

Regional Integration in Africa: Lessons from the Past and Prospects for the Future

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1. INTRODUCTION

The case for unity and cooperation among African states has been strongly made.¹ According to Nkrumah, 'If we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the full benefits of Africa's rich resources, we must unite to plan for our total defence and the full exploitation of our material and human means, in the full interests of all our peoples. "To go it alone" will limit our horizons, curtail our expectations, and threaten our liberty.'² Green and Seidman added the observation that

'No African state is economically large enough to construct a modern economy alone. Africa as a whole has the resources for industrialization, but it is split among more than forty African territories. Africa as a whole could provide markets able to support large-scale efficient industrial complexes; no single African state nor existing sub-regional economic union can do so. African states cannot establish large-scale productive complexes stimulating demand throughout the economy as poles of rapid economic growth because their markets are far too small. . . .

The only way to achieve the economic reconstruction and development essential to fulfil the aspirations, needs and demands of the peoples of Africa is through a sustained shift to continental planning, so as to unite increasingly the resources, markets and capital of Africa in a single substantial economic unit.'³

More recently, Green has noted that 'Economic size is crucial to both political and economic power to bargain and to enforce decision', and that the quickest way to acquire a substantial increase in economic size is through economic integration. Economic cooperation is also 'a means of increasing both effective decision making and implementary capacity' with the result that 'the ability of each state to exercise rights of sovereignty and ownership may well be greater after their partial merger than when exercised separately but with weaker power and capacity backing.' These results, however, hold true only when the cooperating units are roughly equal in economic size and attempt something more than a *laissez-faire* form of cooperation.⁴

In addition to the motives of security, autonomy, power and economic development, the case for African unity has also been made on the following grounds: the social and cultural unity of Africa; the unity and community of fate that derives from having been exploited by Western imperialism; a way of avoiding conflicts among African states; unity is the wave of the future and even the Europeans are doing it.

By now, the above grounds for African unity are generally accepted even though some may quibble with some of the arguments presented above. Serious disagreements are likely to be encountered over the Green and Seidman assertion that no African state or sub-region could construct a modern economy as well as over Green's contention that a *laissez-faire* approach to economic cooperation is unlikely to produce the desired results.

In the past, disagreements also existed between advocates of a federalist approach entailing instant political unification and partisans of a gradual and incremental strategy of African political unity by way of economic cooperation and integration. At present, some contend that African cooperation and unity is not adversely affected and may even be facilitated by maintaining and even strengthening

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the prevailing close ties with the developed market economies while others claim that African unity requires and should aim at eliminating the dependency of African states on the global system. Finally, there are disagreements over the time period entailed in integration. Some measure the transitional phase in terms of decades, if not generations, while others think of achieving the desired outcome within a much shorter period.

Thus it is clear from the above that in spite of the apparent general consensus on the need and desirability of African unity, serious disagreement exists on the following points:

- (1) level of unification—continental or regional;
- (2) strategy of unification—federal or incremental;
- (3) scope of cooperation as measured by number and importance of issue areas—broad or narrow;
- (4) period of transition to full and effective unification—short or long;
- (5) condition and consequence of unification on relations with the international system—autonomy or dependence.

Finally, one should note a sixth area of disagreement, that of whether unification requires and should lead to socialism or capitalism.

Not surprisingly, these areas of disagreement are familiar to those who have encountered them in Western Europe. Further, these disagreements over the ultimate form and goals of unification remain dysfunctional in West Europe⁵, and they undoubtedly have the same consequences in Africa. Nevertheless, Western Europe has achieved a much greater degree of integration than Africa or any of its sub-regions.⁶ Thus our task is to go beyond the above disagreements on form and outcomes of integration and analyse the obstacles to regional integration in Africa. But before we do this, certain conceptual clarifications are necessary.

2. CONCEPTS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

In the above sections, the terms cooperation and integration were used interchangeably. In fact, however, they refer to different things. 'Regional cooperation is a vague term covering any interstate activity with less than universal participation designed to meet some commonly experienced need.' While 'The study of regional integration is concerned with explaining how and why states cease to be wholly sovereign, how and why they voluntarily mingle, merge, and mix with their neighbours so as to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty while acquiring new techniques for resolving conflict between themselves.'⁷ Thus whereas the concept of regional integration implies a process that leads to a qualitative change in the relationships among the participating states with respect to their former sovereignty, no such qualitative change is implied in the concept of regional cooperation. A widely used measure of progress towards regional integration is the degree of increase in the scope and level of authority, with scope referring to the number of issue areas collectively dealt with and authority referring to the degree of jurisdiction possessed by regional bodies for making and implementing decisions in these areas. Continued increases in both scope and level of authority will eventually result in the emergence of a new political community at the regional level.⁸

It must be mentioned immediately that the full meaning of a concept cannot be fully understood in isolation from the theory in which it is embedded. The above definition of regional integration is the one more or less explicitly employed by most writers who subscribe to the neofunctional theory of regional integration even though there are differences in nuance and wording among them. This definition is also, in its essence, subscribed to by other theories of regional integration, such as the communications theory, even though this theory focuses more on the process of communication than on the process of political amalgamation. Further, this definition, regional integration and the theories in which they are

embedded were formulated mostly on the basis of the regional integration experience in Western Europe. Inevitably therefore, this definition of regional integration (and, as we shall show later, the theory in which it is located) reflects the dominant political orientation of the context from which it was derived. This political orientation is that of capitalism.

This bias in the definition is revealed not as much by what is included, but by what is left out. Nothing in the definition tells us who is going to control the process of decision-making, on the basis of which political values decisions are to be made, and which interests are going to be served by the decisions taken. And these are certainly the more fundamental questions of politics, far more salient than the degree or form of political integration as measured by the scope and level of joint decision-making.

That the question of regional integration under whose control and in whose interest is not asked is not surprising. The answer to this question from the regional integration experience in Western Europe is that the integration process is controlled by and serves the interests of the same groups that control and gain the most from the political processes within each of the states of Western Europe.

The typical style of decision-making associated with the above regional integration pattern is the supranational style. Haas identifies the participants in this supranational decision-making process as high civil servants, the experts working for the regional secretariat, the spokesmen of major national and regional interest groups, and legislature members.⁹ Haas notes further that the context of supranational decisions is economic, social, and technical, '... the kind of economics and social questions ... [that are] at the very core of the modern welfare state.'¹⁰ In sum, one is talking about regional integration by and for capitalists or liberal democrats.

Thus, for those subscribing to a socialist philosophy, the above definition of integration is inadequate. This is not to reject the concepts of scope and level, but to indicate that they are inadequate. At a minimum, our definition of regional integration must provide for the participation of the broad masses of the people plus the notion that the process of integration must serve the interests of these broad masses rather than a small minority.

This is a way of saying that the definition of regional integration and the specification of its forms cannot be ideologically neutral; it could not be divorced from the motives that lead people to attempt regional integration, regard it as beneficial, and the results they expect from it. Form cannot be divorced from substance and inherent in the substance is a choice among values. Thus Haas acknowledges the normative factor that underlies studies of regional political integration.¹¹ Unfortunately, 'what has been missing from all this work [on regional integration] is some attention to the difference it makes whether or not such regional entities are created. As a result, after more than a decade of research we have only a very limited understanding of the costs and benefits of integration.'¹² Our contention is that the political ends we want to have realized as a result of successful regional integration influence our definition of it as well as our manner of studying it. These political ends must therefore be made explicit. Undoubtedly, our proposed definition of regional integration increases the measurement problems but this is no argument for a narrow definition.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

How much regional integration by either criteria has occurred in Africa? In a survey of attempts at regional integration in Africa in the mid sixties, the conclusion was drawn that 'These studies of economic and political integration between African states have as much or more to say about the weakening of existing ties than about the coming together of those who were apart. Despite the speeches, the conferences, the resolutions, the quest for African Unity seems to approach little nearer to its goal.'¹³

In a survey at the end of the sixties,¹⁴ the present author found that out of eight attempts at instant political union among African states, five met with failure (they are the Union of Central African

Republics, the Mali Federation, the Ghana-Mali Union, the Senegal-Gambia Union, and the attempt at Federation in East Africa in 1963), and only three succeeded (French and Southern Cameroon, British and Italian Somaliland, Tanganyika and Zanzibar).

A study of eight cases of broad attempts at functional cooperation revealed the following as far as changes in scope and level of authority from their respective date of creation to the end of the sixties.

	Scope	Level
U D E A O (1959)	—	—
U D E-U D E A C	0	0
Conseil de l'Entente	—	0
U A M-O C A M (1960)	—	+
U E A C (1968)	—	—
E A C (1961)	0	0
Maghreb Union (1964)	0	0
West African Free Trade Association (1965)	—	—

A plus sign (+) in the above indicates an increase in what is being measured, a zero sign (0) indicates no change, and a minus sign (—) indicates a decrease. Further, it must be noted that the above table measures total net changes over the entire period. Thus if a group of countries drop some issues from their cooperative venture while adding new issues without resulting in a change in the number of issue areas in which they cooperate, the outcome is judged as no change. Also, as noted earlier, scope measures the number of issue areas in which a group of countries pursue joint action and level measures the degree to which decision-making and implementation in these areas have been transferred to regional centres.¹⁵

From the above, the trend toward disintegration or stagnation with respect to regional integration in Africa during the sixties is sharply revealed. Of the eight cases, three (UDEAO, UEAC, West African Free Trade Association) had negative scores for both scope and level by 1970, these efforts had either formally ceased to exist (the UEAC and West African Free Trade Association) or were moribund (UDEAO). Two others (the Conseil de l'Entente and the UAM-OCAM) experienced decreases in their scope of integration and were tottering on the brink of collapse which was sharply revealed by their loss of members. The remaining three (UDE-UDEAC, EAC, and Maghreb Union), while they suffered neither losses nor gains in either scope or level, did not register gains in these areas either.

Moreover, not only was there stagnation in these efforts, they were also beset with constant and acute crises and conflicts which threatened their collapse. And both UDE-UDEAC and the Maghreb Union suffered losses in members.

More recently, Haas has measured the progress of 30 regional organizations in terms of changes in their scope and level of integration from their time of creation to about the mid seventies. Here are his findings for African regional organizations:¹⁶

	Scope	Level
O.A.U.	0	0
African Development Bank	+	0
Conseil de l'Entente	—	—
O C A M	—	—
West African Communities	—	0
U D E A C	—	—
E.A.C.	—	—
Maghreb Union	0	0

Note: Haas' measure of scope and level is more elaborate than the one we used earlier. It is not clear what Haas refers to as the West African Communities but it is most likely to be the UDEAO.

Of the above eight regional organizations, six experienced disintegration, two (the O.A.U. and the Maghreb Union) retained their earlier levels of integration, and only the African Development Bank enjoyed a gain in its level of integration. It is noteworthy that the three regional organizations which experienced no change or a gain in their levels of integration are also the ones most recently created. We cannot help but wonder whether in the absence of an increase in the factors favourable to regional integration, these organizations will continue to hold their own and/or do as well as they are now doing. We will subsequently return to what these favourable factors are.

What the above factors and figures point to is what is generally known and accepted by most students of regional political integration in Africa, namely that despite numerous efforts, the declared acceptance of the need for and the advantages of regional integration, the professions of goodwill and all the rest, the trend in Africa is not towards integration but towards disintegration. And this conclusion holds true even when we ignore the question of who controls decision-making, what values are being served, and who gains from these attempts at regional integration. Raising these questions only makes the situation bleaker.

4. DECISION MAKING AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Many African countries have 'authoritarian' political systems. Within these systems, decision-making is in the hands of the political *élite*, the bureaucratic *élite*, individuals and sectors of the commercial and economic *élite*, and foreigners representing the political and economic interests of the developed capitalist states. The broad masses of the people mostly neither participate in nor influence the decision-making process. Inevitably, those controlling the decision-making process promote primarily their own interests and further their own values. In Africa, these interests and values are certainly not socialist but they are not genuinely capitalist either as compared with the nature of these interests and values encountered in developed capitalist societies.

In the developed capitalist economies, the goal is that of creating developed economies owned and controlled by indigenous entrepreneurs. The values are capitalistic and the habits of accumulation, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, honesty, objectivity, etc. are encouraged. What one finds in Africa for the most part is acquiescence in if not the active promotion of the maintenance of neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism results in underdevelopment whose essential features are: '(1) unevenness of productivity as between sectors; (2) disarticulation of the economic system; and (3) domination from outside. . .'¹⁷ The primary beneficiaries of neo-colonialism and underdevelopment are the foreign investors, expatriates employed in the country, some of the indigenous political, bureaucratic and commercial *élite*, and a few of the better paid local force. 'At the bottom of the income scale are the small peasants. . .'¹⁸ Values are heavily weighted towards conspicuous consumption¹⁹, subjectivism, and personal and parochial ties. The result is the economic, political and social deformation that is so widespread in Africa. The internal characteristics of African states are bound to be reflected at the regional level.

Not much attention has been given to participants in the decision-making process within African regional organizations.²⁰ It is generally known though that these organizations are intergovernmental in nature with the key decision makers being very high level political *élites* and bureaucrats. Employees of the regional *secrétariats* play a minor role while the various parliamentary bodies hardly participate in the process. The masses of the people are virtually ignored and even organizations representing business interests are not included on a regular and formal basis even though they do make their presence felt individually, indirectly, and informally. Finally, foreign interests are represented both directly and indirectly as well as formally and informally.

What interests do African regional organizations serve and what values do they promote? These

questions could not yet be answered conclusively because of the very limited degree of success, if any, in achieving regional political integration in Africa. It is clear nonetheless that none of them has directly and energetically attacked the problem of underdevelopment, none of them has proclaimed socialism as its goal and in none of them do the states that subscribe to socialism and deal seriously with the problem of underdevelopment constitute a majority of the membership.

The actual working of these organizations provide us with further evidence for the above conclusions. None of the African regional organizations has ever succeeded in creating a complete customs union, much less engage in serious regional planning for industrial and economic development on the basis of self-reliance. Further, the goal of a customs union is seen as a way of attracting foreign direct investments which will only aggravate the degree of underdevelopment. That this in fact did happen is partly suggested by the fact that African countries for the most part have not diversified their sources of direct foreign investment and the former colonial powers retain their hold over the economies of their former colonies. Thus, as of 1967, Britain and France were responsible for 50 per cent or more of all foreign direct private investments in their former African colonies. Further, these foreign investments have resulted in very weak measures of industrial interdependence in the economies of the individual African states as compared with the degrees of interdependence produced in similar sectors in the highly developed capitalist economies.²¹ This disarticulation of the economies of the individual African states is reflected in and explains the low degree of economic transactions within African groupings. Thus in the East African Community, regional trade as a percentage of the GDP of the member states decreased from 6.0 per cent in 1965 to 3.5 per cent in 1971 and a similar trend also occurred within UDEAC.

We can therefore conclude that regional organizations in Africa acquiesce if not assist in the perpetuation of neo-colonialism, serve the interests of those who benefit from neo-colonialism, and promote the values associated with neo-colonialism. The outcome cannot be otherwise. The political, economic, and social characteristics of the individual members will inevitably be reflected in their regional endeavours.

Our over-all conclusion is that the current attempts at regional integration in Africa are failures measured either by capitalist standards or by socialist standards. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to explanations of the above outcome and to some prescriptions as to how the outcomes could be altered.

5. CRITIQUE OF THEORIES OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Two major theories of regional integration are the communications theory and the neo-functional theory initially formulated by Karl Deutsch and Ernest Haas respectively. How useful are these theories in helping us understand attempts at regional integration in Africa?

The fundamental assertion of the communications theory is that intensive patterns of communication among states as measured by trade, mail flows, movement of individuals across state boundaries, mutual attention, etc. is positively correlated with regional integration. The theory however fails to spell out the causal links between communications and regional integration and it is unclear from the theory whether increases in communication cause regional integration or whether increased communication is an outcome or a measure of regional integration.²² Further, the communications theory does not establish the link between communications and the motives, interests, perceptions, goals and strategies of the actors nor does it pay much attention to the contents of the communications.

At the level of verification, it has been argued that on the basis of data derived from the regional integration attempt in Western Europe, there is no direct correlation between communications and integration. It was found that while increases in communications had halted, political integration was

still taking place.²³ More recently, and again on the basis of evidence from Western Europe, a subscriber to the communications theory has stated that while transaction flows have descriptive utility in the study of regional integration,

‘... it cannot be underlined too strongly that there is a major difference between *describing* regional integration and *explaining* it. More directly to the point, transaction flows reflect regional integration. *But transaction flows do not cause regional integration.* Moreover, since it is not entirely clear, either theoretically or empirically, exactly what causes, accelerates, or reverses transaction flows, there is some risk in using transaction analysis predictively in integration studies.’²⁴

In Third World integration efforts, especially in Africa, negative correlations have been found between increases in transactions, especially trade, and regional integration.

To conclude, the communications theory has very serious shortcomings as a theory with explanatory and predictive power. It is formulated at the systemic level and not linked to the concerns of concrete individuals and groups. Finally, serious doubts exist as to the correlation between communications and integration at the descriptive level. The communications theory is therefore unlikely to help us explain the outcomes of attempts at regional political integration in Africa. The causal imagery of the neo-functional theory is functionalist. The essence of a functionalist explanation is that ‘the *consequences* of some behaviour or social arrangement are essential elements of the causes of that behaviour’. Moreover, ‘whenever we find *uniformity of the consequences* of action but *great variety of the behaviour causing those consequences*, a functional explanation in which the consequence serves as a cause is suggested.’²⁵ Applied to the study of regional integration, regional integration becomes the consequence and the problem in formulating the theory is to specify the positive behaviour engendered by these consequences and the tensions that hinder the automatic attainment of the consequences.²⁶

Early statements of the neo-functional theory were not as explicitly and rigorously functionalist and neither did national actor strategy occupy as central a role as in Schmitter’s formulation. Rather, the search was for an exhaustive list of independent variables that were functional for regional integration.

In the initial formulation of the neo-functional theory, Haas limited its applicability to settings with the following features:

- ‘... (1) an industrialized economy deeply enmeshed in international trade and finance,
- (2) societies in which the masses are fully mobilised politically and tend to channel their aspirations through permanent interest groups and political parties,
- (3) societies in which these groups are habitually led by identifiable elites competing with one another for influence and in disagreement on many basic values,
- (4) societies in which relations among these elites are governed by the traditions and assumption of parliamentary (or presidential) democracy and constitutionalism.’²⁷

Shortly thereafter, Haas stipulated two additional variables besides the environmental variable cited above as necessary for successful integration. These were, ‘(1) Institutionally, supranational bodies most readily lend themselves to accommodation on the basis of upgrading common interests. . . [and] (2) functionally, specific economic tasks resolving policy differences emerging from previous imperfect compromises on welfare questions but involving large mass interests, are most intimately related to rapid integration. . . .’²⁸

Work on the neo-functional theory since the above was written has been mainly concerned with disaggregating and specifying the independent variables more rigorously, increasing the list of independent variables through the search for functional equivalents, a clearer specification of the relations among the independent variables and the relations between the independent variables and the dependent variables, and otherwise refining the theory.²⁹ These changes in the theory have been necessitated by problems encountered in trying to apply the theory to areas other than West Europe (especially Latin America), by stresses within Western European integration not anticipated by or fully explainable with the aid of the theory (the 1965 crisis in the E.E.C. that resulted from the French boycott)³⁰ and by

criticisms of the neo-functional theory.³¹

Still, however, the essential position of the neo-functional theory is that successful regional integration is correlated with and caused by the environmental, structural, and functional factors cited above. Thus the neo-functional explanation of the failure or slow progress towards regional integration in Africa as compared with West Europe is that these three factors, especially the environmental one, are absent or present to only a minimal degree in Africa. For Africa to be as successful as West Europe, it must become like West Europe economically, socially, and politically. A second approach is to seek functional equivalents of the West European environment, but even this is a second best approach in that few have been found thus far and the positive impact of these equivalents on regional integration have been assessed as not very strong.³²

In sum, efforts at regional political integration in Africa are likely to yield only negative or at best minimally positive results. But is the picture really that bleak or is there a way out? Such a way out can only emerge from raising serious doubts as to the validity of the explanations and therefore the predictions of the theory. It is to this task of evaluating the validity of the theory that we now turn.

The neo-functional theory explains the lack of regional integration in Africa by showing that certain features associated with successful efforts in Western Europe are absent in Africa. This implies that only those features found in Western Europe can promote regional integration. But as noted above, the essence of functionalist logic is that a great variety of behaviour can result in the same consequences. So why limit the factors that are functional for regional integration to those mentioned above and found only in Western Europe? This could only be done if one postulates traits that are functionally indispensable for realizing the stated consequences. But not only would this run counter to the postulate of functionalist explanation mentioned above, but it would also run into the problem that 'the assumption of functional indispensability for a given item is highly questionable on empirical grounds: in all concrete cases of application, there do seem to exist alternatives.'³³

Not only is it impossible for functionalist theory to make a requisite statement, but even the possibility of making a probabilistic statement is doubtful. '... for in most, if not all, concrete cases it would be impossible to specify with any precision the range of alternative behaviour patterns, institutions, customs, or the like that would suffice to meet a given functional prerequisite or need. And even if that range could be characterized, there is no satisfactory method in sight for dividing it into some finite number of cases and assigning a probability to each of these.'³⁴ The result is that functional analysis by its very nature can offer only a weak explanation which takes the form of stating that any one of a limited list of variables could have produced a given consequence. Otherwise, its explanations will be *ex post facto*.

It is undoubtedly the above weakness in functionalist explanation, which the neo-functional theory shares, that accounts for the continuous increase in the list of independent variables in the face of new developments in Western European integration and when attempts are made at applying the theory outside the Western European environment. What the above criticism implies, however, is that the increase in the independent variables will either be endless or else arbitrarily curtailed. Even then the explanation offered will be either trivial or else *ex post facto*.

In the face of such weak explanatory power, functionalist explanation cannot predict which behavioural patterns if any, will emerge to promote the desired consequences and neither could it prescribe, except in an arbitrary manner, a finite list of behavioral patterns that will promote the given end. The neo-functional theory of regional integration is therefore weak as a theory and there are no theoretical grounds for accepting its explanations, predictions or prescriptions. Its explanatory and predictive weakness in the context of Western European integration is an additional proof of this conclusion.

The above is a general critique of the neo-functional theory of regional integration. From the general weakness of functionalist explanations, and the manner in which the neo-functional theory tries to by-pass these shortcomings (through the imposition of arbitrary limits to their list of indepen-

dent variables derived largely from the Western European context), we arrive at a specific weakness of neo-functionalism as far as explaining developments in Africa. Attempts at regional integration in Africa are not studied on their own terms, with the factors functional and dysfunctional for regional political integration being clearly specified and their causal links to the dependent variable carefully traced. The result is that the exercise is not very convincing.

A final criticism of neo-functionalist theory in the context of Africa is that its explanatory depth is rather shallow. Let us accept for a moment that the factors which neo-functionalists argue are positively correlated with regional political integration are absent in Africa. For the theory to be politically relevant, i.e. for it to be relevant to those who want to change reality, it must provide some explanation as to why the above characteristics are absent and how they could be created. This the theory does not do and this is why it ends on a note of pessimism and futility. But the need is too urgent and we must seek a way out. On what basis can one construct a theoretically sound explanation of regional integration in Africa that is politically relevant and provides hope for the future?

6. ELEMENTS OF A THEORY OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

The basis of our analysis must be the essential characteristics of African states. It is these that explain both the numerous attempts at regional integration and the failure of these efforts. In our view, these essential characteristics are the economic and political underdevelopment of African states as a result of the manner in which they have been integrated into the world political economy. Political and economic underdevelopment generates contradictions for which regional integration is advanced as a solution, but regional integration is impossible in the context of political and economic underdevelopment. This is the fundamental explanation of the outcome of regional integration attempts in Africa, and the rest of this paper will be devoted to the elaboration of the above thesis.

Following Samir Amin, we have already specified the features of economic underdevelopment as those of unevenness of productivity between sectors, disarticulation of the economy, and external domination. The literature on economic underdevelopment is now very extensive and provides us with extensive insights on the consequences of economic underdevelopment. It is both impossible and unnecessary to go over this ground again. What we intend to do is to indicate the salient consequences of economic underdevelopment for regional integration.

We are advancing the concept of political underdevelopment as a substitute for the concept of political development that is widely used and for the concept of political decay advanced by Samuel Huntington.³⁵ We agree with Huntington that there is little sign that many Third World countries are becoming politically developed in the sense of moving in the direction of creating the kind of political systems found in developed countries of the West. But the term political decay is inaccurate in that it implies that these systems were once developed in the sense indicated above and are now degenerating from that position.

The concept of political underdevelopment is analogous in the political sphere to the concept of economic underdevelopment in the area of economics. It implies that in the same way that integration in the world capitalist economy produced structural defects in the economies of the periphery that are manifested by their economic underdevelopment, the inevitable integration of the peripheries in the political system of world capitalism produced deformed political systems which are summed up by the concept of political underdevelopment. In sum, the crippled economic and political formations found in the periphery have the same roots.³⁶

What are the essential traits of political underdevelopment? They are:

- (1) the absence of nationhood and a sense of national cohesion;
- (2) authoritarian systems lacking the formal liberties found in developed capitalist states; and
- (3) inefficient, ineffective, and often unstable governments and bureaucracies.

Most observers will agree that these are some of the salient features of the political systems found in the periphery. Some though, may disagree with us as to the origins and explanations of these deformities. It is unnecessary to proceed with the presentation of the facts and analysis that underlies our conclusion; these will be discussed in a subsequent study. Given the undeniable presence of the above features of political underdevelopment, we can proceed with the indication of their consequences for regional integration.

Uneven production between sectors of the economy implies a widening of the gap in society. One aspect of this problem is the high unemployment level which has been documented throughout the countries of the periphery. The other is the greater inequality in the income distribution in the periphery as compared with the centre.

This means that the broad masses of the people are excluded from effective participation in the economy as both producers and consumers. This low economic mobilization of the broad masses of the people means they are unlikely to be involved in regional integration efforts based on functionalist strategies. At best, therefore, regional integration will be between only a tiny fraction of the population of the states concerned. But even this is unlikely since this tiny high income group is most likely to develop consumption patterns oriented towards the centre countries.

The disarticulation of the economy leads to the lack of communication or exchange among its sectors. It also has the consequence of inhibiting the spread of growth and development from one sector to another. These produce negative effects on regional integration in that in the absence of cohesive national economies one can hardly expect them at the regional level. And it is precisely the existence of substantial economic links and interdependencies that result in possibilities and demands for regional coordination of economic policies. Thus it is not surprising that in contrast to the Western European experience, the creation of customs unions among states of the periphery did not result in any significant increase in economic transactions among them which would have served as a catalyst for more cooperative efforts.

A second consequence of disarticulation of the economy is that by restricting the spread effects of growth and development in one sector, it limits the overall growth and development of the economy. Given the increasing hardships of the broad masses of the people noted above, lack of overall growth and development creates pressures on the *élites* who then initiate regional integration attempts as a way of solving their dilemma. But since the root cause of the disarticulation of the economy—external dependency—is not attacked, these attempts at regional integration fail to produce the desired results. The invariable result of this situation is conflicts among the member states as to who gains the most from the attempt at regional integration and, very soon, disintegration sets in.

External domination reinforces and is the cause of the disarticulation of the economy at both the national and regional levels. At the same time, it entails more substantial and unequal economic exchanges with the centre countries. Further, external dependence results in severe financial problems (notably in the area of balance of payments) because of the repatriation of profits from foreign investments.

Moreover, as Samir Amin and others have shown, foreign investment in underdeveloped countries leads to an accelerated growth of imports because of (1) urbanization without sufficient growth of local subsistence goods, (2) rapid growth of administrative expenditure due mainly to the obligations that follow from integration in the international system, (3) maldistribution of incomes and the foreign consumption habits of the high income groups, and (4) inadequate and unbalanced industrial development resulting in the need to import intermediate and capital goods.³⁷ These financial problems result in the distribution crisis mentioned above. They also lead to difficulties in creating free trade areas because of the potential loss of import duties resulting from trade diversion. Finally, since these financial difficulties are encountered by different countries at different times and with different severities, creating and maintaining a customs union becomes difficult.

One would assume that external dependency will result in joint efforts in dealing with the external actors. While a few timid steps have been taken in this direction (e.g. the common investment code of UDEAC which however leaves a lot of discretion to individual members), these have failed because, as noted earlier, the *élites* are externally oriented and benefit from underdevelopment relative to the masses of the people in the periphery. They are likely to lose their positions and rewards as a result of any serious challenge to the interests of the external actors. Moreover, certain countries of the periphery enjoy a more privileged position in the international division of labour as compared with other countries of the periphery. These privileges take the form of relatively greater ability to attract external funds, and political and military support. Efforts at preserving these privileges, and the efforts of others to secure a share in these privileges makes joint action difficult.

In sum, we can conclude that economic underdevelopment generates the need for regional integration as a way of solving increasingly difficult problems of economic growth and development and thus of calming the frustrations of the masses. Economic underdevelopment, however, prevents successful regional political integration for the following reasons:

- (1) restriction of involvement to only a tiny privileged group;
- (2) creation of a tiny privileged group that is externally oriented and has foreign consumption habits;
- (3) inability to generate substantial economic exchanges while maintaining or increasing economic exchanges with the centre states;
- (4) generates crisis over the distribution of gains;
- (5) generates competition and rivalry rather than cooperative attitudes and behaviour; and
- (6) inability to produce economic gains. With liabilities such as these, it is hardly surprising that little regional integration has occurred in Africa and countries of the periphery in general.

Is political underdevelopment equally detrimental to regional integration? Lack of cohesive nations and of efforts in that direction also inhibit broad involvement in the regional integration effort. It also reinforces the negative consequences resulting from external dependency since the ruling group tends to rely on foreign help to stay in office. The ruling group also uses its control over the state machinery to provide rewards in the commercial and bureaucratic sectors for its sub-national base. The commercial and bureaucratic bourgeoisies that emerge tend to cooperate with and play a subsidiary role to the foreign interests present in the country. Regional integration is unappealing to this group (except in some instances when they feel themselves to be stronger than their counterparts in the other countries) since it is seen as entailing increased competition for them. Thus they push for strengthening the hold of the group in power and collaboration with outside forces. In this context, the development of national, and much less regional norms and values is next to impossible. Finally, in the absence of the reality and sense of nationhood, the preoccupation of the ruling group is to stay in office. Thus there is little time and effort devoted to promoting regional integration.

Authoritarian styles of politics again limit the breadth of participation of regional integration by reproducing the same authoritarian style at the regional level. And since those who decide invariably promote their own interests and values, it means that regional integration in the periphery along socialist lines is impossible because of the nature, interests, and values of these groups discussed above. Restricted participation limits the input of information and knowledge to the regional decision-making process to the detriment of effective policy making and implementation. Finally, authoritarianism makes it impossible for the regional integration effort to acquire legitimacy.

The quality of the governmental and bureaucratic structure has as its key consequence the inability to make and implement effective policies. The resulting inefficiencies lead to frustrations, failure to achieve goals, and ultimately conflicts among the partners. It also accounts for the non emergence of regional norms and identity and inhibits the acquisition of legitimacy by the regional institutions.

Thus our answer to the question raised above is that political underdevelopment is dysfunctional for

regional integration for the following reasons:

- (1) it helps in the creation and support of groups opposed to regional integration;
- (2) it inhibits the emergence of common regional norms and identity;
- (3) it takes attention away from regional integration matters;
- (4) it makes effective policy making and implementation difficult;
- (5) it reproduces an authoritarian and non socialistic pattern at the regional level; and
- (6) it is inimical to the acquisition of legitimacy by the regional institutions.

7. CONCLUSIONS

We have now arrived at the conclusion and provided the reasons why regional integration is impossible in an environment of economic and political underdevelopment. The evidence that underdevelopment is inimical to regional integration is overwhelming. This holds true even for areas outside the periphery. Thus one author recently concluded that 'In the last analysis, the main obstacle to European unity is Europe's military dependence on the United States and, among other things, the presence of American troops on the continent.'³⁸ But our conclusion is more general than that stated above. Our view is that in the long run, regional integration within the framework of capitalism is impossible.

It must never be forgotten that regional integration started in Western Europe only after World War II, and as a result of the desperate situation faced by the states in that region. Regional integration was seen by many as the only way of saving the economic and political systems of Western Europe. But how far has this effort at regional integration gone? Several years ago, Karl Deutsch and others concluded that 'European integration has slowed since the mid-1950s, and it has stopped or reached a plateau since 1957-58'.³⁹ More recently, West Europe was labeled as a 'Community of Malaise'.⁴⁰ And Haas states that 'Regional integration in Western Europe has disappointed everybody: there is no federation, the nation state behaves as if it were both obstinate and obsolete, and what once appeared to be a distinctive "supranational" style now looks more like a huge regional bureaucratic appendage to an intergovernmental conference in permanent session.'⁴¹ In sum, most observers agree that something has gone wrong and that the earlier optimistic hopes of the degree of regional integration that will be attained in West Europe must be revised downwards.

What accounts for this new turn of events? In our view, it is a clear manifestation that in the long run, integration under capitalism is impossible. In the desperate circumstances attendant on the end of World War II, Western Europe had to try to integrate. The moment the grave threat receded, problems emerged. This is because capitalism is essentially competitive even though individual capitalists seek to avoid competition at all costs. A common way of doing this is to seek protection from the state, especially by groups that are losing from competition. This tendency of losing groups to seek state protection applies not only to industrial groups but also to territorial and other economic groups. The national political *élites*, few of whom were wholeheartedly in favour of regional integration in any event, begin to assert the national interest and perspective. Also, as capitalist development advances, its political system becomes more bureaucratic with fewer possibilities for the active participation of the broad masses of the people. This style of politics is reproduced at the regional level and the result is growing dissatisfaction with and alienation from regional integration. For these reasons, regional integration soon runs out of steam and comes to a halt.

What then are the prospects for regional integration in Africa? Our analysis shows that as long as the states remain economically and politically underdeveloped, regional integration is not likely to succeed. Further, we subscribe to the view held by many that it is not possible to construct mature capitalist economies in the areas of the periphery.⁴² We have also just shown why in the long run regional integration in the context of capitalism is unlikely even in Western Europe. An indispensable

condition for regional political integration in Africa is therefore socialist political and economic development which itself requires regional integration. Hence those who argue and strive for regional integration and yet reject socialism are engaged in a futile exercise. For socialists, there is no contradiction since international solidarity is one of the cardinal principles of socialism. Until this perspective is generalized, no progress is likely to be made towards regional integration in Africa.

Footnotes and References

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- 3 Green and Seidman, op. cit., p. 22.
- 4 R.H. Green, 'Economic Independence and Economic Co-operation', in D.P. Ghai (ed.), *Economic Independence in Africa*, Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973, pp. 48–50.
- 5 See for example R. Price, *The Politics of the European Community*, London: Butterworths, 1973.
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- 7 E.B. Haas, 'The Study of Regional Integration: Reflections on the Joy and Anguish of Pretheorizing', in L.N. Lindberg and S.A. Scheingold (eds.), *Regional Integration: Theory and Research*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 6–7.
- 8 See P.C. Schmitter, 'A Revised Theory of Regional Integration', in Lindberg and Scheingold, op. cit., pp. 240–242.
- 9 E.B. Haas, 'Technocracy, Pluralism and the New Europe', in J.S. Nye, Jr. (ed.), *International and Regionalism—Readings*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968, p. 152.
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