



## Regional integration: social philosophy analysis Tomsk Polytechnic University

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### Abstract

Regional integration is widely discussed in contemporary social philosophy. In the course of the discussions, there are issues like the essence of the integration process, its initiators, reasons, goals, as well as the integration Association peculiarities of development and functioning are discussed. There is no definite definition for what can be called a successful regional integration. This paper studies regional integration processes, their peculiarities. We mention the features describing regional integration associations and examine the definitions of regional integration concepts given by different scientists. According to the results of analysis, we give the definition of regional integration which provides a new look on integration processes. This definition makes it possible to re-evaluate the success of regional integration associations.

*Keywords:* Regional integration, integration process, integration association, globalization.

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### 1. Introduction

Regional integration is widely discussed in contemporary social philosophy. The paper examines the essence of the integration process, its initiators, reasons that cause this process, its goals, development peculiarities and functioning. The negative effects of regional integration such as costs for integration implementation are also discussed. The definite definition a successful regional integration has not been given yet. However, most scientists nowadays consider that the European Union is a successful integration project because it is an economic and monetary union and takes a top place due to Bela Balassa economic scale of 1961. This fact illustrates that the regional integration has not been sufficiently studied yet and we have to study the peculiarities of the regional integration that allow scientists to compare the regional integration associations that are at different levels of development.

### 2. Characteristics of regional integration

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became a time of an active associations formation, which united some States under the auspices of many different purposes. These processes gave grounds to examine a regional integration as a characteristic feature of the modern world. The word “Integration” is derived from the Latin “integer” (whole), which suggests the formation of community, a completely new system composed of separate elements.

In order to understand the regional integration, we single out characteristic presented in all regional integration associations. The first characteristic of a regional integration largely comes from the word-formation presented in the first paragraph. It is considered that the State formed as a result of integration process gains something new and it cannot do it without integration because of enormous costs and lack of resources.

Thus, a regional integration generates a positive constant for a State and the association in general. In other words, regional integration has a strong synergistic effect. This effect can be explained by the unity of the Eurasian economic union and Armenia. Armenia gains the unification of customs regulations and procedures, and at the same time, the Eurasian economic union gets new market and access to labor resources.

The second key feature of regional integration could be described as the voluntary and confidential nature of relations between participating countries. The States decide to create a regional integration association voluntarily as they see the benefits for their populations. Therefore, the unity of States or their territories through military actions cannot be considered as a regional integration.

The third feature of regional integration is the distance from the States that are out of the association. The States forming a regional integration association agree to strive for maximum cooperation, the elimination of all undesirable barriers between them. The obstacles slowing down mutual trade are gradually disappearing among the Member States, as well as visa and currency barriers which makes the interaction between them as easy as possible. At the same time, Member states form mutual barriers and constraints, such as common customs tariff or common visa requirements, in relation to the States that don't belong to the association. In other words, the liberalization processes between the Member States of the Association accompanied by the process of unintentional discrimination of States that don't take part in regional integration.

External and internal directions of integration processes present the fourth feature of regional integration. This feature distinguishes regional integration associations from multinational companies or international organizations. International organizations have international regulations and rules such as non-proliferation of nuclear weapon that all States have to follow. As for regional integration associations, Member States develop the regulations in spheres of public activities, affecting in most cases their own national competence such as requirements for the production and safety products, which are manufactured on the territory of an integration association. In addition, international organizations are specialized in one or a few spheres of social life. The International Monetary Fund is only involved in currency exchange relationship. Regional integration associations are specialized strictly and can afford regulation activities in many spheres of social life, including economy, politics, education, culture, and others.

The fifth feature of the regional integration acts as a General based on four characteristics mentioned above; it is a sort of the quintessential issue helping to understand what regional integration is. According to global experience, we could admit that regional integration is mainly based on Member States' ideas and images of their further fate that is inextricably linked with their integration partners. It is impossible to assess the degree of certain nations generality fully, especially considering the historical experience of the Soviet Union collapse and the massive entry of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. However, the community could be a good option of agitation for some politicians or usual citizens, but in practice, it is not enough to form a successful regional integration. Relations between Russia and Ukraine now are the best evidence. We can also recall the historical experience of the Northern union formed by Norway, Denmark and Sweden. Their artists promoted the ideas of Scandinavism, however, it is losing public support due to the lack of integration progress. Moreover, the real integration began only when they had to face a common enemy in the face of Hitler's Germany, and their political elites started to take decisive steps.

Only Member States' vision of the common global identity is a key feature of an integration. Undoubtedly, it is an advantage when there are no contradictions in religious thoughts, cultures and languages, economic models and political views. However, this is not the ground for the regional integration. In support of this thesis, we could quote the words of one of the founders of the European Union: «...A thinking European can no longer afford Machiavellian joy about the failure of our neighbor: we have a common destiny. The success or failure of the neighbors affect us»[2]. It is peculiar not only to the European region, a similar attitude could be seen in the ASEAN Declaration: "...the Association represents the collective will of the nations of South-East Asia to become friends and to cooperate and joint efforts let states to give their peoples peace, freedom and prosperity" [8].

### **3. Existing regional integration definitions**

The definitions of regional integration can be divided into two types. The first type of regional integration definition is characterized by a synthesis of actual experience and the process of extrapolation. The definitions of the second type are from a theoretical model, which mainly exist by themselves in their own reality, and reflect the reality slightly. Definitions of the first type are broadly similar and very widespread due to their empirical nature, common sense and clarity, which they perfectly combine.

These definitions mainly consider regional integration with its economic component as a core element of integration processes. This is due to integration process in Europe, because it started from the economic sphere of life. Moreover, the economic indicators are easier to measure with the quantitative methods, when they are compared with the same integration in the field of politics, culture, or other field of social life. So, Yu. Shishkov describes regional integration as the highest stage of internationalization characterized by splicing of national

markets and the common market space formation with a common monetary and financial systems, resulting in a single legal regulation and coordination of foreign and domestic policies on economic issues[4].

A similar definition is given by Nikolai Liventsev and Valentina Kharlamova. They think that regional integration is a gradual process of Member States economic unification that leads to a new holistic economic organism called «international regional complex». Due to the authors the regional integration "creates new quality of international economic relations"[7].

Well-known Dutch scholar, Willem Molle, establishes that regional integration has an economic orientation and independent States remove the barriers between them while implementing the regional integration. Thus, the economies of Member States of integration association start functioning as a single unit. At the same time, he notes that economic integration is not a goal of itself, but serves higher objectives in both economy and politics. These include welfare, peace, democracy and human rights. The highest stage of integration is "Complete Union", described as complete integration of Member States' economies. And it starts to act as a Federation or Confederation [3].

Russian scholar, Vladimir Barnovskiy, describes regional integration as the process that forms a holistic complex between members of integration association, both at political and at the economic levels[5].

The second type of regional integration definitions does not have such cohesion, comparing with the first because of heterogeneous nature of integration theories. Considering the ideas of European federalism and its scholars inspired by dreams of a United Europe, it is possible to detect the first well-known integration model. Their concept of regional integration represents a clear goal of integration processes — European integration that has to happen through the creation of the "super state" run by the principle of powers separation. Federalists have seen success only in the formation of supranational government which withdraws a part of Member States' national sovereignty. The ideological basis, as you could guess, would be federalism, which helps to distribute the sources of legitimacy and authority between all levels of government. Citizens of the "super state" have the same role as in their national States. All levels of government are democratically elected and all citizens are equal and have the same rights.

In communication theory, intergroup contacts and contacts of individual citizens of Member States are emphasized. It is important to note that the intensity of relevant contacts could be easily calculated, for example, the flow of goods, or labor migration. Thus, the researchers are able to assess regional integration in different parts of the world and to receive the world recognition. According to communication theory, regional integration is a state of a system in which participating countries have a closer relationship than with countries outside the Association. At the same time, relations within integration associations are distinguished from relations of the same order. The regional integration associations are formed because of an intention to create a kind of security community that combines liberal democratic values. In other words, a theory of communication described regional integration as a cohesive and safe community with common identity and values that are unequivocally shared.

Neofunctionalists see regional integration as a catalyst for satisfying certain needs of different social groups. They consider regional integration is a result of strategic planning. According to neofunctionalists, regional integration is developing due to close relationships in modern society. Thus, the problem solving through the integration gives birth to necessity of interrelated actions in other spheres of social life. Thus, the integration processes in the economic sphere gradually form the equivalent of integration processes in politics and law. It is called a "spillover" effect. Neofunctionalists consider regional integration as a process of forming a new community with supranational authorities which are equally legitimate with the national ones.

#### **4. A new definition of regional integration**

All interpretations of the regional integration concept define it as an independent and isolated process despite the fact that theses about the relationships between the processes of globalization and regional integration as well as their interdependence. If we look at European regional integration and its history, we see that the necessity to strengthen the international position of Europe was a part of all politician's speeches, from Churchill to Delors. Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, former member of the European Central Bank's six-member executive board, in his book "Europe — social force" examines the history of the EU as a reflection of the global post-war history. Based on economic facts, he proved that the Community had faced the same challenges as the rest of the world. However, it found more adequate solutions with the help of purposeful work and conducive environment created by regional integration [2]. Researchers from the Institute of Latin America of the Russian Academy of Sciences found the link between the developments of regional integration in the West with the position of the participating States. These States perceived regional integration as an additional way to intensify structural reforms occurring in conditions of high competition and globalization.

Regional integration was a short way to form a market economy and the main way to secure their citizens welfare [6].

Thus, in this paper regional integration is not the element of globalization or its most developed form, as the perception of integration in such way does not reflect its essence. Moreover, in this case, the entire regional integration and globalization are reduced to a consolidating aspect. Considering these processes, in practice we have the trade liberalization. However, when focusing on this, we forget about the dividing feature of globalization, which researchers from MGIMO call «stratification of the world» and about peculiar feature of regional integration observed as a separation of the group of countries participating from countries not participating in the integration.

David Heald and David Goldblatt conducted a study of stratification from antiquity to the late twentieth century. They note that the End of the Cold War opened the way to a multipolar stratification. In the economy OECD countries dominated, despite the fact that the value of the US decreases, and the value of the new industrial States increases. Authors call Cultural stratification extremely unfair, because in mass culture there is undeniable dominance of the United States and the English language. Environmental stratification is observed as there is a great difference in the consumption level of natural resource between the North and the South.

The driving force of integration processes is understood as an intention of member States of regional integration Association to create the best Strata, or to get into it, compared to the Stratas where these States have already taken place without participation in regional integration. It is known that European integration processes start when the colonial empires collapse, and this forces European leaders to provide the region's higher position and prevent it from losing political and economic influence. Regional integration in this case is a very efficient instrument, which allows the State to enjoy the benefits of globalization while limiting its Consistency and integrity formed by regional integration work together in the globalization conditions. Based on this it is possible to conclude that regional integration is a process of voluntary and active participation of States in the processes of the world stratification caused by globalization.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper studies regional integration processes, its peculiarities. We have mentioned the features describing regional integration associations and examined the definitions of regional integration concepts given by different sciences. Through the analysis of existing definitions of regional integration, we have found that existing definitions are factually incorrect and do not comply with the reality. In addition, the existing definitions do not describe the relationship between the integration process and globalization. According to the results of analysis, we create a definition of regional integration, which is a tool for the Member States to create strata that increases region's influence in strategically important areas of their interests. A new definition of regional integration provides a new look on integration processes. In addition, there is an opportunity to re-evaluate the success of regional integration associations.

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