



WORKSHOP

“ Exploring Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on African States’ International Relations and Regional Integration in East Africa ”



Dr. Ng'wanza Kamata

CHIEF INTERLOCUTOR



Dr. Miraji Kitigwa
Interlocutor



Dr. William John Walwa

Interlocutor



Dr. Muhidin Shangwe

Interlocutor



Dr. Lupa Ramadhani

Interlocutor



Dr. Albert Memba

Interlocutor



Adv Irene Musokwa

Interlocutor



Dr. Rasul Ahmed Minja

Interlocutor

Date: Wednesday, 24th November 2021

Venue: Council Chamber, Main Campus | TIME: 9:00-15:00 hours

International Relations (IR) scholars and students alike have had a lot to ponder since the outbreak of Covid-19 and the World Health Organization (WHO) declaration as a pandemic. Research and debates on the rhetorical link between infectious diseases (IDs) and IR sub-disciplines such as national security, which have featured prominently in the security literature, are not new. IR students can recall Thucydides’ account of the Peloponnesian Wars and specifically how disease was decisive in demoralizing the Athenian peoples’ resilience, wreaking havoc to its army.

The severity of the ID problem globally and in Africa specifically today is well documented. For brevity purposes, in recent years, the world has come to terms with the deleterious effects of multiple devastating IDs like plague, smallpox, influenza, Ebola, Marburg virus, Hepatitis C, mad cow disease and other scourges. The global health threat is further complicated by the increasing mortality rates associated with the so-called ‘diseases of affluence (or second generation of diseases) like heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

Gaining currency at the international level today is the global civil society campaign for a waiver of the World Trade Organization’s Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) Agreement for fighting Covid-19. Proponents of the IP waiver have received a boost from indication of the US government diluted stance on the subject. Contentious concepts like ‘peoples’ vaccines’, ‘vaccines equity’, and ‘vaccines apartheid’ have recently featured in the pro-waiver debates. In sharp contrast, IP waiver opponents (obviously the pharmaceutical industry) argue that overriding TRIPs would kill off incentives for innovation and take away the profits accruing from great scientific discoveries.

At the regional level, varied responses by East African Community (EAC) member states have drawn curiosity and criticisms in equal measure. To put it bluntly, their counter-measures have in the main been short of imprints of a collective regional response to a transboundary crisis, nor were they expected to marshal a harmonized strategy given the apparent internal divisions and strained relations between member states. Nairobi’s exemptions list from the mandatory 14-day quarantine and introduction of digital health surveillance at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport saw Dodoma’s retaliating by revoking Kenya Airway’s landing permits. At some point, the feud between the two leading economies turned to a full-blown trade confrontation in maize, liquefied petroleum gas and milk products. Covid-19 testing at EAC border points further exposed the EAC unpreparedness to transboundary health crises. The Covid-19 outbreak has also offered comprehensive tests to the much-touted One-Stop Border Posts (OSBP), which ran short of Covid-19 reagents and testing kits, causing delays in releasing test results to allow faster movement of goods. More interestingly, while some state authorities were imposing mandatory lock-downs, curfews, social distancing, wearing masks, preparing for vaccinations and publicly sharing Covid-19 data, others were urging their citizens to rely on local herbal remedies like steam inhalation to boost immunity against Covid-19 and conducting national prayers.

From 2020, the world has been grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the worst global misfortunes of the 21st Century. Governments worldwide have introduced various emergency rules on their territories in an attempt to contain the pandemic. Within the EAC arrangement, the pandemic has accelerated the erosion of the democratic foundation, on which protection of human rights ultimately depends. The claim is that the pandemic has also provided some EAC governments with an ideal pretext to exploit fears and crackdown on dissent, restrict people’s rights and pass emergency legislation that risk having long-term consequences beyond the health crisis.

Some EAC governments have been alleged of using the pandemic as a pretext to introduce disproportionate restrictions on press freedom, freedom of assembly, and the ability of human rights activists, opposition political parties and civil society to act. Such measures have been adopted under special regimes, referred to as a “public health state of emergency”, implying in many cases derogations to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, among other human rights instruments.

Are such measures acceptable and justifiable? Do the measures comply with the norms enshrined in international human rights standards? Have states managed to strike a balance between “legality” and “necessity”? These are some of the questions the panel will attempt to answer by revisiting EAC governments’ reactions to the pandemic.

The panel will, among other issues, consider and discuss the current state of the Covid-19 pandemic and how it has affected the international relations of African countries in general and the EAC regional integration project in particular. Proposed themes for the panel’s presentations are:

- i. Why would states cooperate in times of a transboundary crisis?
A Snapshot of Theoretical Debates- **(Dr R. Minja)**
- ii. The Covid-19 Pandemic and Intensified Foreign Powers’ Rivalry in Africa-
(Dr. M. Shangwe)
- iii. The Covid-19 Pandemic and the EAC Deepening Integration Project-
(Dr L. Ramadhani)
- iv. Relations Among Multilateral Institutions, AU and African Countries during the Covid-19 Pandemic- **(Dr A. Memba)**
- v. EAC Member States’ responses to Covid-19 and International Human Rights Standards **(Dr M. Kitigwa)**
- vi. Coronavirus Counter-Measures, The EAC Treaty and Domestic Legal Requirements **(Ms I. Musokwa)**
- vii. Governing security during the pandemic: Implications of COVID-19 on security and violence in East Africa **(Dr W. Walwa).**