

African Union (Au) and International Regional Economic Organizations: Collaborations and Interdependence For Integration In A Changing World.

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Abstract

The study examines the nexus between the African Union and other International Regional Economic Organizations for monetary and political integration. The global reality of international economic relations and its attendant dynamics have given more impetus for international integration among countries across continents for collaboration. It requires pooling of economic forces (trade, monetary, fiscal etc.) and political union tendency towards interdependence of states for the realization of investment and strengthening of business potentials to curb poverty and the challenges of underdevelopment. The paper makes use of secondary data to source for information while it adopts theory of integration as its theoretical framework to midwife the study.

Keywords: African Union, Continental Integration, Institutional Development, International Economics Regional Organizations, Partnership Agreement Trade liberalization.

Historical Roots of International Integration

According to Goldstein and Pevehouse (2012):

The European Union is by far the most successful example of the integration process — though even that achievement is only partial. Regional coordination in Western Europe is a relatively recent historical development, emerging just after World Conflict II. Until around 50 years ago, the European continent was synonymous with national sovereignty, state competition, and war. Europe's nations were involved in chronic intermittent conflict for 500 years, until 1945; in the twentieth century alone, two world wars left the continent in ruins. The European nations have distinct religious, ethnic, and cultural identities, both historical and contemporary. In 2011, the EU's 27 members spoke 23 official languages. If there was a contender for integration's failure, it would seem to be Europe. Even more remarkable, European integration started with the cooperation of Europe's two most fierce adversaries during the preceding century — France and Germany — adversaries in three major wars since 1870 (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2012:356).

The above captures the history and the development of integration via the integration of existing governments, typically on a regional basis, and, in the long term, the desire of sovereign states towards the formation of a single global state. Europe has been the principal testing ground for integration concepts since 1945 (Brown & Ainley, 2005:122). For more than 400 years, Europe was the center of world strife. That notwithstanding, of recent, significant changes have occurred. Relieved of the Cold War's political and strategic confrontations, the sovereign states in Europe attempted to build an economic integration with a few nations (Spiegel, Mathews, Taw & Williams, 2009:207).

The iron and steel nations of France and Germany amalgamated in 1950. The 1957 Treaty of Rome expanded the existing union to include atomic energy concerns, such as nuclear power development coordination, by combining research, investment, and administration (European Atomic Energy Community). With the foundation of a free trade area that subsequently became the European Free Trade Association, the European Economic Community (EEC), subsequently known as the European Community (EC), was the second organization (EFTA). Following the integration of a free trade area, customs union, and single market in the 1960s, it adopted a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the 1980s, which led to an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). It evolved into the European Union (EU), a single European Act (1985), and the establishment of the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice, the European Commission, the European Union Council, the Economic and Social Committee, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

All of these were done in the hopes of accelerating European economic integration and the formation of a future political union (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2012:359-363; Barry, 2006:25; James, 2000:38; Mwashu, 2015:73). The EU-index is a composite indicator of the union's integration. The single market, EU significance,

EU homogeneity, EU symmetry, and institutional conformance are among the five indicators (Gor, 2017:87). The European integration project has shown how states interests may shift over time. The goal of the integration process was to strengthen the participating nation-states from the outset. Later, the EU member states determined that deepening the process was in their best interests and they worked towards achieving the set objective. Consequently, the fact that the EU member-states had strong believe that it is in their best interests to deepen the process became the deciding factor (Heinonen, 2006:1). Thus, following the completion of the single market for commodities, the EU expanded to include services, financial and labor flows, and other sorts of regulation. Meanwhile, in the 1970s, it used exchange rate coordination and, later, monetary union, among other measures, to move from trade policy coordination to greater integration (Page, 2001:6).

Evolution of African Integration Efforts

African integration has long been a cherished aspiration, though there was no serious efforts towards goal realization (Olu-Adeyemi and Ayodele, 2017:1). Olukoshi (2010) submitted that:

The most significant experiments in African integration are inextricably linked to the history of state formation and the quest for the extension of political suzerainty on the continent, particularly in terms of efforts to unite disparate peoples and communities under a common institutional administrative umbrella. These trials were motivated by economic factors, such as regulating expanding domestic markets, mobilizing labor, and managing external/cross-border trade connections, including taxes. Additionally, the experiments had economic ramifications, including the establishment and extension of markets, the opening of new trade borders and routes, and the promotion of inter-state commercial interaction based on agreed-upon laws and principles. The experiments culminated in a sequence of enormous multi-ethnic and multi-religious kingdoms and empires built on a variety of political agendas and bolstered by the operations of a variety of economic operators. They all required the development of institutional mechanisms, political norms, fiscal and monetary policies, and administrative capabilities in order to be governable over the long term, even if the process of agglomerating political communities into unified or federated states was almost always characterized by a high level of contention, conflict, and war (Olukoshi, 2010:37-38).

There has been strong desire, from African states, for regional cooperation to strengthen their sovereignty and advance their economic potentials through greater cooperation and integration. Notwithstanding the strong desire expressed the states, the notion of fair cooperation of African states and regions, the diverse political ideas held by the different African elder statesmen, the differences in communications, official engagements and formal agreements, et cetera, had led to short outcomes only. However, the challenges did not quench the burning desire for integration among the African sovereign states. Thus, the quest has produced higher pressure culminating in the formation of the AU in 2002 (Harsch, 2002:2).

According to Harsch (2002):

For many ordinary Africans, what divides them is secondary to what unites them: a recognition that they are all Africans with a shared purpose in fostering the strongest political, economic, and personal relationships possible beyond state lines (Harsch, 2002:80).

Historically, Pan-Africanism embodied the idea which emphasized continental unity and formidable attachment with anti-colonial agitations formed the basis of the pre- and post-independence Africa's development plan. From the start of the decolonization process in the 1960s, the creation of sub-regional economic groupings was a great part of Africa's growth mechanism (Qobo, 2007:2). Since independence, African states have been involved in regional integration as a strategy for solving their development challenges. This is because regional integration has been identified as a pivotal factor in the promotion of economic development and cooperation (Aworawo, 2015:6).

Kritzinger-Van Niekerth (2006) posited that:

Economic integration on a regional scale has a long history in nearly every portion of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Soon after independence, a number of leaders advocated for Africa's integration, but it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that serious moves were made to relaunch or build economic integration institutions in all sub-regions. Regional integration schemes of the first generation were inspired in part by the political vision of African Unity, but also by the need to provide adequate scale for import substitution and industrialisation strategies. This inward-looking regional policy failed for the same reasons as the underlying national import substitution programs did: (i) domestic markets were too small and insufficiently developed; (ii) high input costs harmed transformation and export, resulting in currency shortages and overvaluation; (iii) Domestic monopolies and trade protection fueled the growth of large rent-seeking and "nationalist" lobbies that were prejudiced and organized against regional and global commerce; (iv) nationalistic governments that expressed a desire in regional cooperation provided nominal assistance to regional institutions, breached regional promises,

and allowed implementation to lapse; and (v) an undue focus was placed on shared public investments rather than on establishing fully unified markets for private operators (Kritzinger-Van Niekert, 2006:1).

Similarly, according to Lavergne (1997), as cited in Naanen and Asuk (2013): Africans' quest for new forms of community capable of overcoming development obstacles in a fast-changing environment is often delayed by a strong feeling of isolation. Regional economic integration appears as the only path to a sense of community and a reprieve from disillusionment with nations formerly viewed as the main engine of African prosperity. Due to the restricted capability of African countries cooperating in fair markets as a consequence of their undeveloped industrial capability, regional integration is seen as a viable alternative and recommended as a development strategy targeted at minimizing international isolation (Naanen and Asuk, 2013:83-84).

In furtherance of the above ideas, Uchegbu (2008) noted that:

The new recognition of regional integration as a starting point for political power and the need to avoid recolonisation by the rapidly growing power of imperialism compelled the African states to reaffirm its commitment to unity by strengthening the institutional structure that enables the union to accomplish its objectives on behalf of its members. African governments, on the other hand, have shown political timidity in their refusal to cede further power to the Union and establish a true supranational organization to safeguard Africans against imperialism's divisive techniques; the ravaging illnesses and non-international conflicts (Uchegbu, 2008:101).

Therefore, African states' strong desire to adopt regionalism was not solely as a platform to dislodge the colonial masters from their political grip of the continent but to serve as an avenue of economic emancipation and development. However, the OAU was structured to pursue political sovereignty from colonial control (Naanen and Asuk, 2013:87).

Efforts aimed at regionalism in Africa commenced early and focused basically on the regrouping of the states. The need to promote economic cooperation among African countries as well as political unification for regional transformation was conceived by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and supported by President Abdul Nasser of Egypt (Ajibewa, 2013:192, Juma&Mangeni, 2018:1). This culminated in the formation of the OAU. The need for greater intervention and integration in Africa led to the transformation of the OAU to the AU, repackaged with a new vision and mission that redefined Pan-Africanism for Africa's renaissance. Based on the AU constitutive Act, the vision is to build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent driven by its own people, ideas and dynamism as a force to be reckoned with at the international stage (Maru, 2013:5). A central focus of the AU is the continent's aspirations to encourage economic growth, sustainable development and improve its negotiation power in world politics through a strong political integration method (Mekuriyaw, 2016:55).

Regional integration has been a major way in African strategies to form various governments for growth and security through economic association and political cooperation. In a continent where many various states hold to territorial dividing lines of national independence, cooperation has been recognized as a settlement among nationalism and supranationalism. African efforts at integration have existed among all embracing arrangement of progressively increasing the ability for allotted independence and challenges answer to political and economic circles (Khadiagula, 2011:8; Sesay & Akonai, 2010:34).

Integration Theory

Integration theory seeks to figure out why nation-states embrace supranationalism, which attracts the attention of realism (state sovereignty and territorial integrity). It refers to the process through which supranational institutions gradually take the place of national institutions, portraying the progressive transfer of sovereignty from state to regional or global organisations. The merging of many states into a single state - or, eventually, into a single global authority - would be the ultimate manifestation of integration. A shift of sovereignty to the supranational level would almost certainly require some kind of federalism, in which states or other political subdivisions acknowledge the central government's sovereignty while maintaining some powers for themselves (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2012:356).

Neofunctionalism was defined by Ernst Haas (1958), David Mitrany (1944), and Leon Lindberg (1963) as a process of political integration in which political players in diverse national contexts are convinced to redirect their allegiances, expectations, and political activity toward a new centre whose institutions have or seek authority over pre-existing nation-states. It is mainly concerned with establishing an unavoidable process of functional integration. It posits that sovereign states are not the only international players, and that regional integration begins in well-defined and less contentious areas before ultimately spilling over into more complicated areas (Haas, 1961: 5).

Haas was mostly concerned with international integration. He saw that liberalizing the flow of products, money, and people might drastically alter conventional European politics. Neo-functionalism

emphasizes the relevance of nation-states while simultaneously emphasizing the roles of regional interest groups and regional bureaucracies. The goal of neo-functionalism is to produce hypotheses for testing in different situations based on the pioneering European experience of integration. The process of regional integration is described and explained by neofunctionalism in terms of how three causative elements interact:

- i. Nation-to-nation economic interconnectedness keeps increasing;
 - ii. Organizational ability for resolving conflicts and establishing international legal frameworks; and
 - iii. National regulatory regimes are replaced by supranational market rules (Rosamond, 2003).
- Haas suggested that the following strategies could help to cement cooperation further among states in a region:
- i. Good overflow outcome is the notion that cooperation within countries in one economic section will promote strong motivations for integration in other areas in order to fully match the benefits of cooperation in the section.
 - ii. Growing conduct and strength of discussion that hold in correction with increasing regional cooperation.
 - iii. The machinery of a movement of internal loyalties can be better comprehended by first observing that crucial supposition among neo-functionalists hoping is it of a multiple community consisting of the directly related countries.
 - iv. Higher regulation entanglement is then required, and other organisations at the regional ground are mostly needed for the cooperation to accomplish greater levels of judgement making procedures.
 - v. Administrative ability to draw the manner in which cooperation moves, with international organisations set up to increase the cooperation process will itself carry the lead in the responsibility to support cooperation as the supranational happens to be more powerful and more independent of the member states (Rosamond, 2003:7)
- According to Sinaic (1992) and Galbrath (1962), as cited by Balami (2011):

At its most basic level, integration theory asserts that, as a result of advancements in production, culture, and science in capitalist and socialist systems, countries share common characteristics and are extremely similar to one another, and that each has embraced the best aspects of the other while attempting to eliminate their shortcomings and flaws. The future of industrial systems analysis points to a rising tendency of integration as a result of technological advancements, the maintenance of autonomous institutions, societal needs, and specialized training (Balami, 2011:89).

The integration theory is concerned with the development of new nations via the integration of existing nations, typically on a regional basis and, in the long term, a single global state (Brown and Ainely, 2005:122). International integration became a focus of study for social scientists only in the last half-century. Only after WWII did economics and political science begin to address the issue seriously. World cooperation is seen to be good and necessary for the security of the international system. The meaning of security living was connected up with the conception of integration (Domonkos, 2010:2).

The great thinkers and proponents of integration theory include Joseph Nye, Karl Deutsch, Morton Kaplan, Georg Ritzer, Immanuel Kant, Roger Masters, David Mitrany etc. The main characteristic of integration theory is that it originated in the Western tradition of pluralists, interest groups politics and in the theoretical assumptions about the political impact of intensified economic interdependence based on liberal capitalist international policies and practices. By the mid-1960s, the application of the pluralist, neo-functional model was expanded to non-European experiences like in the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), the Central American Community and the East European Commission (Kent and Nielsson, (eds) 1980:128).

As a result, combining the steel and coal sectors of France and Germany into a unified framework was seen as critical to Europe's economic recovery and prosperity. It finally joined France and Germany with Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg to form the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Those states collaborated with the ECSC to lower trade barriers in coal and steel policy by establishing an authority to deal with businesses, labour organizations, and individuals, and to some degree, it could disobey authorities (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2012:358)

The theory's connection and significance to this research is to give a framework for comprehending the new push driving African integration and unity. The Assembly of the Union, the Executive Council, and the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) were given defined mandates to create a more coherent and coordinated institutional structure, with a special focus on the integration and mobilization of African civil society, states, and governments into the AU's integration process.

Nevertheless, the theory has its shortcomings in these ways:

- i. Cooperation limits countries' strength to defend the groups and their people from the global challenges and crises.
- ii. Integration could intend higher concentration at a period when people, local sets and central geographical residents request further involvement in their own matters.
- iii. The concentration of political government communication and beliefs as a result of cooperation will endanger both individual and people; and

iv. Forces among those supporting one's country and those supporting international government loyalties normally happen (Neilsson, 1980:129).

Bases of Partnership

- Absence of war and security, democracy and human rights.
- Sustainable and inclusive development, economic growth and regional integration.
- Tackling global issues and capacity development.
- Creating trilateral research partnerships (Akotou, Sohn, Vogl & Yeboah, 2013:10)

Also, here is a relationship connecting the AU, the EU and the UN in their effort to collectively respond to Africa's security challenges, in particular when it comes to collaborative multi-dimensional peace support operations. (Aning & Danso, 2011:71)

In 2008, a new Africa-Europe Alliance for sustainable investment & jobs was created which aimed to deepen their economic & trade relations by protecting and ensuring:

- A boost of strategic investment & job creation
- Investment in education & skills
- Strengthening the business and vicinity & investment condition tapping the full potential of economic integration & trade.

The African Union and other Regional Economic Integration Organizations

Synergies and dichotomies between globalism and regionalism define the contemporary global political economy. It has gained in importance in recent years as globalization and trade liberalization have progressed across countries and areas of the globe (Grenade, 2007:3). The relationship between the AU and other regional economic integration organizations is x-rayed in this section of the work. Such other regional organizations include the European Union (EU) Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), Organization of American States (OAS), among others. They are discussed below.

(i) European Union (EU)

Historically, the EU has been Africa's primary trading, investment, and development partner. A series of Lome Conventions controlled trade with the EU, granting African nation-states, with the exception of South Africa, privileged access to EU markets. The Cotonou Agreement, signed by the EU and African states in 2000, prepared the ground for the drafting of World Trade Organization (WTO) compliant Economic Partnership Agreements. Many African states have formed negotiation parties that cut through previous neighborhood regional integration agreements, adding another degree of complication to Africa's regional integration process. The European Partnership Agreement (EPA) reveals significant gaps in African regional integration between political goals and economic realities. African dynamics are characterized by linear market integration, which comes after progressive integration of commodities, labor and capital markets, as well as monetary and fiscal integration. As many regional economic communities (RECs) across Africa have been recognized as the building blocks of the AEC, it begins with a free trade area, customs union, and common market, and progresses to monetary and fiscal considerations for an economic union (Hartzenberg, 2011:2-3; Springer, 2012:6).

The provision for EU-Africa connections may be found in the Treaty of Rome. Articles 131 and 136 of the treaty provided for the participation of certain number of the founder-members' colonies in the European Economic Community (EEC). Following those colonies' independence, the new states were offered substantial financial aid as well as preferential access to their primary products without the need for reciprocity, with a broader scope that included a clause on general rights, rule of law, economic, social, and cultural rights, and good governance. The asymmetrical character of political discourse between the two partners/regions paralleled the varied trade relationship (Kimunguyi, 2015:8). Furthermore, due to the preponderance of EU members, ties between the EU and African Union are unbalanced. To fulfill their collective goals, these states seem to adopt different realist techniques such as a divide-and-rule strategy, selective approach, asymmetric trade, strongly conditioned assistance, imposition of sanctions, and military action (Wache, 2010:30).

The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) noted that the two continental entities were pursuing a new political connection with a new partnership that went beyond conventional developmental cooperation in Africa. The partnership has yielded tangible results in development cooperation and has pushed the two unions (EU and AU) to collaborate in international arena to address global challenges, with the goal of improving mutual knowledge of each other's institutions by essentially sharing expertise in order to promote the African Union Commission's institutional development (Mackie and Bossuyt, 2010:9; Bilal, 2010:73; Klavert, Koeb & Sherriff, 2011:178)

(ii) Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)

UNASUR was founded in 2008 with the goal of contributing to the regional integration process in areas such as education, health, environment, infrastructure, security, and democracy in a participatory and consensual

manner, with the goal of eradicating socio-economic inequality and increasing civil society participation, as well as strengthening democracy and reducing asymmetries within the framework. It was founded on the EU model (Borda, 2014:3), despite the integration issues associated with trade and social amenities that are crucial for economic growth, productivity, and regionally balanced development (Barcena, Prado, Yanez & Perez, 2014:53). Although the Africa-South America Summit (ASA) is still in its infancy, it is gathering steam. The first ASA summit took place in 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria, and the second in 2009 in Venezuela. The cooperation was oriented on political unity, shared values, and economic viability (AU, nd:1).

(iii) Organization of American States (OAS)

The OAS was established in 1948 but came into effect in 1951. It was composed of twenty-one American states, each with its own administrative structure and platform. Economic integration inside the OAS is very feasible and does not even require a free trade zone; only some member-states have signed the agreements. It is regarded as a significant intergovernmental body only by few (Furkat, 2015:8). Treaties are the most visible representations of neoliberal-inspired integration ideals and have resulted in a quantum leap forward in economic integration for free trade. They have, however, harmed states' ability to implement safeguarding measures, despite economic inequalities and trade liberalizations that necessitate radical neoliberal reforms in areas such as public procurement, basic infrastructure, investment regulation, and intellectual property rights, among others, while precluding any attempt at deeper political integration (Ebenau, 2012:8).

(iv) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

It was established in 1967 with the mission of accelerating economic growth, social improvement, cultural development, and the promotion of regional peace and security. ASEAN has a bigger market than the EU. Its Free Trade Area (AFTA) went into effect in 2003, creating a single market for products, money, people, and services (analogous to the EU). It views integration through the lens of intergovernmentalism progressing toward supranational organization (Furtak, 2015:15). It currently has sixteen members.

ASEAN and the AU have been collaborating to identify methods to enhance international economic, cultural, social, and political relations (Diaz, 2017:6). Additionally, ASEAN is responsible for standardization, reciprocal recognition of tests and certification procedures, the elimination of barriers to foreign investment, macroeconomic consultations, and venture capital promotion through the Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) on the elimination of non-tariff barriers for years (Ghai, nd:4). Despite this, additional elements of collaboration have been introduced, including the desire to establish an ASEAN community by 2015 and beyond that is composed of three pillars: the ASEAN Political Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (Dosenrode, 2010:6).

(v) The Arab League

The Arab League (AL) was founded in 1945 as a means of achieving Arab integration and unity. Arab governments have concluded several bilateral agreements and established sub-regional organizations to boost commerce and political cooperation. The purpose of such programs was to deepen economic and political integration within the current Arab state structure with the expectation of gaining more political clout on the world arena while also attaining economic goals. Among its noteworthy initiatives are the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); the Arab Magreb Union (AMU); the Arab Common Market; and the Arab Organization for Industrialization (AOI) (Mohsen, nd:6). The Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) has precise commitments requiring both tariff and non-tariff measures across the board. Import taxes and other commercial obstacles to Arab-origin items have to be reduced (Galal and Hoekman, nd:4), since the Arab League is prone to hasty integration (Grissa, 1994:21).

(vi) Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)

The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) was established in 1973 with 15 member nation-states and an integrated plan for coordinating and enhancing their joint economic and social growth. The Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) ushered in a new age of free trade based on expanded functional ties and institutions aimed at political and economic integration of the area. It is organized in a manner determined by national governments in order to maximize the effectiveness of national programs by pursuing them within a regional framework (Hornbeek, 2008:4). It pursues policies that are primarily intergovernmental in nature rather than transnational in scope (Grenade, 2007:15). CARICOM member states benefit from the Lome Agreement, which the EU administers on behalf of its former colonies (Filippo, 2005:13).

Table 1: Degree of Regional Integrations

S/N	Regional Organization	Degree of Integration
1	AFRICAN UNION	Middle
2	ARAB LEAGUE	Middle
3	ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS	Low
4	CARICOM	Middle
5	ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES	Low

6	UNION OF SOUTH AMERICA NATIONS	High
7	EUROPEAN UNION	High

SOURCE: Furtak (2015). Integration in Regional Organizations: A Comparison of EU, OAS, and ASEAN

Recommendation and Conclusion

African Union needs access to overseas markets and economic collaboration for faster growth and development from other sisters organization, which emerged from effects of globalization and the geographical constellation as in the world that necessitated mutually benefiting cooperation and independence to exist among collective economic forces of posterity. It therefore noted that integration of African into the global economy through industrial infrastructural, trade, private and public sector partnership development investment drive, research and technology, food security and debt consideration will go deep into the fabrics of the continent.

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