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CAT QUESTION (50MARKS)

REFLECTIVE REPORT ON THE FOUR-DAY TRIP TO ARUSHA

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes my thoughts and observations from our recent four-day educational field trip to Arusha, Tanzania, which was planned by Dr. Rodgers Adhiambo, our East African Community lecturer. Preparations for the trip started with getting students without passports temporary permits through eCitizen and getting vaccinated against yellow fever. We gained firsthand knowledge of cross-border protocols and money exchange operations during our journey across the Namanga border. We interacted with EAC organizations, took part in educational seminars, and experienced Tanzanian culture firsthand during the trip. In particular, the Common Market, Monetary Union, Customs Union, cultural aspects, institutional frameworks, and the pragmatic realities of East African cooperation are all discussed in this report along with my personal thoughts on their importance to my comprehension of regional integration.

A key component of regional integration, the EAC Common Market seeks to promote the free flow of capital, people, products, and services among its member nations. Our experience crossing the Namanga border gave us a hands-on understanding of how the Common Market functions. We witnessed the real processes needed for cross-border transit, even if the protocol theoretically guarantees smooth mobility. This underscored the discrepancy between the objectives of policy and its actual application.

We talked about the Common Market's foundation in facilitating the free flow of products and people resources throughout East Africa during our presentation with Elifuraha Laltaika. However, he criticized the procedure for failing to sufficiently meet "sentimental needs of the community," noting religious factors such the Maasai communities' concerns about Ol Doinyo Lengai, their sacred location.

Since I had observed Maasai settlements on both sides of the Kenya-Tanzania border during our trip, this observation struck a deep chord with me and made me consider the ways in which political boundaries and cultural identities interact.

My perception of the Common Market was changed from an abstract idea to a concrete reality with real-world difficulties because of the border crossing experience. Observing currency exchange activities (1 KSh to 20 TSh) showed how, in the absence of monetary union, economic integration is still lacking. I had never thought about how regional frameworks must take into account the cultural and spiritual aspects of communal life to achieve true integration until I read Mr. Laltaika's critique of sentimental needs.

My understanding of effective policy design has completely changed as a result of this realization, which emphasizes that technical economic provisions by themselves are unable to meet the entire range of human needs in cross-border communities.  
 The Monetary Union  
 The experience of exchanging currencies at the Namanga border post provided useful insight into the EAC's current monetary situation, where various national currencies persist despite calls for a single currency. The transaction costs and inefficiencies present in the current system were made evident by the exchange rate we were given (1 KSh to 20 TSh) and the various rates that were provided when converting back to Kenyan Shillings.  
 We discussed the odd idea of trying to run a "common market with different currencies," as Mr. Laltaika pointed out critically, during our conversations with EAC officials. The officials agreed that one of the most difficult parts of integration is monetary union, which calls for significant political commitment from member states, convergence of macroeconomic data, and harmonization of fiscal policies.  
 Introspection: Firsthand currency exchange experience shed light on the real-world difficulties citizens encounter when engaging in cross-border operations. A further obstacle to integration was created by the fluctuating exchange rates between Tanzanian Shillings and other currencies, which demonstrated how common people could lose value in transactions. This real-world experience made it easier for me to see why monetary union is crucial for strengthening integration, but it also presents such formidable implementation challenges. In order to lower transaction costs for citizens conducting cross-border transactions, the experience has made me reevaluate the order of integration steps and wonder if certain monetary coordination measures might come before full market integration.

THE CUSTOMS UNION

We were directly exposed to EAC Customs Union actions during our border crossing in Namanga. The processes we went through, which included document verification and possible goods inspection, were an actual application of customs regulations. Although it was relatively easy for us as students to cross the border, commercial trucks had to go through more involved processes, indicating that different types of border crossers received varied treatment.

We learned in our lectures that the Customs Union wants to create a single external tariff for goods coming into the EAC from outside the area while doing away with internal tariffs. Despite formal agreements, several non-tariff barriers still exist, making the practical achievement of these goals uneven. At the EAC headquarters, we discussed current initiatives to improve uniformity of implementation among member states and expedite customs operations.

Direct observation of the border operations demonstrated both advancements and ongoing difficulties in the establishment of the Customs Union. The event demonstrated how policy frameworks are translated into routine practices that impact both enterprises and regular residents. The uneven effectiveness of border operations particularly caught my attention, indicating that different sites and traveller types require different processes to be applied. My comprehension of implementation gaps in regional integration has improved as a result of this observation, which shows how formal agreements might not always result in standardized practices in the absence of reliable monitoring and enforcement systems.

QUESTIONS OF CULTURE  
 Rich exposure to the cultural aspects of East African integration was given by the tour. Significant concerns regarding the relationship between political boundaries and cultural identities were brought up by the existence of Maasai populations on both sides of the Kenya-Tanzania border. I wondered how colonial-era borders separated culturally cohesive peoples and how regional integration may resolve these historical divisions as I saw similar traditional attire, rituals, and means of subsistence throughout various tribes.  
 We were able to fully interact with Tanzania's cultural legacy during our tour to the African Art Gallery. Meaningful cross-cultural connections were formed by the serene atmosphere, variety of artistic expressions, and chance to perform traditional instruments with local musicians. In contrast to language patterns in Kenya, where English is more prevalent in various circumstances, I saw that Swahili was used more frequently across Arusha.

Our trip's cultural components had a significant impact on how I perceived the difficulties of regional integration. As I observed cultural continuities across political lines, Mr. Laltaika's criticism of the EAC for failing to address the "sentimental needs" of communities struck a deep chord. The gallery's musical performances with Tanzanian musicians showed how cultural expression cuts beyond political boundaries and fosters unity in spite of differences. Nonetheless, observations of certain hostile attitudes toward foreign women brought to light the ways in which cultural conflicts might show up in social situations. These encounters have persuaded me that cultural aspects must be actively addressed for integration to be effective rather than being seen as an afterthought to political and economic structures. Policies for integration must promote intercommunal understanding while acknowledging and respecting cultural identities.

Aspects of the Institution of EAC  
 Our tour to the EAC's Arusha headquarters gave us a thorough understanding of the institutional structure of the organization. A visual picture of the physical infrastructure enabling regional governance was provided by the guided tour of the premises. Important organizations that play different roles in the integration process were discussed, such as the East African Legislative Assembly and the East African Court of Justice (EACJ).  
 In-depth discussion of institutional frameworks was covered in our second-day lecture with an EAC official, with special attention paid to the composition, authority, and case law of the EACJ. Referencing seminal rulings like the Ogiek and Katambazi cases, we looked at Article 34b of the EAC Treaty and talked about jurisdictional issues pertaining to human rights matters. The lecturer described the relationship between the African Commission, the African Court of Justice, and the EACJ as well as the necessity of using all available local remedies before turning to the EACJ.

Abstract governance frameworks were brought to life through the institutional visit. Seeing the EAC offices and talking to officials who deal with integration issues on a daily basis gave me a perspective that textbooks cannot give. The intricacy of the jurisdictional issues surrounding the EACJ, particularly with regard to human rights issues, really caught my attention. The case studies demonstrated how institutional frameworks have a direct impact on citizens' rights and professional mobility, such as Martha Karua's attempt to practice law in Uganda. My understanding of the difficulties in regional integration's institutional architecture has grown as a result of these revelations, especially the need to strike a balance between concerns about national sovereignty and efficient regional governance systems.

GUEST TALKS  
 The EAC official and Elifuraha Laltaika's guest lectures offered knowledgeable viewpoints on institutional frameworks and integration issues. In his talk, Mr. Laltaika analysed integration procedures critically, pointing out flaws such as the protocol's inability to meet the emotive demands of communities and the conundrum of trying to run a shared market with disparate currencies. He outlined historical difficulties, pointing out how political disagreements caused the EAC to disintegrate under Nyerere's leadership. He also made recommendations for enhancements, such as more public participation and the use of conflict resolution techniques.  
 An EAC official's talk on the second day gave a thorough overview of institutional and legal structures, especially the composition and functions of the EACJ. The talk covered important treaty clauses, jurisdictional issues, and seminal cases that illustrated the court's changing function in regional administration. The official went into depth about the court's procedures, such as the need to file a case, how to withdraw it, and how it interacts with other local courts.

Beyond the notions found in textbooks, these lectures really increased my comprehension of integration processes. By drawing attention to historical difficulties and limitations in actual implementation, Mr. Laltaika's critical viewpoint called into question utopian ideas about integration and must guide present initiatives. Our second lecturer's legal insights shed light on the intricate interactions between national and regional judicial systems, showing how legal frameworks can facilitate and impede integration efforts. When national systems are unable to preserve minority rights, regional institutions may be able to do so. This was demonstrated by the instances that were addressed, especially the Ogiek case that dealt with indigenous land rights. These viewpoints have improved my analytical framework for evaluating integration processes by promoting a critical analysis of both successes and failures.  
FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE  
 In addition to the official educational aspects, the trip provided me with rich personal encounters that improved my comprehension of regional dynamics. The actual trip, which included breathtaking mountain scenery while adhering to Tanzania's 50 km/h speed restriction on Tanzanian highways, gave background information on the country's physical topography and legal system.  
 Interactions with Tanzanians daily exposed Kenyan and Tanzanian cultural parallels and distinctions. I noticed that prices for goods and services in Tanzania are typically lower than in Kenya, and there are several reasonably priced restaurants in Arusha. But I also came across difficult circumstances, such as instances of rudeness toward foreign ladies and attempts by certain residents to take advantage of tourists who were not familiar with the currency. Cross-border travel was impacted by procedural discrepancies, as evidenced by the differing speeds of border procedures—longer when entering Tanzania, shorter when returning to Kenya.  
These firsthand accounts offered priceless background information for comprehending integration difficulties outside of institutional frameworks. Some visitors' currency uncertainty brought to light the real-world challenges that regular people encounter when navigating various monetary systems. The disparate border processes illustrated how, depending on the direction of travel, execution differs even within the same crossing location. Most importantly, cases of abuse and disdain for foreign guests demonstrated that integration necessitates not only legal frameworks but also cultural beliefs that uphold justice and respect for one another. I've been persuaded by these experiences that effective integration necessitates both top-down policy implementation and bottom-up cultural changes that promote regional cohesion and identity.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS  
 During our vacation, several other observations surfaced. The 50 km/h speed limit on Tanzanian highways stood in stark contrast to Kenya's typically higher restrictions, underscoring the regulatory disparities that impact cross-border travel. The currency exchange experience exposed possibilities for abuse when visitors are unaware of fair exchange prices, in addition to disparate rates when changing between currencies.  
 Comparing Tanzania's predominantly Swahili-speaking population to Kenya's more multilingual setting shed light on the linguistic aspects of regional integration. Although having a common language should, in theory, make integration easier, communication becomes complicated due to minor variations in usage and English's fluctuating prominence.  
These findings demonstrated how seemingly insignificant language, regulatory, and economic variations have a big influence on day-to-day cross-border contacts. Travelers must adjust to the various driving laws, which could make smooth mobility more difficult. Despite their apparent similarity, language patterns contain significant variances that need for flexibility and cultural knowledge. These revelations have strengthened my comprehension that harmonization is necessary for successful integration across a variety of everyday aspects, not only high-level policy frameworks. The experience has also shown how common people, not through treaty clauses or institutional frameworks, experience integration through these routine encounters.

CONCLUSION

In addition to complementing and enhancing theoretical classroom learning, the four-day educational excursion to Arusha offered priceless firsthand insights into East African integration processes. I developed a greater awareness of the successes and difficulties in putting the Common Market, Monetary Union, Customs Union, and other integration elements into practice through border crossings, institutional visits, expert lectures, and cultural immersion.

My understanding of regional integration has been greatly impacted by the experience, which has highlighted the discrepancy between academic frameworks and real-world application. I now see integration as a multifaceted process that includes cultural identities, historical legacies, and daily human relationships in addition to economic and political aspects. Seeing firsthand how regular people deal with cross-border travel, currency conversion, and cultural differences has brought to light real-world issues that are sometimes disregarded in scholarly discourse.

I want to use these insights going forward in my academic work as well as any future professional involvement with regional integration initiatives. My resolve to seek solutions that bridge implementation gaps while honouring the many needs, identities, and goals of East African communities has been reinforced by the experience. Most significantly, I now see integration as a lived reality that impacts millions of people in the region rather than just an idealistic policy objective.