

## **LOOKING EAST: UGANDA'S EMERGING ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY WITH THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The focus of this Article is on how, over the decade, Uganda, one of the East African countries, has related with the nations of the Asia-Pacific Region. The bilateral relations have been premised on economic diplomacy rather than on the traditional political diplomacy. It is argued that the bilateral economic relations should be characterized by a symbiosis whereby both Uganda and the nations of Asia-Pacific Region gain from their economic interaction on equal basis. This is a significant departure from Uganda's economic relations with the imperialist powers of the West which economic relations, especially during the Cold-War period, while based on exploitation of Uganda's resources by the West. The cardinal reason why Uganda decided to "Look East" both before and after the Cold-War period was to diversify its economic relations for its benefit. The Article is guided by two theories, namely (1) The Theory of Comparative Advantage; and (2) Classical Trade Theory. Methodologically, the Article largely relied on secondary resources to navigate the historical and contemporary dimensions of economic diplomacy between Uganda and the nations of the Asia-Pacific Region. The Article concludes that Uganda and other developing countries of Africa and the Global South stand to benefit from their economic diplomacy as the result of changes that have been brought about by the demise of the Cold-War at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the subsequent Post-Cold War World Order, a major transformation in international relations and diplomacy.

**Keywords:** Cold War, Diplomacy, Economic Diplomacy, International Relations, Political Diplomacy, Trade Policy, World Order.

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the cardinal themes emerging from the foreign relations and diplomacy of the Asia-Pacific region in recent times is the notion of "looking east." The fascinating thing about this notion is that it is both outward and inward looking. It is inward looking in the sense that states of the Asia-Pacific region (such as China, Korea, and Japan) see other states as designing a "look east" policy with respect to their relations with these Asia-Pacific states. It is outward looking in the sense that states of the Asia-Pacific region see themselves as providing alternative focus for the diplomacy and foreign policy of other states, especially those in Africa and Latin America. In both senses, however, the nucleus of the matter is the construction of a world view that would like to move the center of the diplomacy of these states from the traditional Western moorings to Eastern ones.

This article does not, in any way, claim to provide a comprehensive account of Uganda's purported "look east" policy with respect to the Asia-Pacific region. Neither does it set out to provide the last word on this issue. Rather, it frames the issues surrendering historical and emergent relations between Uganda and the Asia-Pacific region. The article thus provides a framework for scholars and practitioners of diplomacy through which these relations can be

further examined and rationalized; and through such a framework, a real policy for Uganda's relations with that part of the world can at some point begin to be articulated.

It is also important to point out that whereas the individual members of the Asia-Pacific region, such as Korea, do have a clearly articulated policy towards Africa – and even East Africa – Uganda does not have a corresponding policy with regard to its long-term diplomatic relations with these states. Issues such as peaceful co-existence, non-alignment and the like, which have been used to explain the basis of Uganda's relations with these and other states fall short of a concrete foreign policy towards these states. And it is to the beginning of the creation and articulation of such a policy that this article contributes a framework through which a more detailed understanding, and hence policy can emerge at some point. The issues that are framed in this article surround the diplomatic relations with these other states, both as tempered by the Cold War period, and as they should be tempered in the emerging currents of post-Cold War international relations.

The article is anchored on two theories, namely, comparative advantage theory and classical trade theory. Methodologically, the article is based on an analysis of secondary sources such as books and journal articles. The sub-sections of the article include: conceptual framework; historical relations and emerging economic diplomacy; issues of economic diplomacy; Uganda's emerging Asia-Pacific policy; the international politics of 'Looking East'; regional dimensions of 'Looking East'; conclusions and policy recommendations.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Bayne and Woolcock (2007) define economic diplomacy as a decision-making and negotiation process in international economic relations. It is implemented by various actors – state and non-state – geared towards economic development via track one (state) and track two (non-state) levels. In earlier diplomatic practices, ministries of Foreign Affairs, Trade/Commerce and Finance conducted economic diplomacy. However, in recent times, other institutions and/or organizations are also involved, including but not limited to Multinational Corporations (MNCs) also termed Transnational Corporations (TNCs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and sub-central government departments.

The article is based on two theories; namely, comparative advantage theory and classical trade theory. Comparative advantage is a concept associated with the nineteenth century English Economist Ricardo (1817) who contended that global output would increase when the principle of comparative advantage is applied by countries to determine what goods and services they should specialize in producing. He suggested that such countries should do so by allocating their scarce resources to produce goods and services for which they have a comparative cost advantage. Comparative advantage is, therefore, a theory about the benefits that specialization and trade would bring, rather than a strict prediction about actual behavior. Comparative advantage is, however, not a static concept; it may change over time. For example, non-renewable resources can slowly run out, thereby increasing the cost of production and reducing the gain from trade.

The classical trade theory was developed by Adam Smith (1776) and is usually considered to mark the beginning of classical economics. Smith argued that the wealth of nations was based not on gold but on trade; that when two parties freely agree to exchange things of value, because both see a profit in the exchange, total wealth increases. Classical economists observe that markets generally regulate themselves when free of coercion. Smith referred to this as a metaphorical 'invisible hand', which refers to the notion that private incentives are

aligned with society welfare maximization under certain competitive conditions. Smith repeatedly warned of the dangers of monopoly and stressed the importance of competition.

Economic advantages may arise from country differences in factors such as resource endowments, labour, capital, technology or entrepreneurship. Thus, classical trade theory contends that the basis for international trade can be attributed to differences in production characteristics and resource endowments which are founded on economic advantages, its shortcomings notwithstanding.

### **Historical Relations and Emerging Economic Diplomacy**

Uganda's relations with the states of the Asia-Pacific region are not new. There has been continuous diplomatic relations between Uganda and Korea since Uganda's independence in 1962. The relations between Uganda and states of the Asia-Pacific region have been largely bilateral and those bilateral relations have grown, and even thrived throughout the Cold War period to the post-Cold War era. That these relations firmly thrived within the framework of bilateral relations and diplomacy is not surprising, given the tenor and character of the international political economy, and of the international political system that was in vogue at the creation and nurturing of those relations.

However, the old framework of the Cold War, against which the historical relations between Uganda and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region were constructed, has given way to a more open climate. This climate is characterized, among other things, by the process of globalization in all its various dimensions. The realities of a globalizing and a globalized world have, in turn, laid a lot of emphasis on the shape and structure of the international political economy that has been emerging since the end of the Cold War. This has in turn encouraged states to look more and more closely at the economic basis of their relations. It is in this context that Uganda has looked to that region in more recent times with lenses that have been colored by an economic hue.

Uganda's emerging emphasis on economic diplomacy sometimes termed 'development' diplomacy (Baligidde, 2012) encompasses other regions besides the Asia-Pacific region. But its emphasis on economic diplomacy, as opposed to the more multilateral and multi-lateralized frameworks for its economic diplomacy elsewhere, such as with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region, with the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the like. All these various strands of Uganda's economic diplomacy have been propelled, in part at least, by the requirements of a globalizing world; and in that context, Uganda's emerging economic diplomacy can be seen as part of the fashion of globalization and its processes. The new economic diplomacy is also in part the product of the realization that the African renaissance – and the Ugandan one also – will ride on the back of the economic rejuvenation and reconstruction. Also, the new economic diplomacy is partly a result of the need for the government of President Yoweri K. Museveni to disengage from the bitter memories of the Iddi Amin's fascist regime and the Tito Okello's brief military junta, which hit Uganda especially hard economically, and in terms of Uganda's ability to survive with dignity in the post-Cold War international and political economy (Mamdani, 1983; Omara-Otumu, 1987).

These all explain the reasons for Uganda's emerging economic diplomacy. In that emerging diplomacy, the bottom line is that when people think of foreign policy for Uganda, they must color it economically. Looking at diplomacy via economic lenses is not new; and in this sense, the look east perspective is not new either. Indeed, in the late 1990s and early twenty

first century, there were statements by President Museveni to the effect that Uganda's foreign policy and its diplomacy should be based on economic considerations, and, therefore, hitherto, all permanent secretaries were required to attain Masters degrees in Business Administration, and related disciplines for those who did not have them (Okoth, 2007).

However, remained statement of intent, to the extent that they were never effected empirically. What is new is that in current times, it is a perspective that has emerging themes and rationalizations that were not there before.

### **Issues of Economic Diplomacy**

The recreation and re-imagination of Uganda's diplomacy and its rebirth with an economic hue is perhaps timely, given as noted earlier, the continued salience of the lessons and imperatives of the processes of globalization. But while this is true, an emerging economic diplomacy needs to be framed against the acknowledgement that it is not possible to pursue an effective economic diplomacy on the basis of a bad, non-performing economy. Hence, the challenge for policy makers who would quite rightly wish to capture the economic benefits to be reaped from a globalizing world is to set the economy on an even keel once more.

A mature economic diplomacy needs to ask different sets of questions than those that Uganda has normally asked with respect to its relationship with other countries of the world, and particularly those euphemistically referred to as development partners. The normal question that has been asked – which is a further reason why Uganda's earlier intention to practice economic diplomacy did not take off – was what the other country can give to us. The proper question to ask should be what we can take from here that is needed there, and which can strengthen our relationship, making us less dependent. There is here an important psychological basis for the practice of economic diplomacy; that it needs, in order to thrive, to be based on an exchange and not on a passive framework. If a country's economic diplomacy cannot be founded on this relationship of exchange, then the whole of that country's diplomacy will lie supine as the rest of the world walks all over it. Indeed, this has been the bane on Uganda's political diplomacy until recently.

Until now, at least in the fifteen years or so there has begun to emerge the contours of an economic diplomacy for Uganda. But the practice of that diplomacy has been rather disjointed. One reason for this is that the bureaucratic paraphernalia of the practice of that diplomacy has not been very clearly understood – or articulated. The effective practice of economic diplomacy requires a movement away from the traditional perspective of the practice of diplomacy as being the preserve of the ministry of foreign affairs alone. Traditional diplomacy took that perspective, when in large part, the practice of diplomacy was an almost purely political affair, concerned only with political relationship (Mwagiru, 2004; Barston, 2006). That perspective has changed dramatically in modern diplomacy, and especially so in modern multilateral diplomacy, which has made the practice of diplomacy more technical and more complex than it was in the pre-first world war years. The lesson to be learnt has been, for example, that it is not possible to pursue economic diplomacy without an understanding of the politics of diplomacy. Politics and economics are complementary and are, in synergy, a *sine qua non* for the pursuit of an effective economic diplomacy.

There is also the epistemological question of whether for an economic diplomacy to exist, it must be articulated, or whether it can exist without being officially articulated. This is an issue that is also related to the "look east" policy that has been mooted for the relations between Uganda and Korea, and with other states of the Asia-Pacific region. Diplomacy

ought to be a deliberate act, or a deliberate set of actions done internationally on behalf of the country on behalf of which the actions are being done. This is probably even truer of economic diplomacy, in which the stakes for survival can be quite high. Whether a policy exists or not can be judged from a checklist whose menu is quite straightforward. In order for there to exist a policy, such a policy should have been articulated by the policy makers; and its articulation should ideally have been preceded by consensus building, which can be gauged by public debate about the policy and the issues underlying it (Modelski, 1962). Secondly, the policy that is articulated must have a rationale behind it; and for a policy on economic diplomacy, that rationale must firmly be the service of the national interest broadly defined. Thirdly, for a policy to exist, there must be a coherent plan about how that policy – and its expected benefits – will be realized. And lastly, there must be a clearly calculable output that will result from the pursuit of the policy that has been articulated. For, if there is no output, seen as benefit to the national interest, then there would be no reason to pursue that policy (Morgenthau, 2006).

### **Uganda's Emerging Asia-Pacific Policy**

This definition of what constitutes a policy helps to frame Uganda's approach to the Asia-Pacific region. It is termed an "approach" because strictly speaking it is not a policy. Since it lacks the ingredients suggested earlier, it cannot constitute a policy. But there is an emerging framework for a policy. That framework can be discerned from the weight that is being given to economic diplomacy (although that too needs to be clearly articulated, so that the framework and the basis for its practice can be put in place). The contemporary practice of economic diplomacy points to many directions. But one clear direction is that of the Asia-Pacific region, which has a lot of potential for the growth of Uganda, and the strengthening of its capacity as an actor in the international economic system.

Uganda's emerging economic diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region has some historical continuity, in that it appears to be fuelled bilaterally, rather than multilaterally. In other words, the emerging policy seems to be founded on the strategy of dealing bilaterally with each of the states of that region, be they Korea, China, Japan, Malaysia, or the others. That this strategy has survived the trend of the multilateralization of diplomacy also suggests that there is much merit in the view that bilateral diplomacy is certainly not dead, and that reports of its death are highly exaggerated. The major question that should arise is why Uganda needs to look east now: why should Uganda develop and articulate a "look east" policy that is coherent?

One reason why there is an emerging policy to "look east" is *not* that relations between Uganda and its so-called traditional partners have been strained in recent times or even that those traditional (western) partners have been making too harsh demands on Uganda. As was noted earlier, Uganda has had diplomatic relations with countries of the Asia-Pacific region since 1962. Hence, there is nothing new about consolidating these relationships. The best way to understand this issue is to accept the perspective that given the complex character of the contemporary world, all states need to look beyond their traditional trading and other partnerships, and cultivate those which they may have neglected, but which can yield much to the national interest. Also, to suggest that Uganda's emerging economic diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region is prompted by the harsh conditions being given by the IMF and the World Bank suggests that Uganda is engaged in a renegade diplomacy, which has no standards. Neither of these perspectives can be demonstrated to be true; therefore, the reasons for the emerging policy towards the east must lie elsewhere.

Before examining the specific benefits that are to be had from pursuing an economic diplomacy in the east, the broad framework against which such a policy is emerging needs to be appreciated. After the end of the Cold War, there was a mood for a new freedom for states; which essentially meant that states felt a little freer to engage with those with whom they could not comfortably have dealt with within the confining political and ideological constraints of the Cold War. Secondly, as that ideological straightjacket was being removed, the world had begun to change in very fundamental ways. One of these changes was that the world had become increasingly interdependent in all sectors of life; and this meant that a policy of isolation on the basis of ideology was no longer possible in this environment of complex interdependence. Thirdly, the process of the globalization of the world, which had begun with that very interdependence, was well and truly underway; and in the face of that process, which involved all the actors in the globe, a policy of isolation was no longer tenable. Fourthly, after the Cold War, there began to emerge the appreciation that there were broader meanings of “security”, and that states’ security was to be attained beyond physical security (Okoth, 2008; Buzan, 1991).

One tenable reason for the emerging policy – of both economic diplomacy and also “looking east” – is that Uganda, like other states in its circumstances, must be involved in the genuine search for new markets and opportunities. Until now, Uganda and its diplomacy had paid very close attention to the west, but in the end, that attention had not helped Uganda to reap the dividends which its potential otherwise suggests. Since Uganda’s economic diplomacy with the west can be judged to have delivered much less than it promised, and certainly not independent and self-sustainable in many spheres of common engagement, it is only rational that a new government, with new thinking, and perhaps with less emotional and other baggage tying it to the west, can afford to be a bit more adventurous. This spirit of adventure entails creating space for Uganda in the post-Cold War regulatory landscape.

A second major reason that can explain the emerging policy of “looking east” is that for decades now, Ugandan leadership made a promise for the industrialization of Uganda, the fulfillment of which has not even begun. One reason for this is that maybe the models that Ugandan leadership had in mind for the process of industrialization to get underway were not attainable because they were western-oriented, and hence did not make use of the strengths of Uganda. In this sense, looking east makes sense because the countries of the east are industrialized, taking off from positions more or less like that of Uganda; hence there are important lessons to be learnt, and advantage can be taken of this by making a bold diplomatic movement towards the east.

There is also the question of what Uganda can offer – and what states of the Asia-Pacific region can gain from more intense economic and other diplomatic relations with Uganda. For if Uganda’s diplomacy looks east towards Korea and other states in the region, their diplomacy must also look out towards Uganda and the region. Such mutual relations are imperative because they make possible a vertical deepening of relationships between the concerned states and regions, rather than merely a horizontal widening of relationships (The Central/East Europe Research Group’s Report, 2003). A vertical deepening of relationships essentially means that both sides of the diplomatic matrix in question appreciate the mutual gains to be gained from common engagement. Such a vertical deepening – with strong roots – enhances the standing and the clout of each partner internationally. A horizontal widening, on the other hand, does not increase the standing of either or both partners in the relationship, although it may do so for one of them (Webi *et al*, 2015).

In defining emerging diplomatic and economic relations with the east, however, it is important that Uganda, and others, do not exchange one uncomfortable and exploitative set of relationships for another. For in the long run, it will not have made much sense to run away from the economic and financial clutches of western states and institutions, only to end up firmly within an eastern set of clutches. And here really lies the fundamental problem with the way in which emerging relationships are being defined, at least in some circles. Thus, there are structural problems that need to be done away with if Uganda's economic diplomacy is to grow and flourish. But to remove them, Uganda requires also that the policy makers do away with a certain mind-set that sees Uganda merely as a recipient that has nothing to offer in return. The ideas of an eastern policy certainly should not be founded on the replacement of one set of donor states by another. When a country's diplomatic relations are based on receiving aid, or assistance (which is a euphemism that does not hide the essential realities in the relationship), then such a country is susceptible and open to verbal and diplomatic uncultured that may arise from the donor state. The point is that structurally unequal relationship gives rise to a multitude of problems and attitudes, none of which promotes the sort of relationship that is based on mutuality that the diplomacy of states such as Uganda should be endeavouring to promote.

### **The International Politics of 'Looking East'**

Whichever way one looks at the looking east perspective, even as it is emerging, it cannot be seen in isolation from the dynamics of international politics. Hence such a policy, amongst other things, should be couched on the understanding of how the relationship can be used to pay dividends for the country in the international political and economic arena. Of the essence in the eastern world's promotion of a look east policy by different states is the idea that the international political system is becoming multi-polarized, and that the east is emerging as one of the pillars of multi-polar world. In this perspective, the countries of Africa, for example, need to hitch their wagon to the east because this can contribute to strengthening the eastern states of the Asia-Pacific region, and in doing so, help to prompt the democratization of international relations. The democratization of international relations will, amongst other things, lead to the development of a fairer and more equitable international order. And part of the essence of this creation will be to contain "the attempt of the great powers to dominate international affairs" (Latin America Research Group, 2004).

One offshoot of that kind of relationship would be that the countries of the east, together with others in Africa, Central America, and the like, can join hands through consultation, concertation, and coordination to promote the role of international organizations such as the United Nations, in promoting the role of the Security Council, and in protecting the national interests of the Global South in fora such as the World Trade Organization in the various rounds of negotiations in that forum (Latin America Research Group, 2004). This sort of relationship would thus aim at a common stand in pushing for a redefinition of the contemporary international political and economic regime. This sort of policy has a place in the diplomacy of any country, including small countries such as Uganda. Small states, acting alone, can never hope effectively to push the agenda for change in the international system; but working in concert, they can do so, and their diplomacy should at least in part be employed in that direction.

The idea that diplomacy should aim at creating a more rational and just world is not new. It is an idea that African countries, and their friends in the developing world, have pushed in the past, especially through the move, thirty or so years ago, to demand for the establishment of a new international economic order. That debate did not end in favour of these states; and given

the structure of the international economic and trading system that then existed, perhaps it was never destined to make any progress. However, the world has changed somewhat now, even though the contours of the international economic, trading, and political system have not changed substantially (Keohane, 1996). Nevertheless, the struggle to change that system needs to continue, and it can only gain momentum if the disadvantaged states join hands and fight the battle together. To this extent, a look east policy can be seen as one strand of the diplomatic architecture that needs to be constructed in order to give impetus to the drive to change the thinking and the current rationale of the international system in all its aspects. But it would remain only one strand in that architecture; it can never be the only pillar, because that struggle needs other like-minded hands to join in.

### **Regional Dimensions of ‘Looking East’ Policy**

The decades of bilateral relations between Uganda and Korea provides an opportunity to look at the dimension in which the contemporary system is heading, take stock of the achievements of the forty years of bilateral relationship, and raise the debate about the need to broaden that relationship structurally so that its benefits can more clearly be felt and appreciated. Contemporary diplomacy has become more and more multilateralized. But it is also a truism that contemporary diplomacy has more than ever developed economic concerns. Indeed, the multi-lateralization of contemporary diplomacy has ridden on the back of the bringing to the fore of economic dimensions to diplomacy. In the African context, this has happened through the fast pace that sub-regional organizations have grown. A lesson has been learnt from the growth of these sub-regional organizations such as the East African Community (EAC) (EAC, 2000) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is that those states belonging to these organizations are stronger, and have better bargaining power when they act as organizations, than when they act individually. The heart of the lesson is that to some extent, states need to subordinate their individual policies (and bilateral diplomacies) to the organizations of which they are apart (Adar and Ngunyi, 1994).

Sub-regional organizations such as the East African Community contain very large markets: much larger, certainly, than those of any member states individually. The existence of a large market creates bargaining power; and it is that collective bargaining power that should be at the basis of diplomatic – and economic – policies such as looking east. The point being made here is that given these emergent strengths, it is no longer useful for individual diplomacies to go it alone, especially when they are dealing with partners that are at least economically stronger. Hence, instead of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, or Southern Sudan to individually cultivate the “look east” (or elsewhere) policies, the Community itself should be the one spearheading such a policy. Indeed, doing so would make the member states more attractive, as partners, because they would be standing on the solid ground of a regionally integrated entity that would be a stronger and more persuasive diplomatic and economic interlocutor in a harsh international economic and political climate. It is this sort of philosophy that has driven the European Union, for example, and which has also made it a formidable actor on the international stage (Okoth, 2017).

In analyzing diplomatic policies such as the “look east” one, it is often forgotten that the states towards which the policy is directed (China, Japan, Korea, etc) have national interests and needs now and in the future, in whose fulfillment their diplomacy needs to engage. Because this reciprocal aspect of reality is forgotten, the policies developed by countries like Uganda become one-sided in their reach. These states too have strategic interests, and it is in those interests that their diplomacy is oriented towards different partners. They need new markets so that their economies can diversify in ways that will meet their development and



security strategies. On the other hand, they do – or will – soon face shortages in certain resources which they consider crucial for their survival, and hence for their collective national interests. For sure, sub-regions such as East Africa cannot provide all the sources that these states will require; but they should go all out to negotiate the provision of what they can offer. But if that is self-evident, it also seems self-evident that a larger entity such as COMESA can substantially provide a larger amount of these resources. And if the Community or the common market can expand their membership to capture countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo with its natural resources, forests, and so on, then it becomes clear that a “look east” policy that sees the broader picture has vast possibilities and potential.

### **Conclusions and Policy Recommendations**

The past decades of relations between Uganda and the Asia-Pacific region have achieved some things for sure; but these achievements can only be measured in bilateral diplomatic terms. Those relations have opened up the horizons for Uganda and these states, although perhaps the penetration of economies and markets has been more in one direction. Also, the relations in the past decades have had much to do with trade, and perhaps with a one-way promotion of culture. These things of course cannot be blamed on any of the partners, although they suggest areas of future strengthening. But seen from the perspective of what should be achieved in future, two main challenges and perspectives will need to be considered. The first one is that there needs to be a strengthening of bilateral diplomacy in some areas; and the second is that there needs to be a greater regionalization of diplomacy with respect to the policy of “looking east”.

Bilaterally, going beyond trade, certain aspects of the life of both sides in the relationship need to be strengthened in order to give more depth to the relationship that has emerged over the decades. One such area is the strengthening of cultural aspects of diplomacy. In the record so far, only one side in this diplomatic equation has been able to make its culture – in the wide dimension of the meaning of culture – felt in the bilateral relationship. Together with the deepening of the cultural diplomacy between the two, there needs to be more and more people-to-people diplomacy (track-three diplomacy) because it is the relationship among people on which strong diplomatic and other relations are founded. At the same time, other aspects of relationships, such as the tourism sector, need to be cultivated more and more, so that they become one of the defining elements of the relationships, thus strengthening even more the bilateral people-to-people diplomacy. Also, to consolidate the growth of this cultural diplomacy, there will need to be even more educational exchanges between Uganda and the countries of Asia-Pacific region and particularly among the youth. In the final analysis, it is the relationships and interactions between the peoples of these countries that will help to “force the spring” and hence create a more dynamic and meaningful relationship.

With respect to the economic dimensions of the look east policy, the future clearly lies in the multi-lateralization, through greater regionalization of the existing economic and trading relationships. This will mean more and more going beyond bilateralism where these relationships are concerned. Over the next fifty years, the corporate strength, which Uganda derives from its membership of sub-regional organizations, such as the East African Community and COMESA, ought to be brought more to bear in the policy of “looking east”. This regionalization of the economic relationships is eventually not something that the two sides can opt out of, because it will be very much of the essence in defining a mutually beneficial and perhaps more equal economic and trading relationship.

However, as “looking east” develops into a fully recognizable policy, an important caveat needs to guide its development: that “looking east” does not mean, and should never mean, ignoring or turning back on the traditional interlocutors, especially those in the west. If the policy of looking east came to mean abandoning other relationships, then it will become a policy that will flounder on the rocks. Whatever else that can be said about the international system, it is a system that is complex and dynamic; and these complexity and dynamism need to be preserved, even as diplomacies strike out in new directions. The international system cannot now escape from the globalization that has crept in; and this globalization requires to be nurtured on the basis of the diversities of the global village in which diplomacy will more and more be called upon to ply its trade. For, in the final analysis, the beat of diplomacy and foreign policy resembles that of the heart; it beats in a rhythm of diastole enlargement and systole contradiction, each complementing the other, and thereby consolidating life.

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