



The Hidden Benefits of Regional Integration

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ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates on the one hand that there are hidden advantages of regional integration, apart from the advantages known and treated by researchers, who have most essentially emphasized economic and commercial advantages. Thus, using qualitative research methodology methods, including documentary research and analysis (textual, audiovisual), non-participant observation or even observation, this article carries out a constructive analysis which results in hidden or unknown advantages of regional integration. These hidden advantages are in the interest of member countries of the same organization, of the same regional community and in the interest of their citizens like ECOWAS or NATO. Of these hidden advantages, we retain the protection of democratic regimes and citizens of the countries of the community guaranteed by the regional community; the means of overcoming the challenges related to natural insecurity; the feeling of belonging to a powerful regional community and the means of deterrence against possible aggression; and finally, the means of tending towards a cultural, racial and ethnic mixing. These hidden advantages align with the known advantages that have been the subject of several studies, such as the sharing of a common currency, the easy movement of goods and people, a common market or the exemption of taxes and customs duties between member states of the same community as that which brings together West African countries. On the other hand, this present article suggests reasons and motivations justifying regional integration that is easy so that certain countries, even due to certain circumstances and certain considerations, can integrate a Regional Community to which they aspire to be members.

Keywords: regional integration, the little-known benefits of regional integration, benefits of regional integration

Introduction

Regional integration does not only have economic benefits for the countries involved. Indeed, there are several advantages that regional integration brings to countries that decide to belong to the same regional organization or community. However, there are some that are hidden and are not considered as advantages at their true value, but which nevertheless are. Indeed, the latter may seem much more important than those that are considered to be obviously important advantages. However, does regional integration have little-known advantages beyond economic advantages? This question can be answered by the fact that there are indeed hidden advantages of regional integration. First, these are advantages that have not given rise to scientific debate, and which are almost unknown because they have not been specifically mentioned by academic research. These are the benefits that contribute to the development, prosperity, and tranquility of a member country of a regional community (such as the protection of democracy and citizens; sustainable health and food assistance; multilateral security reinforcement, support, and assistance; or cultural, racial, and ethnic mixing) or of member countries of the same community or regional organization. Moreover, these benefits can often be far more valuable than the economic advantages of regional integration (the common market, the removal of customs barriers, the free movement of goods and people).

Thus, this constructive analysis in this article will outline the hidden benefits of regional integration in four main areas, including one with a subsection to clearly demonstrate that these hidden benefits can be far more important than any other benefits that regional integration can give rise to. Thus, the article will firstly address the relative advantage of the protection of democratic regimes and citizens of the countries of the community

guaranteed by the Regional Community through the taking of certain decisions that may be of a binding or judicial nature, and then the article will mention as hidden advantages of regional integration the means of overcoming the challenges related to natural insecurity, as well as the feeling of belonging to a powerful regional community and the means of deterrence against possible aggressions as well as the idea of cultural, racial and ethnic mixing as a type of hidden advantage that regional integration offers. And finally, this article will highlight as suggestions the reasons and motivations for which regional integration must be a common ideal nowadays.

The protection of democratic regimes and citizens of the countries of the community guaranteed by the Regional Community

Every regional community has a body of rules and fundamental principles that govern the said regional community or organization¹. For example, the case of the Economic Community of West African States provides for measures to be taken in the event of a coup d'état or a violation of a fundamental right or freedom. Indeed, Article 4 of the 1993 revised ECOWAS Treaty establishes the promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of government in each member state as a basic principle of the community. Any action by a state that is at odds with democratic principles should therefore, in principle, lead to a reaction from ECOWAS². Indeed, a reaction is a binding decision intended to sanction this type of action by those in power, whether by force or without going through the electoral process; this is the case in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. These states experienced coups d'état respectively on August 18, 2020³, in Mali, on September 30, 2022⁴, in Burkina Faso and on July 26, 2023⁵, in Niger. And because these states were members of the West African regional community (ECOWAS), ECOWAS, guarantor of the protection of democratic regimes and the peoples of its member countries, was consequently subject to decisions sanctioning these states. For example, Niger was subjected to a series of 9 decisions decreed by ECOWAS. Indeed, sanctions ranging from the suspension of financial and commercial transactions with Niger to the freezing of the assets of the military personnel responsible for the coup, including a travel ban on military officers involved in the coup. and all commercial and financial transactions between ECOWAS member states and Niger are suspended in ECOWAS central banks, the assets of the Republic of Niger have been frozen⁶. This approach of the regional community testifies to its role as protector, and which is a hidden advantage of regional integration, thus making coup perpetrators believe that they will never be free. Moreover, regional integration also protects citizens in the event of a violation of one of their rights, who also often advocate for the mode of governance based on democracy, which represents the government of the people by themselves, what is called today direct democracy⁷. In addition, it follows that this democracy nowadays becomes more and more threatened by authoritarian powers, most of which were born from a coup d'état perpetrated and some populations condemn these coups d'état, which

¹ Djifa Agbezoukin, "ECOWAS and Coups in West Africa: What Legal Framework for What Preventive Actions?", *Institute for Applied Geopolitics*, June 16, 2022, available at: <https://www.institut-ega.org/l/la-cedeao-et-les-coups-d-etat-en-afrique-de-l-ouest-quel-cadre-juridique-pour-quelles-actions-preventives/>, (last accessed May 2, 2025).

² *Ibid.*

³ [Mali: How the Military Regime Mobilizes History and Popular Emotions], available at: <https://theconversation.com/mali-comment-le-regime-militaire-mobilise-l-histoire-et-les-emotions-populaires-255478>, (last accessed May 2, 2025).

⁴ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Understanding Burkina Faso's Latest Coup: After two coups in nine months, political instability in Burkina Faso is at a new turning point, leading to greater uncertainty as the country faces an escalating threat from militant Islamism.", *AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES*, November 1, 2022, available at: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/understanding-burkina-faso-latest-coup/>, (last accessed May 2, 2025).

⁵ [Niger: Understanding the situation after the coup in six questions] Since the overthrow of President Mohamed Bazoum, West African countries have been divided between military regimes supporting the coup and those calling for the restoration of constitutional order., available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/08/09/niger-comprendre-la-situation-apres-le-coup-d-etat-en-six-questions_6184961_3212.html#:~:text=Le%2026%20juillet%2C%20des%20militaires%20putschistes%2C%20membres%20de,la%20r%C3%A9sidence%20officielle%2C%20%C3%A0%20l'int%C3%A9rieur%20du%20palais%20pr%C3%A9sidentiel, (last accessed May 2, 2025).

⁶ Cherif Ousman Mbardounka, BBC Africa Journalist, "Coup d'état in Niger: The consequences of ECOWAS sanctions," *BBC NEWS AFRICA*, August 15, 2023, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-66502800>, (last accessed May 2, 2025)., (last accessed May 2, 2025).

⁷ Cloe Lachaux, "What is democracy?", *LA REVUE DE LA DÉMOCRATIE*, January 31, 2025, available at: <https://revue-democratie.org/quest-ce-que-la-democratie/#:~:text=On%20attribue%20les%20origines%20de%20la%20d%C3%A9mocratie%20%C3%A0,peuple%2C%20le%20d%C3%A9mos%2C%20et%20le%20pouvoir%2C%20le%20kratien>, (last accessed May 2, 2025).

means that they are forced to suffer the evils coming from authoritarian powers at the price of not being deprived of freedom, hence the idea that regional integration reassures or even protects the rights of populations who love democracy and who value it.

Indeed, this is the case of the journalist, activist, and actor of Nigerien civil society Moussa Tchangari, who has been held captive since the end of December 2024 under the orders of the Nigerien military authorities who led the coup d'état of July 26, 2023. Indeed, he is an individual who, since the 1990s, has been known as an activist working for the promotion of human rights and the rule of law in Niger. On November 28, the ACS (Alternative Citizens' Space), Tchangari's organization, called a meeting to discuss the presidential decree of October 10 temporarily withdrawing Nigerien nationality from nine people linked to former President Bazoum. Human Rights Watch also expressed concern about the decree and called on the authorities to rescind it⁸. On October 10, the head of Niger's military junta, General Abdourahamane Tiani, signed a decree temporarily stripping the Nigerien nationality of nine people linked to former President Mohamed Bazoum, who is still wrongly detained⁹. Thus, the arrest of Moussa Tchangari has sparked a public outcry, as international, regional, and Nigerien human rights organizations, including Transparency International Niger, have called for his release¹⁰. Indeed, the organization known as the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa), of which Moussa Tchangari is a member, has been demanding the release¹¹ of Moussa Tchangari since December 4, 2024, following his arrest. In this sense, regional integration is a hidden advantage for the democratic system and citizens of the member countries of the said regional community or organization, instead of only advantages linked to the economy.

Moreover, there are even decisions dedicated to the protection of citizens of member countries of a regional integration, which also represent hidden or unknown advantages of regional integration, because regional integration suggests or reveals and appears firstly trade, the movement of human capital etc., as advantages. While there is an advantage that concerns citizens of member countries of the said regional community. For example, it emerges from the case law No. ECW/CCJ/JUD/06/08 of October 27, 2008, decision of the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States that the Republic of Niger is condemned for violation of articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 18 (3) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; That the Nigerien Authorities introduce new legislation that effectively protects women against discriminatory customs in matters of marriage and divorce; That the Nigerien Authorities must revise the legislation relating to Courts and Tribunals so that justice can fully play its role as guardian of the rights of people who are victims of the practice of slavery; That the Republic of Niger abolish harmful customs and practices based on the idea of the inferiority of women; That Hadijatou Mani Koraou be granted fair compensation for the harm she suffered during her 9 years of captivity¹². Unlike a country not belonging to a regional integration, it would be difficult for its citizens to benefit from such an advantage protection guaranteed by a Regional Community. This gives rise to the understanding that regional integration is not only an idea of economic advantages, as Christian Deblock (2017) took the time to point out by answering the question how to achieve integration, and how far to push it?, which according to him regional integration refers to economic integration that must be ever more extensive and deeper, until the complete economic and monetary union¹³. This is also the case of Jacob Kotcho (2017) according to whom the integration model chosen by the African continent is a mix between integration by markets and that by institutions, trying to follow the approach proposed by Balassa which goes from the free trade area to the economic and monetary union through the customs union, the common market and the

⁸ AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, "Niger: Prominent Civil Society Activist Arbitrarily Arrested," December 9, 2024, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/niger-civil-society-arbitrary-detention/>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

⁹ Ilaria Allegrozzi, "Niger: Counterterrorism Decree Targets Political Opponents: Junta Temporarily Deprives 9 of Nigerien Nationality," *HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH*, October 15, 2024, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/10/15/niger-counterterrorism-decree-targets-political-opponents>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Press release from the Center for Democracy and Development, "We Demand the Immediate Release of Moussa Tchangari, Journalist and Human Rights Defender," December 4, 2024, available at: <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/press-releases/we-demand-the-immediate-release-of-moussa-tchangari-journalist-and-human-rights-defender/>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

¹² THE COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS), DAME HADIJATOU MANI KORAOU, Applicant VS. THE REPUBLIC OF NIGER, Respondent, JUDGMENT No. ECW/CCJ/JUD/06/08, October 27, 2008, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/jurisprudence/caselaw/ecowascj/2008/fr/63810>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

¹³ Christian Deblock, "The Regional Integration Index in Africa," *Revue Interventions économiques* [Online], Special Edition. Transformations | 2017, published on March 1, 2017, accessed on March 22, 2023. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/interventionseconomiques/5633>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/interventionseconomiques.5633>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

economic union¹⁴. In fact, regional integration has other hidden or little-known advantages apart from the advantages relating to the economy, these are those that we do not think of at first glance.

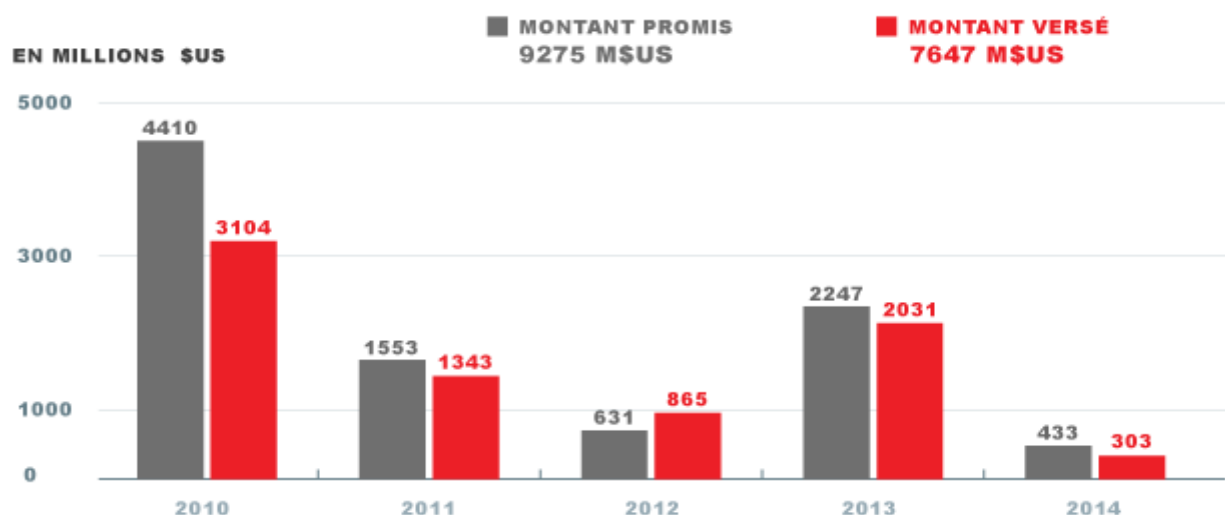
The way to overcome the challenges of natural insecurity

Regional integration contributes enormously to solving problems often related to earthquakes and seismic events, hunger and famine or health.

Regional integration: a solution to various insecurities faced by a member country of a regional community
The most striking example is that of January 12, 2010, at 4:53 p.m. when a violent earthquake of magnitude 7.3 occurred 25 km from the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, resulting in a devastating toll: 280,000 dead, 300,000 injured and 1.3 million homeless¹⁵. After this, several countries around the world and those from the same regional integration, as well as those in the same community as Haiti, notably the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), mobilized to stand alongside Haiti.

Figure 1: Summary of the support of countries from the same community or regional organization towards Haiti, in the name of community ideology

DONS DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ INTERNATIONALE



Source : Module de gestion de l'aide externe de la République d'Haïti (gouvernement), 2014

ICI RADIO-CANADA  .ca

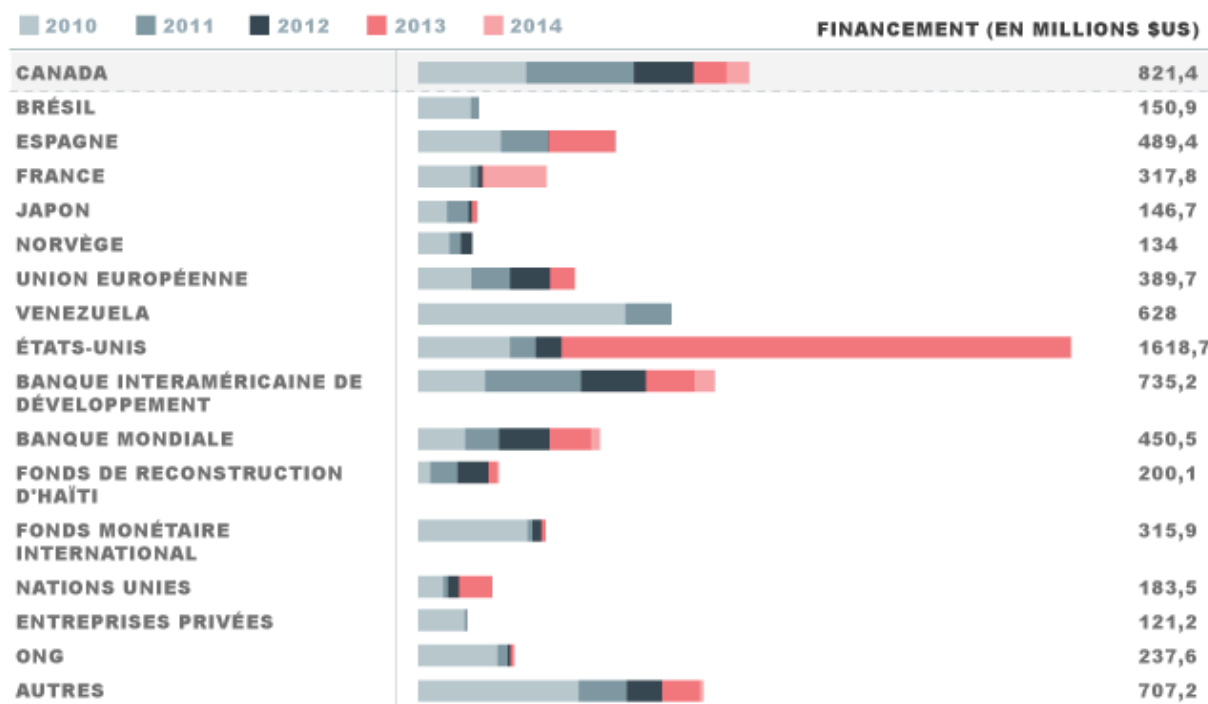
Source: <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/700842/haiti-cinq-ans-apres-le-seisme-reconstruction-aide-internationale>.

¹⁴ Jacob Kotcho, "African Trade Integration and Global Free Trade: Challenges and Prospects," *Revue Interventions économiques* [Online], Special Edition. Transformations | 2017, published on March 1, 2017, accessed on March 21, 2023. Available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/interventionseconomiques/5781>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/interventionseconomiques.5781>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

¹⁵ Sandrine Côté, "The Memory of the Haiti Earthquake Still Vivid, 15 Years After the Tragedy," January 12, 2025, available at: <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/info/long-format/2132104/quinze-ans-seisme-haiti-bilan#:~:text=Un%20violent%20tremblement%20de%20terre%20dune%20magnitude%207%2C3,300%20000%20injurés%20et%201%20million%20de%20sans-abri>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

Figure 2: Observation of the aid provided by several regional (international) communities or organizations, composed of several States and certain States with ideals of regional integration.

PRINCIPAUX DONATEURS À HAÏTI DEPUIS LE SÉISME DE 2010



Source : Module de gestion de l'aide externe de la République d'Haïti (gouvernemental), 2014

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Source: <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/700842/haïti-cinq-ans-apres-le-seisme-reconstruction-aide-internationale>.

Furthermore, recently (2021) also still being the victim of an earthquake, Haiti benefited from several aids including those from Jamaica and the Dominican Republic as neighboring Caribbean countries. Indeed, Luis Abinader, at the time Dominican President, asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to communicate with the Haitian Prime Minister to facilitate any assistance to the extent of their means, because since August 16, 2021, the Dominican Republic has contributed two million masks, hand sanitizers, wheelchairs, circuits, suture kits, cotton, needles and gowns and in addition to the provision of a helicopter based in the province of Jimaní in case emergency transfers were necessary to Jacmel. In addition, 10,000 rations of food and medicine were ordered by boat from Cabo Rojo and Manzanillo. Inside are medicines, antivirals, painkillers, vitamins, mucolytics and paracetamol¹⁶ and as for Jamaica, Andrew Holness, at the time Prime Minister, declared Jamaica's sympathy without making an announcement of aid¹⁷.

Regarding CARICOM, its Secretary General Irwin La Rocque, said in a message to Haitian President Jovenel Moïse that CARICOM is deeply saddened by the loss of life and significant destruction of property in the French-speaking country following the 5.9 magnitude earthquake¹⁸. Indeed, the Caribbean Community

¹⁶ Larisa Karr, "International Aid Arrives in Haiti After Latest Earthquake," August 14, 2021, available at: <https://haitiantimes.com/fr/2021/08/14/Les-pays-promettent-une-aide-à-Haïti/>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ THE HAITIAN TIMES, "CARICOM Ready to Aid Haiti Earthquake Victims," October 12, 2018, available at: <https://haitiantimes.com/fr/2018/10/12/La-Caricom-prête-à-fournir-une-assistance-aux-sinistrés-du-séisme-en->

(CARICOM) says it is ready and willing to provide assistance to Haiti, which is one of its 15 CARCOM member countries hit by a series of earthquakes that resulted in the death of 17 people and injured more than 300 others¹⁹ and Irwin La Rocque also said that the regional integration grouping offers its condolences to the families who lost their loved ones as well as a full and speedy recovery for the injured. Also, according to the Secretary General of CARICOM, the said Caribbean community and its institutions are ready to offer their assistance to the extent of their capacities to contribute to the recovery process²⁰. This demonstrates one of the hidden advantages of regional integration for Haiti, due to being a member of CARICOM, an organization created in 1973 with the aim of promoting economic integration and cooperation among Caribbean states and which also aims to support the economic, social and cultural development of its 15 member states²¹. This is what is usually expected of regional integration, but the latter has other little-known advantages.

The feeling of belonging to a powerful Regional Community and the means of deterrence against possible attacks

Every country that is a member of a community organization, thanks to regional integration, has the comfort of being allied with several state powers. Indeed, this is the case with NATO, which is an alliance organization between several countries in Europe and North America.

On the one hand, Sweden's accession to NATO is a victory for freedom, declared Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, because the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted Sweden to apply for membership²², which demonstrates the comfort of belonging to such a community organization. For Sweden, it is a strong feeling to now belong to NATO, which sees it as a powerful organization. Currently, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine are interested in joining this alliance²³. Furthermore, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is this political and military alliance, now with 32 members across the world, which aims to be a means of promoting democratic values and cooperation on defense and security issues²⁴. Furthermore, NATO is a defensive Alliance that has ensured the security and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area for more than 70 years. It was created in 1949 by 12 States, including France, and collective defense has been, since its foundation, the primary responsibility of the Alliance²⁵. Moreover, this is a principle enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which states that: "an armed attack against one or more [of the parties] shall be considered as an attack against all the parties, and each of them shall take such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and ensure security in the North Atlantic area." But Article 5 has been invoked only once, in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. NATO is also a defensive alliance that takes measures to deter and defend against any threat of aggression and against any emerging security challenge that would compromise the fundamental security of one or more Allies. Therefore, since the establishment of NATO, no state that has become a member has had to suffer a conventional attack from another state on its soil²⁶. And this is one of the hidden advantages of regional integration, of being a member of a regional community.

On the other hand, Ukraine's intention to join NATO has earned it the war it is experiencing with Russia. Indeed, in August 2021, a feeling reinforced with the reiterated desire of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to join NATO was expressed, and therefore Ukraine is moving further away from Russia and since then the crisis between Russia and Ukraine took an important turn on Thursday, February 24, 2022 with the declaration of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the first bombings and the entry into Ukrainian soil of Russian armed forces in the east, in the south through Crimea and in the north via Belarus, an ally of Moscow²⁷. This is therefore an entry into war resulting from long months of tensions between the two countries, because for Russia it is unacceptable for Ukraine to have a rapprochement with Western democracies, much less to admit

Haïti/#:~:text=Le%20secrétaire%20général%20de%20la%20CARICOM%2C%20Irwin%20La,de%20magnit ude%205,9%20qui%20a%20frappé%20samedi%20soir, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ MondayData.com, January 2022, available at: <https://www.mondialdata.com/accords-commerciaux/caricom.php>, (last accessed May 3, 2025).

²² CNEWS, "NATO: Here is the list of the 32 member countries in 2024," 07/03/2024, available at: <https://www.cnews.fr/monde/2024-03-07/otan-voici-la-liste-des-32-pays-membres-en-2024-1340696>, (last accessed May 3, 2025). (last accessed May 3, 2025).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ France Diplomatie, "France and NATO," April 2025, available at: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-et-rangere-de-la-france/securite-desarmement-et-non-proliferation/nos-alliances-et-cooperations/la-france-et-l-otan/>, (last accessed May 4, 2025).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ The Editorial Team, "Ukraine - Russia: Why the War?" Explanation of the conflict", *lintern@ute*, March 18, 2022, available at: <https://www.linternaute.com/actualite/monde/2609887-ukraine-russie-pourquoi-la-guerre-exposition-du-conflit/>, (last accessed May 4, 2025).

Ukraine's desire to join NATO, which for Vladimir Putin represents a threat to its borders²⁸. This is where regional integration has hidden benefits, beyond the known advantages related to the economy, trade, or human mobility, which are likely to foster a sense of belonging to a powerful regional community and act as a deterrent for the member states concerned against potential aggression. Hence the importance of being a member of a regional community or a community organization like NATO for states and their populations to be protected from any military or jihadist aggression, which is Ukraine's desire, knowing what it will gain by joining NATO.

But the hidden benefits of regional integration go beyond the feeling of belonging to a powerful community or deterring sponsors of potential military or jihadist aggression.

A means of cultural, racial and ethnic mixing

As Bauer, M., & Hanelt, C.-P., (2011) point out, building bridges between societies and cultures is an element that can be an advantage for development²⁹, they take as an example the introduction of jointly managed circular migration programs for students, businessmen and skilled workers that can be a particularly promising initiative to address demographic challenges in the north and south of Europe as well as to address demographic challenges in the north and south of the Mediterranean³⁰. And this approach suggests the idea of regional integration through human movements. We can also mention the words of, for example, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, former president of the Spanish government, who emphasized that Morocco and Spain constitute a model of coexistence, cultural and civilizational mixing and good neighborliness, which must govern international relations in the current situation³¹, because in the absence of Morocco and Spain being members of the same regional community, there are several bilateral agreements between the two countries. Indeed, Morocco and Spain have signed 20 bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding and these agreements include agreements on migration, climate change and water resource management³², which has favored this cultural mixing between the two countries, even racial and ethnic since the city of Tangier is almost a portion of Spain due to the proximity that exists between the two countries, also due to the Spaniards living in this city and the Moroccans living in Spain. Because the observation, one of the qualitative methods that allowed the development of this article, demonstrates that there are several people of both Moroccan and Iberian descent who manage tourist restaurants on the seaside in the city of Tangier.

Furthermore, according to psychologist Angela Kalistratova, mixed marriages are a sign of progress, because the children born into these families are more intelligent and more beautiful, and they break down ethnic barriers³³. These children have the advantage of observing different cultures to enrich themselves spiritually. This allows them to see that people are different, that everything depends on character, and thus they become more tolerant³⁴, which is one of the hidden benefits of regional integration.

For example, West African regional integration, in this case ECOWAS, has allowed for significant ethnic and racial mixing due to the free movement of individuals within the ECOWAS area, which is one of the known benefits of regional integration. Indeed, marriage between different nationalities has become common, as the non-participant observation and observation carried out to produce this article have revealed that there are marriages between citizens of Togo and citizens of Benin, between Ivorians and Guineans, between Senegalese and Gambians, etc. And all this has been made possible thanks to regional integration, which does not only give rise to economic benefits as usual.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Bauer, M., & Hanelt, C.-P., "The Arab World in transition: prospects and challenges for a revitalized relationship between Europe and North Africa. », *Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung*, 2011, 61 P, available at: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:O168ssoar-374622>, (last accessed May 4, 2025).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Atlasinfo.fr, "Morocco and Spain: A Model of Coexistence, Cultural Mix, and Good Neighborliness (Zapatero)," September 3, 2022, available at: <https://atlasinfo.fr/le-maroc-et-lespagne-un-modele-de-coexistence-de-metissage-culturel-et-de-bon-voisinage-zapatero.html>, (last accessed May 4, 2025).

³² Le7tv, "Morocco – Spain: Signing of 20 Bilateral Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding!", February 2, 2023, available at: <https://fr.le7tv.ma/2023/02/02/maroc-espagne-signature-de-20-accords-et-memorandums-dentente-bilateraux/#:~:text=Le%20Maroc%20et%20l'Espagne%20ont%20signé%20ce%20jeudi%2C,Gouvernements%20Espagnol%2C%20Pedro%20Sanchez%20et%20Marocain%2C%20Aziz%20Akhannouch>, (last accessed May 4, 2025).

³³ AfriqueFemme.com, "Mixed Marriages: Here Are Their Advantages and Disadvantages," April 12, 2019, available at: <https://www.afriquefemme.com/fr/mariage/vie-de-couple/15091-mariages-mixtes-voici-ses-avantages-et-ses-inconvenients>, (last accessed May 4, 2025). Rym Bousmid, "Morocco's Membership in ECOWAS: Why It's Stuck," *jeuneafrique*, March 10, 2022, available at: <https://www.jeuneafrique.comme/1325/57/politique/abonnement-du-maroc-a-la-cedeao-pourquoi-ca-coince/>, (last accessed May 4, 2025).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

On the one hand, this article has shown that regional integration is not limited solely to economic or commercial advantages that members of the same Regional Community can benefit from. Indeed, today, states and their citizens not only need to benefit from an economy or trade relations, but also require assistance, aid and support, protection, and diversity in an increasingly conflictual and closed world where individual interests seem much more important than the general interest. It is also necessary for all States, both those that are close to and far from each other, to give – a primordial importance to regional integration – to unity between various States in order to be able to meet all the challenges that could threaten human existence, that of animals, that of the environment and even that of the very existence of a mode of governance, namely, unfounded revolutions and revolts, injustice, inequity and impunity, disasters, barbaric military and jihadist attacks, racism, ethnocentrism and division etc. As for regional integration processes as well, regional communities and organizations must review the criteria and conditions to be met so that a state can benefit from all the advantages that regional integration can provide as a member. For example, the fact that a country is geographically located in the north does not justify any reason why it is impossible for that country to integrate into a regional community located in the south, east or west if it adheres to the rules that govern said community. Similarly, the weight or level of development, currency or trends of a country must in no case must in no case condition and frame regional integration, otherwise it will be caused to the state in question a prejudicial act that could lead to the belief of discrimination and put it aside alone in the face of its challenges. On the contrary, security issues in all their dimensions (the security and protection of state institutions, urban and rural populations, animals, etc.), the issues of common sustainable development (related to global warming, education, infrastructure) and identity issues (related to rejections and contempt for others) that states face must be considered. Thus, in the current state of the world, unity must be considered to the point that it is the central element to which great importance must be attached, because only unity and collaboration are likely to lead to the general interest, to prevent any harmful inconvenience for states and their constituents. Returning to the analysis conducted in this article, it was carried out with the understanding that no research work is perfect or excellent, either in substance or in form. Especially about writing, it was useful to make judicious use of the tool allowing for instant, objective translation of languages. Nevertheless, throughout the analysis, the rules and principles established in the field of science and research were applied and respected. Scientific ethics and moral integrity, among other things, were at the forefront of the analysis and contributed to the originality of this article.

However, and finally, possible research on the reluctance shown by communities or regional community organizations when a state wishes to integrate them would be greatly appreciated to truly understand the refusals to join, which were frequent at this time. And the results of this research could well enable States affected by uncertainty or refusal of regional integration, as is the case for Morocco which is still awaiting its definitive membership within ECOWAS³⁵ and Haiti which has seen its membership refused by the African Union³⁶, to be able to take the necessary steps to remedy this.

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