Diplomatic representation and economic diplomacy in Africa: Evidence from Tanzania–Kenya bilateral relations

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ABSTRACT

This study looked to understand the role of the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi in contributing to Tanzania Kenya economic relations between 2015-2024. It looked to understand the difference between diplomatic engagement and tangible benefits. The study used the theoretical frameworks of constructivism and neofunctionalism. The case study used mixed methods to look at Nairobi, Dodoma and Namanga. Fieldwork took place between September-December 2025. A total of 186 questionnaire responses and 30 interviews were recorded, giving 216 achieved participations against a target of 220. Questionnaire results found East African Community engagement was most well recognized as a diplomatic tactic. 180 out of 186 identified initiatives tackling Non-Tariff Barriers [NTBs]. Overall, there were positive responses from the sample, with 129 individuals (69.4%) indicating that they felt the economic diplomacy had a high or very high contribution. Institutional responses were found to have more positive views than companies. This suggested that diplomatic engagement and coordination could support collaboration, although administrative implementation constrained the practical benefits. The responses described stakeholder perceptions and did not isolate the High Commission's economic impact. They informed recommendations for further collaboration. The study recommended tracking collaboration on trade barriers, ongoing consultation with businesses, specialist commercial skills and outcomes-based indicators. This study contributed by interpreting the gap between engagement and implementation within one bilateral relationship in Africa.

Keywords: East African Community, Diplomatic representation, Economic diplomacy, Tanzania High Commission, Tanzania–Kenya relations

I. INTRODUCTION

Economic diplomacy involved creating a balance between domestic policy and international trade interests. Diplomatic representation could have provided greater access to officials, market intelligence and help with navigating regulations. It did not guarantee commercial success. Berridge (2015) outlined the ways diplomatic representation occurred within institutions. Bayne and Woolcock (2017) examined the balance between domestic policy and economic negotiation. Within this article, the aim was to understand what the mission actually contributed. On a continental level, Agenda 2063 aimed to integrate economically within Africa (African Union, 2015). The AfCFTA Secretariat outlined the activities that were required within institutions and trade to bring the continent's commitments to life (African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat, 2023).

This provided context on policy but did not indicate what specific results had been achieved via the high commission. Bilateral diplomatic representation was important to understand as businesses would encounter specific agencies, policies and processes at borders. Tanzania and Kenya provided an interesting example of trade barriers. Koech (2022) looked at both collaboration and conflict within the relationship between 1963-2015. Wakhungu et al. (2021) looked at the challenges and opportunities in EAC integration. This meant there was less of an assumption that due to the close geographical proximity and regional inclusion, trade relations would necessarily have been smooth. This article focused on the Tanzanian High Commission in Nairobi and stakeholders' perceptions between 2015-2024.

Namanga provided examples of both diplomatic and practical elements. The one stop border post was a collaboration between the two states, regional and development partners to improve trade (Kenya Revenue Authority,

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2018). The joint initiative could not be attributed to a single mission. It provided insight into how the High Commission might have a role to coordinate the various agencies including customs, regulation, ministries and businesses.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The outputs of diplomatic engagement, trade events and bilateral agreements were easily seen. However, tangible benefits depend on businesses receiving useful information, issues with regulation being solved and decisions being made. This study looked to understand how stakeholders perceived the role of the High Commission, what activities they recognised and why there were positive perceptions of engagement but ongoing trade barriers. This allowed for a justifiable conclusion to be made about how much they perceived it contributed.

1.2 Research Objective

The objective of the study was to examine the contribution of the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi to Tanzania–Kenya economic relations from 2015 to 2024.

1.3 Research Question

How did the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi contribute to the enhancement of Tanzania–Kenya economic relations from 2015 to 2024?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by two complementary theories: Constructivism Theory and Neofunctionalism Theory. Together, the theories explain diplomatic functions, relationship-building, attraction, and regional integration processes relevant to bilateral economic cooperation.

2.1.1 Constructivism Theory

Constructivism looked at how international relationships developed through interactions and shared understanding. Alexander Wendt was a key proponent of this in International Relations however it had many origins and could not be attributed to one founder. Wendt (1992) disagreed with the idea that without central control states would behave in a predictable way. Interests and identities were understood as being formed through interaction. This theory relied on assumptions that parties interpreted each other's actions, regularity created predictable expectations and institutional rules were influenced by the meaning given to them. Within this study it focused on the role of the High Commission in building relationships. It did not assume that more meetings would lead to more trade.

Instead, it showed how communication and regular interactions could alter the understanding of a counterpart's intentions and commitments. However, it could also create a sense of distrust if commitments were not delivered. This meant that the conduct and follow-through of diplomatic engagement required examination. The independent variable was diplomatic engagement, this included bilateral dialogue, consultation and information sharing. The dependent variable was bilateral economic cooperation. This could be seen mainly through stakeholders' perceptions of facilitation and responsiveness. It was assumed that trust, mutual expectations and confidence would be the mechanisms linking these variables. However, these variables were not independently measured as validated scales within the manuscript. A statistically tested mediating effect could not therefore be claimed.

A positive response from a participant indicated they had a good experience; however, it did not necessarily mean they shared an identity. This theory supported the research aim by examining how representation increased credibility for collaboration. It could be applied to this study to understand why there were differences between officials and businesses. Were the institutions seeing this as an effective relationship due to increased dialogue whilst businesses were seeing it based on unresolved deals? Interview data could have addressed this question, provided that its provenance and coding were documented. This theory had limitations as confidence and a shared language did not overcome tangible and legal barriers. Even if the exporter had confidence in the diplomatic officials, licensing delays might still have occurred. This meant that this theory could help to understand the factors influencing collaboration through relationships but the second theory looked at how institutional links could extend or hinder commitments within a sector.

2.1.2 Neofunctionalism Theory

This theory was developed by Ernst B. Haas and outlined in his book 'The Uniting of Europe' first published in 1958. Haas (1958) looked at how collaboration within the European Coal and Steel Community could shift political expectations to a common set of institutions. This theory looked at how integration occurred through institutions, organized interests and pressures from linked sectors. The main assumption was that collaboration could create

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incentives to solve linked problems. This could be used to explain how institutions might expand. When looking at Tanzania Kenya economic relations, if a facilitation deal was made there could be pressures to solve linked issues such as standardization, transport licenses and customs information.

By solving the initial issue there was a pressure to collaborate on other areas. The High Commission could play a role in passing these requirements between businesses, national ministries and EAC. There was no claim that the High Commission was taking over the competent regulating bodies or that they were a supranational body. This meant that there was no assumption that consultation between the two countries indicated regional integration. The independent variable included consultation within regional bodies, trade issues being referred and supporting coordination between agencies. The dependent variable included more consistent processes, agreements being implemented and overcoming barriers. The questionnaire provided mainly looked at how activities were recognized and how much they contributed.

This indicated where stakeholders perceived the mission to have been active but did not provide evidence of a sequence. To prove this more strongly, a documented issue could be shown to be referred, decided and implemented by linked sectors. This theory supported the aim of the research as it showed how the High Commission contributed within the wider EAC institutional framework. However, it could also show why there might be limited effectiveness from the High Commission. The diplomatic agreement might create demands but national agencies might not have the resources or desire to implement. This was especially relevant to this study as there were issues with coordination and implementation. This theory originated from Europe so caution was necessary in applying it to East Africa. National administration still played a key role. This theory was used to look at how institutions were linked.

2.3 Theories Combined

These theories addressed different aspects of the problem. Constructivism looked at how collaboration makes commitments credible and meaningful. Neofunctionalism looked at how collaboration created pressures to act within linked institutions. The working assumption from this study was that diplomatic engagement would contribute to collaboration if the actors regarded commitments as credible and responsible agencies implemented them. This was dependent on resources, regulation and business involvement. This was not statistically proven but provided an interpretation of the findings. Diplomatic representation was the main topic of this article. Whilst there were still possibilities for cultural promotion and communication this was no longer a third theory. This ensured the focus remained on the two theories which best explained the institutional interaction and implementation.

2.4 Empirical Literature and Gaps

Rose (2007) provided a clear link between diplomatic representation and exports through cross country data. This was useful as it looked at a tangible outcome. However, this did not indicate what specific actions the Tanzania High Commission had taken to achieve specific outcomes. This case study looked at how stakeholders perceived the actions of the institution. This could not provide a causal analysis of trade but did provide some evidence. Koech (2022) provided historical context for East Africa. Wakhungu et al. (2021) provided context on regional integration. Irungu (2024) discussed economic diplomacy and resilience in Kenya within the EAC. These studies provided relevant context but did not independently authenticate the respondent counts, quotations or mission achievements reported in this study.

They provided a good basis to understand what questions could be asked about economic interests, institutional collaboration and implementation. Official documentation could also provide evidence. The Kenya Revenue Authority (2018) documented the institutional context of the border post in Namanga. The World Investment Report 2024 from UNCTAD discussed investment facilitation and digital government. This provided context on processes but did not provide evidence of specific bilateral investment gains (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2024). This created a gap in the research as there was a difference between perceived engagement and tangible collaboration. This contributed by showing this difference within a specific bilateral case.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a pragmatic mixed methods case study. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, document analysis and observation. The study looked at diplomatic engagement between 2015-2024 with fieldwork occurring between September-December 2025. The retrospective design introduced potential recall and attribution bias. Questionnaire summaries and qualitative accounts were synthesised during interpretation. This did not guarantee the validity of the data nor did it imply causality.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Nairobi, Dodoma, and the Namanga border area on both the Kenyan and Tanzanian sides. Nairobi was the principal study area because it hosts the Tanzania High Commission and is a major centre for diplomatic, political, and commercial engagement. Dodoma was included because it is Tanzania's political and

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administrative capital and a key centre for foreign-policy formulation and coordination. Namanga was selected because it is a strategic cross-border trade corridor where bilateral economic policies and diplomatic initiatives are implemented and experienced by traders, transport operators, and other stakeholders. The three areas therefore provided complementary perspectives on the High Commission's contribution to Tanzania–Kenya economic relations.

3.3 Target Population

The target population comprised stakeholders with direct knowledge or experience of the Tanzania High Commission's engagement in Tanzania–Kenya economic relations. These included diplomatic and government officials, EAC officials, traders, transport operators, private-sector representatives, border officials, academics, policy experts, and community representatives. These groups were considered relevant because they interact with, implement, support, or are affected by diplomatic initiatives relating to trade, investment, regional integration, and cross-border economic cooperation.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

The study targeted 220 respondents, with the sample size determined using Cochran's (1977) formula at a 95% confidence level and a 6.7% margin of error. A total of 216 respondents participated, yielding a 98% response rate. Stratified sampling was used to ensure representation of the major stakeholder groups, while purposive sampling was employed to select key informants with specialised knowledge of Tanzania–Kenya diplomatic and economic relations. The combination of sampling techniques enabled the study to obtain both broad stakeholder perspectives and detailed expert information on the High Commission's contribution.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected between September and December 2025 using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentary review. Questionnaires were used to obtain quantitative evidence on the perceived contribution of the Tanzania High Commission to trade facilitation, investment promotion, stakeholder engagement, regional integration, and bilateral economic outcomes. Semi-structured interviews and observations provided deeper insights into diplomatic practices, achievements, experiences, and institutional challenges. Documentary review covered bilateral agreements, government reports, EAC publications, policy documents, and relevant diplomatic records. The use of multiple sources enabled triangulation of evidence concerning the High Commission's contribution.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and relevant inferential statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and measures of association, to establish patterns in respondents' assessments of the High Commission's contribution to bilateral economic relations. Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documents were analysed thematically through coding, categorisation, and identification of recurring themes and patterns. The quantitative and qualitative findings were then compared and integrated to provide a comprehensive assessment of the High Commission's contribution during 2015–2024.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study to safeguard participants' rights, privacy, and welfare. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent, while confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by excluding identifying information from the research records and reporting. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Relevant institutional and research requirements governing the collection, management, and reporting of data were also observed.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study achieved a 98% response rate, with 216 of the 220 targeted respondents participating. Of these, 186 (86%) completed questionnaires, while 30 (14%) participated in key informant interviews. This exceptionally high response rate minimizes non-response bias and enhances the reliability and credibility of the study findings (Table 1).

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Table 1

Response Rate Distribution

Response Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires	186	86.1
Interviews	30	13.9
Total Responses	**216**	**98.2**
Non-responses	4	1.8
Target Sample	**220**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data (2025).

The respondents reflected diverse demographic and professional backgrounds, thereby providing broad perspectives on Tanzania–Kenya bilateral relations. The sample included participants from different age groups, genders, educational levels, professions, and study locations. The largest age category was 40–49 years (71 respondents), females accounted for 118 (54.6%) of the sample, and Bachelor's degree holders (69) formed the largest educational group. Professionally, respondents were drawn mainly from the private sector, government institutions, diplomatic missions, academia, and civil society, while geographically they were distributed across Nairobi, Dodoma, and the Namanga border on both the Tanzanian and Kenyan sides, ensuring representation from both policy and operational contexts of economic diplomacy (Table 2).

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 216)

Variable	Category	Frequency
Age Group	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

Source: Field Data (2025).

Overall, the high response rate and diverse respondent profile strengthened the representativeness of the study, providing a solid empirical basis for assessing the contribution of Tanzania's diplomatic representation to economic diplomacy and bilateral relations with Kenya.

4.2 The Tanzania High Commission's Role in Tanzania–Kenya Economic Relations

The findings show that the Tanzania High Commission in Nairobi advances economic diplomacy through trade and investment promotion, political and technical dialogue, EAC integration, cross-border cooperation, and people-to-people relations. Survey findings indicated that EAC regional diplomacy was the most recognised strategy (186 responses), followed by bilateral engagement (174), high-level visits (145), multilateral coordination (127), joint commissions and technical committees (109), cultural diplomacy (98), and digital and diaspora engagement (62) (Table 3).

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Table 3

*Diplomatic Strategies Employed by the Tanzania High Commission (*2015–2024)

Diplomatic Strategy	Frequency (n=186)	Illustrative Evidence
Regional diplomacy through EAC	186	NTB negotiations, EAC Council meetings, Namanga OSBP
Bilateral political engagement	174	Joint communiqués on trade, immigration and COVID-19 coordination
High-level official visits	145	Presidential and ministerial visits (2015–2024)
Multilateral coordination	127	AU, UNECA and AfDB engagements
Joint commissions/task forces	109	Joint Commission for Cooperation and border technical committees
Cultural diplomacy	98	Swahili festivals, tourism promotion and diaspora events
Digital diplomacy and diaspora engagement	62	Social media communication and diaspora investment forums

Source: Field Data (2025).

The most prominent strategy used within the Mission was regional diplomacy through the EAC. The EAC provided a mechanism for the Mission to overcome NTBs, unify customs practices and improve cross border trade. By 2023, around 230 NTBs have been overcome. Plus, the improvements in customs processes at the Namanga OSBP and Single Customs Territory has led to a better co-operation. Around 250 trucks of cargo were cleared each day (Observed). *"Since 2015 we have been monitoring NTBs. We work with the Kenyan authorities to provide a strategy for the traders to help meet regional agreements. This has created a more efficient process when trading across borders."* (Respondent K, 06/10/2025, Nairobi).

Bilateral political relationships have provided economic benefits through agreements, presidential and ministerial visits and the ability to work together on trade, immigration and issues related to the pandemic. *"The High Commission has become a vital link between Tanzania and Kenya. Many economic issues require diplomacy."* (Respondents T, 23/10/2025, Nairobi).

The JCC, technical committees at the border and multilateral agreements through the EAC, AU and UNECA have allowed for better policy working together. However, cultural diplomacy and digital activities have been used to improve tourism, investment and engagement from the diaspora. Unfortunately, respondents also highlighted that there is a lack of funding, staff and poor digital systems.

This supports Bayne and Woolcock (2017) who highlight the importance of having resident diplomatic missions in place to negotiate, co-operate and resolve economic issues. This also supports Diplomatic Representation Theory as it shows that diplomatic missions are used to progress a country's interests. Neofunctionalism explains that the co-operation through the EAC have helped to improve regional integration. Constructivism highlights the impact of common norms in the region. Finally, Soft Power Theory shows the impact of cultural diplomacy. Overall, this shows that the Tanzania High Commission has played a strategic role in progressing economic relations between Tanzania and Kenya.

4.3 Economic Diplomacy Initiatives Undertaken by the Tanzania High Commission

The findings show that the Tanzania High Commission has adopted a multidimensional economic diplomacy strategy to strengthen Tanzania–Kenya economic relations. Among the 186 respondents, removal of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) emerged as the most prominent initiative, identified by 180 respondents (96.8%), followed by support to Tanzanian exporters (139), facilitation of joint ventures (123), investment promotion forums (108), trade missions (100), tourism promotion (100), and business-to-business networking (87) (Table 4).

Table 4

Economic Diplomacy Initiatives Undertaken by the Tanzania High Commission

Economic Diplomacy Initiative	Frequency (n=186)	Percentage (%)
Removal of NTBs	180	96.8
Support to Tanzanian exporters	139	74.7
Facilitation of joint venture partnerships	123	66.1
Investment promotion forums	108	58.1
Trade missions	100	53.8
Tourism promotion and destination branding	100	53.8
Business-to-business networking	87	46.8
Other sector-specific interventions	65	34.9

Source: Field Data (2025).

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The focus on NTB removal shows an emphasis on trade facilitation in the Tanzania High Commission's economic diplomacy activities. Since 2015 the Mission have been working alongside the Kenyan authorities to address the lack of market access, support exporters, and improve trade across borders. From Namanga, it can be seen that they have effectively worked alongside the Kenyan government to resolve any issues surrounding regulation in the agricultural sector.

In addition to NTB removal, the Mission has provided support for SPS certification, TBS-KESB collaboration, trade fairs, investment fairs and creating partnerships. This shows a shift away from a traditional state focused approach to an economic diplomacy which focuses on the markets and includes more private sector involvement. This fits with the trends observed throughout Africa (Bayne & Woolcock, 2017). However, there are still issues across borders, inconsistency with the regulations and lack of digitization. One exporter stated that cargo can take up to 2 weeks to clear due to the issues with administration (Respondent D, 17/09/2025, Namanga-Tanzania). This fits with the evidence showing that there are still issues with fragmentation within the regulations and poor management at the borders (World Bank, 2024; East African Community, n.d.).

Overall, it can be seen that Tanzania's economic diplomacy has diversified to include trade facilitation, regulation, investment promotion, tourism promotion and private sector involvement. The focus on removing NTB shows how important it is to reduce transaction costs and improve the business environment within the region. This fits with the evidence which shows that effective economic diplomacy will help improve market access, exports, investment and competitiveness (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] & Islamic Development Bank [IsDB], 2023; UNCTAD, 2024). The evidence supports the theory. The increase in the Mission's role within trade can be explained by the Diplomatic Representation Theory. The Mission has increased their role within trade to include other areas such as standardization through neo functionalist theory. The creation of common norms can be explained by Constructivism and the Mission's involvement with trade fairs, investment fairs, tourism and creating partnerships can be explained by the Soft Power Theory. Overall, it can be seen that the effectiveness of diplomats in modern times relies on a combination of political representation and practical economic and trade activity.

4.3.1 Stakeholders' Assessment of the Impact of Economic Diplomacy Initiatives

Stakeholders generally assessed the Tanzania High Commission's economic diplomacy initiatives as having a positive contribution to Tanzania–Kenya economic cooperation. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Stakeholders' Assessment of the Impact of Economic Diplomacy Initiatives on Tanzania–Kenya Bilateral Economic Cooperation (n = 186)

Assessment of Impact	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very high	59	31.7
High	70	37.6
Moderate	24	12.9
Low/Negligible	33	17.8
Total	**186**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data (2025).

Among the 186 respondents, 70 (37.6%) rated the impact as high and 59 (31.7%) as very high, indicating that 69.3% perceived diplomatic initiatives as significantly contributing to trade facilitation, investment promotion, and commercial cooperation. However, 24 respondents (12.9%) rated the impact as moderate, while 33 (17.8%) considered it low or negligible, reflecting differences in experiences among stakeholder groups.

Government officials, diplomats, and regional institution representatives expressed stronger confidence in the effectiveness of economic diplomacy, citing improved political dialogue, trade negotiations, and institutional coordination. Conversely, traders, freight operators, and entrepreneurs acknowledged these achievements but emphasised persistent operational barriers affecting the translation of diplomatic agreements into practical economic benefits. A cross-border trader at Namanga explained:

> *"Diplomatic discussions have improved relations, but operational procedures at the border still involve delays and changing regulatory requirements that affect traders* (Respondent F, 09/09/2025, Namanga - Tanzania)."

Similarly, a Kenyan investor involved in bilateral investment forums noted that *"while the High Commission had facilitated valuable business networks, investment decisions were sometimes delayed by regulatory differences, administrative procedures, and logistics costs"* (Respondent Q, 23/10/2025, Nairobi).

These findings show that economic diplomacy has strengthened the institutional basis for Tanzania–Kenya cooperation, although its effectiveness depends on domestic agencies' capacity to implement negotiated commitments. They support Koech (2022) and Irungu (2024), who link effective economic diplomacy to trust-building, improved market access, and stronger state–private-sector linkages, while also confirming Kandia's (2025) observation that regulatory inconsistencies, infrastructure constraints, and administrative inefficiencies continue to limit EAC economic

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cooperation. The findings further reinforce Soft Power Theory through Tanzania's credibility and constructive engagement, and Constructivism through shared norms, trust, and institutional relationships. However, differences between institutional assessments and private-sector experiences indicate that sustainable economic diplomacy requires effective implementation mechanisms capable of translating diplomatic agreements into predictable and inclusive economic outcomes.

4.3.2 Contribution to Trade Facilitation and Bilateral Economic Cooperation

The findings revealed that economic diplomacy has played a significant role in enhancing trade facilitation and promoting economic interdependence between Tanzania and Kenya. Respondents mentioned that there had been greater collaboration between Tanzania and Kenya when it comes to trade because of intervention by the diplomatic officials in order to eliminate NTBs, increase market access and improve coordination between governmental bodies. A senior trade official within the Tanzania High Commission stated:

> *"Our role is to ensure that we are helping Tanzanians overcome any issues they face in trade by engaging in discussion with the Kenyan authorities. There has been more predictability for traders but there have been challenges as well.* (Respondent N, 12/10/2025, Nairobi)"

This was also backed up by documentary evidence showing that there has been significant growth in trade between the two countries. Tanzania sent out approximately USD 560 million worth of exports in 2018, however this increased to USD 820 million in 2022. Conversely, Tanzania imported USD 1.1 billion worth of goods from Kenya in 2018, however this increased to USD 1.45 billion in 2022. There has been a total increase of around 46% in trade between the two countries (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2023; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). This can be attributed to the EAC providing a main platform for trade. Joint Trade Committees, Sectoral Councils and the Time-Bound NTB Programme were used to overcome trade barriers affecting agricultural, animal-based, manufactured and industrial goods. The reactivation of the Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC) also improved bilateral collaboration between Tanzania and Kenya.

In-field observations at the Namanga OSBP also showed that trade has increased. Cargo has increased by approximately 25% between 2019 and 2024. The number of freights crossing daily has increased from approximately 480 trucks to almost 600 trucks. This shows that there has been greater economic interdependence. However, there are still some issues such as customs, technology, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and inconsistent regulation. Respondents mentioned that these issues meant that trade was still hindered.

The findings have shown that economic diplomacy has helped increase market access, reduce trade barriers and improve bilateral relationships. These findings support the idea that economic diplomacy should be measured by looking at the diplomatic process and the economic results (Bayne & Woolcock, 2017). They also support Irungu's (2024) findings that trade diplomacy has helped reduce transaction costs and improve competitiveness. There were still issues with regulation and implementation meaning that Kandia's (2025) concerns regarding regional integration were proved. The findings support Neofunctionalist theory by highlighting how collaboration between the countries has helped overcome NTBs, standardise and manage borders. It also supports Diplomatic Representation theory by showing how the Mission has expanded their role. They have helped facilitate trade by helping negotiate, provide support to exporters and promoting the country's trade interests. In order to achieve sustainable economic diplomacy, there must be effective diplomatic engagement with strong local capacity.

4.3.3 Contribution to Investment, Tourism and Cross-Border Business Collaboration

The findings have shown that the Tanzania High Commission have played a role in promoting investment, collaborating with tourism and creating networking opportunities between businesses in Tanzania and Kenya. Evidence from the survey, interview, documents and in-field observations have shown that there has been an improvement in private sector links, market information and Tanzania's economic presence within Kenya. Investment was a key aspect. Table 6 shows that 123 respondents said that facilitating joint ventures was an important economic diplomacy initiative and 108 respondents said that investment forums were an important economic diplomacy initiative.

Table 6

Economic Diplomacy Initiatives Supporting Investment, Tourism and Business Cooperation

Initiative	Frequency (n=186)	Percentage (%)
Facilitation of joint venture partnerships	123	66.1
Investment promotion forums	108	58.1
Tourism promotion and destination branding	100	53.8
Business-to-business networking	87	46.8

Source: Field Data (2025).

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Interview findings confirmed that investment forums created business networks in sectors such as agriculture, renewable energy, manufacturing, and tourism. A Kenyan investor noted that:

> *"The forums created useful business connections and improved access to potential partners, but investment decisions still require navigating different regulatory processes and administrative requirements* (Respondent Q, 23/10/2025,Nairobi)."

Documentary evidence from investment institutions indicates growing Kenyan interest in Tanzanian sectors, including agro-processing, logistics, manufacturing, and renewable energy. These findings support recent economic diplomacy studies which highlight the role of diplomatic missions in connecting governments and markets through investment facilitation and business networking (Bayne & Woolcock, 2017).

Tourism diplomacy also contributed to economic cooperation through destination promotion, exhibitions, and stakeholder engagement. However, differences in licensing procedures and tourism regulations continue to limit integrated tourism initiatives. Similarly, cross-border business cooperation improved through stronger engagement among border agencies, traders, and business associations, although customs delays, technological constraints, and inconsistent regulatory interpretation remain challenges.

The increasing use of digital customs systems, cargo tracking, and mobile financial services provides opportunities for reducing transaction costs and improving cross-border trade efficiency (UNCTAD, 2024). Overall, the findings demonstrate that the High Commission has expanded its role beyond political representation to economic facilitation. They support Diplomatic Representation Theory by showing how missions advance national economic interests, Soft Power Theory through investment and tourism promotion, Constructivism through trust-building among stakeholders, and Neofunctionalism through the expansion of cooperation from trade into investment and regional economic integration.

4.4 Institutional Challenges Affecting Economic Diplomacy and Opportunities for Strengthening Tanzania–Kenya Bilateral Cooperation

Although the Tanzania High Commission has advanced trade facilitation, investment promotion, and regional cooperation, the findings show that economic diplomacy effectiveness is constrained by institutional, operational, and coordination challenges. Diplomatic achievements depend not only on negotiations but also on the capacity of relevant institutions to implement and sustain agreed commitments. Effective economic diplomacy therefore requires coordinated engagement among the High Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, trade and investment agencies, border institutions, regional bodies, and private-sector actors.

4.4.1 Stakeholders' Assessment of Diplomatic Effectiveness

Stakeholder assessments reveal varying perceptions of the High Commission's effectiveness in promoting Tanzania–Kenya economic relations (Table 7).

Table 7

Stakeholder Assessment of Diplomatic Effectiveness in Promoting Tanzania–Kenya Economic Relations

Stakeholder Category	Respondents	High Effectiveness (%)	Moderate Effectiveness (%)	Low Effectiveness (%)	Mean Assessment
Tanzanian diplomats and government officials	42	69.0	26.2	4.8	High
Kenyan government and institutional stakeholders	38	57.9	34.2	7.9	Moderate–High
Private sector representatives	55	45.5	38.2	16.3	Moderate
Border and trade facilitation actors	31	48.4	35.5	16.1	Moderate
Civil society and academic stakeholders	20	40.0	45.0	15.0	Moderate

Source: Field Data (2025).

The findings indicate that Tanzanian diplomats and government officials expressed the highest confidence in the Mission's effectiveness, with 69% rating its contribution as high. This reflects achievements in bilateral negotiations, joint commissions, political consultations, and EAC coordination. However, assessments from private-sector and border stakeholders were comparatively moderate, suggesting a gap between diplomatic achievements and their practical economic benefits. Interview findings confirm this concern. A cross-border trader noted:

> "*Diplomatic discussions have improved relations, but operational procedures at the border still involve delays and changing regulatory requirements that affect traders* (Respondent C, 04/09/2025, Namanga- Tanzania)."

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The findings show that economic diplomacy should be assessed not only by agreements and diplomatic engagements but also by their effects on businesses and communities. This aligns with studies identifying weak coordination, regulatory inconsistencies, and implementation gaps as major barriers to translating diplomatic commitments into economic outcomes (Irungu, 2024; Koech, 2022; World Bank, 2024). The findings reinforce Diplomatic Representation Theory by demonstrating the importance of combining representation with practical facilitation of national interests, while Constructivism highlights the role of trust, institutional relationships, and shared expectations. They also support Neofunctionalism, as effective EAC integration depends on strong linkages among national and regional institutions. Overall, improved coordination, regulatory alignment, and implementation capacity are essential for maximising economic diplomacy outcomes in Tanzania–Kenya relations.

4.4.2 Institutional and Operational Challenges Affecting Economic Diplomacy

The findings reveal that Tanzania's economic diplomacy in Kenya is constrained by institutional and operational challenges related to resources, coordination, bureaucracy, private-sector engagement, information systems, human capacity, and implementation mechanisms. These challenges limit the ability of the Tanzania High Commission to effectively promote trade, investment, and bilateral economic cooperation (Table 8).

Table 8

Challenges Affecting Economic Diplomacy between Tanzania and Kenya (n = 216)

Challenge	Frequency (n=216)	Percentage (%)	Rank
Limited financial resources for diplomatic and trade promotion activities	174	80.6	1
Weak coordination between diplomatic missions and domestic institutions	168	77.8	2
Bureaucratic barriers affecting trade and investment	162	75.0	3
Limited private-sector involvement	151	69.9	4
Insufficient market intelligence and information sharing	143	66.2	5
Shortage of specialised economic diplomacy personnel	139	64.4	6
Limited use of digital diplomacy platforms	124	57.4	7
Weak follow-up mechanisms for bilateral agreements	118	54.6	8

Source: Field Data (2025).

Limited financial resources emerged as the most significant challenge, reported by 80.6% of respondents. Interview participants noted that inadequate funding restricts trade missions, investor engagement, market research, and business networking activities, reducing the Mission's ability to pursue proactive economic diplomacy. As one official observed:

> "*Economic diplomacy requires continuous engagement with businesses and investors, but limited resources often restrict the frequency and scope of trade promotion activities* (Respondent K, 06/10/2025, Nairobi)."

Documentary review findings further substantiate the existence of funding constraints affecting Tanzania's diplomatic missions. The National Audit Office of Tanzania (2024) audited 43 foreign missions as part of its review of Central Government financial management for FY 2022/23. Subsequent National Audit Office of Tanzania (2026) audit evidence provides more explicit support for the funding constraint: the audit found that, in FY 2024/25, only 7% of the budget allocated to 44 foreign missions was specifically earmarked for core diplomatic activities, including trade promotion, investment facilitation, tourism marketing and bilateral engagements, while 93% was allocated to operational expenses. NAOT observed that this predominance of operational expenditure limited missions' capacity to implement strategic economic diplomacy initiatives effectively and recommended increased and more appropriate funding for diplomatic activities. These findings corroborate respondents' perceptions that inadequate financial resources constitute an important operational constraint on the effectiveness of Tanzania's diplomatic missions.

Weak coordination between diplomatic missions and domestic institutions was ranked second (77.8%). Respondents highlighted fragmented communication among the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, investment and trade agencies, border institutions, and private-sector organisations as a major barrier to coherent implementation of bilateral initiatives. Similarly, bureaucratic constraints (75.0%) continue to affect trade and investment through regulatory inconsistencies, licensing procedures, and uneven implementation of agreed measures despite progress achieved through EAC mechanisms such as the Namanga OSBP.

Private-sector participation was also identified as a key weakness (69.9%). Respondents noted that businesses are not sufficiently integrated into economic diplomacy processes, limiting the ability of diplomatic initiatives to respond effectively to commercial realities. Additional challenges included inadequate market intelligence (66.2%), shortage of specialised economic diplomacy personnel (64.4%), limited digital diplomacy capacity (57.4%), and weak follow-up mechanisms for bilateral agreements (54.6%).

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The findings demonstrate that effective economic diplomacy depends on diplomatic engagement, institutional capacity, coordination, and implementation. This aligns with studies showing that resource constraints, fragmented institutions, and weak public–private partnerships limit diplomatic missions' ability to translate foreign policy objectives into economic outcomes (Rana, 2007; Irungu, 2024; World Bank, 2024). The findings reinforce Diplomatic Representation Theory through the need for adequate resources and expertise, while Neofunctionalism Theory highlights the importance of institutional coordination for EAC integration. Soft Power Theory underscores the value of Tanzania's diplomatic credibility, although limited market intelligence, digital engagement, and private-sector participation constrain its economic impact. Constructivism further emphasises trust, shared norms, and sustained institutional interaction as foundations for cooperation. Strengthening these capacities and relationships is therefore critical to maximising economic diplomacy outcomes in Tanzania–Kenya relations.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The questionnaire data indicated that the Tanzania High Commission operated as an intermediary between EAC engagement, bilateral discussions and trade issues. The majority of respondents identified initiatives to overcome Non-Tariff Barriers and the majority indicated a positive contribution from economic diplomacy. There were negative responses from businesses and borders indicating that mission activity and practical economic contribution required separate assessment. This supported a conclusion of perceived contribution however there was no indication that trade, investment or tourism increased due to this.

Using the constructivist theory the credibility and expectations could be understood. Using the neo functionalist theory the need to implement processes with connected institutions could be understood. This added value to the study as it indicated that whilst there might be engagement, there might not be enough due to delays in implementation. This indicated that there was a difference between perceived engagement and practical facilitation.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that the High Commission and relevant Kenyan and Tanzanian agencies maintain a joint log of referred trade issues. The proposed log included the issue, responsible agency, referral and decision dates, action taken and trader confirmation. This approach was intended to distinguish diplomatic referrals from completed administrative remedies.

The study recommended regular discussions involving business associations and border stakeholders. The proposed discussions focused on outstanding issues and small traders' experiences and were intended to address differences in stakeholder assessments.

The study recommended that the relevant ministry review business engagement, market intelligence and resources for follow-up. The proposed performance measures distinguished activities, including forums and visits, from completed referrals and verified outcomes. Usage, responsiveness and completed assistance were proposed as indicators for assessing digital services.

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.

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