

THE CHALLENGES OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

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Abstract

After the World War II mankind entered a new phase of international relations development. It is characterized by extension of international economic, political and cultural collaboration; intensification of internationalization and globalization processes, further more world community tends to greater integration, greater foreseeability, and growth of organization and development control mechanisms. In this job the accent is laid upon analyses of regional integration, which is one of the key methods of solving globalization challenges. Before dwelling upon integration in Africa, it is necessary to define the notion of integration and globalization, analyze the way they intercourse and trace the way globalization process influences the integration process in Africa.

Keywords: Regional integration, globalization, African Union,

Introduction

The word «integration» originates from the Latin «integer» — «whole». Thus, integration implies the development of some new alliance or new integrity of separate parts, which start to act as an independent unity. It should be underlined that integration is seen as a positive amount game, which makes it profitable for each player as well for the whole community. It should be said, that, что global competitive landscape is a kind of environment in which only the strongest survive along with the countries and economies that unite the efforts facing the blows and challenges of globalization. On the other hand, regional integration guarantees its participants preferential economic, commercial, political regime which undermines certain universal regulative instruments. Integration is possible only under the following conditions:

- Continental solidarity, implying community spirit, which appears as the result of the delamination from the outside world and inner homogenization; as the result of political centralization, administrative centralization; judicial uniformity; territorial organized division of labor; mass education and mass communication;

- Economic growth, which enables the constantly growing part of population enjoy the economic prosperity on a bigger scale;

- Legal capacity of the governments that manage to guarantee common people relatively high living standards regardless of individual market success. It is important to remind of the fact that the problem of globalization and regional integration correlation is tending to come out in the foreground recently. It tackles upon a wide range not only geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-civilizational issues, but also political-economic, financial, currency and other problems.

Thus, regional integration, firstly, allows the countries of the region to stand up to the challenges of globalization, endure the pressure of global leaders who dictate the rules of the game.

Secondly, it allows creating regional preferential advantages in global competitive landscape at the world goods, services, technologies and labor markets.

Thirdly, regional integration lowers cost of production and marketing expenses, encourages international labor disintegration, specialization and cooperation of goods and services production encourages dynamic development of national economies, the growth of their competitive ability in global environment. There are some examples of integration in the world history based on the contingency of economic interests and this ways seems to be the most effective in solving multiple problems of African reality. The decision made by the Union to provide support in development of international processes relying on the current political and administrative unities of the South and the North of the continent, western and eastern Africa show the understanding by the heads of the governments the problems they are going to face on the long and difficult way and the readiness to overcome them.

As for regional integration in Africa, it is necessary to underline that for the detailed analyses of African international processes we should turn to earlier periods, as the tendency of African countries to unite originates in the 1950-1960-ies, the period of political independence acquisition. In this precise period the first integration alliances were formed, which were considered the key way of gaining economic independence for the countries free from the colonial dependence, an instrument of reformation and integration of the national economies into world economy. It should be stated that the problems of regional integration in Africa are mostly determined by the character of political processes organization on the African continent. Africa is the only region in the world where the growth of poverty is not only recorded but also predicted. The situation is worsened by the external debt problem, the growth of which exceeds the development possibilities of African economies. It also should be mentioned that the majority of economic exponents are still at low level, for example the employment exponents. African economic structure renders its position at the global economic system, and the combination of negative external and internal factors intensify the economic instability in Africa even more.

Due to the current international division of labor Africa specializes mostly on the export of primary goods with the prices established at the global level and not in Africa. Such models of unequal exchange not only lessen the opportunities for development of African countries at the expense of export but also result in competitive ability loss of African countries at the world market.

Many Africanists think that Organizations of African Unity (OAU) – the biggest political unity of African continent was created in 1963 on the basis of African solidity and unity principles and from the very beginning concentrated on the fight for the complete freedom of Africa from the colonial dependency. One more priority was the fight for the destruction of apartheid regime in South Africa and all forms of racial discrimination. Particularly in this the organization demonstrated outstanding decisiveness and firmness and managed to mobilize the efforts of all countries on the continent and draw the attention of the world to these problems, which resulted in final success of its intentions.

At the moment there are some factors which in my opinion contributed to the achievement of the compromise and the creation of Organizations of African Unity. Firstly, it clear understands by the African countries that it's impossible to break free of the colonial burden by the forces of one or several countries only. Secondly, young African countries were inclined to unite and collaborate.

At the moment the real reasons for creating African Union which substituted OAU were cardinal changes in the alignment of political forces in the world at the period of its existence (1963–2001) and the fulfillment at the brink of the new millennium some high priority tasks that were appointed to OAU. The problems of current economic development in Africa call for new approaches and mechanisms. The main difference of AU from OAU is that economic integration is proclaimed the main priority of the new organization while OAU viewed political integration as the main task for taking measures to guarantee national independence and territorial integrity of young African states.

It is necessary to mention that the aim of the new organization, as it is underlined in the organizational act of AU, is the readiness of the heads of governments and countries – AU members to promote unity, solidarity, cohesion and collaboration among the nations and countries of Africa. As the main tasks of AU were announced: leading a dialogue with the world community on unanimity of view point on the part of African countries (including decisions which will be able to answer the challenges of globalization), protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity of countries, support of peace, safety and security, stability on the continent, effective resolution of regional conflicts.

It is worth mentioning that at the conference of the heads of OAU in June 1979 a historic Monrovia declaration was carried which laid the basis for Lagos plan of actions (LPA), the main points of which are the following:

- great resources of Africa should be used above all to satisfy the needs of people;
- it is necessary to deal with the dependency of Africa from the export of raw material;
- Africa should mobilize all its own human and material resources for the sake of development;
- these efforts should lead to economic integration of Africa;
- governments should pursue the economic, social and cultural policy in accordance with LPA aims.

On the other hand the analyses I made allows me to state that Cairo plan defined the following priorities for the continent's invigoration:

- a) government, peace, stability, development;
- b) food safety;
- c) human resources development and the growth of their efficiency;
- d) resource mobilization;
- e) economic collaboration and integration on the regional level;
- f) structural reorganization of African countries economies.

As for the foundation of the United states of Africa and the establishment of OAU Kaddafi not only broke the statute of OAU in which it is said that the revision of the statute is only possible in a year after its project will be put over to all the countries-members of the Union. He also reopened discussion about the organizational form of pan Africanism, which originates from the early 60-ies before OAU was established.

The head of International Affairs Committee of the Federation Council Mikhail Margelov says: «African integration today is a fight among different groups of countries for the influence on the continent, which represents not only the interests of African states but also the USA, the European Union, China and other serious international players, the is why political and economic unity of the continent being the optimal way-out from a number of crisis situations in Africa still is a matter remote future and it is a long way to go till all the problems AU faces are solved.»

Executive economic program of the newly reestablished all-African organization became NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) – new major program of Africa strategy development which determines its place in the world, it includes a certain complex of measures in the economy sphere of African countries and a hope is expressed for the partnership on the global level in the process of its realization and to promote mutual commercial and investment relations. This program has essentially two bases : the partnership program to revitalize the development of Africa in the new century and the Omega Plan , which aims to resolve intra - African conflicts , investment and financial assistance among African countries. In the early '90s both in Africa with expansion abroad there was an extremely pessimistic information regarding the strategies and prospects to solve socio - economic development of Africa apocalyptic situations in different African regions , in my

opinion the source of African pessimism and ma economic development of most African countries.

According to the Russian Africanist Sumbatyan J.G. program that gives priority to develop the agriculture, education, health, and infrastructure. African leaders considered the African Union and NEPAD as two social factors inter - linked, integrated social, political and economic relations and replicate Africa's access to the world Economic. It is clear that the activities of the African Union determines the existence of NEPAD , requiring new qualities of solidarity of African States, waives the selfish political tendencies of African leaders . In July 2001, a new program that known as' New African Initiative «, it had raised the fusion of the two aforementioned programs, the new program has the following goals by the year 2018 was approved:

- I. Reduction of the number of people living below the poverty line (less than \$ 1 per day)
- II. Ensure primary education for all children of school age,
- III. Achieving Equality of gender in relation to populations facing education, primary, secondary and higher education,
- IV. Reduce child mortality for 3/2,

The African Union and the regional economic integration groups argued that new approaches to the formation of connections " cross-country " is required and improve the forms , methods and tools for mutual cooperation in economic and social fields .The creation of the AU was an absolute step forward in the development of the idea and practice of African integration. The AU has contributed to the development of the African states position face the global challenges. Key factors of disintegration in Africa:

- Reduced size and capacity of markets and economies of African countries: GDP per capita well below average, poor diversification of production and exports, leading to the need to share resources;
- The integration of many member countries into one group (to 27 countries), which prevents the development of a common policy;
- The concern of governments with regard to the unequal distribution of benefits and costs of integration between the various Member States;
- Extremely low the role of the private business sector;
- Weakness of the structures of state power.

In Africa, there are a large proportion of the world's poorest countries, with a GDP per capita below \$ 950 on average per year. The factors of disintegration are clearly manifest poor performance of almost all African regional groups. Thus , it should be noted that the economic development of most African countries are at an extremely low level .In general Africa which is formed by 54 countries , but Africa still plays a minor role in the global economy .

In the book titled «Feature integration processes in Africa ", Shkvarov L.V. explained that unlike many other regions of the world, the internal contradictions of the groups of African integration (with some exceptions) do not contribute to the growth of bilateral trade. Unless a low share of exports relative to total exports of member countries, while the last two decades in many groupings exports increased investment. The most dynamic growth of this indicator is characteristic of the Southern African Development Community, the Union of the Arab Maghreb and UEMOA. In 2011 almost all groups of regional integration reached an early stage of economic integration, free trade areas have become totally or partially. It is important to clarify that the geographical structure of foreign trade of African countries is dominated by developed countries, especially the European Union countries, the share of which in total African trade is 40 %. Overall, Africa's trade with the EU is greater than the volume of trade between the five largest countries of the continent (South Africa, Algeria, Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt).

In recent years there has been a desire of some integration groups to coordinate their domestic economic activities .Thus, ECOWAS and UEMOA have developed a common program of trade liberalization and implementation of macroeconomic policy, the development of common rules of origin, customs procedures and harmonization of the compensation mechanism (for that ECOWAS decided to use the system UEMOA) African countries.

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