

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

PROSPECTS FOR RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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Vladimir Nikolaevich Davydov, Idriss Ahmat, Soumaila Kanoute, Nogbou Allouan Patrik Renaud, Mahazaka Solofonantenaina. Prospects For Russia's Influence On Regional Integration In African Countries-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(3), 1346-1355. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords Regional Integration, Africa, Intraregional Trade, Import, Export, International Trade

ABSTRACT

The relevance of the research is due to the fact that regional integration in Africa is at a very low level, while trade and cooperation within the regional associations has significant potential to accelerate economic growth. The Russian Federation, regaining its status as a significant player in inter-African relations, can contribute to the synergy of its position in the world geopolitics.

The purpose of the study is to assess the prospects for the influence of foreign economic policy of the Russian Federation on the regional integration in African countries.

The objectives of the research were to analyze the policy of the Russian Federation within the context of regional integration in African countries at the present stage.

In the study of the formation and development of foreign economic policy of the Russian Federation and regional integration processes in African countries, a systemic, institutional, historical, comparative and sociological approaches were used.

In the process of research of the work, such general scientific methods as the inductive-deductive method, the structural-functional method, information gathering, comparative analysis, synthesis, systematization, and description were also used.

The scientific merit lies in the fact that the analysis can contribute to the search for real approaches to strengthening Russia's influence on regional integration in African countries.

The issues of regional integration in countries of Africa are reflected in the following publications [6,7,9], and the problems of the implementation of Russia's foreign economic strategy in Africa are described in the works [1,2,3,5,8].

The relevance of regional economic integration is that it brings a number of advantages related to improved political cooperation, expansion within the regional trade and generating of the employment, and thereby can accelerate the growth and development of interning countries. More integrated regions have proven their ability to grow faster and have shown greater adaptability in times of global economic downturn. While the global economy is struggling with all its might to return to its high levels of growth after the global economic crisis, the domestic and regional growth acceleration has become a major strategic decision for many countries and regions. China is tightening links with its neighbors, India is doing the same, and also a large regional association like the European Union has managed to recover through integration and to return to the level that existed before the financial crisis.

In Africa, many countries are also actively adopting the regional trade strategies, while Europe is Africa's main export market. The complexity of the problem lies in building the right balance of trade. If a regional association encourages mutual trade between its member countries, then the synergetic effect of the association will be achieved only if the current balance of exports with existing partners is not upset.

To date, there are fourteen major more or less integrated African regional economic integrations (table 1).

Table 1 - Regional economic integrations of Africa countries

Regional Economic Community	Areas of cooperation	Purpose of cooperation	Effective Date	Member States
Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Economic union	02/17/1989	Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia

Common Market for East and South Africa (COMESA)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Common Market	12/8/1994	Angola, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Creation of a free trade zone and integration in some sectors	2/4/1998	Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Zambia, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Chad, Togo, Tunisia
Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Economic union	7/1/2007	Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe Chad
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Integrale Economic Union	7/24/1993	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger,

				Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Economic union	11/25/1996	Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan
Southern African Development Community (SADC)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Economic union	9/1/2000	South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Tanzania, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMS)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Economic union	6/24/1999	Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Chad
East African Community (EAC)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Economic union	7/7/2000	Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Rwanda
South African Customs Union (SACU)	Goods, services, investments, migration	Customs union	7/15/2004	South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland
West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)	Approximation of commercial law, convergence of macroeconomic policies	Customs union	1/10/1994	Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo

As can be seen from the analysis of table 1, the participation of African countries in various regional trade agreements is not very active. From the fifty-four

African countries only twenty-seven are members of two regional groups, eighteen are in three groups, and one country is a member of four associations. Only eight countries are members of one regional economic group.

In addition, these regional structures suffer from the reluctance of African states to sacrifice their sovereignty in economy in favor of integration associations. In the absence of supranational bodies, the role of regional associations is reduced to an arena of discussion of problems and consideration of proposals, but the decision-making process is very complicated and brings to naught the effectiveness of integration. African states have their declared or hidden ambitions, which may conflict with the commonwealth and interest, which also slows down the integration process.

Africa as a whole is a minor player in global merchandise trade. The overall volume of trade in products in Africa in 2018 amounted to more than 760 billion dollars. As a comparison, Asia supplies \$ 6,801.4 billion worth of products. America and Europe have slightly less volume of trade.

The European Union remained the main continental trading partner of Africa in 2018 - it accounted for 29.8 percent of overall volume of trade. Africa's volume of trade with Asia has grown significantly over the past decade, and accounted for more than 35 percent of the continent's overall volume of trade in 2018. China and India continued to strengthen their position as Africa's first and second largest trading partners, accounting for more than 21 percent of Africa's overall volume of trade in 2018. Inside, African trade also grew steadily in 2018, having increased on 17 percent and reached \$ 159 billion. [19] It should be noted that this figure does not take into account the "dimmed" movement of goods, the practice of which is very common in Africa.

In general, Africa's contribution to world trade remains insignificant and accounts 2.6 percent, compared with 2.4 percent in 2017. Although Africa has eight large regional economic communities, the share of African regional trade within the region remains low. However, domestic African trade has grown to 16 percent in 2018 from 5 percent in 1980. In addition, its share remains low compared to intra-regional trade in Europe and Asia [15].

Africa is done away with the consequences of the 2008 recession, as its economy is largely dependent on its trade exchanges with the rest of the world. Internally, African trade can help the continent become less vulnerable to external forces. In fact, in 2000-2018 Africa has increased from 80% to 90% of the world's export turnover. The only region that is more dependent on exports outside of it is Oceania.

Figure 1 compares the values of commercial exchanges within the various economic communities of Africa [17]. It should be noted that the EU share in trade in the terms of regional associations of Africa is very high and ranges from 50 to 85%.

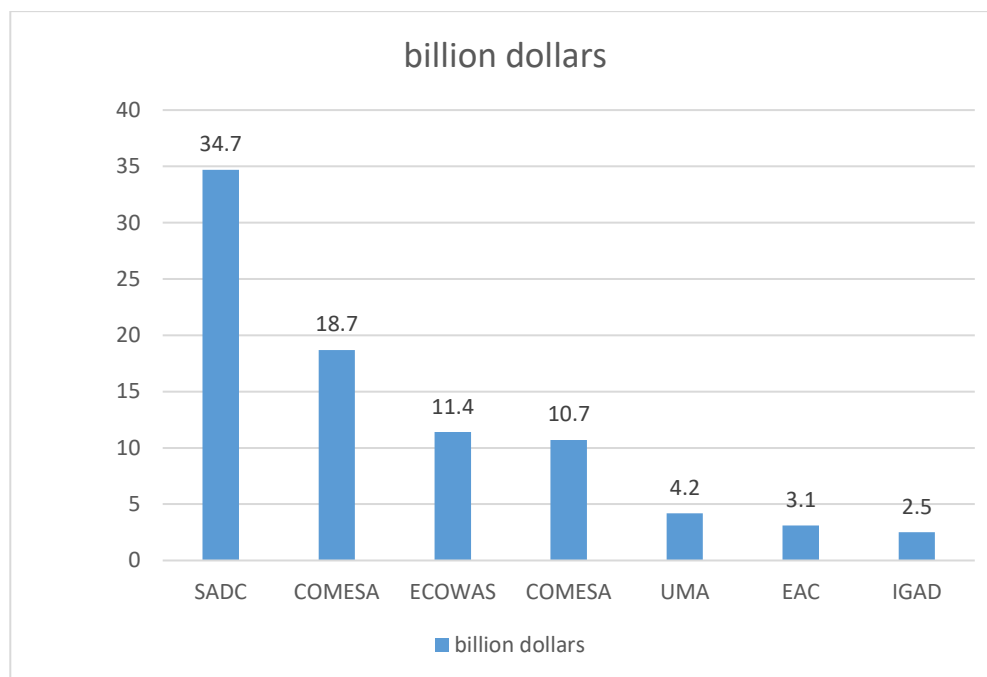


Figure 1. African intraregional trade volumes

Thus, in order to have a weight of influence on regional integration, it is necessary to have a significant share in trade with countries belonging to regional associations. According to customs statistics, recently, trade between Russia and Africa is experiencing a real upsurge. However, the share of African imports in Russia is very small and the trade deficit is very large in Russia's favor.

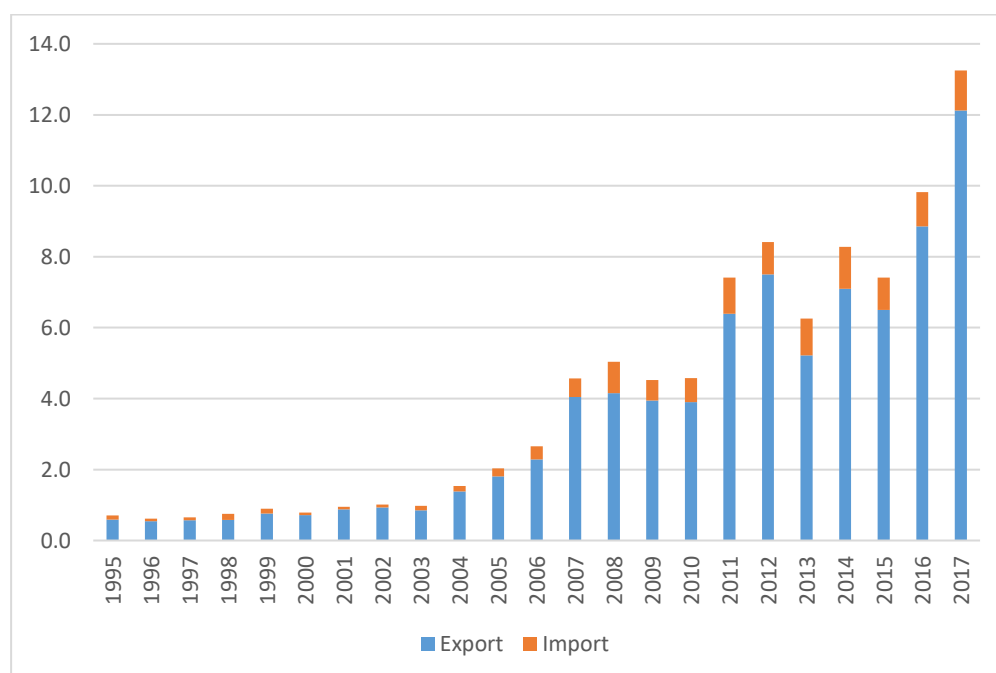


Fig.2 Foreign trade turnover with African countries, billion dollars [4]

Regional integration is a key priority for Africa's development strategy, where free trade among the members is one of the centrepieces of the 2063 Agenda recently adopted by the African Union [13]. Intra-regional trade should bring significant productivity gains for the continent. In the African context, such advances will increase overall food security by transporting food and agricultural products from overabundance regions to the deficit regions at a lower price. New opportunities also exist for cross-border trade in key manufacturing industries, such as metal and plastic products, which are expensive to import in the global market. In addition, intra-regional trade is able to activate the private sector, which begins to play a key role in all markets where regional integration begins and accelerates. Africa is no exception.

A resource-rich African economy can also develop regional value chains oriented towards commodities such as iron ore and gold. In response, interregional trade in services offers unused potential for productivity gains through private sector development and export of professional services. Similarly, exporting services provides an opportunity to improve basic public services for citizens, such as health care and education.

The development of intraregional integration will also be beneficial for Russia, since it will be easier for our country to increase the volume of cooperation with African countries within the regional associations.

The return of Russia's influence to Africa began relatively recently. In December 2017, Moscow got liberation from the United Nations arms embargo on the Central African Republic (CAR). Since then, there has been discussion about Russia's return to Africa, into the zone of influence of the former USSR, which extends from Luanda to Port Sudan and from Cairo to Pretoria. Of course, the restoration of Russia's interest in Africa, its political participation in African affairs in general and regional integration in particular, pale into insignificance in comparison with Russia's investments in Asia. Africa still looks faraway in Russia's hierarchy of priorities due to its limited economic prospects and the high remaining influence of the former European colonial powers. However, Western sanctions against Russia after the annexation of Crimea, the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union, and the beginning of participation in the settling in Syria created new geopolitical realities. Confrontation with the West motivates Russia to search for alternative political and economic partners. Nevertheless, the influence of Russia on intraregional integration in Africa is inevitably met with opposition from the old colonial powers and developing countries, including Russian partners such as India, China, Brazil and Turkey, which invested incommensurate resources in the continent comparing with the Russian-African volume of economic cooperation.

In 2017, the EU delivered the goods worth of \$ 152 billion to African countries, importing goods worth of \$ 151 billion [16]. Chinese exports to Africa amounted \$ 104.91 billion, while imports amounted \$ 99.28 billion [18]. African trade with India is also high – \$ 70 billion, \$ 53 billion with the United States and \$ 20 billion with Turkey. In general, Russia seems late in terms of economic cooperation with Africa.

However, very good prospects are opening up in mutual cooperation in terms of arms sales. Russia accounts for about 30% of arms sales to sub-Saharan Africa. Soviet military equipment is still used in three quarters of African countries and requires maintenance. The development of military and scientific and technological cooperation with Russia is considered in the context of the fight against terrorism, which is the scourge of African countries at the beginning of the 21st century. Developing partnerships with African regional economic associations, Russia can share its best practices in the field of security in exchange for economic benefits, including those coming from the exploitation of the continent's natural resources. This is pushed by the inability of African governments to maintain order and security in their territory, despite the support of the West (for example, the Sahel countries, Central African Republic)

Russia can offer another model of economic cooperation than Chinese loans, which are becoming burdensome for African countries, as they often entail the loss of the country's infrastructure. Russia does not offer such onerous contracts and prefers to focus on the short-term needs of states and transparent terms of transaction.

And finally, the fear of most African leaders is caused by the so-called "color-coded revolutions", from which Moscow seems to be able to protect them, since its military involvement in Syria has shown significant military and political means of the country. In Africa, as in the Middle East and Central Asia, Russia can position itself as a provider of security and stability in the face of the threat of foreign intervention and domestic disturbances.

Russia has a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, which underlines its ability to support Africa in its fight against extremism and terrorism, which causes a state of insecurity. Russia strives to observer status within the Sahel G5 group and is consulting with five countries of the group. The issue of security in the Sahel was pushed by Russian President V. Putin at the «Russia-Africa» Summit [11]. Russia's proposal to improve security in Africa can be built around the need to find alternative solutions to proposals of the West that do not work.

Arms supplies to African countries can be combined flexibly with contracts for the development of resources, as well as contracts for the supply of atomic energy, which will lead to increased economic cooperation, which has declined in previous years.

On the whole, Russia's current role in Africa is due to economic opportunism, and so far it does not seek to imitate the role that the Soviet Union once played here: it has neither resources nor ambitions for this. On the other hand, Russia has significant potential for influencing regional integration in Africa if it plays a more active role in the future of the continent, otherwise it will be excluded from these markets and lose access to the resources of the continent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to the Institute of Africa for ideological assistance in the process of writing the article.

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