the impossible seemed possible. Makerere was then a place of dreams.'[38] The consequences of such intimacies could be less ethereal. Soldiers from all three territories attended the East African Military Training School in Kenya, a regional esprit de corps that, some argued, helped explain the rapid spread of East Africa's army mutinies in 1964.[39] All this suggests how popular ideological commitment to pan-Africanist projects of unity emerged from networks forged at regionalist institutions, many inherited from the colonial era, and in the region's print cultures. This had practical and emotional implications for everyday lives of East Africa's citizens.

School civics textbooks also provide an insight into the ways in which the idea of 'East Africa' had, by the 1960s, come to be conceived as a meaningful political, as well as geographical, unit for populations at large. The primers used in schools across East Africa told school children that East Africa was 'historically and geographically a single unit'.[40] And yet, as this 1966 Tanzanian textbook made clear, 'the natural units of geography were artificially divided with the coming of different European colonialists in Africa', in the case of East Africa, because 'the Germans divided off one part from the Portuguese in the South and the British in the North – just by drawing a line on a map, without any reference to the nature of the area or the people who inhabited it.'[41]

Regionalism was then a powerful discursive resource in the realm of political ideas of East Africa's citizenries to criticise not only the artificial divisions of colonial legacy, but also the paths ahead of their post-colonial nations. Just as multiple regional and federal registers served as

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[38] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Birth of Dream Weaver: A Writer's Awakening* (London: Harvill Secker, 2016), 221-222.
[39] Timothy Parsons, *The 1964 Army Mutinies and the Making of Modern East Africa* (Westport: Greenwood, 2003), 75.
[40] Hildebrand Meienberg, *Tanzanian Citizen: a civics textbook,* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1966), 185.
[41] Meienberg, *Tanzanian Citizen*, 181.

discursive resources for East African leaders to articulate their centralising virtues against the 'tribalist' secessionism of opponents, so too did a spectrum of East Africans use regional appeals to critique those very leaders for authoritarian and ethnic turns into the late 1960s. In local print cultures, 'thinking East African' remained a powerful rhetorical device to hold politicians to account for failing to implement their promises for independence.[42] A space of such mainstay popular thinking was *Baraza*, established during the Second World War as a way to bring global news to Swahiliphone readers. Although published in Nairobi, it was read across East Africa by a diverse readership of, among others, civil servants, teachers and business people. Its editors routinely addressed an imagined East African readership, and readers responded in similar vein, often describing themselves as citizens of East Africa. In June 1972, one editorial recalled a historical past in which there was no distinction between Kenyans, Tanzanians and Ugandans. The people of East Africa had mixed freely, on a basis of equality, and would do so again once the barriers put in their way by colonialism and new political leaders had been removed. But this was about more than simply returning to a previous state of affairs; rather, it was only through creating a united East Africa at the level of citizenries that full, meaningful independence would be achieved.[43]

From 1963 to 1977, *Baraza*'s editorial line was consistently in favour of greater union. Editors gave pride of place to commentaries on the East African Community. When the Kenyan politician Tom Mboya was assassinated in 1969, his contributions to the cause of East African integration were particularly highlighted in the many tributes paid to him.[44] A series of articles in 1969 explored the work of the East African Community in a range of areas, from scientific research into trypanosomiasis to the provision of a multiple social services. *Baraza's* editors acted as spokespersons for a wider community of 'the people', defined in contrast to East Africa's leaders. While projects of East African unity are often presented as top-down initiatives with little wider support, *Baraza* claimed to be speaking for ordinary people who, *Baraza* argued, were the ones who suffered from the artificial barriers placed in their way by national borders and restrictions on movement to work or do business in neighbouring countries. In 1965, when the three nations decided to establish their own currencies and banks, *Baraza* lamented this as a step backwards.[45]

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[42] George Kanyeihamba, *Constitutional Law and Government in Uganda* (Kampala: EALB, 1975).
[43] Editorial, 'Twdai Shirikisho Leo', *Baraza*, 1 June 1972, 4.
[44] See for example this front page article: 'Wakristo wa Arusha waomboleza kanisani', *Baraza*, 10 July 1969, 1.
[45] Editorial, 'Hatua ya kurudi nyuma', *Baraza*, 17 June 1965, 4.

Rather than blame Tanzania alone, as many were doing, *Baraza* attributed the blame to all three leaders for errors that obstructed federation. While many abandoned hope that federation would ever be achieved, *Baraza* claimed to speak on behalf of the many people 'who long for union', believing that the aim must still be federation. And, the editorial concluded, if their leaders were unwilling to make this a reality, 'why do they not resign so that we can elect leaders who will achieve our aim and establish an EAST AFRICAN FEDERATION?'[46]

Regionalist imaginary also served as one language, in a repertoire of multiple supranational vocabularies, for East Africa's intelligentsia to interrogate the nature of post-colonialism beyond the bureaucratic-executive state. *Transition* magazine, the continent's premier and most daring literary journal, published from Kampala between 1961 and 1968, viewed itself as a driver for a cosmopolitan (and rather globalised) East African culture and future. Its editor, Rajat Neogy, would 'raise the curtains at the right cue' to signpost the direction of progressive change.[47] East Africa was, for Neogy, a meaningful cultural unit. Under criticisms of *Transition's* eclectic multiracial authorship and audience, Neogy, a Ugandan of Asian origin, retorted in 1962 that 'I do not like to think of it as a magazine which has even to think in terms of or be conscious, in fact, of the racial composition of its contributors. And I hope at least that East Africa will begin to produce a literature which can stand by itself without having to be referred to as belonging to a particular territory or a particular region of East Africa.'[48] Regionalism was, for mobile urban cultural elites like Neogy, one means to engineer more accommodative African futures to dissolve the legacies of racialised colonialism.

The East African Literature Bureau (EALB) underscored such experiments in regionalist cultural engineering. Founded in 1948 as a typically colonial 'marriage' of economic development and cultural production, the EALB lived on, like the UEA, in 'hysteresis' through which older patterns of colonial-era organisation shaped revived post-colonial production.[49] The EALB retooled itself as a driver of a more emotive community of regional affinity, as well as a continued disseminator of educational texts. By 1961, the EALB books had sold some two million books in

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Rajat Neogy, "The Role of a Literary Magazine in the Development of Culture", *East Africa's Cultural Heritage* (Nairobi: East African Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs, 1966), 110-115.

[48] Rajat Neogy, "Review of Transition literary journal", *African Writers Club* broadcast for BBC Radio, 1962.

[49] Evelyn Ellerman, "The Literature Bureau: African Influence in Papua New Guinea", *Research in African Literatures*, 26, no. 4, 1995, 208; Daniel Bach, *Regionalism in Africa: Genealogies, Institutions and Trans-State Networks* (Routledge: New York, 2016), 13.

almost all of East Africa's scripted vernacular languages ranging from primers on animal husbandry to high-literary composition. In East Africa's first detective novel, published by EALB, the Kiswahili language *Mzimu wa watu wa kale* (1960), the protagonist Bwana Msa provided a modern exemplar of working across ethnic difference and superstition to solve his case. Like Neogy, EALB editors carefully curated the East African Publishing House (EAPH) list to institutionalise the emerging East African literary cohesion of the 1962 Conference of African Writers of English Expression at Makerere University, sponsored by *Transition* and attended by the young Ngugi. David Cook and David Rubadiri's *Poems from East Africa* (1971) consciously included 50 contributors relatively equally from across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, including Taban Lo Liyong (Uganda) and John Mbiti (Kenya), alongside numerous East African South Asian-origin writers Jagjit Singh (Kenya), Yusuf Kassam (Tanzania) and Bahadur Tejani (Uganda), the latter a friend and classmate of Ngugi at Makerere in the early 1960s. Tejani's novel, *The Day After Tomorrow*, written in 1967 and published by EAPH in 1971, presented a sexually charged vision of a new edenic East African civilisation free of racial inhibition.[50] Racial and ethnic divisions of the colonial past, in this view, did not have to become the grammar of a new East Africa. EALB curation promoted a loose form of cultural East African connection across new nation-states, but drawing on the cultural energy of distinct East African national cultures in early 1960s.

Such cultural institutions increasingly deployed these regionalist frameworks to more directly interrogate the fragmentation of East African affinities – the failure of Tejani's utopian vision – into the late 1960s. By 1966, an increasingly iconoclastic *Transition* replaced its modernist literary pretensions with stringent political condemnation of autocratic 'personality cults' of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and, most notably, Uganda's own Milton Obote.[51] In so doing, *Transition* supported the voices of a range of pro-federation politicians and parliamentarians who blamed the failure to bring about federation on the narrow self-interest and authoritarianism of East Africa's presidents.[52] In September 1967, the Bugandan opposition politician, Abu Mayajya, fired into Obote's controversial new constitutional proposals as 'illiberal and authoritarian. They provide for the concentration of excessive, autocratic and dangerous powers in the hands of one

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[50] Dan Ojwang, "The half-caste and the dream of secularism and freedom: Insights from East African Asian writing", *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa*, 13, 2 (2008), 33-34.
[51] Ali Mazrui, "Nkrumah: the Leninist Czar", *Transition*, v. 5, no. 26 (1966); 31 (1967).
[52] See Vaughan, *Federation*, 535-538.

man… a dictatorship of black men has no objective advantages over a dictatorship of white men: it may even be less efficient and impartial.'[53] In 1968, Obote imprisoned Neogy on charges of sedition for publishing another fiery article by Mayajya, which again powerfully castigated Obote's ethnicised, autocratic statehood. In an era of apparent authoritarianism and state introversion into the 1970s, regionalism lived on as a set of vocabularies for political critique of nation-states. Indeed the 'centrifugal' vision of federation that Ngala had so prominently endorsed in 1963, lived on in the alternative nationalisms that survived in the region. For example, King Mumbere of the Rwenzori Kingdom, located in the Uganda-Congo borderlands, wrote to the EAC in 1971 to request recognition by and membership in the Community. He called on the EAC to protect his kingdom against the aggressions of Idi Amin's military, "bearing that I am one of the African rulers who never obtain freedom of living in my motherland since Uganda and Zaire got Independent."[54]

In December 1972, as relations between Tanzania and Uganda deteriorated after Idi Amin's coup, a *Baraza* correspondent from Musoma, Josephat Kiboko Nyerere, contrasted the present difficulties between Tanzania and Uganda with the time before independence when Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere publicly offered to delay Tanganyika's independence to wait for Kenya and Uganda. 'My fellow citizens of East Africa, we must wake up and ask our leaders why they have delayed our unity!'[55] Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of Amin's coup in 1971, a great number of letters in *Baraza*, framed the transition – whether supportive or opposed – in idioms of East African regionalism. For one correspondent, Obote had been a block to East African unity and Amin's coup was therefore to be welcomed.[56] Nonetheless, community summits and presidential meetings halted in the aftermath of Amin's coup, as Nyerere refused to recognise Amin's regime. This exclusion from regionalist presidential meetings was bitterly resented by Amin who persistently sought the recognition and 'regime-boosting' effect bestowed by participation in these fora (indeed, he found a warmer reception at the Organisation of African Unity).

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[53] Abu Mayanja, 'The Government's proposals for a new Constitution in Uganda', *Transition*, v. 6, no. 32 (1967), 25.
[54] MMU Archives (Fort Portal) King Charles M. Wesley Mumbere to Jomo Kenyatta, Chairman of EAC 22 December 1971.
[55] Letter from Josephat Kiboko Nyerere, 'Tuna hamu na Shirikisho!', *Baraza*, 14 December 1972, 4.
[56] Letter from Peter Inyangala, 'Mapinduzi ya Uganda', *Baraza*, 4 February 1971, 4.

As political relations worsened, so too did regionalist cultural fora move in more introverted directions. By the time the East African Community collapsed in 1977, *Baraza* oriented more towards a Kenyan public, much like the EALB. The cosmopolitan *Transition* was dead after a brief resurrection in Accra, Ghana. Assertions of the right to protect national economies and borders outnumbered arguments for eroding boundaries. But, for some fifteen years before, diverse scales and valences of regional imaginary informed not only state-building but also presented sets of resources for East African citizenries to lambast the fissiparous legacies of the colonial state and lament dangerous ethno-authoritarian turns they so anxiously monitored over the 1960s. This points to the inaccuracy of political scientist Joseph Nye's contemporary observations that, while integrationist pan-African ideology was strong amongst East African leaders, wider populations were largely passive in 'thinking' East African (or indeed 'acting' East African in the case of borderland communities or literary elites).[57] East African community backlit independence negotiations. It also uplit emerging statehood from below.

Conclusion

In 1975, at the same time as Uganda's George Kanyeihamba saw faint hope for East African federation in youth culture, Julius Nyerere extended an olive branch to his regional partners as relations soured.

> For the nations of East Africa are all very young, and perhaps are more assertive in their nationalism as a result… We must hold on to the realisation of our East Africanness… I am not suggesting that a strong and active consciousness of being East African would avoid disputes within the Community or between the Partner States. I am saying that if we are rational and we 'think East African' we shall abide by the rules we have laid down for ourselves, and thus prevent disagreements from becoming quarrels and jeopardising our joint progress.[58]

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[57] Nye, *Pan-Africanism*.

[58] Julius Nyerere to EALA Arusha, 15 January 1975, Report of Select Committee on East African Federation, presented by Hon. I.M. Bhoke Munanka, Chairman, East African Legislative Assembly, 1975

'Thinking East African' retained a tenacious allure. It is no coincidence that the breakdown of the EAC in 1977 provoked popular lamentations in emotive terms of 'marriage' and 'divorce' as a bitter 'verbal guerrilla war' unfolded between the three nations in the late 1970s.[59]

In this chapter, we have sought to reinsert visions of unity to a central place in the political thought of East Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. The concept of federation was clearly a powerful discursive resource for nation-state builders in the early 1960s, but it also had ideological purchase for those who sought to contest the maintenance of statehood within colonial borders. The very flexibility and indeterminacy of the idea helps explain its power as sets of discursive resources, but perhaps also helps us to understand its failure as practical politics. Yet ideas of unity and co-operation persisted in the public sphere even as these visions ceased to be part of the domain of real-time state politics. Why should this be? One reason for this is that many citizens were deeply invested in regional ties at personal and existential levels. In many cases, these are the voices of a mobile elite, tied into regional structures such the UEA or EALB, which supported that mobility and germinated personalised communities of affinity as a result. Equally though, issues of mobility and ideas of common citizenship, so central to these public imaginaries of regional unity, had also been central to the breakdown of negotiations over federation in 1963. State elites (and perhaps many East African peoples who had more concerns over employment and land rights than the cosmopolitan educated elite) had always been more cautious about the implications of common citizenship than their sometimes utopian rhetoric suggested.

But there was also something more profound at work in these years. Independence did not simply constitute a transfer of power; it was a moment of possibility. Visions of a united future continued to inspire East Africa's citizens, even as the political room for manoeuvre closed and more introverted state power grew. For the citizens of East Africa's new states, the idea of East African unity served as a way of resisting attempts not only to erect barriers to movement, but also as a way to resist new barriers to political imagination. The tenacity of a vision of East African unity stems in part, therefore, from its potential as an ideological resource to imagine and advocate alternative post-colonial futures.

Such languages of regional affinity were reborn into the twenty-first century with the re-establishment of the EAC in 2000; once more, the region's educated youth have been at the centre

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[59] Aggrippah Mugomba, "Regional Organisations and African Underdevelopment: the Collapse of the East African Community", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 16, 2 (1978), 261-272.

of more optimistic visions of the future. In August 2016, the inaugural East African Bicycle Tour (the '*Tour* d'EAC') would, according to Al Hajj Abdul Naduli, Ugandan Minister for State without Portfolio and Chairman of the Tour, help in 'enhancing and empowering the unity of the people of East Africa… Indeed, it is patriotism of a kind that shall accelerate more steady social security and economic development of East Africa'. For one participant, Uganda's John Phyton Balongo, 'we chose peddling because we know it does not only provide an opportunity for people to ride together and experience the route, but it is a powerful way to build a sense of Community and strengthen sociable networks within the EAC'.[60] In 2018, the First EAC High Level Youth Ambassadors Dialogue on Regional Integration specifically encouraged its participants to 'think East African' in 'people-centred' ways.[61] This was the hope expressed by George Kanyeihamba in 1975; even as the institutions of regional co-operation, past and present, might be dismissed as typically technocratic, statist projects, East Africa's regionalist imaginary belonged to its peoples as well as its presidents.

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[60]https://www.eac.int/press-releases/519-863-661-acquaint-selves-of-integration-process-take-advantage-of-benefits-accrued-under-eac-speaker-tells-youth

[61]https://www.eaciidea.net/2018/11/07/youth-are-thinking-east-african/

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