Assessment of South — South Cooperation As Strategy For Africa's International Economic Development

Odo Christopher Uba PhD
Department of Political Science Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Jos, Nigeria
Email: odouba4062@gmail.com Phone No; 08032862673 & 08128359200

Abstract

This paper assessed South-South cooperation as strategies for Africa's international socio-economic development Developing countries today face the multiple interlinked financial, climate, insecurity and development crises. As the development gap between rich and poor countries grows and inequality deepens, never before has South-South cooperation at all levels especially in all fields of international and domestic endeavour as developing countries seek, individually and collectively, to meet current global challenges together with developed countries. South-South Cooperation (SSC) provide a broad framework for collaboration among countries of the Global South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains through strategies on a bilateral, regional, sub regional or interregional basis. Developing countries share knowledge, skills, expertise and resources to meet their development goals through concerted efforts. The paper adopted descriptive survey design methodology in the analysis of data collected. The study revealed that recent developments in (SSC} have taken the form of an increased volume of South-South trade, South-South involvement in foreign direct investment, movements towards regional integration, technology transfers, sharing of solutions and experts, and other forms of exchanges are manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance and the attainment of internationally agreed development goals. The study recommends that the South-South Cooperation agenda must be determined by the countries of the South and guided by the principles of national sovereignty, national ownership, equality, and non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs unless on doctrine of necessity and mutual benefit and enhancing the capacities of the institutions and the arrangements that promotes such cooperation.

Keywords: South-South Cooperation, Economic Development.

Introduction

South-South Cooperation represents a framework for interaction among countries of the global South (referred to as the Third World) to enhance their economic growth. While encouraging the self-reliance of the developing countries, South-South Cooperation creates new challenges for the North.

Developing southern nations have increasingly turned to each other for economic development assistance. South-South Cooperation is seen as an alternative to North-South aid with it's over tones of economic and cultural hegemony. Highly successful, it has contributed to substantial economic growth in developing countries.

The origin of SSC can be traced back to the Bandung Conference (or Asian-African Conference), which in 1955 brought together representatives of 29 Asian and African nations in Bandung, Indonesia, to discuss the potential for collaboration among developing countries.

The Bandung Conference gave birth in 1961 to the Non-Aligned Movement, defined as a group of States that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. In 1964 the aim of fostering economic cooperation among developing countries resulted in the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), now a permanent intergovernmental body located in Geneva, Switzerland. At the first UNCTAD conference, Latin American countries joined with African and Asian countries to create the G-77(Asante, 1997).

South-South Cooperation is altering the global balance of power. Rich industrialised nations can no longer count on access to raw materials and consumer markets in southern countries where strategic rivals, particularly China, are gaining greater influence. Moreover, environmental, human rights, and intellectual property rights issues have created North-South tension. South So4h cooperation can take many forms such as trade and investment, educational programmes exchange, Custom Union, Common Market. And Economic Union (Melo & Panagariya,1993).

Conceptual Clarifications

A. South-South Cooperation

South-South Cooperation refers to cooperative activities between newly industrialised southern countries and other, lesser-developed, nations of the Southern Hemisphere. Such activities include developing mutually beneficial technologies, services, and trading relationships. South-South cooperation also refers to the technical cooperation among developing countries in the Global South. It is a tool used by the states, international organizations, academics, civil society and the private sector to collaborate and share knowledge, skills and successful initiatives in specific areas such as agricultural development, human rights, urbanization, health, climate change etc (Nchinda,1998).

South-South Cooperation aims to promote self-sufficiency among southern nations and to strengthen economic ties among states whose market power is more equally matched than in syn1metric North-South relationships. South-South Cooperation is important to these nations for two reasons. First, it contributes to economic advances in southern nations, especially in Africa, southern Asia and South America. Second, South-South Cooperation lacks the overtones of cultural, political, and economic hegemony sometimes associated with traditional North-South from United States, Russia, and Western Europe.

B. Economic Development

Economic development has to do with multiple dimensional nature of socio-economic transformation. It entails the re-organization and re-orientation of the entire system. Socio-Economic developments have to do with the expansion of the positive interactions, good moral values, positive culture and economy entirely. According to Todaro 1992 cited in Dakyap & Dabo (2013) development implies the multiple-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. Socio-Economic development has to do with the entire changes in the entire system not only the physical structures such as roads, electricity, markets and pipe borne water but also development of human beings in areas of good attitude, intelligence or simply in affective, cognitive and psychomotor domain.

Generally, development in other words can be seen as a process of change in social structure, attitude, institutions, and general acceleration of economic growth through reduction of inequality and poverty. Development occurs when the answer to these questions are negative i. What is happening to poverty? What is happening to Justice? What is happening to Inequality?. If positive development occurs the standard of living of the citizens of a country is improved generally in terms of health care services that are of good standard, good shelter or accommodation, good balanced diet, good security network, improvement in educational standard, income and improvement in literacy level in the country.

THEORETIICAL FRAMEWORK

Regional Theory of Economic Integration.

This study adopts Regional theory of economic integration developed from the works of Haas (1958), Nye & Keohane (1977). Regional Integration of Economic Theory helps to understand the dynamics of how countries work together within a specific geographic area, balancing the benefits of cooperation with the challenges of maintaining national interests and sovereignty. Examples of regional economic integrations are: African Union (AU); European Union (EU); North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The tenets of the theory are that economic cooperation between neighboring countries can lead to regional integration and economic benefits.

The regional theory of economic integration is characterized by its commitment to expanding the boundaries of the economy and the focus is on fostering Regional trade agreements, economic unions, or shared policies that can enhance cooperation and create larger, more integrated markets. Regional Integration Economic Theory explores how and why countries within a specific geographic region come together to form closer economic, political, or social ties. The theory seeks to understand the processes, benefits, and challenges of regional cooperation and integration. Here's a breakdown of the key aspects of Regional Integration Economic Theory:

Core Aspects

1. **Regional Integration**: This involves the process by which countries in a particular region work together to create a more integrated economic or political entity. This can include forming free trade areas, customs unions, common markets, or even political unions.
2. **Types of Regional Integration**
   - i. **Free Trade Area (FTA)**: Countries reduce or eliminate tariffs and trade barriers among themselves but maintain their own trade policies with non-member countries.
   - ii. **Customs Union**: Member countries not only remove internal tariffs but also adopt a common external tariff for non-member countries.
   - iii. **Common Market**: In addition to removing internal tariffs and adopting a common external tariff, member countries also allow the free movement of labor and capital.
   - iv. **Economic Union**: Member countries harmonize economic policies, including monetary and fiscal policies, to create a more unified economic environment.
   - v. **Political Union**: This represents the highest level of integration, where countries merge their political systems and institutions, effectively becoming a single political entity.

Haas (1958), Nye & Keohane (1977) rightly submit that regional economic integration has brought about benefits of Regional Economic Integration in the following areas:

1. **Economic Growth**: Integration can lead to increased trade, investment, and economic growth by reducing trade barriers and creating larger markets.
2. **Enhanced Cooperation**: Countries can collaborate on shared issues such as infrastructure, environmental protection, and security.
3. **Increased Bargaining Power**: By banding together, countries can strengthen their position in international negotiations and trade deals.
4. **Peace and Stability**: Economic interdependence can reduce the likelihood of conflicts between member states by increasing the cost of war and fostering cooperation.

The paper therefore adopted this regional integration economic theory in analysing the South –South Economic cooperation as a strategy for Africa's international economic development in areas of trade, investments, infrastructures, security, peace and stability, removing of tariffs among others,

Methodology

This paper adopted inductive –qualitative research which dwells on secondary sources of data collection and analysis. The study therefore utilized secondary sources of dada from text books, journals articles, magazines, e-journals, newspapers, internet sources among others were used for the sources of data for this paper. The justification for the use of secondary data is because it will allow for wider inputs of other authors on the study under investigation.

Historical Overview of South-South Cooperation

The concept of South-South Cooperation has been used by academics for decades. The UN created a Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (SU/SSC) in the late 1970s, which supported academic research and voluntary cooperative efforts between southern countries to promote South-South trade and investment. The Non-Aligned Movement, an international organization of over 100 independent states not formally aligned with any major power bloc, established the Group for South-South Consultation and Coordination (G-15) in 1989. The G-15 promotes bilateral South-South Cooperation by providing unified input to influence the policies of other international organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the Group of Seven rich industrialized nations. Reductions in foreign aid in the 1980s and 1990s from northern countries, particularly Great Britain, increased southern countries' awareness of the need for mutual cooperation rather than dependence on northern states. Stirrings of such mutual aid were already visible. China and Brazil, for example, signed an agreement in 1993 resulting in greater bilateral trade and the joint launching of environmental monitoring satellites in 1999 and 2003. The satellites, based on Chinese ZY-1 technology, provide high-resolution environmental monitoring date (1999) to both countries. Two additional satellites are planned for future launch (Plonski, 2005).

India had long been active in technology assistance to southern developing countries since it established its technical and economic cooperation program (ITEC) in 1964. ITEC funds training for scientists and technicians of developing countries in various areas of technology. To date, over 30,000 students have participated in ITEC programs.

The Group of 77, an alliance of developing countries in the UN, held the First South Summit in Havana in April 2000. This summit set the groundwork for the 2003 Marrakech Declaration and the accompanying Marrakech Framework, which established long-term goals and strategies for participating countries.

The Marrakech documents prioritized technology transfer and skill development, literacy, eliminating trade barriers, and direct investment, particularly in infrastructure and information systems. They also highlighted the need for assistance programs to help eradicate hunger and HIV /AIDS and to promote debt relief, environmental tourism and sustainability (Medical News Today, 2004).

In December 2003, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 58220, declaring December 19th the annual United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation. This declaration series focused attention on SSC and to promote more extensive participation in SSC efforts. The General Assembly also urged all UN agencies and other multilateral organization to maintain South-South Cooperation in their program operations and to increase resource allocations to support South-South Cooperation activities.

These declarations led to commitments by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)(2003) and participating nations to set up the South-South Cooperation Fund. This fund supplements unilateral efforts by individual nations such as China, India, Brazil, Egypt, and Japan to assist lesser-developed southern nations. The South-South Cooperation Fund, for instance, contributed 3.5 ni1Iion dollars in tsunami disaster relief in 2005. Other South-South Cooperation funds have been set up for humanitarian assistance, livelihood, rehabilitation and infrastructure restoration in tsunami-affected areas.

Tb objectives of South-South Cooperation are as follows:

I. To foster and strengthen the self-reliance of developing countries by enhancing their creative capacity to find solutions and technological capacities to their development problems and formulate the requisite strategies to address them;

II. To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among developing countries through the exchange of experiences leading to a greater awareness of common problems and wider access to available knowledge;

III. To recognize and respond to the problems and requirements of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states and countries most seriously affected by for example, natural disasters and other crises, and enable them to achieve a greater degree of participation in international economic activities (Plonski,2005).

Principles of South-South Cooperation:

As reaffirmed in the Ministerial Declaration of the 33rd Annual Meeting in (2009) held by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Group of 77 and China, in September 2009, New York, USA, the principles of South -South Cooperation are:

I. South-South Cooperation is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives and solidarity.

II. South-South Cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South.

III. South-South Cooperation must not be seen as a replacement for North-South Cooperation. Strengthening South-South Cooperation must not be a measure of coping with the receding interest of the developed world in assisting developing countries.

IV. Cooperation between countries of the South must not be analyzed and evaluated using the same standards as those used for North-South relations.

V. Financial contributions from other developing countries should not be seen as official development assistance from these countries to other countries of the South. These are merely expressions of solidarity and cooperation borne out of shared experiences and sympathies.

VI. South-South Cooperation is a development agenda based on premises, conditions and objectives that are specific to the historic and political context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations. South-South Cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion.

VII. South-South Cooperation is based on a strong, genuine, broad-based partnership and solidarity.

VIII. South-South Cooperation is based on equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit.

IX. South-South Cooperation respects national sovereignty in the context of shared responsibility.

X. South-South Cooperation strives for strengthened multilateralism in the promotion of and action-oriented approach to development challenges.

XI. South-South Cooperation promotes the exchange of best practices among developing countries in the common pursuit of their broad development objectives (encompassing all aspects of international relations and not just in the traditional economic and technical areas).

XII. South-South Cooperation is based on the collective self-reliance of developing countries.

XIII. South-South Cooperation seeks to enable developing countries to play a more active role in international policy and decision-making processes, in support of their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

XIV. The modalities and mechanisms for promoting South-South Cooperation are based on bilateral, sub-regional, regional and interregional cooperation and integration as well as multilateral cooperation (Fajgenbaum,1999)..

African Regional Economic Integration

An empirical review on African regional economic integration involves analyzing various studies and research findings that assess the effectiveness, impact, and challenges of regional integration initiatives across the continent. Here's a summary of notable empirical studies and authors who have contributed to this field:

In the works of Deen & Thalif. (2020) titled "Economic Reform and the Process of Global Integration" (1995) on the study integrations impact and trade, Sachs & Warner explore the effects of economic reforms and integration on developing economies, including Africa. They find that regional integration can significantly boost trade and economic growth if accompanied by sound economic policies. These authors were able to give us sound approach on how African can boost their economy but failed to take cognizance of bad governance as a factor that militates, against African economic development.

In another article by Bilal & Van Hove (2003) titled "Regional Integration and Economic Development in Africa" *(2003)* this study examines the economic benefits of regional integration for African countries, emphasizing how increased trade within regional economic communities (RECs) can lead to greater economic development and reduced poverty. These authors are optimistic in their writes up on how regional integration and economic development can enhance increase in trade in Africa, but failed to show that corruption in Africa is a big challenge to the African economic development

Collier & Hoeffler (2004) in their work titled "Greed and Grievance in Civil War" (2004) On the topic Trade and Tariff. They argued that although primarily the topic focused on Trade and Tariffs, this study provides insights into how trade and economic integration might influence stability in conflict-prone regions. It implies that increased economic opportunities through integration can potentially reduce conflicts. These authors capture our topic under study because it dealt with the approaches to African economic development as well as the challenges facing African economic development such as prevalent of conflicts in African states that hinders economic development as no manful economic development can take place in an atmosphere of conflicts as obtainable in Africa and Middle East.

Asante (2010) in his work titled: "The Impact of Regional Integration on Trade in Africa: Evidence from the African Union" (2010) opined that regional integration initiatives, specifically the African Union's agreements, have influenced trade patterns and economic growth in Africa, finding positive effects on intra-African trade Here the author Fabrice (2010) was apt in his analysis of (AU) economic integration and moreover he was on the positive part of economic development but failed to take into consideration of unequal trade of African countries with China and other developed economy like Europe and North America,.

In another development the author Brown (2013) in their work titled: "Infrastructure and Economic Development: Evidence from Africa" (2013) on topic Infrastructure and Logistics analyse the role of infrastructure in economic development and integration, argued that infrastructure improvements, such as transport and logistics networks, can facilitate regional economic integration. The author Brown (2013) were able to give us a glimpse on hoe infrastructures and logistics aids development in Africa, however he failed to tell us that all these infrastructures and logistic are present but they are not functional virtually in all African countries even if they are there they are not within the reach of those they are meant for.

Similarly, the authors: Vincent & Samuel (2015) in their work titled "Transport Infrastructure and Regional Integration in Africa" (2015). They argued that transport infrastructure affects regional integration and trade within Africa, finding that improved infrastructure can significantly enhance regional economic cooperation and trade. These authors are reductionist in nature in their analysis of factors that helps economic development in Africa as they failed to mention markets, good road networks, electricity, health, pipe borne water among others. They only dwell on Transport Infrastructure as the only panacea regional economic development in Africa.

In another development the authors Ncube & José (2017) in their work titled "Regional Integration and Policy Reform in Africa" (2017) on the topic titled Policy and Institutional Frameworks explores the role of policy and institutional reforms in facilitating regional integration in Africa. It highlights the need for harmonized policies and effective institutions to support regional integration efforts. These authors are Eurocentric in nature as they failed to understand that African governments has so many policies and programmes but the problem noticeable in most third world countries is implementations of these robust polcies and programmes.

African Development Bank (AfDB) Report (2920) argued in the work on: "African Economic Outlook: Regional Integration and Infrastructure" (2020) that provides an empirical analysis of the impact of regional integration and infrastructure development on economic growth in Africa, offering policy recommendations based on recent data on economic integration in Africa that following meticulously the policy recommendations of economic policy will boost African economy. AfDB failed to to take into cognizance the ecological factors militating against the economic growth and development in Africa such as social, political, economic. Legal, technological religion, cultural and legal.

Benefits of African Economic Cooperation

1. **Increased Intra-African Trade**: Reducing trade barriers and increasing market access can enhance trade between African countries, helping to diversify economies and reduce dependence on external markets.
2. **Economic Growth and Development**: Regional cooperation can lead to economies of scale, improved infrastructure, and more investment, fostering economic growth and development.
3. **Improved Political Stability**: Economic cooperation can contribute to political stability by addressing common challenges and fostering regional solidarity.
4. **Enhanced Global Bargaining Power**: A unified Africa can negotiate more effectively on the global stage, influencing international trade agreements and economic policies.

Examples of Progress

1. **The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** has been a significant step towards economic integration, with many countries already beginning to lower tariffs and work towards implementing the agreement.
2. **Regional Infrastructure Projects**: Projects like the Trans-African Highway network aim to improve connectivity across the continent, facilitating trade and economic integration.
3. **Cross-Border Trade Initiatives**: Programs such as the African Trade and Logistics Corridor have been established to improve cross-border trade and logistics within Africa.

African economic cooperation represents a crucial element in the continent's development strategy, with on -going efforts to overcome challenges and enhance regional integration for sustainable growth and prosperity.

Challenges of South-South Cooperation

The challenges of south – south economic corporation can be seen from the following ways viz-a-viz:

1. **Prevalent of Conflicts in African States.**

   Virtually all African states experience one form of conflict or the other ranging from insurgency, political conflict, militancy, ethnic conflicts, human rights violations, farmers herders conflicts and military coup d'etat. These conflicts have in one way or the other deterred foreign investors because no positive economic development can take place in an atmosphere of violence for instance Nigeria have been engulfed in Boko-Haram insurgency tha have destroyed lives and property since 2009 till date. Southern and Northern Sudan have been ungovernable as a result of armed conflicts between the Law Enforcement and Security Agencies and the rebel armed groups that have forced many of its citizens to be displaced internally displaced while many are refugees in Chad, Nigeria and Libya, Other African countries such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are under military rule. These prevalent of conflicts in Africa hinder economic growth and development as no neaniful economic development can take place in an atmosphere of violence.

2. **Corruption.**

Corruption which is the diversion of public entrusted finance and material resources by an individual to private gains hinders economic development as money meant for developments are diverted by an individual or groups for their private use thereby hindering economic development of infrastructures such as electricity, roads, markets, pipe-borne water and hospitals. In Africa corruption have been institutionalized and legitimized as that ib the order of the day in both public and private sector economy. And that hinders economic development in Africa.

3. **Regional Integration and the Challenges of Policy Coordination in Africa.**

The challenges of policy coordination among African countries, including issues related to sovereignty, economic disparities, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, which can hinder the effectiveness of regional integration These can be noticed in most African countries as there are lack of expertise in areas of administrations, Equally, African countries are not endowed with equal human and natural resources as some of these countries such as Mali Chad and Niger are poor countries their foreign policies are not vibrant as a result of poor economy in these countries and that hinders economic integrations in south-south.

4. **The Challenges of Implementing Regional Integration Agreements in Africa: A Case Study**

The implementation challenges faced by regional integration agreements in Africa, serves as an obstacle facing African economic integration as most third have robust economic blue prints but implementation is a problem.

Other Challenges and Obstacles to the African Economic Integration are:

i. **Political and Economic Instability**: Political instability and conflicts in some regions can hinder effective cooperation and integration efforts.

ii. **Infrastructure Gaps**: Inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation and communication networks, can limit the effectiveness of regional integration.

iii. **Diverse Economic Conditions**: Economic disparities among African countries can create challenges in harmonizing policies and ensuring equitable benefits from integration.

iv. **Bureaucratic and Institutional Barriers**: Inefficient bureaucratic processes and weak institutional frameworks can impede progress in economic cooperation.

v. **Implementation Challenges**: Even with agreements in place, there can be difficulties in implementing and enforcing regional policies and regulations.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

South-South Cooperation is a vital force in world economic development today. India and China, once considered net recipients of aid, are now emerging as net donors, focusing their aid efforts on southern nations. South-South trade is growing at an estimated ten percent annually. The former U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for instance noted that over 40 percent of developing country exports are headed to other developing countries. Some economists predict that economic growth rates in southern countries in a few years will move from five to eight percent a year, compared with two to three percent in the north.

This newfound economic power could alter the balance of political power as well. As they grow less dependent upon northern markets for their economic well-being, southern states are emerging with new power and a stronger voice at the bargaining tables of multinational organization. Future agreement on important international and multilateral issues in areas of trade, environmental protection, and human rights will require broader outreach to achieve true international consensus. Northern nations, accustomed to leading on the international stage, may see their priorities counterbalanced by those of the South. Good governance devoid of corruption should be hallmark for African states.

African economic cooperation has been a significant focus of regional and continental efforts to enhance economic integration and development across the continent.

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