

## **Relevance of Integration Theory To African Countries**

**Jibrin Ibrahim Gani**

*Federal University Gashua Yobe State, Nigeria.*

---

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the concept of integration as a strategy for economic development globally and the effectiveness or otherwise of the theory of Integration to the process of development of Africa in particular. African countries have had a long history of repeated attempts to integrate themselves together, both in various sub-groups and in continental- wide, through several broad types of Integration arrangements. Integration is a process in which neighboring Nations or State enter into an agreement to upgrade cooperation through common institutions and rules. This study uses secondary data of analysis. The linkage between bad government policies, the production of similar agricultural products or raw materials, lack of modern technology and skills manpower constitute some of the impediment to Integration in the continent of Africa. The paper emphasizes the importance of given attention to productive forces, the means of production and relations of production to enable African countries optimize the benefit of Integration. The findings from and the recommendation of this studies will help in finding solutions to the problem militating against the success of Integration in Africa. In the findings, the paper found that despite the improvement in Africa in recent times, the economic conditions in most African countries remain highly fragile and vulnerable. This study also found out that the examination of African economy clearly indicates that without a major reorientation of International and Domestic policies it would be almost impossible to change the fortunes of the region. The study recommends that for African countries to generate resources to sustain satisfactory growth and development there is need for structural adjustment, macroeconomics policies and appropriate aids to African countries. It is therefore hoped that the findings from this research will be helpful in providing solutions to Integration process and the current developmental challenges in Africa.

**KEY WORDS:** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INTEGRATION, PRODUCTIVE FORCES

---

Date of Submission: 08-11-2020

Date of Acceptance: 23-11-2020

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Integration is a process in which neighboring states enter into an agreement to upgrade cooperation through common institutions and rules. Haas (1966) also explained integration as a process whereby political actors from different national settings are motivated to bring together their loyalties, expectations, and political activities towards a new center, whose institution poses or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states. The objectives of the agreement could range from economic to political to environmental, although it has typically taken the form of a political economy initiative where commercial interests are the focus for achieving broader socio-political and security objectives, as defined by national governments. Regional integration has been organized either via supranational institutional structures or through intergovernmental decision-making, or a combination of both. Past efforts at regional integration have often focused on removing barriers to free trade in the region, increasing the free movement of people, labor, goods, and capital across national borders reducing the possibility of regional armed conflict (for example, through confidence and Security-Building Measures), and adopting cohesive regional stances on policy issues, such as the environment, climate change and migration. Hosny S. [2013].

African countries have had a long history of repeated attempts to link themselves together, both in various sub-groups and even continent-wide, through several broad types of regional integration and cooperation arrangements. In virtually all cases, these attempts have reflected the desire to deal, in one way or another, with the perceived growth-retarding problems thought to be associated with a number of key elements of the structure of African countries (Oyejide, 2000). Today, there is no region of the world that is not encompassed by one or more regional groupings. From its inception in 1945 the United Nations itself recognized the role of regional organizations, acknowledging them as efficient mechanisms of dealing with regional conflicts and the maintenance of international peace and security (UN Charter, Article 52). However, regional groupings were considered as auxiliary to the central role of the United Nations in this regard, which remains the premier institution of global governance (Sarbo, 2010).

Africa has seen political and institutional changes over the last decade, yet in the 50th year of independence of numerous states, the profundity of change remains unclear. The prospect of successful continental integration has arguably suffered a loss of political drive with the absence of authoritative, clear minded political leadership. The consensus in Africa, as a matter of fact ever since decolonization, is that given the continent's economic and geo-political realities, regionalization is the *sine qua non* for meaningful progress. Unfortunately, this consensus was never followed by clear and decisive action and Africa's problems persisted. At this stage, the traditional paradigm of African integration, based on minimalist intergovernmentalism and holistic top-down regional engineering, is only part of the solution. Learning from past experiences, the evidence is that effective and sustainable regionalization can only happen in an economic, political, and social environment that can sustain the effort. This environment does not yet exist in most African states (Olivier, 2008).

In the West African subregion, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) came into being through the endorsement of the treaty in Lagos on the 28th of May 1975. Initially it was conceived as a sub-regional integration scheme to promote economic development, modernization and growth among other things in the sub-Region over the years has expanded its objectives and roles, authority and focus in order to accommodate new exigencies, changes and development. These include the unique manner ECOWAS was able to manage and promote a new security consciousness in conflicts prevention and management globally acclaimed as depicted by the ECOWAS/ECOMOG initiatives and performance (Adetula, 2009).

During the early years of regional integration, critics continued to raise concern about how the integration terminology could be properly used during a lack of clarity regarding its content. There are different aspects of regional integration, and these include economic, social, and political aspects. Regional integration schemes are famous ways in which regions embark on their integration. There are differences, however, in the way regional integration schemes have been implemented across the world, as well as in the results obtained by different regions. The main difference is in the extent of commitment to the application of regional integration in economic integration schemes in both developed and developing countries. The primary focus of this work is to attempt an evaluation of the theory of cooperation and integration and the significance for West Africa. As a prelude to this, the paper will begin by giving a brief historical perspective of regional integration theory, the challenges as well as the relevance of the theory to the study.

### **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND FEATURES OF FUNCTIONALISM THEORY**

Historically, neo-functionalism evolved from three stands of intellectual development. First, it emanated from a critique and attempts to reform the functionalist thesis, secondly, the progress of the European Economic Community served as a power house for the fashioning of this approach, finally, it was linked with the tools of analysis developed from the behavioral revolution within American political systems (Chime 177:70). According to this approach the integrations between states emerges from pluralist bargaining process among salient political forces consisting of interest groups, parties, governments and international organization. That actors involved in non-violent conflicts seeking to maximize their common interest, delegate more powers to common organization Neo-functionalists capitalize on bargaining styles, organization growth and the roles of elites in their specialized field.

The process of European integration had at different times demonstrated their limitations of the functionalist's constructions, especially on the shift loyalty towards an international body. According Haas, (1964:23), the separability proposition of the functionalist school cannot be accepted fully as there remains considerable hope that the propositions may be revised and refined as to set us beyond the blind alley of realist analysis. He therefore set about the task of modifying the proposition by saying "our first task, then must be a refinement of these proposition in the light of social science theory and contemporary empirical studies". They believe that the establishment of a supranational authority that undermines the independence of nation likely to result in political actors shifting "their loyalties, expectations, and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess jurisdiction over pre-existing national state" (Adetula 1996:34). To them political integration is a process and not a condition as pluralist who rely on transaction and communication for measuring integration. They believe that political integration is more fundamental than economic and social trends.

Scholars like Hass, Deutsch, Nye, and Schlitter have identified several conditions for integration venture. Categorized these conditions into three: -

1. Those necessary for amalgamation and pluralistic security communities
2. Those that are essential for amalgamated but helpful for a pluralist community
3. Those considered to be helpful for security communities (Adetula 1996:18).

The theory also presumes that there is harmony of national interests at the regional level; incrementalism could not be reversed; that groups, political elite and governments would assume that interdependence between states is good for national and personal development; and that political evolution

ought to result in larger units emerging from previously smaller ones- very much like the assumptions of social Darwinism. In West Africa, external political and economic dependence makes external influence very important in the calculation of the benefits and costs of participation. Another assumption that underlies neo-functional theory is that super states or a merging of states results in improved capabilities. Indeed, the reasons given for regional integration in all cases seem to subscribe to this position. In the case of Western Europe, the assumption was that integration would help increase the capability of its members vis-a-vis the United States and the former Soviet Union. Though it was not based on a questioning of the viability of the individual member states as national units, it nevertheless assumed that bigger states implied greater capability and influence.

### **DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF INTERGRATION THEORY**

Realist theorists discern the roots of European integration in the havoc wreaked in European societies by the II World War, and Europe's geopolitical position after 1945. From this perspective the need to oppose the communism during the Cold War contributed to the integration of Western European states. This integration was perceived because of power politics. Liberalism takes a more favorable position towards integration. It concentrates on the explanation of cooperation between states. Globalism explains relations between center and periphery whereas the English School brings in the idea of international society. Our understanding of integration is broadened by dynamically developing constructivism, concentrating on actors' identities and interests. The two main competing theories of EU integration are Neo-functionalism and Intergovernmentalism. Although these theories have been heavily criticized, amended, or even abandoned, they do contain two strong theoretical integration arguments. [Ludlow N.P 2001]

Factionalism is a theory of international relation that arose principally from the experiences of the second World War and strong concern about the obsolescence of the state as a form of social organization rather than the self-interest of nation state that realist see as a motivating factor. Functionalist focus not only on common interest, needs shared by states but also by non-state actors in a process of global integration triggered by the erosion of sovereignty and the increasing weight of knowledge and hence of scientist and experts in the police-making.[Rosamond,2000].

In the functionalism theory, international integration, the collective governance, and interdependence between states develops its own internal dynamic as state integrate in limited functional, technical and economic areas. International agencies would meet human needs. The benefits rendered by the functional agencies would attract the loyalty of the population and stimulate their participation and expand areas of integration. Prominent scholars of functionalism are Emile Durkheim and Robert Minton. Hosny s. [2013]. According to functionalism, international integration-the collective governance and material interdependence [Mitrany, 1933-101] between states-develops its own internal dynamics as states integrate in limited functional, technical and/or economic areas, international agencies will meet human needs, aided by knowledge and expertise. The benefits render by functional agencies would attract the loyalty of the population and stimulate their participation and expand the area of integration. There are strong assumptions underpinning functionalism. 1] That the process of integration take place within the framework of human freedom. 2] That knowledge and expertise are currently available to meet needs for which the functional agencies are built. 3] That states will not sabotage the process. [ Tran M. vol.1 pp. 1-22]

Neofunctionalism is simultaneously both a theory and a strategy of regional integration. Neofunctionalism reintroduced territorialism in the functional theory and downplayed its global dimension. Neo-functionalism was developed in the second half of the 1950s and is the first, 'classical' grand theory/narrative of European integration. It is a theory of regional integration, building on the work of Ernst B. Haas, an American political scientist and Leon Lindberg, also an American political scientist. Jean Monnet's approach to European integration, which aimed at integrating individual sectors in hopes of achieving spill-over effects. The core of Neo-functionalism is the use of the concept of 'spill-over'. The process of 'spill-over' refers to situations when an initial decision by governments to place a certain sector under the authority of central institutions creates pressures to extend the authority of the institutions into neighboring areas of policy, such as currency exchange rates, taxation, and wages. This core claim meant that driving further cooperation. Haas later declared the theory of Neo-functionalism obsolete, after the process of European integration started stalling in the 1960s, when Charles de Gaulle's 'empty chair' politics paralyzed the institutions of the European Coal and Steel Community, European Economic Community, and European Atomic Energy Community. Neo-functionalism proposed the concept of 'spill-over' - 'Integration within one sector will tend to beget its own impetus and spread to other sectors. [ Held d 1996]

Intergovernmentalism was developed in the mid-1960s and initially proposed by Stanley Hoffmann. It suggests that national governments control the level and speed of European integration. The theory proposed the Logic of Diversity, which 'set limits to the degree which the 'spill-over' process can limit the freedom of action of the governments...the logic of diversity implies that on vital issues, losses are not compensated by gains on other issues'. He further argues that any increase in power at supranational level, he argues, results from a direct

decision by governments. He believed that integration, driven by national governments, was often based on the domestic political and economic issues of the day. The theory rejects the concept of the spill-over effect that Neo-functionalism proposes. He also rejects the idea that supranational organizations are on an equal level (in terms of political influence) as national governments. [Wikipedia]

### **CRITISM OF INTEGRATION THEORY**

Critics of integration theory question the basic assumption that it is possible to separate functional and political issues and so insulate functional cooperation from political disputes between member States. They argue that peace creates the conditions for functional cooperation between the States rather than functional cooperation creating the peace. Some scholars have also suggested that functionalism relied too much on an almost deterministic belief in the ability of technical solutions to resolve to resolve political disputes. They are of the opinion that Mitten's writings are certainly embedded in what was to become known as modernization theory. Faith in scientific progress was a core liberal value of the mid-20th century. Mitrany wrote in an era yet to encounter post modernism, environmentalism, and other constraints on developmental imperatives and faith in scientific progress. Hosny S. [2013].

Critics of integration theory ascertain that functionalism is found wanting because the functional scheme was created for a planned recovery and reconstruction in post-world war [1945] international order. That the Anglo-America parentage of the special agencies derived partly from U.S, new deal model clearly identifies them as agencies of Keynesian intervention.

Critics also argue that, the accelerated of globalization after 1990 has eroded many distinctive characteristics of functional school of thought. The size and scope of the public sector in many countries has been greatly reduce by privatization, deregulation, and monetization. Therefore, some of the functions associated with public sector provision and hence intergovernmental cooperation have passed into the private sector. Other social changes have further eroded the Keynesian consensus on welfare in the western democracies and with it the incentive to sustain international cooperation in this fields.

Critics also question one of assumption of functionalism that all element within society interact and work together and that if one dynamic is changed it will alter the whole society, they argue that not all element within a society interconnect. Critics also said that because the functionalism argue that society itself also changes to accommodate new dynamics, it fails to provide an explanation for war and conflicts that may arise societies.

Critics also argue that functionalism disregards the immediate causes and motivations which are necessary to give rise to a phenomenon.[Held D.1996]

Its however, important to note that, taking collectively, these critics limit rather than refute the integration [functional model] theory. The integration agencies have been in existence since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. They were created, funded, and mandated by a nearly universal membership of sovereign governments. This suggest that most member states continue to view the agencies as a valuable instrument to further multilateral policy goals.

### **APPLICATION/RELEVANCE OF INTEGRATION THEORY**

African countries have had a long history of repeated attempts to link themselves together, both in various sub-groups and even continent-wide, through several broad types of regional integration and cooperation arrangements. In virtually all cases, these attempts have reflected the desire to deal, in one way or another, with the perceived growth-retarding problems thought to be associated with a number of key elements of the structure of African countries (Oyejide, 2000).The choice of the neo functional theory as theoretical underpinning theory to understanding ECOWAS integration experiment matters as essential as perceived by groups and elites, which can be translated into political demands based on self-interest. More so the theory is also relevance because states emerges from pluralist bargaining process among salient political forces consisting of interest party's government and international organization that actor involved in nonviolent conflicts seeking to maximize their common interest delegate more power to common organization neo functionalist capitalized on bargaining styles, organization growth and the roles of elites in their specialized field. It is important to know that the main factors that explain the outcomes of regional integration and the variation between countries and policies are: Interdependence, preference, capability, and commitment. Although in West Africa, external political and economic dependence makes external influence very important in the calculation of the benefits and costs of participation in integration, but the assumption that underlies neo-functional theory is that super states or a merging of states results in improved capabilities. Indeed, the reasons given for regional integration in all cases seem to subscribe to this position. In the case of Africa, the assumption was that integration would help increase the capability of its members vis-a-vis the United States, Soviet Union, and European countries. Though it was not based on a questioning of the viability of the individual member states as national units, it nevertheless assumed that bigger states implied greater capability and influence.

Other benefits of integration theory to Africa include among others the following:

-Regional integration allows countries in Africa to unified and form common markets.

-Integration will create larger markets by opening borders, eliminate import/export tariffs and taxes between the member nations

-It promotes global advantages for business.

In conclusion, it was observed that despite the consensus that regional integration efforts in Africa registered disappointing results; the enthusiasm to revitalize existing groupings seems to have gained renewed momentum in recent years. Thus, Africans need to take integration not only as lingering pan-African ideology, but more importantly as economic survival strategy aimed at combating marginalization from the global economy.

#### REFERENCES

- [1]. Adetula, V. A. (2009) *ECOWAS and the Challenges of Integration in Africa* in Ogwu, U.J & Alli, W.O (eds) *Milestones in Regional Integration*. Lagos: NIIA.
- [2]. Anadi, S.K.M. (2005). "Regional Integration in Africa: The Case of ECOWAS", *An Unpublished Doctor of Philosophy Theses* submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of Zurich.
- [3]. Olivier, G. (2008). *Regional Integration in Africa: A Political Perspective*, Johannesburg: Centre for African and European Studies, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.
- [4]. Oyejide, T.A (2000). *Policies for Regional Integration in Africa*, Abidjan: The African Development Bank.
- [5]. Sarbo, D.N. (2010). *The Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa: The Case of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development*, Global Economic Governance Programme: University College Oxford.
- [6]. Hosny S. [2013]. Theories of Economic Integration: A Survey of the Economic and Political Literature. *International Journal of Economy, Management and Social Science*, 2[5], p133-155.
- [7]. Balassa, B. [1961]. *The Theory of Economic Integration*. Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin
- [8]. Held D [1996]. *Model of Democracy*, Polity Press. Cambridge.
- [9]. Wikipedia [Intergovernmentalism encyclopedia .org].

Jibrin Ibrahim Gani. "Relevance of Integration Theory TO African Countries." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 25(11), 2020, pp. 15-19.