

Hybrid Wars: The East African Community's Crush

Part 8

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

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The East African Community is perhaps the most economically promising bloc of states in the entire continent, though it's a grouping that most people don't know anything about. Up until South Sudan's accession in [spring 2016](#), it was comprised of a geographically tight 'circle' of five states - Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania.

The inclusion of Africa's newest country brings with it much opportunity, though because it's only recently incorporated into the framework that's going to be studied and is fraught with a multitude of risks, it will be discussed at length in its own section alongside the Central African Republic. In this part of the research, the East African Community (EAC) will refer only to the five aforementioned states and will exclude South Sudan unless explicitly stated otherwise. Having explained the geographic parameters of the region under focus, it's now time to investigate it in depth and explore its strategic potential in the coming years.

The present chapter opens up by providing a broad overview of the EAC in general, looking into its federalization prospects and the impact that its actualization could have on Africa and the rest of the world. Afterwards, it uncovers the series of Silk Road projects that are snaking through the region and examines how they have the collective potential to strengthen the EAC's integration plans and turn the bloc into China's main continental outpost for One Belt One Road activities. Finally, the last part of this introductory article looks at the prospects for the EAC turning into an object of New Cold War rivalry between China and India, especially considering current economic data that convincingly indicates that this is already gearing up to be the case. Following this initial chapter, all subsequent ones will deal specifically with each of the countries of the region, beginning with Kenya and then proceeding to Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (which will be studied together), and Tanzania. At the end of the research, it's the author's aim that the reader can appreciate the geostrategic significance of the EAC and acquire an understanding of how and why the US might resort to [Hybrid War](#) to crush this integrational community.

Federalizing The Community

The EAC has plans to one day integrate into what would prospectively be called the [East African Federation](#) (EAF), but this process is a lot easier said than done. Nevertheless, because it would be such a monumental move if it does in fact happen, it deserves to be comprehensively analyzed in order for observers to see how it fits into the regional paradigm and China's continental vision for the One Belt One Road infrastructure network.

Background And Possibilities:



To start off, the EAC's background history is very important to be aware of so that analysts can better assess the organization's future viability under a federalized model. The EAC was originally only a three-country group between Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania and briefly existed between 1967-1977. It was brought back to the forefront of regional politics in 2000 and expanded to include Rwanda and Burundi in 2007. South Sudan, as was mentioned above, joined in early 2016, though the current study only examines the original five-country bloc for the sake of regional and strategic consistency. If the complementary goals of a political and economic/currency federation enter into fruition, then the East African Federation (EAF) would be a sizeable global force to be reckoned with, totaling nearly 170 million people and representing a market and labor force of impressive economic potential. The proposed plan is for the EAF capital to be in the northern Tanzanian city of Arusha, which has previously been used for such regional high-level diplomatic initiatives as attempting to resolve the Rwandan and Burundian Civil Wars.

External Views:

From an outsider's perspective, especially that of the Great Powers, the EAF might seem like a welcome geopolitical construction. It would ideally create a single unified federal structure through which the resource- and labor-rich region could interact with the outside world, and it could also be expected to elevate their collective capabilities to untold heights. China, for example, might prefer dealing with a single semi-centralized entity that's responsible for this strategic region through which so many of its New Silk Road projects are supposed to pass (and which will be discussed soon enough), while the Indians might eagerly see their own opportunity in further maximizing their economic influence in Kenya and Tanzania and spreading it deeper into the continent's Ugandan, Rwandan, and Burundian interior reaches (and like with China's case, will also be discussed at length later on).

Looked at from the American viewpoint, there are notable advantages and disadvantages. If the US could strongly influence the EAF, then it would replicate the EU pattern in acquiring a submissive bloc for carrying out its regional "[Lead From Behind](#)" hegemonic tasks, to say nothing of the anti-China capabilities that Washington could gain by indirectly controlling the various New Silk Roads. On the other hand, and along the lines of what China is endeavoring to work for, if the EAF eludes American control and is able to defend itself in whole or in part from any forthcoming Hybrid Wars that Washington manufactures, then it would become a valuable addition to the multipolar world order and a beacon of transformative hope for the rest of the continent. Essentially, the future of the region comes down to whether or not the EAC turns into the EAF, and also how the whole entity or its individual parts react to the US' combination of disruptive intrigue and tempting outreaches (Hybrid Wars and unipolar bribes).

Internal Views:

While the above analysis is an accurate overview of the most basic interests that China, India, and the US have in relation to the EAC/EAF, it doesn't account for the internal politics of the bloc itself. The governments of Kenya, Rwanda, and especially Uganda are heavily in favor of accelerating the integrational and federalization processes, while Burundi is relatively blasé towards all of this amidst its own foreign-concocted internal crisis and Tanzania has traditionally kept the whole platform at arm's length. To expand a bit more on all of this, the regionally ambitious Ugandan President [Yoweri Museveni](#) has enthusiastically embraced the EAF in the hopes that it could become his defining legacy and distract from his controversial personal history and spate of neighboring military interventions,

particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and to an extent, even in the Central African Republic. The Tanzanians, on the other hand, have historically been suspicious of regional integration projects as a cover for expanding their Kenyan competitors' influence throughout the area, and their socialist history has created some serious domestic administrative obstacles to this vision. Because of this, they're generally regarded as the most 'sluggish' of the EAC's members when it comes to further integration proposals.



Nairobi

Additionally, aside from the regional aspirations of Uganda and the historical suspiciousness of Tanzania, there's also Kenya, which is the [largest economy](#) in the region in GDP terms. Nairobi would like to leverage its coastal position in order to become the route of choice for foreign investors in directly accessing the Ugandan, South Sudanese, and Ethiopian markets. It hopes that this will allow it to expand its own economy in step with that of its neighbors and capitalize off of the emerging prospects that they provide, thus transforming Kenya into one of the most key countries in the entire western Indian Ocean Region. Rwanda, being of comparatively much smaller size and disadvantageously landlocked in the central highlands of the continent, sees the EAF as an instrument for connecting its economy to that of the outside world, hopefully diversifying its options by dually allowing for Ugandan (and further afield, Kenyan) and Tanzanian opportunities. If faced with a choice, Rwanda might prefer to rely more on Uganda than Tanzania owing to the political connections that Rwandan President Paul Kagame has historically cultivated with his Ugandan counterpart and his suspected intention of wanting to deepen Kigali's perceived influence over Kampala.

Continuing along the line of internal perspectives about the EAC's federalization plans, it's also worthwhile to consider what the average citizen might think about this far-reaching initiative. Obviously, there are very serious concerns about the erosion of national sovereignty and which country or group thereof would effectively end up leading the bloc. The regional competition between the two coastal states of Kenya and Tanzania is well known, and neither wants the other to gain a relatively perceived advantage at their expense. Additionally, the landlocked states of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi do not want to cede too much of their sovereignty to their larger eastern neighbors and become too adversely dependent on them. From their angle of thinking, it's best to retain as many options as possible in balancing between the two while finding 'compromise' ways to boost their profile within the bloc, possibly through some sort of political solution related to a rotating EAF presidency or other similar ideas. Conversely, Kenyan and Tanzanian citizens would not want to feel as though they are caving in to their smaller neighbors by giving up their advantageous positions in favor of what might be perceived or negatively promoted as pandering to Ugandans, Rwandans, and Burundians at the expense of their national interests.

Federalization Summary:

Each of these internal positions are all legitimate in their own way, from the high-level geopolitical calculations of the respective national leaderships to the populist approaches of their citizenry, and it's up to each government and their civil society partners to reconcile all major differences in reaching an acceptable solution as regards the federalization issue.

Each country will likely end up with their own answer to approaching this topic, and it might predictably slow down any preplanned integrational deadlines and possibly even end up being exploited by the US as a Color Revolution trigger in some cases. It's plain to see that a compromise solution that equally respects each country's sovereignty and minimally cedes any existing strategic ground is what's called for, but as clichéd as it is to repeat, such ideas are always easier said than done.

Nevertheless, the international incentives are certainly there to encourage all regional stakeholders to reach an agreement sooner than later, since the expected economic and strategic dividends that would roll in might be more than enough to assuage most naysayers. China would like for the EAF to function as a platform for standardizing policies related to the New Silk Road, while India has similar interests as they apply to New Delhi's investment in the region. The US wants a semi-integrated regional framework through which it can project military influence and gain a lever of control over China's aforementioned projects. As a worst-case scenario in the event that it can't gain and maintain some degree of acceptable control over the EAF or some of its desired individual members, the US has plans to resort to its trademarked "geopolitical scorched earth" tactic in unleashing a set of Hybrid Wars to devastate the region.

The East African Silk Road(s)

So as to understand why targeted and even indiscriminate destruction are such particularly attractive options for American strategists, it's relevant to look at how the EAC figures into China's broader One Belt One Road plans for a connected network of global infrastructure projects. For reference, the author suggests that the reader cite his earlier work on the topic for Oriental Review, "[East Africa's Problems Might Spoil Its Silk Road Dreams](#)", which earlier covered this issue in brief, as well as go back and look at the maps that were presented in the first part of the African research. For convenience's sake, an updated version of the most relevant map is included below:



Yellow: LAPSSET

Blue: Standard Gauge Railway

Rose: Central Corridor

Lavender: Ugandan-Tanzanian Pipeline Terminal in Tanga

Lime Green: TAZARA

Dark Green: Mtwara Corridor

This part of the introductory article will thus explain the six main Silk Road projects in the EAC that combine to form what the author has taken to calling the East African Silk Road Megaproject. Of pertinent note, all of the rail-related infrastructure has been collectively referred to as the [East African Railway Master Plan](#) and has substantial Chinese backing.

Beginning from north to south, the six Silk Road projects are as follows:

LAPSSET Corridor:

Beginning in the port of Lamu in northeastern Kenya's Somalian-inhabited areas, this [multimodal transport corridor](#) aims to connect rail, road, and pipeline infrastructure to Ethiopia and South Sudan. In reference to the former, it can be seen as serving a

complementary role to the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railroad that was described in the earlier section about the Horn of Africa, whereas for the latter, it realistically presents Juba's only possible access route to the global markets. South Sudan does not want to fall under Sudan's influence and have its export routes controlled by its hated rival, and considering that the newly christened and war-torn state is now an official member of the EAC, it makes sense that it would prioritize the southeastern vector of its international development corridor plans. Furthermore, this correlates with the US' preplanned geostrategic goals for the region, which were partially hatched in order to tear this resource-rich region away from the central government in order to achieve precisely this objective, though that will be discussed more in an appropriate chapter later on in the research.

Standard Gauge Railway (SGR):

✘ Kenya's [\\$13.8 billion partially Chinese-funded project](#) has the express intention of linking the bustling port of Mombasa with the landlocked economies of South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. The Ugandan capital of Kampala is supposed to serve as a crucial junction in linking the other inland countries together with Kenya, which if completed, would deepen the strategic partnership between the two neighborly states and increase each of their positions vis-à-vis their neighbors, which is exactly in line with each of their grand strategic interests. Additionally, there's also the possibility that the SGR could be expanded to the Congolese riparian port of Kisangani if the situation ever sustainably stabilized in the Orientale Province (particularly in its [Ituri region](#)), thenceforth allowing this project to function as a crucial component of a tentative trans-continental multimodal corridor connecting Africa's Eastern and Western coasts.

Ugandan-Tanzanian Pipeline:

Uganda declared a few years ago that it found impressive oil deposits in the northwestern reaches of the country bordering Lake Albert, and it surprisingly [chose Tanzania](#) as its export route in April 2016 instead of Kenya like everyone previously thought it would. While there was obviously a lot of oil-bartering intriguing going on behind the scenes (specifically on behalf of French investor Total), Uganda's official reason for changing its plans is that it did feel that the proposed pipeline would be adequately secured in northeast Kenya's Somali-inhabited region, as it was originally expected to terminate at the port of Lamu and supplement the LAPSET Corridor. Instead, the pipeline will go south through Tanzania and around Lake Victoria and reach the coast at the port of [Tanga](#), with the entire project expected to be completed by [2020](#). Importantly, this places it within very close proximity to some of Tanzania's offshore oil and gas deposits [near](#) the Zanzibar archipelago, which could help Tanga become a globally renowned energy export center in the future if properly managed as such and so long as domestic stability prevails between the mainland and the islands.

✘ Uganda's change of plans in choosing Tanzania for its oil export route instead of Kenya came as a major demoralizing blow for Nairobi, which had earlier staked a lot of high hopes on its energy cooperation with Kampala. To outside observers, it looks like Uganda is trying to balance its strategic dependence on its two larger neighbors by relying on Kenya for the SGR but seeking out Tanzania for the pipeline so as not to be overly dependent on one or the other. Seen from Nairobi, it looks like Kampala is pivoting towards Dodoma and upsetting Kenya's projected position in a forthcoming federalized structure as the main 'gatekeeper' to all of the inland economies' maritime trade routes. Additionally, it even opens the possibility that the SGR might not become the sole railway route to the sea for

Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, especially seeing as how Kenya's Tanzanian competitor is moving forward with the rival Central Corridor project that aims to do something similar vis-à-vis its own coast.

If Tanzania displaces Kenya as the primary transit route for the rest of the EAC countries' international (global) trade, then it would result in the progressive isolation of Nairobi within the organization and Dodoma's emergence as the entity's strategic heavyweight. One of the cumulative effects of this happening could be that the Kenyan government is prompted to completely rethink all of its erstwhile policies, including its embracive attitude towards federalization, thus ripening it up for a pivot and make it susceptible to any outside "balancing" partner that approaches it with an 'attractive deal' (such as the US).

The Central Corridor And TAZARA:

Although two totally separate projects constructed nearly four decades apart, these railroads have in common their shared Chinese funding and the fact that they terminate at Dar Es Salaam or the nearby \$10 billion port that [China and Oman](#) are planning to construct in [Bagamoyo](#). The [Central Corridor](#) is a brand-new initiative which foresees a state-of-the-art rail corridor cutting through northwestern Tanzania and connecting to Rwanda and Burundi, with the open possibility of extending to Uganda one day as well. This said project would terminate in Bagamoyo, which is being developed from the ground-up just for this purpose and with the intent of becoming East Africa's largest port one day. [TAZARA](#), on the other hand, is a relic of China's Cold War cooperation with its Tanzanian and Zambian allies, both of which have since been reliable diplomatic proponents of Beijing and the latter of which has consistently exported [copper](#) to the country via this corridor.

✘ Like it was explained in Part I, TAZARA has the potential of being an alternative to the SGR-Congo River intermodal transport corridor that the author has envisioned and could function as the second possible route in streamlining an East-West Corridor between Africa's two coasts. In fact, if one factors the Central Corridor into the mix and the technical possibility that it could replace the SGR (but only under specific, likely manufactured, political-regional circumstances), then Tanzania could emerge as Eastern and Central Africa's main gateway to the Indian Ocean and the wider world, the logical consequence of which might be that its decision makers second guess their earlier resistance to federalization. Should events unfold in that manner, then Tanzania and Kenya would ironically swap roles in regards to their respective positions towards federalization, with formerly eager Kenya becoming very reluctant while traditionally cautionary Tanzania becomes wholly enthusiastic.

Mtwara Development Corridor:

The last of the six Silk Road-related projects to run through the EAC is the Mtwara Development Corridor, the core of which is a [\\$1.4 billion Chinese-financed](#) railroad from the coastal city of Mtwara to the Lake Malawi-abutting town of [Mbamba Bay](#) in the mineral-rich region of Njombe. Along the way, it would also connect to [Russian-invested uranium mines on the Mkuju River](#) and would exit near the Indian Ocean very close to the village of Lindi, which will have its [own LNG plant](#) for processing southern Tanzania's hefty offshore deposits. The Mtwara Development Corridor is also vital not only for developing the southern hinterlands of Tanzania and the northern rural ones of Mozambique, but also for linking landlocked Malawi to the Chinese economy and deepening Beijing's strategic penetration of Southeastern Africa. Although this might be one of the least known of China's

Silk Road projects, whether in Africa or anywhere else in the world for that matter, its comparative lack of popularity belies its actual importance in the larger New Cold War paradigm that's progressively setting in all across East Africa.



Cotton vs. Silk

One of the most pivotal developments in global geopolitics thus far has been India's recent redirection towards the US, which the author explained in detail in a [two-part](#) series for The Duran. The relevance of this dramatic shift is that it makes India a unipolar-leaning player that's ready to "contain" China wherever it sees the chance to do so on behalf of its American strategic patrons, and the Indian Ocean Region is by far no exception. Most people in the world are aware of China's Silk Road plans, but just about everyone is clueless when it comes to India's proposed response.

New Delhi barely publicized it, but an important three-day conference was held in the eastern Indian city of Bhubaneshwar in March 2015 to consider just that, and the outcome of the "India and Indian Ocean: Renewing the Maritime Trade and Civilisational Linkages" event was something called the "Cotton Route".

Envisaged to be India's counter to China's New Silk Road, the Cotton Route was only vaguely described as a plan to connect India to all Indian Ocean Region economies, but it can be safely assumed that New Delhi is hard at work trying to turn this plan into a reality. The author forecast what the Cotton Route could look like in an article for [Sputnik](#) during that time, and like with previous publications that have been already been directly cited, it's suggested that the reader review it at their earliest convenience if they're interested, but the most pertinent part of the research is that India would concentrate a lot of its attention on East Africa.

Trade Ties And Diaspora Networks:

Investigating deeper and using the Observatory of Economic Complexity as a reliable resource, it's revealed that India is already [Tanzania's](#) top import and export partner, while closely tailing behind China as [Kenya's](#) second-largest import one. It can be confidently assumed that India's economic prominence in these two countries isn't just attributable to its nearby geography and the ease of maritime trade between the subcontinent and East Africa, but also due to the presence of the [Indian diaspora](#) there, many of whom came or were taken to the region during the British imperial period and thenceforth eventually acquired a comfortable post-independence position in each country's trading class. Prime Minister Modi has made a [big deal](#) out of tapping into the diaspora's economic potential in almost every country that he's visited since his election, so it can be expected that New Delhi has pinned high hopes on its compatriots in the two most important EAC states to lead the way for the Cotton Road's future development.



The Island Factor:

Looking at the map, a casual observer might be forgiven for not recognizing that there are two strategic but very small island chains located within a comparatively close distance to the East African coast, the Seychelles and the Comoros. The former is the most important of

the two because it 'guards' the trans-Indian Ocean maritime approach to the EAC, thus bestowing whatever patron can establish influence over it with the irreplaceable opportunity to monitor maritime trade routes to and from the region. Put into more practical terms, the Seychellois President's [public disclosure](#) in December 2015 that India would be building a naval base somewhere in the island chain and New Delhi's [dispatch](#) of submarine-hunting aircraft to the archipelago in March 2016 speak heavily to India's intentions in "containing" China and monitoring its New Silk Road relationship with the EAC.

These established facts on the ground (or rather, over the water) prove that India has successfully beaten China in the rush to set up a base in the islands, thereby refuting the myriad reports that had previously [circulated for years](#) about a suspected Chinese maritime facility in the country. There's still [chatter](#) that China is considering the islands for a forthcoming naval base, and truth be told, it wouldn't be surprising at all if Victoria decides to "balance" between New Delhi and Beijing by allowing one, though it would remain to be seen how the US would react. Still, it's important to draw attention to India's naval activity in the island chain because it could pose strategic risks for China and its Sea Lanes of Communication with East Africa, which is obviously the whole reason why New Delhi decided to move forward with it.

The other island chain near East Africa, the Comoros, is actually located a lot closer to the coast, though in an extreme southeast direction. It's no longer as geostrategically significant as it once was during the days before the Suez Canal when countless ships were forced to sail through the Mozambique Channel on their journeys between Europe and Asia, its star might once again be rising with the [enormous LNG deposits](#) located near its coasts in Tanzanian and Mozambican maritime territory. Granted, the Federation of the Comoros is extremely unstable and its post-independence history has been marked by over 20 coups or coup attempts, but that actually plays to the US' divide and rule advantage in this situation by making it a hotbed of potential coastal unrest in the area. Moreover, the vast majority of the population is Muslim, and while this isn't a destabilizing indicator in and of itself, the country's [membership](#) in the Saudi-led "anti-terrorist" coalition should surely raise eyebrows about Riyadh's grand strategic intent in the Southeast African region.

It wouldn't be unreasonable nor out of line with Saudi Arabia's historical track record to suggest that the Comoros might be used as a terrorist springboard against continental Africa, with Tanzania and its autonomous Zanzibar provinces being the most convenient targets. On top of that, India has disturbingly been [moving very close to Saudi Arabia](#) over the past couple of months, and if Modi decides to reach a similar strategic partnership with the Kingdom just like he did with the US (if he hasn't done so already), then it could mean that New Delhi might also find a way to gain an asymmetrical foothold in this important island chain. Just like with its presence in the Seychelles, India would be interested first and foremost in finding a way to employ its newfound position against China out of the subjectively understood need to "contain" it in the context of the [Cold War](#) that it's engaged in with Beijing.

Piggybacking:

As it stands, India hasn't articulated any detailed strategic vision for actualizing its Cotton Route, though it isn't to say that New Delhi lacks a coherent strategy. Instead of seeking to emulate China in the sense of replicating large-scale infrastructure projects of the nature that were earlier described, India simply wants to capitalize off of its rival's investments in 'piggybacking' off of them after they're completed and using them for its own benefit.

Realistically speaking, there's nothing preventing India or any other country such as the US from doing so, since an infrastructure corridor, especially a trade-related New Silk Road one, is by definition open to all parties and isn't intended to be restrictive. In addition to that, taking stock of what China wants to achieve in the region, there really isn't anything else that India or any other competitor could suggest that hasn't already been thought of, pursued, or discounted by the Chinese, meaning that the most efficient and realistic projects are already being built and that anything else of similar magnitude is unnecessary in the strategic sense (at least for the medium-term future).

Accepting that this is the case, then it means that India actually has an interest in seeing China's New Silk Road projects succeed so that it can use them for its own purposes, but it of course doesn't want Beijing's influence to get too strong or muscle out New Delhi's, hence India's naval presence in the Seychelles and its prospective Saudi ally's curious position in the Comoros. It can be taken to be understood that the US also isn't entirely opposed to China's New Silk Road megaprojects in East Africa, although it would of course want to curtail some of them, outright stop some, and exert some degree of direct or indirect control over the rest. So, when looked at from an objective strategic sense, the US would tolerate some of China's regional infrastructure projects if India was able to profit as well, but in order to increase the chances that this could be the case, the US doesn't want China's ambitions to get "uncontrollable" and it thus might want to 'cut them down to size' through a couple Hybrid War disturbances in order to offset a few and gain key transit control over the remaining others.

As a worst-case scenario, the US would questionably sacrifice its Indian subordinate's strategic 'piggybacking' plan and sabotage all of China's East African Silk Road if it had to, though it seems to have much more to gain at this moment by doing so in a controlled and selective manner targeting only the most crucial transit points. Also, it might want to prevent the East African Silk Road from becoming the Indian Ocean anchor for a forthcoming trans-continental intermodal corridor, so it could try to engineer some outbreaks of chaos in Uganda, Rwanda, and as is seen nowadays, especially in [Burundi](#) in order to geographically limit it from 'overstepping' the 'boundaries' that the US has set up, short of attacking the actual projects themselves (at least not yet). All of these strategic considerations need to be kept in mind as the research progresses to individually studying each of the five examined EAC members and their specific domestic conditions, since specific Hybrid War vulnerabilities will inevitably reveal themselves and allow the reader to forecast the various methods in which the US will attempt to stop China's East African Silk Road plans.

To be continued...

Andrew Korybko is the American political commentator currently working for the [Sputnik](#) agency. He is the author of the monograph "[Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach To Regime Change](#)" (2015). This text will be included into his forthcoming book on the theory of Hybrid Warfare.

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About the author:

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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