East African Federation: will the world go from 195 to 190 countries

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There will be a new country tomorrow - is not something uttered every day, and if it were the case, it would be likely that the country in question is a region of another country declaring its independence. This is the case of South Sudan, the youngest state in the world (we will come back to this). Is the union of several countries to form a single nation still being considered, as it was the case at the time of the unification of Germany or Italy? Yes, but it is rare. The unification proposal that is the most thought through - and therefore one of the most likely to be realized in the near future - is the East African Federation (EAF).

The EAF refers to the proposed unification of six East African countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda and Burundi. Since 2018, a commission has been drafting a constitution for the new country, which is expected to be implemented by 2023. These countries would then form a federation of six states, with a common currency, a common market and a common cultural identity, like the Swiss Confederation. The EAF would then become the largest country in Africa with an area of 2.5 million square kilometers (sixty Switzerlands), surpassing Algeria by 100,000 square kilometers[1]. With a square kilometers (sixty Switzerlands), surpassing largest country in Africa with an area of 2.5 million common currency, a common market and for the new country, which is expected to be a commission has been drafting a constitution for the new state? They are primarily economic. The landlocked countries would benefit from access to Dar es Salaam and Mombasa (in Tanzania and Kenya respectively), two of the largest ports on the east coast of Africa. In addition, the absence of internal borders would greatly facilitate the exchange of goods and information among states whose average age is just under 20 years.

This desire for unification is not new either. The idea of a federation of the former British colonies in East Africa existed at the time of their independence in the early 1960s, but these plans never came to life. However, Africa has many inter-governmental organizations, the most important of which is the African Union (AU). Launched in 2002 as the successor to the 1963 Organization of African Unity, the AU brings together the 55 countries of continental Africa and neighbouring island states. Its purpose is to ensure cooperation and unity among African nations and to promote peace and security. The headquarters of the Secretary are located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In addition, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) recognized by the African Union exist in tandem, aiming at more localized economic integration. One of these RECs is the East African Community (EAC), which is composed of the six countries of the East African Community and the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights. It is also the place where those responsible for the Tsutsi genocide (we will come back to this) were judged[2]

- **Uganda: a tyrant’s heritage**

 Unlike the surrounding countries, Uganda was not a colony of a Great Power. It declared its independence in the early 1960s, but these plans never came to life. However, Africa has many inter-governmental organizations, the most important of which is the African Union (AU). Launched in 2002 as the successor to the 1963 Organization of African Unity, the AU brings together the 55 countries of continental Africa and neighbouring island states. Its purpose is to ensure cooperation and unity among African nations and to promote peace and security. The headquarters of the Secretary are located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In addition, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) recognized by the African Union exist in tandem, aiming at more localized economic integration. One of these RECs is the East African Community (EAC), which is composed of the six countries of the East African Community and the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights. It is also the place where those responsible for the Tsutsi genocide (we will come back to this) were judged[2]

- **Kenya and Tanzania: African stereotypes**

 We don’t talk about nature enough in these Ingénieur.e du Monde articles. Kenya and Tanzania are the safari destinations. These countries are home to the «Big Five» (a term unfortunately derived from hunting) which designates the lion, leopard, elephant, black rhino, and the African buffalo combo. The Serengeti National Park, located mainly in Tanzania but shared with Kenya, is famous worldwide for the annual migration of wildebeest, zebra and gazelle.

 Tanzania is also the home of three dormant volcanoes, Shira, Kibo and Mawenzi, which together form Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, with Uhuru Peak on Kibo volcano rising to 5,895 meters. Tanzania is also the fusion between the British colony of Tanganyika, and the Sultanate of Zanzibar, also a former British protectorate. Remember that the name «Tanzania» is a zipped-word formed from Tanganyika (Tan) and Zanzibar (Zan). The city of Arusha in Tanzania, at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro, would serve as the capital of the EAF. Arusha, although sparsely populated, is a symbolic city, as it is the seat of the East African Community and the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights. It is also the place where those responsible for the Tsutsi genocide (we will come back to this) were judged[2]

- **South Sudan: the 195th state**

 As mentioned earlier, South Sudan is the youngest country in the World, separated from Sudan in 2011. For many years, Egypt and the United Kingdom, Sudan became independent in 1956. Before this separation, the country was a textbook case of colonial borders without consideration for peoples. For the country was extremely heterogeneous: the north was populated by Arabs of Muslim faith, and the south by Nilotic peoples also living in Kenya and Uganda, and practicing Christianity or traditional African religions of sub-Saharan Africa. As a result of these differences, Sudan experienced two civil wars between 1955-1972 and 1983-2005, which saw the north and the south of the country clash. At the end of these conflicts, South Sudan became independent in 2011. However, the country, largely weakened, lacks infrastructure, and an unteenth civil war broke out in 2013, fuelled by tribal rivalries, until a ceasefire in 2020. South Sudan joined the East African Community in 2016.

- **Rwanda and Burundi : recovering form a slaughter**

 You may be wondering why two relatively small countries exist surrounded by larger ones. To put it simply, the region of present-day Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi was part of the German Empire until the end of the First World War. After the German defeat, its colonies were divided among the victorious countries. Tanzania became a British colony, while Rwanda and Burundi became Belgian.
One of the first things that comes to mind when talking about these countries is obviously the massacre of the Tutsis in 1993-1994. An extremely dark page of African history for which a single paragraph would not do justice... However, the efforts made by Rwanda and Burundi since the genocide are remarkable: Rwanda, in particular, aspires to become the Singapore of Africa\[7\], the business center of the continent. To this end, the country is taking advantage of its strategic location and aims to develop its commercial and entrepreneurial attractiveness and infrastructure. Rwanda has become one of the safest countries on the continent, and Kigali one of the cleanest capitals in the world.

In terms of religion, it is important to know that the African continent is almost perfectly divided in two between Islam and Christianity. The north of the continent is essentially of Muslim faith, especially Sunni, and the south of the Christian majority. It is interesting to note that a portion of the population still practices traditional African beliefs that are often spiritualistic and animistic. These beliefs can be practiced in conjunction with the Abrahamic religions. Religious difference is still a source of conflict between peoples, as for example in Nigeria, where the population is half Muslim and half Christian, or in Sudan before the year 2011, as we have seen before. The countries of East Africa are predominantly Christian with a Muslim minority on the side, which again creates cohesion.

In the end, true progress is made through the exchange of goods, technology, knowledge, and culture, and the key is to put in place institutions capable of ensuring that these exchanges take place without injustice and inequality\[8\]. If the East African Federation meets this criterion, it will truly be beneficial. If not, it may mark the beginning of a single leader’s authoritarian rule over 183 million people. In any case, the only answer is to let time decide. A simple and banal answer, the exact opposite of the six East African countries.

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