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# Reviving Tanzania's regional leadership and global engagement

## Priorities for an effective foreign policy reset

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# Summary

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- Tanzania has recently begun to re-emerge from a period of damaging isolationism under former president John Magufuli. This isolationism obstructed international investment and undermined the country’s credible history of global and continental leadership. Following Magufuli’s death in 2021, his successor, Samia Suluhu Hassan, commissioned an official review of foreign policy strategy – seeking a first refresh of policy for over two decades. This review provides a chance to consolidate Tanzania’s revival as an economic and diplomatic leader.
  - Tanzania’s rising economic influence and its ambitions to complete major cross-border railway and energy infrastructure projects will demand a more active leadership role on regional integration efforts, alongside commitments on peacekeeping and conflict mediation.
  - Re-engagement with a range of international partners is already delivering greater choice and resilience in trade and foreign investment links. Examples of this are the pursuit of stronger ties with countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam; the consolidation of emerging strategic partnerships, particularly with the Gulf Arab states; and a repair of established relations with China, India and Western partners.
  - A gradual renewal of Tanzania’s commitment and voice on international and multilateral issues is also under way. But this renewal is yet to be reinforced by decisive action to rejoin frameworks from which the country withdrew at the peak of its isolationism under Magufuli. President Samia’s foreign policy review may target further opportunities for leadership on global challenges and opportunities, including on climate change, critical minerals and peacebuilding.
  - Entrenched suspicion of external investment remains a significant obstacle in the pursuit of external partnerships, exacerbated by a lack of coordination between economic diplomacy objectives and incomplete domestic governance and democratic reforms. The suppression of public debate – most notably in relation to controversy surrounding investments in Tanzanian port infrastructure by Gulf states – risks making this obstacle larger still.
  - Bolder steps are needed to create long-term safeguards against a return to isolation or cautious disengagement. The foreign policy review currently under way must target a refreshed strategic vision that emphasizes the assertive and positive dimensions of non-alignment.

- This research paper contends that a slow and hesitant approach alone will not be enough to safeguard against a return to isolation. A new strategy must emphasize proactive engagement with regional institutions and on global issues. The paper presents a series of recommendations aimed at both Tanzanian policymakers and Tanzania's international partners. Among the specific recommendations, the paper calls for policymakers to:
  - **Take a more proactive approach to regional economic integration.** Tanzania must seize opportunities in its immediate region, anticipating its expected rise as the largest economy in East Africa and helping to safeguard the viability of major cross-border infrastructure projects.
  - **Consolidate Tanzania's role in regional conflict resolution.** To mitigate suggestions of divided loyalties and connect with Tanzania's historical record on conflict mediation efforts, it could bolster the role of Arusha and Zanzibar in hosting talks and show leadership on wider security issues in East and southern Africa, including in the maritime space.
  - **Rejoin multilateral governance and legal initiatives.** Tanzania should rejoin frameworks from which it has previously withdrawn, such as the Open Government Partnership, and put in place legal safeguards to mitigate against future departures.
  - **Ensure the new strategy explicitly highlights a goal to engage with, and learn from the experience of, other middle-income countries.** This could include further consolidating relations with emerging partners such as Indonesia, Vietnam and countries in Central and Eastern Europe.
  - **Embrace international leadership opportunities to advance core principles of South–South cooperation.** Tanzania could signal its intent to seek non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for the first time since 2006, highlighting its existing peacekeeping contributions and furthering its wider agenda for reform of the UN system to allow greater African representation.
  - **Be transparent about foreign investment agreements and allow dissenting views on foreign policy to be aired freely.** A heavy-handed response to criticism – as, for example, in relation to port infrastructure investment by Gulf states – can exacerbate isolationist tendencies and in turn discourage the involvement of external partners in essential major projects.
  - **Go beyond simple platitudes when mentioning climate change and other environmental issues.** The review must help to create a reference point for Tanzanian officials as they engage in international forums while pursuing major oil and gas projects. The development of a critical minerals strategy should also be aligned with the country's objectives in economic diplomacy.
  - **Signal a new approach and distinguish the new foreign policy strategy from that of the previous administration with refreshed terminology.** The new strategy must be seen as a turning point, and must reject entrenched norms of hesitation or suspicion in external relations. Merely retaining the same basic strategic framing of economic diplomacy and non-alignment, while simply adding new themes, would convey a message of greater passivity than Tanzania's ambitions deserve.

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# 01

# Introduction

**A refresh of Tanzania’s foreign policy strategy is long overdue. The official review commissioned by President Samia Suluhu Hassan presents an opportunity to define a bolder strategic vision.**

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Formerly one of Africa’s leading voices on the global stage and a fierce supporter of the continent’s liberation struggles, Tanzania faded in international prominence after the Cold War amid a drive for domestic political and economic liberalization. In recognition of this shift, Tanzania’s first ever official strategy – the New Foreign Policy of 2001 – directed that external relations must be primarily guided by economic objectives. Yet, under the fervently nationalist presidency of John Magufuli from 2015–21, Tanzania damaged trade and investment partnerships, withdrew from several international commitments and clashed with international organizations including the EU and the UN. Since Magufuli’s death in 2021, his successor as president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, has begun repairing Tanzania’s global image, including by commissioning an official review of foreign policy in 2023–24 – seeking the first successful refresh of strategy for more than two decades.

An updated and effective Tanzanian foreign policy is therefore overdue, and could have significant wider implications for Tanzania’s regional and international standing. Tanzania is strategically located between East and southern Africa, and is endowed with major natural resources including mineral deposits and offshore gas. Given insecurity in the neighbouring Great Lakes region and northern Mozambique, Tanzania’s own avoidance of major internal conflict makes it an important regional anchor for stability. Tanzania’s current population of 65 million people – roughly similar to that of the UK – is projected to double by 2050 according to UN figures, which would make Tanzania the world’s 15th largest country by population in that year.<sup>1</sup> Its political future is also in the balance: the former socialist

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<sup>1</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2022) ‘World Population Prospects 2022’, [https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/wpp2022\\_summary\\_of\\_results.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/wpp2022_summary_of_results.pdf); Institut national d’études démographiques (2022), ‘World projections > Projections by countries’, [https://www.ined.fr/en/everything\\_about\\_population/data/world-projections/projections-by-countries](https://www.ined.fr/en/everything_about_population/data/world-projections/projections-by-countries) (accessed on 8 Apr. 2024).

liberation movement Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) has governed Tanzania since independence in 1962,<sup>2</sup> with a centralization of power under the Magufuli era eroding a fragile commitment to democracy since multipartyism began in 1992.

This research paper argues that the government's foreign policy review must seize the opportunity to define a bolder strategic vision for Tanzania's foreign policy. The momentum of Tanzania's international revival has so far placed an emphasis on carefully rebuilding relations with a diverse range of partners, creating greater resilience in Tanzania's search for external investment. Yet a slow and hesitant approach alone will not be enough to safeguard against a return to isolation. A new strategy must emphasize proactive engagement with regional institutions and on global issues, while maintaining the balance between domestic interests and external partnerships for investment.

The paper is grounded in an extensive in-country research process as part of a collaborative project between Chatham House and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) titled *Tanzania's Foreign Policy Agenda: Economic Diplomacy and International Agency*. Insights were generated from private roundtable dialogues with Tanzanian and regional stakeholders, held in Arusha and Dar es Salaam in 2023, as well as interviews with Tanzanian foreign affairs experts and policymakers.<sup>3</sup> Its findings seek to guide Tanzanian leaders in the design and implementation of their new foreign policy strategy. The paper aims equally to foster better understanding of Tanzania's foreign policy among the country's external partners – who frequently cite the inaccessibility and unpredictability of Tanzanian decision-making as a challenge for bilateral engagement.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> CCM was formed in 1977 by a merger of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) – the mainland ruling party since independence – and the Zanzibari ruling Afro-Shirazi Party.

<sup>3</sup> Chatham House (2022), 'Tanzanian agency in the international system', Meeting Summary, 24 November 2022, <https://chathamhouse.soutron.net/Portal/Public/en-GB/RecordView/Index/202188>; Chatham House (2023), 'Tanzania's regional role', Meeting Summary, 18 May 2023, <https://chathamhouse.soutron.net/Portal/Public/en-GB/RecordView/Index/203404>; Chatham House (2023), 'Tanzania's global economic diplomacy', Meeting Summary, 27 July 2023, <https://chathamhouse.soutron.net/Portal/Public/en-GB/RecordView/Index/203523>.

<sup>4</sup> Research interviews under the Chatham House Rule, Dar es Salaam, June 2023.

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# 02

## From influence to isolation: Tanzania's foreign policy history

**Tanzania has a proud history of continental and global influence. Restoring Tanzania's historical credibility after a period of isolationism therefore provides a strong motivation for current reform efforts.**

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Tanzania's distinctive post-independence history continues to influence modern-day foreign policy decision-making, largely due to the towering reputation of the country's first president, Julius Nyerere. During his leadership from 1961–85, Nyerere's pursuit of *ujamaa* – a brand of 'African socialism' – was underpinned by ambitions for self-reliance and national unity.

Under Nyerere, Tanzania became a leading voice for, and host of, African liberation struggles, supporting exiled movements and political refugees from across southern Africa. Beyond the region, Tanzania influenced Commonwealth members to reject the readmission of apartheid South Africa, and sacrificed a substantial aid commitment to break diplomatic relations with the UK from 1965–68 over the issue of independence for Rhodesia.<sup>5</sup> Engagement with China also progressed rapidly

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<sup>5</sup> The financial loss from this decision was estimated at \$7.5 million. See Pallotti, A. (2009), 'Post-colonial Nation-building and Southern African Liberation: Tanzania and the Break of Diplomatic Relations with the United Kingdom, 1965-1968', *African Historical Review*, 41(2), pp. 60–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17532521003607393>.



via military cooperation, state visits and technical and financial support – including to build the TAZARA railway from Dar es Salaam to Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia in 1970–75 – with Tanzania leading calls for Beijing's 1971 admission to the UN.

## **Tanzania's distinctive post-independence history continues to influence modern-day foreign policy decision-making, largely due to the towering reputation of the country's first president, Julius Nyerere.**

Yet Nyerere always rejected the notion that socialism, non-alignment or liberation diplomacy amounted to an 'anti-West' foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the 1970s, Tanzania's core stance of non-alignment began to take on an economic meaning and its sources of aid became more diversified. Financial support from Scandinavian countries rose and tensions with the US and West Germany thawed, even as Tanzania retained military support from the Soviet bloc. Tanzania's economy deteriorated, however, and was crippled by war with Uganda in 1978–79. Nyerere resisted IMF reforms but stepped down as president in 1985. With Nyerere's successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, focused on domestic liberalization reforms during the 1990s, Tanzania shifted its foreign policy towards limited regional involvement, mainly in conflict resolution efforts in the Great Lakes region.<sup>7</sup>

However, in 2001, under President Benjamin Mkapa, Tanzania adopted the 'New Foreign Policy' strategy, directing that the country's foreign relations were to be 'driven in line with economic interests' through 'active and sustainable economic diplomacy', while also retaining core Nyerere-era principles.<sup>8</sup> This new approach was also advanced by Tanzania's fourth president (2005–15), Jakaya Kikwete. A celebrated foreign minister prior to winning the presidency, Kikwete continued to travel widely and welcomed high-profile state visits to Tanzania – including those by US president Barack Obama and Chinese president Xi Jinping in 2013 – that signalled growth in foreign investment and aid commitments.

## **International withdrawal in the Magufuli era**

President Kikwete's foreign obligations, however, became a target for critics, as high-profile domestic corruption scandals surfaced. His successor, John Magufuli,<sup>9</sup> framed a retreat from the international stage and a rejection of principled foreign

<sup>6</sup> Nyerere stated in 1967: '[W]e shall not allow any of our friendships to be exclusive; we shall not allow anyone to choose any of our friends or enemies for us.' Nyerere, J. K. (1967), 'Tanzania Policy on Foreign Affairs', Speech at the Tanganyika African National Union National Conference, 16 October 1967, [https://www.juliusnyerere.org/resources/view/tanzania\\_policy\\_on\\_foreign\\_affairs\\_in\\_1967](https://www.juliusnyerere.org/resources/view/tanzania_policy_on_foreign_affairs_in_1967).

<sup>7</sup> See Shule, L. (2014), 'From Southern Africa to the Great Lakes Region: Challenges to Tanzanian Foreign Policy and Conflict Resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa', PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, Australia, <http://ogma.newcastle.edu.au:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/uon:15179>.

<sup>8</sup> Tanzania Ministry of Foreign Affairs (no date), 'Tanzania Foreign Policy the Case of Economic Diplomacy', <https://www.foreign.go.tz/about/tanzania-foreign-policy-the-case-of-economic-diplomacy>.

<sup>9</sup> Magufuli was a former minister of works and transport, with minimal international profile or foreign affairs experience, who rose to power largely due to CCM's internal factionalism.

policy as part of a broader crackdown on government profligacy, stating that Tanzania had 'carried the burdens of other peoples' conflicts for too long'.<sup>10</sup> Magufuli curtailed foreign travel by government officials and visited just eight countries during his presidency, none of which were outside Africa.

At Magufuli's direction, Tanzania withdrew from multilateral commitments including the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), and from accepting non-governmental cases at the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), which the country hosts in Arusha. His administration also clashed with the IMF and World Bank,<sup>11</sup> denounced the terms of finance agreements with China, and expelled the EU ambassador and country representatives for three UN agencies following perceived criticisms. President Magufuli's denial of the existence of the COVID-19 virus in 2020 brought global infamy, compounding existing damage to investor relations. In 2017, new laws were introduced that prevented investors from seeking international arbitration and empowered the government to cancel contracts, with Magufuli also announcing a \$190 billion fine for Tanzania's largest gold producer.<sup>12</sup>

Magufuli's sudden death in March 2021 elevated his former deputy, Samia Suluhu Hassan, to the presidency. President Samia – a Muslim woman from the semi-autonomous Zanzibar archipelago – rose to power without having a significant existing support base in CCM. Within such a dominant and deep-seated ruling party, many external partners feared that this starting point of relative fragility would restrict Samia's ability to enact policy change. However, Samia has found space to implement a gradual reform agenda, under which foreign policy has reflected the most decisive area of change. In November 2022, she announced plans for an official review of Tanzania's foreign policy strategy – marking a first refresh of strategy since 2001. The following chapters of this paper explore the most significant considerations for this new approach across both regional and international settings.

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<sup>10</sup> Roberts, G. (2022), *Revolutionary State-Making in Dar es Salaam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>11</sup> *The Citizen* (2018), 'World Bank stance on loan release to Tanzania', 19 November 2018, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/World-Bank-stance-on-loan-release-to-Tanzania/1840340-4858282-wdi71sz/index.html>;

Cotterill, J. (2019), 'Tanzania president blocks critical IMF report on economy', *Financial Times*, 18 April 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/cb51db44-61f8-11e9-a27a-fdd51850994c>.

<sup>12</sup> Reuters (2017), 'Acacia Mining hit with huge demand for unpaid taxes by Tanzania', 24 July 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/acacia-mining-tanzania-idUSL5N1KF5CE>.

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# 03

## Between the EAC and SADC: Opportunities for regional leadership

**Tanzania's growing significance as a regional economic power contrasts with its past reluctance to embrace integration. Ambitions for major cross-border infrastructure projects and a revived role on conflict resolution present opportunities to demonstrate regional leadership.**

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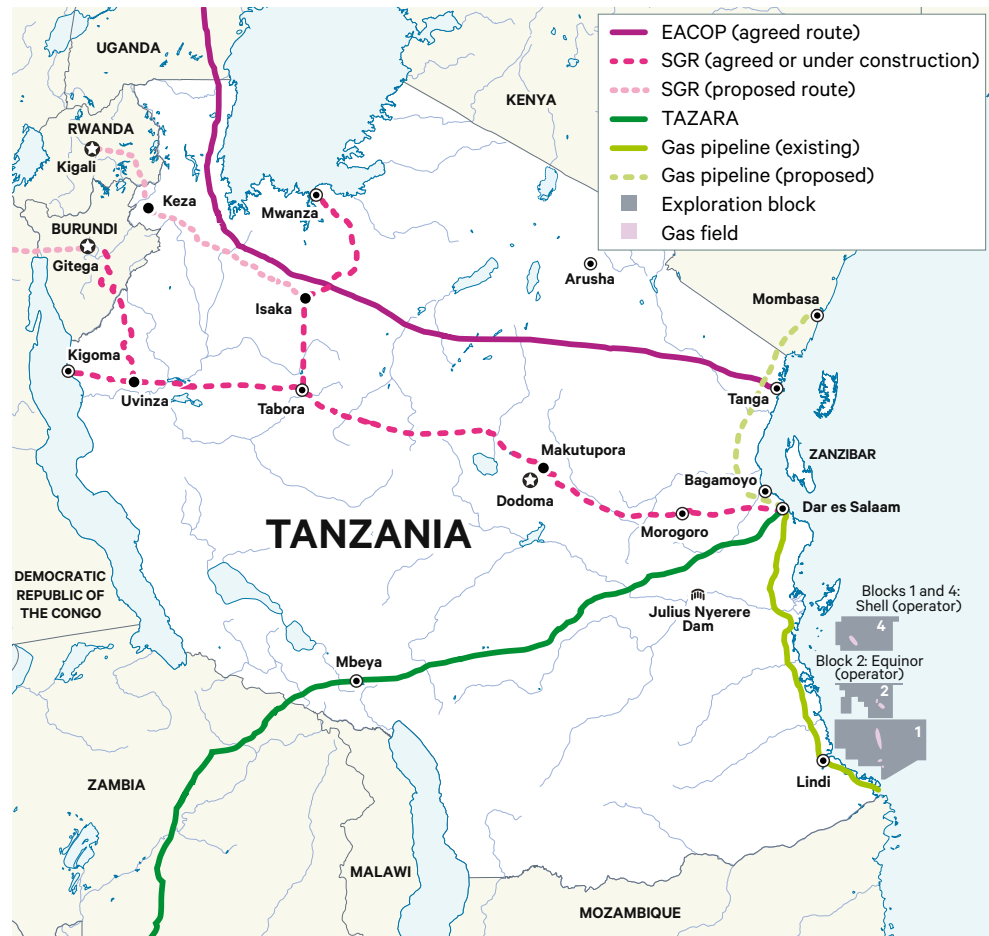
Tanzania sits astride East and southern Africa and consequently holds joint membership of the main regional economic communities for each region – the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Despite hosting the EAC's headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania sees that organization primarily as an institutional channel for trade and economic linkages. The SADC is perceived more as a forum for maintaining political relationships – a stance influenced by the history of liberation diplomacy in the region.<sup>13</sup> In the modern era, Tanzania has not been active in promoting the ambitious integration agendas of either organization – instead preferring a cautiously reluctant approach that is often interpreted by some neighbours as deliberately obstructive. (The implications of this approach in relation to regional infrastructure projects are discussed further in Box 1.)

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<sup>13</sup> Chatham House (2023), 'Tanzania's regional role'.

In East Africa, the EAC integration agenda is now being matched by a push for new members, driven by Kenya. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was admitted in 2022, joining Tanzania in being a member of both the EAC and SADC. Somalia joined the EAC in March 2024, and that organization's secretariat plans to seek Ethiopia's admission in future.<sup>14</sup> At a time of new and resurgent conflicts in the eastern DRC, Ethiopia, Somalia and northern Mozambique, the regional dimension of Tanzania's foreign policy review must be closely attuned to the potential implications of EAC expansion.

**Figure 1. Tanzania's regional infrastructure development**



Source: Compiled by authors.

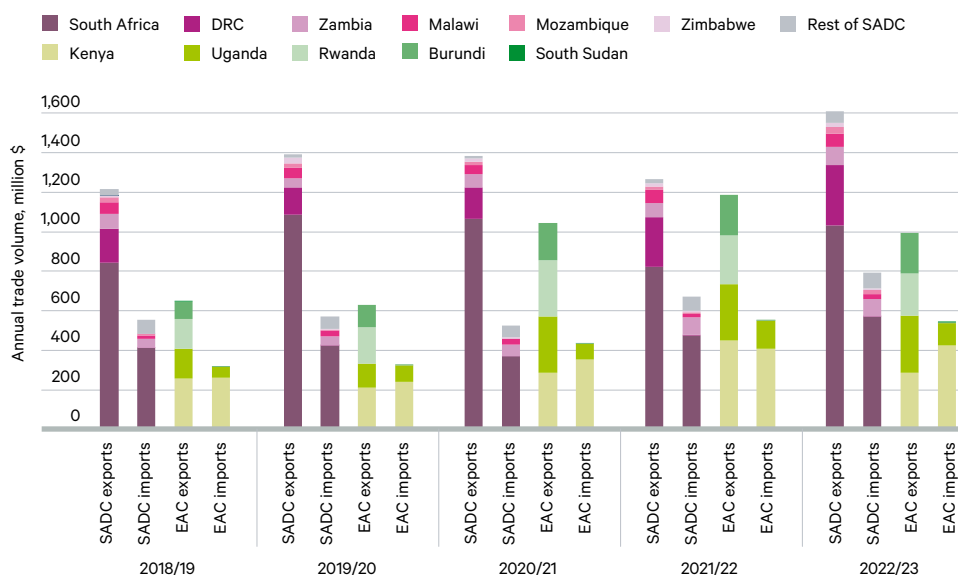
Note: The boundaries and names shown and designations used on the map do not imply endorsement or acceptance by the authors or Chatham House.

<sup>14</sup> Mutinda, J. (2023), 'Peter Mathuki: Why we want Addis to join EAC after Somalia', *The East African*, 1 April 2023, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/mathuki-after-somalia-we-want-addis-to-join-eac-4181390>.

## Regional trade and investment

Tanzania has a critical role in regional trade in each regional community, both as a transit route and through its own productive sectors. It participates in the EAC's customs union and SADC's free-trade area, though some of Tanzania's earlier protectionist inclinations have lingered in the form of non-tariff barriers or tariff deviations on products such as clothing and sugar.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to neighbouring Kenya's more openly pro-business approach and increasingly expansionist private sector, Tanzania has also been slow to embrace openness to investment from other EAC states and does not promote outward investment, instead placing restrictions on its citizens' participation in foreign capital markets.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 2.** Tanzania's balance of trade with EAC and SADC countries, 2018–23



Source: Bank of Tanzania (2023), *Bank of Tanzania Annual Report 2022/23*, December 2023, <https://www.bot.go.tz/Publications/Financial%20Report/Financial%20Statements/en/2023123114595517.pdf>.

As Figure 2 shows, Tanzania maintains a strong trade surplus with SADC countries, but this is overwhelmingly dominated by gold exports to South Africa, which surged in value during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bordering countries of Zambia and Malawi account for a significant share of Tanzania's non-gold exports in the SADC region, pointing to the importance of strengthening those ties over the long term. President Samia made her first state visit to Zambia in October 2023. Plans to revamp cross-border infrastructure links to the south, including an upgrade of the TAZARA railway<sup>17</sup> will further consolidate those partnerships. The plans also closely link with international priorities around the supply of critical minerals.

<sup>15</sup> Agarwal, P., Kweka, J. and te Velde, D. W. (2022), *Tanzania and the African Continental Free Trade Area*, briefing, London: ODI, March 2022, [http://cdn-odi-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/AfCFTA\\_Tanzania\\_Final\\_EDIT-.PDF.pdf](http://cdn-odi-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/AfCFTA_Tanzania_Final_EDIT-.PDF.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of State (2023), *2023 Investment Climate Statements: Tanzania*, report, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-investment-climate-statements/tanzania>.

<sup>17</sup> Zajontz, T. (2022), 'Tanzania and Zambia want to upgrade the 'Uhuru Railway' – but can they?', *The Conversation*, 19 September 2022, <https://theconversation.com/tanzania-and-zambia-want-to-upgrade-the-uhuru-railway-but-can-they-190659>.

Tanzania's trade with the EAC is more diversified. It also maintains a trade surplus with other EAC members, but, in contrast to trade with the SADC, cereals and other agricultural produce tend to be the largest source of export revenue. The relationship with Kenya dominates Tanzania's EAC trading partnerships and is permanently imbued with competitive rivalry, but bilateral relations deteriorated under Magufuli's presidency with a succession of high-profile disputes. Just one month into her term of office, President Samia visited Nairobi in search of a reset, resolving several border and processing issues. Trade volumes subsequently reached all-time highs in 2021, but recurring disagreements in 2022 and 2023 over Tanzanian-imposed barriers on maize exports and poultry imports, as well as a spat in January 2024 that saw Tanzania briefly ban Kenya Airways flights,<sup>18</sup> demonstrate the power of underlying tensions. Long-term prospects for the construction of a natural gas pipeline from Dar es Salaam to Mombasa (see Figure 1), agreed by President Samia during her first visit to Nairobi in 2021, however, signal the long-term importance of maintaining close ties.

Hampered by these tit-for-tat trade disputes and poor transport connectivity, the EAC and SADC regions combined accounted for around only 18 per cent of Tanzania's total trade flows in 2022.<sup>19</sup> Improving this share of trade depends not only on enhancing infrastructure links (see Box 1), but on pursuing more effective regional economic diplomacy, including the following opportunities:

- **Addressing internal coordination challenges.** Despite Tanzania's deeply centralized government, a lack of internal cohesion regularly contributes to reactionary domestic policies and strained regional relations. The 2022 controls on maize exports to Kenya introduced by Tanzania's Ministry of Agriculture seek short-term results for domestic pricing and food security, but damage relations with neighbouring countries and fail to consider the increasing long-term pressures of rapid population growth and climate change. The merging of the formerly separate Ministry of East African Community Affairs (MEAC) into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) by Magufuli in 2015<sup>20</sup> further complicated this coordination challenge and compares unfavourably with neighbours: Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda have separate ministries covering EAC affairs, while Rwanda maintains a dedicated EAC cabinet minister.<sup>21</sup> Whether via the MEAC's restoration or its empowerment within the MFA, a greater coordination and oversight role is needed to prevent and mitigate the damage of reactionary domestic policies and end the cycle of brinkmanship.

<sup>18</sup> Reuters (2024) 'Tanzania says it has lifted ban on Kenya Airways flights', 16 January 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/tanzania-says-it-has-lifted-ban-kenya-airways-flights-2024-01-16>.

<sup>19</sup> International Trade Centre (2023) 'Trade Map Data', <https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx> (accessed 2 Nov. 2023).

<sup>20</sup> This was an early cost-cutting measure in Magufuli's first cabinet that downgraded the EAC portfolio to the level of deputy minister in the MFA.

<sup>21</sup> Tanzania's MFA includes two permanent secretaries, with one focused on East African cooperation.

- **Strategic engagement with institutional trade initiatives.** After years of delays, Tanzania eventually ratified the AfCFTA in January 2022. Though a welcome signal of renewed commitment to continental integration, this also arguably symbolized a missed opportunity. Tanzania is yet to ratify the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA), which links free-trade areas under the EAC, SADC and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). It withdrew from COMESA in 2000, fearing loss of customs revenues, but private sector interests have since lobbied for readmittance. Simulations suggest positive gains from the TFTA in most key industries.<sup>22</sup> Zambia ratified the agreement in 2021, and with Kenya leading the push for the TFTA as a building block for the AfCFTA, a well-timed ratification by Tanzania would be an opportunity to balance Kenya's leadership, engage with the private sector, and strengthen regional ties – including with Somalia and Ethiopia as current COMESA members and new or prospective EAC states.
- **Support for regional private sector engagement.** Since taking office, President Samia has acknowledged the need to 'work towards developing the private sector in the region'.<sup>23</sup> Foundations for progress are in place: following economic liberalization over the past three decades, several Tanzanian companies have quietly developed a regional presence.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, the national investment body, the Tanzanian Investment Centre (TIC), is focused largely on inward investment, and has suffered from a lack of capacity and political support. Tanzania's overhaul of its Investment Act in 2022 did empower TIC to collect data on Tanzanian investments abroad but failed to go further. Recognizing Tanzania's long-term regional economic significance – the country is forecast to overtake Kenya as the largest EAC economy in the next decade<sup>25</sup> – a further review of TIC's mandate to include support for Tanzanian companies operating regionally could offer longer-term benefits for private sector dialogue and incentivize regional integration.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> A study suggests productivity gains for all Tanzania's main industries other than processed food. See Mold, A. and Mukwaya, R. (2016), 'Modelling the economic impact of the tripartite free trade area: Its implications for the economic geography of Southern, Eastern and Northern Africa', *Journal of African Trade*, 3(1), pp. 57–84, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joat.2017.05.003>.

<sup>23</sup> The 2001 New Foreign Policy Strategy emphasizes 'the full involvement of the private sector' in EAC regional integration and harmonization. See East African Community (2021), 'President Samia Suluhu Hassan calls for review of EAC legal instruments to reflect current times', press release, 12 June 2021, <https://www.eac.int/press-releases/2102-president-samia-suluhu-hassan-calls-for-review-of-eac-legal-instruments-to-reflect-current-times>.

<sup>24</sup> Examples include Azam, CRDB Bank, GSM, Oilcom and TAIFA Gas. See Chatham House (2023), 'Tanzania's regional role'.

<sup>25</sup> *The Citizen* (2023), 'Tanzania to overtake Kenya as East Africa's largest economy in 10 years', 16 April 2023, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/business/tanzania-to-overtake-kenya-as-east-africa-s-largest-economy-in-10-years-4201184>.

<sup>26</sup> A greater presence of local companies operating regionally is shown to help to disincentivize tariff deviations and barriers. See Bündler, T. (2018), 'How Common Is the East African Community's Common External Tariff Really? The Influence of Interest Groups on the EAC's Tariff Negotiations', *SAGE Open*, 8(1), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017748235>.

### Box 1. Competition over regional infrastructure development in East Africa

Two major Tanzanian infrastructure projects are shaping its regional foreign policy (see Figure 1). The first is the **East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)**, initially agreed in 2017 and expected to cost \$4 billion. EACOP will carry Ugandan oil to the Tanzanian port of Tanga, as a joint project between the Ugandan and Tanzanian national oil companies, together with the French company Total Energies and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation.

The second project is Tanzania's **Standard Gauge Railway (SGR)** project, estimated to cost over \$10 billion, which will connect Dar es Salaam with lines extending on to Burundi, DRC and Rwanda. A 2015 agreement for China to finance and construct the SGR was replaced by a multi-lot approach, with construction tenders granted since 2017 to a Turkish firm for four phases and with Chinese companies for a further two. Tanzania's funding strategy for the full project has been opaque, and is seemingly heavily reliant on domestic revenue sources. Some external commercial financing has come in the form of a \$1.46 billion syndicated loan agreed with Standard Chartered Bank in 2020, while the African Development Bank have approved \$597 million in funding for the section to Burundi.<sup>27</sup>

Both projects have been strongly influenced by changing power dynamics in East Africa. Oil discoveries in Kenya and Uganda from 2006 onwards inspired a drive for regional integration alongside Rwanda; the three countries leaving behind Burundi and Tanzania to create a 'coalition of the willing' in a push for infrastructure links along the 'Northern Corridor' connecting its members and South Sudan, Ethiopia and the DRC, including via Kenya's own Chinese-funded SGR and an original Uganda–Kenya crude oil pipeline. Yet, by 2016 the coalition had effectively collapsed: Uganda switched its attention to the EACOP's southern route to Tanzania and, as China retreated from the costs of extending Kenya's incomplete SGR to Uganda, Rwanda indicated in 2016 that it too would prioritize routing a line via Tanzania.

President Magufuli's bilateral engagement with Rwanda and Uganda in the first years of his presidency – including significant tax concessions to the latter on EACOP – was a contributing factor to this shift.<sup>28</sup> Magufuli's relatively clean slate as regards foreign policy, and Tanzania's years of non-committal engagement, allowed flexibility to move quickly and exploit regional tensions. But Tanzania is now confronting the uncertain reality of this major project exposure. Ongoing doubts over the financing for both the pipeline and SGR indicate that the picture could change once again. Between 2021 and 2023, President Samia visited Uganda more than any other country, with four trips signalling awareness of the need to maintain close relations. And, while Tanzania's SGR link with Burundi is advancing, the line to Rwanda is now less certain and more complicated, as Kenya and Uganda look to revive plans for their rail connection. With the viability of its largest regional infrastructure project in question, Tanzania cannot afford to fall back into isolation.

<sup>27</sup> African Development Bank (2023), 'African Development Bank approves \$696.41 million of financing for Burundi and Tanzania', press release, 12 December 2023, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-development-bank-approves-69641-million-financing-burundi-and-tanzania-build-650-kilometers-rail-infrastructure-develop-central-corridor-network-67028>.

<sup>28</sup> Cannon, B. J. and Mogaka, S. (2022), 'Rivalry in East Africa: The case of the Uganda-Kenya crude oil pipeline and the East Africa crude oil pipeline', *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 11(101102), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2022.101102>.



## Regional insecurity

### Conflict resolution

Tanzania's military contribution to addressing regional insecurity has been a central component of its foreign policy since independence.<sup>29</sup> This is now being tested by two neighbouring conflicts that cut across its regional commitments:

- **Conflict in the eastern DRC.** Personnel from the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF) have been deployed in the eastern DRC since 2013, when, alongside fellow SADC members Malawi and South Africa, they formed the Force Intervention Brigade – a specialized offensive component of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At a heads of state summit in Nairobi in June 2022, the EAC agreed to deploy its own EAC Regional Force (EACRF) in the DRC to suppress resurgent militia violence. Tanzania did not raise objections publicly, but conspicuously was represented at the summit by the high commissioner to Kenya, rather than the president herself or a minister – reflecting government concerns over potential overlap with the existing TPDF deployment. Tanzania subsequently attempted to leverage alternative offers of support to the EACRF, including seconding an experienced army general to the EAC headquarters in Arusha.<sup>30</sup>
- **Insurgency in northern Mozambique.** Since 2017, Mozambique's northern region of Cabo Delgado, which borders Tanzania, has suffered a violent insurgency led by an armed group known locally as Al-Shabaab. At the peak of the insurrection in early 2021, Mozambican president Filipe Nyusi visited Tanzania but failed to secure commitment for a military intervention from Magufuli. Samia reversed this decision soon after taking office as president, endorsing SADC's decision in June 2021 to deploy a regional force. (Tanzania contributed 274 troops.) Suggestions had arisen in Mozambique by early 2022 that this SADC contingent was ineffectual, a problem ascribed to unpopularity with local communities and a lack of intent to engage beyond self-protection – in marked contrast to Rwanda's bilateral military presence.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, however, relations between Nyusi and Samia have become notably closer, with two state visits by Samia to Mozambique in 2022 resulting in a bilateral agreement, under which a new TPDF contingent of 300 troops was deployed in December.

Tanzania's previous approach to the insecurity on the border with Mozambique seldom strayed into the diplomatic realm, instead treating the issue as an internal matter for suppression. Though the Tanzanian security services are highly influential in this area, and information surrounding the conflict is strictly controlled within Tanzania, the increased initiative among politicians to strengthen

<sup>29</sup> Historical examples include for conflict resolution in Seychelles in 1977, war with Uganda in 1978 and for a period of Mozambique's civil war in 1986–88.

<sup>30</sup> There are parallels here with Tanzania's refusal in 2007 to contribute troops to the African Union mission in Somalia, when it also sought to emphasize training support over an active military deployment. See Jaensch, S. (2021), 'Understanding African Agency in Peace and Security: Tanzania's Implementation of "Non-Indifference" in Somalia', *Funding Institutions*, 56(3), pp. 274–92, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002039721993482>.

<sup>31</sup> Morrison, D. (2022), 'Tanzania weathers diplomatic criticism over Cabo Delgado', *Zitamar News*, 25 February 2022, <https://www.zitamar.com/tanzania-weather-diplomatic-criticism-over-cabo-delgado>.

high-level ties with Mozambique is an overdue shift of foreign policy back towards economic diplomacy, particularly considering the importance to Tanzania of a proposed \$40 billion natural gas project in its southern region of Lindi.

In relation to the eastern DRC, Tanzania has shown diplomatic agility to avoid joining the ineffectual EACRF, which eventually withdrew at the end of 2023. Yet there is a need to reflect on the long-term implications of limited engagement. President Samia's first regional leadership position is as the chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation for 2024. As Tanzania continues with its own dual intervention in Mozambique while lending its support to a newly agreed SADC mission in the DRC for 2024, its reluctance to engage fully on EAC security issues may amplify a perception of divided loyalties.

## Mediation

Despite its geographical scale, Tanzania's record of internal peace and support for liberation have enabled it to be viewed as a non-threatening regional player<sup>32</sup> – helping to unlock an important mediation role. Examples include: Burundi, where Nyerere and Mkapa each led or facilitated peace processes in the 1990s and 2016 respectively; Kenya, where following the 2007-08 post-election violence, Kikwete made a crucial intervention in his capacity as African Union (AU) chairperson; in the DRC, where Mkapa acted as AU special envoy during talks in 2008–09; in the case of Rwanda's civil war in 1992,<sup>33</sup> and in hosting negotiations in Arusha in 2007 over a Uganda–DRC boundary dispute. After leaving office as president, Kikwete was appointed AU high representative for Libya in 2016 and has chaired the SADC panel of elders since 2021.

**Despite its geographical scale, Tanzania's record of internal peace and support for liberation have enabled it to be viewed as a non-threatening regional player – helping to unlock an important mediation role.**

Magufuli's public rebuke of such diplomatic efforts as a 'burden' – a stance compounded by his deep suspicion of Kikwete and other senior figures in CCM<sup>34</sup> – brought a notable decline in Tanzania's mediation role from 2016 to 2020. Under Samia's presidency, there have been signs of revival: for example, talks between Ethiopia's federal government and Oromo rebels were held in Zanzibar in April 2023, though Tanzania did not fulfil any formal mediation function.

<sup>32</sup> Chatham House (2023), 'Tanzania's regional role'

<sup>33</sup> The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was also hosted in Arusha from 1995 onwards.

<sup>34</sup> Research interview under the Chatham House Rule, Dar es Salaam, January 2024. See also Collord, M. (2022), 'Wealth, Power and Institutional Change in Tanzania's Parliament', *African Affairs*, 121(482), pp. 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adac008>.

## Refugees and human rights

Nyerere's Tanzania was among the most welcoming countries in Africa for refugees, and present-day officials continue to emphasize this historical record as a foreign policy asset. However, Tanzania's commitment has wavered in recent years, as seen in Magufuli's CRRF withdrawal in 2018 and accusations of intimidatory treatment and forcible returns of Burundian and Mozambican refugees between 2017 and 2021.<sup>35</sup>

The perception of wavering commitment partly reflects a failure of foreign policy to coordinate among overlapping and sometimes contradictory regional, local and international interests. Magufuli's approach to Burundian refugees prioritized ties with Burundi's government,<sup>36</sup> while the alleged refoulement of northern Mozambican refugees in 2021 aligned with Tanzania's internalized response to the conflict. Ultimately, Tanzania's refugee population is small relative to those of several neighbours,<sup>37</sup> and while funding support is insufficient, maintaining a hostile approach to refugee populations might both worsen this situation and undermine Tanzania's appeal to historical solidarity.

Similar trends are visible in Tanzania's 2019 decision to prevent individuals and NGOs from filing cases against it at the AfCHPR – a move motivated by the increasing volume of judgments raised against the Tanzanian government in the court. President Samia has indicated a willingness to review this stance as part of her broader agenda for governance reforms, but no action has yet been taken to fully rejoin the court. Given that the AfCHPR is hosted on Tanzanian soil, in Arusha, the withdrawal itself may be more detrimental to the country's external image than the number of cases it had accumulated.

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<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Watch (2020), 'Tanzania: Burundian Refugees 'Disappeared', Tortured', 30 November 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/30/tanzania-burundian-refugees-disappeared-tortured>; UNHCR (2021), 'UNHCR appeals for Mozambicans fleeing violence to be given access to asylum in Tanzania', 18 May 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-appeals-mozambicans-fleeing-violence-be-given-access-asylum-tanzania>.

<sup>36</sup> Ruzibiza, Y. and Turner, S. (2023), 'Tanzania's Open Door to Refugees Narrows', article, Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 24 August 2023, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/tanzania-refugee-policy>.

<sup>37</sup> At February/March 2024, Tanzania's refugee population of 243,000 was small relative to those of Kenya (767,000) and Uganda (almost 1.7 million). UNHCR (2024), 'Operational Data Portal > Refugees and Asylum-seekers in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region', <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/rbehagl> (accessed 15 Apr. 2024).

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# 04 Tanzania's global engagement and agency

**Tanzania's pursuit of a diverse range of international partnerships is already delivering choice and resilience in trade and finance, and offering opportunities for Tanzania to participate in multilateral leadership on global issues.**

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Since taking office, President Samia has been the figurehead of Tanzania's international re-emergence. Compared to Magufuli's eight excursions in six years, she made 47 foreign trips between 2021 and 2023, of which 23 were outside of East and southern Africa. In an unprecedented move, Samia's government has integrated its more open foreign policy goals into Tanzania's national development strategy. The five-year plan for 2021/22 to 2025/26 includes ambitious targets to increase the number of foreign investors five-fold and to open 10 new embassies abroad.<sup>38</sup>

The speed of this turnaround reflects a private consensus among President Samia's close circle that Magufuli's isolationism harmed Tanzania's economic interests and contradicted its core foreign policy values. Yet obstacles remain on implementation. Magufuli's populist rhetoric of anti-imperialism retains an enduring appeal for many citizens and offers political expediencies for his remaining allies in CCM.

Considering the party's longstanding symbiotic relationship with the state, the influence of internal CCM party dynamics on foreign policy cannot be understated. As ties between the party and Tanzania's private sector intensified with economic liberalization from the 1990s, the interests and financing links this relationship

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<sup>38</sup> Tanzania Ministry of Finance and Planning (2021), *National Five Year Development Plan 2021/22–2025/26*, June 2021, <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/tan205461.pdf>.

created have given rise to factional CCM networks. Subsequent frustration with reported corruption and infighting created the conditions for Magufuli's rise as a relative outsider, but his centralization of power initially closed off ties to major party financiers.<sup>39</sup> President Samia's return to a more open economic diplomacy therefore brings with it the challenge of managing resurgent networks with their own financial interests, as well as elements of the party – both traditional and newer Magufuli-era figures – inclined to see this approach as a contradiction of Nyerere-era ideological purity.

Tanzania is also re-emerging in a significantly different global context than the one it left, and trust with international partners will take longer to build than it did to dismantle. In calling for the foreign policy review, President Samia stated that it 'should address [global shifts] as we are currently experiencing the re-emergence of wrenching politics between superpower countries'.<sup>40</sup> The new strategy, and President Samia's approach to implementation, therefore must maintain a delicate balance between Tanzania's core non-alignment principles and its drive to secure major investment and trade commitments, while also managing a politically sensitive transition from the Magufuli era.

## Economic diplomacy and private investment

Tanzania's foreign policy revival also comes at a pivotal moment for the country's economy. Though poverty levels remain stubbornly high,<sup>41</sup> strong economic growth during the last decade enabled Tanzania to reach lower middle-income class in 2020.<sup>42</sup> The government now targets upper middle-income status by 2050. Infrastructure megaprojects pursued by successive Tanzanian governments are seen to embody this long-term vision: in addition to the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), EACOP and gas projects, the country's current major projects also include the Julius Nyerere Dam (JND), a \$3 billion hydroelectric project under construction from 2019–24; and port developments (see Box 2).

In contrast to former president Magufuli's focus, President Samia's administration now recognizes that the viability of capital-intensive projects depends on attracting and sustaining foreign investment. In this sense, Tanzania's domestic business environment is a significant factor underpinning the success of the country's economic diplomacy. Yet interviewees for this paper spoke of an entrenched reluctance and suspicion among many government officials towards foreign investors, and a fear of infringement on sovereignty. This fear results in a slow-moving approach and a hesitation that has delayed – or even derailed – investment projects with clear

<sup>39</sup> Beginning in late 2018, Magufuli made efforts to repair relations with key financiers. See, for example, *The Citizen* (2018), 'Magufuli's surprise talks with Rostam', 14 November 2018, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/-magufuli-s-surprise-talks-with-rostam-2661554>.

<sup>40</sup> Ng'hily, D. (2022), 'Samia lists areas of focus in foreign policy review', *The Citizen*, 20 November 2022, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/samia-lists-areas-of-focus-in-foreign-policy-review-4026558>.

<sup>41</sup> World Bank figures for 2022 indicate that 27 per cent of the population live in poverty. See World Bank (2023), 'Tanzania Economic Update – The Efficiency and Effectiveness of Fiscal Policy in Tanzania', <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099091823115598061/P1796100836f74008096c60cb74977ab2f5>.

<sup>42</sup> Battaile, W. G. (2020), 'What does Tanzania's move to lower-middle income status mean?', World Bank Blogs, 10 July 2020, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/african/what-does-tanzanias-move-lower-middle-income-status-mean>.

financial benefits to the country.<sup>43</sup> Such attitudes are often dismissed as an inevitable legacy of Tanzania's socialist past, but such an essentialist reading is not productive. Other addressable factors also contribute to Tanzania's sluggish approach, including corruption, a lack of transparency and factionalism within both the government and CCM.

## Greater coordination between economic diplomacy and business reforms is critical to Tanzania's foreign policy effectiveness.

Greater coordination between economic diplomacy and business reforms is therefore critical to Tanzania's foreign policy effectiveness. Recent public appointments reflect positive signs in this respect: in September 2023, the head of Tanzania's leading private enterprise body, the Tanzania Private Sector Foundation, was appointed to ambassador status in the MFA, and given the responsibility of designing a new internal implementation strategy on economic diplomacy. Meanwhile, a TIC director appointed in February 2023 is driving greater MFA-TIC coordination, including for the training of newly appointed diplomats.<sup>44</sup> Tanzania also agreed to settlements on at least two sizeable international arbitration claims<sup>45</sup> raised against it for Magufuli-era breaches of bilateral investment treaties in 2023, and the country has repealed a 2018 law on public-private partnerships that prevented investors from recourse to arbitration outside of Tanzania.

Nonetheless, further action is still needed to widen and consolidate the legal basis of existing reforms. Legislation from 2017 concerning natural resources remains largely intact – a major factor behind many foreign investors maintaining a 'wait-and-see' approach. Political pressures must also be managed. Any temptation to fall back into short-term populist hostility to outside investors ahead of the 2025 elections would significantly undermine the foundations for effective economic diplomacy.

## Tanzania's evolving bilateral partnerships

A limited number of high-level engagements took place in the early years of Magufuli's presidency, but these lacked the geopolitical balance of the Kikwete era and dried up amid Magufuli's unwillingness to reciprocate. Visitors to Tanzania in this period included Indian prime minister Narendra Modi (2016), Vietnamese president Truong Tấn Sang (2016), Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2017), and Egyptian president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi (2017). In contrast, President Samia's revival has showcased far greater diversity in Tanzania's partnerships. It is possible to speak of three distinct trends in Tanzania's renewal of bilateral engagement.

<sup>43</sup> Research interview under the Chatham House Rule, Arusha, May 2023.

<sup>44</sup> Mirondo, R. (2023), 'TIC equips ambassadors with skills to promote Tanzania's resources', *The Citizen*, 5 September 2023, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tic-equips-ambassadors-with-skills-to-promote-tanzania-s-resources--4358816>.

<sup>45</sup> Ballantyne, J. (2023), 'Tanzania pays out to settle mining claim', *Global Arbitration Review*, 16 October 2023, <https://globalarbitrationreview.com/article/tanzania-pays-out-settle-mining-claim>.

## Broadening engagement

The first of these trends concerns the active expansion of external ties to include partners with which Tanzania has either dormant or limited existing engagement. Previous years saw only sporadic initiatives in this respect – Tanzania opened its first embassy in South Korea in 2018, and Poland reopened its embassy in Tanzania in the same year.

But the pace of expansion has increased under President Samia's administration. In 2023, Tanzania opened its first embassy in Vienna, Austria – a move designed primarily to boost engagement with the international organizations hosted there. In June 2023, a new Tanzanian embassy opened in Indonesia, with Indonesian president Joko Widodo visiting Tanzania in August 2023 – a visit reciprocated by Samia in January 2024. Indonesia is a strategic partner for Tanzania in the natural gas sector: Indonesian company Medco Energi has a minority interest in the potential major project in Lindi – and Indonesia is also relevant to mineral development, considering its status as one of the world's leading nickel producers and the existence of significant deposits in Tanzania.

Proposals are being considered to open embassies in both Iran and Pakistan,<sup>46</sup> with Samia meeting with Iranian president Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi on the margins of the BRICS summit in South Africa in August 2023. Ties with Vietnam were already developing under Kikwete following a state visit to Hanoi in 2014, with Vietnam's state-owned telecommunications company investing an initial \$736 million in Tanzania in 2015 as Halotel Tanzania.<sup>47</sup> Samia's influential CCM vice-chair, Abdulrahman Kinana, made a working visit to Vietnam in May 2023 and met the Vietnamese president.

Nonetheless, reasons for caution over the trend of expanding partnerships remain. Kinana's visit as a senior CCM official to Vietnam may help to leverage historical socialist connections, but risks blurring the lines between party and state. These newer partnerships will also demand continued engagement and resources to be sustained. Ties with Brazil, for example, have declined since rapid initial growth under the Kikwete presidency,<sup>48</sup> while relations with countries in Central and Eastern Europe such as Poland have fluctuated since the end of the Soviet era.<sup>49</sup>

Other recent examples of diversification present a dilemma. Breaking with Tanzania's history of frosty relations with Israel, President Magufuli opened an embassy in Tel Aviv in 2017 – a move that has gone without reciprocation to date. Similarly, despite historical support and recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), Tanzania's ties with Morocco grew under Magufuli, with a state visit by King Mohammed VI in 2016. In both cases, economic gain has incentivized closer ties – whether access to Israeli solar and agricultural technologies or Moroccan

<sup>46</sup> The Chanzo Initiative (2023), 'Tanzania Mulls Opening Embassies in Iran, Pakistan', 12 September 2023, <https://thechanzo.com/2023/09/12/tanzania-mulls-opening-embassies-in-iran-pakistan>.

<sup>47</sup> Reuters (2015), 'Vietnam's military-run mobile firm launches in Tanzania, invests \$736 mln', 15 October 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/tanzania-telecoms-idUKL8N12F2C220151015>.

<sup>48</sup> See Dye, B. J. (2021), 'Brazil's Boom and Bust in Tanzania: A Case Study of Naivety?', in Alencastro, M. and Seabra, P. (eds) (2021), *Brazil-Africa Relations in the 21st Century: From Surge to Downturn and Beyond*, pp. 73–93, Cham: Springer.

<sup>49</sup> Official visits to Tanzania by Romanian president Klaus Iohannes in November 2023 and Polish president Andrzej Duda in February 2024 suggest that CEE ties are currently on an upward trajectory.

investments in stadium infrastructure and a fertilizer plant. Simultaneously, Tanzania has continued to stress its support for the SADR, even describing it as 'the last colony in Africa' in a 2021 statement.<sup>50</sup>

But this same separation between economic and political ties has not always been consistent. In 2016, Tanzania actively intervened to soften criticism of Israel in a UNESCO resolution, while Tanzania's official statements at the outset of the Hamas–Israel conflict in October 2023 were less committal than those regarding the SADR. Maintaining ties with Israel and Morocco may be justified on the grounds of economic diplomacy, but greater consistency is needed to compartmentalize their economic and political dimensions effectively. Otherwise, Tanzania risks losing credibility in referring to its historically principled stance.

### Consolidating strategic relationships

A second trend concerns the strengthening of relationships with significant emerging strategic interest for Tanzania. Egypt is one such partner. Relations between the two countries strengthened under the Magufuli presidency, culminating in the contracting in 2018 of the JND project to an Egyptian firm, Arab Contractors. President Samia made a three-day state visit to Egypt in 2021, where she met with President El-Sisi. Maintaining ties with Egypt is an important component of the dam's delivery, with El-Sisi including it 'within the framework of distinguished relations between Egypt and Tanzania'.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, Tanzania needs to carefully manage this relationship with consideration of its regional standing, as there is a risk of the dam being exploited to fit separate Egyptian narratives amid continuing tensions with other Nile Basin countries over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Türkiye provides a similar case. Stronger relations began to surface under Kikwete, with reciprocal state visits in 2009–10. But again, the relationship is now dominated by Tanzania's infrastructure development goals, given the award of major SGR project tenders to Turkish firm Yapi Merkezi. In the context of financing issues for the SGR, with Yapi Merkezi facing strikes by workers in Tanzania and seeking to restructure up to \$1 billion of loans from state-owned Turkish lenders following cash-flow issues in 2023,<sup>52</sup> it had become increasingly notable that President Samia was yet to meet with her Turkish counterpart in the first three years of her international outreach. However, her official visit to Türkiye in April 2024 at the invitation of Erdoğan provides a signal of commitment to the partnership.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Tanzania Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), 'Statement: The United Republic of Tanzania's Position on the Question of Western Sahara', press statement, 26 October 2021, <https://www.diramakini.co.tz/2021/10/the-united-republic-of-tanzanias.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Mutambo, A. (2022), 'Construction of Tanzania dam by Egyptian builders raises eyebrows', *The East African*, 6 February 2022, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/construction-of-tanzania-dam-egyptian-builders-raises-eyebrows-3706294>.

<sup>52</sup> Kandemir, A. and Karakaya, K. (2023), 'Turkish Contractor Seeks \$1 Billion Restructuring on Tanzania Row', Bloomberg, 15 September 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-09-15/turkey-s-yapi-merkezi-seeks-to-restructure-about-1-billion-debt>.

<sup>53</sup> Altas, M. (2024), 'Turkish President Erdogan welcomes Tanzanian President Hassan with official ceremony', Anadolu Ajansı, 18 April 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/turkish-president-erdogan-welcomes-tanzanian-president-hassan-with-official-ceremony/3195612>.



This strategic trend is not limited to emerging economies. France also provides a key example. Kikwete visited Paris in 2013, and Samia was hosted by French president Emmanuel Macron for a state visit in early 2022. Increasing investment commitments by French companies have intensified mutual interests, notably including Total's role in the EACOP. A French–Tanzanian Chamber of Commerce was set up in 2020. France is also one of Tanzania's largest bilateral creditors, holding an estimated debt stock of \$204 million by 2022, according to the IMF.<sup>54</sup> A reciprocal visit to Tanzania by Macron, the first by any French president since independence, is also anticipated in the medium term.

## **There are significant historical links between Tanzania and Oman given the latter's colonial history in Zanzibar, and long-term cultural and business connections have encouraged engagement with other Gulf states.**

The Gulf Arab states are also at the forefront of this trend. Trade volumes with Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries have significantly increased in recent years (see Figures 3 and 4), dominated by Tanzanian mining exports and fuel imports. President Samia has made several visits to the Gulf region, including a state visit to Oman in 2022, and trade expos and international summits in both Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). There are significant historical links between Tanzania and Oman given the latter's colonial history in Zanzibar, and long-term cultural and business connections have encouraged presidential-level engagement with other Gulf states. Nonetheless, concerns remain around Omani and Emirati involvement in Tanzanian infrastructure projects, as discussed in Box 2 with reference to the ports sector. Other areas of controversy have surfaced around Emirati business interests in trophy hunting in Tanzanian conservation areas. President Magufuli had previously revoked the hunting licence for those interests in 2017, reportedly in response to reports of corruption and close personal ties to the UAE among high-ranking political figures in Tanzania.<sup>55</sup> This tension points to a need to stabilize and formalize relationships with the Gulf states outside of personalized ties, which increase the risk exposure of Tanzania's foreign policy to corruption or internal CCM factionalism, and towards more institutional linkages through the MFA.

<sup>54</sup> International Monetary Fund (2023), 'United Republic of Tanzania: Staff Report for the 2023 Article IV Consultation and First Review Under the Extended Credit Facility Arrangement-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for the United Republic of Tanzania', 28 April 2023, <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400241703.002>.

<sup>55</sup> Africa Intelligence (2022), 'Emirates prepare Tanzania comeback after years in wilderness under Magufuli', 29 August 2022, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/eastern-africa-and-the-horn/2022/08/29/emirates-prepare-tanzania-comeback-after-years-in-wilderness-under-magufuli,109807313-art>.

## Box 2. Tanzanian foreign policy and maritime infrastructure

Nowhere has the influence of Tanzanian infrastructure on foreign policy been clearer than in the ports sector. It is a source of repeated frustration for the government that key ports have struggled to provide the capacity to meet rising demand and compete with neighbouring Kenya's Mombasa port.

### Bagamoyo port

From 2013 to 2015, Tanzania negotiated with China Merchant Holdings International (CMHI) and Oman's sovereign wealth fund to finance and construct a \$10 billion new port and surrounding infrastructure at Bagamoyo, a town around 45 miles north of Dar es Salaam and in the district of President Kikwete's birth. On completion, Bagamoyo would dwarf Tanzania's existing main port at Dar es Salaam, potentially providing up to 25 times the capacity of the latter.<sup>56</sup>

The Bagamoyo project became a target for criticism during the 2015 election campaigns – Tanzania's most closely fought since multipartyism began – and was quickly suspended by Magufuli after he took office. Having resumed negotiations, Magufuli shelved the project in 2019 and launched a withering public critique of China in relation to the Bagamoyo project, citing terms only '... a drunkard would agree to'.<sup>57</sup> These alleged terms included tax exemptions, a lease of 99 years, as well as the suggestion that CMHI conditions prevented Tanzania from pursuing any other port development.

However, just months after succeeding Magufuli, President Samia announced plans to revive the project. Tanzanian officials attempted to raise the issue at the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation in Senegal in November 2021, but were met with little encouragement from the Chinese side.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, the government made clear efforts to rehabilitate the project's image after Magufuli's criticism: Tanzania's investment minister denied claims that a 99-year lease had been agreed, and argued that the clause on further port developments was far less restrictive than opponents claimed. With limited prospects for a single partner and keen to avoid financial overexposure, Tanzania is now moving to split the project into different components and develop public–private partnerships with a variety of interested parties. According to a statement by Samia in March 2022, these parties include Belgium, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and the US. French companies have also signalled their interest.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Ford, N. (2016), 'The race to become East Africa's biggest port', BBC News, 7 June 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36458946>.

<sup>57</sup> Alfred, T. (2022), 'Samia in China: Will China-Tanzania Relations Return to 2013's Heights?', The Chanzo Initiative, <https://thechanzo.com/2022/11/03/samia-in-china-will-china-tanzania-relations-return-to-2013s-heights>.

<sup>58</sup> Research interview held under the Chatham House Rule, Dakar, November 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Ng'Wanakilala, F. and Malingha, D. (2022), 'Scramble for Gas Set to Draw \$10 Billion Into Tanzania Project', Bloomberg, 29 March 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-29/scramble-for-gas-set-to-draw-10-billion-into-tanzania-project>; Malanga, A. N. (2022), 'French companies open to talks over Bagamoyo Port', *The Citizen*, 20 February 2022, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/french-companies-open-to-talks-over-bagamoyo-port-3723094>.

### Dar es Salaam Port and DP World

Tanzania's existing port at Dar es Salaam has recently surpassed Bagamoyo as a site of controversy.<sup>60</sup> During President Samia's visit to the UAE in February 2022, the Tanzanian Ports Authority (TPA) signed a memorandum of understanding with Dubai Ports World (DPW). This was followed in October 2022 by an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between Tanzania and the Emirate of Dubai. The IGA includes specific reference to the development, management and operation of several berths at Dar es Salaam Port by DPW, as well as support on ICT systems and other upgrades to supporting systems, but leaves other projects open 'as may be proposed by TPA and agreed with DPW'.<sup>61</sup>

Ahead of its ratification by the Tanzanian parliament in June 2023, the IGA's text was leaked and published online, causing uproar among segments of the Tanzanian opposition and civil society, who framed the agreement as a breach of sovereignty. Concerns centred around the lack of a clear end-date in the agreement, an article on stabilization that called to 'address any changes in Law or changes in tax affecting the relevant Projects', and the lack of any termination clause. Discontent was further stoked by the government's attempt to amend two Magufuli-era natural resources laws from 2017 to ensure neither could be applied to port projects.<sup>62</sup> Conspiracy theories also began to circulate regarding the structure of Tanzania's union with Zanzibar, citing the fact that the IGA contained no specific references to Zanzibari ports.

Nonetheless, in October 2023 Tanzania signed a specific project contract with DPW for it to solely operate four berths and jointly operate another four with TPA, with an initial investment of \$250 million for a 30-year lease. Though the contract itself is confidential, it is important to put the IGA in context. Stabilization clauses are common in international project finance and there are different varieties available.<sup>63</sup> The IGA merely provides for stabilization, but leaves the details to be agreed between the parties on specific projects. Tanzania has not handed over ownership of the port, nor do specific project agreements apply indefinitely, as shown by the 30-year term applied to the lease. Tanzania is also accepting bids for an operator on a further four berths at Dar es Salaam, which were previously operated for 22 years under a joint venture with a company from Hong Kong. Given the instability of TPA operations,<sup>64</sup> and the critical importance of Dar es Salaam port for the long-term viability of the SGR project, criticism of the DPW arrangement on sovereignty grounds is likely to be premature. It is notable, for example, that plans for a project-specific law on Tanzania's

<sup>60</sup> Feltes, T. and Schröder, A. (2023), *East African Ports in the Geostrategic Scramble – Eyes on Tanzania's Port Deal with Dubai*, KAS Facts & Findings, No. 514, October 2023, <https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/22161843/East+African+Ports+in+the+Geostrategic+Scramble.pdf/63b1c83d-d756-d5a5-b0e8-63515cffe6e6?version=2.0&t=1698676431512>.

<sup>61</sup> The United Republic of Tanzania and the Emirate of Dubai (2022), *Intergovernmental Agreement Between The United Republic of Tanzania and The Emirate of Dubai Concerning Economic and Social Partnership for the Development and Improving Performance of Sea and Lake Ports in Tanzania*, October 2022, <https://www.scribd.com/document/654437537/Intergovernmental-Agreement-TZDubai-DP-World>.

<sup>62</sup> These amendments were subsequently withdrawn. See Karashani, B. (2023), 'Tanzania bows to public pressure over DP World', *The East African*, 2 September 2023, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/tanzania-bows-to-public-pressure-over-dp-world-4355912>.

<sup>63</sup> A study of Chinese lending found such clauses to be commonplace, including in commercial bank lending contracts. See Gelpern, A. et al. (2021), *How China Lends: A Rare Look into 100 Debt Contracts with Foreign Governments*, paper, Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/how-china-lends-rare-look-100-debt-contracts-foreign-governments.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Reuters (2021), 'Tanzania's Hassan suspends ports chief, continuing Magufuli's anti-graft stance', 28 March 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-tanzania-politics-idUSKBN2BK0D1>.

natural gas project have attracted less concern despite reflecting similar legal mechanisms. Finally, port matters are in practice handled separately under Tanzania's union with Zanzibar, but are officially a union matter. The IGA does apply to the United Republic as a whole, but its deliberate use of the shorthand 'Tanzania' in the latter stages of the agreement appears to have contributed to concerns.

The agreement with Dubai reflects a pragmatic choice to prioritize the rapid enhancement of Tanzania's port efficiency – in particular with regard to the wider implications for other transport projects – ahead of solely entrusting an ill-prepared TPA with the task. However, the government's repressive crackdown on dissenting views around the deal, including the arrest of protestors and intimidation of critics,<sup>65</sup> has inflamed the issue. Criticisms and conspiracy theories around the IGA are sustained by the government's failure to criticize the Magufuli era outright, with the administration preferring instead to tinker at the edges of problematic remaining laws such as the 2017 Unconscionable Terms Act. Ultimately, the government should seek to encourage open debate and set out its stance on attracting investment clearly, signalling a clear break with the Magufuli era rather than seeking to hide behind it.

## Established core partners

The final trend concerns Tanzania's established core partners. China may be the most prominent case, given the strength of historical ties between the two countries, which Tanzanian officials both in government and CCM are quick to stress provide a unique foundation for the relationship.<sup>66</sup> In the modern era, the state-controlled Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM Bank) is Tanzania's largest non-multilateral external creditor, mainly through financing for the construction of a \$1.2 billion natural gas pipeline completed in 2015. But as shown by the SGR project discussed in Box 1 and the Bagamoyo port project in Box 2, Chinese involvement in major infrastructure development became increasingly contested after 2015 under Magufuli's presidency, aligning with China's own internal economic slowdown. Perhaps more through luck rather than design, and in contrast to neighbouring Kenya, Tanzania has so far avoided becoming significantly overexposed to Chinese financing. Tanzania's move to pursue the TAZARA redevelopment as a public-private-partnership with a Chinese state-owned company suggests that this trend in the economic relationship will continue.<sup>67</sup>

In November 2022, President Samia visited Beijing for a state visit, in which she described China as Tanzania's 'most important friend', and expressed 'firm support on issues concerning China's core interests such as Taiwan, Xinjiang and Hong Kong'.<sup>68</sup> Despite such narratives, trade relations remain hugely

<sup>65</sup> Human Rights Watch (2023), 'Tanzania: Critics of Port Deal Arrested', 7 August 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/07/tanzania-critics-port-deal-arrested>.

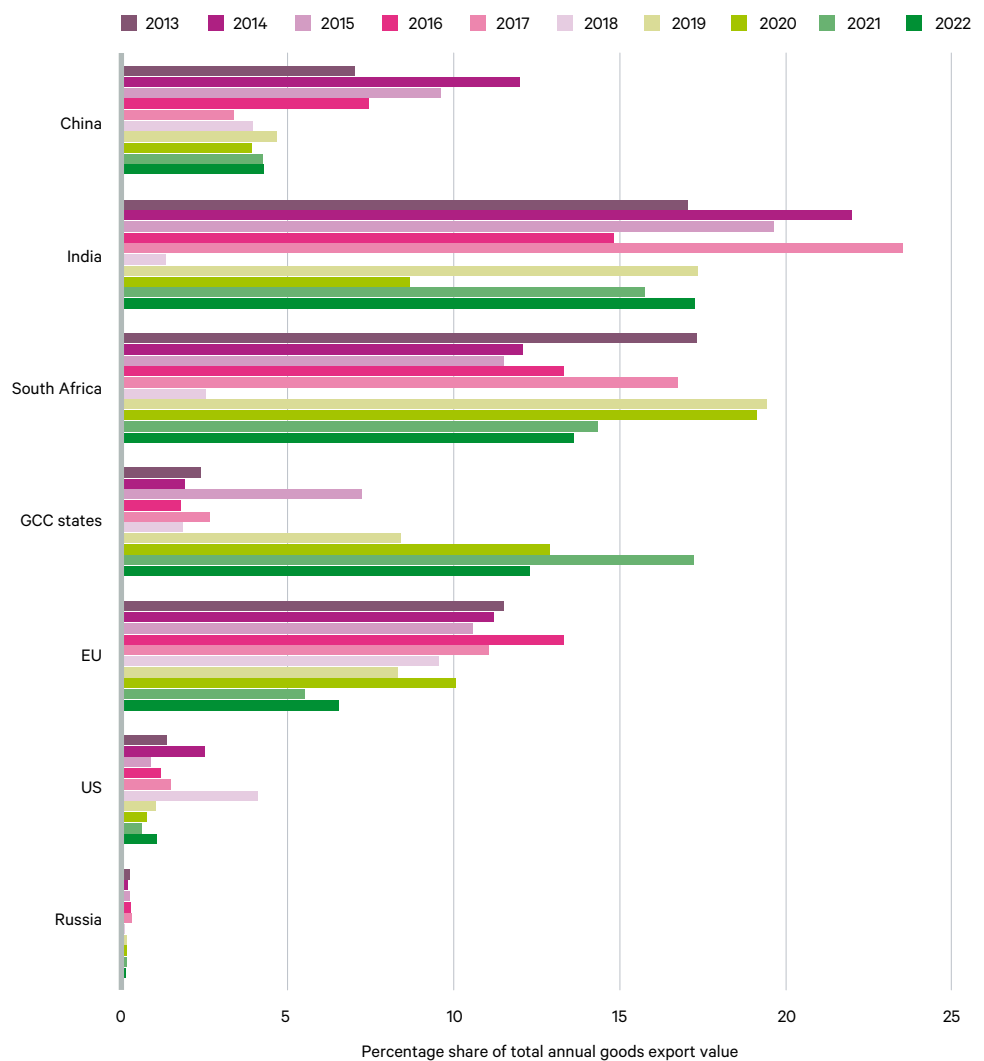
<sup>66</sup> Research interview held under the Chatham House Rule, Dar es Salaam, July 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Hill, M. and Mitimindi, T. (2024), 'China Proposes a \$1 Billion Tanzania-Zambia Railway Revamp', BNN Bloomberg, 7 February 2024, <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/china-proposes-a-1-billion-tanzania-zambia-railway-revamp-1.2032021>.

<sup>68</sup> The Chanzo Initiative (2022), 'Samia Says Tanzania 'Firmly' Supports China on Taiwan, Xinjiang and Hong Kong', 3 November 2022, <https://thechanzo.com/2022/11/03/samia-says-tanzania-firmly-supports-china-on-taiwan-xinjiang-and-hong-kong>.

imbalanced: China is Tanzania's largest source of imports, but Tanzanian exports to China are equivalent to less than one-tenth of this figure (see Figures 3 and 4). Earlier in 2022, Tanzania opened the Mwalimu Nyerere Leadership School – a Chinese-funded political training school co-founded with six ruling parties in southern Africa, all former socialist liberation movements. While revised approaches to the TAZARA, SGR or Bagamoyo Port projects reflect Tanzania's caution over financial dependency on a single external partner, Tanzania must ensure similar balance in the political relationship with China to remain consistent with the core foreign policy tenet of non-alignment and minimize the conflation between CCM and the state.

**Figure 3.** Tanzanian annual exports by destination, 2013–22



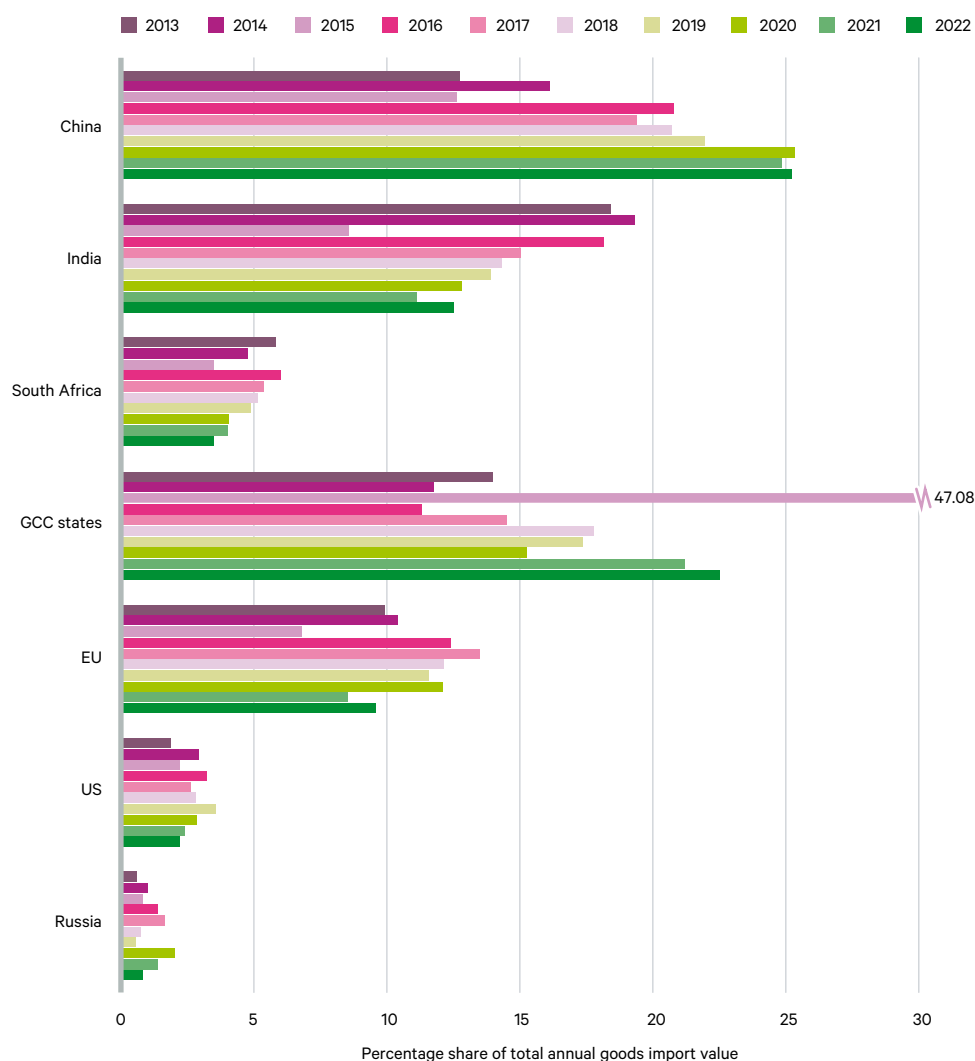
Source: United Nations (2023) 'UN Comtrade Database', UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://comtrade.un.org/data> (accessed 25 Jan. 2024).

Note: GCC states refers to the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. EU data includes the UK until 2020.

India is another established partner. Trade is the defining feature of the relationship (see Figure 4) – with India accounting for the largest share of Tanzanian export volumes in 2022 – and Tanzania's relationship with India is considerably more

balanced than that with China. The Indian market is a pivotal one for major Tanzanian exports, particularly cashew nuts. Despite Prime Minister Modi's visit in 2016, bilateral relations were patchy under Magufuli due to his interventionist approach to the cashew sector.<sup>69</sup> Indian foreign direct investment (FDI) stock remains low, however, and Tanzania's cashew exports are dominated by unprocessed raw nuts. The Tanzanian government has set ambitious targets of achieving 60 per cent local processing by 2025, and boosting Indian FDI to \$3 billion by the same year. But vested interests in the cashew marketing sector will make reaching the first target challenging.<sup>70</sup>

**Figure 4.** Tanzanian annual imports by source, 2013–22



Source: United Nations (2023) 'UN Comtrade Database', UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://comtrade.un.org/data> (accessed 25 Jan. 2024).

Note: GCC states refers to the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. EU data includes the UK until 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Magufuli deployed the army to buy the 2018 crop. See, for example, Reuters (2018), 'Tanzanian army arrives in cashew region to oversee crop purchases', 16 November 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/tanzania-cashewnuts-idINKCN1NL1G8>.

<sup>70</sup> Research interview held under the Chatham House Rule, Arusha, May 2023.

President Samia made her first state visit to India in October 2023, which elevated the relationship to a 'strategic partnership' and included a joint commitment to boost trade via purchases in the two countries' local currencies. Significant potential also exists to further strengthen ties with India in the defence and maritime security space, building on a bilateral defence cooperation agreement signed in 2022 and balancing strong military ties with China, as well as with Indian ambitions in the critical minerals sector.<sup>71</sup>

### **Traditional development partners**

Tanzania's leading established partners in the West include the US, the EU, the Nordic countries and the former colonial powers of Germany and the UK, with relations traditionally focused on flows of official development assistance (ODA). While previous tensions between Tanzania and these partners had surfaced around ODA commitments previously, relations deteriorated spectacularly under President Magufuli – particularly over the increasing repression of civic space. The EU announced in 2018 that it would review its financial support to Tanzania.<sup>72</sup> In 2019 the US issued a joint statement with the UK over concerns about the rule of law,<sup>73</sup> and in 2020, sanctioned then regional commissioner of Dar es Salaam Paul Makonda over 'his involvement in gross violations of human rights'.<sup>74</sup>

## **The ability of Western partners to deliver concrete initiatives in areas of mutual interest can reduce the incentive for Tanzanian leaders to regress into populist narratives.**

As part of President Samia's reform drive from 2021, her then foreign minister, Liberata Mulamula, led the initiative to re-engage with Tanzania's Western partners. Of these, the US is comfortably the country's largest bilateral ODA donor (see Figure 5). Demonstrating the importance of this relationship, President Samia has visited the US three times since taking office, including a two-week tour in April 2022, and in March 2023 welcomed US vice-president Kamala Harris to Dar es Salaam. Harris's visit emphasized Samia's democratic reform agenda as an enabler of partnership and featured the signing of a \$500 million agreement between Tanzania and the US Export-Import Bank to support US exports in the infrastructure and green technology sectors. The visit also highlighted support

<sup>71</sup> Venkatesh, M. (2023), 'India locks in Tanzania for mineral security as Africa buzzes on New Delhi's radar', India Narrative, 11 October 2023, <https://www.indianarrative.com/economy-news/india-locks-in-tanzania-for-mineral-security-as-africa-buzzes-on-new-delhis-radar-152952.html>.

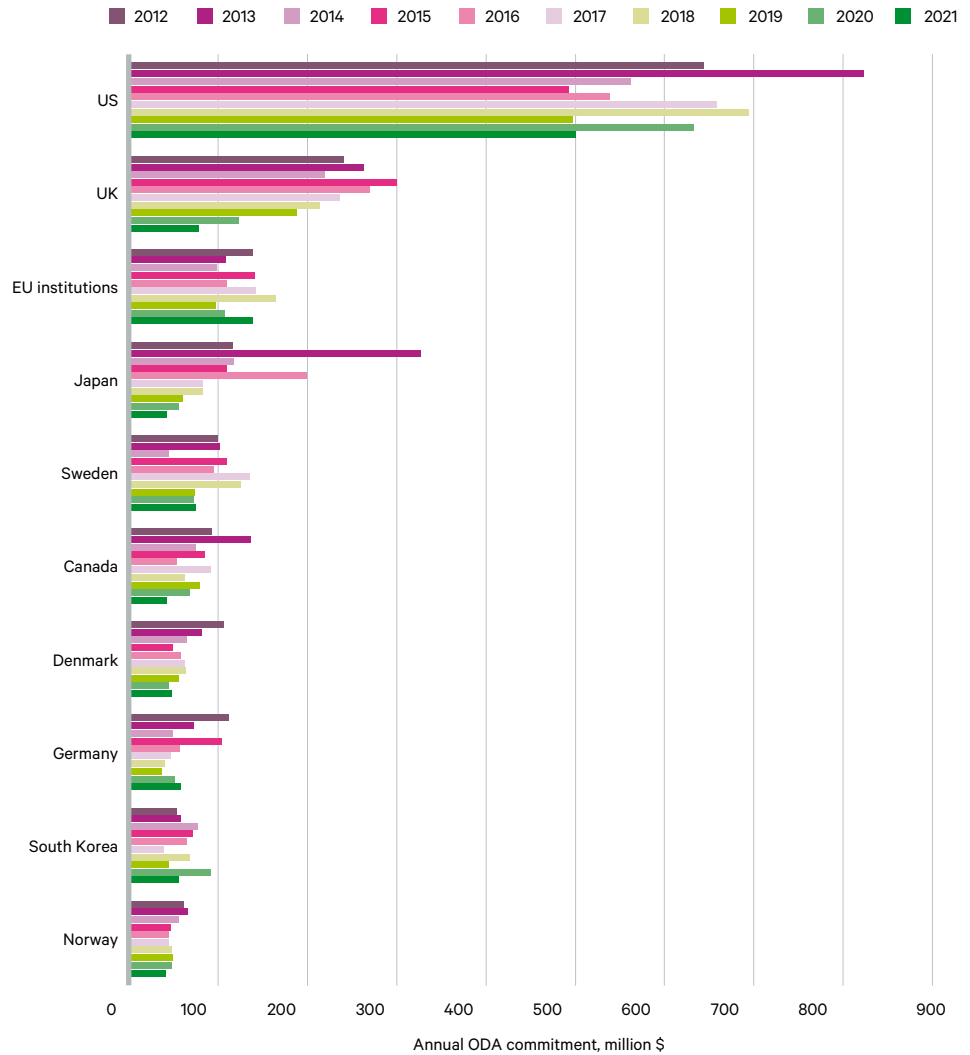
<sup>72</sup> Fox, B. (2019), 'EU waits for Tanzania to back up change of heart on stalled trade deal', Euractiv, 25 March 2019, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/eu-waits-for-tanzania-to-back-up-change-of-heart-on-stalled-trade-deal>.

<sup>73</sup> British High Commission, Dar es Salaam (2019), 'Tanzania: US-UK issue joint statement on recent indictment of investigative journalist', 9 August 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tanzania-us-uk-issue-joint-statement-on-recent-indictment-of-investigative-journalist>.

<sup>74</sup> Reuters (2020), 'U.S. bans Tanzanian official who launched anti-gay crackdown', 1 February 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1ZU2W7>.

for the development of a processing factory based in Tanzania for critical minerals including cobalt and nickel – a priority for Western countries seeking to diversify supply chains for their green energy transitions.

**Figure 5.** Tanzania's 10 largest bilateral ODA partners, 2012–21



Source: Burgess, B., Bengtson, A. and Lautenslager, B. (2023), 'Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', Version 1.0, Williamsburg, VA: AidData, <http://aiddata.org/sdg> (accessed 23 Jan. 2024).

The EU has similarly sought to strengthen engagement with Tanzania via its flagship Global Gateway Initiative, a strategy for the EU's investment in international infrastructure development. President Samia visited Brussels in February 2022 for the AU–EU Summit and a first Tanzania–EU Business Forum was hosted in 2023 in Dar es Salaam, at which commitments including a joint EU–France financing contribution towards a €296 million hydropower project were made.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> €36 million will be an EU grant and €110 million soft loan from the French development agency, with additional funding from the African Development Bank. See European Commission (2023), 'Global Gateway Forum: Tanzania secures funding from EU and French Development Agency for Kakono hydropower plant', press release, 26 October 2023, [https://global-gateway-forum.ec.europa.eu/news/global-gateway-forum-tanzania-secures-funding-eu-and-french-development-agency-kakono-hydropower-2023-10-25\\_en](https://global-gateway-forum.ec.europa.eu/news/global-gateway-forum-tanzania-secures-funding-eu-and-french-development-agency-kakono-hydropower-2023-10-25_en).



A sticking point in the relationship remains trade: in 2017, Tanzania refused to sign the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EAC and the EU, calling it a 'form of colonialism'.<sup>76</sup> The EPA maintains duty-free access to EU markets and proposes a gradual reduction in EAC tariffs over a 25-year period. Neighbouring Kenya, facing loss of duty-free export access given its graduation from UN least-developed country status, agreed the EPA bilaterally with the EU in June 2023. Tanzania is concerned that ratification could lead to a flood of EU imports, harming its domestic manufacturing sector, and that banning export duties on raw materials would harm its goals for increased processing and value addition.<sup>77</sup> Influential CCM elders – most notably the late former president Mkapa – have traditionally been strong opponents of the deal and contribute to entrenched Tanzanian hostility. In 2022, amid rumours that Tanzania was about to sign the EPA, the Tanzanian trade ministry released a statement clarifying that its position remained unchanged.<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, the UK's ODA to Tanzania has declined significantly since 2015, but its share of FDI remains considerable – particularly in financial services, food and extractive industries. President Samia has visited the UK twice since taking office – first, for the COP26 climate conference in late 2021, and second, for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II in October 2022. However, no UK leader has visited Tanzania in official capacity for decades – the last UK state visit being that of Queen Elizabeth II in 1979. This absence now stands in contrast to the engagement of Tanzania's other former colonial power: German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier made a state visit to Tanzania in late 2023, accompanied by a business delegation, and emphasized the two countries' shared goal of increasing investments, particularly in the green energy sector.

In the post-Magufuli era, the ability of Western partners to deliver concrete initiatives in areas of mutual interest can reduce the incentive for Tanzanian leaders to regress into populist narratives. Tanzania's desire to increase the value addition of its raw materials has been clearly expressed, and high-profile US efforts to support a minerals-processing facility meet a clear Tanzanian demand in line with US national interests. The EU is unlikely to make progress on the EPA deal if it cannot clearly point to similar initiatives.

Given the approach to external investment under Magufuli, there is a persistent fear among Tanzanian ministers and officials of 'bad' deals. Providing safeguards and innovative financing mechanisms for Tanzanian investment needs are therefore one area in which EU countries, the US and the UK could demonstrate added value and encourage an outward-facing foreign policy.

Tanzania's revised foreign policy document post-review is expected to contain a new principle on 'safeguarding social and cultural values'.<sup>79</sup> The inclusion of such a principle speaks to a fundamental challenge faced by Western partners: how

<sup>76</sup> *The Citizen* (2017), 'Signing EPA with Europe is bad, declares Magufuli', 26 February 2017, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/signing-epa-with-europe-is-bad-declares-magufuli-2581660>.

<sup>77</sup> Research interview held under the Chatham House Rule, Arusha, May 2023.

<sup>78</sup> Tanzania Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade (2022), *The status of negotiations between the United Republic of Tanzania and the European Union regarding the EAC-EU EPA*, press release, 15 February 2022, <https://www.viwanda.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw-1644995693-PRESS%20RELEASE.pdf>.

<sup>79</sup> Research interview held under the Chatham House Rule, Dar es Salaam, January 2024.

to express their values around democracy and human rights without creating a perception that this depends on Tanzanian acceptance of an externally imposed agenda – as opposed to the country's existing commitments under international legal frameworks and declarations. Early engagement by diplomatic missions for full clarity on the anticipated implementation of this new principle will be critical. In the context of CCM transitional politics, public communication by external partners, particularly Western ones, is extremely sensitive. The wrong message at the wrong time could have significant consequences in limiting President Samia's political space to operate and thus undermining her broader reform agenda.

## Multilateral engagement and global issues

Historically, Tanzania's foreign policy has always stressed a commitment to effective multilateralism as a core principle. With the end of the Cold War and decline in African liberation movements, Tanzania found new avenues for multilateral engagement, which included active support for UN peacekeeping missions. In November 2023, Tanzania was the 11th highest contributor of UN peacekeeping personnel worldwide, with 1,544 troops.<sup>80</sup>

### **In November 2023, Tanzania was the 11th highest contributor of UN peacekeeping personnel worldwide, with 1,544 troops.**

The country's multilateral profile suffered under the isolationist period of President Magufuli, as seen in the consistent withdrawal of head of state participation in global summits and in public clashes with UN bodies and other international organizations.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, Tanzania's revival of foreign policy has not overlooked multilateral affairs. Indeed, President Samia gave an early signal of desire for global re-engagement in a speech at the UN General Assembly in 2021. Tanzania is now seeking to establish itself as a host of international forums. In July 2023, the Africa Human Capital heads of state summit took place in Dar es Salaam, in collaboration with the World Bank, and in September Tanzania hosted the Africa Food Systems Forum summit. In line with historical tradition, tentative signs are emerging of a push for Tanzanian participation in the leadership of international institutions. For example, former foreign minister Mulamula was briefly endorsed by President Samia in 2023 as a candidate for secretary-general of the Commonwealth, while in July 2023, the director-general of the Tanzania Meteorological Authority, Ladislaus Chang'a, was appointed as vice-chair

<sup>80</sup> UN Peacekeeping (2024), 'Troop and Police Contributors > By Country', <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors> (accessed on 4 Apr. 2024).

<sup>81</sup> This tension was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. See BBC News (2021), 'Covid: WHO pleads with Tanzania to start reporting cases', 21 February 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-56145510>.

of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Later that year, Tanzanian officials also considered a bid for former president Kikwete to become the new chairperson of the AU Commission.<sup>82</sup>

## Non-alignment

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Tanzania's stance of non-alignment has come under increased international scrutiny, after it voted to abstain or was not present at five major UN General Assembly resolutions on the conflict. These positions, shared by at least 21 other African countries in each of the five votes, have drawn criticism from many Western partners, which have sought a firm condemnation of Russia's actions.

Yet the Tanzanian stance should not be interpreted as a tacit approval of Russia's actions. Nor is it inconsistent with past votes on the issue, with Tanzania having also abstained on a 2014 resolution relating to Russia's occupation of Crimea. Most of Tanzania's wheat imports come from Russia, but the partnership still accounts for less than 1 per cent of Tanzania's total volume of international trade across the past decade (see Figures 3 and 4).

Tanzania's position should rather be viewed in the context of broader considerations. The country's history of engagement with the Soviet Union, particularly around support for African liberation movements, influences its reluctance to frame the Ukraine conflict in binary terms between the West and Russia. Other factors include Russia's status as a permanent UN Security Council member, given Tanzania's own peacekeeping commitments, and a perception that the conflict may be attracting disproportionate geopolitical focus compared to conflicts in Africa due to its proximity to Western Europe.<sup>83</sup>

Nonetheless, President Samia did not attend the 2023 Russia–Africa summit in St Petersburg, instead sending Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa. This was, however, consistent with the make-up of the Tanzanian delegation for the summit's first iteration in 2019. Having also not attended the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2021 in Dakar, Samia's presence at both the AU–EU summit in Brussels and the US–Africa summit in Washington in 2022 provides further indication that Tanzania's abstention over Ukraine should not be interpreted as fundamentally 'anti-West' in intent.

## Climate change and critical minerals

Like much of Africa, Tanzania has been a negligible contributor to historic global carbon emissions but faces a disproportionate burden from the negative effects of climate change. In its climate change diplomacy, the government has sought to maintain a balance between boosting its multilateral profile in climate change forums and supporting its own major oil and gas projects. In September 2023, President Samia was appointed to the advisory board of the Global Center on Adaptation, and her speech at the COP28 conference in Abu Dhabi highlighted the need for international commitment to climate agreements and innovative

<sup>82</sup> Research interview held under the Chatham House Rule, Dar es Salaam, January 2024.

<sup>83</sup> Chatham House (2022), 'Tanzanian agency in the international system'.

financing.<sup>84</sup> Equally, defensiveness on the part of the government has been evident in response to criticism of major Tanzanian energy projects by Western partners: for example, in 2023 former energy minister January Makamba denounced the 'hypocrisy' of wealthier nations in their reluctance to fund new gas projects.<sup>85</sup> Reflecting this logic, Tanzanian coal exports increased seven-fold in 2022 (from just \$31 million previously), with demand driven primarily by Europe as countries scrambled to diversify their energy supply chains away from Russia.<sup>86</sup>

Nonetheless, the projected future emissions from EACOP have attracted criticism from the EU and civil society organizations, while Tanzania's government is now accelerating further plans to increase coal production and capitalize on growing global demand.<sup>87</sup> Tanzania does not have as strong a global reputation for renewable energy generation as neighbouring Kenya, and as such there is a risk that – without having a clearly defined strategy – its new projects could harm its concurrent attempts to gain credibility on international climate change issues.

As previously highlighted, Tanzania also has significant mineral resources that are essential to the global energy transition. These include cobalt, graphite, nickel and a range of rare earth elements. After taking office, President Samia's administration issued a flurry of special mining licenses to foreign mining companies, recognizing the potential to expand the sector and capitalize on global shifts in demand. This effort is now being accompanied by a boost in Tanzanian external outreach, which has included sending a government delegation to the African Mining Indaba summit in February 2024 and hosting the first East African Battery Minerals summit in Zanzibar in July 2024.<sup>88</sup> However, investors in the sector continue to face uncertainty stemming from a lack of legislative clarity around the remains of Magufuli-era policies, such as the ban on the export of raw minerals.

Foreign policy has a clear role to play as Tanzania balances its attempts to seek external investment in the natural resources sector with its legitimate need to benefit citizens through greater value addition and processing. Significant potential exists to foster policy coherence across each of Tanzania's economic diplomacy strategy – including in its consultations with other leading mineral-producing countries such as Indonesia – its ambitions for global leadership on climate change, and its plans to develop an official strategy on critical minerals.

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<sup>84</sup> The Exchange (2023), 'Tanzania at COP28', <https://theexchange.africa/industry-and-trade/tanzania-at-cop28>.

<sup>85</sup> Tan, F. and Narayan, M. (2023), 'Move away from hypocrisy: Global South demands energy justice', Reuters, 7 February 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/move-away-hypocrisy-global-south-demands-energy-justice-2023-02-07>.

<sup>86</sup> Christopher, J. (2023), 'Tanzania's coal exports rise to record high', *The Citizen*, 8 May 2023, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tanzania-s-coal-exports-rise-to-a-record-high-4227128>.

<sup>87</sup> Jamax, F. (2023), 'NDC inks pact with five companies to extract coal at Mchuchuma', *Daily News*, 15 September 2023, <https://dailynews.co.tz/ndc-inks-pact-with-five-companies-to-extract-coal-at-mchuchuma>.

<sup>88</sup> The Chanzo Initiative (2024), 'Zanzibar to Host 'Historic' Battery Minerals Summit in April', 25 January 2024, <https://thechanzo.com/2024/01/25/zanzibar-to-host-historic-battery-minerals-summit-in-april>.

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# 05 Conclusion and policy recommendations

**Tanzania's re-emergence from insularity has begun to deliver benefits. The foreign policy review offers an opportunity to adopt a more assertive strategic vision and safeguard against a return to isolation.**

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Tanzania has reaped some early rewards from its return under President Samia from the isolationism of her predecessor, taking significant strides towards rebuilding diversity and trust in its international relations. The breadth and variety of engagements – many owing to the agency and initiative of the Samia administration – have unlocked increased choice and provided greater resilience in the pursuit of major economic projects and goals.

But the insularity of the Magufuli administration did not develop in a vacuum, nor have its negative consequences been fully addressed. A rush for political legacy via infrastructure deals with China in Kikwete's second term helped to fuel a backlash after 2015, while Magufuli's legacy still looms large in reactionary regional spats and ongoing suspicion of new investment projects. The long-term risk of slipping into a default mode of cautious disengagement – or worse, a return to full isolation – still therefore exists.

The government's current review of foreign policy presents a critical opportunity to respond to these concerns. The review will undoubtedly provide encouragement on numerous issues raised in this research paper. Many of these are straightforward and uncontroversial: quick wins could be achieved simply by including passing

references to the 'blue economy' or climate change, for example. These issues are indeed important priorities, but their inevitable inclusion should not encourage complacency.

The real task for Tanzania's foreign policy review lies in outlining a more assertive strategic vision, delivering proactive implementation, and aligning both of these with more effective internal coordination. The latter must include giving foreign policy a central role in Tanzania's Vision 2050 development strategy, and aligning other policies on climate change and critical minerals to take full advantage of global opportunities.

In the regional setting, Tanzania's relations with neighbours including Kenya and Mozambique have been placed on a more stable footing under Samia's presidency. There is now a clear platform to boost institutional leadership by ratifying initiatives such as the TFTA, reasserting commitment to mediation and conflict resolution, and rejoining the AfCHPR. Such steps would be commensurate both with Tanzania's historical role in the region and its anticipated economic trajectory.

External investment in major infrastructure projects has emerged at the forefront of economic diplomacy, and influences engagement with a group of emerging strategic partners. But as the controversy around Dar es Salaam port shows, the government's actions have suffered from a lack of transparency and clear communication of benefits, fuelling a perceived separation between state and public interests that has been exacerbated by a repressive response against critical voices from civil society, churches and political opponents.

A straightforward reassertion of non-aligned economic diplomacy would not fully reflect the proactive work that has already been done to rebuild Tanzania's global image, nor the work that is still to be done. President Samia has stated that the goal of her foreign policy is for Tanzania to return to its 'proper place' of international leadership.<sup>89</sup> A foreign policy refresh that is assertive and highlights positive aspects of strategic neutrality would be a significant step towards achieving that goal.

The following recommendations are intended to guide Tanzanian leaders in the design and implementation of their new foreign policy strategy. They may equally help to foster better understanding of Tanzania's foreign policy among its external partners.

— **Take a more proactive approach to regional economic integration.**

Tanzania must seize opportunities in its immediate region, better anticipating its expected rise as the largest economy in East Africa and helping to safeguard the viability of the EACOP and SGR projects. Beyond minimizing brinkmanship and disputes with Kenya in particular, priority actions should include ratifying the TFTA and endorsing a more active role for the TIC in supporting Tanzanian investments in the wider region.

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<sup>89</sup> FIRST Strategic Insight (2022), *The United Republic of Tanzania: Strengthening Relations, Promoting Multilateralism*, report, <https://firstforum.org/publishing/reports/the-united-republic-of-tanzania-2022>.

- **Consolidate the country's role in regional conflict resolution.** Such an effort would not only highlight Tanzania's historical record and the established reputation of Arusha as a location for hosting talks, but increasingly provide a role for Zanzibar. As Tanzania joins the SADC mission in the eastern DRC, it could mitigate accusations of divided loyalties by leading more actively on other aspects of EAC security cooperation, particularly in the maritime space, which is set to be a new strategic focus under the foreign policy review.
- **Rejoin multilateral governance and legal initiatives,** particularly the AfCHPR and the OGP. To further signal a clear break with the unpredictability of the past, Tanzania should put in place legal reforms to require parliamentary approval for future withdrawals from international frameworks.
- **Ensure the new strategy explicitly highlights a goal to engage with, and learn from the experience of, other middle-income countries.** This could include working with existing partners in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as further developing relations with Indonesia and Vietnam. In the interests of maintaining geopolitical balance and avoiding the risks of personalized relationships, engagements should clearly demonstrate a separation of the CCM party and the Tanzanian state.
- **Effectively align international trading relationships with long-term economic ambitions.** Recognizing its expectation to graduate from least-developed country status (see recommendation above), Tanzania could consider how resuming the EPA negotiation process with the EU might secure commitment to increased funding support on areas such as phytosanitary standards and mineral-processing.
- **Embrace international leadership opportunities to advance core principles of South–South cooperation.** For example, Tanzania could signal its intent to seek non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the first time since 2006, signalling harmony with its existing peacekeeping contributions.<sup>90</sup> A campaign for the UNSC could be tied in with a call for wider reform of the UN system to allow greater African representation, building on President Samia's existing statements on the subject.<sup>91</sup>
- **Be transparent about foreign investment agreements and allow dissenting views on foreign policy to be aired freely.** It is vital for the sustainability of a more open foreign policy that Tanzanian political leaders avoid the temptation of short-term populism, including in public consultations on the new strategy – particularly ahead of elections in 2025. One of the main lessons from the Dar es Salaam port controversy is that a heavy-handed response to criticism can encourage the emergence of conspiracy theories, exacerbate isolationist tendencies and in turn discourage the involvement of external partners in essential major projects, such as Bagamoyo port.

<sup>90</sup> Tanzania has served two UNSC membership terms previously, in 1975–76 and 2005–06. During the first of those terms, it championed African liberation struggles, while in the second, it focused on issues of the Great Lakes region. See Shule (2014), 'From Southern Africa to the Great Lakes Region'.

<sup>91</sup> Business Standard (2023), 'India, Tanzania to work together on reform of UNSC through expansion: MEA', 9 October 2023, [https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/india-tanzania-to-work-together-on-reform-of-uns-c-through-expansion-mea-123100900702\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/india-tanzania-to-work-together-on-reform-of-uns-c-through-expansion-mea-123100900702_1.html).

- **Go beyond simple platitudes when mentioning climate change and other environmental issues.** The new foreign policy strategy is expected to include specific mentions of climate change and the environment for the first time. The review must not merely touch on these subjects, but instead help to create a reference point for Tanzanian officials, particularly as they engage in international forums alongside Tanzania's pursuit of the EACOP and natural gas projects. The development of a critical minerals strategy should also be aligned with the country's objectives in economic diplomacy and its public statements on climate change.
- **Signal the new approach and distinguish the new foreign policy strategy from that of the previous administration with refreshed terminology.** To be effective, the new strategy must be seen as a turning point, and must reject entrenched norms of hesitation or suspicion in external relations. Merely retaining the same basic strategic framing of economic diplomacy and non-alignment, while simply adding new themes, would convey a message of greater passivity than Tanzania's ambitions deserve. Zambia's references to 'positive neutrality',<sup>92</sup> India's 'multi-alignment' and Malaysia's 'equidistant diplomacy' all provide guiding examples in this respect.

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<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Vandome, C. (2023), *Zambia's developing international relations: 'Positive neutrality' and global partnerships*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784135553>.



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