

SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF EXISTING INTEGRATION GROUPINGS IN THE
WORLD

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Abstract: This article provides a scientific analysis of contemporary integration groupings as a key element of the institutionalized system of international relations. It examines integration as a gradual process of deepening interstate cooperation and highlights the enduring relevance of classical integration theories in explaining modern regional dynamics. Particular attention is paid to major integration models, including the European Union, ASEAN, Latin American, African, and BRICS frameworks, emphasizing their institutional diversity and functional differences. The study demonstrates that no universal model of integration exists and that integration trajectories are shaped by political, economic, and historical factors. The article concludes that modern integration is increasingly characterized by hybrid and differentiated forms of cooperation, reflecting the conditions of multipolarity and geopolitical competition.

Keywords: international integration, regional organizations, institutionalization, European Union, ASEAN, BRICS, regionalism, global governance.

Integration groups are the primary expression of the high level of institutionalization of interstate contact that characterizes the modern system of international relations. In an era of global interdependence, governments' desires to jointly confront economic, political, and socio-security concerns are reflected in their establishment and progress. It is feasible to discover both the structural constraints of integration as a form of international cooperation as well as broad patterns of regional cooperation through a scientific examination of current integration groups.

According to the traditional interpretation, integration is a process of increasing and strengthening state-to-state cooperation along with the institutionalization of norms, regulations, and collective governance institutions. The studies of E. Haas, B. Balassa, and K. Deutsch, who saw integration as a slow transition from economic cooperation to political convergence, established the theoretical groundwork for the study of integration groupings [1, p. 5]. These theoretical approaches continue to have heuristic relevance even in the face of substantial changes in the global environment, particularly when analyzing the most sophisticated integration models [2, p. 87].

The European Union continues to be the most institutionally advanced integration organization in the modern world. The combination of supranational and intergovernmental aspects of governance, along with the extent of economic and legal integration—which includes a monetary union, a single internal market, and a sophisticated structure of pan-European institutions—are what make it unique [3, p. 56]. According to scholarly study, the EU provides factual support for the neofunctionalist logic of "spillover," which holds that collaboration in one area fosters deeper engagement in others [4, p. 49]. Simultaneously, the financial, migration-related, and institutional crises of the last ten years have exposed the boundaries of

integration solidarity and heightened discussions about differentiated integration as the predominant model of EU development.

Integration processes are more stable but less formalized in the Asia-Pacific area. One example of "soft regionalism" is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is founded on the ideas of respect for sovereignty, non-interference, and consensus. According to academic research, ASEAN exemplifies a different integration approach that prioritizes economic pragmatism and political stability over the establishment of inflexible supranational organizations [5, p. 113]. This group has significantly influenced the regional architecture of security and economic cooperation in East Asia, despite its low level of institutionalization.

High levels of political and economic instability have led to the institutional dispersion of integration groups in Latin America. Depending mostly on internal political cycles in member nations, MERCOSUR and the Andean Community exhibit oscillations between liberal and protectionist types of integration. The North American integration approach, exemplified by NAFTA and subsequently USMCA, is distinguished by a strong economic focus and a low degree of political institutionalization. According to academic research, this kind of "shallow integration" can guarantee an increase in commerce and investment but has little effect on the development of a common regional identity [6, p. 85].

The African Union is an attempt to overcome the legacy of colonial fragmentation and unequal development, and integration processes in Africa have received special attention in recent political science research. Weak state institutions, inadequate infrastructure, and a high degree of reliance on outside sources impede the efficiency of integration on the continent despite lofty objectives, such as the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area. However, other scholars observe that African integration serves a significant political and symbolic purpose, bolstering the region's governments' collective agency in international affairs [7, p. 149].

Separate analysis is also necessary for new forms of interregional and "non-Western" integration, especially the BRICS alliance. In contrast to traditional integration blocs, BRICS serves as a platform for coordinating the political and economic interests of key developing countries rather than aiming to create a free trade area or supranational organizations. According to scholarly evaluations, this style is indicative of a tendency toward "selective integration," which aims to reduce reliance on Western-centric institutions and change global governance [8, p. 61]. However, this group's transformational potential is constrained by its lack of institutional depth and legally binding obligations.

There is no uniform paradigm of integration, according to a comparative study of current integration groupings. Economic complementarity, elite political will, institutional development, and cultural-historical context all influence the extent and course of integration processes. Integration groups are increasingly performing both economic and strategic roles, acting as tools for nations to place themselves within the global system, in an environment of developing multipolarity and geopolitical rivalry.

Finally, it should be mentioned that a shift from linear models of integration to more complex, hybrid, and differentiated forms of cooperation is shown by the scientific examination of integration groups conducted globally. The creation of analytical techniques that can take into account the multidimensional character of integration, the interaction of state and non-state

actors, and the increasing influence of external forces is a crucial problem for modern political science. Integration groups continue to be crucial components of the international order, and how they develop will have a significant impact on how global governance is structured in the twenty-first century.

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