Volume 2, Issue 6 June 2016 ISSN NO: 2454 - 2326

North Asian International Research Journal Consortium

North Asian International Research Journal Of Multidisciplinary

NAIRJC JOURNAL PUBLICATION

North Asian
International
Research Journal Consortium

Welcome to NAIRJC

ISSN NO: 2454 - 2326

North Asian International Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi, Urdu all research papers submitted to the journal will be double-blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial board. Readers will include investigator in Universities, Research Institutes Government and Industry with research interest in the general subjects

Editorial Board

Address: - Dr. Ashak Hussain Malik House No. 221 Gangoo, Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir, India - 192301, Cell: 09086405302, 09906662570, Ph. No: 01933-212815,
Email: nairjc5@gmail.com, info@nairjc.com **Website:** www.nairjc.com

North Asian International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary ISSN: 2454 - 2326 Vol. 2, Issue 6 June 2016

IRJIF IMPACT FACTOR: 3.52

CRITICAL THEORY AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

SHERIFF GHALI IBRAHIM AND SOMOYUN O. OLALEKA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF ABUJA, ABUJA-NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

Greater African integration has long been a cherished but elusive goal. Political leaders at official conferences and formal summits have long promoted the idea, although with only limited results on the ground. There is a renewed impetus to establish closer economic and political ties among the continent's numerous countries, based on a heightened appreciation of the need for regional integration and a clearer understanding of the past failures. The paper examines regional integration in Africa, using critical theory as an instrument. Secondary methodology was used to collect data, and findings show that, Political liberation and de-colonization was the rallying ideology upon which economic integration and unity, found eloquent articulation in the 1960's. With the independence of several African States and the subsequent establishment of a plethora of integrative mechanisms integration is gradually becoming a reality. The paper concludes that Regional Integration in itself has not failed in Africa, but rather progress has been hampered by the lack of political will in implementing and accumulating the necessary resources for its success. The paper recommends absolute adoption of relevant ways of dealing with the political and economic challenges of the continent, such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, technology, political will to cooperate and mutual assistance among other things.

Keywords: *regional; integration; Africa; critical; theory; traditional*

INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of independence, it was obvious that Africa's development was hinged in the unity of her people. Indeed, it was the quest for unity that ignited African nationalism and led to pan-Africanism as a guiding ideology upon which the battle for de-colonization was fought with vigor, strength and determination. These struggles led to complete dismantling of apartheid in South Africa followed with political independence. African sovereign states have always subscribed to the principles of continental cooperation and integration. This they have demonstrated with increased determination and vociferous public declarations on the issue of regional cooperation and integration by firstly establishing Organization of African Unity OAU even before the subject gained currency in the global development agenda and discourse.

The eventual establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 reflects the determination and resolve of African peoples to accomplish concrete continental unity. Though ideological divisions inherited brought about as a result of different colonial political experiences among the newly independent states and nationalistic devotion of each independent states to the process of nation building and institutional development affected the strong realization of the dream of the OAU. By the 1980s the challenge of addressing the issue of continental socioeconomic transformation was becoming more urgent. This was reinforced by the economic decline experienced from the late 1970s, the realization of the non-viability of externally dependent strategies of development and the imperative of integration.

The majority of sub-Sahara African countries are members of one or more regional or sub-regional arrangements that seek to promote economic coordination, cooperation or integration among the member countries concerned. The various African regional economic blocs, and indeed the individual countries that comprise their membership, are at varying stages of development and implementation of their regional arrangements. The blocs' scope covers various socio-economic, developmental and political considerations, including the promotion of intra-regional trade, socio-economic policy coordination, and management or development of shared physical infrastructure and the environment. Some of the African regional arrangements also cover issues of common interest in the areas of public governance, defense and security, among other socio-economic and political dimensions.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

In ordinary language, the term 'integration' means to bring parts of an object into a complete whole, while in economic terms it would imply, in its narrowest sense, the coordination of economic activities within a country for the purpose of enhancing the development of that particular country (Mutharika, 1972). Mutharika further gives the term a wider meaning, and indicates that it implies the process of integration of various economies in a given area or region into a single unit for the purpose of regional economic development. In a more precise way, economic integration occurs when two or more nations undertake policies that result in greater mutual economic interdependence. It follows that if such countries emanating from a single region or Regional Economic

Community (REC), as it is referred to in Africa, embark on economic integration activities and /or processes, these activities or processes will be termed 'regional economic integration'.

Economists have defined the term 'economic integration' in several different ways over time. Economic integration is a process of eliminating restrictions on international trade, payments and factor mobility (Carbaugh, 2004). Economic integration thus results in the uniting of two or more national economies in regional trading agreements. According to Biswaro (2003), regional economic integration involves the process of trade, economic and financial convergence of integrating states.

The economic integration literature clearly distinguishes between regional economic integration and regional economic cooperation. Regional economic cooperation is seen more as an ad hoc and temporary scheme, which is mainly based on contractual agreements with regard to projects of mutual interest between member states. Such projects could involve two or more countries in the region. On the other side, regional economic integration involves agreements that are more permanent.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is the critical theory. Critical Theory was born in the trauma of the Weimar Republic, grew to maturity in expatriation, and achieved cultural currency on its return from exile. Passed on from its founding first generation –among others Max Horkheimer, Friedrich Pollock, Herbert Marcuse, and Theodor Adorno – to the leader of its second, Jurgen Habermas, Critical Theory remained central to European philosophical, social, and political thought throughout the Cold War period. Critical Theory is envisioned as political in the sense of embracing the unavoidably political nature of all theory and attempting to direct it towards rationally chosen ends. It is this second task that appears to be stymied by Critical Theory's own analysis of the contradictions of modernity (McCarthy, 1982).

Critical Theory has a normative agenda. Its stated interest is the emancipation of humanity from injustice. What justifies this particular interest over others? Horkheimer argues that this interest is the product of applying negative dialectics to the contradictions of social reality. Two basic contradictions anchor the normative ends of Critical Theory in reality so that it cannot be accused of idealism (spinning normative ends out of the arbitrariness of pure thought) and yet is not weighed down and imprisoned by existing conditions (as is positivism). The first contradictions manifests itself at the level of political economy and ideology, while the second points to a deeper level and involves the confrontation of human reason and nature. The contradictions of political economy involve the confrontation between the professed goals of the bourgeois economic revolution and what that revolution had become (White, 1988).

Critical Theory's "content is the transformation of the concepts which dominate the economy into their opposites: fair exchange into deepening of social injustice, a free economy into monopolistic control, productive work into rigid relationships which hinder production, the maintenance of society's life into the pauperization of the peoples. There is a strong tendency among the first generation of Critical Theorists (Benjamin, Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno, Leo L¨ owenthal) to denounce social democratic progress towards egalitarian mass society as a "one-dimensional," "technocratic," and "positivistic" duplication of "what already is the case" and to denounce the equality that has been achieved as an equality of bondage (White, 1988).

In all, the critical theory is pedaled on the principles that the society in its historical specificity must be put into consideration while making analysis. More so theoretical analysis should include the understanding of that particular society by integrating all the major areas of the social sciences which will make the theory explanatory, practical and normative without lacking in empiricism (McCarthy, 1982).

REASONS FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Since African countries began achieving independence in the late 1950s onwards, two conflicting predispositions have influenced their efforts at regional cooperation and integration. The first has been to adhere rigidly to the colonial borders drawn up in imperial European capitals, although these borders militate against the economic, political and social viability and coherence of the African nation-states thus artificially created. Their second inclination has been to emphasize from the outset the indispensability of economic integration across Africa's sub-regions and the continent as a whole. The consequence however is that despite this emphasis on the vitality of economic integration and the continent's natural and mineral resources, most states have proved to be economically unviable. The reliance on one commodity has played a role in weakening economic integration and intra-African trade. Here the work of the AU in addressing the economic challenges faced by member states is clearly crucial.

There are few achievements in some areas of integration in Africa. However the results in terms of progress and a move towards closer integration, as other regional groupings in the world have done, is still minimal. As mentioned in the above paragraph, the other problem associated with the failure of regional integration in Africa is that there is less intra-African regional trade. This poses a serious challenge to the AU. Table 1 illustrates this phenomenon. Kennes argues that a more plausible explanation for the low level of intra-African trade is that the regional groupings have not yet been able to abolish customs duties or more generally the barriers inherent in doing business across borders. Roadblocks between borders and constraints on payments, investment and movement of persons are still issues that need to be dealt with thoroughly in order to facilitate intra-African trade; the AU will grapple with these difficulties. Resolving these difficulties means a large expenditure on infrastructure, something that has substantial budgetary implications on the AU's financial capabilities. NEPAD with its emphasis on building infrastructure on the continent provides a perfect fall back plan in this regard, hence its funding becomes very vital. It is ironic to note that across borders of African countries there is a high level of unrecorded trade between ordinary citizens of the continent. This is a reflection of the continent's potential to flourish if regional integration is well coordinated (Mutasa, 2004).

OVERVIEW OF REVIEW OF PROGRESS ON AFRICAN INTEGRATION

Apart from the African Union (AU), which, as the umbrella political Africa-wide body, envisages eventually having a common currency and central bank by 2025, the continent has various regional economic communities in all the four cardinal parts of the continent. Following the Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and Abuja Treaty (1991), various regional arrangements on policy coordination, cooperation or integration have been initiated, re-invigorated or re-aligned to continental aspiration on integration in the following sub-regional blocs (Mutasa, 2004):

Central Africa: Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) in Central Africa aims to become an economic union: customs and monetary union and convergence have been achieved. Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) is considering implementation of free trade area with a view to eventually attaining full economic union status.

East Africa: The East African Community, comprising of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, has been resuscitated and has progressed on free trade area status and commenced a move towards a customs union with harmonized fiscal and monetary policies as agreed on 1January 2005.

Southern Africa: Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Southern Africa (plus Tanzania from East Africa): Seychelles withdrew, while Madagascar may be interested in joining. SAD Caims for full economic cooperation that includes a free trade area, to move towards monetary union. Mechanisms to cooperate on power, peace and security have been created. Southern African Customs Union (SACU), formed in early1900s, comprises of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. They also have a Common Monetary Area (CMA), which excludes only Botswana. Customs Union stage has actually been achieved, on the ground.

North Africa: Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD): has studied feasibility of free trade and pursues selected sectoral integration. Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) in North Africa, which envisages an economic union, has conventions relating to investment, payments and transportation. It is however yet to become a free trade area.

West Africa: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Monetary Union (UEMOA) in West Africa aims for an economic union through selected tariff reduction, macroeconomic and monetary convergence. It has harmonized business laws, and also pursues peace and security issues. The Manor River Union (MRU) of West Africa seeks to integrate various sectors, but has been adversely affected by political issues.

Other Groupings: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA): macroeconomic convergence criteria have been set. Integration has generally been slow. Most COMESA countries have been struggling to attain the 10 percent inflation regional target.

GENERAL LESSONS AND CHALLENGES FOR AFRICAN INTEGRATION

Many of the monetary harmonization programs in the different African integration sub-regional blocs have been slower or not in line with the African Monetary Cooperation Program (AMCP) which aspires to have a single continental currency and central bank by the year2025. Lessons from the experiences in Europe and elsewhere show that for macroeconomic convergence to work there must be key determinants in place, such as: building consensus in developing the convergence criteria and its implementation modalities, as well as commitment to agreed obligations; prioritization in the design of policy objectives, strategies as well as the setting up of relevant institutions and assigning mandates at the national and regional levels; equitable, objective and transparent mechanisms for determining and allocating the costs, benefits and corrective measures that integration entails; an appropriate, independent supranational authority and requisite regional institutions(e.g. a single central bank), with a clear focus and realistic transition framework towards integration – such a supranational authority should be adequately empowered with rules for enforcing and penalizing any errant behavior by non-compliant members (Kelly, 1994).

European Monetary Union experiences highlight the important role of institutions in influencing the level and distribution of costs and benefits of macroeconomic integration, especially when the region is affected by exogenous shocks. Thus, without proper institutional design and consistent policy objectives (as happens under a federation or political union), heterogeneity of policy preferences among members to a convergence agreement, e.g. choice in the employment-inflation trade-off, can affect the sustainability of monetary integration (Kelly, 1994).

Convergence towards a monetary union can act as a regional agent of beneficial fiscal restraint that instills a culture of discipline among member states. The cost-reduction benefits include the removal of exchange rate risks that sometimes cause uncertainty to investors, and can court speculative attacks through reversals in capital flows and contagion effects.

Other lessons for Africa from the European Union experience include the need for a common central bank to focus on price stability as its primary objective and thus causing national fiscal compliance with this goal by all member states. The central monetary authority should be guided by clear and realistic parameters that are equally enforceable amongst all members.

CHALLENGES OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

Some of the major challenges of regional integration in Africa according to the writings of Yang and Sanjeev (2005) may include the following:

a. **Membership issues**. On a continental basis and also within sub-regions, many African countries belong to several groupings or sub-groupings that sometimes compete, conflict or overlap amongst themselves rather than complement each other. This adds to the burden of harmonization and coordination, and is wasteful duplication in view of constrained resources.
b. **Slow ratification of protocols and reluctant implementation of agreed plans**. Due to low political commitment and/or perceived or real losses and sacrifices involved, a number of countries have been reluctant to fully implement integration programs on a timely basis. This has been partly caused by the lack of prior cost-benefit analysis and broad internal consultations on the part of the member countries concerned. In some cases, changes in the socio-economic and political dynamics within the member states

involved have also militated against implementation of regionally agreed programs, especially where socio-economic sacrifices are concerned.

c. **Socio-economic policy divergence.** The inconsistency or incoherence at the macroeconomic level has also been a source of problems for the systematic implementation and “internalization” of the regional integration agenda into national programs. It has been impossible to integrate regionally where there has been continuously glaring policy, implementation and information inconsistencies at the national level. There is therefore need for an appropriate policy mix and coordination at the national level that targets low inflation and fiscal discipline.

d. **Limited national and regional capacities.** The lack of mechanisms and resources for effective planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring and pragmatic adjustment of programs on the ground have been another constraint to regional integration in Africa. In the area of trade and mobility of factors of production, African integration has been relatively more outward-looking at the expense of intra-regional trade. Xenophobia has partly hampered labor movement among members, while capital mobility has been constrained by largely undeveloped financial markets.

Domestic, regional and international financial and investment constraints have also hampered regional integration, which requires considerable resources to plan, coordinate, implement, and monitor progress in its implementation. There is low saving as a percentage of GDP, while foreign direct investment (FDI) remains elusive and eschew Africa. Furthermore, official development assistance (ODA) has also been dwindling (Soludo, Osita, and Ha-joon, 2004).

Lack of full private sector involvement at both planning and implementation stage has not elicited maximum deliberate input from this important sector, which usually has the financial resources and owns productive capacity. In most countries the private sector remains weak and is still not well organized. Civil society involvement has also been wanting. There is also a high degree of vulnerability to exogenous shocks, including heavy and unsustainable external debt burdens (the majority of HIPCs are in Africa), inadequate and erratic external resource inflows, adverse weather patterns, natural disasters, unfavorable terms of trade(witness the current oil price shocks affecting non-oil exporting countries amidst declining primary commodity prices), while civil strife– itself a result of abject poverty and other forms of socio-economic –and political instability have also had their toll (Soludo, Osita, and Ha-joon, 2004).

From the foregoing, it could be concluded that, on the whole, Africa's monetary and financial integration remains largely elusive, with marked variation among individual sub-regions and their respective member states. African experience so far seems to indicate that groupings with fewer members tend to be more successful and show better progress than large groups. The examples of EAC and SACU/CMA support this view. Initially, regional groupings in Africa came into being for political reasons. Now circumstances have forced that they be resuscitated but this time around for economic reasons. Much has been done already to raise awareness on the indispensability and viability of African sub-regional and regional integration in the face of the risks of marginalization and the loss of opportunities offered by globalization. Participation in the globalization process should be increasingly realized from a regionalized African platform to enhance the bargaining power of countries or their regional groupings. The benefits of regional economic integration are (i) benefits for all through synergy and symbiosis; (ii) bargaining bloc in international arena; (iii) viable size for foreign direct investment; and (iv) improved scope for diversification and its benefits of lowering risk (Soludo, Osita, and Ha-joon, 2004).

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Progress has been rather slow and reality has fallen far short of aspirations. So there is ample room for improvement when it comes to implementation. Practical measures could be geared towards: Eradicating wasteful or costly duplication of multiple memberships and rationalizing some overlapping sub-regional blocs. This should be based on priority needs and efficiency from comparative advantage. To deal with this challenge, the reasons for belonging to various groupings or forming sub-groups within the same groups should be carefully studied. There is need to rationalize the number of blocs and membership to them, based on thorough analysis of comparative advantages and cost and benefit. Inter-regional interaction should also be cultivated to "sell" the logic and benefits of rationalization.

Securing irrevocable commitment beyond mere political rhetoric among member countries of the various sub-regional blocs to the ratification and meticulous and punctual implementation of treaties and protocols, without inefficiencies, lapses or reversals. Prior informed analysis and internal consultations, including bringing civil society and the private sector on board much earlier, should precede integration programs to enhance ownership that motivates full implementation among all stakeholders. The process should be inclusive and participatory. At the national level, there should be coherent coordination, public awareness, engagement of private sector and civil society, whole-hearted political will, and rules-based implementation and accountability.

Strengthening technical capacity for conducting informative cost-benefit analysis and ensuring fair and equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of integration should be the starting point among member States. They should also plan for dealing with changes in country circumstances that may militate against implementation of integration programs or diffuse their impact.

Capacity for comprehensive and consistent planning, policy formulation and implementation at the national level should be strengthened in the member countries to reduce the risks of conflicting policy objectives, and enhance synchrony and complementarily. Capacity also needs to be sharpened to effectively tackle all stages of integration: from planning, to coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of impact. This calls for human and institutional capacity building covering planning, policy analysis/formulation, implementation and monitoring of programs. Data availability and credibility and other information requirements should also be addressed. This is where African sub-regional and regional institutions, complemented by targeted and regionally coordinated international expertise that cross-pollinates regional capacities, can play a meaningful role.

Effective pooling of resources and expertise to tackle cross-cutting regional challenges, such as infrastructure, governance, gender, HIV/AIDS, peace, security and conflict prevention, can help reduce the average costs of delivery, and also assist to harmonize and raise standards. Regional integration treaties, protocols, leadership and priorities should be unambiguous in providing binding rules-based frameworks and results-oriented milestones to guide national, sub-regional and regional actions required for envisaged eventual continental integration.

Effective monitoring, follow-up and corrective mechanisms should be put in place and enforced. The regional and continental bodies should be adequately staffed and resourced, with authority to act as necessary. Africa’s negotiation capacity, especially in the area of multilateral trade, needs to be strengthened from a regionalized vantage point. There is need to strengthen and empower the institutions that implement and monitor regional integration programmes both at the regional and country levels.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper has provided a critical analysis of regional integration in Africa vis-à-vis the critical theory. Regional integration in itself has not failed in Africa, but rather progress has been hampered by the lack of political will in implementing and accumulating the necessary resources for the success of it. As a result whilst the world has been reaping the fruits of regional integration, such benefits have eluded Africans. It needs to be said that the Abuja Treaty spelt out clearly Africa's desire for change. In addition, the paper has further assessed how African countries' practice of multiple memberships has constituted an obstacle in the success of regional integration. Issues such as civil strife, conflicts and the lack of transport and communications infrastructure have played a negative role and have delayed progress in regional integration. In reality these are just some of the lessons and challenges that the AU will have to contend with. The AU will now have to focus on both political and economic challenges on the African continent, a task that will be riddled with complexities and difficulties.

REFERENCES

1. Kelly, M. (ed.), (1994): *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
2. McCarthy, C.L. (2002), "Macroeconomic Convergence in SADC – A Policy Perspective for the Central Banks of the Integration Arrangement", Southern African Development Community, Zimbabwe.
3. McCarthy, T. *(1982): Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas*. Rev. edn. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
4. Mutasa, C. (2004), "Regional Integration and Debt: A Comparative Report of Africa's Regional Groupings", Harare, AFRODAD.
5. SADC (2002), *SADC Annual Report: 2001-2002*, SADC Secretariat, Zimbabwe.
6. SADC Macroeconomic Convergence Workshop (2001), "Convergence in SADC: a Way Forward", Report to the SADC Committee of Ministers of Finance and Investment, Southern African Development Community, Zimbabwe, July.
7. Soludo, C., Osita O. and Ha-Joon C. (2004), *The Politics of Trade and Industrial Policy in Africa: Forced Consensus?*, IDRC/Africa World Press, Ottawa/Nairobi.
8. White, S. (1988):*The Recent Work of Jurgen Habermas: Reason, Justice and Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
9. Yang, Y. and Sanjeev, G. (2005), "Regional Trade Arrangements in Africa: Past Performance and the Way Forward", IMF Working Paper 05/36, IMF, Washington D.C.

Publish Research Article

Dear Sir/Mam,

We invite unpublished Research Paper,Summary of Research Project,Theses,Books and Book Review for publication.

Address:- Dr. Ashak Hussain Malik House No-221, Gangoo Pulwama - 192301 Jammu & Kashmir, India
Cell: 09086405302, 09906662570,
Ph No: 01933212815
Email: nairjc5@gmail.com, info@nairjc.com
Website: www.nairjc.com