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Svetlana CEBOTARI, Carolina BUDURINA-GOREACII, Lidia PRISAC
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Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of the "Integration Process" Phenomenon

Svetlana CEBOTARI¹

Carolina BUDURINA-GOREACII²

Lidia PRISAC³

Abstract:

Following attentively on global changes, we are witnessing of rapid changes in geopolitics content. If in the past states and peoples were isolated, atomized, today they are under the conditions of mutual contacts, of interdependent relations. It appears the new integration groups, diversification of organizational forms, and evolution from simplistic models to more complex ones. As a result, the integration processes comprised virtually all regions and states, contributing thus to the formation of new international "matrix".

Taking into account all these aspects, we might mention that integration involves all economic and political processes, where there are created a common space of two or more states, based on the coincidence of principles, goals and national interests.

Keywords:

Integration, theoretical, methodological, regions, organizational forms, international relations.

¹ Svetlana CEBOTARI – Ph.D. in political sciences, Associate professor, Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences, Moldova State University. Email: svetlana.cebotari@mail.ru, Phone no. +373 068977695.

² Carolina BUDURINA-GOREACII – lecturer, Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences Department of Applied Foreign Languages. Phone no. +373 79097490.

³ Lidia PRISAC – scientific researcher, The Institute of Cultural Heritage of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, Email Address: lidiaprisac@yahoo.com, Phone no. +373 69391978.

Numerous of political, economic and social changes in latest decades of the XX-th century, the beginning of the XXI-st century have changed essentially the world picture and were at the obvious transformation of international relations. Following attentively on global changes, we are witnessing of rapid changes in geopolitics content. If in the past states and peoples were isolated, atomized, today they are under the conditions of mutual contacts, of interdependent relations. It appears the new integration groups, diversification of organizational forms, and evolution from simplistic models to more complex ones. As a result, the integration processes comprised virtually all regions and states, contributing thus to the formation of new international “matrix”. An historical impetus has been made by The European Union. The beginning of formation is considered to be the April 18, 1951, when six European countries (France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg) signed the Treaty of Paris. The main goal of this international body consisted in creating a common space to unite all the states through a customs union and free movement of goods in the Member States, by canceling taxes and other barriers to trade, free movement of capital, services and people, creating a single monetary policy and aid to developing states.

It becomes obviously the fact that, integrationist tendencies are not confined only to Western Europe, but they are also actively developing on other continents. Beginning with 1 January 1994 it has been entered into force the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and which it brings together the United States, Canada and Mexico. America is the first continent where regionalism manifests itself and where there are designed forms of regional and sub regional organization, such as the Central American Common Market (MCCA), Caribbean Community (CARICON), Latin American Economic System (SELA), the Andean Group. It enhances the integration processes also in Latin America. Since 1991 (entered into force on 1 January 1995) MERCOSUR (Common Market of South Cone) associates Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

A particular interest for the integration processes are observed also on the African continent. In 1989 it was created Arab Union's Maghreb (UMA), with the participation of Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia. In order to obtain the independence of African

countries and of the abolition of apartheid, it was created the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Since October 19 on the continent it has been working the Central African States Economic Community (CESAC) which has the ambition to form a similar space of the European Community between the participating states.

More than a quarter century there are working successfully southwestern Asian states (ASEAN) in which there are seven developed countries in the region - Singapore, Indonesia, Malazia, Thailand, Philippines, Sultanate of Brunei, Vietnam.

Since May 25, 1981 in the Middle East the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Gulf Arab states (Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, mule, Oman) actively work. Already beginning with 14 August 1960, in this region there is the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEP), having as members Venezuela, Iran, Indonesia, Nigeria, Ecuador and Gabon. OPEP associates big Arab states, of oil exporters: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Libya, UAE and Algeria. (Dafares, 1998:57-78; Schiff, 2004:28-30; Schulz, 2001:125-130; Measnikovici, 1999:19-50). Some researchers, as for example, Battler A., believes that the world can be divided into three large poles integration. The diversity of integration paradigms allows virtually all states, irrespective of its place in the political arena, the potential and the level of development to find their place in these processes (Battler, 2002:75-76).

The first category includes the developed world – "the billions of gold" which consist of three economic areas, with a different level of integrationist intensity: North America, Western Europe and Japan. It is considered the most powerful integrationist pole in economic, political and military relations and that dominates over the others.

The second integrationist pole belongs to middle developed countries – the CIS, Eastern Europe, Baltic States, China, and India. Its specificity consists of the policy of reforms, refuses of previous models and intention to move to new models, close to the West. Unlike the integration processes taking place within the first pole, they are weaker. On the one hand there is a tendency towards collaboration, and on the other hand there is a tendency to retain sovereignty and independence. It is characterized by the absence of a single policy of integration.

Developing States: the African, Latin America, the Far East (Asia), Asia Minor states (except South Korea, Thailand) and South Asia

(except India) form the third pole, characterized by lack of integrationist core, if is to make an exception to the Latin American states (Battler, 2002:75-76).

Examining all these international bodies, we can see that the complexity and variety of integration processes, diversity and contradictory nature of phenomena that includes, the interaction with other aspects of social relations, make that the term "integration process" to be different from a author to another one (Florea, 2002:5; Maximova, 1974:11). Thus, in the literature of specialty relating to integration processes there have been crystallized some currents. Among the best known integration theories there can be distinguished: functionalism, federalism, neofunctionalism, tranzactionalism, and institutionalism and integovernmentalism (Kellstrup, 1972:31-44).

The functionalist theory, which appeared during the Second World War and that was stimulated by the events that took place in 30s established itself a program of actions to eliminate international conflicts. The main goal of early functionalism was to find an effective way of organizing the international system that would guarantee peace and welfare. According to representatives of this theory, the so-called Princeton group, the policy continuity represents all the functions performed by members. These functions, they think, are social groups that have a certain degree of political communication, of a certain device to implement decisions and habits of a nation to obey integration. The authors emphasize that through "community feeling" social problems must and can be solved by process of "peaceful change" (Brucan, 1997:182).

According to British scholar, of Romanian origin, D. Mitrany, it is much more likely to progress through joint work and that all operational activities that cover political divisions with a stretched mesh of actions and international agents are means by which the interests and lives of all integrate gradually (Savu, 1996:15; Wolter, 1999:21-22). Mitrany believes that, ensuring a sustainable peace can't be achieved through regional unification, as it will lead to replacement international tensions with interregional ones or to a world government, because it could become a threat to fundamental freedoms of human beings. Instead, he advocated for the creation of separate international bodies, that to have powers in certain functional areas such as defense, transport

and communications. These bodies, in the opinion of Mitrany, being equipped with autonomous executive powers, would perform some similar functions to those of national governments, but on another level. This, in his opinion, would encourage more and better international cooperation than some other major actions. Sizes and the structure of these international organizations, says Mitrany, must not be predetermined, but, rather, left them to shape. Since these organizations will be created, they will be obliged to work. Transport companies (in railways, motor transport and air domain) will need the functional coordination (to solve, for example, issues related to passenger traffic and transport costs). Functional agencies would have, finally, to cooperate closely, fact which would lead to international planning. States in turn, will be able to deny some functions, instead to keep them on others or seek their own political and social experiments (Stăvilă, 2001; Rosamond, 2000:59-64).

Thus, the functionalist theory, the processes of regional integration processes are considered economic cooperation process. Economic cooperation in well defined areas, finishes through extending cooperation aspect to new areas, and in this sense, economic cooperation mechanism would consist the condition that would lead to avoiding a conflict between member cooperation states. The function of international cooperation in the opinion of each functionalist is ambiguous. On the one hand, it is limited to achieving objectives in a certain sector of cooperation; on the other hand, cooperation has a function that goes beyond itself, and is characterized by the appearance of spin-offs for the cooperation process, but is important for integration process such as the appearance of a sense of confidence and awareness of common identity. So, functionalism view is summarized as follows: political division is a source of conflict between states. This division can be overcome gradually by finding areas of common interest and activity, in which and through which the interests of all nations are gradually integrated and managed by specialized elites. Namely prosperity through economic integration is the guarantor of a stable and peaceful international system. Also, according to functionalist theory, economic unification eventually would lead to political unification.

Representatives of the second current, the "federalists", try to give some solutions, troubleshooting, many issues that concern the

relations between states and nations, between several international organizations, among nations on the one hand, and international organizations on the other one, or just within the international organizations. There are authors who argue that in a confederation or an international organization regional governments or single states do not operate directly on humanity, and federal governments or international organization institution operate on regional government, or on state governments. In case of formation of a federation, the followers of this theory consider that Member States transfer to federal government the following powers:

a) control of the defense - the need to defend caused the union of the regions or states within a federation (the right to declare war or the right to conclude peace);

b) control of almost exclusively external relations (the right to conclude treaties, the right to send and receive ambassadors);

c) expertise in economic affairs (right to regulate trade and relations with foreign states);

– To manage the monetary system and to issue the single currency;

– The control of the revenue from customs duties and indirect taxes, both in the form of payroll taxes, as well as income from interest:

– To obtain revenues from property, commercial enterprises and companies.

d) The right to organize some social services such as: politics, education, health, assistance in case of old age, disability, unemployment, accidents.

As a method to achieve a political union, federalist theory focuses primarily on the development of some constitutional texts. This theory addresses, in particular, political and constitutional issues. According to G. Mackay, only in case of political authority endowed with the appropriate power may be enough to social and economic progress in Europe. Federalist thinking followers have shown of "spontaneous" inclusion through measures taken in the economic field can not actually enter politics, that to diminish the sovereignty of member States. The integration, considers the Federalists, requires the intervention of policy makers, even if it has a greater or limited role (Savu, 1996:16-17).

As a result of researches conducted on the European Coal and Steel Community the theses of neofunctionalists appear vis-a-vis of integration. Neofunctionalism can be considered as a gradual shift from functionalism to federalism, whose starting point was the development of the common market. Given that the main representatives as B. Haas and L. Lindberg, Neofunctionalist School argues that certain prerequisites are necessary for integration to move forward. It is necessary that public opinion to be in favor of cooperation, the elites, from the pragmatic interests rather and not from altruistic reasons, to want to promote integration and the new supranational structures to be equipped with real power. With the creation of these premises, there is an extension of the integration, caused by so by the so-called "spillover" effect, as there is a process of "overflow" and "expansion" of integration in other fields of activity. Common activity in a sector creates new needs, gaps and problems putting pressure on political actors for this to expand joint activities and the other sector. For example, free movement of people only works if there is cooperation in home affairs and justice, free movement of pensions, comparable working conditions, mutual recognition of diplomas (Stăvilă, 2001; Stepen, 1996:36-39). In view of this theory, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) achieved an integration of coal and steel industries, of the six Member States, overseen by a central institution, the "High Authority" with supranational powers.

The highest neofunctionalist criticism, in particular the theory of the "spillover", referred to the fact that it was too linear and that needs to be extended or amended to be adopted at different pressures of integration, and that, the also needs to be seen in conjunction with other influences. Just in 10 years after the original publication of "The Uniting of Europe", E. Haas argues in a new edition of the work that functionalist theory paid too little attention to (1) changes in attitude that occurred following the creation of a body such as ECSC, (2) the impact of nationalism on the integration, (3) the influence of external events, including the economic and military threats from the outside and (4) social and political changes that took place separately from the integration process (Rosamond, 2000:142).

Something different from the above states theories is the transactionalism current. Characteristic for this school is the fact it

doesn't that it locate institutional attention to political, socio-cultural integration and political identity. Tranzactionalism is a theory based on behaviorist approach and uses the method of the massive cooperation of data under which it makes a number of concepts on integration. Through analysis of certain transactions related to different economic and cultural areas such as trade, tourism, communications, tranzactionalists attempt to outline certain models of integration, and thus it seeks to answer in what conditions the perception of community and common political identities appear. The basic interest of tranzactionalist is to study structures and political institutions. Later, Karl Deutsch notes that the formation of political community is paramount, and institutional integration has a secondary role. Thus, the main idea of Tranzactionalist School is placed on the internal processes within the economic and socio-cultural interaction between the European community members. Creating political community depends and is determined by this interaction (Kellstrup, 1972:31-44).

Another current, outlining in the theories on integration processes is the theory of intergovernmentalism. Intergovernmentalist School continues the realistic tradition of studying international relations and provides the state its basic role on the information arena. Interpretation of which member states dominate integration processes corresponds to political realities of the 70-80 years of the last century. The basic vision of the main ideas consist in the fact that, states, the interests of states, as well as the interaction between them and the results of these interactions influence the character of international relations, contribute to the integration processes and eventual institutionalization of these processes. While the basic ideas of the functionalists, tranzactionalists, neofunctionalists do not focus on governmental actors activity, intergovernmentalism interprets integration processes as being decided by the interconnections between them.

Institutionalism through its visions became a contemporary form of functionalist and neofunctionalist joint ideas. Representatives of the current base their approaches vis-à-vis their integration on a number of reasons:

- Increasing interdependence between states generates the need for international cooperation and the need to create institutions and the (regional) international regimes;

– the role of institutions is important through the benefit that it brings and that directly or indirectly influence the policy states and on how they define their interests. Institutions influence on each other by providing information, promoting transparency, reducing transaction costs and effective use of strategies. Thus, neo-liberal institutionalism is concerned with finding solutions and ways in which rational and selfish state would cooperate at the regional level.

Some authors understand integration in an economic way, as formation of a structure, of an economic body, which comprises a group of separate states of the world economy, considered as an entity. Thus, for J. Tinbergen integration is creation of an optimal structure of the international economy by removing the artificial barriers of trade. Also this idea is supported by M. Allais, M. Halperin, D. Villaery, R. Courtin, T. Scitovsky but also by B. Blass (Dobrescu, 1996:11-12). Polish theorist Z.Kamencki understands this phenomenon as a creation of an economic structure which comprises a group of countries with high economic level of internal links, obtained as a result of integration (Şişkov, 1993:56). Other authors, such as for example Karl W Deitsch, characterizes the integration as achieving, in a given territory, a "sense of community" and of some institutions strong enough and widespread practices that provide for a secure long hope of "peaceful change" among the states concerned. For E. Haas integration is the process whereby political actors from different national structures are convinced to change leading, expectations and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess, or claim jurisdiction over pre-existing national states (Dobrescu, 1996:12).

Examining the process of integration, we can say that economic integration must be followed by political integration that also requires a looming. Economic integration is followed by the political aspect, and the achievement of political integration can be a dynamic factor, propelled for economic integration. Economic integration postulates political integration, it creates the foundation, removing obstacles and making common interest to appear in implementation of the two forms of integration. Political integration is the ultimate objective of economic integration, because it is full, assuming all channels of social life. The political integration in the literature of specialty is called "global integration".

Some thinkers have built theoretical models of political integration, directly influenced during the period Cold War. Since 1962, the American George Liska concluded that the bipolar balance (USA-USSR) will lead to an opposite trend of economic integration, to the multiplication of acts of economic and political independence, which in fact confirmed the historical evolution. Others considered that integration depends on the geopolitical and environmental factors. Karl W. Deutsch, the advocate of "moral or social community" said that easing tensions between Eastern and Western Europe in the seventh – eight decade, has led to slow European integration and even stop it completely. We believe that the German expert is wrong, because in this period the six states, members of European Community have become *new*, then quite quickly 2, reaching number 25 today. Leon N. Lindberg Deutsch reproaches that have not developed a theory of "political community" that tends to "moral and social community."

Studying the phenomenon of integration, S. Brucan S. considers that the underlying elements are: 1) natural-material bases that include geography, population and production; 2) social factors (classes and nations). Thus, natural resources, world position and the distance according to the scientist, play an important role in initiating a wider union. Geographical and ecological factors will determine the integration process to start on a regional basis. Neighboring territories and a morphology that allows transport and easy communications are in favor of unification. Population growth has significance for integration only because of the relative importance that it has in a component of national power. In other words, small nations are afraid of those with a large population for fear of being swallowed by them. An important factor is the mode of production. Brucan S. believes that economic homogeneity is a factor favoring unification of nations. Countries that differ in economic structure may find an advantage in integrating in complementary economies, provided that their level of development is not too different.

The second element which stands at the basis of the integration is the social factor. Starting from the ideas that for a nation to successfully integrate into a larger unite, fundamental premise consisted itself to be integrated. In other words, a society that is not integrated at the national level can not be a stable component of a supranational body.

Some authors argue that, undeveloped countries do not have enough training to form unions; the new independent states must first strengthen as the nation. This we believe is also true for Moldova. One factor favoring the formation of a larger union is the homogeneity of the class structure (through class structure we understand not only classes that make up the nations concerned, but also relations between them, particularly class that has the power). In this case, homogeneity is essential both for initiation, and for the process of integration and of supranational unification. Regarding the nations, their role in supranational integration is of utmost importance. Particular nation is the category most directly involved both in initiation, as well as in the process of unification (Brucan, 1997:192-197).

Before the break of the "world socialist system" it has been theorized and implemented "socialist integration", conceived as a process of deepening and improving the collaboration and development of socialist economic integration. This process was designed in accordance with the following principles: respect for state sovereignty, independence and noninterference in internal affairs, full equality of rights of all states, mutual benefit – principles which were difficult exposed practice. Paul Chamly points out that, integration is a process that leads to the formation of political and economic entity comprising two aspects, on the development and strengthening regulations of the integrated system and another, extensively, which refers to the definition and broadening political and economic space governed by these rules.

There are thinkers who believe that economic integration is normally preceded of the political one. In turn A. Zucher supports that integration is a full revolution in the political sense which opens new possibilities for social and economic progress, and Ugo La Malfa believes that, when we talk about European integration it is difficult to separate economic and political considerations. A distinction between the two categories, he notes, can be made only at the risk of falling in the abstract. Both economic factors, as well as those political ones are interspersed between them and any distinction between them is practically impossible.

On the other hand, a series of doctrines and political theories promote the idea of ideological role in economic and political integration. Pan-Europeanism is a concept that launched the creation of

a united Europe. Regionalism supports the achievement of specific links, particularly between countries belonging to different geographical areas or certain continents; functionalism draws attention to interdependent problems some of which transcend national borders. Federalism, whose essence is given by the principle of interdependence between central government (federal) and local governments, while the globalism or mondialism is concerned with extension of planetary-scale problems and their penetration across the globe, we can deduce the concept of "integration".

Of Romanian specialists, who have studied the integration, P. Suiian conceive the integration as a global process that includes both economic integration, as well as political, because by its nature, politics and economics are inseparable (Dobrescu, 1996:27-31). The notion of European integration recently appeared in the vocabulary of politicians in Moldova. At the Moldovan political arena, this notion is still far from having the weight of European political discourse feature. However, it (the concept) has already gained major importance of political issues, serving as a line of democracy policy options (Klipi, 2001:33).

Analyzing etymologically, the term "integration" comes from the Latin "integro, integration" and "integrație", which also means to put together, to bring several parts into a whole, or in order to form a whole, to restore (Guțu, 1983:639). Taken originally from mathematics, the term "integration" has become widely used in various socio-human aspects, including economics and politics sciences, covering a wide range of processes and phenomena.

After Gran Larousse, integration is: 1) the action of parties, groups to join or, 2) merger territories, or of national minority in a group (Gran, 1994:1639), and Sopen Universal Encyclopedia stresses that integration evokes incorporating a foreign element in a whole (Encyclopedia, 1995:4555). The same idea is encountered in Webster's Encyclopedie Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, which involves the act of integration of combining several parts into a whole (Webster's, 1989:738). In Romanian language the verb "to integrate" has the same meaning as in French "intégrer", in Spanish "integrar" or in English "to integrate", ie: to include, to integrate, to incorporate, to harmonize into a whole (Dex, 1996: 497).

Integration, however, also requires politics, institutions and security. Besides the formation of economic and monetary union, countries of the world try to develop a common foreign security policy, a policy of justice and human rights of European aspect, and also to form a European identity of security and defense (Stratulat, 2005:37), of realization the national interests of states in a within a common "body".

Thus, through political integration some researchers mean the state of cohesion that exists in a political community, the process by which two or more political units increases their cooperation contacts. In addition, integration requires a high level or increased transactions between units, and a growing perception of some interests and common values (Tămaș, 1993:37).

Seen in geographical perspective, the integration is manifested on the following scales:

1. international (eg. the attempt to integrate Transisria, or an abstract case, the establishment of several economic macro-regions on the basis of administrative units of the second level);

2. regional (the European integration process). This may be on a continental scale (NAFTA, in of the U.S., Canada and Mexico) or sub continental (EU, MERCOSUR in Latin America);

3. global (the trend that is yet manifested only in its infancy level, but it will increasingly become more important at the time of strengthening the main economic - trade international building blocks). Global integration is also called multilateral, especially with reference to the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, WTO can not be considered a pillar yet sufficient for a global integration process of the depth and breadth of Europe.

Intra-national, regional and global integration can be both complementary and antagonistic. Thus, the U.S.A., which traditionally is considered a follower of multilateral approaches to international trade, has frequently accused the European Union the overly discriminatory character of "European fortress". Exclusive regional approach promoted and periodically experienced by the EU regularly even generated trade conflicts with the U.S.A. What concerns with the hypothesis of complementarities of the regional and global integration, this will be confirmed only if the future will become clear that the EU, along with NAFTA, MERCOSUR, APEC is nothing more than some regional

blocks in an integrated economy (Prohnițchi, 2003). Depending on the depth of regional integration, economists propose to distinguish the following types of integration ensembles:

- *Free Trade Area* is the form of economic integration whereby two or more neighboring states undertake to remove customs and trade barriers between them, but each country maintains its national barriers to trade with third countries;
- *Custom Union* is a form of integration that countries shall terminate all customs and trade barriers between them, taken together, a common external customs tariff (TEC) to third countries. The custom union can be defined as a free trade area agreed to a TEC with third countries. However, the Custom Union is understood a single custom territory of the member countries and a common commercial policy towards third parties;
- *Common Market* is the form of integration, in addition to the existence of a customs union, removes all barriers to the flow of factors of production (free movement of labor and capital forces) among member countries;
- *Economic Union* is the understanding of several countries that establish common tariff towards third parties and trade policies to reduce restrictions on exports - imports between Member States (Gudim, 2002:6-7; Dobrotă, 1999:481, 498; Ignat, 1994:19-20, 23).

Taking into account all these aspects, we might mention that integration involves all economic and political processes, where there are created a common space of two or more states, based on the coincidence of principles, goals and national interests.

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