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CONSOLIDATING REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA: LESSONS FROM THE EU AND SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

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Abstract:

To what extent have African states recorded successes in the pursuit of the vision and aspiration of the founding fathers towards a continental integration? What are the likely challenges that have militated against the effort of member states in their quest for economic integration? Are there lessons that could be learnt elsewhere for a better approach and methodology? These, and many more questions any curious spectator would seek to find answers to, with respect to economic integration in Africa. Bearing in mind that the call for a continental integration in Africa dates back to the early period of independence in Africa, it becomes necessary to find out how much success has been recorded so far. More than anything else, to inquire if there are lessons to learn elsewhere. These twin issues form the focus of this paper. And to achieve this, the paper adopts the ***Functionalist Theory*** *of integration for a proper analysis. The paper agrees that the success recorded by the European Union (EU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has made it imperative for African states to take a clue from them.*

Keywords: Africa; Integration; Regional; Lessons; Cooperation& Organisation

Introduction:

It is a truism that every continental region is involved in at least one or more major integration movement(s). In Europe, there is the European Union (EU); in Asia, there is the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); North America has the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); Latin America has the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), and the Andean Common Market (ANCOM); the Caribbean has the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); the Middle East has the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU); Central America has the Central American Common Market (CACM); and in Africa there are perhaps five major regional groupings: the Southern African Development Community (SADC); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in North Africa.

These regional blocs or economic groupings have the common goal of economic transformation and development, implicitly including eradication or reduction of poverty in the process (Gerry, Dannie, and McCoy, 2002). Following from this therefore, economic cooperation and integration are not an end in themselves, but a means towards achieving sustainable economic development.

Sadly however, sub-regional integration schemes in Africa over the years have been perceived to be more ceremonial than achieving any economic benefits. The economic benefits here are viewed mainly in terms of limited success in creating intra-regional trade coupled with the dwindling share of Africa in world trade (Yang and Gupta 2005). While Africa's attempt at regional integration appears not to have yielded desired results on the one hand, the European Union (EU) on the other hand has done very well in its integration efforts. Going forward, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) within the Eurasia axis has also recorded steady progress. It is on this note that this paper examines Africa's effort at regional economic integration, with a view to finding out the efficacy of such effort, by way of looking at its successes and failures. Hence, the paper advances some basic lessons that could be learnt from the EU and the SCO.

Theoretical Framework:

Sheriff (2013), identified three major theories of cooperation to include the Nationalist theory of cooperation, the Internationalist theory of cooperation and the Constructivist theory of cooperation. These theories differently explain the reasons and conditions that propel nations to cooperate and engage in integration efforts. Moving forward, Aja (2002) looked at theories of integration from the angle of regionalism. Thus, he makes a case for two basic theories viz; the functionalist theory and the neo-functionalist theory. While both theories share the same view on the reasons why nations cooperate, they differ on the approach and roadmap.

According to Aja (2002), the functionalists argue that states that have common interest, values and experiences can transfer their sovereign will, by a function and not formula in the realisation of set goals and objectives, in the hope that in time, the integrating states would shift from working together in certain technical areas of interest to creating a political union. The thrust of this argument is that, by cooperating in specific non political issues, nations can learn to trust one another, thereby avoiding conflict and deepening integration. Major advocate of this theory is David Mitrany.

On the other hand, the neo-functionalists maintain that, integration is only possible through deliberate establishment and building of institutional mechanisms to promote more collaborative tendencies. The neo-functionalist rejects the ideology of gradual evolutionary transition from non-political aspects of cooperation to a political union. The major advocate of this theory is Ernest Haas.

For the purpose of this research, we adopted the functionalist model for analysis. It is the focus of this research that integration can only be successful and efficacious when it is born out of initial cooperation in other basic aspects of life. In fact, some scholars are of the opinion that the success of the European Union is attributable to long period of cooperation in productive and industrial endeavours. This can be seen in the metamorphosis that the EU has witnessed overtime from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to a full-fledged European Union. This paper takes into cognizance, the necessity of nations to collaborate in economic and industrial spheres, and then gravitate into regional unions to record success. In other words, this paper argues that the slow pace of integration in Africa and the failure to produce needed results is an offshoot of the vacuum between initial collaboration and the eventual union.

The History and Progress of African Integration:

Economic integration in Africa has a deep historical genesis. The origin of African economic integration actually dates back to as early as 1910 when the Southern African Custom Union (SACU) was formed (Soderbaum, 1996). Afterwards, there was a persistent call for regionalism on the continent, to be pursued at fast pace. This call was associated with Pan-Africanism as the pioneering leaders such as Nkrumah (Ghana), Toure (Guinea), Nasser (Egypt), Kaunda (Zambia), Kenyatta (Kenya) and Nyerere (Tanzania) proposed a continental integration as panacea to colonization. Although, this call for continental integration failed owing to the fact that many independent African States leaders perceived the plan as too bogus and over ambitious, a sub-regional integration scheme was however embraced. The sub-regional integration was based on the plan of promoting development and market integrations among smaller and homogenous neighbouring countries (Afesorgbor, 2013). This results in the formation of myriads of regional blocs across the continent, particularly from 1970s. A typical example was the establishment of the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS).

In retrospect, it should be emphasized that Africa's geo-political configuration has been largely determined by the European colonial powers. Hence, the immediate post-independence Africa was characterised by a strong commitment to economic planning. The driving force of this approach was the belief that development would be promoted by industrialisation. The ambition of African leaders to integrate Africa, and to develop the continent through import substitution industrialisation, was a key feature of the immediate post-colonial period, and provided the rationale for the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) (McCarthy, 1995).

The LPA was an initiative of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), adopted by heads of state in April 1980, and keenly supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). A decade later in 1991, the Abuja Treaty provided strong support for the African integration agenda. The Treaty emphasised African solidarity, self-reliance and an endogenous development strategy, through industrialisation.

The proposed framework for African integration and continental industrialisation was the division of the continent into regional integration areas that would constitute a united African economy, the African Economic Community. In order to achieve this, UNECA supported three regional integration arrangements namely, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for West Africa, which was established in 1975, predating the LPA; the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) covering East and Southern Africa, which later metamorphosed into the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for Central Africa. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was established in 1989, completing continental coverage (McCarthy, 1995).

Nevertheless, the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference (SADCC) was established in 1980, by the so-called front line states with the specific aim of reducing economic dependence on apartheid South Africa, which was still excluded from the African integration plan. However, in anticipation of South Africa's democratic transition in the early 1990s, SADCC became the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1992 and South Africa joined SADC in 1994. SADCC was not a market integration arrangement to be specific, but the front line states constituting the arrangement adopted a broad development mandate. Although the SADC Treaty (and subsequently the SADC Trade Protocol) does not articulate a detailed plan for integration, the detail was provided in the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) of 2003.

This strategic plan articulates the roadmap for SADC's integration and provides for the establishment of a free trade area by 2008, a customs union in 2010, a common market in 2015, a monetary union in 2016 and the introduction of a single currency in 2018 (McCarthy, 1995).It remains to be seen however, whether this plan will materialises as reality. Although the RISDP is not a legally binding instrument, it enjoys significant political legitimacy and is recognised as the strategic plan for SADC's integration. A similar approach was also adopted by the East African Community (EAC), established in 1997, and by ECOWAS in West Africa. Progress in ECOWAS to establish a free trade area has been very slow and the customs union is still a work in progress.

Africa's economic integration reflects a strong focus on liberalisation of trade in goods through the establishment of free trade areas and customs unions. Trade in services becomes a feature of the regional integration model when the stage of the common market is reached, and this has received very little attention in formal African integration arrangements. This is also true of African countries' foray into the regional trade agreement (RTA) arena with external partners. The inclusion of services (issues such as investment, competition policy and government procurement) is notable by its absence, and has been contentious to say the least. The neglect of the trade in services agenda is somewhat ironic in Africa where infrastructure services such as transport and telecommunications adversely affect the costs of doing business, and pose obvious challenges to the regional and continental integration.

Suffice it to mention that the rationale for integration in Africa is not only clear but it is equally compelling. A common market combining Africa's mostly small and fragmented economies will lead to economies of scale, making African countries more competitive in global trade. This is central to the continent's quest for robust, self-sustaining economic growth and steady development. Regional integration will also lead to stronger political cooperation among partnering nations, which is essential for dealing with regional public goods such as infrastructure development, and conflict resolution and management. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has successfully demonstrated the latter point through its intervention in the conflicts of Sierra Leone and Liberia, bringing peace and hope to millions of people.

Major Regional Groups in Africa:

There are several regional groupings in Africa. Africa is the most proliferated continent with respect to regional organizations. Sheriff (2013) agrees that there are about nine regional groups in Africa. While this is true, we have in this paper identified the following as the major ones worthy of note. They are presented in a semi tabular format, with their years of formation, members, objectives and their current status.

(Name &year)	Members	Main Objectives	Current Status
SADC(1994)	Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe,	Promote deeper economic integration. Establish a common political, economic and social policies and values. Strengthen regional security.	-Tariffs removed and cover all products. -Power pool in place -Peace and security mechanism in place -Macroeconomic convergence in place -free movement of people
ECOWAS (1975)	Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Guinea, Togo, Benin, Cote D'Ivorie, Senegal, Mali, Liberia, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea Bissau	Forster cooperation and development in all economic activity. Establish a FTA, a common external tariff and free movement of people.	-Tariffs removed on unprocessed goods and traditional handicraft. -Full elimination of tariffs on industrial good started by Benin -Second monetary zone in progress - Free movement of people

			-Macroeconomic convergence in place
COMESA (1993)	Burundi, Comoros, Libya, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.	Promote development, regional cooperation and integration. Establish full FTA and create a custom union with common external tarriff.	-FTA established and covers all goods -A custom union established - Trade and development policy established
AMU (1989)	Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia	To establish a common market .Provide intra-union free trade, erection of common external tariff, free movement of people	-FTA established and covers agricultural products -Established transport and communication network. The trans-Maghreb highway and Maghreb airline -Launch the mediterranean security network
ECCAS (1983)	Angola, Burundi, Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, DR Congo, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe	To promote regional cooperation and integration. Abolish trade restrictions and establish a common external tariff.	--Yet to secure the free movement of people. -insecurity in the region has hindered progress

Source: Africa economic bulletin, 2015.

The Thriving Nature and the Challenging Factors Inhibiting Economic Integration in Africa:

Indeed, the success story of economic integration in Africa leaves much to be desired. Despite the long period of attempts at integration, only minimal success has been recorded. Some of the areas where considerable success has been recorded include the free movement of people within and among the integrating nation states, transport, communication, energy, knowledge sharing, and peace and security. As it relates to free movement for instance, the citizens of ECOWAS nations have access to free movement within the zone. The only requirement for entry and exit is the ECOWAS passport. This has assisted in reducing the troubles associated with visa acquisition and other requirements that may inhibit movement of persons, as well as trade among the affected nations.

Apart from the free movement of persons, the ECOWAS trade liberalization scheme (ETLS) which is already operationalized by the customs of affected member states, has helped a great deal in the facilitation of trade among ECOWAS members. The benefit of this policy makes it possible for the movement of indigenous goods form one member nation to others without payment of customs duties. It amounts to zero percent (0%) of duty for all goods originating from a member nation to another. The customs bodies in these nations already have a resolution to this effect.

Furthermore, while quoting Kebel, Sheriff (2013) admits that COMESA states, in implementing a free trade area, are well on their way to achieving their target of removing all internal trade tariffs and barriers. This suggests that the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa is working hard towards attaining the set objectives of promoting development through trade liberalization and tariffs remover.

Also in the area of trade, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, and the Southern African Customs Union are already customs unions and other regional economic communities are establishing free trade areas. All are implementing transport programmes that remove nonphysical barriers to trade in order to strengthen transit facilitation, harmonize customs, and improve overall trade efficiency. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) has harmonized axle load limits and road transit charges for its members and introduced a regional customs guarantee and third-party motor insurance schemes. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have also introduced comprehensive transport facilitation programmes.

In the same vein, to minimize energy costs, regional economic communities are using regional hydropower policy to share energy across countries. SADC has been a pioneer, with 12 members creating the Southern African Power Pool in August 1995. In ECOWAS the connections between Benin and Nigeria and among Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo are the most important links of the West African Power Pool.

More than anything else, ECOWAS has been very committed and has recorded enviable success in the area of conflict resolution and peace keeping via ECOMONG. Notable examples are crises in Liberia, Sudan, Rwanda, etc.

The Challenges:

Notwithstanding the achievements above, there are some fundamental challenges that have hampered the success of regional bodies in Africa, and this has made it necessary to take a look at the trend in the EU and SCO to see what lessons can be learnt. Some of the obvious challenges are discussed below.

Too much overlap in regional economic community membership; The overlapping membership regional groups in Africa are definitely puzzling. According to the report of the Economic Commission for Africa, 2006, on average, 95% of the members of a regional economic community belong to another community. Of course, there are likely consequences of multiple and overlapping memberships, such as low attendance of meetings and duplicated or conflicting programme implementation.

Duplication of programmes*:* The duplication of programmes by regional economic communities is another inefficiency of Africa's regional integration efforts. According to the report of the Economic Commission for Africa, 2006, of the 12 major programmes being undertaken by the regional economic communities in West Africa, there is duplication in at least 9 of them. Programmes in trade and market integration and in agriculture and food security are undertaken by three of the four regional economic communities. The majority of regional economic communities in Africa acknowledged duplication asa problem, especially in programmes related to trade facilitation and market integration. Without coordination, the regional economic communities as they now work will be unlikely to move towards continental integration. The lack of harmonized instruments governing trade and market integration schemes means that each regional economic community has its own rules of origin or its own certification process, among other things, limiting trade between and among communities.

Underfunding: The duplication of programmes and overlapping memberships come at a cost to Africa's integration process, especially given the resource constraints that regional economic communities face. On average, a third of regional economic community members fail to meet their contribution obligations; rising to more than half in some communities (Economic Commission for Africa, 2006). The internal financing mechanisms of the African regional economic communities are seriously wanting, which could also have some implications such as;

a. Countries are feeling the burden of being spread too thin among the many regional economic communities.
b. Countries are uncertain of the expected gains from regional economic communities.
c. Countries joined the regional economic communities without sufficient strategic thought as to the political or financial implications.

Poor implementation of agreed programmes: Rationalizing the institutional setting is important for successful integration. Member countries are the primary stakeholders and have an important role in ensuring that commonly agreed policies are implemented at the national level. On the contrary, national implementation has been weak in Africa, with only few countries having established effective integration mechanisms. For instance, only 28% of countries are reported to have reduced tariffs to levels agreed to by the regional economic communities. Some32% are still implementing tariff reductions that are supposed to be completed—an indication of a lagging integration agenda (Economic Commission for Africa, 2006).

Lack of dominant economic power: Sheriff (2013) with specific reference to ECOWAS, identified the absence of a viable industrialized and economic power as a challenge to successful integration in Africa. For him, most African nations are producers and exporters of raw materials especially agricultural and mineral products. Thus, they compete among themselves for market, hence cannot form a formidable body to deal with issues of trade in relation to the external world and even among member states.

Fear of hegemony: Another major setback to African integration effort is the fear of the development of hegemonic sub-regional states. Sheriff (2013) agreed with this position when he argued that whenever one of the continent's most powerful countries like Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa appears to be taking an active interest in sub-regional affairs, many of its smaller neighbours will try to combine to counter balance what they perceive to be excessive power. This is what Aja (2001) refers to as lack of mutual trust and confidence. The Anglophone and Francophone states distrust one another. Neither real group-think, nor functional relations exist.

Lessons from the European Union (EU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

Both the EU and the SCO are regional organizations in Europe and Eurasia axis respectively. These groups have to a large extent recorded success in their integration effort, especially with particular reference to the EU. For this reason, it becomes necessary to look at the lessons Africa regional groups can learn thereof.

On its part, the European Union (EU) started very small with the European Coal and Steel Community (1951 Treaty of Paris) having only six countries. But today, it includes a common market, a common currency and increasingly a coordinated foreign and security policy. Since the early 1950s, the EU has been a pioneer in regional integration. According to Fraser (2010), the most important principles underlying the success of the EU project which African nations must learn include:

a. Leadership charisma, generated by the Franco-German axis. Despite many challenges, problems and hostility, Paris and Berlin have been and remain the driving force behind European integration.
b. The political will to share sovereignty and construct strong, legally based, common institutions to oversee the integration project.
c. A consensus approach combined with solidarity and tolerance. The EU approach is based on not isolating any member state if they have a major problem (such as Greece in the most recent crisis), hesitance to move forward with policies until the vast majority of member states are ready, and a willingness to provide significant financial transfers to help poorer member states catch up with the norm.

These three tenets have guided the EU well over the years and enabled the institutions to survive many crises. Nevertheless, the core tenet that have accounted for the success of the EU over time is its readiness to share sovereignty and operate through strong common institutions.

On the other hand, the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization** is a Eurasian political, economic and military organisation which was founded in 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. These countries, except for Uzbekistan, had been members of the **Shanghai Five**, founded in 1996. But with the inclusion of Uzbekistan in 2001, the members renamed the organisation from Shanghai Five to Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO has reiterated that it is primarily centered on its member nations' Central Asian security-related concerns, often describing the main threats it confronts as being terrorism, separatism and extremism. However evidence is growing that its activities in the area of social development of its member states is increasing fast.

One basic point that is discernible from the SCO is the fact that it had a single overall concern which is security, and thus formed the basis of engagement from inception. This is similar to the case of the EU which began with cooperation in the area of Coal and Steel (ECSC); and later in Atomic Energy (Euratom). On the contrary, African integration process usually begins with very bogus and wide range vision. Africa must therefore learn from this.

Moreso, the commitment displayed by the two most viable economic powers (China and Russia) in the activities of the SCO is also similar to the commitment displayed by Germany and France in the EU scenario. This has helped to survive both bodies, and for the fact that these countries are part of the world super powers, it has made their presence felt and also earned them respect at the international arena. In this connection, Africa must learn to trust and encourage some of its members who are the most economically viable and who champion the integration process.

Concluding Remarks:

Suffice it to say that the success story of economic integration in Europe is antithetical to Africa scenario. No doubt, economic integration is not new to Africa. But the persistent issue is the methodology of translating words into actions. The need for integration indeed exists, but the political will to actualize it is lacking. In this light, Aja

(2001) observed that the political will is lacking because Africa lacks the enabling security climates, which Western Europe managed to create after the World War II. Africa is crisis-ridden. There is no sub-region in Africa that is free from intra and inter-state conflicts, poverty of mutual trust and confidence, crisis of coordination and harmonization of policies, as well as dependency syndrome. Moreso, group-think and group relations are also absent in Africa. All of these combine to hamper integration efforts in Africa.

The above situation is unequivocally at variance with the dream and vision of the pioneer African leaders (the hero past). In 1958, the conference of African leaders recognized economic integration and cooperation as development imperatives. Again in 1963, the establishment of the Organization of African Unity made this aspiration more significant. The bigger dream was to create African Economic Community (AEC) which was subsequently modified to Economic Community for Africa (ECA). The sub-regional groups were expected to midwife this process of continental integration.

Unfortunately, till date, integration in Africa has remain more of a mirage. The reasons adduced for the abysmal failure of African integration effort include but not limited to; lack of political will, overlapping membership by member states, lack of clear-cut harmonized policies, lack of mutual trust, poor implementation of resolutions reached by member states, absence of viable economic structure, and the challenges of globalization and the new world order.

This paper suggests that Africa can surmount the challenges above by taking dressing from other regional groupings that have recorded success over the years. Thanks to the European Union (EU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

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