



Economic diplomacy as a strategy influencing bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan (2011-2023)

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Recommended Reference: Kennedy, N. N., Odhiambo, E. O. S., & Muhindi, S. (2025). Economic diplomacy as a strategy influencing bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan (2011–2023). *African Quarterly Social Science Review*, 2(3), 402–414. <https://doi.org/10.51867/AQSSR.2.3.34>

ABSTRACT

International collaboration through different avenues such as economic diplomacy has been made possible through globalization, boiling down to continental collaborations by the utilisation of organisation's and treaties. After independence, East African countries sought cooperation across economic and political as well as social domains. This study focused on economic diplomacy as a bilateral strategy between Kenya and South Sudan, given their geographical proximity since South Sudan gained its independence in 2011, and the potential benefits derived from such collaboration. Kenya is an outstanding economic hub in the East African region and has consistently used economic diplomacy to actualize and pursue its national interests. The objective examined the nature of bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan, identifying key areas that need reforms. The study aimed to illuminate the interaction between the independent variable of economic diplomacy and the dependent variable of bilateral relations. The interdependence liberalism theory and the factor endowment theory provided the theoretical framework. The data was gathered in Nairobi using questionnaires and interviews with 356 respondents, resulting in an 87.1% response rate. The data were analyzed using a mixed-method design and content analysis. The findings indicate that Kenya's economic diplomacy positively influences bilateral relations with South Sudan, with improvements in investment and trade as well as cultural exchange. Furthermore, the study proved the positive correlation of economic diplomacy aspects of labour movements, goods and service movement and foreign direct investments in the enhancement of bilateral relations. In conclusion, the study determined that economic diplomacy has been a vital influence in improving bilateral relations between these neighbouring countries. Key policy implications recommended prioritizing more permanent solutions to enhance peace and security for a trade-conducive environment, more trade negotiations to increase trade volume and fine-tuning customs policies fostering better goods and services movement. This study shed light on a better understanding of how economic diplomacy moulds bilateral relations, giving a broad insight essential for policymakers seeking to strengthen Kenya and South Sudan engagements. The study recommended that future research explore the broader East African Community regional dynamics and the impact of existing trade policies on economic growth.

Keywords: Bilateral Relations, Economic Diplomacy, Examining, Globalization

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has made it possible for countries to increasingly cooperate through bilateral relations at various levels in the contemporary international arena through economic opportunities in technology, science, and communication, such as in the case of Kenya and South Sudan. Furthermore, it has led to increasing capital and economic marginalization, especially in developing countries (Borchmeyer, 2012). Multilateral and bilateral relations have now become a central means of collaboration, with the use of different tools such as economic diplomacy; Kenya maintains bilateral relationships and has signed bilateral trade and economic cooperation agreements with all her neighbours (Pannier, 2020). Kenya and South Sudan have had relations since its independence in 2011 in many matters, including trade. However, there have been rising issues threatening the relationship between these two countries, such as border conflicts of the South Sudanese Toposa and Kenyan Turkana communities, which could stand in the way of realizing the shared dream that aims to achieve economic integration (Maupeu, 2021).

Economic, cultural, and peace diplomacy are the key approaches to trade, technology, security, and conflict discussions. Economic diplomacy is intense on using economic tools, including regulations and sanctions, to advance the economic, political, and strategic goals through an increment of trade, promotion of investments as well as cooperation on trade agreements, whether bilateral or multilateral (Wanjaiya, 2019). The end goal is to create an



atmosphere suitable for the growth of both nations. Vitorino (2018) recognizes how important and critical economic diplomacy has become a priority in the 21st century, especially due to globalization and increased international competitiveness. When the Sudanese civil war broke out, Kenya was significant in the Machakos protocol signing, aiding in restoring peace in South Sudan (Maupeu, 2021). Wanyama (2013) notes that talks between the Kenyan government and South Sudan resulted in the lending of six billion shillings from Kenya; serving as economic and humanitarian aid. It would also improve the economic diplomacy and trade between the two countries. There has been a notable collaboration between Kenya and South Sudan as its exports to South Sudan were valued at 17 billion shillings in a single year. Due to Kenya's role in attaining independence, there have been collaborations in many other fields apart from trade, such as post-conflict restitution, security, and peace. According to Piana (2015), Kenya and South Sudan have invested heavily in constructing infrastructural links, such as the road connecting Kitale and Juba, which was further rehabilitated to allow smooth movement. Obala (2012) also noted that the Lamu Port- South Sudan –Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) program was meant to oversee a rail project and an oil construction project linking South Sudan oil fields and Lamu, Kenya, to strengthen their relationship. Key Kenyan institutions have established businesses in Sudan, such as Equity Bank, Cooperative Bank, Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB), and Old Mutual. Other smaller investors from Kenya have also set up their businesses in South Sudan. Gichana (2016) highly commended the joining of the EAC by South Sudan as it has notably contributed to its efforts in economic diplomacy among EAC member states and the African continent in general.

Cherono (2022) reports the use cooperative agreements to better infrastructure and development and reduce trade costs between Kenya and South Sudan. Furthermore, Achieng (2019) examined Kenya's approach and reported that border demarcation issues, refugees, terror attacks, and extremist groups are among the main threats to the integrity of relations between Kenya and South Sudan. The study further reported diplomatic relations' inefficiency in solving border disputes over the Ilemi triangle between Kenya and South Sudan, the Migingo Island with Uganda, and the maritime dispute with Ethiopia. Mwinyi (2022) asserts that both countries can use economic diplomacy by formulating and implementing transboundary resource policies to harmonize legislative acts, policies, management and the development of resources they share. Njeri (2020) notes that Kenya and South Sudan have actively combined peace, cultural, and economic strategies to handle cross-border ethnic conflicts. South Sudan is one of Kenya's main external trade partners.

Despite a rich history of cultural exchange and trade, the relationship between these two countries has been faltering, as shown by the reduced volume of imports and exports between the two countries (Kibanga, 2022). During the last six years, the exports of Kenya to South Sudan have decreased at an annual rate of 1.88%, from 173 million dollars in 2015 to 155 million dollars (Kibanga, 2022). Kibanga (2022) also notes that South Sudan exported \$634k in 2021. Chatterjee (2020) notes that the major exports of Kenya to South Sudan include other edible preparations (16.8%), beer (8.68%), sorghum (6.03%), refined petroleum (4.95%), cement (3.33%) and more. Major exports of South Sudan to Kenya include felt or coated fabric garments (44.2%), sawn wood (25.5%), electrical ignitions (10.1%), cars (7.39%), low voltage protection equipment (4.98%) and more. South Sudan's top exports are crude petroleum, refined petroleum onions, sheep and goat meat, and forage crops, mostly to China, Italy, Singapore, Japan, and the United Arabs Emirates [UAE] (Chatterjee, 2020).

The deterioration of economic diplomacy and trade between Kenya and South Sudan has been blamed on multiple unsolved rows of border conflicts over the Ilemi triangle, whereby South Sudan has accused Kenya of encroachment. Kirui (2022) states that this dispute results from border division in 1914 of the two states that fell under the British Empire. With no definitive division to date, it has stayed a dispute area with both countries seeking control. Kenyan troupes have been deployed for the purpose of security in this area due to various threats issued by terrorist groups in the area affecting various spheres like transportation of goods as truck drivers using the route have been issued threats of harm from terrorist leaders. Kenya and South Sudan have both claimed ownership of the Ilemi Triangle which is rich in oil and water and therefore, these resources have also contributed to the stagnation of resolution as both nations are not willing to hand it over (Kirui, 2022). Conflict like this affects economic diplomacy as it leads to hostility between traders and makes it harder to cross the border due to fear of escalation that may cost lives and massive losses on either side. Both governments have had internal meetings over the never-ending border conflict without reaching on a long lasting solution; however, luckily there has not been a case of massive escalation. Furthermore, both governments have vowed to resolve the matter using diplomatic means, holding meetings in Nairobi since 2018 with no visible resolution as the matter still lingers to date.

President Salva Kiir of South Sudan, as well as President William Ruto of Kenya vowed to finally find a permanent resolution in the recently concluded African Union meeting in Nairobi with support from other African presidents, who observed that it is a liability to economic goals of both countries. Violent extremism and terror groups at the border hinder economic progress and a resolution will enable both governments to work collaboratively to curb these and better support economic progression and integration. Furthermore, both countries have accused each other of predatory business behaviours for personal interests (Asiedu, 2018). With Kenya having high export numbers to South



Sudan, the latter has claimed that Kenya has turned it into an economic backyard whereby they dump their goods since exports from South Sudan are much lower. Clashes between the Toposa and Turkana communities at the Kenya-South Sudan border when they cross to look for grazing land have also caused a strain. In some cases, these clashes have escalated to physical conflict whereby citizens of both countries have died at the hands of one another as well as the terrorist groups operating from the South Sudanese border. Thus hindering economic diplomacy due to the lack of peace, a critical component in economic integration.

Despite diplomatic meetings, there has been little success in solving conflicts since 2019. Furthermore, the two countries' trade volume and economic relationship have not improved in years (Camilla, 2019). Adriana (2016) noted that Kenya's strongest trade partner in the East African region is Uganda, and it is essential to apply similar tenets with South Sudan. Ssekika (2015) notes that pursuing diplomatic relations increases the effectiveness of bilateral relations and is critical to sustaining development. Diplomatic relations improve access within a wide region and facilitate integration (Ssekika, 2015). This study will review contextual elements of economic diplomacy such as labour movement, foreign direct investments, and goods and services movement on the level of bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan. The study will be critical to policy makers as well as academicians as it will add a broader understanding to bilateral relations especially in the context of these two countries, while anchoring future studies with a similar focus. Furthermore, the study seeks to provide guidance on how to utilize diplomacy as a key tool in economic development and integration. Thus, providing empirical evidence that will be central in formulation of policies and strategies that exploit economic diplomacy as a tool to sustain and enhance bilateral relations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Bilateral relations play a key role in sustaining international relations; Kenya has aggressively used democratic strategies to advance bilateral relations, encourage investments, and actualize economic growth, majorly for its agricultural produce. Despite Kenya's efforts to foster bilateral relations and economic diplomacy with South Sudan, its trade volume with South Sudan has been deteriorating due to frequent infighting between them in recent years. Effective economic diplomacy would be critical in negotiations and how these countries relate with one another. Furthermore, Kenyan exports to South Sudan have reduced at an annual rate of 1.88% with South Sudan also suggesting their preference to use the Djibouti port instead of the Mombasa port, which would negatively affect the economic diplomacy between these two states. While various diplomatic strategies have been employed, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis on the effectiveness of economic diplomacy in reversing the deteriorating trade relations between Kenya and South Sudan, necessitating this study. The Ilemi triangle border dispute, border insecurity as well as border grazing communities, Toposa and Turkana conflicting have also hindered economic development and integration between the two states. Thus, this study sought to resolve this by exploring the role of economic diplomacy as a strategy influencing bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan.

1.2 Research Objective.

To examine the nature of the bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan identifying key areas that need reforms.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The theories in this section guided the study. These theories included the interdependence liberalism theory and the factor endowment theory. These two theories were used as they complement one another.

2.1.1 Interdependence Liberalism Theory

The interdependence liberalism theory suggests states' co-relationships spring cooperation among them (Copeland, 1996). Due to globalization, countries have grown to rely on one another, making inter-state changing dynamics from power reliant to using aspects such as economic diplomacy in their relations. Interdependence liberalism theory argues that economic interdependence which can be achieved through economic diplomacy encourages peaceful trade among states and discourages conflict which builds up bilateral relations (Copeland, 1996). Notably, the Kenya South Sudan Ilemi triangle conflict resolution can better highlight this aspect. The LAPSSET project also marks a key infrastructural collaboration. International and regional institutions can further enhance the benefits of bilateral deals by providing verified information regarding how different nations honor trade agreements by monitoring and reporting on compliance requirements (Kirui, 2022). EAC is at the foot of steering Kenya and South Sudan, as well as other East African nations. Furthermore, both countries are members of IGAD. The result will ensure that nations can fully exploit and tap into each other's potential, improving bilateral relations and minimizing conflict.

2.1.2 The Factor Endowment Theory

This theory suggests that trading between different countries is inevitable (Didier, 2018). Therefore, engaging in economic diplomacy is not only a necessity but a development tool. Trading, in this case, is determined by the existing amount of resources between two countries. Resource interaction is key as comparative advantage will determine goods for export and those to import. A country that produces capital-intensive commodities for export has capital abundance, while that specializing in producing labor-intensive commodities for export has labor abundance. Kenya and South Sudan find a market to trade commodities with abundant resources through bilateral relations (Wangui, 2024). Without working relations, economic diplomacy is compromised, and markets become inaccessible. It is necessary to ensure that a country can profit from its abundant labor intensive or capital intensive resources to improve economy, relations and prevent wastage.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 The Nature of Economic Diplomacy between Kenya and South Sudan

Globally, economic means have been used to chase various objectives, such as political goals. Kenyan policies, institutions and economic resources have been critical in spearheading relations with South Sudan through political and economic collaboration. The Kenyan foreign policy, centered on the pillars of peace, economic integration and security has been critical in the stabilization of South Sudan particularly during its civil unrest and independence. Most notable is the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement reflecting a commitment to strengthening bilateral ties and regional stability (Didier, 2018). Kenya's infrastructure has been strategic to boosting South Sudan's access to international markets through the Lamu Port as well as the ongoing LAPSSET project. Furthermore, Kenyan investment sectors and institutions have been key in providing essential services in South Sudan, such as banking services from KCB and Equity Bank.

Relations between Kenya and South Sudan heavily rely on economic diplomacy. South Sudan provides Kenya with a ready market, reflected in the high level of exports of various products. During the last six years, the exports of Kenya to South Sudan have decreased at an annual rate of 1.88%, from 173 million dollars in 2015 to 155 million dollars in 2021 (Kibanga, 2022). Kibanga (2022) also notes that South Sudan exported \$634k in 2021. The major exports of Kenya to South Sudan include other edible preparations (16.8%), beer (8.68%), sorghum (6.03%), refined petroleum (4.95%), cement (3.33%) and more. Major exports of South Sudan to Kenya include felt or coated fabric garments (44.2%), sawn wood (25.5%), electrical ignitions (10.1%), cars (7.39%), low voltage protection equipment (4.98%) and more (Mwinyi, 2022) However, the imbalance in comparison to exports from South Sudan to Kenya is notable as it is much lower, almost earning a status of being Kenya's "economic backyard" (Mwinyi, 2022).

2.2.2 Trade Agreements and Their Influence on Bilateral Relations between Kenya and South Sudan

Trade agreements are one of the most important tools of economic diplomacy and have a crucial impact on the nature of relations between states. These treaties have therefore continued to be a central feature in the relations between Kenya and South Sudan, regarding economic relations. There have been specific trade agreements and policies between Kenya and South Sudan that have had effects on economic diplomacy and bilateral relations between the two countries. Since South Sudan became an independent country in 2011, Kenya, being a centrally located neighboring country with a more developed economy and access to the Indian Ocean, become an important factor in the formation of the South Sudanese economy (Kirui, 2022). There have been several trade policies that were signed by Kenya and South Sudan in order to promote economic diplomacy and the ease of trade between the two countries. All these agreements are within a broader context of the integration of South Sudan into the regional economic structures and poverty eradication. These key trade agreements include the Bilateral Trade Agreement of 2012 (Bayne et al., 2021). This treaty was among the first structured undertakings that were signed after the two countries independence with the goal of facilitating the elimination of tariffs and other non-tariff barriers to trade, improving on customs' formalities and general cooperation in several sectors. The accords paved the way for greater amounts of bilateral trade and investments. Secondly, the Memorandum of Understanding with regard to Infrastructure Development was signed in 2013 (Bayne et al., 2021). This particular MoU concentrated on infrastructural development cooperation, especially on the Lamu Port–South Sudan–Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) project in which Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia are to be connected by a network of roads and railways for transport of commodities for sale and other purposes (Bayne et al., 2021).

2.2.3 The Reflection of Economic Diplomacy in Shaping Bilateral Relations between Kenya and South Sudan

Economic diplomacy is central to the formation of diplomatic relations between Kenya and South Sudan. It has been crucial in enhancing diplomacy, trade, political stability, security, and cooperation. Economic interdependence between these two nations is fostered through business ventures, export/import deals, and the development of communication systems. Therefore, analyzing the specifics of economic diplomacy in Kenya-South



Sudan relations will help to comprehend its effect on the partnership and stability in the region. (Njeri, 2020) Kenya has been regarded as a strategic player in the nation-building process of South Sudan which became independent in 2011 after seceding from Sudan. The role of Kenya during the liberation struggle of South Sudan and being part of the team that has been mediating most of the peace negotiation processes has therefore fostered good relations between Kenya and South Sudan (Ogutu, 2019). After independence, Kenya has played a pivotal role in South Sudan's economic development. It is necessary to distinguish several basic elements or forms of economic diplomacy that have been utilized to define the cooperation between Kenya and South Sudan - for instance, through trade and investment as well as infrastructure and construction. All these components are therefore of utmost importance in the improvement of the economic relations and development of mutual cooperation. (Ogutu, 2019) The targets of economic diplomacy trade and economic relations constitute the basis of interaction between these two states. The two countries have made several bilateral trade agreements in a bid to uphold liberalizing trade, standardize the measures on trading alleviate measures on trading, and lift customs that have been deemed unnecessary (Ogutu, 2019). Elimination of these trade barriers through disposing of tariffs as well as non-tariff barriers has enhanced the trade between the two nations. This enables the export of rough wood from South Sudan to Kenyan markets and in return, Kenya has exported manufactured goods, and agricultural produce as well as services to South Sudan.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

According to Flick (2022), a research design constitutes the basic framework that directs the research, marking a blueprint for data collection, evaluation, and quantification. Technically, the research design is the heart of the study. Additionally, it outlines a researcher's direction from the beginning of the proposal writing to the conclusion. In a bid to achieve its research objectives, this study used a mixed method design taking both descriptive and explanatory research designs. This research design was used because both descriptive and explanatory designs are effective as the former entails description of the different characteristics and the latter informs us on the causes. Furthermore, this study applied the combined approach to avoid selective gathering of information and get a more comprehensive view of the research objectives that will not only describe but will give a deeper and comprehensive justification to the findings thus improving the credibility of the study. In turn, the use of more than one design enhances the research by alleviating setbacks and prejudice linked to a given technique, consequently enhancing the representativeness of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018), descriptive design offers clear descriptions in terms of the characteristics and attributes of the population and a phenomenon of interest; thus should help in the provision of enough information on the state that is obtainable at the time of study. The explanatory design assists in establishing and quantifying the relationship between the independent and dependent variables; therefore, it will reveal why specific trends or results are observable. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data was quite simple as it began with qualitative data collection as well as analysis, building subsequently to the quantitative phase. The explanatory design begins with quantitative data collection and analysis phase, informing the follow up qualitative phase (Davis et al., 2019). Bias in descriptive research or the limitations of explanatory models, were mitigated by ensuring that multiple people evaluated it before writing a report on it, therefore if different people have similar interpretations then it is effective and the possibility of bias is eliminated.

3.2 Location of the Study

This study took place in Nairobi's Kileleshwa area and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs offices. However, it was not limited to the location, as it also prioritized online means whereby the interviews and questionnaires were administered via email and any other platforms suitable for the study. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs spearheads Kenya's bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries and therefore, was able to provide reliable data regarding Kenya and South Sudan. It was also able to provide a wider range of data, which improved the clarity of the study. Furthermore, Kileleshwa houses multiple Nairobi-based Kenya South Sudan traders with valuable information to the study. Kileleshwa area in Nairobi houses a large number of traders from South Sudan, in line with the Refugee Led Research Hub organization, seeking to find a central location within Kenya's capital to conduct different economic activities. Online means came in handy as they easily reached the respondents and would be sent back to the researcher in the same way where necessary.

3.3 Target Population

According to Mishra and Alok (2022), the target population refers to individuals, objects, or incidences with similar distinctive features. The target population of this study involved 1598 Kenya-South Sudan traders and 20 staff in the Kenyan Foreign Ministry and, specifically trade officers as key informants. The key informants from the



Ministry of Foreign Affairs have the requisite knowledge of economic diplomacy and its role in bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan. On the other hand, the traders have ground experience of economic interactions between the two countries. The first target population of this study, staff in the Kenyan Foreign Ministry contribute to economic diplomacy-related decisions and have trade records detailing Kenya and South Sudan relations. The traders on the other hand have first-hand experience regarding trading practices on the ground as influenced by both governments. Potential challenges encountered in accessing the target population and especially the staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were mitigated through scheduling interviews when more convenient to them as well as showing the authorization letter from the school. Furthermore, an assurance of anonymity through the introductory letter was used to try curb confidentiality concerns as well as professional obligations constraints.

3.4 Sample Size

Table 1 outlines the sample size and sampling methods used for the study. The target population includes traders (1,598 individuals) and trade officers (20 individuals). A total of 356 respondents were selected for the research. Traders were sampled using simple random sampling, resulting in 336 traders participating, while all 20 trade officers were purposively sampled for interviews. Data collection methods included questionnaires for traders and interviews for trade officers.

Table 1
Sample Population

Target Population	Total Number	Sample Size	Sampling Technique	Methods of data collection
Traders	1598	336	Simple random sampling	Questionnaires
Trade officers	20	20	Purposive sampling	Interviews
Total		356		

3.5 Sampling Procedures and Techniques

According to Flick (2022), the particular narrowed-down cases or individuals representing the entire target population are the sample size. A sampling procedure refers to the selection of individuals set to take part in a study in a manner that allows them to adequately represent the larger population they are picked from. This study used a purposive sampling method and simple random sampling for respondent selection to ensure equal representation. The sample population had both experts and personnel with trading experience between Kenya and South Sudan. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where the researcher intentionally selects units, aiming at those who have the needed characteristics. In turn, people who hold various desirable views about the study are included “on purpose”. The sample size here in this study is 1598 respondents who are Kenya-South Sudan traders and staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as key informants.

3.6 Research instruments

Mishra and Alok (2022) indicate that the data collection process involves the development of an appropriate research instrument that aids in the collection of data that would be used in solving the research problem. Primary and secondary data was used to collect data for this study. The researcher constructed a questionnaire and interview guide to administer to the sample population. Ajayi (2017) states that primary data is collected from respondents within their fields. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect primary data; they are qualitative data collection methods and are best to use when seeking information that is detailed either orally or in written form. Consequently, the Foreign Ministry's documents, publications, and peer-reviewed journals were used to collect secondary data. Primary means of the use of questionnaires and interviews enabled the researcher to efficiently gather a large amount of data quickly. Additionally, they provided more robust and representative results. Secondary data on the other hand enabled the filling of gaps and deficiencies through offering additional information to aid the study, stretching over different timelines. Developing the interview questions and questionnaires was meticulous and focused on creating reliable and valid questions addressing all the research objectives, keen on both countries and the intertwining aspects of economic diplomacy and bilateral relations. For instance, “From your perspective, in what other ways could the labour movement be utilized to promote bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan, regarding effective cross-border strategies?” These questions were also placed in a meaningful order that was most appropriate for either the interview or the questionnaire itself. Anticipated bias such as social desirability was mitigated through assurance of anonymity, guaranteed total confidentiality, framing the questions appropriately as well as an indirect approach to ensure the participants were more at ease.

3.7 Testing for Validity and Reliability/Trustworthiness

This section analyses the accuracy expected from different instruments (Lakshmi & Mohideen, 2013). Therefore, it marks the extent to which the results of the data analysis can accurately depict the phenomena under investigation. In this case, the instruments were tested using expert judgment. The instruments were keenly tested for their relevance, suitability, and clarity to the study through expert judgment. This process aimed to ensure that the instrument could measure what they were intended to. The study used through purposive sampling, utilized the services of two experts, experienced in conducting research as they are Masters graduates and researchers in the social sciences field. Reliability, on the other hand, points to the degree to which the instruments used for the research can produce accurate results even after frequent trials. The researcher is responsible for identifying uncertainties and fixing them promptly to prevent them from altering the research (Mishra & Alok, 2022). It was done by administering a pilot study where the questionnaires and interviews were given to the respondents on two separate occasions to gauge the outcome, which proved that the instruments would be effective considering objectives, participant engagement, instruments, feasibility, duration, adverse events and cost. Anticipated issues like fatigue in long interviews and questionnaires that could affect reliability were mitigated by planning the surveys effectively to give respondents enough time to fill them out. Expert judgment ensured that any loopholes were fixed in a timely manner as they were assessed by experts for relevance, suitability, and clarity. Thus, ensuring that they maintained a high level of integrity as intended. The pilot study tested reliability as the researcher administered a preliminary study before the main study, intending to evaluate and improve on the study design. The pilot study tested how long interview and questionnaire schedules would take, unclear or ambiguous questions, if instructions and layout were clear, uneasy questions and if there were any key omissions.

3.8 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Data collection in this study used both primary and secondary data sources. The interview and questionnaire were administered to Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff and Kenya-South Sudanese traders for primary data sources. Specifically, trade officers used drop and pick method as personal interactions have been found to yield more responses. The researcher was able to get a permit from NACOSTI to allow data collection. Secondary sources, on the other hand, heavily relied on several sources particularly Foreign Ministry reports and records with South Sudan. Additionally, online materials from government bodies came in handy, for example, from the Export Promotion Council (EPC). In cases where primary and secondary sources differed, the researcher assessed credibility, timeframe as well as comparison of different sources on the subject to eliminate bias and ensure usage of accurate and relevant data. The drop-and-pick method of administering the questionnaires allowed socialization which yielded more chances of responses and the use of online means enabled easier access to a wide variety of traders. In cases where the researcher experienced delays or low response rate using the drop-and-pick method, incentives, follow ups and deadlines were established and strictly followed. Secondary sources from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government bodies provided critical insights and additional information to back the study.

3.9 Proposed Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

The data analysis section deals with the organization, interpretation, and presentation of collected data (Oso & Onen, 2008). Data analysis focuses on the relationships between variables, which further helps determine outcomes. This study utilized content analysis, supplemented with Microsoft Excel. The findings were represented by means, standard deviation, percentages, and figures. Content analysis is a method that studies subjects to analyze the final themes in a methodical, objective, and quantitative manner to allow the measuring of the variables under study. This research technique can interpret and code textual material to make a valid inference. Content analysis determined frequent themes and their relationship with one another (Chatterjee, 2020). Content analysis uses quantitative measures of the frequency of appearance of particular elements in the text. Numeric quantitative data utilized descriptive analysis comprising of description of statistics, aggregating as well as presenting constructs of interest. Arising inferential statistics from the findings were interpreted and utilized to reach conclusions based on the varying variables. In this regard, this study's data was converted to numeric formats and then interpreted in line with the set objectives, including graphs, charts and tables that projected and compared scenarios and all other information that was best presented in a quantitative manner. SPSS and Microsoft Excel can both analyze and effectively represent data.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Researchers are professionals hence, research ethics as a branch of applied ethics has well established rules and guidelines that defines their conduct (Flick, 2022). Research ethics is important in our daily life research endeavors and requires that researchers should protect the dignity of their subjects and publish well the information that is researched (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011). In research, ethical considerations are the foundation for the whole



process, without them the information could be biased. The researcher obtained consent from NACOSTI as well as that of Mount Kenya University to conduct this research. The researcher also asked for and got informed consent from the respondents by promptly ensuring that they are well aware and informed of the research. Furthermore, it did not interfere with their day-to-day activities, and there was an assurance of confidentiality. The researcher also adequately did an introduction to the respondents and was very punctual in the set appointments while using conducive language that was easy to comprehend. The researcher further prepared the questionnaire and interview guide for this research to directly keep track of and lessen any chance of anomalies in the flow of events. The respondents were also informed about the nature of the study and the intention of the information before any engagement. All respondent participation was therefore done voluntarily. If anyone was not open to participating in the study for any reason, that was respected. The data given physically and online was accorded the highest level of privacy. The researcher ensured to send an informed consent form to the online respondents to sign as well, ensuring they were accorded similar guidance as physical respondents. Ethical considerations ensure that no one is subjected to any negative consequences due to the research; the research observed all ethical recommendations from the school. It was necessary to ensure confidentiality as it is important in the data collection process and in ensuring higher chances of getting reliable and credible data, stripped of bias, as respondents can freely express their honest opinions.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 The Nature of Bilateral Relations between Kenya and South Sudan

In this study, the dependent variable was bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan, and its findings are as shown below. A clustered column chart was utilized in the presentation of the findings as shown below in Figure 1.

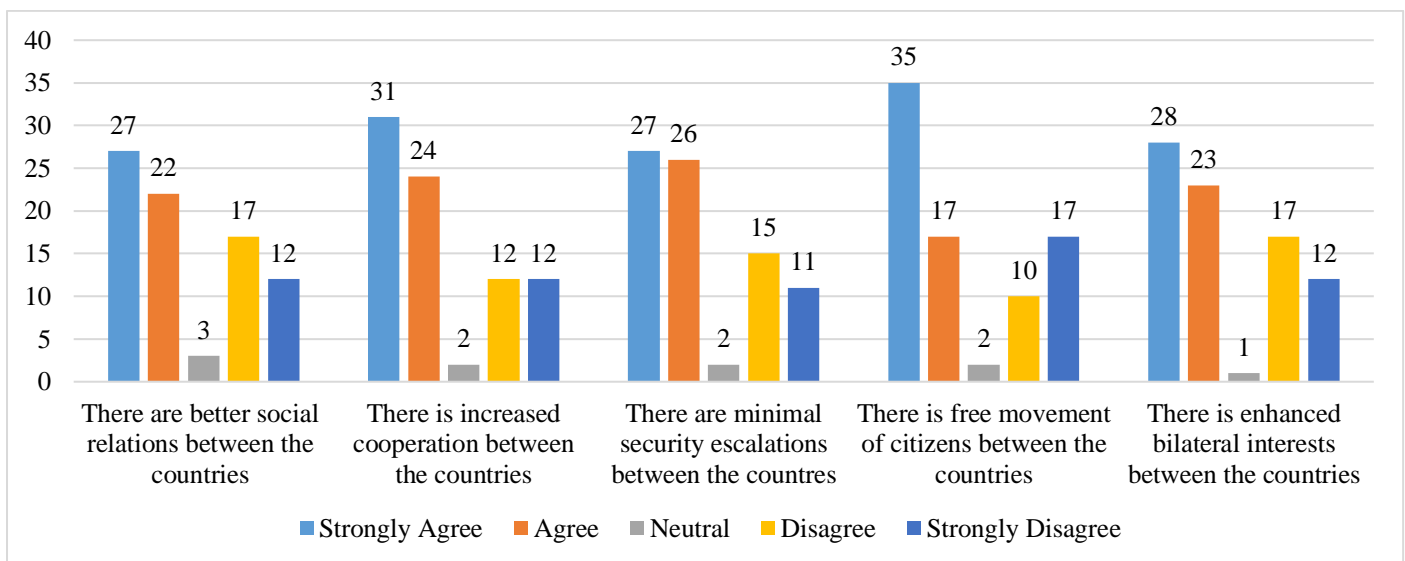


Figure 1
The State of Bilateral Relations between the Two Countries

In line with the findings, social relations between the countries are much better in line with the agreement rate of 33.8% (n=27) and 26.5% (n=22). 3.9% (n=3) were neutral and 21.6% (n=17) and 14.2% (n=12) disagreed and strongly disagreed. With increased technology, social relations have increased across borders as most people have felt it and used it for trade, among other uses (Asiedu, 2018). Furthermore, the results showed that there was an improved cooperation between Kenya and South Sudan, as supported by 38.2% (n=31) and 29.9% (n=24) of the respondents, while 3% (n=2) were neutral. 14.2% (n=12) and 14.7% (n=13) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Both countries have overtime, collaborated on mutually beneficial projects and engaging in diplomatic talks aimed at improving peace and trade, which aligns with the interdependence liberalism theory. The findings from the participants also show that there are minimal security escalations experienced between Kenya and South Sudan by a margin of 32.8% (n=27) and 32.4% (n=26) while 2.5% (n=2) was neutral. According to Kibanga (2022), presidents of both Kenya and South Sudan with encouragement from regional organizations like the African Union and EAC have prioritized talks and border security, to try finding a solution for the Ilemi triangle conflict. In doing so, there is a clear show of effort in curbing security escalations between the two countries.

Additionally, 19.1% (n=15) and 13.2% (n=11) disagreed and strongly disagreed. The respondents also agreed that citizens of both countries can move freely from one to another as shown by 43.6% (n=35) and 20.1% (n=17).

2.9% (n=2) was neutral, however 11.8% (n=10) and 21.6% (n=17) disagreed and strongly disagreed. Cross border movement between the two countries was found to be driven by trade as well as migration. In other cases, it was found to be fleeing conflict and delivering human aid. Lastly, the participants also agreed that there is a higher cooperation between these two countries at 35.1% (n=28) and 26.9% (n=23) with 1.8% (n=1) being neutral. 21% (n=17) and 15.2% (n=12) disagreed and strongly disagreed. The two countries have collaborated as Kenya has given domestic loans to South Sudan and teamed up for peacekeeping missions in conflict zones, in turn promoting a conducive environment for peace (Kirui, 2022). In line with bilateral relations, a trade officer agreed that; "The existing similar tribes across the border have common cultural practices, and this is a strong factor that can help foster a better relationship between the two countries. Additionally, these intense cultural practices and relations between citizens of both nations contribute to free movement to either country to carry out trade or economic investments."

4.2 The Consequences of Kenya's Trade Policies on its Relations with South Sudan

The findings from this variable used to measure economic diplomacy are tabulated as shown below in Figure 2.

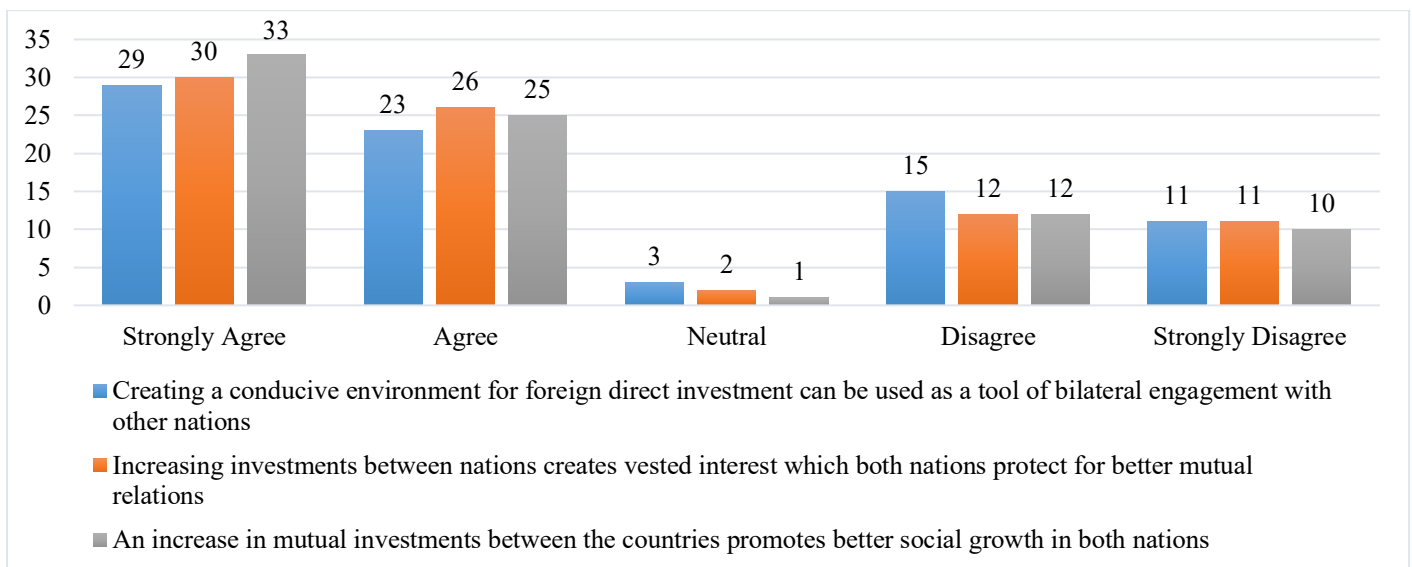


Figure 2
Trade Policies and Investments

The respondents agreed that bilateral engagements will be greatly improved across both countries once a conducive environment is created at a rate of 35.8% (n=29) and 28.4% (n=23), 3.4% (n=3) being neutral with 16.7% (n=15) and 15.7% (n=11) disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. Cheronno (2022) noted the effort from both countries in stabilizing peace and security which compromises trade through creating a hostile environment. Encouraging peace has been prioritized by both governments and especially through border peace keeping missions. There was also a consensus that increasing mutual investments across both countries improves social growth for both countries at 41.2% (n=33) and 30.9% (n=25), with 1.4% (n=1) being neutral while 14.2% (n=12) and 12.3% (n=10) of the participants disagreed and strongly disagreed as well.

Mutually beneficial endeavours ensure that both countries have access to opportunities that will improve social growth and promote national security. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated an agreement that an increase in investments between the countries leads to a vested interest protected by both, for improved mutual relations. This feedback is demonstrated by 36.3% (n=30) and 32.4% (n=26) of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed, while 3% (n=2) were neutral 15.1% (n=12) and 13.2% (n=11) disagreed and strongly disagreed. Therefore, also promoting peaceful coexistence as both countries stand to lose if there is hostility. The interdependence liberalism theory is best showcased here as cooperation is key. Additionally, a trade expert said that "Economic growth is a huge priority of either country and therefore citizens of both countries should be allowed to work in companies, share skills as well as technology as it is a great contributor. Additionally, company products and services should be allowed to access both markets freely. Simplifying procedures to allow ease of transfer of commodities such as technology and capital can massively contribute to economic growth between the two countries."

4.3 Cross Border Strategies that can be used to Promote Economic Diplomacy and Improve Bilateral Relations between Kenya and South Sudan.

Labour movement was key in assessing economic diplomacy between these two countries. The responses are presented as shown below in Figure 3.

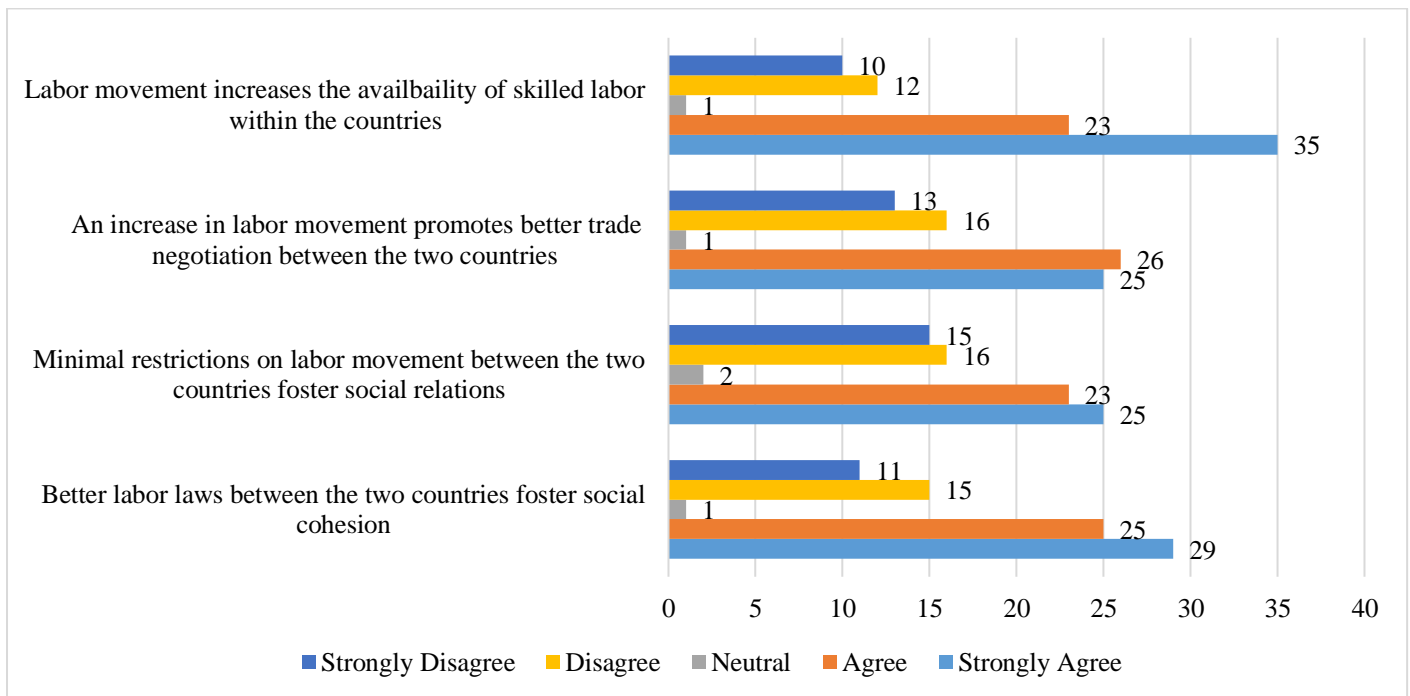


Figure 3

Cross Border Labour Movement

The respondents agreed that labour movement does lead to better availability of skilled labour between both participating countries as shown above, 43.1% (n=35) strongly agreed, 29.9% (n=23) agreed and 1% (n=1) were neutral. Labour makes it easier for institutions to access skilled labour, which is key in economic growth. Furthermore, 14.2% (n=12) disagreed while 11.8% (n=10) strongly disagreed. Respondents cited challenges such as cultural differences which made it quite a task to adjust into a new environment, and in other cases, language barrier. The findings also showed a consensus that minimal restrictions in the movement of labour foster better social relations between the two countries. The agreement level was at 30.9% (n=25) and 27.9% (n=23) strongly agreeing and agreeing respectively, 2.9% (n=2) was neutral with 19.2% (n=16) and 19.1% (n=15) disagreeing and strongly disagreeing. Notably, some legal restrictions however posed a challenge to labour movement. The participants also agreed that better labour laws demonstrated by the participating countries would promote social cohesion. The table above shows an agreement rate of 35.3% (n=29) and 31.4% (n=25) strongly agreeing and agreeing, 1.5% (n=1) is neutral while 18.1% (n=15) and 13.7% (n=11) disagree and strongly disagree.

Both countries have right-to-work laws that restrict discrimination based on diversity (Kirui, 2022), in turn encouraging their nationals to utilize their skills in both environments. Finally, the respondents agreed that improved labour laws would bring about better social relations between the countries at an agreement rate of 30.4% (n=25) and 32.4% (n=26) respectively, 1% (n=1) neutral while 20.1% (n=16) and 16.1% (n=13) disagreed and strongly disagreed. Labour laws that offer opportunity and recognize skill will promote interpersonal interactions, as these services can be used by either country. Additionally, through the use of technology, both citizens will benefit greatly. The study also sought detailed responses from the respondents that revealed a majority of the key informants suggesting that; "Labour movement can be of great use by systematically implementing the East African Community Market Protocol and establishing strong labour agreements across both countries. Labour movement across borders leads to the transference of beneficial skills and practices demanding even better economic growth that would be of great benefit to both nations in question." Promoting labour movement improves skill transfer, foreign direct investment as well as foreign exchange across both countries. Thus, both Kenya and South Sudan ought to set up mutually beneficial policies allowing their citizens to work in any of the two countries without hindrance and unnecessary restrictions.

Moreover, there was consensus that both nations need to attempt to prioritize advocacy allowing labour unions that are well organized to fight for reasonable wages, good working conditions, and most importantly better wages. In doing so it's easier to reduce the cost of conducting business in line with the supply and demand law. Additionally, it would be necessary for both countries to standardize labour qualifications to ensure a wider access of

either of the citizens to work permits which will in turn lead to better capacity building between nationals of the countries. The feedback aligns with Baranay (2009), who noted that the use and development of several trade-related approaches are critical to alliance-building between countries and regions. Moreover, when countries are progressive in establishing new continuous trade agreements, labour movement positively grows which then ensures that there are better and open ties between countries. The interdependence liberalism theory comes into play here, as cooperation between the two states is shown to be mutually beneficial. A key way to ensure that countries are able to maintain long-term positive coexistence and partnerships according to Borchmeyer (2012), is ensuring that deal-making in various sections of trade is consistent. Both countries further benefit in this way as there will be constant economic growth and gain experienced by both ends, aligning with the factor endowment tenet where mutual benefit comes in through resource swapping. Both countries can in this manner access labour from one another much easily. In line with Bayne et al (2021), trade agreements are a brilliant tool to further expand bilateral engagements and further extend as a tool to maintain peaceful coexistence between countries.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 The Nature of Bilateral Relations between Kenya and South Sudan

In order to strengthen relations between the two countries, there is need to enhance trade, the security sector, and cooperation in migration as a stronger trade relationship between the two countries would foster more bilateral agreements as well as joint verification meetings. These factors contribute to the creation of a thriving environment and lessen issues that could negatively affect positive relations. Furthermore, the two countries need to further expand their relations in more areas including social integration, environmental relations, enhancing opportunities to offer educational scholarships, fostering better cooperation in shared natural resources and widening areas boosting bilateral cooperation. Relating on more platforms will foster more areas contributing to bilateral relations. These findings were in line with Camilla (2019), who stated that Kenya has been a growing economic hub in East Africa, with tremendous growth visible in areas of trade, and social and cultural relations with its neighbouring countries. Interactions such as bilateral arrangements have enabled it to develop long-lasting sustainable relations and growth. Cheron (2022) aligned with this view, as it notes the importance of a country to engage in more in bilateral relations as a tactic to develop and strengthen partnerships. Different economies can utilize bilateral engagements as a key to ensure development and stronger relations that come with fostering security (Ssekika, 2015).

4.5.2 The Consequences of Kenya's Trade Policies on its Relations with South Sudan

Tailor-made joint trade policy initiatives aimed at increasing the interest of investors in both Kenya and South Sudan will foster mutual dependency all while creating a win-win situation that will open more employment opportunities and foster better bilateral relations. Through being joint beneficiaries, both economies will benefit while creating a bigger field for investors. Regulation of policies on transaction costs across both countries is key as if high, it is bound to run off investors. Reasonable taxes in individual countries and trading across borders are also key in creating an environment conducive to foreign direct investments. Once there is a decline in investors or they leave because of a harsh business climate brought by factors such as insecurity, it is necessary to bring in regulations to remedy the situation for the sake of both countries. These findings align with Arel-Bundock (2017) who suggested that expanding conducive policies can be a great tool in ensuring that the involved countries are able to strike bilateral deals that align with their collective needs. Furthermore, being neighbours such as in the case of Kenya and South Sudan is a great opportunity to create an advantage over other countries based on geographical convenience. Fine-tuned policies will lead to increased foreign direct investments that are key to enabling bilateralism between different countries worldwide (Thompson & Verdier, 2014). Additionally, Bayne et al. (2021) note that foreign direct investments have become a critical tool to advance foreign policy objectives across countries besides using economic policies to negotiate. Poulsen (2015) notes that economic tools are important in strengthening bilateral relations between and among different countries as it is a win-win situation. Investment flow from one country to another encourages economic growth which can extend from one region to another, eventually acting as a means of growing bilateral relations using economic diplomacy.

4.5.3 Cross Border Strategies that can be used to Promote Economic Diplomacy and Improve Bilateral Relations between Kenya and South Sudan.

Better trade policies will strengthen bilateral and multilateral engagements, as pertains within the East African region and broader African region. When it came to goods and service movement, participants suggested that both countries can extend by; "Ensuring that they support the ease of availability when it came to essential goods such as medical supplies like Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) proved to be key, especially during the widespread COVID-19 pandemic period. Moreover, both countries can work towards expansion of joint trade, as it strengthens the economy of either of the partnering countries while improving citizen livelihood that is the cornerstone of national



economic security.” The respondents further noted that both countries can, "Make sure they simplify the movements of goods and services at border points as they can greatly benefit from it as sometimes businesses dealing with perishables, for instance, face great losses that can cost both economies. Easing border requirements can help both countries avoid and minimize shortages which will make economic fundamentals much more stable. The two countries need to implement the EAC Common Market Protocol effectively as a sign of political goodwill. This route will be central to the expansion of trade between the two countries as well as uphold future negotiating power with different trading blocs. Furthermore, eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers would improve bilateral relations across both countries. Additionally, advancing mutual relations of the nationals of both countries will be very critical in the regulation of prices stemming from the forces of demand and supply, which will be in favour of bilateral market performance in the long run. Promoting trade via greater exports and imports between two countries is a key means to motivate better relations as both gain from this exchange, economically and in other sectors such as border security as it encourages a peaceful co-existence (Chatterjee, 2020). By building alliances, countries bring in structures that minimize vulnerability points that could compromise security or cause negative relations between them. Kirui (2022) notes that bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan have over time improved, supported by finding better and calm ways to temporarily resolve conflicts such as the Ilemi Triangle border dispute which would otherwise have affected both countries in negative ways in both the economic and security sector. Both countries have formed a joint border commission to find an enduring solution to allow trade to continue as usual across the border as economic development is a top priority. Additionally, Kirui (2022) notes that the highly anticipated high-speed electric standard gauge way project aimed to link the Indian Ocean port of Lamu to Ethiopia and South Sudan will greatly facilitate goods and service movement across both countries.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The study proved that economic diplomacy is a key strategy and has always played a part in improving bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan. The use of different economic diplomacy tools has therefore been central to not only both economies but also to enhancing the association on various fronts. These tools; labour movement, foreign direct investment as well as goods and service movement allow the flow of capital and promote social relations. Economic diplomacy is notably among the five key pillars of Kenyan foreign policy. However, overreliance on economic diplomacy could potentially cause risks such as unequal power dynamics and dependence on this one single sector of trade. Constantly engaging in different ventures across borders to South Sudan and vice versa has then cumulated common interests since it got its independence in 2011. Therefore, for over a decade, the two countries have gained better bilateral relations with economic diplomacy being a major contributory factor. Exports as well as imports are sent and received across and therefore, contribute to the national security of either country as well as economic advancement. As long-term trading partners, Kenya and South Sudan have gained a rapport that has boosted bilateral relations regardless of barriers such as border disputes, and both have made efforts to fix without ruining these economic transactions. Both nations have over time prioritized economic relations that have proven to enhance good relations while seeking to collaborate further.

5.2 Recommendation

This study recommends that both nations uphold improved and more permanent approaches in border conflict resolution to enhance peace and security. Being a key factor, it affects economic diplomacy trickling down to bilateral relations. Therefore, through joint committees and agreements permanently resolve the Ilemi Triangle dispute to decrease the tension between the border Turkana and Toposa communities which negatively affects passage of goods and services. In doing so, the livestock theft that has been an issue between these two communities will be resolved promoting social and bilateral relations. Furthermore, joint efforts to eliminate banditry at the border will help ease movement of traders and goods, tackling the insecurity problem. Joint government efforts will ensure deployment of missions to curb insecurity, reducing deaths and loss of property due to tribal animosity over conflicted land that either citizens use for grazing and livestock rearing. As a result, promoting investments and economic growth by creating a conducive environment.

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