

# Fifty Years of *The African Review*

## Past, Present and Future

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### Abstract

In 2021, *The African Review* (TARE) attained its 50 years of existence. Founded by the Department of Political Science of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), it primarily focused on decolonizing the interpretation of significant events in African politics which has been monopolized by foreign “experts” within the North-South knowledge divide. Over the last fifty years, TARE has gone through three main phases. The first phase was when it was directly published by the Department of Political Science (1971-2018); the second phase (2018-19) was when the journal was published by Dar es Salaam University Press (DUP); and the third phase begun in 2019 when Brill started to publish the journal. During these phases, TARE has attracted manuscripts from renowned scholars from all over the world and has published regularly. Moreover, the journal has been indexed and abstracted in reputable databases such as Scopus. This article revisits the fifty years of existence of TARE, focusing on its past, present and future. We note that since 2019, TARE has become more institutionalized and internationally visible. In terms of quality, it is now compared to some well-known journals published in the North. We argue that a win-win collaboration between journals from the South and established publishers can improve the quality and visibility of the work produced.

### Keywords

*The African Review*, journals, University of Dar es Salaam, North-South knowledge divide

## Introduction

**T**he *African Review (TARE)* was launched in March 1971 by the Department of Political Science of the University of Dar es Salaam. The University of Dar es Salaam is the oldest public university in Tanzania. It was established on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 1961 as the University College Dar es Salaam, an affiliate college of the University of London. In 1963, it became a constituent college of the University of East Africa. UDSM became a full-fledged university on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1970 through the Act No. 12 of 1970.

Founded during the struggles for independence in Africa, the University embraced revolutionary ideas of decolonizing the continent from Western political and economic domination. It is around this time that a group of historians popularly known as “the Dar es Salaam School of Thought” emerged from UDSM’s History Department. This “School” was essentially against colonialism and imperialism in Africa and in the global “South” (Ranger, 1971; Campbell, 1986; Chuhila, 2015). Some of the influential works which were developed during this time include *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) by Walter Rodney whose preoccupation was on how the World’s capitalist system managed to dominate the “South”, particularly Africa. Rodney systematically and analytically explained how capitalism as a Western system was exported to the less developed parts of the world around the 1880s in form of colonialism to dominate such societies politically for the purpose of extracting economic super profits (Rodney, 1972). This perspective was further enhanced especially when Tanzania adopted *Ujamaa*, a form of socialism which sought to establish a society free from exploitation of any kind.

Examined critically, the “Dar es Salaam School” shares with the dependency school (Prebisch, 1950; Cardoso & Feletto, 1979) and world systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974) its anti-imperialist agenda. It is not surprising that from the 1960s to the 1970s, the anti-imperialist standpoint informed teaching, research, and publication at the University of Dar es Salaam (Mamdani, 2019). However, the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and subsequently the introduction of Structural Adjustment Policies by the Bretton Woods institutions in the 1980s upset the organizing thinking of the past era. The “Dar es Salaam School” diminished its potential forces as countries in the “South” were forced to accept Western conditions in all aspects of life, including science. Arising from the above background, the University of Dar es Salaam has developed a number of policies and guidelines to inform its journals. With regards to research and publication of journals, the University has a number of policies and guidelines in place to guide collaborations. These instruments include the UDSM (2015) Research Policy and Operational Procedures - 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, UDSM (2024) Journal Policy and Guidelines, as well as the UDSM (2015) Policy on Intellectual Property. This article examines the development of *TARE* in the context of UDSM policies and guidelines. In doing so, we borrow from our paper (Makulilo & Henry, 2024) to extend and consolidate the debate on collaboration in publishing scientific journals.

## The Evolution of *TARE*

This section examines the three phases of the evolution of *TARE* over the last fifty years. Over this whole period, a journal like this must have experienced remarkable successes and challenges. Both the international and local contexts inform this development. We take stock of the journal’s development while pointing out how each phase took the journal to a better position.

## Phase One: Published by the Department of Political Science (1971–2018)

*TARE* was founded on 1 March 1971 (see Figure 1, the cover and contents of *TARE*, Volume 1, Issue 1). Initially, the journal primarily focused on decolonizing the interpretation of significant events in African politics which has been monopolized by foreign experts. Hence, it was anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist. From the 1990s onwards, the journal focused on contemporary issues related to globalization, development, and African affairs in a way to address the North-South knowledge divide. From 1971 to 1975, the journal was run by an editorial board rather than one chief editor. Most of the work in this period was carried out by an assistant editor and the editorial board convened a meeting before an issue was published. This meeting approved papers that were finally published. However, from 1976, the journal started to be run by a chief editor. Table 1 below presents the list of these chief editors from the inauguration of the journal in 1971 up to now:

Chief Editors	Years
Editorial Board	1971 – 1975
Nathan Shamuyarira	1976 – 1977
Gelase Mutahaba	1978 – 1984
Emmanuel Bavu	1985 – 1987
Sammuel Mushi	1988 – 1989, 2003
Rwekaza Mukandala	1990 – 1992
Charles Gasarasi	1993 – 1995
Andrew Kiondo	1996 – 1997
Daudi Mukangara	1998 – 1999
Mohammed Bakari	2000, 2005 – 2008
Benson Bana	2001
Mwesiga Baregu	2002 – 2004
Bruce Heilman	2009 – 2011
Alexander Makulilo	Since 2012

Table 1: Chief Editors since 1971

It has to be noted that traditionally the chief editor is appointed by the Head of Department of Political Science of the University of Dar es Salaam. He or she serves on a voluntary basis. There is no specific term limit to serve as editor. Usually, the editor ceases when he or she assumes other responsibilities which could affect the operations of the journal or when one feels tired to continue to serve as editor. The general thinking is that once a chief editor remains productive, he or she is left to serve until he or she feels the need to resign.

*TARE* started as a quarterly journal. However, the journal experienced a break from 1979 to 1981. When it resumed in 1982, it was published bi-annually. The major explanations for this change were two. Firstly, the journal experienced a shortage of resources from the University. Secondly, the journal received too few submissions to sustain publishing four times in a year. From 2022 to 2023, the journal was published quarterly. However, starting from 2024, it is published five times a year. For about 45 years, the journal operated in printed form only. Like many other journals in the global South, *TARE* has experienced challenges such as lack of an institutionalized journal system and overdependence on its Chief Editor who performed copyediting, proofreading and typesetting (Makulilo, 2013). This brought other challenges such as irregular publications for some years, poor international visibility, lack of indexing and abstracting services, poor distribution, poor printing quality, unreliable and inadequate financial resources, publishing by combining two issues in one,

lack of an effective system of tracking manuscripts from submission to decision, the problem of attracting potential authors hence getting few manuscripts, poor record keeping, and the problem of getting reviewers. It was against that background that when the new editor (Alexander Makulilo) took over in 2012 specific targets were set to ensure that the journal becomes a leading platform for African studies (Makulilo, 2013).



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Figure 1: *The African Review* 1971, Volume 1, Issue 1 (Front Cover and Contents)

Notwithstanding the above challenges, *TARE* managed to survive. It was known internationally as it has not ceased to attract international authors and members to its editorial board. Moreover, using WorldCat ([WorldCat.org](http://WorldCat.org)) we have been able to establish that, since it was launched in 1971, *TARE* has fourteen editions in 559 libraries in the world – in Europe, Asia, USA, Latin America, Australia, Canada, and Africa – including the University of Oxford (Rhodes House Library), Yale University Library, Harvard University, Library of the European Parliament, and University of Michigan. This implies that the journal is being read worldwide making it a prominent outlet for sharing scientific knowledge. In 2013, the journal was for the first time published online. However, the journal online system was not reliable due to challenges related to internet connectivity. The back run of all previous issues is available on JSTOR.

### *Phase Two: Published by the Dar es Salaam University Press (2018-19)*

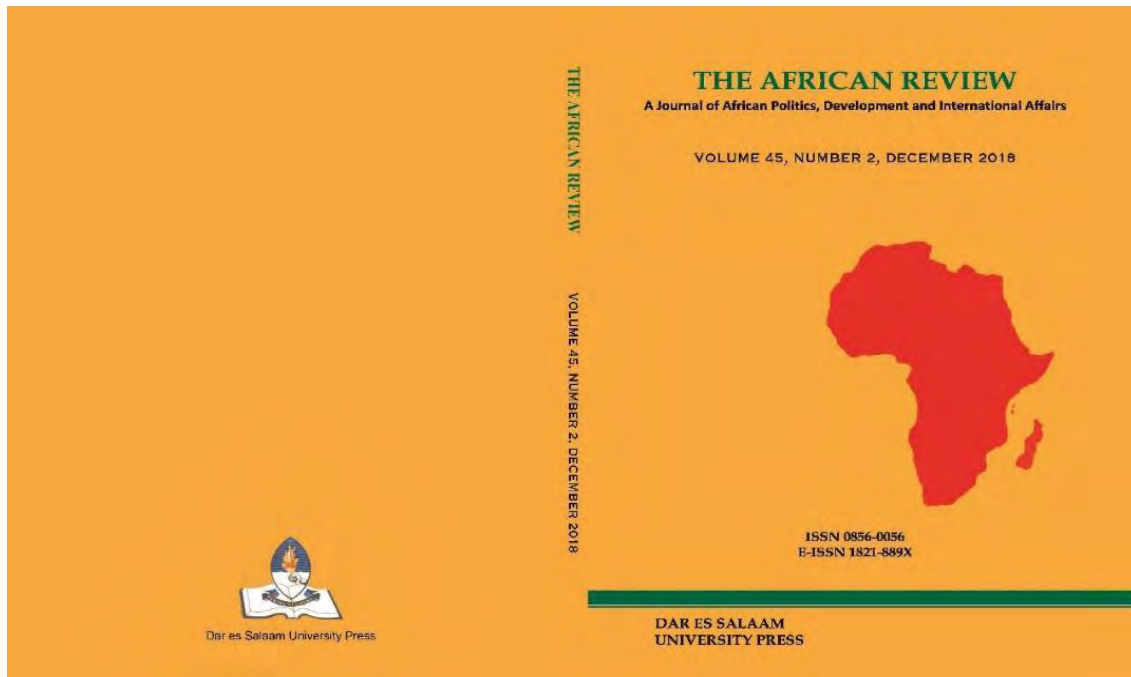


Figure 2: *The African Review* 2018, Volume 45, No. 2 (front and back cover).

In 2018 Dar es Salaam University Press (DUP) started to publish *TARE*. DUP published three issues before Brill took over. Specifically, these issues include Volume 45, No. 1 of June 2018 (Special Supplementary Issue), Volume 45, No. 2 of December 2018 (see Figure 2), and Volume 46, No. 1 of June 2019. DUP added value to the visibility of the journal. However, following some challenges facing DUP (such as the shortage of specialized staff in the publishing industry, inadequate modern facilities, inadequate capital investment, and limited distribution systems for marketing and international visibility), the idea to search for another publisher under collaboration was pursued. Currently, the University is working hard to revive the DUP.

### *Phase Three: Published by Brill (since 2019)*

From May 2016, we started to find an established publisher to collaborate with *TARE*. Initially, we approached Taylor & Francis. *TARE* went through several processes including evaluation until March 2019. The journal was positively considered. However, there were two main issues which acted as a barrier to join Taylor & Francis. First, the recommendation that *TARE* changes its title since at that particular time Taylor & Francis had another journal called *Africa Review*. But we were not ready to do so since by then *TARE* was 45 years old while the *Africa Review* was almost seven years. The other issue was about subscriptions. We were supposed to produce evidence for the past five years about subscriptions. Since at that particular time *TARE* did not have a strong system of records, it was difficult to fulfil this condition. It was on that basis that we immediately approached Brill. In June 2019, the UDSM negotiated and signed an agreement with Brill to publish *TARE*. In the agreement, Brill provides the journal with infrastructural systems and undertakes final production and distribution of the journal. The UDSM, on the other hand, retains ownership of the journal copyright and performs all the editorial activities. This agreement has significantly institutionalized and improved the quality, indexing, distribution and visibility of the journal (see Figure 3). Our current evaluation clearly indicates that the quality of the journal has significantly improved. This

section revisits six aspects of the journal to appreciate the transformative change of *TARE*. These aspects include the peer-review process, indexing and abstracting services, journal management systems, website, publication frequencies, and distribution.

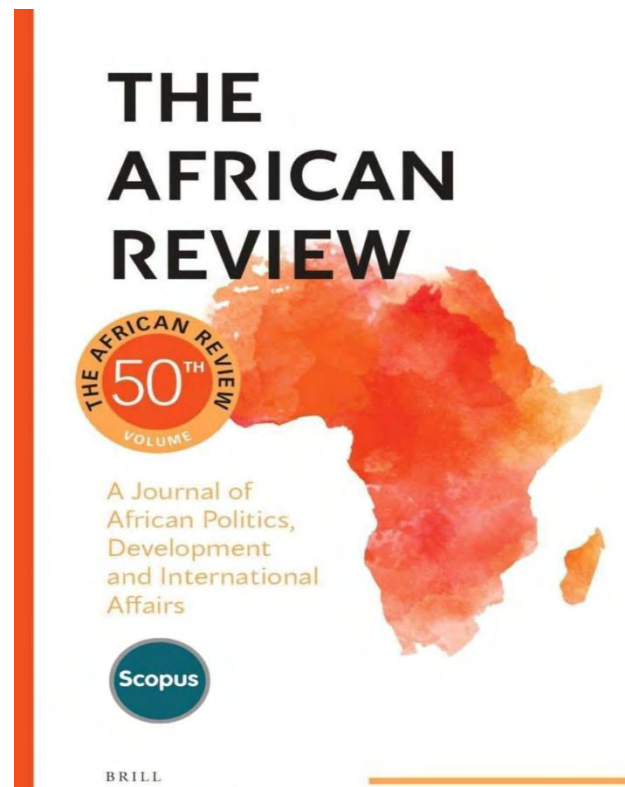


Figure 3: *The African Review* 2024 (front cover)

Under the UDSM-Brill agreement, the peer-review process is conducted systematically by authors from Africa and beyond. The journal has now a potential list of all available reviewers in different specializations. The journal's Online Management System for articles (Editorial Manager, EM) automatically treats all registered authors as potential reviewers. Moreover, the editor can register more reviewers who are not necessarily previous authors. The journal has by now about 400 experts as potential reviewers. Most such experts come from the global South. It is therefore not difficult to get a reviewer. However, one challenge still exists these days whereby most reviewers do not accomplish their assignments in a timely way. The editorial board keeps reminding our reviewers to complete their assignments on time. Likewise, the peer-review process has been systematized.

Before the agreement, *TARE* was indexed by EBSCOhost only. *TARE* is now indexed by Scopus. The process to index the journal in the Web of Science is underway. Moreover, Brill has indexed and abstracted *TARE* with the Chadwyck-Healey International Index to Black Periodicals, Russian Academy of Sciences Bibliographies, African Studies Abstracts, and JSTOR. Through JSTOR, for example, past issues of the journal have been archived. This is important for our readers to appreciate the rich history and evolution of the journal within the North-South debate.

The journal has an online Editorial Manager (EM). This system allows submission of articles online. EM is an online submission and peer review tracking system where authors can submit manuscripts and track their progress. Whether you are an author, editor, or reviewer, you can access EM (see Figure 4) from anywhere at any time as long as you have access to a computer with an internet connection. This system allows systematic interaction among authors, reviewers, editors and publishers. Moreover, it keeps records of all activities undertaken within the system. It therefore enhances accountability of all actors as it provides feedback after every step.

Under this agreement, the journal has an excellent website (<https://brill.com/view/journals/tare/tare-overview.xml>) with important information about the journal. The website provides for instructions for authors as well as tutorials on how to interact with the EM.

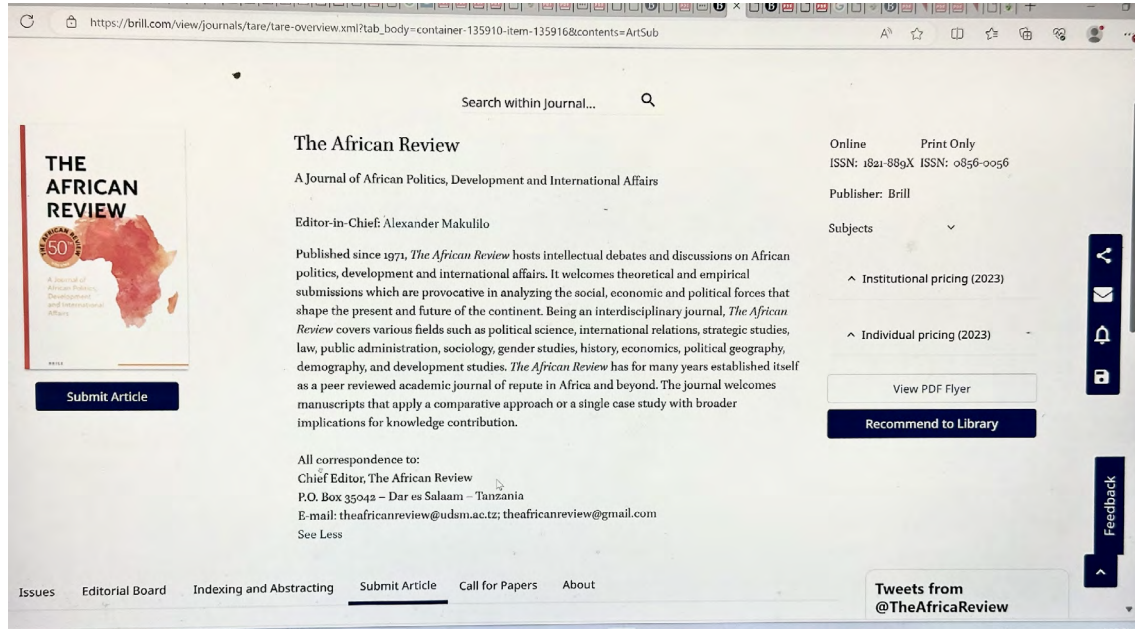


Figure 4: *The African Review's* website

All published issues and advance articles as well as journal subscription information are found on the website. The website, hosted by Brill, is accessible all the time making it possible for the journal to be visible.

The journal outlook has changed because of the industrial production. After this agreement, the journal's frequency has increased from bi-annual to five times per year. Starting from 2025, *TARE* will be published bi-monthly. This means the number of articles published will increase from 10 to 32 or 40 per year. The average manuscript turnaround time of the serial publication ranges from 14 to 18 weeks. The average manuscript acceptance rate is about 40%. This has made the journal highly competitive and its quality has significantly improved. The journal is now published on a subscription basis and Open Access. Each published article has metadata which indicates important information such as title of the article, when it was submitted, accepted, and published as well as its Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and keywords. Moreover, each article has metrics which indicates abstract, text views as well as downloads. Published articles are promoted using social media. Data shows that up to end of June 2023, the journal had 126% more downloaded articles than in 2022. This indicates that the journal's popularity is rising quickly. It should be noted that in 2020, the metrics system was not yet introduced for *TARE*. Since the journal publishes only 160 pages per issue, there are now more articles which get published as advance articles. As of October 2023, about 60 papers had already been published as advance articles. This has made it possible for papers to be available to readers even before they are assigned a specific issue. In the agreement, Brill, through its international infrastructures, distributes the journal in online, print only, and print + online formats to several libraries worldwide as per the subscription agreements. Customers can order publications through [customerservices@brill.com](mailto:customerservices@brill.com). The profit accrued from distribution is fairly divided between partners.

## Conclusion

*TARE* has its own history and identity. Over the last fifty years, the journal has experienced a number of successes and challenges. However, having a Northern publisher has helped the journal to improve its quality as well as its visibility. The UDSM-Brill agreement has been a game changer for *TARE*. The journal has increasingly become competitive internationally and its quality is matched to that of some well-known journals published in the North. Brill, although an institution in the North, has positively and fairly collaborated with the University of Dar es Salaam to publish the journal. Indeed, *TARE* has become an important platform for most authors in the South. As argued in this article, this state of affairs has been made possible owing not only to the design of the agreement, but also the willingness of the partners to respect each other and work in a transparent manner. This agreement implies that the global partnerships framed in the context of the North-South divide must operate primarily to empower their Southern partners.

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