



Selective regionalism as a response to the economic and institutional capacities of developing countries in their integrative relations

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Abstract:

This research aims to emphasize the need to continue to think about regional economic integration among developing countries and explore its explanations of what can maximize its capabilities and overcome its obstacles. After focusing on explaining the reasons and results of the establishment of integration arrangements, this proposal included the idea of selectivity.

The study concluded that the selectivity in the approach to integration for the developing countries among themselves, will have an opportunity to achieve the desired of regional economic integration at the trade and development level and be eligible to benefit from the complementary arrangements that bring them together with the developed countries.

Keywords: *Developing countries; International political economy; Regional economic integration; Selective regionalism*

I. INTRODUCTION

The forms of regional arrangements established between countries vary according to the degree of coordination between them and how they respond to specific situations within a certain period of time, and this situation prompts a certain degree of regional economic integration. Countries have habitually experienced economic or political uncertainty or instability in the development of the world economic system.

Correspondingly, regional arrangements of different depths and entrances have emerged, but it seeks to explain the existing or possible possibilities of regional economic integration in developing countries, including the obstacles encountered, and the factors it can rely on to advance its status quo. It promotes the need to give other dimensions to the traditional trade-off between commercial entry and production entry. This trade-off dominates the analysis of regional economic integration between developments, knowing that it missed the opportunity to include the dominant model of regional economic integration:

The first wave of integration includes the national economy formed on this basis, such as Zolovlin in Germany, and the form of colonial empire based on preferential trade agreements.

The second one is characterized by protectionism, which coincides with the development of closed groups based on colonial empires during the two world wars, such as the French trade unions and their colonies in 1928, the British Commonwealth preferential system established by the United Kingdom in 1932, the Asian region under Japanese influence, which led to the reduction of relations in the multilateral framework.

As for the third wave, it was the period after the establishment of the European Community in 1958, such as the establishment of the Arab Common Market and the arrangements for Latin American countries based on import substitution.

In the fourth wave from the late 1980s to today, not only regional agreements are distinguished in terms of quantity, but there are also qualitative differences in the members involved in the regions involved in integration arrangements. The field extends to investment, services, intellectual property, competition policy, legal reconciliation and political dialogue, and trade liberalization, at which point this integration begins and ends. Their level of development and their enthusiasm for joining these arrangements, especially free trade zones, shows that they find more things in the regional framework than the multiple framework provides.

It is important to note here that regional arrangements seem to be a comprehensive process implemented by the country, the purpose of which is to reach agreement and coordinate their relations while taking into account the economic and political situation at the multilateral level. (Hugon, 2002, p. 39) The entry and deep development of these regional arrangements can be explained from the way the country interacts with its internal and external market demands. Therefore, it is necessary to explain them through political economy, and it can also be explained from the perspective of regional relations from the perspective of international political economy (Gilpin, 2004, p. 32).

As far as the basic foundation of an economic region is concerned, it is an economic and institutional structure that reflects the possibility of integration through the conditions of the domestic market, the requirements of the external market, and the willingness and ability of countries to integrate:

The economic aspect describes the strength of economic relations, and characterizes regional arrangements through the concentration of economic flows (hugon, 2002, p. 10) .The institutional aspect describes the political formation of the region through which the member states adopt common rules without the economic relations between them being stronger compared to the rest of the world. Therefore, analyzing the entrance and depth of regional economic integration can be the complementary intersection of two dimensions, that is, the product of economy and other politics (Figuière,C.,Laétitia,G., 2009, p. 81)

• Research Question:

Based on the interaction between the state of the countries concerned with integration and the state of their internal and external markets, and in the context of an ongoing dynamic that affects the foundations of integration, a major question can be posed as follows:

Is it possible to lay the foundation for the regional economic integration of a group of developing countries without complying with specific items and specific levels?

From a practical point of view, it seems that it has been difficult to explain the regional integration arrangements between developing countries, or to classify them from their entrance or depth according to specific theoretical and practical frameworks. Therefore, sub-questions can be asked:

- What interactions are needed between the economic foundation and its main internal and external interests, and the institutional foundations that reflect the wishes of the member states or their limitations in coordinating to lay the foundation for an economic region that meets the conditions for integration?
- And what can be the selectivity to achieve this?

- **Research Structure:**

In order to address the problem, and cover various aspects of the subject of the study, we have divided it according to the following axes:

- **The first axis:** the degree of regional integration that reflects the interaction of the state and the market.
- **The second axis:** the reasons for the selectivity of regionalism in developing countries.

II. The degree of regional integration that reflects the interaction of the state and the market.

The developments in the global economic system, made the main issue in discussions of political economy is to determine the appropriate role of internal and external market forces (Gilpin, 2004, p. 33). According to this line, we find that international political economy provides the theoretical framework that shows the articulation between economics and politics in regional economic integration, taking into account the interaction between the national and international levels, thus complementing the tools of international economics to analyze the regional arrangement (Figuère, C., Laëtitia, G., 2009, p. 81).

The differences in the positions of different schools of thought on the nature of the relationship between economy and politics may belong to one of different ideologies, through which the regional orientation of the country can be explained. Only the most hegemonic states in relation to the realist thinking that has prevailed since the Second World War, can establish structures for the system, that is, they take upon themselves the task of producing cooperation and ensuring its continuity (Gilpin, 2004, p. 103). As the proponents of this approach belong to the theory (TSH: Theory of Hegemonic Stability), hence, the necessity of a state with military, economic and demographic advantages on which its strength rests, and in which it outperforms all other states, and this situation is similar to a country's ability to produce public goods for the beginning of cooperation (Kindelberger 1973).

The renewal in this thinking gave the possibility to drop the hegemony hypothesis, whereby each country seeks the commitment of the rest of the countries to respect the concluded agreements, and that the latter produces equal profits, but this situation is possible in two cases:

- Either it is the dominant position (one is the main and the other is the smaller), so cooperation starts from the dominant party, which selects member states and sets cooperation rules;
- Or the case of a strong alliance, because in this case, it is clear that the assumption of hegemonic unity has been abandoned (Bethaud, 2009, p. 7).
- Liberal analysis believes that international cooperation is the result of negotiations at two levels:
 - The first is national in which the state negotiates with various interest groups in order to project one of its national preferences;
 - The second is international in terms of the need to find a settlement with other countries (Coussy, 2001, p. 20).

Thus, the analysis starts from a national level (infra-state) with the aim of understanding the group of internal interests or personalities that influence the formation of the policy of international integration, this approach was updated in the 1980s to prove how to achieve unhegemonic cooperation based on the distribution of power, where the national preference for regional cooperation emerged through the result of the analysis from the point of view of

interest groups, and it was found that the state's preferences are internal rather than external (Seroen, 2004, p. 79).

When a country faces internal differences or even conflicts of interest, it is only the transmitter of these preferences to negotiations. Therefore, regionalism can be understood as a combination of social consensus or solutions formed at the national level, and therefore supports the adoption of agreements reached between countries. Pressure groups within each country and each country can benefit from regional arrangements. This is the reason for negotiating or signing agreements with a group of countries.

There are some factors that prompt companies to require the government to reach an agreement while relying on foreign markets, because their sales are related to exports and therefore are sensitive to the actions of other countries and "vulnerable". Therefore, it opposes any national protectionist policies that may instigate other countries take the same measures, so it is in their interest to open up their economies and sign preferential agreements with other countries.

According to liberalism, cooperation can occur without hegemony, because hegemony is a sufficient condition for cooperation between countries, but it is not a necessary condition for creating and maintaining cooperation, because liberals see the possibility of an alliance between states (Paquin, 2013, p. 184).

Whatever the dominant or the group of countries that impose cooperation, the desired goal is not only to achieve special interests, but rather the interest of a group of countries in the medium and long term, and this analysis is consistent with the view of the leader (Kindelberger 1973-1991). But the qualities of the leader among liberals differ from his qualities among the realists, as it is not determined only by military and economic control or material sources of state power, but also by the ability to bring about consensus and drag or group a number of states. Therefore, it is determined by two types of criteria, the material resources and the ability to drag countries behind it, which is described as soft power (Seroen, 2004, p. 92).

Soft power is a measure of the seductive ability and legitimacy of a country, that is, the ability to attract due to a certain cultural or ideological model, and even the international system allows other countries to enter the framework specified by the party that has these qualities. Therefore, according to this analysis, the leader leads other countries to act according to his directions, and he uses tools that are not coercive to impose legitimacy and bring harmony in education, system, culture, and ideology, where all these factors allow the distinction of this authority (Paquin, 2013, p. 174), which is the case of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, for example.

Marxist thinking is a critical trend in the international political economy, not as prevalent as liberals and realists, but this kind of thinking transfers the interaction between economy and politics to the social and historical environment. These trends emerged in the Marxist approach, which witnessed important developments in the late 1970s and 1980s, the most important of which was the Canadian School (Cox 1987), which was based on reading international relations through the ruling class, and the English School (Paquin, 2013, p. 300), where the interest revolves around the study of international relations and the New Regional Approach (NRA) that can be applied to regional realities and structural methods, the latter focusing on the interpretation of regional relations.

It can be seen that the hegemony in this analysis is due to the proportionality of social forces within a specific country and the emergence of a hegemonic class, which imposes compatible relations and coercion on other classes, and this class emerges at the international level (transnational), that impose on the country and influence preferences and policies. The state is what the government transfers to negotiation (Bethaud, 2009, p. 8).

Therefore, a new analysis of authority shows that it is one-dimensional based on three forces: material capabilities, means of production, technology, and ideas cited by social groups and institutions.

Neo-Marxists did not analyze the relationship at the regional level, but the class conflicts that existed at the national and global levels inevitably existed at the regional level. This is a special case of international relations and the management capability of the ruling class. Conflicts at the regional level can be stabilized by creating conditions for cooperation and establishing regional processes.

While the structural approach in the analysis, especially the main thinker (Strange 1996-1994), was based on the factors controlling international relations and on the concept of "structural authority", where the state is not the only factor affecting the global economic and political formation. There are even other factors such as NGOs, civil society, multinational corporations are the most influential in the global economic system, and the concept of structural authority came to define the capabilities of factors to form and define the structures in which authority exists and develops. In contrast to the rational current that returns authority to its sources or criteria (Paquin, 2013, p. 130), structural authority is based on four structures of the international economy: security, production, finance, and knowledge.

The constructivist approach came with the concept of "knowledge society" as a basis in the formation of the global system. The constructivist approach established a strong link between national identity, the definition of national interests and the formation of foreign policy (Bethaud, 2009, p. 12). The approach presented a special analysis of regional behavior, as the formation of a regional bloc comes from a common awareness, and the regions formed are political and social constructions, so regionalism draws a line by which it creates borders between members and non-members. The approach is not only to analyze exchange flows or investments to understand the regional phenomenon, but also to take into account the common values between countries (Echinard, y., Guilhot, L., 2007, p. 788).

The New Regional Approach (NRA) is a regional process research project developed in Northern Europe in the late 1990s. The analysis of this method is based on the assumption that regional processes are heterogeneous and multidimensional. The most important participants in this process are the state and civil society. The theorists of this method consider all these aspects based on the concept of (regional) to determine the source of regional agreements and coordination in a particular region, and to see if it is regional Arrange to maintain peace and transcend nation-states, and demonstrate how a geographic area can transform from a negative goal to a positive goal, while taking into account the national interests of the members and the region (Echinard, y., Guilhot, L., 2007, p. 789), they proposed the formation of five levels of regions, each level reached, as a unit independent of the state, its independence is more guaranteed: regional judiciary, regional complex, regional community, regional community, institutional regional policy group.

Therefore, the main theories and ideas recorded in international experience explain in detail the relationship based on the interaction of economic and political aspects under specific conditions, thereby allowing the establishment and continued cooperation:

- Only the most dominant countries can establish structures for the system and take upon themselves the task of producing cooperation and ensuring its continuity;
- The country negotiates with various interest groups to highlight one of its national preferences, and on this basis, reach a settlement with other countries;
- The ability to reach a consensus and unite multiple countries depends on two criteria, material resources and the ability to drag countries behind it, which is described as soft power;
- Hegemony is due to the proportionality of social forces in a particular country and the emergence of a hegemonic class, which imposes compatibility and coercive relations on other classes. This class appears at the international level (transnational), imposes itself on the country and influences the country's preferences and policies. This is what the government transfers to negotiations;
- The close connection between national identity, the definition of national interest and the formation of foreign policy;
- The formation of regional groups comes from a common sense, and the formation of regions is political and social construction;
- Regional processes are heterogeneous and multidimensional.

Therefore, looking at this analysis and trying to project it onto regional arrangements, it can be noticed that, on several levels, the alliance between European countries may have been explained at the beginning of the establishment of the European Union. It can also explain that Brexit negotiations with the United Kingdom remain linked to the strategic interests of the market, but in a group of developing economies, these explanations may lack the basis for the required interaction between their markets, needs, and capabilities, and the state as a representative of national interests, negotiators and decision makers in these relationships.

However, given that the ability to separate economic and production development from the global economy is weakening, it is necessary to look at the regional economic integration of developing countries from two different but simultaneous perspectives, which may lead to approaching the conception of the appropriate model for them:

On the one hand, countries participating in regional arrangements transfer their national interests to the regional level, requiring a leading country, and the leading country must have the ability to generate and maintain cooperation between them. Therefore, countries choose to establish contacts at the regional level. Taking flexibility on this basis, by developing a relationship that may be biased toward the existing agreement, that is, a certain number of countries, certain sectors, and a certain degree of integration in line with the intensity of economic interests, which will lead to its continuity.

On the other hand, it should be noted that developing countries are subject to the influence of soft power, and this is well evident in the case of the Maghreb countries in relation to the European Union. But is this effect taken as negative or positive? It is negative in terms of applying a model that exceeds the economic capabilities of countries that depends on liberalizing trade with developed countries, and positive in terms of the possibility of benefiting from it, by focusing on attracting foreign direct investment from industrial companies as a dynamic effect of liberalizing Trade with more developed countries within the framework of the new regionalism.

These questions may find answers in the selectivity in laying the foundations of the integrative region. National interests determine the entrance and ultimate goal, the leadership determines the degree of coordination, and the concept of soft power determines the possibility of benefiting from a more advanced party, which will be clarified in the next section.

III. The reasons for the selectivity of regionalism in developing countries:

At present, the difficulty of conceiving and even talking about regional economic integration among developing countries, including the national economy and the Arab economy, is completely equivalent to the difficulty of the economic and political situation of these countries. However, this prompts the need to continue to think seriously about regionalism and what it can provide for the countries concerned compared with what they get from multilateral frameworks or new regionalism, provided that such thinking is realistic and realism requires:

- Taking into account the economic and geopolitical situation, because most developing countries suffer from unprecedented political and economic instability and cannot be surpassed. Thinking of integration will seriously affect the two main pillars of the integration arrangement-the way of interaction between the economy and the system, and in turn affect the possible coordination methods and levels;
- A series of integration attempts that coincide with the previous three rounds of regional economic integration have had a profound impact on the basic pillars of the region, increasing the difficulty of achieving integration in accordance with the original methods that proved impossible and sustainable. Integration, so not giving up it must be accompanied by flexibility of thinking and application ;
- If the developing countries form a free trade area between them or a customs union, they adhere to the adoption of regional economic integration through the market, which is based on trade liberalization, but this type of integration, even if it requires in its tools the effectiveness of the institutional aspect in the process of integration, it must be supported by an economic reality that allows progress in the integrative arrangement.

It can be said that it seems impossible to criticize the business method and recommend a complete replacement of it, because the reality of these countries, their markets and their external environment are not qualified to use the production method as a complete replacement to achieve their dual goals, development and Integration, not even just one of them. Development is a necessary condition for national rejuvenation. Developing countries integrate through the market. Therefore, sectoral development should precede trade liberalization. On the contrary, what is happening between them is happening through new regionalism in focusing on interests and efforts. Even if it is a scientific discussion, will the pursuit of trade liberalization stop before development is achieved?.

In addition, this does not seem to be realistic, because if those countries avoid liberalizing

their intra-regional trade on the grounds that it leads to harm at the level of productive sectors due to inter-competition, they expose the same sectors to competition at the level of other regional and multilateral arrangements with more developed countries (under the influence of soft power).

Therefore, we can consider adopting selectivity in inter-regional integration, and use the remaining external and regional relations to lay the foundation for the inter-regional economy, so as to put national economic interests first.

Selectivity can be visualized at the level of integration approach, relevant countries, and target sectors. It is not fully committed to regional economic integration, but takes it as a national strategic dimension.

The available analytical frameworks are dominated by the (B.Balassa) classification, which describes a specific region that progresses in achieving an economic unit, starting with the free trade area and the customs union, based on the interaction of economic data and the ability to coordinate, but the current reality has proven that even if the integration Existing through markets, it does not necessarily respond to the Balassa classification, as it may start and end in a free trade area, and this is what the new regionalism consecrates (Al-Imam, 2000, p. 52) as the free trade area exceeds what is required in it as a stage to take advantage of the advantages of other subsequent stages, the most important of which is the transfer of capital Money and policy coordination. If we look at it in terms of commitment, it is an incomplete commitment to regional economic integration through the market, and it has a kind of flexibility that can be taken between developing countries, as in their relationship with developed countries.

Since the level of economic unification through the liberalization of intra-regional exchanges is based on the fact that each stage is based on the results of the previous stage, therefore, economic reasons promote the work on the system, the framework and coordination of the work in this respect progress from one level of integration to another level of integration.

If the integrative arrangement exists between developing countries, the coordination and approval of the national economic policies of the member states is not the transition from one stage to another, but is necessary from the first stages, that is, it can be imagined that the process can develop in an opposite way in the case of the integration of developing economies, including Arab economies are hampered by customs and non-tariff duties at a time when they are members of an integrated regional arrangement, so coordination can be at the level of specific sectors that have the ability to achieve a role in the development process from an integrative point of view, or production processes qualified to develop through partnership with a foreign party For example, in the case of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Chelihi I., Djellaba A. , Larbaa E., 2021).

Therefore, it is possible to agree on a selective alliance, in which the focus is on certain sectors without a commitment to complete integration, which prepares the economy to achieve integration through the market, provided that the role of the state here is a "project manager" and not a regionalist major factor. This may be the role that the country that failed in the first integration attempt should play, because the credibility and effectiveness of integration come from ensuring its continued economic interests, and the country is the carrier to achieve these benefits from the national level to regional level.

This idea may be embodied through project integration, that is, taking advantage of joint projects within the framework of a commodity-producing sectoral approach, where the importance is not focused on achieving general goals or reaching the final stage of integration according to the division of (Balassa), in addition to that this method does not need Countries can agree on the liberalization of trade exchanges directly. They can even agree on the geographical division of production units, and plan to benefit from those units that are looking for sites for their industries from developed countries, especially in the context of the flow of foreign direct investment, accompanying the liberalization of trade, which characterizes the new regionalism. From this perspective, regional arrangements allow for the creation of complementary factors for national development in each country, and can identify areas that are free of disputes or competition to achieve integration among developing countries.

Accordingly, when developing countries set development programs aiming for joint action at the level of sectors, they must develop plans for them from an integrative perspective according to coordinated policies from the beginning in a way that makes them adopt integrated

programs that take into account leaving a wide possibility of achieving economic integration among them. Thus, the method of forming regional economic integration should not be definitively defined, but rather leave the room for taking the reasons for success in multiple integration approaches through political will, spatial savings, and strong external or institutional savings.

The failure of a group of developing economies to achieve regional integration is due to the fact that existing capabilities do not cover the established goals. Therefore, selectivity can carry the meaning of focusing only on what can lead to the success of integration, and let it be sectors without others, and thus integration for developing countries depends on the definition of the degree of state contribution and the role left to market rules. If it is necessary to create regional integration, it must begin with the state, where its strategies, besides allowing economic openness, direct the allocation of resources and direct investments to sectors that allow benefiting from the effects of the bloc, and this is important because they are in binding external regional relations with other advanced countries, especially in The framework of the new regionalism, which takes the spatial dimension in the distribution of industrial activities.

The new theory of industrial economics also looks at productive integration through the development of sectoral projects through companies that cross countries, where financial flows are in the form of foreign direct investment, in addition to being the most important dynamic effects of regional trade liberalization, as they are essential factors for regional integration, and they are growth factors within the exchange area. It also plays a more positive role on regional economic integration, if the region includes countries with different levels of development. Likewise, we find that it has an important impact on the volume and structure of exchanges. Therefore, foreign direct investment and the resulting production integration process can lead to the formation of an international division of labor method, which is more important than the method produced by single exchange logic between countries (Hugon p. , 2002, p. 14). Under the circumstance of the disparity in development level, making it a stronger party in the industrial field, developing countries can benefit from the transfer of production activities to it. The effects of trade creation and trade diversion resulting from the liberalization of exchanges in the sectors that are being developed can direct the foreign direct investments that are obtained as a strategic behavior from multinational companies and this behavior comes as a response to the occurrence of important effects on the level of trade that bring more foreign investments as the absence of barriers to exchanges, the interconnection of the different economic poles within the integrated region can give a greater possibility for companies to enter production within one country and export to the other.

But this depends on a factor that is more important than the economic and geographic scale of the integration area, that is, the degree of integration of the economies receiving these investments and the degree of progress. Therefore, the ability to attract foreign direct investment seems to depend on the group of countries in terms of:

- The size of the regional market and the demand from member economies enable them to attract companies ;
- The degree of availability of economic resources, the most important of which are human capital, technology and natural resources;
- Infrastructures, especially transportation and communications, which allow internal exchanges and link industrial and economic areas in the region;
- That the region provides the possibility of fragmenting the production process, in addition to the availability of the appropriate legal framework with regard to investment.

IV. Conclusion:

By thinking about the reasons for entering into regional economic integration and the possibility of its depth and selectivity, establishing regional economic integration suitable for the goals and capabilities of developing countries, some preliminary conclusions were formulated that accept further thinking and discussion.

Since regional economic integration is based on economics and institutions, it is necessary to interpret existing relationships as political and economic interactions, because internal conflicts of interest guide negotiations and relationships at the international and

regional levels. Therefore, the content of these relationships must reflect the reality of these interests, and this is what Britain's withdrawal from the European Union has shown.

Developing countries lack the concept of leader in their mutual relations and are subject to the concept of soft power within the framework of regional relations with developed countries.

For the integration arrangements of developing countries, it is necessary to coordinate and approve the national economic policies of the member states in specific aspects related to integration qualifications from the early stage.

Regional economic integration has different types in terms of the way and conditions of its formation, and this gives it the possibility of being based on a political will or because of a feasible dimension or strong external or institutional savings, where most importantly it provides the possibilities of achieving capital accumulation and knowledge accumulation.

Therefore, the selectivity of regional arrangements can be demonstrated through the following aspects:

V. Flexibility of the basis, i.e. flexibility in the use of integration tools, in the sense of abandoning the idea of regional economic integration through the market as a goal, which would give the possibility of not committing to a specific arrangement with a specific entrance and adopting the reasons for success available in other approaches from within the integration area of developing countries or from outside, especially To lay the foundations of its integration, and allows choosing to work on qualified productive sectors to benefit from foreign direct investment that serve that integration later ;

VI. Selectivity that takes into account the possibilities of sectoral and spatial extensions, the latter being at the level of members, where countries with economic, financial and political stability play the key role in the foundations of integration, as well as preferably at a partial level between specific countries with the aim of controlling foreign relations from on the one hand, and on the other hand, controlling the degree of coordination and its subject matter, but with a comprehensive strategic view.

So it can be said that the appropriate interpretation of the state of regional economic integration between a group of countries reveals the integration models that are required and qualified for success. The lack of commitment to a specific approach and a certain degree of depth gives a greater opportunity for the beginning and continuation of the integrative arrangement, with serious attention to important pillars to achieve the desired integration, the most important of which are: leadership, the reflection of national interests and concerns in the integrative arrangements and negotiations carried out by developing countries, the role of the state in formulating and adopting regional projects that take into account the requirements development and directing the new regional effects related to investment towards building the industrial sectors in the first place.

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