Economic diplomacy, foreign policy, and bilateral cooperation: Insights from Tanzania–Kenya relations

Apolinary Karoli[1]
Elijah Onyango Standslause Odhiambo[2]
Pontian Godfrey Okoth[3]

[1]apolinarykaroli@gmail.com (+255684487921)
[2]standslauseodhiambo@yahoo.com (+254722956244)
[3]pontianokoth@gmail.com (+254700025095)

[1,3] Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, [2] Bomet University, 1,2,3 Kenya

Recommended Reference: Karoli, A., Odhiambo, E. O. S., & Okoth, P. G. (2026). Economic diplomacy, foreign policy, and bilateral cooperation: Insights from Tanzania–Kenya relations. *African Quarterly Social Science Review*, 3(4), 524–535. https://doi.org/10.51867/AQSSR.3.4.42

ABSTRACT

This article examines the contribution and effectiveness of Tanzania's diplomatic representation in advancing Tanzania–Kenya bilateral economic relations, focusing on economic-diplomacy initiatives, policy influence and alignment, public diplomacy and stakeholder perceptions, and the institutional and implementation challenges affecting the Mission's effectiveness from 2015 to 2024. The study adopted a pragmatic mixed-methods approach incorporating descriptive, historical, and evaluative designs, guided by Diplomatic Representation Theory, Constructivism, Soft Power Theory, and Neofunctionalism. The target population comprised diplomats, government and East African Community (EAC) officials, traders, business leaders, transport operators, border officials, academics, policy experts, and community representatives involved in Tanzania–Kenya economic cooperation. A target sample of 220 participants was established using Cochran's formula, with purposive sampling for key informants and stratified sampling for stakeholder representation. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, documentary review, and observations, yielding 216 responses. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square, t-tests, and multiple regression, while qualitative data were thematically analysed. The findings highlight that the Tanzania High Commission contributed to bilateral economic cooperation through NTB removal, exporter support, and joint-venture facilitation, with economic-diplomacy initiatives explaining 49.3% of perceived impact. Diplomatic engagement significantly influenced policy perceptions, $\chi^2(12) = 28.41$, $p = .005$, while public diplomacy explained 46.4% of perception variance. However, lower border-level impact, $t(184) = 2.87$, $p = .005$, and inadequate Mission capacity reported by 33.9% of respondents constrained implementation. The study recommends strengthening economic diplomacy, addressing non-tariff and regulatory barriers, improving policy and border coordination, expanding public diplomacy, and enhancing the Mission's institutional capacity.

Keywords: Bilateral Cooperation; Economic Diplomacy; East African Community, Foreign Policy; Media Framing; Policy Alignment; Public Diplomacy; Tanzania–Kenya Relations

I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing importance of economic interests in contemporary international relations has expanded diplomacy beyond its traditional political and ceremonial functions to include the promotion of trade, investment, market access, regional integration, and national development. Economic diplomacy enables states to pursue economic interests through diplomatic engagement, international cooperation, investment promotion, trade facilitation, negotiation, and stakeholder networking. In Tanzania, economic diplomacy has increasingly been used to support economic development, investment promotion, industrialisation, and international economic cooperation (Msacky & Mmassy, 2023). Research on African economic diplomacy similarly demonstrates that diplomatic engagement can support trade and economic cooperation, although its effectiveness depends on institutional capacity, policy coherence, and the broader regulatory environment.

Tanzania–Kenya relations provide an important context for examining this role of economic diplomacy. The two neighbouring countries are members of the East African Community (EAC) and maintain extensive economic interactions involving trade, investment, transport, tourism, and cross-border communities. However, bilateral economic relations have periodically been affected by non-tariff barriers (NTBs), customs and administrative procedures, standards requirements, licensing arrangements, transport regulations, and other regulatory differences. Studies of the EAC demonstrate that NTBs continue to constrain intra-regional trade and complicate the implementation of regional integration commitments (Amol, 2023; Muhirwa et al., 2024). These challenges indicate

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

that the existence of regional agreements and institutional mechanisms does not automatically ensure effective implementation at national and border levels.

Within this context, the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi occupies an important position in Tanzania's diplomatic engagement with Kenya. Diplomatic missions can facilitate economic relations by representing national interests, engaging host-government institutions, supporting businesses, communicating policy positions, identifying economic opportunities, and coordinating responses to bilateral challenges. Tanzania-specific research shows that economic diplomacy involves networking, international engagement, investment promotion, and the creation of a supportive environment for economic development (Msacky & Mmassy, 2023). Consequently, the role of a diplomatic mission should be understood not only in terms of formal representation but also in terms of its contribution to practical economic cooperation and the implementation of foreign-policy priorities.

The study further recognises that economic diplomacy operates alongside public diplomacy. Public diplomacy enables states to communicate with foreign publics and build favourable perceptions through media engagement, cultural activities, digital communication, educational exchanges, and other forms of societal interaction. Research on public diplomacy in Africa shows that communication and public engagement can constitute important instruments through which states seek to build influence and favourable perceptions abroad (Antwi-Boasiako, 2022; Ochieng, 2022). These activities are therefore relevant to understanding how Tanzania's diplomatic representation contributes to the broader bilateral relationship with Kenya.

The study is guided by Diplomatic Representation Theory, Constructivist International Relations Theory, Soft Power Theory, and Neofunctionalism. Together, these perspectives provide a basis for examining diplomatic representation as an instrument of interest representation, relationship building, influence, cooperation, and regional integration. The analysis focuses on the relationship between economic diplomacy and foreign policy, the influence of Tanzania's diplomatic representation on Kenya's economic policy priorities, the alignment of diplomatic initiatives with national and regional priorities, and the contribution of public diplomacy, media engagement, and stakeholder perceptions to bilateral cooperation.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Tanzania and Kenya maintain extensive bilateral economic relations within the East African regional integration framework. However, persistent non-tariff barriers (NTBs), regulatory differences, customs procedures, standards, licensing, transport, and border-implementation challenges continue to affect cross-border economic interaction. Although existing studies examine NTBs and their implications for East African Community (EAC) integration and trade, limited empirical attention has been given to how a specific diplomatic mission addresses these challenges and translates diplomatic engagement into practical bilateral economic outcomes (Amol, 2023; Muhirwa et al., 2024). Similarly, studies on Tanzania's economic diplomacy largely focus on economic development, industrialisation, investment, and international engagement, leaving limited evidence on the operational role of the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi in facilitating economic diplomacy, engaging Kenyan institutions, influencing policy processes, resolving trade barriers, and linking diplomatic initiatives to outcomes experienced by traders, businesses, border actors, and other stakeholders (Msacky & Mmassy, 2023). A further gap concerns how public diplomacy—including media engagement, cultural diplomacy, digital outreach, and stakeholder interaction—complements economic diplomacy in Tanzania–Kenya relations, despite evidence that communication and engagement can influence foreign publics' perceptions and diplomatic influence (Antwi-Boasiako, 2022; Ochieng, 2022). The problem, therefore, is not the absence of diplomatic engagement, but limited empirical evidence on how effectively the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi translates such engagement into practical economic and foreign-policy outcomes. This study addresses this gap by examining the Mission's contribution to Tanzania–Kenya economic relations from 2015 to 2024, while recognising the influence of national institutions, regional mechanisms, domestic interests, regulatory practices, and implementation capacity beyond its direct control.

1.2 Research Objective

i. Examine the economic-diplomacy initiatives undertaken by the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi and their contribution to Tanzania–Kenya bilateral economic cooperation from 2015 to 2024;
ii. Assess the influence of Tanzania's diplomatic representation on Kenya's economic-policy processes and the alignmentof the Mission's initiatives with Tanzania's national and regional policy priorities from 2015 to 2024;
iii. Examine the contribution of public diplomacy, media engagement, and stakeholder interaction to perceptions of Tanzania and Tanzania–Kenya bilateral cooperation from 2015 to 2024; and
iv. Examine the institutional capacity and policy-implementation challenges affecting the effectiveness of the Tanzania High Commission in promoting Tanzania–Kenya bilateral economic relations from 2015 to 2024.

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was guided by four complementary theoretical perspectives: Diplomatic Representation Theory, Constructivist International Relations Theory, Soft Power Theory, and Neofunctionalism**.** Together, they explain how diplomatic missions represent national interests, influence perceptions and policy processes, facilitate economic cooperation, and contribute to bilateral and regional integration.

2.1.1 Diplomatic Representation Theory

Diplomatic Representation Theory provides the primary institutional lens for examining the functions of diplomatic missions in representing, communicating, negotiating, and promoting state interests abroad (Berridge, 2015). In this study, the theory explains how the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi advances Tanzania's economic and foreign-policy interests through negotiation, policy advocacy, trade and investment promotion, information exchange, and engagement with Kenyan institutions and stakeholders. This perspective is particularly relevant because the study focuses on the Mission as the principal institutional actor through which Tanzania conducts diplomatic engagement in Kenya. The theory therefore provides the basis for assessing the Mission's initiatives, mechanisms of engagement, and contribution to bilateral economic outcomes.

2.1.2 Constructivist International Relations Theory

Constructivism emphasises the role of ideas, identities, norms, perceptions, and social interaction in shaping international relations (Wendt, 1999). Constructivist scholarship demonstrates that state interests and international relationships are socially constructed through interaction rather than determined solely by material interests (Checkel, 1998; Jung, 2019). This perspective is relevant to Tanzania–Kenya relations because bilateral cooperation is influenced not only by trade and economic interests but also by shared East African identity, diplomatic discourse, historical relationships, media narratives, and stakeholder perceptions. It therefore helps explain how sustained diplomatic interaction can shape mutual perceptions and the social environment within which economic cooperation occurs.

2.1.3 Soft Power Theory

Soft Power Theory explains influence through attraction, credibility, culture, values, and communication rather than coercion or material inducements. Nye (2008) argues that public diplomacy can contribute to soft power by communicating a country's culture, values, and policies and by building credibility with foreign publics. This theory is therefore relevant to the study's examination of Tanzania's media engagement, cultural diplomacy, digital communication, tourism promotion, and stakeholder outreach. It provides a framework for assessing how public diplomacy complements economic diplomacy by shaping perceptions of Tanzania and strengthening the relational environment for bilateral cooperation.

2.1.4 Neofunctionalism

Neofunctionalism explains regional integration as a process in which cooperation in one functional area can generate spillover into other areas, progressively deepening cooperation and integration (Haas, 1958). The perspective is useful for understanding the EAC because cooperation in trade facilitation and the removal of non-tariff barriers can encourage further collaboration in customs, transport, investment, infrastructure, and other areas. Contemporary research continues to apply neofunctionalist reasoning to regional integration by examining how functional cooperation can advance or encounter obstacles in the integration process. In this study, Neofunctionalism therefore helps explain how Tanzania–Kenya economic cooperation operates within and contributes to the wider EAC integration process.

Collectively, the four theories provide a complementary analytical framework. Diplomatic Representation Theory explains the institutional role and mechanisms of diplomatic action; Constructivism explains perceptions, identities, norms, and social interaction; Soft Power Theory explains influence through attraction and communication; and Neofunctionalism explains how functional economic cooperation can generate broader bilateral and regional integration.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Economic-Diplomacy Initiatives and Bilateral Economic Cooperation

Economic diplomacy links foreign-policy objectives with economic interests through trade promotion, investment facilitation, market access, business engagement, negotiation, and the resolution of regulatory barriers. In the Tanzania–Kenya context, evidence indicates that economic diplomacy has involved bilateral negotiations, EAC mechanisms, trade facilitation, infrastructure development, tourism, cross-border cooperation, and engagement with

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

economic stakeholders. Koech (2022) found that Kenya–Tanzania economic relations have alternated between cooperation and tension, with ideological differences, trade restrictions, and competing national interests affecting economic engagement. Similarly, research on EAC integration shows that NTBs, regulatory differences, and administrative requirements continue to constrain regional trade (Muhirwa et al., 2024). Evidence from the Dar es Salaam–Namanga corridor further shows that NTBs affect cargo movement and cross-border trade, demonstrating the importance of practical trade facilitation and border-level interventions.

However, much of the existing literature examines bilateral trade relations or regional integration broadly rather than the specific economic-diplomacy initiatives of the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi**.** The contribution of the Mission to NTB removal, exporter support, investment and joint-venture facilitation, business networking, and other practical economic interventions therefore remains insufficiently documented. This study addresses this gap by examining the Mission's economic-diplomacy initiatives and their perceived contribution to Tanzania–Kenya economic relations during 2015–2024.

2.2.2 Diplomatic Influence on Economic Policy and Policy Alignment

Diplomatic representation can influence economic policy through negotiation, advocacy, consultations, high-level visits, bilateral committees, and engagement with relevant government institutions. Existing evidence on Tanzania–Kenya relations shows that diplomatic engagement has contributed to periods of cooperation as well as the management of trade disputes and competing national interests (Koech, 2022). At the regional level, EAC mechanisms provide institutional channels for addressing trade barriers and implementing common-market commitments. However, studies indicate that differences in national regulations and implementation practices can limit the translation of regional commitments into practical outcomes (Chilangazi & Magasi, 2023; Muhirwa et al., 2024).

The literature nevertheless provides limited empirical evidence on the degree to which Tanzania's diplomatic representation influences Kenya's economic-policy priorities and the extent to which Mission initiatives align with Tanzania's national and EAC priorities**.** This study addresses this gap by examining diplomatic influence, policy engagement, and the alignment of the Mission's initiatives with national and regional policy frameworks.

2.2.3 Public Diplomacy, Media Engagement and Stakeholder Perceptions

Public diplomacy complements economic diplomacy by enabling states to communicate with foreign publics, build relationships, and develop favourable perceptions. Nye (2008) links public diplomacy to soft power, emphasising the importance of credibility, communication, culture, and engagement with civil society. Contemporary public diplomacy also increasingly incorporates digital communication and other forms of direct engagement with foreign audiences.

In Tanzania–Kenya relations, these mechanisms are relevant because economic cooperation occurs within a broader social and political environment shaped by media narratives, cultural interaction, tourism, business relationships, and people-to-people contacts. However, limited empirical research specifically examines how Tanzania's High Commission combines media, cultural, digital, diaspora, and stakeholder engagement with economic diplomacy and how these activities relate to perceptions of Tanzania among Kenyan stakeholders. This study addresses this gap by examining public-diplomacy activities, media engagement, stakeholder perceptions, and their contribution to bilateral cooperation.

2.2.4 Institutional Capacity, Implementation and Economic-Diplomacy Effectiveness

The effectiveness of economic diplomacy depends not only on diplomatic engagement but also on institutional capacity, coordination, regulatory consistency, and implementation at national and border levels. Studies of EAC trade integration identify NTBs, customs procedures, technical requirements, infrastructure constraints, and differences in national implementation as continuing obstacles to regional trade (Muhirwa et al., 2024). Research on the Tanzania–Kenya trade corridor similarly identifies administrative and technical barriers affecting cross-border cargo movement.

These findings suggest that diplomatic agreements and negotiations may not automatically produce operational outcomes where implementation involves multiple ministries, border agencies, private-sector actors, and regional institutions. Nevertheless, limited research has systematically examined how institutional capacity and implementation constraints affect the performance of the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi. This study therefore examines these constraints alongside diplomatic initiatives and outcomes, recognising that the effectiveness of diplomatic representation is shaped by factors both within and beyond the Mission's direct control.

The reviewed literature establishes that economic diplomacy contributes to trade promotion, investment, regional integration, and bilateral cooperation, while NTBs, regulatory differences, institutional capacity, and implementation challenges can constrain these outcomes. However, three important gaps remain. First, limited

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

research examines the specific economic-diplomacy initiatives of the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi. Second, insufficient attention has been given to the Mission's influence on economic-policy processes and alignment with Tanzania's national and EAC priorities. Third, limited empirical evidence connects economic diplomacy with public diplomacy, stakeholder perceptions, and institutional implementation constraints within Tanzania–Kenya relations. This study addresses these gaps by examining the contribution of the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi to Tanzania–Kenya economic relations from 2015 to 2024, using evidence from diplomatic, government, business, border, academic, and community stakeholders.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Nairobi, Dodoma, and the Namanga border area on both the Tanzanian and Kenyan sides. Nairobi was selected because it hosts the Tanzania High Commission and is a major diplomatic and commercial centre, while Dodoma serves as Tanzania's political and administrative capital and a key centre for foreign-policy coordination. Namanga was selected for its strategic role in cross-border trade, investment, transport, and Tanzania–Kenya regional integration.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a pragmatic mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine Tanzania–Kenya economic diplomacy during 2015–2024. Descriptive, historical, and evaluative perspectives were applied to assess diplomatic initiatives, stakeholder perceptions, policy alignment, trade and investment facilitation, and NTB-related interventions. Qualitative evidence complemented the quantitative findings by providing contextual explanations of diplomatic practices and observed outcomes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.3 Target Population

The target population comprised diplomats, Tanzanian and Kenyan government officials, EAC officials, traders, business leaders, transport operators, border officials, academics, policy experts, and community representatives involved in Tanzania–Kenya economic cooperation. These stakeholders were selected based on their direct knowledge or experience of bilateral trade, investment, cross-border activities, and foreign-policy implementation.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

A target sample of 220 respondents was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula, based on a 95% confidence level, 50% population proportion, and 6.7% margin of error, yielding a minimum estimate of approximately 214 respondents. The target was increased to 220 to enhance representation and accommodate non-response. Purposive sampling identified key informants with specialised knowledge, while stratified sampling ensured representation across major stakeholder groups and study locations. Of the 220 targeted participants, 216 participated (98.2% response rate), comprising 186 questionnaire respondents and 30 interview participants.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected between September and December 2025 using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentary review. Questionnaires captured stakeholder perceptions of economic diplomacy, trade facilitation, investment promotion, NTB resolution, and bilateral economic outcomes, while interviews provided contextual insights into diplomatic practices and implementation challenges. Documentary evidence was obtained from bilateral agreements, government reports, EAC publications, policy documents, and diplomatic records. The combination of methods facilitated triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, chi-square tests, independent-samples *t*-tests, and multiple regression analysis. Descriptive statistics summarised stakeholder responses, chi-square tests examined associations between categorical variables, *t*-tests compared relevant groups, and regression analysis assessed the contribution of selected diplomatic and economic-diplomacy initiatives to bilateral economic outcomes. Qualitative data were thematically analysed to identify patterns concerning economic diplomacy, policy alignment, NTB removal, trade and investment facilitation, and institutional constraints. Integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence enhanced interpretation through triangulation.

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and responsible use of data were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, their right to decline or withdraw, and the intended academic use of the information. Relevant institutional and administrative permissions were obtained before data collection.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate and Characteristics of Respondents

The study achieved a high response rate of 98%, with 216 of the 220 targeted participants providing usable data. Of these, 186 (86%) completed questionnaires and 30 (14%) participated in key informant interviews, while only four (2%) did not respond. The high response rate reduced the likelihood of non-response bias and provided a strong empirical basis for examining the relationship between economic diplomacy, foreign policy, and bilateral cooperation between Tanzania and Kenya (Table 1).

Table 1

Response Rate Distribution

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires	186	86.0
Key informant interviews	30	14.0
Total responses	216	98.0
Non-responses	4	2.0
Target sample	**220**	**100.0**

The respondents represented diverse demographic, professional, and geographical backgrounds relevant to Tanzania–Kenya economic relations. The largest age group was 40–49 years (71 respondents), while females constituted 118 (54.6%) and males 98 (45.4%). In terms of education, Bachelor's degree holders formed the largest group (69), followed by certificate/diploma holders (47) and Master's degree holders (33). Professionally, respondents included government officials (53), business and private-sector actors (77), diplomatic mission staff (31), academics and researchers (21), and civil society/community leaders (33). Geographically, participants were drawn from Nairobi (70), Dodoma (67), and the Namanga border on the Tanzanian (41) and Kenyan (38) sides. This diversity ensured that the study captured both policy-level and operational perspectives on economic diplomacy, foreign-policy implementation, trade facilitation, and bilateral cooperation (Table 2).

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 216)

Variable	Category	Frequency
Age	18–29 years	55
	30–39 years	48
	40–49 years	71
	50+ years	42
Gender	Female	118
	Male	98
Education	Primary	19
	Secondary	30
	Certificate/Diploma	47
	Bachelor's Degree	69
	Master's Degree	33
	Doctorate	18
Profession	Government Officials	53
	Business/Private Sector	77
	Diplomatic Mission Staff	31
	Academia/Research	21
	Civil Society/Community Leaders	33
	Other	1
Location	Nairobi	70
	Dodoma	67
	Namanga (Tanzania)	41
	Namanga (Kenya)	38

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

Overall, the high response rate and broad composition of the sample enhanced the credibility of the findings. The inclusion of diplomatic, governmental, private-sector, academic, civil-society, and border stakeholders enabled the study to assess economic diplomacy not only as a foreign-policy instrument but also in terms of its practical contribution to trade, investment, cross-border engagement, and broader Tanzania–Kenya bilateral cooperation.

4.1.1 Economic-Diplomacy Initiatives and Bilateral Economic Cooperation

The first empirical dimension examined the contribution of the Tanzania High Commission's economic-diplomacy initiatives to Tanzania–Kenya economic cooperation. The findings indicate that NTB removal was the most prominent initiative, identified by 180 of 186 respondents, followed by exporter support (139), joint-venture facilitation (123), investment forums (108), trade missions and tourism promotion (100 each), sector-specific interventions (94), and B2B networking (87) (Table 3).

Table 3

Economic-Diplomacy Initiatives Undertaken Since 2015

Economic diplomacy initiative	Responses (N=186)	Relative emphasis
Removal of NTBs	180	Very High
Support to Tanzanian exporters	139	High
Facilitation of joint ventures	123	High
Participation in investment forums	108	Moderate–High
Trade missions	100	Moderate
Tourism promotion and destination branding	100	Moderate
Sector-specific interventions	94	Moderate
B2B networking events	87	Moderate–Low

The prominence of NTB removal suggests that the Mission's economic diplomacy extended beyond trade promotion to practical problem-solving and market-access facilitation. A senior commercial officer reported that the Mission had focused on trade facilitation and engagement with Kenyan authorities to address restrictions affecting Tanzanian goods (Respondent N, 12/10/2025, Nairobi). Similarly, a cross-border traders' representative at Namanga reported Mission intervention when agricultural consignments were delayed or blocked (Respondent F, 09/09/2025, Namanga–Tanzania). These accounts are consistent with the EAC Customs Union framework, which identifies non-tariff barriers, including administrative aand technical requirements that impede trade, as constraints on intra-EAC trade and provides institutional mechanisms for their identification, monitoring and resolution (East African Community [EAC], 2004, 2017).

The regression results provide further evidence of differentiated contributions among the initiatives (Table 4). The overall model was statistically significant, $R = .702$, $R^2 = .493$, $F(8,177) = 26.91$, $p < .001$, indicating that the included initiatives collectively explained 49.3% of the variance in perceived economic-diplomacy impact. NTB removal was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .462$, $p < .001$), followed by exporter support ($\beta = .331$, $p < .01$) and joint-venture facilitation ($\beta = .284$, $p < .05$). Sector-specific interventions were also statistically significant ($\beta = .167$, $p = .049$), whereas trade missions, investment forums, tourism promotion and B2B networking were not statistically significant at the 5% level.

Table 4

Predictors of Economic-Diplomacy Impact

Initiative	β	p-value	Interpretation
NTB removal	.462	< .001	Strong positive predictor
Exporter support	.331	< .01	Significant positive predictor
Joint ventures	.284	< .05	Positive predictor
Sector-specific interventions	.167	.049	Significant predictor
Trade missions	.152	.064	Not significant at 5%
Investment forums	.119	.087	Not significant
Tourism promotion	.094	.193	Not significant
B2B networking	.071	.241	Not significant

Model: $R = .702$; $R^2 = .493$; $F(8,177) = 26.91$, $p < .001$.

These findings suggest that stakeholders perceived problem-solving and commercially targeted interventions as more closely associated with economic-diplomacy impact than general promotional activities. This supports Bayne and Woolcock (2011) and Rana (2013), who emphasise trade promotion, market access, negotiation and support to

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

economic actors as important dimensions of contemporary economic diplomacy. It also complements Koech (2022), Gabone (2023), and Masaa (2025), who identify trade restrictions, border challenges and diplomatic engagement as important features of Tanzania–Kenya economic relations. The finding therefore addresses the literature gap concerning the specific contribution of the Tanzania High Commission to practical economic-diplomacy activities.

The broader economic evidence provides additional contextual support. Documentary evidence reviewed in the study indicated that Tanzania's exports to Kenya increased from approximately USD 259.1 million in 2018/19 to USD 449.2 million in 2021/22, representing a 73.4% increase, while imports from Kenya increased from approximately USD 262.6 million to USD 407.0 million, representing a 55.0% increase over the same period (Bank of Tanzania [BoT], 2023). The study also recorded reported increases in joint-venture inquiries and cross-border cargo movements. These trends should, however, be interpreted as contextual evidence rather than proof of diplomatic causation. The findings indicate that diplomatic engagement may have contributed to an enabling environment for commercial activity rather than independently causing changes in trade. This interpretation is consistent with the EAC's continuing emphasis on trade facilitation, NTB removal and more efficient border procedures.

4.1.2 Diplomatic Influence, Economic Policy and Policy Alignment

The second empirical dimension examined the extent to which the High Commission influenced Kenya's economic-policy processes and aligned its activities with Tanzania's national and regional priorities. The findings indicate that the Mission's influence was primarily facilitative and persuasive rather than directive. Among respondents, 69 (37.1%) rated its influence as moderate, 43 (23.1%) as strong, and 6 (3.2%) as very strong, while 48 (25.8%) reported minimal influence and 20 (10.8%) no influence.

Table 5

Perceived Influence on Kenya's Bilateral Economic Policy

Influence mechanism	Responses
Policy advocacy and negotiation	137
High-level state visits and engagements	120
Regular diplomatic consultations	118
Bilateral committees/joint commissions	102
Not sure	46
Role not visible	14

Policy advocacy and negotiation were the most visible mechanisms, followed by high-level engagements, diplomatic consultations and participation in bilateral committees. A Kenyan government official described the Mission as visible in bilateral and EAC trade engagement, while a Kenyan policy expert noted that the Mission could raise issues and support dialogue but that Kenya's economic policies remained shaped by domestic institutions and interests (Respondents T, 23/10/2025, and K, 11/10/2025, Nairobi). The chi-square result showed a significant association between diplomatic engagement and perceived influence, $\chi^2(12) = 28.41$, $p = .005$.

The evidence therefore suggests that Tanzania's influence operated through agenda-setting, negotiation, information exchange, consultation and problem-solving, rather than control over Kenyan policy. Documentary evidence of interventions concerning detained trucks, agricultural consignments and SPS or licensing requirements similarly indicates an issue-specific form of influence. This finding supports Diplomatic Representation Theory and complements Koech (2022), Gabone (2023), and Masaa (2025), who emphasise negotiation and institutional cooperation in Tanzania–Kenya relations. It also reflects Constructivist Theory, under which interaction and communication contribute to the development of shared understandings. The study further found substantial alignment between the Mission's activities and Tanzania's national and regional priorities. As shown in Table 6, 128 respondents (68.9%) considered the initiatives fully or mostly aligned with national and regional strategies.

Table 6

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Policy Alignment

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Fully aligned	68	36.6
Mostly aligned	60	32.3
Partially aligned	31	16.7
Slightly aligned	27	14.5
Not aligned	0	0.0
Total	**186**	**100.0**

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

The alignment related particularly to export promotion, investment attraction, industrialisation, NTB reduction and EAC integration. An official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation similarly indicated that the Mission's economic initiatives were connected to national development and regional economic strategies (Respondent AD, 15/11/2025, Dodoma). These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed, particularly Gabone (2023) and Masaa (2025), which highlight the interaction between bilateral diplomacy and EAC mechanisms. They also support Neofunctionalism by demonstrating how bilateral economic engagement is connected to wider regional integration processes.

4.1.3 Public Diplomacy, Media Engagement and Stakeholder Perceptions

The third empirical dimension examined the relationship between public diplomacy, media engagement and perceptions of Tanzania among Kenyan stakeholders. The findings show a generally favourable perception: 117 of 186 respondents (62.9%) rated Tanzania positively or very positively, 57 (30.6%) reported neutral or mixed perceptions, and only two reported generally negative perceptions. The High Commission's public-diplomacy activities included media engagement (168 respondents), cultural diplomacy (167), digital and social-media outreach (152), diaspora engagement (133), youth and educational initiatives (129), and business/investor forums (124) (Table 7).

Table 7

Public-Diplomacy Initiatives Observed by Respondents

Initiative	Responses
Media engagement	168
Cultural diplomacy	167
Digital/social-media outreach	152
Diaspora engagement	133
Youth/educational initiatives	129
Business/investor forums	124

Interview evidence indicates that these activities supported information exchange, relationship-building and Tanzania's visibility. A Kenyan media practitioner noted that regular media engagement helped clarify Tanzania's policy positions, while a Tanzanian Mission officer highlighted cultural festivals, music and joint arts activities as instruments of engagement (Respondents M, 07/10/2025, and U, 22/10/2025, Nairobi). Documentary and observational evidence similarly indicated that tourism, cultural and investment activities created opportunities for interaction with Kenyan stakeholders, consistent with the EAC framework for coordinated tourism promotion and cultural cooperation among Partner States (East African Community [EAC], 2021).

The regression results strengthen this finding. The public-diplomacy model was statistically significant, $R = .681$, $R^2 = .464$, $F(6,179) = 25.86$, $p < .001$, explaining 46.4% of the variance in perception scores. Media engagement was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .428$, $p < .001$), followed by cultural diplomacy ($\beta = .311$, $p = .004$), digital/social-media outreach ($\beta = .267$, $p = .011$) and diaspora engagement ($\beta = .182$, $p = .049$). Business forums and youth/education programmes were not statistically significant (Table 8).

Table 8

Predictors of Stakeholder Perceptions of Tanzania

Predictor	β	p-value	Interpretation
Media engagement	.428	< .001	Significant positive predictor
Cultural diplomacy	.311	.004	Significant positive predictor
Digital/social-media outreach	.267	.011	Significant positive predictor
Diaspora engagement	.182	.049	Significant positive predictor
Business forums	.121	.083	Not significant
Youth/education programmes	.097	.116	Not significant

Model: $R = .681$; $R^2 = .464$; $F(6,179) = 25.86$, $p < .001$.

The findings support Nye's (2008) conception of public diplomacy and Soft Power Theory, particularly the role of communication, culture, credibility and attraction. They also support Constructivist Theory because perceptions are shaped through repeated social interaction, communication and interpretation. The findings extend the reviewed literature by demonstrating that public diplomacy was not a uniform influence mechanism: media, cultural and digital engagement showed stronger statistical associations with perceptions than business or youth programmes. Importantly, the qualitative evidence also showed that Tanzania's image was not uniformly positive. Kenyan

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

stakeholders described Tanzania as both a partner and, in some contexts, a competitor. This indicates that public diplomacy operates within a broader environment shaped by economic experiences, regulatory issues and media narratives. The finding therefore connects public diplomacy with economic diplomacy rather than treating the two as independent processes.

4.1.4 Institutional Capacity, Policy Implementation and Diplomatic Effectiveness

The fourth empirical dimension examined institutional capacity and implementation constraints. The findings demonstrate that policy alignment did not always translate into consistent operational outcomes, particularly at the border. Observation at Namanga identified functioning OSBP arrangements, joint border procedures and digital cargo-clearance systems, but also delays in SPS inspections, staffing limitations, inadequate testing facilities and differences in customs interpretation. Such challenges are consistent with broader EAC evidence showing continuing operational and administrative barriers despite progress in regional trade facilitation (East African Community [EAC], 2026).

Border-level respondents also rated the impact of economic diplomacy significantly lower than national-level respondents, $t(184) = 2.87$, $p = .005$. An exporter similarly observed that agreements reached through diplomatic channels were not always reflected in border-level practices (Respondent D, 17/09/2025, Namanga–Tanzania). This distinction demonstrates that diplomatic negotiation and implementation are related but analytically different processes.

Institutional capacity within the Mission was another constraint. None of the 186 respondents rated capacity as very adequate; 55 considered it adequate, 68 moderately adequate, 43 inadequate and 20 highly inadequate. Thus, 63 respondents (33.9%) assessed capacity as inadequate or highly inadequate. Financial limitations, staffing shortages, institutional coordination and infrastructure were identified among the principal constraints. A senior diplomat reported that limited numbers of economic officers and trade personnel required individual officers to perform multiple functions (Respondent N, 12/10/2025, Nairobi).

These findings reinforce the literature on EAC trade integration, which identifies regulatory differences, customs procedures, technical requirements and institutional capacity as continuing implementation challenges (Muhirwa et al., 2024, & Wakhungu, et al., 2021). They also support Koech (2022), Gabone (2023), and Masaa (2025), who identify bureaucratic, institutional and border-related constraints in Tanzania–Kenya economic cooperation. From the perspective of Diplomatic Representation Theory, the Mission may negotiate and advocate for policy change, but implementation depends on multiple domestic agencies and border institutions. Neofunctionalism similarly suggests that regional institutional arrangements do not automatically produce uniform implementation across member states.

Overall, the findings indicate that diplomatic effectiveness is shaped by a chain extending from diplomatic initiative to institutional coordination and implementation. Economic diplomacy was most visible where the Mission addressed concrete commercial constraints; diplomatic influence operated mainly through negotiation and facilitation; public diplomacy was associated with favourable stakeholder perceptions; and institutional capacity and implementation conditions moderated the translation of these activities into practical outcomes. The evidence therefore supports an understanding of diplomatic efficacy as context-dependent rather than solely a function of the number of diplomatic activities undertaken.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi made a substantive contribution to Tanzania–Kenya economic relations during 2015–2024 through economic diplomacy, policy engagement, and public diplomacy. Economic-diplomacy initiatives significantly predicted perceived impact, explaining 49.3% of its variance, while diplomatic engagement was significantly associated with perceived policy influence, $\chi^2(12) = 28.41$, $p = .005$. Public-diplomacy initiatives also supported favourable stakeholder perceptions, with 62.9% reporting positive or very positive perceptions and the model explaining 46.4% of the variance. However, the contribution was constrained by institutional and implementation challenges, reflected in significantly lower perceived impact among border-level respondents, $t(184) = 2.87$, $p = .005$, and 33.9% rating Mission capacity as inadequate or highly inadequate. Overall, the High Commission contributed to advancing bilateral economic relations, but the extent of its contribution depended on institutional capacity, coordination, and implementation by national and regional institutions.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations. First, the High Commission should strengthen economic diplomacy through trade and investment promotion, exporter support, business-to-business engagement, joint-venture facilitation, and follow-up on bilateral economic commitments. Second, Tanzania and

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

Kenya should strengthen mechanisms for identifying and resolving non-tariff barriers (NTBs), regulatory differences, and other constraints to cross-border trade. Third, the High Commission should enhance coordination with relevant ministries, agencies, business associations, and EAC institutions to align diplomatic initiatives with national and regional priorities and ensure effective implementation. Fourth, the Mission should expand strategic media, digital, cultural, diaspora, youth, and business engagement to strengthen stakeholder awareness and support for bilateral economic cooperation. Fifth, the Government should enhance the Mission's financial, human-resource, technological, and logistical capacity to implement and monitor economic-diplomacy initiatives effectively. Finally, Tanzania and Kenya should improve cross-border coordination among border agencies to enhance customs efficiency, information sharing, infrastructure, and implementation of agreed measures along major trade corridors.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Funding Declaration

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

REFERENCES

Amol, H. (2023). A critique of the East African Community's non-tariff barriers regime. *African Journal of Commercial Law, 2*(1), 153–185. https://doi.org/10.58216/ajcl.v2i1.273

Antwi-Boasiako, I. (2022). The quest for influence: Examining Russia's public diplomacy mechanisms in Africa. *South African Journal of International Affairs, 29*(4), 463–482. https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2022.2153728

Bank of Tanzania. (2023). *Annual report 2022/23.*

Bayne, N., & Woolcock, S. (2011). *The new economic diplomacy: Decision-making and negotiation in international economic relations* (3rd ed., rev. & updated). Ashgate.

Berridge, G. R. (2015). *Diplomacy: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Checkel, J. T. (1998). The constructive turn in international relations theory. *World Politics, 50*(2), 324–348. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100008133

Chilangazi, E., & Magasi, C. (2023). Emerging challenges in implementing the Common Market Protocol for free movement of goods in the East African Community. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science, 12*(4), 426–434. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i4.2642

Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

East African Community. (2004). *Protocol on the establishment of the East African Community Customs Union*. East African Community Secretariat.

East African Community. (2017). *East African Community Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers Act, 2017*. East African Community Secretariat.

East African Community. (2021). *Tourism marketing strategy 2021–2025*. East African Community Secretariat. https://www.eac.int/documents?controller=download&task=download.file&file=1b85f64d-ac03-48e1-b903-71ecdfa73155&name=Tourism%20Marketing%20Strategy%20-%20web.pdf

East African Community. (2023, August 16). *Non-tariff barriers and national protection impeding intra-EAC trade*. East African Community Secretariat.

East African Community. (2026, July 20). *EAC calls for new-generation border reforms to support growing regional trade*. https://www.eac.int/press-releases/142-customs/3566-eac-calls-for-new-generation-border-reforms-to-support-growing-regional-trade

Gabone, I. K. (2023). *Exploring Tanzania's trade diplomacy with Kenya and its implications to bilateral trade* [Master's research project, United States International University-Africa]. USIU-Africa Institutional Repository.

Haas, E. B. (1958). *The uniting of Europe: Political, social, and economic forces, 1950–1957*. Stanford University Press.

Jung, H. (2019). The evolution of social constructivism in political science: Past to present. *SAGE Open, 9*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019832703

Koech, K. V. (2022). *Dynamics of economic diplomacy in East Africa: A case of relations between Kenya and Tanzania, 1963–2015* [Master's thesis, Kenyatta University]. Kenyatta University Institutional Repository.

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)

Masaa, P. S. (2025). *Kenya–Tanzania diplomatic relations and regional economic development in the East African Community, 2000–2017* [Master's research project, Mount Kenya University]. Mount Kenya University Repository.

Msacky, R., & Mmassy, T. (2023). Strategies and challenges of economic diplomacy on industrialisation in Tanzania. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies, 13*(4), 50–64.

Muhirwa, Y. D., Iradukunda, N., & Waweru, M. (2024). Effects of non-tariff barriers on promotion of East African Community integration: A case of Magasins Généraux du Rwanda. *African Journal of Empirical Research, 5*(3), 1116–1130. https://doi.org/10.51867/ajernet.5.3.95

Nye, J. S., Jr. (2008). Public diplomacy and soft power. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 616*(1), 94–109. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699

Ochieng, H. K. (2022). China's public diplomacy towards Africa: Strategies, economic linkages and implications for Korea's ambitions in Africa. *East Asian Economic Review, 26*(1), 49–91. https://doi.org/10.11644/KIEP.EAER.2022.26.1.405

Rana, K. S. (2013). Economic diplomacy: What might best serve a developing country? *International Journal of Diplomacy and Economy, 1*(3–4), 232–247. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJDIPE.2013.057000

Wakhungu, J. P., Okoth, G. P., & Odhiambo, E. O. S. (2021). Challenges and opportunities constraining and enhancing Kenya and Tanzania participation in the EAC econo-political integration process. *Open Journal of Political Science, 11*, 134–154. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2021.111009

Wendt, A. (1999). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-NC)