

Policy Brief

Burundi-Rwanda Relations: The Road to Normalization

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Executive Summary

Growing tensions between Burundi and Rwanda have not only affected the social and economic well-being of both countries, but also threatened regional security and successful regional economic integration envisaged to take place through the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Mutual mistrust, political suspicion and the prevalence of armed rebellion in the region have heightened diplomatic spats between these neighboring states. Both governments have repeatedly made each other responsible for attacks by unidentified groups in the border regions. Tensions are also mounting between Rwanda and Uganda and it is alleged that these countries, including Burundi, back insurgents based in the

eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This potentially compounds the region's security challenges. Attention given by the regional actors to the tension that surfaced between Burundi and Rwanda after the 2015 attempted coup in Burundi is very limited.

In 2020, following the ascension of Evariste Ndayishimiye to the presidency in Burundi, both countries embarked on a journey that would help them end tensions and restore bilateral ties. Even though the meeting of officials from both countries opened a new window to normalize their relations and improve trade and cross border movement, it is facing early challenges and so far only little progress has been made. Thus, a concerted and collaborative effort from regional

and international actors is needed to encourage subsequent talks that address specific details.

In addition, during this time when African countries are heading for regional integration through the implementation of the AfCFTA, peaceful relations amongst states is a pre-condition. Therefore, the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC)

and the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) should take advantage of this initiative taken by these two countries to restore ties and help them to resolve the protracted hostile relationships and contribute to Africa's ambitious continental project.

Key Points

- Relations between Burundi and Rwanda remained strained after the Burundian government accused the Rwandan government of backing an attempted military coup in Burundi in 2015, a claim that the latter denied.
- Mutual mistrust and political suspicions between Burundi and Rwanda, coupled with the prevalence of armed groups in the Great Lakes region, have heightened diplomatic spats between these neighboring states. This has presented a rising concern to regional security and is likely to hinder economic integration particularly by posing implementation challenges to the AfCFTA.
- The AU, EAC and ICGLR should take advantage of the recent agreement made between these two countries on the need to continue contacts to end tensions and “fully restore bilateral ties” and also push for more talks between the state leaders.
- The talk should encourage conflicting parties to share evidence of their rivals' support for insurgents in the DRC as a first step toward a roadmap for the withdrawal of the backing.

Introduction

Burundi and Rwanda share similar cultures, economic hardships and almost identical ethnic buildups. Both endured similar conflicts related to the Hutu–Tutsi divisions (the 1993 war in Burundi and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda). Rwanda and Burundi have close ties and have sheltered with each other during the times when trouble spiked. A typical example is when thousands of Rwandese took refuge in Burundi fleeing the 1994 Rwandan genocide in which at least 800,000 mainly Tutsi people were

killed by extremist Hutu militias.¹ Rwanda has also received thousands of Burundian refugees who fled insecurity and unrest due to the political situation since 2015.²

Despite having much in common, Burundi and Rwanda have not had the best of relationships. While the clash between the leaders of the two nations at the November 2012 meeting of regional leaders over the March 23 Movement (M23) rebel group in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

led to a massive worsening of their relationship, the political crisis in Burundi over the late President Pierre Nkurunziza's third term election has further strained the situation.³ Burundi accused the Rwandan government of backing the 2015 attempted coup and the resultant political crisis in its country but the claim is denied by the Rwandan government.

In the years that followed, diplomatic tensions intensified between the two countries with both accusing each other of harbouring one another's political opponents.⁴ Both held each other responsible for several attacks at their shared borders. For example, following the armed attacks on Rwanda by a North Kivu-based militia and on Burundi by an unidentified group, in October and November 2019 respectively, both countries accused and threatened each other to retaliate and have deployed troops to their mutual border.^{5,6}

In 2020, however, Burundi, under its new leadership, negotiated a path towards enforcing security at its common border with Rwanda and both countries agreed to work together to end their longstanding hostilities and return to normalcy.^{7,8} Some Burundian refugees have also been repatriated from Rwanda, a move indicating renewed cooperation between the two neighbouring countries.

Even though this initiative raised hopes that Burundi and Rwanda are on course to iron out their differences and restore bilateral ties, which have been frosty since 2015, the process is facing challenges and so far there is little progress made. Preliminary meetings between officials of both countries did not address specific details and the promised subsequent meetings of officials that would lead to the meeting of heads of state have not been materialized yet.

Given the fragile security situation of the Great Lakes region, with conflicts that are dynamic, complex and involving multiple and interlocking regional and international actors, the current stalemate between these neighbouring states and also between Rwanda and Uganda threatens a return to the regional wars that tore that region apart in previous decades.⁹ In addition to the greater danger it poses on regional security, the deterioration of relations between Burundi and Rwanda has claimed human lives and affected the social and economic well-being of both countries. It is, therefore, important to have an overview of the situation toward a problem-solving and policy-relevant analysis. Thus, after highlighting the existing tensions and initiatives towards normalization between Burundi and Rwanda, this policy brief discusses implications of the situation to the regional security and economic integration, assesses the current regional response employed

to curb the situation and closes with policy recommendations.

Burundi—Rwanda Relations

In the past, Rwanda and Burundi had enjoyed good relations, despite the fact that the Rwandan army and the Democratic Defence Forces (FDD), the then military wing of the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy CNDD-FDD, fought each other during the First and Second Congo Wars. In 2005, Rwanda extended its helping hand to Pierre Nkurunziza when he was a presidential candidate. Authorities in Rwanda, who were not in favour of former Burundian President Pierre Buyoya and by extension the Burundian Armed forces, financed his electoral campaign. Kigali's distaste for the then-president Pierre Buyoya was primarily because Bujumbura had refused to support the Rwandan patriotic Front during the guerrilla war.¹⁰ Following the coming to power of Pierre Nkurunziza, there were regular consultations between the two countries on regional security issues such as the Interahamwe¹¹ and respective opponents.¹² Rwandan investment in Burundi also steadily increased.¹³

However, relations between the two countries changed profoundly in 2013 following the defeat of the M23 rebellion, a pro-Rwandan armed

group active in eastern Congo. The defeat came at the hands of the South African and Tanzanian contingents of the UN stabilization force. But Rwanda accused Burundi of being a safe haven for combatants whose presence in the Congo had justified Rwanda's intervention until then.¹⁴ This accusation caused tension in Burundi's fragile ethnic-political makeup that is at the origin of the current political hardening and repression against the opposition.¹⁵ Rwanda was accused by the United Nations (UN) of supporting M23 rebels in Congo and a splinter emerged in Burundi's political system.¹⁶ This resulted in a fractured partnership between the two countries.

Relations between them further strained in 2015 following a political crisis in Burundi over the late President Pierre Nkurunziza's third term. The coup attempt in Burundi was subjected to tensions between them as Burundi accused Rwanda of hosting General Godefroid Niyombare who attempted to overthrow Nkurunziza along with many opposition leaders who may have played a direct or indirect role in the coup plot and in facilitating the coup plotters' actions. Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, repeatedly criticized Nkurunziza for seeking a third term. Kagame accused Nkurunziza of setting the ground for a possible genocide by creating political tension within the Burundian society.¹⁷ Paradoxically, Rwanda held a referendum in 2015, almost at the

same time, that paved the way for President Paul Kagame to seek a third seven-year presidential term (effectively extending his term to 2025). Rwandans, including a diplomat, were expelled from Burundi at the end of 2015.¹⁸

Since the re-election of Burundi's late President Pierre Nkurunziza's in 2015, the two countries have openly exchanged hostilities. Tensions intensified as both accused each other of supporting one another's political opponents. The government of Burundi accused Rwanda of giving military training to Burundian refugees with the aim to oust Nkurunziza, a charge that a UN expert panel report seemed to substantiate.¹⁹

While the attempt by the commission of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to investigate the allegations of Rwanda's meddling in Burundi's internal affairs was not successful, as the Rwandan government refused to receive the commission after their work in Burundi, the accusation of recruitment and military training of refugees was confirmed by a confidential report of the UN in February 2016.²⁰

On the other hand, according to Kigali, Burundi welcomes Rwandan FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) Hutu rebels, a mutation of people accused of having committed grievous crimes during the 1994 genocide. Earlier in 2018, there was an armed attack in Nyaruguru district,

Southern province of Rwanda, that left two dead. Burundi was accused of supporting the armed group which attacked the area. A Rwandan armed group called FLN claimed to have carried out the attack.²¹

Within this context of heightened diplomatic tensions between the two countries, violent attacks took place on their common borders in 2018 and 2019 and governments repeatedly made each other responsible for the attacks.²² For example, after the October 2019 raid in Rwanda by a North Kivu-based militia, President Kagame openly threatened to retaliate against his neighbors. He alleged the militia was supported by Burundi and Uganda.²³ On the other hand, Burundi held the Rwandan army responsible for the attack by an unidentified group on a post in Mabayi, Cibitoke province, Burundi, that left 19 people killed and 20 injured.²⁴ As tensions heightened, both governments deployed troops to their mutual border.²⁵

Furthermore, the rift between the two countries is visible on the AU stage. For example, the Burundian government boycotted the July 2016 AU summit in Kigali, accusing the AU of failing to take seriously its allegations that Rwanda was backing anti-government armed groups.²⁶ In 2018, the annual EAC Heads of State Summit was postponed twice because of boycotts by Burundi

accusing EAC of turning a blind eye to its poor relations with Rwanda. On 4 December, the late President Nkurunziza wrote to the EAC President and mediator of the Burundian Crisis, Ugandan President Museveni, criticising the final report of the facilitator, former Tanzanian President Mkapa, and demanding an extraordinary summit to find a solution to the “open conflict between Burundi and Rwanda”.²⁷ Following the deadly attack by an armed group on Burundian soil in November 2019, the Burundian government filed complaints against Rwanda in the EAC, UN, AU and ICGLR, accusing it of armed aggression.²⁸

From the foregoing discussions, it would be reasonable to dwell on the main causes of the diplomatic tension between these two neighboring countries.

Mistrust and Political Suspicion

At the core of the diplomatic tensions between Burundi and Rwanda is mutual mistrust between the neighbouring countries. It was following Burundi’s suspicions that Rwanda was backing opponents of the late President Nkurunziza and the public unrest in 2015 that tensions between the two countries started growing and their relationship deteriorated. Since then, their

relationship is characterized by suspicions and mutual public accusations of harbouring each other’s political opponents, though at times substantiated by investigations. The mistrust sometimes has even led either side to reading ill-intention, even in the most random of events.²⁹ In 2017, for example, the government of Burundi accused Rwanda of wanting to “export” genocide into its country. Also, in mid-October, CNDD-FDD organized a rally in Bujumbura to protest an alleged plot by Rwanda, Belgium and the UN to destabilize the country.³⁰ In April 2017, Burundi refused to accept humanitarian aid which was destined to help some of the estimated 2.1 million people affected by what the World Food Programme (WFP) in its report called an extremely severe humanitarian situation, because it was grown in Rwanda.³¹ In August 2020, President Ndayishimiye accused Rwanda of holding Burundian refugees hostage, a claim that Kigali found “absurd and does not reflect the truth of what is happening”.³²

The Problem of Armed Rebellions

The political instability between Rwanda and Burundi is arguably related to the prevalence of armed groups in the region. Tensions between these two countries and also between Rwanda

and Uganda are mounting because of the allegedly backed insurgents based in the eastern DRC. While Rwanda accuses Burundi and Uganda of backing Rwandan rebels active in the DRC North and South Kivu provinces, Burundi and Uganda assert that Rwanda supports Burundian and Ugandan rebels in the DRC.³³

According to its report released on 31 December 2018, the UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo found evidence that there are active international networks recruiting fighters for rebel groups fighting some governments in the region. Sources informed the Group of “the presence of recruitment cells in South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Burundi that facilitated the transfer of recruits from their country of residence to the DRC by way of Burundi and Rwanda.³⁴ Although the presence of rebel groups based in a country and fighting this or that regional government is not new, as it has been the case for the past two decades, what is worrisome is that rebel groups such as The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) fighting the Ugandan government and FDLR fighting Rwanda were said to have been neutralized but are actually active.

Armed attacks on both Rwanda and Burundi in late 2019 have aggravated the existing tensions between the neighboring countries. While President Kagame openly threatened to retaliate against his neighbours following the October

2019 raid in Rwanda by a North Kivu-based militia that he alleges is supported by Burundi and Uganda,³⁵ the Burundi government pledged to retaliate by using “legitimate defence” if Rwanda should continue hostilities³⁶. Both countries have deployed troops to their mutual border.

As discussed above, diplomatic tension between Burundi and Rwanda is arguably heightened by the mutual mistrust, political suspicions and the prevalence of armed rebellions in the region. In 2020, however, these two neighboring states have agreed to start talks that will normalize their relationship. What are the efforts that have been put in place towards this? What are the challenges?

The Road to Normalization

After years of soured relation, Burundi and Rwanda have embarked on a journey hoped to see the two countries end tensions and restore bilateral ties. As part of attempts to kick-start efforts to resolve outstanding bilateral issues, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from both countries met at the shared border of Nemba-Gasenya on 20 October 2020. Following a closed-door talk, a joint communique was released from both parties indicating that the meeting falls within the framework of the “shared desire to assess the state of bilateral relations between

the two neighbouring countries and to agree on modalities of their normalization".³⁷ This meeting came nearly two months after military intelligence chiefs of Burundi and Rwanda met and agreed to work towards enforcing security at their shared border.³⁸

For long, Burundi has alienated Western countries and its neighbor Rwanda during Nkurunziza's presidency. However, Maj. Gen. Evariste Ndayishimiye, following his victory in the predictable 20 May 2020 elections, pledged to renew Burundi's relations with its neighbours and the international community.³⁹ His swearing-in was fast-tracked following the demise of President Nkurunziza on 8 June 2020, although he was expected to take office in August 2020.

It was following the ascension of Ndayishimiye to the presidency that Kigali openly expressed its interest to normalize relations with Bujumbura for the first time since their relations strained in 2015. The government of President Ndayishimiye demonstrated a similar interest by sending officials to attend a meeting between the two countries. The repatriation of some Burundian refugees was also a move indicating renewed cooperation between the two neighbouring countries.

However, the steps taken towards normalization were only initial steps. So far, there is no agreement signed between intelligence chiefs and

the commitments they made remain "promise to one another"⁴⁰. While the communique released after the meeting of Burundi-Rwanda officials indicated that more meetings would follow, there has not been any official meeting since then. Further, this preliminary meeting did not address specific details⁴¹, and bilateral talks between the leaders of both countries have not been realized yet.

Furthermore, the road to normalizing relations between these two neighboring countries is facing early challenges. Reports are saying that Burundi is setting down conditions for relations between both countries to thaw. For example, it is asking that Rwanda hand over a certain number of refugees accused of participating in the attempted coup of 2015 but Rwanda has reiterated its unwillingness to deport these individuals.⁴² Also, while the repatriation of Burundian refugees from Rwanda has begun, many remain fearing repercussions for being openly critical of the late president's re-election. This is also because of the comment made by President Ndayishimiye claiming that his neighbouring country is keeping his country's enemies instead of handing them over to be 'punished'.⁴³

While the initial interactions between Burundi's new government and Rwanda raised a very high hope, it does not seem to be getting anywhere at the moment and the stalemate continues. Thus, what is the implication of the persistent tension

between these two neighboring countries? What have been its effects?

Implications for Regional Security and Economic Integration

The souring relationship between these two neighboring countries is a major concern for the wider regional stability and integration. While the current tensions appear to be political in nature, they could arguably create cross-border violence.

Bilateral political disputes in the EAC region and also between Rwanda and Burundi are interfering with trade negatively affecting regional integration. Although Customs Union became operational in the EAC region in January 2005 and the regional heads of state have been emphasizing the need and urgency for the EAC to work harder, political wrangling over the past few years has hampered the much needed progress. For example, trade restrictions with neighboring countries, together with other factors such as depreciating national currency and shortage of foreign exchange reserves, continue to limit Burundi's capacity to import food, keeping staple food prices above five-year average levels.

The crisis has also affected the social and economic well-being of both countries and is proving costly for ordinary people across the border. Residents in Bugabria Commune of Kirundo Province in Burundi's northern border with Rwanda are still blocked from

crossing into Rwanda for family visits or to work on farms. Communities across the border that have been intermingled through decades of inter-marriage are not able to visit their relatives across the border. In August 2017, Burundi barred transport vehicles from crossing the border into Rwanda. Since then, all food exports to Burundi's closest neighbor have been banned reportedly deepening the bilateral rift between the two countries and negatively affecting the incomes of many citizens of both nations. In addition, at the regional level, many projects have had to be reconfigured taking the Rwanda-Burundi situation into account.

Following the ratification of the AfCFTA by the required 22 countries in April 2019, the agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019 for the 24 countries that had deposited their instruments of ratification. The success of the implementation of the AfCFTA is highly dependent on the peaceful inter-state relations of individual members and the willingness of their leaders to take action to implement the agreement. Although the EAC, with its vast experience, could contribute to the implementation of Africa's ambitious free trade project, the current tensions between its members could threaten AfCFTA's implementation in general and the EAC regional integration agenda that plans for the establishment of a new common currency and a political federation in particular.

Tensions between Burundi and Rwanda, on the one hand, and Rwanda and Uganda, on the other, not only

threaten regional integration within the EAC bloc of six countries, but also, potentially result in the collapse of the regional bloc, as current tensions in the region ‘echo the difficulties that precipitated the collapse of the old EAC.’ In addition to the fact that the leadership of the EAC seems to have been avoiding this matter, the integration within the regional bloc also continued to show signs of discomfort following failed attempts to hold Heads of State Summit. In 2018 alone, the Heads of State Summit flopped twice in three weeks merely due to the disagreement between Rwanda and Burundi.

As these tensions pose a threat to the regional stability not only for the EAC but also for the whole Great Lakes Region and the continent at large, apart from its social, political and economic impacts on the feuding countries, what were the measures taken by regional actors to curb the situation? How effective were they?

Current Regional Response

Since the escalation of tensions between Burundi and Rwanda, the leadership of the EAC seems to have been avoiding this delicate issue focusing instead on trying to mediate Burundi’s internal crisis. In 2018, not only the EAC Ordinary Summit failed to address this conflict but also the Heads of State Summit, as already mentioned, was postponed twice in three weeks due to the

disagreement between the two countries. Burundi declined attending the EAC Summit accusing EAC of not doing anything about its poor relations with Rwanda.⁴⁴

In 2019, with the President of Rwanda as chairperson, rather unsurprisingly, the EAC Summit did not issue any statement about the tension between the two countries. Let alone on this conflict that explicitly involves Rwanda, even in respect of the mediation process in Burundi, the EAC Summit did not take bold measures as the new chairperson was ‘cognisant of his limited room for manoeuvre’ and wanted ‘to avoid Burundian resistance to any kind of Rwandan initiative.’⁴⁵ The same reasons similarly explain the reluctance of the EAC under President Kagame to involve itself in the tension between the two countries, so as to ‘deny Bujumbura an excuse to reject the EAC overtures.’⁴⁶ Notwithstanding the attendance of President Kagame and the new Burundian president, President Ndayishimiye, the 21st Heads of State Summit of the EAC, held in February 2021 after several postponements, also due to the Corona pandemic, did not address the issue.⁴⁷

The African Union, on its part, has taken no explicit measures with respect to tensions between these two neighboring countries. However, some diplomatic engagements in respect of this inter-

state conflict did occur as part of interventions that mainly addressed the militia violence in the DRC and also issued statements that have relevance to the conflict. For example, statements of the Ministerial meetings of the Guarantors of the PSC Framework for the DRC and the region have called for the importance of resolving differences through dialogue and strengthening cooperation between the “core countries”.⁴⁸⁴⁹⁵⁰ This also refers to Burundi and Rwanda as they are part of the “core countries” of the Great Lakes region. High-Level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the PSC Framework at times has addressed the tension between the two countries (more) directly. For example, its communique released in 2018 had a section titled “Strengthening the bonds of friendship and cooperation in the Great Lakes region”. This section noted the ‘need to address issues that contribute to mistrust among the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi’ and the need for greater demonstration of political will and building of trust among “the core countries of the region”.⁵¹

Although the above analysis indicates that a certain level of attention was given by SADC, ICGLR, AU and UN (as part of the PSC Framework) to ease tensions and enhance cooperation and friendship between the core countries of the region, among which Burundi and Rwanda certainly are, the statements seldom explicitly

mentioned these two countries or reacted to the incidents that prompted them to refer to “existing tensions” in the region. Furthermore, while it is crucial that the conflict in the DRC be addressed not in isolation from the dynamics in the region, as regional dynamics had a huge role in the origin of the conflict itself, the souring relations in the region including issues between Rwanda and Burundi seem to have been addressed only as a byproduct while addressing the conflict in the DRC. This shows that the PSC Framework, which is supposed to address peace and security issues not in the DRC only but in the DRC and the region as its name indicates, was not responsive.

On the other hand, ICGLR is the only actor that explicitly intervened in this conflict. In response to the escalation of tensions between the two neighbours in 2015, ICGLR dispatched a commission to investigate the allegations of Rwanda’s meddling in Burundi’s internal affairs. However, its effort was not as successful as expected because the Rwandan government refused to receive the commission after their work in Burundi.⁵² The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries at their meeting of 21 July 2018 addressed the tensions between the two countries and called upon the ICGLR Troika to undertake diplomatic efforts towards normalising the bilateral relations between them.⁵³ More recently, a meeting between the military chiefs of

Burundi and Rwanda was facilitated by Col. Leon Mahoungou of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, a regional military framework under ICGLR.⁵⁴

Conclusion

Mutual mistrust and political suspicions between Burundi and Rwanda, coupled with the prevalence of armed groups in the Great Lakes region, have heightened diplomatic spats between these neighbouring states. Growing tensions and alleged support for armed opposition groups present a rising concern to regional security and integration. Tensions between Rwanda and Uganda also remain high with both accusing each other of backing one another's rebels based in the DRC. Rising mistrust among the DRC's neighbours carries grave risks for the DRC, given the way their rivalries have historically played out in that country.⁵⁵

Although the initiative taken by the new government of Burundi and Rwanda to end tensions and restore bilateral ties augurs a hopeful future for these countries and also for the regional security, the progress is very slow and it is facing early challenges.

The deterioration of relations between Burundi and Rwanda has affected the social and economic well-being of both countries. The crisis is proving

costly especially for ordinary people and regional integration. Lives are being lost, residents across the border that had been integrated for decades are not able to visit their relatives across the border.

Moreover, regional political and trade disputes in the EAC have already posed challenges to the implementation of the regional economic integration scheme within the region and these challenges are highly likely to affect the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Failure to resolve bilateral disputes between member states not only weakens regional integration but also turns into a cross-border conflict given the crisis is allowed to continue. Then, what is the way forward?

Policy Recommendations

The tensions between Burundi and Rwanda undoubtedly pose a threat to the regional stability of the EAC, the whole Great Lakes Region and to the continent at large. It is, therefore, necessary for the regional actors—the EAC, AU and ICGLR—to take the conflict and tensions between these two nations seriously. A collaborative effort between regional actors,

the UN, and other stakeholders such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France which have had a long-term influence in the region, is needed to ease tensions and enhance cooperation and friendship between the core countries in the region.

To bring the parties to normalcy, confidence-building measures and opportunities that normal relations bring for citizens of the two countries and beyond need to be worked on.⁵⁶ The AU, EAC and ICGLR should take advantage of the agreement made between these two countries on the need to continue contacts in order to normalise relations and push for more talks that lead to concrete steps. The talk should encourage conflicting parties to share evidence of their rivals' support for insurgents in the DRC as a first step toward a roadmap for the withdrawal of the backing.

Moreover, given the prolonged stalemate bounded by mistrust, suspicion, and accusations, having a

mediator will help to quell the suspicion and build trust between these neighbouring states. Thus, appointing a mediator that both countries agree upon would help ease the situation.

If the AU's ambitious free trade agreement, the AfCFTA, aimed at advancing regional integration shall materialize, the AU needs to take a proactive role in bringing these heads of state together and end hostilities. The success of the free trade agreement is heavily dependent on the peaceful inter-state relations of individual members as it is also dependent on the willingness of state leaders to take action to implement the agreement. The EAC that has already advanced in terms of integration could also be repositioned to take advantage of the AfCFTA. In addition, 'regional tensions should be discussed at the AU Peace and Security Council, which can direct the AU on how to most effectively address the deteriorating relations between countries.'⁵⁷

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