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REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND GLOBAL CONFLICT IN THE CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM: IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA

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Abstract

The contemporary international system is increasingly characterized by the proliferation of regional groupings formed to enhance security, economic development, and social progress. Regional integration has become a defining feature of global politics, shaping both inter-state relations and domestic economic outcomes. This paper examines the interplay between regional integration and contemporary conflicts within the international system, focusing on the implications of the Sudan and Ukraine crises for regional stability and global governance. It explores how regional groupings like ECOWAS and continental frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) contribute to economic integration and security cooperation, and how large-scale conflicts disrupt integration processes and global economic patterns. Using secondary data, the study assesses Nigeria's role within regional integration efforts and evaluates the geopolitical and socio-economic impacts of the Sudan and Ukraine conflicts on Africa and the global system. The findings indicate that conflicts undermine regional cooperation, strain humanitarian capacities, and affect global markets, notably food and energy, with implications for development goals. The paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at strengthening regional institutions and conflict mitigation mechanisms.

Keywords: Regionalism, Integration, Global Conflict, International System, Nigeria

Introduction

The contemporary international system is increasingly characterized by the proliferation of regional groupings formed to advance collective security, economic integration, and socio-political development (Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Nye, 2002). As noted by scholars such as Ernst B. Haas (Haas, 1958) and Joseph S. Nye Jr. (Nye, 2002), regional cooperation has become a central mechanism through which states pursue shared interests in an interdependent world. These regional arrangements function as sub-systems within the broader global order, shaping patterns of interaction, cooperation, and conflict among states (Kaplan, 1957; Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

Integration is an important aspect of life for individuals and groups, as well as for nations and peoples. It represents the culmination of relationships, associations and collective action (Deutsch et al., 1968). However, in terms of state relations, integration is viewed within the international system at the global level, while regional groupings operate at the secondary level as international sub-systems (Kaplan, 1957; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). These groups of nations are generally formed with the objectives of gaining security, economic development

and social progress (Haas, 1958). International integration implies the adoption of policies by separate countries as if they were a single political unit (Balassa, 1961). The degree of integration is often tested by assessing whether interest rates, share prices or commodity prices converge across national markets (Balassa, 1961; Lindberg, 1970). This paper thus assesses the values or gains of the integration of Nigeria and other countries of the world.

However, despite the integrative aspirations of these groupings, the international system remains vulnerable to conflicts that disrupt regional stability and global equilibrium. Two prominent contemporary examples are the ongoing conflict in Sudan and the war between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the war between the United States of America (US), Israel and Iran. These crises not only destabilize their immediate regions but also generate far-reaching geopolitical and economic consequences across interconnected global systems (Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Cantori & Spiegel, 1970). The persistence of such conflicts highlights a critical paradox: while regional integration aims to foster cooperation and stability, it often coexists with, and is undermined by violent conflicts within and across regions.

This study concerns itself with understanding how contemporary regional and global conflicts disrupt the objectives of international integration, particularly in terms of security, economic stability, and political cooperation. Although existing literature has examined the causes and dynamics of conflicts, there is limited focus on how distant conflicts generate indirect yet significant consequences for non-belligerent states, particularly in the Global South. In this regard, Nigeria represents a critical case due to its strategic regional role and economic exposure to global market fluctuations.

Nigeria is significantly affected by the Sudan crisis, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the US, Israel and Iran war through multiple pathways. The conflict in Sudan contributes to instability within Africa, exacerbating regional insecurity, disrupting migration patterns, and placing additional pressure on continental governance structures such as the African Union. As a leading regional actor, Nigeria is often required to engage in peacekeeping, diplomatic mediation, and regional stabilization efforts, which carry financial and political costs.

Similarly, the Russia-Ukraine war has had far-reaching economic implications for Nigeria. Disruptions in global supply chains, particularly in wheat, fertilizer, and energy markets, have intensified inflationary pressures and food insecurity (World Bank, 2023; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2022). Nigeria's dependence on imported refined petroleum products and agricultural inputs increases its vulnerability to such external shocks. In addition, especially plummeted by the current US, Israel and Iran war, fluctuations in global oil prices introduce revenue volatility, complicating macroeconomic planning and fiscal stability.

By situating Nigeria within the broader context of global and regional interdependence, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how distant conflicts reshape national realities in an increasingly interconnected world.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

i. How do regional and global conflicts, particularly in Sudan and Ukraine, affect the dynamics of international and regional integration?
ii. Through what mechanisms do these conflicts impact non-participant states such as Nigeria?
iii. What are the specific economic, political, and security implications of these conflicts for Nigeria?

Conceptual Review

Integration

Integration is the process of bringing countries or regions closer together through economic, political, and social cooperation and integration. Lindberg (1970) opines that integration is the process by which nations forgo the desire and the ability to conduct foreign and key domestic policies independent of one another. In this case, nations seek to make joint decisions or delegate the decision making process to a new central organization, instead of making such decisions independently. Etzioni (1965, in Udeoji, 2019:13), however, understands integration to be a condition. The scholar avers that a political entity which possesses effective control over the use of the means of violence is integrated. Thus, such a community has a center for decision making with the power of allocating resources and rewards throughout the community.

Udeoji (2019:13) acknowledges the importance of integration in international relations and avers that it

primarily deals with sub-regional cooperation and formation of political and economic union between neighbouring countries. The author also understands integration as a phenomenon that reflects transactions that attend to cooperative decision making among states. Hence, integration can be both a process and an outcome. This implies a process of linking an existing system with a future system.

However, integration can take many forms, including economic integration, political integration, and cultural integration. Cole, Lyons, & Cary (1999) define economic integration as an agreement between groups of countries in a geographic region to reduce and ultimately remove tariff and non-tariff barriers to the free flow of goods, services, and factors of production between each other. For Udeoji (2019:16), economic integration refers to trade liberalization or the absence of economic discrimination among economic units.

Political integration refers to the process through which sovereign states coordinate or pool aspects of their political authority, policies, and decision-making structures. It often involves the creation of supranational or intergovernmental institutions that guide collective governance and policy harmonization. According to Haas (1958), political integration is a gradual process in which states shift their loyalties, expectations, and political activities toward a new center with shared institutions and authority. Similarly, Lindberg (1970) argues that integration entails the development of collective decision-making systems in which member states increasingly act as a unified entity.

Furthermore, security integration refers to cooperative arrangements among states aimed at preventing conflict, managing threats, and ensuring collective security. It is based on the recognition that security challenges, such as terrorism, civil wars, and transnational crime, often transcend national borders.

Moreover, economic, political and security integration are central dimensions of regionalism and international cooperation, reflecting efforts by states to coordinate governance, decision-making, and collective responses to threats within an increasingly interdependent global system (Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Nye, 2002).

Regionalism

Regionalism is commonly understood as the grouping of geographically proximate states into cooperative organizations aimed at economic integration. Bono (2016) defines regionalism as the expression of a shared identity and purpose, supported by institutions that shape collective action within a region. It exists alongside multilateralism and unilateralism in the international commercial system.

According to Bono (2016), early regional initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s referred to as “old regionalism” achieved limited success outside Western Europe. A new wave of regional integration emerged in the late 1980s, characterized by deeper economic and political cooperation (Carr, 1945). In Africa, regional frameworks such as the African Union and ECOWAS, among others, have been instrumental to deepen economic, political and security cooperation.

Regional Economic Integration and Growth

Ashakah and Wanogho (2021) argue that regional integration has been widely adopted as a growth and development strategy by both developed and developing countries. Integrated economies benefit from increased trade, capital mobility, and information exchange, which accelerate economic growth (Badinger, 2005). Economic integration is typically measured by the extent of free trade and investment among member states (Prakash & Hart, 2000).

Regionalism is generally understood in terms of economics. Many regions come together to form alliances that are officially and formally recognized, with the goal of economic integration, or creating a cluster of countries whose economies are co-dependent. Regionalism is the expression of a common sense of identity and purpose combined with the creation and implementation of institutions that express a particular identity and shape collective action within a geographical region. Regionalism is one of the three constituents of the international commercial system - along with multilateralism and unilateralism (Bono, 2016).

Bono (2016) further contends that the first coherent regional initiatives began in the 1950s and 1960s, but they accomplished little, except in Western Europe with the establishment of the European Community. Some analysts call these initiatives "old regionalism". However, in the late 1980s, a new wave of regional integration (also called "new regionalism") began and continues still. The new wave of political initiatives prompting regional integration took place worldwide during the last two decades (Carr, 1945)

Thus, regionalism is the grouping of nation-states into regions, or cooperative organizations within geographic proximity. Neighbouring countries that express common interests often come together and become formalized through Regional Integration Agreements or policies that outline a mutual goal of economic integration. A Free

Trade Agreement (FTA) established by these countries eliminates most trade barriers.

Global Conflict

Global conflicts are wars or armed confrontations between states or organized groups driven by such motives as economic gain, territorial expansion, religious or cultural differences, and shifting political power balances. These wars have intensified markedly in recent years. By 2026, global instability had reached alarming levels, with 2024 recording the highest number of active state-based conflicts since 1946. Prominent hotspots include the war in Ukraine following Russia's invasion, the Israel–Hamas/Hezbollah conflict centered in Gaza Strip, Sudan's civil war, and persistent insecurity across the Sahel region, as well as the most current and ongoing US-Israel and Iran war. According to Rustad (2025), 2024 was also the fourth most violent year since the end of the Cold War, driven largely by the civil war in Ethiopia's Tigray region, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and intensified bombardments in Gaza. Contemporary conflicts are increasingly fragmented, frequently involving non-state actors and resulting in large-scale displacement of civilian populations.

The character of conflict has evolved significantly since the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. Today, violence is more often waged between states and non-state actors, including political militias, criminal networks, and transnational terrorist organizations. Structural drivers such as unresolved regional tensions, erosion of the rule of law, weakened or co-opted state institutions, illicit economic exploitation, and resource scarcity exacerbated by climate change have become central to contemporary conflicts (UN75, 2020).

Evidence suggests that in 2016 more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time in nearly three decades, reflecting both the spread and fragmentation of violence. The regionalization of conflict (where political, socio-economic, and military dynamics spill across borders) has contributed to increasingly protracted crises that are less responsive to conventional diplomatic or peacekeeping interventions (UN75, 2020). Furthermore, conflict remains the principal driver of terrorism: over 99 percent of terrorism-related deaths occur in countries already affected by violent conflict or high levels of political terror. The majority of such attacks are concentrated in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, with countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria disproportionately affected (UN75, 2020).

These dynamics carry significant implications for African regional integration. Initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aim to deepen economic cooperation, promote development, and strengthen collective security across the continent. Regional economic communities (RECs), including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), play a central role in advancing these objectives. However, persistent political instability, infrastructural deficits, governance weaknesses, and external geopolitical interference continue to hinder progress. While regional integration aspires to foster unity and enhance collective responses to security threats, African states face ongoing challenges in policy harmonization, institutional coordination, and safeguarding sovereignty amid intensifying global power competition.

Literature Review

Regional Integration in International Relations

Recent scholarship continues to affirm that regional integration is a multidimensional process shaped by political, economic, and security considerations. Classical theories by Haas (1958) and Lindberg (1970) remain foundational, but newer empirical studies increasingly emphasize the uneven and contingent nature of integration outcomes.

For instance, Ashakah and Wanogho (2021) demonstrate that while regional integration in West Africa enhances trade and growth, benefits are asymmetrically distributed. Building on this, more recent analyses highlight structural constraints, such as weak institutions and infrastructural deficits that limit deeper integration in African regional blocs like the ECOWAS (Udeoji, 2019; African Development Bank, 2024).

The African Development Bank (2024) reports that although Africa is projected to experience moderate economic recovery, regional integration remains fragile due to external shocks and internal structural vulnerabilities. This suggests that integration processes are highly sensitive to global disruptions, reinforcing arguments by Nye (2002), on the vulnerability of interdependence to external crises.

From a business and management perspective, recent studies increasingly frame regional integration as a platform for value chain development and market expansion, but also note persistent barriers such as policy inconsistency and geopolitical risks. Firms operating in integrated regions benefit from scale and reduced tariffs, yet remain exposed to systemic shocks that disrupt supply chains and investment flows.

Conflict, Regional Stability, and Economic Systems

The literature on conflict and regional stability consistently demonstrates that violent conflicts undermine integration processes by disrupting economic systems, weakening institutions, and eroding trust among states. According to Buzan and Wæver (2003), regions function as security complexes in which conflicts in one state generate spillover effects across neighboring countries. This interconnectedness implies that regional stability is highly sensitive to internal conflicts.

A 2025 study by Mugoni finds that global conflicts, including the Russia–Ukraine war, have systemic effects on African supply chains, with disruptions in logistics, commodity flows, and production networks disproportionately affecting developing economies. This aligns with earlier findings that global interdependence amplifies vulnerability to external shocks.

Similarly, policy-oriented research shows that the Russia–Ukraine war has affected African economies through three primary transmission channels: trade disruptions, commodity price volatility, and financial tightening. These findings are supported by Halidu (2025), who demonstrates that Nigeria's dependence on imported refined petroleum products has amplified inflationary pressures due to global oil market disruptions.

In their studies, Shao et al. (2024) extend analysis into financial and commodity markets. Their quantitative research on global grain markets reveals high levels of interconnectedness and volatility linked to conflicts, with significant spillover effects across regions. These findings are particularly relevant for business and management, as they highlight increased uncertainty in pricing, procurement, and risk management.

Examining food security and agricultural systems, Happiness et al. (2024) show that the Russia–Ukraine war has significantly worsened food insecurity in Nigeria due to disruptions in wheat and fertilizer supplies. This has direct implications for agribusiness, increasing production costs and reducing output.

Also, Adogbeji (2024) finds that the war has reshaped investment patterns, trade relations, and investor sentiment across Africa, underscoring the strategic implications for firms operating in volatile environments. These findings reinforce the growing consensus that conflict is not only a security issue but also a business risk factor affecting corporate strategy, supply chains, and financial planning.

Recent empirical studies on the conflict in Sudan highlight its devastating economic and regional implications. The war has led to massive economic contraction, destruction of infrastructure, and collapse of productive sectors, including agriculture and trade. Additionally, the scale of displacement, over 12 million people, has created one of the largest humanitarian crises globally, placing pressure on neighboring states and regional systems.

A 2025 comparative study (Onen, 2025) argues that both the Sudan and Ukraine conflicts represent interconnected crises with global ramifications, challenging traditional distinctions between regional and global conflicts. However, while the humanitarian and security dimensions are well documented, there remains limited empirical work on how the Sudan conflict affects regional business ecosystems, trade corridors, and investment climates.

However, emerging geopolitical shifts, such as changing alliances and military withdrawals in West Africa, are reshaping regional security dynamics and influencing investment climates and business risks.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the richness of existing scholarship, several theoretical and empirical gaps remain:

1. **Fragmentation between integration and conflict literatures**
   Much of the literature treats regional integration and conflict as separate domains. While integration studies emphasize cooperation and economic gains, conflict studies focus on instability and disruption. There is limited analytical integration of these perspectives, particularly in understanding how conflicts actively reshape integration processes.
2. **Limited focus on indirect and transnational effects**
   Existing research tends to prioritize direct conflict zones, with insufficient attention to how distant conflicts generate indirect economic, political, and security consequences for non-belligerent states. This gap is particularly evident in studies of African economies affected by global conflicts.
3. **Underrepresentation of business and management dimensions**
   Although macroeconomic impacts are widely discussed, there is a lack of detailed analysis on how conflicts affect firms, supply chains, investment decisions, and corporate strategy. The intersection between international conflict and business operations, especially in emerging markets, remains underexplored.
4. **Insufficient Nigeria-centered analysis**
   While Nigeria is frequently referenced as a regional power within ECOWAS, there is

limited empirical work examining how external conflicts, such as those in Sudan and Ukraine, specifically affect Nigeria's economic stability, security posture, and business environment in an integrated manner.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the theoretical frameworks of neoliberal institutionalism and regionalism.

Neoliberal Institutionalism

Most prominently associated with Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., neoliberal institutionalism argues that despite the anarchic nature of the international system, cooperation among states is both possible and sustainable through institutions (Keohane & Nye, 1977; Keohane, 1984). Contrary to realist assumptions, the theory posits that states are rational actors capable of pursuing mutual gains through structured interaction.

Institutions play a central role by reducing transaction costs, providing information, establishing norms of reciprocity, and facilitating collective action (Keohane, 1984). These functions help mitigate uncertainty and enable states to coordinate policies even in the absence of a central authority.

Within this framework, regional institutions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are seen as mechanisms that enhance interdependence and cooperation. For Nigeria, participation in these institutions facilitates trade liberalization, conflict management, and regional policy coordination.

Application to Conflict Dynamics

Neoliberal institutionalism helps explain how conflicts disrupt institutionalized cooperation:

i) In Sudan, the breakdown of political order undermines the ability of regional institutions to enforce norms and mediate conflict effectively, illustrating the dependence of institutions on member-state stability.

ii) In the Russia–Ukraine war, the imposition of sanctions, breakdown of trade agreements, and geopolitical rivalry have weakened global institutional frameworks, increasing uncertainty and transaction costs (IMF, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

For Nigeria, these disruptions translate into economic and institutional challenges, including supply chain instability, inflationary pressures, and reduced effectiveness of multilateral cooperation mechanisms.

Regionalism Theory

Regionalism complements neoliberal institutionalism by focusing on the geopolitical and socio-economic factors that drive states to organize into regional groupings. Scholars such as Andrew Hurrell and Louise Fawcett conceptualize regions as sub-systems within the global order, characterized by dense interactions and shared interests (Hurrell, 1995; Fawcett, 2004).

Regional integration is understood as a multidimensional process encompassing economic cooperation, political coordination, and security collaboration. It is shaped by both internal dynamics, such as shared identity and proximity, and external pressures, including globalization and geopolitical competition.

A key assumption of regionalism is that increased interdependence reduces the likelihood of conflict and promotes stability. However, contemporary conflicts challenge this assumption by demonstrating that integration can coexist with, and even be undermined by geopolitical rivalries.

Application to Conflict Dynamics

i) The conflict in Sudan illustrates how internal instability can generate regional spillovers, including displacement, economic disruption, and security threats, thereby weakening regional cohesion (International Crisis Group, 2023).

ii) The war between Russia and Ukraine demonstrates that even highly integrated regions are vulnerable to conflict. Despite strong institutional frameworks in Europe, geopolitical tensions persist, highlighting the limits of integration (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

For Nigeria, regionalism explains its leadership role within ECOWAS and its strategic interest in maintaining regional stability. It also highlights Nigeria's exposure to spillover effects from both regional and global conflicts.

Together, both neoliberal institutionalism and regionalism provide a robust analytical lens for understanding how cooperation is structured and sustained in the international system, as well as how such cooperation is disrupted by conflict. While neoliberal institutionalism explains the mechanisms that facilitate cooperation under anarchy, regionalism explains the spatial, political, and historical dynamics that drive states to organize into regional subsystems.

The combined framework also explains how disruptions translate into business challenges, including supply chain instability, rising costs, and investment uncertainty (World Bank, 2023; African Development Bank, 2024).

Neoliberal institutionalism and regionalism together provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay between cooperation and conflict in the international system. They explain how institutions facilitate integration, why such integration is regionally organized, and how it is disrupted by crises. Applied to the cases of Sudan and Ukraine, these frameworks illuminate the complex dynamics shaping regional stability and highlight the strategic position of Nigeria within an interconnected global order.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in document analysis of secondary sources. Document analysis is particularly suited for examining complex political, economic, and institutional phenomena, as it enables the systematic interpretation of textual materials to generate meaning, develop empirical knowledge, and draw contextualized inferences (Bowen, 2009). Data were collected from a diverse range of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy reports, and publications from international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and African Development Bank. In addition, reputable news outlets were consulted to capture recent developments in the conflicts in Sudan and between Russia and Ukraine. The analysis synthesizes existing research on Nigeria's participation in regional integration initiatives such as ECOWAS and AfCFTA, the evolution and implications of the Sudan and Ukraine conflicts, and broader scholarship on regionalism and global political economy.

Documents were selected based on their relevance to key themes in this study, such as regional integration (e.g., ECOWAS, AfCFTA), conflict dynamics (Sudan crisis or Russia–Ukraine war), and Nigeria's political, economic, or security context. Preference was given to peer-reviewed journal articles and publications by recognized institutions. Also, studies that focus on Africa, global political economy, and regions directly affected by the conflicts were prioritized. This systematic selection approach enhances the validity and reliability of the findings by ensuring that only high-quality and relevant materials inform the analysis (Bowen, 2009).

Moreover, the study employs thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within data. The analysis follows the six-phase framework developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006), that is, familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and interpretation and synthesis. Through thematic analysis and critical synthesis, the study evaluates the complex and multilayered interactions between regional integration mechanisms and global conflicts. This qualitative approach enables an in-depth exploration of institutional dynamics, political-economic linkages, and security implications that may not be easily quantifiable but are essential to understanding the broader structural relationships under investigation.

This methodological approach enables a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the interactions between regional integration and global conflicts. By combining rigorous document selection with systematic thematic analysis, the study provides robust insights into how conflicts in Sudan and Ukraine shape institutional dynamics, economic systems, and the strategic position of Nigeria within the global order.

Results and Discussion of Findings

This section synthesizes the empirical evidence from the reviewed literature and interprets the findings through the lenses of regional integration, conflict dynamics, and Nigeria's economic and security environment. The discussion highlights both the measurable gains of integration and the disruptive effects of contemporary conflicts, particularly in Sudan and between Russia and Ukraine.

Continental Progress and Measurable Outcomes

The findings indicate that Africa's regional integration agenda, anchored in the Abuja Treaty and operationalized through frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), has generated tangible economic benefits, albeit unevenly distributed. Empirical evidence suggests that free trade areas (FTAs) significantly enhance intra-regional trade, investment flows, and market efficiency (Kawai & Wignaraja, 2008; CSEA, 2023).

Recent assessments show that AfCFTA has the potential to increase intra-African trade by over 50% in the medium term, reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, and facilitate cross-border value chains and industrialization (World Bank, 2020; African Development Bank, 2024).

At the firm level, the emergence of large African multinational corporations, such as Dangote Group and United Bank for Africa, demonstrates how integration

fosters business expansion, regional market penetration, and economies of scale (Animasaun, 2018). These firms operate across multiple African markets, leveraging integration frameworks to reduce transaction costs and expand operations.

Nigeria's Strategic and Economic Advantages

Empirical data confirms that Nigeria is a central actor in West African integration. This means that Nigeria accounts for approximately 42% of ECOWAS GDP (World Bank Development Indicators, 2020), it contributes about 23% of intra-regional trade volume (UNCTAD, 2020), and plays a leading role in regional policy coordination and economic diplomacy within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). These indicators reflect measurable advantages of integration, including expanded export markets and trade diversification, increased capital mobility and financial integration, and strengthened regional influence and geopolitical leverage.

Studies further show that integration enhances economic growth through increased trade openness, knowledge transfer, and investment flows (Badinger, 2005; Ashakah & Wanogho, 2021). From a business perspective, Nigerian firms benefit from larger consumer markets, reduced tariffs, and improved logistics networks, which collectively support profitability and competitiveness.

Disruptions from the Sudan Conflict and Regional Implications

Security and Institutional Disruptions

The conflict in Sudan has produced severe regional destabilization, with empirical evidence pointing to over millions of internally displaced persons and refugees (UNOCHA, 2023), brought about the collapse of infrastructure and economic systems, as well as the weakening of state institutions and governance structures. These disruptions directly undermine regional integration processes by interrupting trade corridors linking North Africa, the Sahel, and the Horn of Africa, increasing transaction costs and uncertainty in cross-border exchanges and straining regional institutions such as the African Union.

Spillover Effects on Nigeria's Security Environment

The findings of the study also show that Sudan's instability generates transnational security spillovers. The proliferation of small arms, movement of armed groups, and refugee flows through Chad into West Africa increase regional insecurity (Durmaz, 2023; Obasi, 2023).

For Nigeria, this translates into heightened pressure on already fragile security systems (e.g., insurgency, banditry), increased risk of arms trafficking and militant infiltration and greater financial and military commitments to regional peacekeeping. These outcomes demonstrate how regional conflicts weaken security integration mechanisms, limiting the effectiveness of collective responses under ECOWAS and the African Union.

Economic and Strategic Impacts of the Russia–Ukraine War

Global Economic Disruptions

The war between Russia and Ukraine has generated measurable global economic shocks, such as, sharp increases in energy prices, particularly in Europe (International Energy Agency, 2023), disruptions in grain exports, with Ukraine and Russia accounting for a significant share of global wheat supply and rising fertilizer prices, affecting agricultural productivity globally. These disruptions have led to global inflationary pressures, supply chain instability, increased production and operational costs for businesses.

Implications for Nigeria's Economy and Business Environment

The findings reveal significant economic consequences, rising food prices due to dependence on imported wheat and fertilizers (IMF, 2022; World Bank, 2023), increased fuel costs linked to global oil market volatility, currency pressures and fiscal instability, higher input costs and reduced profit margins, supply chain disruptions affecting manufacturing and agriculture, and increased uncertainty in investment planning.

However, the findings also reveal strategic advantages, such as, higher global oil prices which can increase government revenue in the short term, opportunities for import substitution and local production, and incentives to diversify trade partnerships and strengthen regional supply chains.

Implications for Regional Integration Processes

Erosion and Resilience of Integration Frameworks

The results show that while regional integration frameworks such as AfCFTA and ECOWAS provide mechanisms for cooperation, they are highly vulnerable to external shocks. Conflicts disrupt integration through reduced trade flows and market fragmentation, weakening of institutional coordination and increased protectionist tendencies among states. However, integration frameworks also demonstrate resilience by

providing platforms for collective response and policy coordination, encouraging intra-regional trade as a buffer against global disruptions and supporting regional supply chain development.

Nigeria's Dual Role in Integration and Crisis Response

The findings highlight Nigeria's dual position in integration first as a beneficiary of integration making gains from expanded markets, trade and investments with strengthened regional influence. And, secondly, as a vulnerable actor with exposure to global economic shocks and security spillovers from regional conflicts.

This duality underscores the complexity of Nigeria's role in regional integration, where benefits are closely intertwined with risks.

Limitations of the Study

There are a couple of limitations to be noted when interpreting these findings. Firstly, the study focuses primarily on Nigeria within the broader frameworks of ECOWAS and AfCFTA, alongside two major conflicts (Sudan and Russia–Ukraine). This limited scope may overlook other relevant regional conflicts or African countries whose experiences could provide comparative insights.

Secondly, the study depends solely on existing literature, which may reflect institutional, ideological, or geopolitical biases. This may influence interpretations of conflicts such as Sudan and the Russia–Ukraine war, as well as assessments of regional integration outcomes.

Thirdly, although the study references empirical statistics, it does not employ quantitative methods to test relationships or measure the magnitude of impacts. This limits the ability to generalize findings or establish causal relationships with statistical precision.

And lastly, both the Sudan conflict and the Russia–Ukraine war are ongoing and evolving. As such, the findings reflect conditions within a specific time frame and may not fully capture future developments, long-term impacts, or shifting geopolitical dynamics.

Conclusion

Regional integration remains a key feature of contemporary international politics as states pursue collective solutions for economic development and security. Nigeria's active role in ECOWAS and continental initiatives highlights the importance of cooperative frameworks. Yet, protracted conflicts, as seen in Sudan and Ukraine, illustrate how violence can disrupt integration processes, strain socio-economic systems, and produce far-reaching global implications. The findings suggest that building resilient regional institutions and comprehensive conflict-prevention strategies is crucial for sustaining integration efforts and mitigating the adverse effects of geopolitical crises.

According to the World Bank, regional integration enables countries to overcome geographic, infrastructural, and policy-induced barriers to economic growth by facilitating the flow of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas. However, when cooperation breaks down and conflicts arise, the consequences are devastating at both regional and global levels, as evidenced by the Sudan and Ukraine crises.

Despite these challenges, Nigeria's engagement in regional and global integration has yielded substantial economic benefits. Through trade expansion, capital mobility, and institutional cooperation, regional integration remains a viable strategy for growth and development. Nevertheless, sustaining these gains requires political stability, effective conflict management, and stronger regional cooperation frameworks.

Overall, regional integration generates measurable economic and strategic advantages, including trade expansion, market access, and business growth. Conflicts such as those in Sudan and Ukraine significantly disrupt these gains by destabilizing economic systems, weakening institutions, and increasing security risks. Nigeria's position as a regional leader amplifies both its benefits and vulnerabilities, making it a critical case for understanding the interplay between integration and conflict.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Nigerian government should reduce overdependence on oil by investing in agriculture, manufacturing, and technology sectors. It should prioritize policies that encourage local production and import substitution to cushion the effects of global supply chain disruptions.
2. Nigeria and ECOWAS member states should deepen the implementation of the AfCFTA by reducing non-tariff barriers, improving customs efficiency, and harmonizing trade policies. They should leverage on the AfCFTA to develop regional value chains, particularly in agriculture and manufacturing, to reduce reliance on extra-African imports. When institutional capacity of regional bodies are strengthened, they can

respond more effectively to external shocks and conflicts.

3. Nigeria should intensify collaboration with ECOWAS and the African Union in intelligence sharing, joint border patrols, and coordinated counterterrorism efforts. There is a need to strengthen mechanisms for controlling the proliferation of small arms and managing refugee flows across borders.
4. Policymakers should adopt measures to manage inflation, stabilize exchange rates, and mitigate the impact of global commodity price shocks.

Areas for further research

Prospective studies need to be done using longitudinal approach to track how regional integration frameworks evolve over time in response to recurring global and regional crises. They should focus research on areas such as, arms trafficking, insurgency dynamics, and border security in West Africa, which this research focus did not reach. Such research could employ econometric models to measure the precise impact of conflicts (e.g., Sudan, Ukraine) on trade flows, inflation, investment, and security indicators within Nigeria and the ECOWAS region, as well as compare Nigeria with other African regional powers such as South Africa or Kenya to better understand variations in how countries respond to integration opportunities and external shocks. In all, there is a need for in-depth analysis of specific sectors such as agriculture, energy, and manufacturing to understand how global disruptions affect production systems and value chains differently.

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