



First Topic/Feature Article coming soon

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Two meetings of African leaders that took place in the last week of October in towns 1,000 miles apart point to a reshaping of the continent and the emergence of a new scramble for regional political and economic influence.

In Kigali, Rwanda, President Paul Kagame hosted Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta to sign off on a Single Customs Territory for the three countries. President Salva Kiir of South Sudan was also in attendance and his country is expected to eventually join the East African Community and the regional infrastructure projects at the heart of the new 'coalition of the willing' within the EAC

Around the same time President Joseph Kabila was hosting President Jacob Zuma on a state visit to Kinshasa – the first ever by a South African leader to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Both meetings offer a glimpse into the changing alliances across Africa informed by economic and political interests, and cemented by cross-border infrastructure projects. In Kigali the three presidents tied their countries into a SCT that, in theory, flattens borders, reduces cargo transit time by 75 per cent and cuts the cost by half.

In Kinshasa President Zuma and President Kabila signed a treaty to jointly develop the \$80 billion Grand Inga hydropower project. When complete the dam will generate 40,000 Megawatts which is more than two times the amount of power produced by China's Three Gorges Dam.

DR Congo currently has an installed capacity of 2,400MW but only produces about half of that due to ageing and poorly maintained infrastructure; only about one in 10 of the 70 million Congolese has access to electricity.

Most of the power produced out of Inga will, however, be exported – to South Africa, to other countries in the region, and possibly as far north as Europe.

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South Africa has had a partnership framework with DR Congo in the form of the General Cooperation Agreement signed in 2004 and has long courted the country but Pretoria's newly aggressive foreign policy stance is likely to have wider implications on geopolitical



configurations.

The projection of force under the Zuma administration began with the successful installation of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as chairperson of the African Union and, more recently, with Pretoria's deployment of a brigade to the United Nations Intervention Brigade in eastern DR Congo.

South Africa's deployment and emergence as guarantor of peace and investment partner has turned eastern DR Congo into a theatre of contest between the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community.

Tanzania, which has a leg in SADC, has also contributed troops to the brigade which last week dislodged M23 rebels who retain sympathies and, according to a UN panel of experts' report, support from Rwanda and Uganda.

In a speech before the DRC Parliament President Zuma acknowledged the need for the faltering peace talks in Kampala and the need for a political settlement in eastern Congo but he also fired a veiled warning shot towards the external actors in the conflict.

"South Africa remains deeply concerned by the enduring conflict in eastern Congo, perpetrated by local and externally supported armed groups on innocent Congolese civilians," he said.

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"Enough is enough, the time for peace is now and to those who would challenge this for their own self-interests, we stand firm in the message that your time is now up, lay down your arms, as no longer will the misery you inflict be tolerated."

Tanzania's deployment in eastern DR Congo alongside South Africa gives the Intervention Brigade a distinctly SADC hue. In addition, Tanzania's announcement last week that it intends to seek new political and economic alliances with Burundi and DR Congo can be seen as a potential re-alignment of Dodoma's loyalties away from the EAC to SADC.

This is a significant development for at least two major reasons. First it tears up the rulebook of regional alliances, which have hitherto been built around shared colonial history and geography (the EAC Treaty, for instance, requires member states to have "geographical proximity" and "inter-dependence").

Secondly, it gives added momentum to the expansion and deepening of regional economic blocs. An alliance between Tanzania, Burundi and DR Congo would lead to a bloc of 124 million people. If this were to align itself with SADC (population 277 million; GDP \$650 billion according to World Bank figures) it would create the largest economic bloc on the continent and an economy that would, on paper, be the twentieth biggest in the world.



The EAC is expected to admit South Sudan as early as late November when the heads of state summit takes place in Kampala, creating a bloc with a GDP of just over \$100 billion with Tanzania and Burundi (\$73.5 billion if the two were to leave).

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This is likely to be followed by further expansion northwards. Sudan, which applied to join EAC before Juba would be a strong candidate depending on its relations with South Sudan while Somalia has also expressed interest but is unlikely to be admitted until the transitional government attains reasonable control over the country and its own affairs.

The bigger play, however, would then be for Ethiopia, which is already involved in the Lamu-South Sudan-Ethiopia Trade Corridor. A united EAC with South Sudan (population 156 million; GDP \$104 billion) is a large market to which Ethiopia (population 92 million; GDP \$43 billion) can be expected to join as a partner.

Without Tanzania and Burundi the EAC's position becomes weaker (population drops to 98 million; GDP to \$74 billion) and Ethiopia can then be expected to try and leverage its size, position, geo-strategic importance as the home of the African Union, and its large military to enter as a first among equals.

Ethiopia could press its advantages further by proposing to join the expanded bloc through an alliance of EAC and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Disease, which also includes Djibouti, Somalia and Sudan alongside Kenya and Uganda.

This would expand the new bloc even further but it would also give Ethiopia a strong negotiating arm and a dominant position within the bloc.

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From a wider perspective, these alignments across the continent could leave Africa with four distinctive regional blocs: a South African-led bloc running from Cape Town to the jungles of DR Congo and the beaches of Dar es Salaam; an Ethiopian-led East African bloc that rises from the hills of Rwanda to the deserts of Sudan; an Egyptian-led Maghreb bloc that stretches across the top of the continent; and a Nigerian-led West African bloc that straddles the belt south of the Sahara and the forests of Central Africa.

This could lead to at least two developments. First is a deepening of integration within each bloc with barriers to trade and the movement of goods and people are eliminated as is happening in the Single Customs Territory in East Africa.

Secondly, this could then provide a geographical base from which cross-border and cross-bloc capital, from the likes of South Africa's MTN and Stanbic to Nigeria's Dangote Group, flows across Africa in pursuit of profit.



With the emergence of powerful continental capital houses and investments as well as fewer but larger and deeply integrated blocs across Africa, the next step would then be the integration of the blocs themselves.

This would not necessarily turn the continent into a country or a federal political entity – naysayers say the continent is too diverse, too varied for that. However it would turn Africa into a more close-knit continent of a few mega regional blocs brought together by common economic interest and welded together by cross-border highways, oil pipelines, power grids and railway lines.

Some 130 years after Europeans met in Berlin to carve up Africa a new scramble is underway on the continent, only this time it is by Africans seeking to break down the colonial-era boundaries, redraw the map, and reassemble the continent around common interests, not the interests of colonial masters or their legacy. Africans are about colonise Africa.

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