



Jean Monnet Network

*The European Union, Africa and China in the
Global Age*

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African Integration in Comparative Perspective – The Global Integration Landscape

Jean-Marc Trouille, Bradford (UK)

AMENET Jean Monnet Network

Accra Workshop Webinar

29 April 2021



Regional Integration

- A global phenomenon induced by globalisation.
- An opportunity for Africa
- Intra-African trade: 18% (Intra-EU: 69%; Intra-Asian (ASEAN): 52%; USMCA: 50%)
- RI is needed to generate markets with a substantial size.
- RI is a process taking place at a different pace, across Africa and around the world.

The Ingredients of Integration

The basics:

- The ‘four freedoms’

But also:

- Harmonisation of rules, norms, standards, common policies.

Driving forces:

- Processes are always driven by a combination of economic and political forces.

Regional Integration

from a comparative perspective

How different is RI in Africa?

What are its specificities?

How could integration processes be strengthened in Africa?

Continental or regional scale?

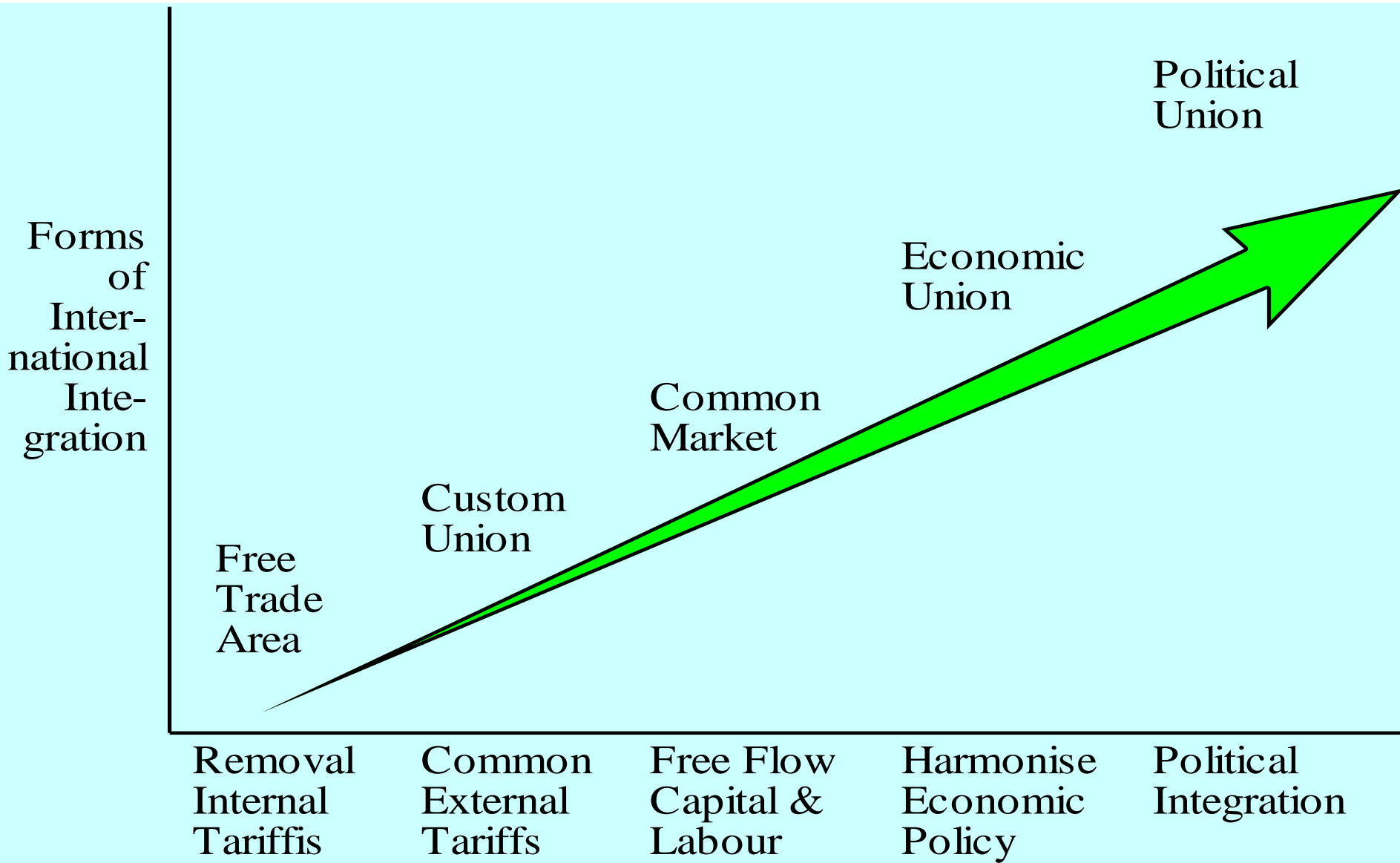
- Continental scale (African Union);
- Sub-continental projects (EAC, ECOWAS, COMESA, ECCAS, SADC, IGAD, SAD, UMA etc.) overlapping structures;
- Cross-regional initiative

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);



Creating One African Market

The ingredients for successful integration have changed – 40 years ago:



Constraints to Integration (1)

(common to Africa and other models)

- Lack of political and democratic involvement of public opinion
- A proliferation of overlapping structures and initiatives
- Relative weakness of institutional mechanisms, especially in developing

Constraints to Integration (2)

- Persisting regional or local border tensions
- Divergence between declared intentions and actual achievements, producing results that live up to declared ambitions
- Challenge for Diplomacy
- Regional integration movements have their ups and downs
- Differences in size of the member states

The global integration landscape

Fairly distinct approaches (holistic vs. incremental):

- Africa
- Latin America
- Central Asia
- Arab world
- Asian model

European Integration: A Specific Case

Regional Integration in Europe remains an exception.

A comprehensive process, a very special chemistry of ingredients:

- Ideological
- Cultural
- Historical
- Legal
- Economic

... which cannot be transposed to other parts of the world.

Solidarity is at its core (EU budget = redistribution: 1% of EU GDP, compared to 0.3% of world GDP redistributed at world level).

EU Integration and Supranationality

If there is something to be learned from European integration:

- Governance of integration cannot rely on the national model;
- Supranational governance is not a higher-level replica of national governance;
- Key functions of governance have to be distributed to different locations. Coordinating these different locations is always a challenge.

Specificities of African Regional Integration - Handicaps (1)

- Poverty levels
- High number of small-scale state structures
- High number of landlocked countries
- Lack of infrastructures

Specificities of African Regional Integration - Handicaps (2)

- Burden of colonial economic and trade model on structures
- Africa is distant from major consumer markets.
- Africa is far away from the major markets of tomorrow (China, India, Indonesia, Brazil).
- Lack of macroeconomic convergence (which facilitates regional cooperation).

Specificities of African Regional Integration - Handicaps (3)

- What is the right level of integration: should Africans focus on continental or regional integration?
- Far behind as concerns private sector organisations, essential drivers: to adopt common standards (economies of scale), eliminate red tape, develop legal systems...

Specificities of African Regional Integration – Advantages / Assets (1)

- Distance of foreign markets can be a comparative advantage for economic integration on the continent;
- Poverty conceals a considerable advantage for consumption;
- Under-utilisation of agricultural production factors could mean future opportunities.
- (Colonial) borders are less rigid, easier to cross = considerable importance of the informal economy...

Specificities of African Regional Integration – Advantages / Assets (2)

- Legal infrastructures governing economy and business, inherited from the British, French or Portuguese, provide useable regional frameworks which saves time.
- Certain regions enjoy linguistic homogeneity or a tradition of free movement of persons.

How could these processes be strengthened? (1)

- Need for leadership: RI can take several decades.
- RI requires considerable political energy, determination, consistency, the ability and authority to exercise the necessary pressures on the home system, combat bureaucracies, interest groups.
- Desirable to have a ‘hard core’ that inspires, initiates change and is sooner or later joined by others.
- Improve coordination between continental, regional and national levels.
- Involve a range of actors to turn RI into a collective project.

How could these processes be strengthened? (2)

Sometimes major objectives that are difficult to achieve can stimulate ambition... But:

Design *a roadmap* with concrete objectives:

Integration of services markets, trade facilitation measures, improvement of information available on domestic markets, creation of dispute settlement mechanisms at regional level, adjustment of common external tariff, setting up redistribution mechanisms, financing of regional institutional structures etc.

Finally:

- No ready-made recipe;
- Each process involves its own conditions, dynamics, specificities;
- RI cannot be ‘transferred’/designed in the same way.

In the end, what is at stake: *to ensure that Africa plays a role in globalisation that is up to its potential.*