THE LEGAL AND ECONOMIC DYNAMICS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA: CAUSES AND EXPRESSIONS

[1]LABIDI LAZHAR, [2]ZERGUINI RADIA,[3]DARDOURI ABDELGANI,

[1]University of El Oued- Algeria

Labidi-lazhar@univ-eloued.dz

[2]University of El Oued- Algeria

zerguini-radia@univ-eloued.dz

[3]Mansoura University- Egypt

ghaniderdouri@gmail.com

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Abstract:

Regional economic integration is a phenomenon currently under study and attention, given its importance in achieving economic recovery and the well-being of peoples. African countries have paid attention to this solution due to their deteriorating economic conditions, particularly through sub-African organizations. This is what we will attempt to address. However, before doing so, it is necessary to briefly address the theoretical framework of regional integration.

Keywords: integration, region, economy, sub-organizations, Africa, international relations, interests, development

INTRODUCTION

In the period following the failure of the balance of power theory and the outbreak of World War I, international relations moved toward a new model of international organization based on activating inter-relations and finding common denominators that unite political units, with the aim of satisfying the needs of their citizens and securing their vital interests. This is what international relations scholars have termed "international integration." [1]

If alliances and military blocs are considered the first building block in the construction of international organization, then the era in which we live has been called the era of international blocs. The term "blocs" is broader in language and content than the term "alliances." Every bloc is an alliance, not the other way around, because blocs extend to encompass all areas of life. [2]

However, the phenomenon of international integration did not attract the attention of international relations scholars until just before World War II, and it did not gain widespread popularity in academic circles until after World War II in the 1950s and 1960s. This was after the achievement of international peace and the well-being of peoples was based on new foundations in international relations, and economic interests took precedence over security and political considerations. [3]

In the mid-twentieth century, the world witnessed significant transformations that impacted the methods of organizing relations between states. Following World War II, there was a global consensus to reject armed conflict as a tool for achieving ambitions. Principles such as peace, security, and respect for human rights emerged and became popular. The idea of direct colonialism became

[1] International Integration Theories, University Publications Office, Algeria, 2008, p. 7

[2] Mr. Mustafa Ahmed Abu al-Khair, The General Theory of Alliances and Military Blocs According to the Rules of Public International Law, First Edition, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, Lebanon, 2010, p. 13

[3] Amer Misbah,op.cit., p. 7

unacceptable, and independence conflicts emerged in various parts of the world. This prompted a move toward achieving political unity, which would make developed countries no longer need to resort to armed conflict due to the expansion of their common interests. Meanwhile, small, newly independent states could achieve unity to free themselves from colonialism. [4]

Several studies have emerged on the phenomenon of integration, particularly in the form of economic integration as a means of integration and preventing conflicts and wars. The European experience and other experiences in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have provided specialists with a laboratory for examining assumptions and results related to the issue of integration[5]. These include the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) in 1949, the Latin American Free Trade Area (LAFTA) in 1957, and in Western Europe, the European Common Market, established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Developing countries have also shown interest in regional economic integration and signed treaties, including those of the Latin American countries in 1958, 1960, and 1961, specifically establishing a common market for Central America. In the Arab world, Arab countries signed the Economic Unity Agreement in 1957 and the Arab Common Market in 1964.

International policy texts have emphasized that cooperation and integration should take place in many economic, cultural, financial, and technological fields. However, since the end of World War II, the issue of economic development has become the fundamental problem. For underdeveloped countries, and the most frequently discussed issue in conferences, economic integration and cooperation have been closely linked to development as one of the important methods for accelerating economic development[6].

Economic blocs became a feature of the twentieth century, as various countries around the world adopted them, with their different political and economic systems. This prompted some economic writers, including Faul Andic, to call the mid-twentieth century the era of economic blocs. [7]Most countries around the world moved towards adopting policies of reform, liberalization, and economic openness. The world witnessed a strong trend towards liberalizing international trade, which takes many forms, the most important of which is non-discriminatory liberalization, whether by the state alone within the framework of the economic reform program adopted by the state, or multilateral liberalization established by virtue of agreements. However, the current era is witnessing a clear increase in the decline of economic liberalization in its non-discriminatory form, and the increase in regional integration agreements and the entry of countries, both developed and developing, into regional blocs. During the period from 1995 to 2003, the number of new regional integration agreements reached 194 agreements, with an average of seven agreements per agreement. This compares to an annual average of three agreements for the period from 1948 to 1994. [8]

The countries of the African continent followed the example of other countries, considering regional economic integration as one of the fundamental means of achieving development, given the advantages it offers. Numerous sub-African organizations emerged on the continent, working to achieve economic integration to varying degrees and according to different time periods. This was

[4] Muhammad Mahmoud al-Imam, Global Integration Experiences and Their Implications for Arab Integration, First Edition, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Lebanon, p. 11

[5] Omar Ibrahim al-Afas, Theories of Regional International Integration, First Edition, Publications of Garyounis University, Benghazi, Libya, National Book House, 2008, p. 10

[6] Abdul Qader Raziq al-Makhademi, Democratic Transformation in the African Continent, First Edition, Dar al-Fajr, Egypt, 2006, p. 93

[7] Mohsen Mahmoud al-Khudayri, Economic Integration between Egypt and Sudan, A thesis submitted for a Master's degree in African Studies from the Department of Political and Economic Systems (Economics), Institute African Research and Studies, Cairo University, 1980, p. 1

[8] Mohsen Ahmed Mahmoud Al-Khudayri,op.cit., p. 4

facilitated by several factors, most of which are related to the status of the African continent, inherited from colonialism, in addition to new developments in the international arena, especially in the economic field.

What are the most important forms of regional economic integration in the African sub-organizations? Before answering this question, we must first address the concept of regional integration, its motivations, and its forms. We will then examine African sub-organizations and their approach to integration issues.

Section One: The Theoretical Framework for Regional Integration

Economic developments and events taking place worldwide have proven that countries, whether developed or underdeveloped, socialist or capitalist, cannot exist in isolation from one another. Therefore, measures have been taken to establish regional links between them. Regional integration may include only developed countries, such as the European Union, or only developing countries, such as the Common Market of South American Countries (MERCOSUR), or it may include both developed and developing countries, such as the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA)[9]. So, what is the concept of regional integration?

1- The Concept of Regional Integration

The American Ernest Haas defines integration as the process by which the loyalties and political activities of political forces in multiple and diverse countries shift toward a new center whose institutions have powers that transcend those of existing nation-states[10]. Karl Deutsch, one of the founding fathers of modern integration theory, defined integration as "the achievement within a region of institutions and practices sufficiently strong and widespread enough to ensure long-term continuity, based on the expectation of peaceful change among the communities of the region."

Leon Lindbergh defined it as "the process by which states find themselves unwilling or unable to manage their foreign or major domestic affairs independently of one another and instead seek to make joint decisions on these matters or delegate them to a new institution, or the process by which a group of political communities is persuaded to shift their activities to a new center." [11]

As for economic integration, some have derived its definition from the Latin word "integrates," which means completion, completion, or whole. They defined integration as the process by which a whole can be created or formed by assembling or adding separate parts together. Integration means assembling parts into a new form and eliminating discrimination between economic units in different countries (e.g., eliminating discrimination between national economies) in order to achieve equal opportunities for all elements of production, not only at the international level but also at the regional level. [12]

Alagraa defined it as "the elimination of all forms of trade discrimination between economies participating in integration, while establishing some elements of cooperation and coordination between them." Winters defined it as "the process of reducing trade barriers between a group of countries, which do not necessarily lie within the same geographic region." This makes the basic distinguishing feature of regional integration trade liberalization, but preferential, with liberalization for some countries and not others." Tinbergen defined it as "the creation of an appropriate structure

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[9] - Hanan Hussein Ramadan Nazir, Regional Integration between Theory and Reality: A Study Submitted for a Master's Degree, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, 2005, p. 1

[10] Hanan Hussein Ramadan Nazir,op.cit., p. 1

[11] Specialists note that the state has not yet transferred part of its powers, part of its sovereignty, or part of its citizens' loyalty to the regional or international organizations to which it belongs, unless doing so temporarily serves its interests. See: Mohamed Bouacha, Integration and Conflict in Current International Relations: A Study of Concepts and Theories, first edition, Dar Al-Jeel, Beirut, Lebanon, 1999, p. 167. 12- Amer Mesbah,op.cit., p. 15

[12] Mohsen Ahmed Mahmoud El-Khodairy,op.cit., p. 5

for international trade between member states, where all barriers between these countries are removed, while the necessary elements of coordination and unification are introduced." [13]

Therefore, he distinguished between negative integration, which is based on eliminating any restrictions on the process of trade liberalization, and positive integration, which is based on introducing institutional changes and creating new ones to achieve the union's goals. This distinction is also called superficial integration and deep integration.

Some believe that economic integration has a concept specific to developing countries, as it aims to create permanent and continuous compatibility between the resources and capabilities of integrated entities and countries and their development requirements. This creates an appropriate climate to stimulate and accelerate growth and create opportunities for various factors of production to propel countries' economies to the stage of growth and achieve prosperity within a framework of appropriate practical planning. This takes into account the conditions, goals, and methods used to achieve development. [14]

2-Forms of Economic Integration

In order to present a comprehensive and interconnected picture of the phenomenon of integration, it is necessary to address the types of integration superficially, as the scope of the study will focus on the forms of integration with respect to economic integration as one of the types of integration.

A- Political Integration

Ernst Haas defines it as "the process by which actors are convinced... Politicians in various political systems shift their loyalties, expectations, and political activities toward a new center whose institutions have the power to issue legislation applicable within those systems. [15]

B- Economic Integration

Some consider it the elimination of distinctions between economic units belonging to different nation-states. Integration is understood at two different levels:

1- The level of national integration, which concerns the conditions or processes of integration within a single political unit. National economic integration occurs at the state level, such as the formation of the United States of America in 1865.

2- The level of multilateral integration, whether regional, which occurs at the level of a group of countries, or international (global) integration, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. [16]

As for the degrees and stages of economic integration (its forms), the stages of economic cooperation and the forms taken by international economic blocs are numerous, as follows:

- **Preferential System**: This system is implemented through agreements that grant customs benefits and facilities to contracting countries that other countries do not benefit from. In this system, restrictions remain in place, but a preferential tariff is agreed upon. Some believe that the preferential system does not fall under the category of economic blocs, as it does not form a cohesive bloc, but rather arranges the exchange of specific products for which agreements have already been concluded with other countries. [17]

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[13] Hanan Hussein Ramadan Nazir,op.cit., p. 7

[14] Mohsen Ahmed Mahmoud El-Khodairy,op.cit., p. 6

[15] Omar Ibrahim El-Afas,op.cit., p. 48 ff.

[16] Hanan Hussein Ramadan Nazir,op.cit., p. 6. Or see Omar Ibrahim El-Afas,op.cit., pp. 33-39

[17] Mohsen Mahmoud El-Khodairy,op.cit., p. 11

-**Free Trade Area**: This means removing customs tariffs and other restrictions on trade between the countries participating in this system, while each country maintains its own policy with respect to non-member countries. An example of this is the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), which entered into force in 1994. Each country maintains its own tariff with respect to others, and this free zone may be limited to some products and not others. Countries establish an agreement to adopt rules of origin, which defines the conditions that must be met by a product in order for it to be considered a national origin of the exporting country. Such an item will only enjoy customs exemption if the rules of origin apply to it. This is to combat the phenomenon of commercial infiltration, which means that goods enter the member state with the lowest customs tariff and are then re-exported to the remaining countries of the free trade zone. [18]

- Customs union: In addition to removing barriers to domestic trade, member states choose a similar tariff in their trade with other parties outside the system. This means that their trade policies are unified globally. Examples include the customs union between Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (Benelux), which was established in 1948 and later became external, and the European Economic Community with the accession of Germany, France, and Italy in 1958.

- Common market: This is an advanced form of economic integration, where member states agree among themselves, in addition to the customs union, to remove any barriers that impede the free movement of production factors (labor, capital, technology), allowing them to move between countries participating in the same system without obstacles. Examples include the Common Market of South American Countries (MERCOSUR) and the European Union. [19]

- Economic unity (complete economic integration, which adds to all of the above a unification of institutions and economic policies and also includes the selection of a common monetary system (the existence of a single currency). A central authority is formed, along with liberalizing the movement of goods and production factors between member states and unifying trade policies toward the outside world. Its mission is to... It is the coordination of the economic policies of member states, such as the deepening of the European Union in 1999 to include an economic union with a single currency. [20]

The first three forms are considered the most widespread in practice because they are less complex, requiring only the removal of barriers to the movement of goods, or both goods and factors of production. Consequently, they entail a relatively simple concession of the internal economic sovereignty of member states, unlike an economic union, which requires the transfer of this sovereignty to a central authority.

2- Motives for Regional Economic Bloc

Integration is a means to achieve a set of political and economic goals, not an end in itself. Economic cooperation is linked to the prevailing social and political systems of member states, because economic convergence—in the view of some—is the result of a convergence in the social and political systems between states, and this may result in actual political integration. Therefore, it has become

[18] Hanan Hussein Ramadan Nazir,op.cit., p. 8

[19]Badir Gabr Ahmed El-Marsawy, "The Common Market for Eastern Africa: Between Theory and Practice," a thesis submitted for a master's degree in African Studies, Institute of African Research and Studies, Cairo University, 1978, pp. 18 ff.

[20] Some consider political union a form of economic integration. Along with economic union, a joint parliament and other institutions are formed to achieve the sovereignty of a single state. However, others believe that this type cannot be considered a form of regional integration because it may not be linked to any economic motive, such as the unification of East and West Germany in 1990. See Hanan Hussein Ramadan Nazir,op.cit., p. 9. 22- Muhammad Bouasha,op.cit., p. 167

important to identify the reasons that have led to this rapid proliferation of regional integration agreements across countries of the world, regardless of their levels and economic systems.

A- Political Motives for Integration

There are many political reasons that prompt countries to adopt a policy of economic integration, including:

- Avoiding the risk of political conflict And military cooperation between member states, making it practically impossible. Integration aims to achieve security, peace, and common interest. Since the international community is suffering from conflicts and wars, integration has been proposed [21] in an attempt to mitigate or eliminate these conflicts and wars. This is because by encouraging trade, deepening and intertwining economic relations, and negotiating trade affairs, trust between the negotiating states increases. The establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 aimed to stem the conflicts that were prevalent at the time, particularly between France and Germany. Mercosur contributed to mitigating the conflict between Argentina and Brazil. Economic integration is, in some cases, considered a prelude to political integration, thus reducing the likelihood of political disputes.

There are those who believe that economically advanced countries are paving the way for the establishment of economic blocs that will achieve dominance and control over the global economic system, similar to military blocs and alliances. The establishment of economic blocs may be intended to legitimize the relations of members of the planned military blocs, thus paving the way for alliances and military blocs through an economic approach. [22]

- Increased negotiating power of member states. This is particularly evident in agreements that stipulate the unification of foreign policies toward non-member states. These agreements enable member states to confront the outside world as a single buyer or seller. Consequently, member states must negotiate as a group, thereby gaining greater market power and greater influence. This effect is evident in the form of customs unions and does not arise in free trade zones. Countries' weight in global politics increases with their increasing economic strength. This can only be achieved by combining their resources and increasing economic interdependence among them. This enables them to confront any exploitation or infringement of their sovereignty and to treat other countries or blocs as equals, based on mutual benefit rather than exploitation. [23]

Although this may be difficult for developing countries to achieve because they lack the human and material resources (financial/expertise) required for the negotiation process, joining a particular integration framework may reduce the cost of negotiation and increase their presence in multilateral negotiations, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). This framework has served as a political tool for joint negotiations between members and other major powers and blocs such as Canada, the United States, and the European Union.

- Using regional integration as a mechanism to ensure that member states fulfill their commitments related to economic reforms, this is done in order to attract domestic and foreign investment by providing confidence in the seriousness and credibility of the reforms. This may facilitate joining regional integration, with its many commitments. For example, when establishing NAFTA, both the United States and Mexico aimed to ensure Mexico's fulfillment of its commitments regarding economic reform policies to raise growth rates and living standards and reduce illegal immigration from Mexico to the United States.

[21] Mr. Mustafa Ahmed Abu Al-Khair,op.cit., pp. 72-73

[22] Mohsen Ahmed Mahmoud Al-Khudairi,op.cit., p. 2

[23] Hanan Hussein Ramadan Nazir,op.cit., p. 13

The same applies to Eastern European countries. The goal of adopting economic reform policies was to conclude partnership agreements with the European Union, as this is considered a condition for their accession to the EU. However, the success of a regional bloc in ensuring that member states fulfill their obligations must meet two conditions. The first is that member states be keen to continue their membership in the bloc, and the second relates to the ability and willingness of member states to compel each other to fulfill their obligations. This is especially true if the bloc includes both developing and developed countries. [24]

B- Economic Motives

- Enjoying economies of scope, i.e., free access to each other's markets, increased production efficiency, and reduced average costs due to lower transportation and shipping costs. Furthermore, projects benefit from interdependence among industries, improved transportation and roads, and the attraction of skilled labor. These savings can be divided into:

Internal economies: These result from market expansion and, consequently, increased demand for products from projects with positive internal elasticity. Increased demand enables projects to utilize their production capacity to a greater extent, which increases economic welfare by reducing production costs and increasing consumer surplus. External economies: These result from the transfer of production factors and the interaction of workers, manifesting in the form of lower cost curves for most industries. [25]

- Improved international exchange rates for member states as a group, as member states' bargaining power increases, contributing to an improvement in their international exchange rates.

- Increased competition due to the expansion of the market, which provides an incentive for producers to improve production. Monopoly and the resulting price increases are eliminated. Furthermore, increased competition between various existing projects and various production factors in member states may lead to the elimination of less efficient producers, which improves the use of economic resources and increases consumer welfare.

- Increased economic growth rates for member states through market expansion and increased foreign and domestic investment, due to the availability of a favorable climate of political and economic stability and the selection of a better location. This makes it possible to establish projects according to reasonable, rather than random, economic standards. This instills confidence among businessmen in the possibility of distribution, which leads to increased investment volume and, consequently, higher income levels, thus raising growth rates. - Securing the national economy against any unexpected trade policies by trading partners, especially major countries, and thus concluding integration agreements with the latter prevents this. [26]

Chapter Two: Economic Blocs in the African Continent

A debate has erupted among economic thinkers regarding several points related to integration agreements, most notably whether these agreements constitute an obstacle to multilateral liberalization because they involve preferential trade liberalization? What is best for developing countries when choosing their partners for regional integration? Is it better for them to enter into integration agreements with similar developing countries? Or to join developed countries? And under what conditions?

The disparity in the economic and social systems of different countries has led countries to prefer union within relatively narrow geographical boundaries. This assumption is based on the fact that

[24] Mohsen Mahmoud Al-Khudairi,op.cit., p. 9

[25] Hanan Hussein Ramadan Nazir, op.cit, p. 15

[26] Abdul Qader Raziq Al-Makhademi, op.cit, p. 94

countries within a single region are more homogeneous in terms of their social and political conditions and possess a shared civilization and cultural ties that facilitate joint action and democratic transformation. [27]

The African continent has witnessed a widespread proliferation of sub-regional organizations as a manifestation of economic blocs. Below, we will discuss the reasons for the emergence of these organizations, then discuss the most prominent ones and their interest in integration issues. 1- Factors of the African Sub-Organizations

The structures established by each colonizer among dependent states created links between them similar to what regional integration seeks to establish, whether in the form of freedom of exchange, shared services, or monetary zones. However, the national and regional structures established by colonialism and transferred to independent states were not suitable for shouldering the burdens of development nor were they suitable for providing a basis for integration between independent states. This led to the need to rebuild integrative institutional frameworks on new foundations.

Thus, the African continent was one of the most important arenas in which movements for political independence, economic and social development, and regional integration coincided, creating a distinct interconnectedness in relations between the national, regional, and continental levels. [28]

In contrast to calls for political unity, two intellectual trends emerged, focusing on the economic dimension. Nigeria opposed Nkrumah's plan for political unity on the basis of the necessity of achieving economic integration before discussing political integration. The first trend, discussed at a conference of eight countries in Accra in April 1958, called for the establishment of an economic administration. At the continental level, within the framework of Nkrumah's project, which included the establishment of a joint government, a common economic and industrial program, a common African market, a common currency, an African monetary zone, a central African bank, a continental transportation system, a common foreign and diplomatic policy, a common African defense system, and a common African army. The second approach was discussed at the Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) Conference in June 1960. It favored starting with partial regional groupings—even at the economic level—based on geography, and expanding from there to broader geographic areas. This plan gained the support of most countries. Consequently, the Economic Commission for Africa proposed dividing the continent into subregions: eastern, southern, central, western, and northern. The Charter of the Organization of African Unity also recognized the need to enhance economic cooperation among member states. The preamble to the Charter stated, "We, the Heads of State and Government of Africa...conscious of our responsibility...for the full progress of our peoples..." Article 2, defining the objectives of the organization, also stipulated the strengthening of Africa's solidarity and cooperation, including economic cooperation. [29]

The mid-1970s witnessed the emergence of subregional organizations aimed at establishing strong subregional economic blocs with the goal of unifying all African economies. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, established in 1958, favored the adoption of subregional blocs on the African continent to address economic conditions and achieve development through cooperation between groups of countries, rather than continental cooperation due to the weakness and scarcity of transportation and communications and the difficulty of coordination.

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[27] Muhammad Mahmoud Al-Imam, op.cit, p. 74

[28] Charter of the Organization of African Unity, from the book African Documents by Abd Al-Salam Muhammad Shalouf and others, first edition, Jamahiriya House for Distribution, Publishing, and Advertising, 2001, p. 172 ff.

[29] Al-Bashir Al-Kut, Subregional Organizations in Africa: A Study of the Most Prominent Organizations, First Edition, The International Center for Green Book Studies and Research, Libya, 2008, p. 29.

The Commission saw fit to divide the continent into five regions for economic cooperation (North, South, Central, East, and West). This was not explicitly stated until the 1991 Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, in Article 28, which called for strengthening existing economic groups, creating new ones, and enhancing cooperation between these groups. Indeed, the sub-organizations respected these geographical areas, with the exception of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), which includes countries from the north, east, and center of the continent. [30]

There are also many countries that are members of more than one grouping, such as Libya, Congo, Uganda, Eritrea, and Angola, which are members of three groups. Most African countries are members of more than one grouping, benefiting from this membership and contributing to convergence toward achieving unity. Some countries believe that the principle of membership in a single grouping should be respected, as this is the right step toward successful development at the sub-group level, followed by the process of integration and merger between the sub-organizations at the continental level.

The emergence of these organizations was characterized by a relatively short period of time between their emergence, and most of them were founded on economic foundations, although their goals included achieving political objectives. However, some organizations are dominated by a political nature in their establishment, despite their pursuit of economic objectives, as stated in their founding treaty, on the basis that achieving economic objectives will lead to achieving political objectives (such as the European Union). The names of these organizations, however, indicate that most of them have an economic character—with the exception of the Maghreb and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States—which provides an indication of the nature of their objectives, in addition to Texts of these organizations.

The reasons for the emergence of these organizations can be traced back to the following:

1- The influence of colonialism: Africa has a long history of regional integration, some of which dates back to the colonial era. The first economic blocs on the African continent were not born of the will of the African masses nor a reflection of their needs. Rather, they were imposed by European colonialism to unite its colonies and connect them to meet its needs. Some colonial powers established economic groups that included their colonies with the aim of optimally exploiting the colonies' resources. [31]The first signs of integration began under colonial rule as a measure aimed at reducing expenditures based on the performance of functions or in the field of service organizations to reduce the burden on the colonial treasury. The Southern African Customs Union (SACE) is considered the oldest trading bloc among developing countries, having been established in 1910 to include the countries dependent on the British Empire located in southern Africa.

2- Economic reasons: Most African countries are considered economically backward, and despite the many reasons leading to poor economic performance, the fragmented and divisive nature of the African economic space in the global economy has remained the main constraint on the continent's growth. This has prompted rapid expansion in sub-regional and continental integration. Governments have sought to adopt economic development plans in which regional economic integration is considered—even theoretically—one of the basic means of achieving development, given the advantages it provides, including: - Regional integration on the continent plays a fundamental role in shaping viable economic units and broad markets that allow for the adoption of large-scale production mechanisms, as the factors of production in each individual country do not meet the needs

[30] Amin Isber, The Journey of African Unity, Second Edition, Dar Al-Kalima Publishing House, Lebanon, 1983, p. 159

[31] Muhammad Ashour,op.cit., p. 21

of large projects, despite the continent's richness in many raw materials. and various energy sources. [32]

- In the absence of industrial structures and infrastructure, integration plans and projects are expected to provide the appropriate framework for mobilizing resources and markets to enable entry into the industrialization phase. Hence, integration becomes a tool for creating the necessary economic harmony between countries.

- The free movement of goods and services between member states in the integration process leads to competition between products. Consequently, producers must improve their productivity and reduce unit production costs through rationalization of production, specialization, and division of labor within the scope of integration. This increases the productive efficiency of economic projects and achieves optimal resource utilization.

- The movement of labor from poor areas to more prosperous areas within the scope of integration, in accordance with economic and employment opportunities, represents a factor for economic expansion for the labor-exporting country, as it reduces pressure on the labor market and provides additional income through remittances from workers abroad. Furthermore, the host country benefits from this labor by reducing production costs and developing its capabilities and competitiveness.

- The movement of capital increases the potential for growth, as capital is directed toward the best financial and economic opportunities, avoiding the waste of scarce resources. Through integration, resources can be redistributed and employed within countries. The region contributes to reducing capital outflows by investing a portion of national savings in neighboring countries. - Integration helps limit the deterioration of African countries' external position internationally and increases their bargaining power with international economic powers regarding the terms of economic exchange, as such negotiations require experts and resources whose costs and implementation exceed the capabilities of African countries. [33]

3- Political Reasons: Initially, the desire to liberate the continent from the remnants of colonialism was one of the motivations for integration or cooperation. There were regions in Africa that were still subject to colonialism, and African countries sought to distance themselves from the ongoing conflict between the Eastern and Western camps. [34]The weakness and fragility of African countries and their inability to fulfill their social, economic, and political obligations are considered the most important and prominent motivations for African integration in Africa, especially with the effects of international developments on the continent's countries and economies, particularly the dominance of capitalist society, which imposed its Western model economically and politically on African countries. These liberal economic policies have increased weakness and rendered African countries unable to meet the demands of their citizens, whether Of public services or the provision of acceptable infrastructure, which led to countries being ineffective at the international level and unable to protect their interests in the face of foreign economic interests, and the components of Western policy towards the African continent still reveal exploitation and opulence in new forms that are the essence of neo-colonialism. [35]

Some experts in African affairs and studies believe that the manifestations of the weakness of the African state, embodied by the problem of national integration in these countries, have carried within them impetus towards regional integration in Africa. Dr. Ibrahim Nasr El-Din observes some positive repercussions of the decline of the state's role on the seekers and efforts of integration in the African

[32] Abd al-Salam Nuwair Muhammad Ashour, Regional Integration in Africa: A Theoretical Field Study, First Edition, Institute of African Research and Studies, Cairo University, Egypt, 2007, pp. 56-57

[33] Muhammad al-Jabali, The Common African Market: Politics and Economics, Cairo University Press, p. 39

[34] Abd al-Salam Nuwair Muhammad Ashour,op.cit., p. 56

[35] Muhammad Ashour,op.cit., p. 26

continent. These include that the collapse of the nation-state project had a positive impact, albeit indirectly, on the process of regional integration. Countries realized their inability to confront the problems of national integration individually and that fortifying themselves with absolute sovereignty and entering into conflicts with neighboring countries would not achieve political stability and economic development. This led to the collapse of the policy of axes based on ideology.

Most African countries adopted market mechanisms and democratic transformation, something that some considered a primary condition for the establishment and success of the regional integration process. [36]

Establishing regional groups in Africa is also a key factor in achieving social and political stability in various countries, as it provides a framework for settlement and resolving costly conflicts. For example, the Great Lakes region could be transformed into a region of economic prosperity, eliminating sources of tension and conflict related to nationalism, sectarianism, and other narrow, primary affiliations. The ethnic divisions witnessed in many regions of Africa have led to wars that have destroyed the African economy and infrastructure. Therefore, their severity can be mitigated by establishing broader regional entities.

2- The Most Important Regional Economic Organizations in Africa and Their Approach to Integration

The emergence of the Organization of African Unity did not prevent the emergence of new sub-regional organizations on the African continent. Africans were not satisfied with a comprehensive regional organization and joined sub-regional organizations. The African Economic Community (AEC) moved toward dividing the African continent into regions and encouraged respect for sub-regional organizations within Africa. This division, in addition to the colonial factor, led to the unification of countries subject to the same colonizer. Numerous organizations emerged, the most important of which we will briefly discuss:

A- The East African Community

The East African Supreme Council (EAC) was officially established in January 1948. It, in turn, succeeded the East African Governors' Conference (EAGC), which was established in 1926. According to the agreement and constitution of the East African Common Services Organization (EACSO) in December 1961, the EAC was replaced by the East African Common Services Organization (EACSO). In June 1960, Julius Nyerere attended an African summit in Addis Ababa and first proposed the idea of East African unity before independence. The concern for the distribution of industrial activity at the beginning of independence led to the establishment of the three countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in 1961, the "Common Services Organisation" (EACO) to replace the High Commission (the Supreme Authority). It attempted to establish a political union for East Africa, but Uganda opposed it. [37]

However, the organization continued to suffer from difficulties stemming from the fact that the benefits of membership went to Kenya more than to the member states, as it dominated trade in manufactured goods among members. A ministerial meeting was held in Kampala (April 1964) to rectify the distribution of industrial activity. On June 6, 1967, the heads of the three countries signed a treaty for East African cooperation in Kampala, establishing the East African Community (EAC) and a common market. It established the principles adopted by the East African Common Services Organization, headquartered in Arusha (Tanzania). It entered into force on December 1, 1967, for a period of 15 years, and laid the foundations for the East African Common Market. Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania signed this agreement, and the door was opened for other countries to join. Somalia

[36] Muhammad Mahmoud al-Imam,op.cit., p. 104
[37] Amin Isber,op.cit., p. 179

and Ethiopia submitted applications for membership, and Burundi and Zambia became associate members in 1968. [38]

Its long-term goal was to establish an economic union that would implement a unified customs tariff and excise duties, prohibiting restrictions on international trade with the exception of agricultural products, and prohibiting transfer taxes on industrial goods. However, it overlooked the problem of the distribution of benefits in the industrial sector, which worsened over time. The group benefited from the "Common Services" institution and added other common bodies, such as the Agricultural Research Organization and organizations for research on primary resources, health, and meteorology.

Regarding trade exchange and transfer taxes, the treaty stipulated the abolition of duties on intra-trade, the imposition of no quantitative restrictions on imports of member products, and the guarantee of freedom of transit trade for goods destined for other members. It also tasked the Common Market Council with eliminating existing differences in excise duties in an effort to achieve a common customs tariff. The group's work was paralyzed when its leadership meetings were suspended due to the refusal of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere to meet with Ugandan President Idi Amin, who had been brought to power through a military coup in January 1971.

The group officially collapsed within ten years, despite being considered a promising experiment. Its members joined the Preferential Trade Area in 1978. Following the fall of Idi Amin's regime, the heads of state of the three countries held a meeting in January 1980, but it yielded no results. After rounds of negotiations, a reconciliation agreement was concluded in 1984, which included an agreement to distribute the group's assets and liabilities. It also included an agreement to explore new ways to enhance cooperation among its members. In late 1993, the Permanent Tripartite Commission for East African Cooperation was established for a five-year term, from March 1996 to March 2001, and sectoral councils and committees were established to develop the details of cooperation in various fields. In 1997, the heads of state called on the Tripartite Commission to develop its agreements into a treaty, which was signed in late 1999 and entered into force. Implementation began after the three countries completed their ratification in mid-2000 and declared the establishment of the East African Community in 2001, with the termination of the Tripartite Commission and its General Secretariat and the transfer of its assets, liabilities, and staff to the Community. [39]

The objectives of the new Community were to expand and deepen cooperation among member states in the political, economic, social, cultural, health, education, technology, defense, security, and legal and judicial fields, in the common interest of all.

This was achieved through the establishment of a customs union as an initial stage for the Community, and a common market, followed by a monetary union, leading to a political federal union for the East African countries. The wording of the treaty was influenced by recent developments in global thought and the content of the Abuja Treaty of the African Economic Community. It stipulated the pursuit of sustained growth in economic activities and equitable development of the region through the rational use of its natural resources and environmental protection, the promotion and strengthening of the participation of the private sector and civil society, and the establishment of participation by the peoples of the region in achieving common, people-centered development. It also emphasized the promotion of good governance, including adherence to democratic principles, the rule of law, accountability, transparency, social justice, and equality.

Opportunities, gender equality, and the advancement of the role of women in development, as well as working to promote peace, security, and stability in the region and good neighborliness among the member states, taking into account the principles of complementarity and similarity in order to achieve the common good and a fair distribution of benefits.

[38] Muhammad Mahmoud al-Imam,op.cit., p. 111
[39] Muhammad Mahmoud al-Imam,op.cit., p. 111

The Treaty has identified the steps for integration. Article 75 of the Treaty stipulates that a protocol shall be prepared within four years to establish a customs union that includes the rule of asymmetry, the abolition of internal duties and taxes with equivalent effect, the removal of non-tariff restrictions, the establishment of a common external tariff, rules of origin, customs, subsidies, equivalent duties, re-export, and the simplification and harmonization of trade documents and procedures. The union shall be established gradually in accordance with what the Council decides. The customs union shall be followed by the preparation of a protocol to establish a common market, whereby the freedom of movement of labor, goods, services, and capital, and the right to engage in economic activity, shall be achieved in a gradual manner decided by the Council. [40]

B- The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

At the regional level, arrangements initially took the form of establishing the "Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa" (PAT) in 1979. This area was then transformed into the "Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESSA)" in 1994, moving closer to the formula established by the Abuja Treaty, becoming the first African region to complete the establishment of a free trade area in 2000 and move to the customs union stage in 2004.

Chapter X of the Common Market Treaty set a ten-year period for establishing a customs union among member states. To this end, a program to eliminate customs duties and similar taxes on intra-regional trade was to begin by October 1, 2000. Member states pledged not to impose any new duties on exchanged products in accordance with the provisions of the market. The first extraordinary summit held in Lusaka announced the establishment of the free trade area as of October 31, 2000. It is the first of its kind on the African continent, with nine member states: Djibouti, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Sudan, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Egypt, with the remaining member states joining later. Until that happens, they will be treated at the same rates of tariff reductions they have achieved. Seychelles joined in June 2001, and Uganda and Burundi in October 2001. Tanzania's withdrawal from COMESA resulted in the cancellation of mutual customs exemptions between it and the rest of the market countries. December 8, 2004, was set as the date and time for establishing the customs union, with a unified external tariff in the free zone being applied to all exports from non-COMESA countries to the region, at rates of 50%, 15%, and 30%, respectively, on all capital goods, raw materials, intermediate goods, and final goods. [41]

The organization has achieved some of its goals of reducing customs tariffs to varying degrees, ranging from 80% to 90%. Egypt, one year after joining the group, announced a 90% customs tariff with the countries of this region in preparation for completely free trade the following year. Some of them have completely removed tariff barriers, which... This led to a 20% increase in intra-regional trade, while trade with third countries grew by 7%. Transit facilitation reduced trade and transport costs by 25% and facilitated the movement of goods among its members. The seriousness of achieving this goal was evident at the fourth meeting of the heads of state of this organization in May in Nairobi, when they adopted the theme of the meeting: "Countdown to the establishment of a free trade area" in October 2000. Progress has also been made in removing non-tariff barriers such as import licenses, eliminating foreign exchange taxes and restrictions, abolishing import and export quotas, and simplifying customs procedures. However, there is still a need to improve import and export structures and simplify customs procedures. There is also a need to improve regional transport and communications infrastructure, ease visa restrictions, increase information and access to trade opportunities, and reduce customs and administrative procedures at border points. [42]

[40] Salah al-Din Hassan al-Sisi, Regional and International Systems and Organizations, First Edition, Dar al-Fikr Al-Arabi, 2007, p. 257

[41] Salah al-Din Hassan al-Sisi,op.cit., p. 256

[42] al-Bashir al-Kut,op.cit., p. 143

C- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is considered one of the most important sub-groups on the African continent. This grouping represents a model for specialized organizations aimed at enhancing financial and economic cooperation. The project to establish the Economic Community of West African States was first proposed at the level of heads of state and government during a meeting held in Monrovia in April 1968. This idea was revived by Nigeria and Togo in 1972 with the aim of establishing an economic bloc for the countries of the region. [43]

The Abidjan Agreement, establishing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was signed on April 17, 1973, retaining the same membership with the exception of Benin. The group included six countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. It became effective in early 1974. Benin later joined the group in 1984. Its goal is to develop cooperation in the areas of trade and customs exchange through the implementation of a preferential treatment agreement, whereby industrial products are exempt from taxes and customs duties, and to develop its cooperative policy in the areas of agriculture, transportation, and communications. However, the agreement was met with opposition from some countries. After lengthy deliberations, the treaty was signed, establishing a new group called the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The treaty was signed in Lomé, Togo (or Lagos) on May 28, 1975. It entered into force in July 1975 and was considered a regional organization operating within the framework of the Organization of African Unity. The purpose of its establishment was to establish a common market and a customs union for these countries. [44]The agreement aims to create economic cooperation and integration with the aim of achieving an economic and monetary union that would lead to economic development and progress in West Africa. According to Article 2 of the agreement, it aims to achieve development and economic cooperation in all areas of economic activity, especially in industry, transportation, telecommunications, agriculture, natural sciences, commercial and monetary aspects, and cultural and social affairs. It also aims to raise the standard of living of citizens of member states to achieve growth and progress, leading to the removal of customs barriers to intra-trade, facilitating the flow of trade and capital, the movement of persons, and coordinating economic policies, whether by establishing a common external customs tariff system for non-member states or establishing A regional cooperation tax system, according to timetables aimed at achieving integration among member states

In 1991, the heads of state of ECOWAS member states realized the need to review the organization's treaty and make some amendments to the organization's objectives. This was due to the emergence of economic, political, and social challenges facing member states regarding future developments, along with their awareness of the importance of expanding the scope of regional economic cooperation. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government approved the revised treaty in June 1993.

It was stated in Article 3 of the revised treaty that the objective of establishing the organization was to achieve cooperation and integration with a view to establishing an economic union in West Africa, a more ambitious goal that represents a broader step toward regional cooperation and integration. The steps to achieve this goal include coordinating local economic policies, establishing a common market, an economic and monetary union, and adopting unified policies at the regional level in the economic, financial, social, and political sectors. [45]

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[43] Muhammad al-Majdhub, International Organization: General Theory and Global, Regional, and Specialized Organizations, Ninth Edition, al-Halabi Legal Publications, 2007, p. 481

[44] al-Bashir al-Kut,op.cit., p. 144. Or see: Amin Isber, pp. 163-164

[45] Adel Abdel Razak, The African System and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Initiative: Between Theory and Practice "A Future Vision," no edition, Egyptian General Book Organization, 2006, p. 224

Conclusion

At the conclusion of this quick study of the phenomenon of regional integration, particularly economic integration, and the African continent's emulation of global developments in this field, the following conclusions can be drawn and recommendations made:

- The phenomenon of international regional integration is one of the most prominent phenomena of interest to specialists in the field of international relations, as it is considered one of the appropriate solutions to the problem of the state's inability to fulfill its basic functions. Today, interest in regional integration is growing as one of the options proposed to address the problem of globalization of the global economy.

- Regarding the forms of economic integration, some place the form of economic unity directly behind the customs union, considering it a customs union supported by the free movement of labor and capital between member states and the coordination of monetary, economic, and social policies, leading to full economic integration, where the economies of the member states are like the economy of a single state. Economic integration is considered the strongest manifestation of an economic bloc, leading to the establishment of a common market between member states and possibly leading to political unity. -

- Economic integration is linked to the extent of implementation of agreed-upon commitments and their repercussions on the member states of the region, i.e., their reaping benefits from this bloc. This can only be achieved through trust among the bloc's member states in implementing their commitments. This is particularly true between countries that share a common geographic area and are bound by a framework of cultural and historical ties, not to mention the role of convergent political views among the leaders of these countries.

- The success of economic integration depends to a large extent on the type and efficiency of the institutions and agencies that oversee and guide its activities. There is no single model of institutions, so each bloc must establish institutions and organizations that are appropriate to its circumstances, given the varying conditions and needs. Integration institutions require sufficient powers to fully perform their roles by studying problems, projects, and decisions, as countries cannot anticipate in advance all the necessary measures and commitments to achieve integration goals. Economic integration requires rapid decision-making and implementation. However, this does not mean rushing into overly ambitious projects, as this can lead to their disintegration within a short period of time. Therefore, research must be conducted to address problems and make sound decisions, taking into account the surrounding and influencing circumstances and factors. Therefore, allocating more time to research related to integration issues reduces negative outcomes by choosing the appropriate approach to economic integration and the circumstances and problems of the countries. Many countries have been driven by their ambition to seek an advanced level of economic integration that is inconsistent with their current stage of development. This is done by imitating the integration models of developed countries without taking into account the differences in existing circumstances, which has resulted in the failure of these attempts and the waste of their resources.