

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

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Abstract. This article analyzes the essence, stages of formation, and the role of international economic integration in the modern global economy. It scientifically examines the main forms of integration, including free trade areas, customs unions, common markets, and economic and monetary unions. Furthermore, the paper highlights the advantages and potential negative consequences of international economic integration, its impact on the competitiveness of national economies, and its significance under globalization conditions. Practical examples of regional economic associations are also discussed, focusing on their influence on trade volume, investment flows, and economic growth. The conclusion provides recommendations on strengthening economic cooperation among countries and outlines future prospects of integration processes.

Keywords: international economic integration, globalization, free trade area, customs union, common market, economic union, competitiveness.

Introduction. The increasing globalization of the world economy is fundamentally driven by the expansion of international trade relations (exports and imports) among countries, i.e., economic integration. These integration processes are primarily observed in highly developed industrial and service regions, as well as within various economic unions. The economic capacity and development level of industrialized nations play a decisive role in advancing integration.

Today, no country can achieve sustainable development without integrating into the global economic system. The internationalization of national economies is an essential aspect of the development of productive forces, encompassing all countries regardless of their political or socio-economic systems. A qualitatively new stage of this internationalization is economic integration, which plays a crucial role in accelerating the exchange of production and capital among nations.

Understanding these processes is of practical importance for accelerating Uzbekistan's integration into the global community and identifying effective directions for broader participation in international economic integration.

Theoretical Background of Economic Integration. At the current stage of global economic development, integration processes have emerged in various forms across all continents. Since the 1950s, leading industrial countries have experienced rapid development, accompanied by improvements in international transport and communication systems. This has led to the accelerated growth of international trade in goods and services.

In addition to trade, the international movement of production factors—capital, labor, and technology—has significantly increased. High-quality products are now produced not only within national borders but also abroad. These developments have created the foundation for international economic integration.

International economic integration can be defined as a process of economic, socio-political, and cultural unification of countries based on stable, multilateral relationships and the

international division of labor. It reflects the interdependence of production sectors at different levels and in various forms (Nazarova et al., 2010).

Scholars offer different interpretations of integration. One group views it as a mechanism to overcome global resource limitations by facilitating the flow of goods and services between countries. According to this perspective, countries can reduce production costs by importing cheaper goods and focusing on technological exchange and innovation. Another group emphasizes non-economic factors, such as strengthening national defense. A third group considers integration as a means to achieve stable economic growth and socio-political stability more efficiently.

In general, integration can be understood as a process of convergence and interpenetration of national economic systems through the creation of a qualitatively new economic environment at the regional level.

Levels and Factors of Integration. Integration processes occur at two main levels:

- **Micro level:** Through the establishment of transnational corporations and cross-border business activities.
- **Macro level:** Through the coordination of national economic policies and the formation of interstate economic unions.

At the micro level, integration develops through economic interactions among firms located in geographically close countries. This includes the creation of subsidiaries, branches, and joint ventures, leading to the expansion of trade, services, and the free movement of capital and labor.

At the macro level, integration is achieved by forming economic alliances and harmonizing national policies. Several objective factors drive integration:

- The increasing internationalization of economic life
- The deepening of the international division of labor
- The global impact of the scientific and technological revolution
- The growing openness of national economies

These factors are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing within the global economic system.

Role of Internationalization and Global Factors. Internationalization reflects the expansion of stable economic relations among countries and the extension of reproduction processes beyond national borders, primarily based on the international division of labor. Transnational corporations (TNCs) play a significant role in this process. According to UNCTAD, there are more than 65,000 TNCs and over 850,000 affiliated enterprises worldwide.

Another important factor is the structural transformation of the international division of labor, largely driven by technological advancements. Countries specialize in producing specific goods, while production processes are distributed across firms and nations.

The modern stage of the scientific and technological revolution has significantly enhanced both market and production integration, increasing the importance of external economic relations in the reproduction process.

Open Economy and Integration. The degree of openness of national economies plays a crucial role in deepening international economic relations. Cooperation among firms from different countries leads to large-scale international challenges in production and investment.

Export-oriented development strategies and policies that attract foreign capital, technology, and skilled labor are essential for fostering open economies.

Conclusion. International economic integration is a key driver of global economic development, strengthening cooperation among countries and enhancing their competitiveness. While integration offers numerous benefits, such as increased trade, investment, and economic growth, it may also create challenges, including economic dependence and unequal development.

For countries like Uzbekistan, active participation in integration processes is essential for sustainable development. Therefore, it is important to develop effective strategies that maximize the benefits of integration while minimizing its potential risks.

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