



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2022.3.20>

UDC 327.7(6):339.92
LBC 66.4(6),61

Submitted: 29.04.2021
Accepted: 01.03.2022

AFRICAN UNION AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES: PROBLEMS, BENEFITS AND PROSPECTS OF COLLABORATIONS FOR INTEGRATION

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Abstract. *Introduction.* African Union's regional economic communities are stronghold for the African continent towards economic integration in various sub-regions and sectors of the African people. Their efforts have further deepen both trade and political interests among them which have equally boosted the integration drive of the African Union for the overall benefits of the Africans. Their moves have articulated many incentive, for more investments and attraction of Foreign Direct Investment that have brought continental reforms like stabilization, market policy, liberalization and privatisation methods adopted for regional arrangements to increase both private and public investments. *Methods and materials.* The paper adopts secondary source of data to elicit information while it makes use of the study towards economic, monetary market development and political union in African. *Analysis and Results.* The paper posits to examine their areas of dimensions, problems and prospects for collaboration to maximize economic goals and objectives which include security governance, economic growth, etc. The paper identifies problems like over concentration with the regional economic communities and their attendant peculiarities, while it notes the prospects of joint activities between the African Union and the regional economic Communities to build their capacities, harmonize and coordinate their institutions towards collaborations.

Key words: African integration, common market, regional economic communities, sovereignty, trade integration, Customs Union.

Citation. Mustapha Ayodele Haruna. African Union and Regional Economic Communities: Problems, Benefits and Prospects of Collaborations for Integration. *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya 4. Istoriya. Regionovedenie. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya* [Science Journal of Volgograd State University. History. Area Studies. International Relations], 2022, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 279-295. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2022.3.20>

УДК 327.7(6):339.92
ББК 66.4(6),61

Дата поступления статьи: 29.04.2021
Дата принятия статьи: 01.03.2022

АФРИКАНСКИЙ СОЮЗ И РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ СООБЩЕСТВА: ПРОБЛЕМЫ, ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА ДЛЯ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ

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Аннотация. Региональные экономические сообщества Африканского союза являются опорой Африканского континента для экономической интеграции различных субрегионов и слоев населения Африки. Их усилия определили как торговые, так и политические интересы между ними, что в равной степени поддержало стремление Африканского союза к интеграции на благо африканцев. Их действия способствовали появлению стимулов для увеличения инвестиций и привлечения прямых иностранных вложений,

которые привели к континентальным реформам. В их основе лежит политика стабилизации рынка, либерализация и приватизация, принятая для увеличения как частных, так и государственных инвестиций. В статье изучены аспекты экономического, валютного развития рынка и особенности современного функционирования политического союза в Африке. Предлагается изучить области измерения, проблемы и перспективы сотрудничества для максимизации экономических целей и задач, которые включают управление безопасностью, экономический рост и т. д. Определены такие проблемы, как чрезмерная концентрация с региональными экономическими сообществами и сопутствующие им особенности, в то же время отмечаются перспективы совместной деятельности Африканского союза и региональных экономических сообществ по наращиванию их потенциала, гармонизации и координации их институтов в направлении сотрудничества.

Ключевые слова: африканская интеграция, общий рынок, региональные экономические сообщества, суверенитет, торговая интеграция, Таможенный союз.

Цитирование. Мустафа Айоделе Харуна. Африканский союз и региональные экономические сообщества: проблемы, преимущества и перспективы сотрудничества для интеграции // Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета. Серия 4, История. Регионоведение. Международные отношения. – 2022. – Т. 27, № 3. – С. 279–295. – (На англ. яз.). – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2022.3.20>

INTRODUCTION

Greater African integration has long been a cherished aspiration and desirable, though there are no tangible efforts towards its goal realization [57, p. 213]. There is great support from African states for regional integration ever since their independence is an important component of their development strategies which have a very great number of regional integration arrangements of which have significant membership overlap in such multilateral and bilateral relations [28, p. 2]. The idea of better integrating African countries and regions has far been promoted by political leaders in speeches, official conferences and formal treaties, although, few result noted [27, p. 2].

For many ordinary Africans, the things that divide them are less important than what unites them: an understanding that they are all Africans and that they have common interest in promoting the closest political, economic, and human ties across natural boundaries [27].

After independence, regional integration became a pillar of Africa's developmental strategy, pan-Africanism, an ideology which emphasizes continental unity and strong identification with ongoing anti-colonial struggles was the ultimate of Africa's developmental framework. From the beginning of the decolonization process in the 1960s, the establishment of sub-regional economic communities was a significant part of Africa's development strategy [59]. Since independence, states in Africa have been involved in regional

economic integration as a strategy for solving their developmental challenges. This is a result of continental integration which has been identified as a pivotal factor in the promotion of economic development and cooperation [11, p. 6]. Regional integration has been a dominant process in African efforts to build multilateral institutions for development and security through economic cooperation and political coordination. In a system of multiple states that adhered to territorial boundaries and natural sovereignty. Integration has been perceived as a compromise between nationalism and Supranationalism. African attempts at integration have operated within the overarching framework of incrementally accelerating the capacity for shared sovereignties and problem – solving in the economic and political perspectives [37] and [62].

AFRICA'S REGIONAL ECONOMICS COMMUNITIES (RECs)

Regional communities in Africa are the integration arrangement which have grown over the years. These regional communities have aided integration through establishing macroeconomic convergence and unimpeded transit facilitation, reducing cost and improving overall efficiency in transportation. The underlying philosophies for the development have been informed by the contextual factors of neo-liberalism, globalization and the quest for regional and countries' political stabilities. All the regional economic communities

have introduced instruments in one form or another to promote free trade amongst members countries. They have improved integration by creating inter-country connectivity through the global revolution in telecom technology, the growing commercialization and privatization of national services. They have brought visible cooperation in early warning systems, agricultural research and capacity building through knowledge sharing [16]. They are recognized in the Abuja Treaty as the building blocks towards an African Economic Community (AEC), with level of autonomy [48]. All the RECs contained elements of functional cooperation in addition to economic integration [68]. It binds the already established structures and gives a head beginning for the continental body and as they are with the World Trade Organization (WTO) governance and rule order, they feature as the best global practices in trade [4]. The following are the notable Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa:

1. Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD).

CEN-SAD is a framework and platform for integration and complementarities in the region. Its aim is to work together with other regional economic communities and African Union to Strengthen peace, security and stability to achieve global and regional economic/social development [41, p. 79]. It was established in 1998 with 24 countries as members. It has the following objectives for regional economic integration:

(i) Establishment of a comprehensive economic union based on a strategy implemented in accordance with a development plan that would be integrated in the national development of the member states which includes investment in agricultural, industrial social, cultural, and energy fields.

(ii) Elimination of all obstacles impeding the unity of its member states through adopting measures that would guarantee the following: facilitating the free movement of individuals, capital and meeting the interest of members states citizens; freedom of residence, work, ownership, and economic activity; freedom of the movement of national goods, merchandise and service, encouragement of foreign trade through drawing up and implementing and investment policy for members states; enhancement and improvement of land, air and sea transportation and telecommunication among member states through

the implementation of joint projects, and the consent of the community member states to give the citizens of member states the same rights and privileges provided for in the constitution of each member states.

(iii) Coordination of pedagogical and educational systems at the various educational levels as well as in the cultural scientific and technical fields with new focus on:

(iv) Regional security and

(v) Sustainable Development [72].

Likewise, market integration is in focus of CEN-SAD which include: trade liberalization programme that deal with non-tariff barriers and other trade promoting activities as a part of the proposed free trade area – FTA, while member states are equally members of other African regional economic communities that have gone considerably further in their trade integration processes thereby making the political and economic incentives for further CEN-SAD integration high [72].

2. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

COMESA was founded in 1933 as a successor to the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA), which was established in 1981. It formally succeeded the PTA in 1994 with the transformation of PTA into common market [41, p. 79]. Its 19 members are landlocked creating an underlying need for regional integration while four (4) of the nineteen are island states. It is to create a fully integrated and internationally competitive and unified region through the creation of a Free Trade Area (FTA), the customs union, a common market in which there is a free movement between members states of labour, capital goods as well as service to be accomplished with the mission and vision, its 2011–2015 strategic plans aims at an operational common market are identified below:

i. Removal of barriers to factor mobility.

ii. Building competitive productive capacity.

iii. Addressing supply-side constraints related infrastructure.

iv. Peace and security.

v. General issues.

vi. Institutional development [17].

COMESA therefore concerns the following:

• Regional infrastructure.

- Trade integration.
- Production integration.
- Free movement of people.
- Financial and macroeconomic integration (Africa Regional integration index), the abolition of all non-tariff barriers to trade among themselves and elimination of tariff in originating product as adopted in 1992 [26, p. 299]

3. East African Community (EAC).

It is a regional intergovernmental organization of 6 partner states established, signed on November 30, 1999 and entered into force on July 7, 2000 following ratification. As one of the fastest growing regional economic blocs in the world, the EAC is widening and deepening co-operation among the partner states in various spheres like political, economic and social. Its integrated process is in full stage with the East African Customs Union, common market and implement Union protocol [51, p. 3; 72]. It maintains the following freedom of movement for all the factors of production and product among member's states:

- Free movement of goods
- Free movement of persons
- Free movement of labour/workers
- Free movement of services
- Free movement of capitals
- Right of Establishment
- Right of Residence [51, p. 3; 72]

4. Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

It was founded in 1983 and has 10 as member states. It is an organization for the promotion of regional economic co-operation in Central Africa. It is to achieve collective autonomy, raise the standard of living of its population and maintains economic stability through harmonious co-operation. ECCAS is the largest economic community in central Africa, regrouping the member states of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), overtime to the promotion of economic cooperation and development through the progressive creation of a central African single market. It adopted treaty that provides a road map towards the establishment of tariff and non-tariff barriers, external common customs tariff and a common trade policy [30]. In 2007, it adopted a strategic vision for 2025 with priorities in peace, infrastructures, energy, water, and environment [31].

5. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

It was established in 1975 by 15 member states across the West African sub-region. It is for the integration of economic policy and improving political cooperation, establishment of a common market, free trade and a common currency. It has the following regional integration mode:

- Elimination between member states customs duties and other charges of equivalent effect on imports and exports.
- Elimination of quantitative and administrative restriction on trade among members.
- Establishment of a common external tariff structure and commercial policy towards non-members states.
- Elimination of obstacles restricting the free movement of persons, services and capital between member states, harmonize agriculture policies and promote common projects in the member states notably in the field of marketing research and agro-industrial enterprises.
- Implementation of schemes for the joint development of transport, communication, energy and other infrastructural facilities as well as the evaluation of a common policy in these fields.
- Harmonization of economic and industrial policies of member states and eliminate disparities in the level of development of member states.
- Harmonization of monetary policies of member states.
- Establishment of a fund for cooperation, compensation and development.
- Embarkent on other activities in the interest of member states within the community [50, p. 2; 63, p. 3].

ECOWAS has introduced a common passport to travel across the region freely, established national committees to address non-tariffs and established complaints desks' at borders, all towards regional integration both at the sub-region and continental levels [26, p. 229]. The West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) was formed by the francophone West African countries after Heads of state of ECOWAS agreed in principle to operationally take-off single currency for the region in 2020 but being delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic [53, p. 131].

6. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

It was created in 1996 with 8 countries to succeed the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development and Development that was founded in 1986 to deal with issues related to drought and desertification in the Horn of Africa. It is to assist and complement the efforts of the member states to achieve through increase cooperation in food security and environmental protection, peace and security, economic cooperation and integration in the region with the following objective:

- Promote joint development strategies and gradually harmonize macro-economic policies and programmes in the social, technological and scientific fields.
- Harmonize policies with regard to trade – customs, transport, communications, agriculture and natural resources promote free movement of goods, services and people with the region.
- Create an enabling environment for foreign cross-border and domestic trade and investment
- Achieve regional food security, encourage and assist efforts of member states to collectively combat drought and other natural and man-made disasters and their natural consequences.
- Initiate and promote programmes and projects for sustainable development of natural resources and environmental protection.
- Develop and improve a coordinated and complementary infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy in the region [73]
- Developing strategies and concepts of regional relevance and capacity building [45, p. 23].

7. Southern African Development Commission (SADC).

It is a regional Economic Community comprising 16 member states established in 1992, focused on regional integration and poverty eradication within southern Africa through economic development and ensuring peace and security. The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) outlines a series of milestones to be achieved within the framework of the SADC common agreements. It covers free trade area, customs union, common market monetary union and single currency [67].

SADC is established with the objectives like: promoting sustainable and equitable economic growth and social – economic development; enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged areas through regional integration, promote common political values systems and other shared values, consolidate defend and maintain democracy, peace security and stability, promote self-reliance and the interdependence of member states [26, p. 299]. The SADC is home to a number of countries, all of them striving to improve their investment, environment to attract foreign investors by reducing the cost of doing business in the region as one way of achieving this is by setting targets for and speeding up political and economic integration, improve connectivity thereby enlarging the marketing size and enhancing its attractiveness [32, p. 2].

8. Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

It was established in 1989 with five (5) countries. It is to strengthen economic cooperation and achieve regional economic integration, while respecting each country's political, economic and social interest. Members aspire to reach a common stance in foreign affairs and national defence, custom union, economic common market [14]. The creation of AMU was perceived as a response to the vulnerability of the region's regimes.

It has the following objectives:

- Strengthening the ties of brotherhood which link the member states and their people to one another.
- Achieving progress and prosperity of their societies and defending their rights.
- Contributing to the preservation of peace based on justice and equity.
- Pursing a common policy indifferent domain.
- Working gradually towards achieving free movement of persons and transfer of service goods and capital among them [73].

CURRENT STATE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATIONS IN EACH OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

Generally, there have been changes and issues to the regional economic communities

due to time, perception and unforeseen realities over the few years to the study under consideration.

1. Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN=SAD).

There had occurred rural terrorism across the region that is, destabilization which threaten the local security governance Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso are now being run by the military juntas through coup d'etat in recent times, overthrown their governments as well as suspended all democratic system and institutional.

Organized crimes in large scale have deeping economic instability and crisis with manifest displayed of abject poverty across member states of the region. Erosion, pastoralism and deforestation in the increase. As such, little has been achieved politically and economically for the region.

2. The Common Market for Eastern And Southern African (COMESA).

- **Economics:** it has been able to harmonized monetary, banking and financial policies in the region while improved the management of transport, the reduction in tariffs among member states and trade facilitation.

- **Political:** fragile conditions with government variations. Making progress but not steady enough.

3. East Africa Community (EAC).

Political: political elites in the region are greatly cooperating resulting into two areas: the rent – oriented coalition where both wanted greater wealth but through different methods to maintain administration and physical hindrances to trade for continuing collecting rents on one hand and while the other wants to improve trade by increasing export [76]. Making in road into economic and political headway, but still little enough.

4. Economic Community of Central African States.

Political instability to peace and security as states descend into failed and anarchic level due to civil wars, crimes and governance failure etc. no progressive headway in both economic and political perspectives achieved.

5. Economic Community of West African States.

Countries in the region have been traumatized by the upsurge of military takeover of governance.

Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso have experienced military coup over the last one year.

Corruption has been widespread as states are fragile based on internal security challenges and inraction by both political and terrorism (insurgency) and related crimes. Human and arms trafficking are common place.

Economy: inflation and devaluation of currencies and crisis of development. It has been drawn back politically but making steady economic progress.

6. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

(i) **Economic** recovery and massive drought and other natural disasters, farmer, ecological disasters and economic hardship. It is a donor funded dependent stats.

(ii) **Political:** Terrorism (Mozambique) on the rise, political instability, cross border crises, refugee and migration related problem associated with social, cultural and institutional issues.

7. Southern African Development Commision (SADC).

Economic: 2020 was a result of a drop in construction, transport, communication manufacturing and mining while the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by 8.2%. Economic inequality, rising debts and joblessness.

Political instability cases on the rise. Health related issues high with recent COVID-19 outbreak and its fatalities and the effects of Ebola Virus disease [19; 66].

8. Arab Magreb Union (AMU).

Political: Instability, insurgency and terrorism are factor to economic disequilibrium. Various socio political and cultural variables usually trigger the economy to the worst side of it based on the state fragility tendencies.

Economic: Most member states have suffered from economic crises as a result of civil wars in Libya, Sudan, crises in Algeria, etc. [3, p. 110]. No political headway and economic state has been precarious for the region.

Russians/Africans for robust relations have equally written on African regional economic communities which include scholars like: [24; 75; 74; 39; 64; 9, p. 8].

Essentially, external debts are crippling the economic fortunes of African states and

liberalization has not however brings improved productivity and efficiency [10, p. 2]. Nevertheless, African Union will facilitate cooperation, promote trade, greatly reduce poverty among its member states and sustain development and growth [54]. It is the contribution of regional economic integrative drive in financing infrastructures, projects management and technical skill in countries of Africa [18].

AU Dimensions:

1. Free movement of people – 0.75.
2. Social integration – 0.60.
3. Trade – 0.78.
4. Financial – 0.60.
5. Monetary – 0.60.
6. Infrastructures – 0.63.
7. Environment – 0.70.
8. Political/institution – 0.70.

Development index as shown in Figure 1. The cycle ensures the interpretability of political will and the resulting forms and stages of cooperation. As the arrows indicate the further they go in the stages of cooperation, the thicker the cooperation as from the highlight at A – D, the emphasis for infrastructures backed by political will, from D furthers on the cycle is more robust as integration has become thicker and possibly self-perpetuating. The regional integration development model for reviving African economies imperatives can be harnessed by stressing the implementation of meaningful development policies at regional and continental levels [72].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Integration theory has been adopted to navigate the study as why states choose supranationalism which challenges the foundation of realism (state sovereignty and territorial integrity). It refers to the process by which supranational institutions replace national ones, depicting the gradual shifting upward of sovereignty from state to regional or global structures. The ultimate expression of integration would be the merger of several (or many) states into a single state or ultimately into a single world government. Such a shift in sovereignty to the supranational level would probably entail some version of federalism, in which states or other political units recognize the sovereignty of a central government while retaining certain powers for themselves [22, p. 356].

Neofunctionalism was considered as a concept of political integration process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing nation states [25, p. 366; 43]. Consequently, the merger of the French and German steel (iron) and coal industries into a single framework considered important to European recovery and growth. Great thinkers and proponents of the integration theory include [20; 35; 43; 47, 60]. The main characteristic of the theory is that it originated in the western tradition of pluralists interest groups/politics and in the theoretical assumptions about the political impact of intensified economic interdependence based on

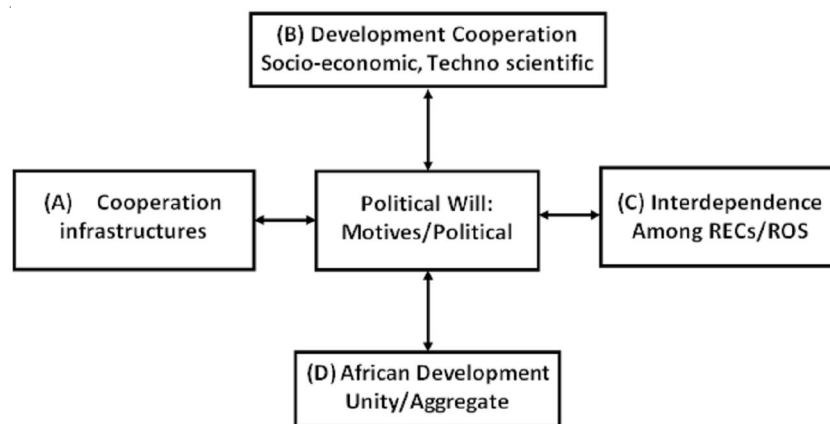


Fig. 1. A model for Regionalism – Development Nexus in Africa

Note. Source: [72].

liberal capitalist international policies and practices [36, p. 128].

The linkage and relevance of the theory to the study is to provide a framework for understanding the new impetus among regional economic communities, the African union and the collaborations for integration with coordinated regional institutional structures with particular focus on economic, monetary and political union. It amid for the integration and mobilization of the input of African RECs in the integration process of the African Union.

Methodology. The study used exploratory method conducted on eight (8) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) over the years to explain their level of integration in terms of regional economic and political union for their development and growth. The method made use of secondary source to analyse the study through the use of textbooks, journals and internet materials related to the study.

Challenges/problems associated with Regional Economic Communities in Africa:

I. Limited national and regional capacities and the lack of mechanisms/resources for effective planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring and pragmatic adjustment of programmes on the ground have been major constraint to regional economic integration [42, p. 72].

II. The existence of multiple, overlapping and often conflicting regional integration arrangements within the same region. Many African countries belong to more than one regional economic communities. Among the 55 countries, 27 are members of two regional grouping, 18 belong to three and 1 country is a member of four regional economic communities. This makes implementation difficult as it imposes a heavy burden on the limited administrative resources available in the member countries. It reflects on the desire of such states to pick and choose options suitable to them by competing regional trading arrangements [55, p. 103].

III. The economic disparity between different African countries making it difficult to engage in equal level of openness and may even cause delay in the adoption of decisions towards further integration.

IV. The failure of African regional economic communities to deliver their missions relates to

the gap between the agreement concluded their implementation [26, p. 299].

V. Infrastructure problems with roads, rails, port, air transports, energy, telecommunication and other issues are cited by the business community as constraints to economic growth and integration in Africa. It limits linkages in trade, cross border matters, etc., as a result of lack of infrastructure [2, p. 122].

VI. The protective imports substitution strategies adopted by most countries since independence resulted in a lot of regulations restricting trade like licensing, administration of foreign exchange allocation, special taxes for acquiring foreign exchange advance import deposits, making the economic context unfavorable to the development of regional economic communities in Africa [46].

VII. Internal and external factors like political instability and leadership crisis, cultural heterogeneity, low regime legitimacy, lack of coercive power, economic backwardness and structural simplicity [7, p. 259].

VIII. A related problem to multiplicity of regional economic communities is the uncertainty it creates in the minds of individuals traders as of the differences in the legal jurisprudence generated in the different RECs. The RECs have their own legal personality, legal entities which generate their own jurisprudence as multiplicity of membership subject individuals to conflicting results, created problems in the enforcement of judgment entered by tribunals that are created by the RECs [38, p. 33].

IX. Africa continues to engage at the periphery of global economy as is evident from the continent's declining share in global production and trade with the majority of sub-Saharan Africa's 55 countries being labeled small and the least developed [72].

X. The absence of a common language among the countries of the continent constitutes a linguistic complexity and endangers a multiplicity of institutions of which some are exclusive to the language group while lack of cohesion exists among the regional economic communities as African union lacks the capacity to hold sway as the continental guarantor of regional grouping with respect to the political will [6, p. 372].

XI. Political factors – the regional integration process has been bisected by political instability

in some African countries on account of civil wars, succession crisis, legitimacy issue etc which have manifested in the slow progress of RECs [69].

XII. [61, p. 5] highlighted the following as problems of RECs:

- Lack of complementary of member countries' production structures.
- Poor perception and assessment of costs and benefits associated with the process.
- Public revenue lose due to tariff reduction.
- Lack of assurance of market integration benefit to individual member countries.
- Long-term benefits against short-term losses.
- Poor design and inadequate sequencing of regional integration arrangement [61, p. 5].

Benefits of Regional Economic Communities (RECs):

• Regional economic integration in the form of customs union also increase the negotiating capacity for developing states. It serves as incentives for investment and attraction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), while general reforms such as stabilization, market liberalization and privatization adopted under regional arrangement have raise returns to all factors and are likely to be more than enough to increase private investment [46].

• It serves as a useful economic purpose beyond the direct gains from trade liberation by reducing uncertainties and improving credibility which make it easier for the private sector to plan and invest. The benefit from economic integration in terms of larger markets, greater competition and the realization of economies of scale will depend on the extent to which it involves in deeper integration [58].

• It results in lower consumer prices because of increasing allocation efficiency through production structures based on comparative advantage, the exploitation of economic of scale in the bigger domestic and international markets and the adoption of new technologies.

• African Union recognize RECs as the pillars of continental integration going by their growing and expanding importance as the building blocks of African integration. Their economic driving force gradually playing more prominent political roles in the areas of peace and security, governance and freedom of movement, goods etc. [40, p. 23].

• It has afforded RECs and member states to grow in regional economic integration at their own pace. SADC has grown greatly than ECOWAS in that range than the other RECs.

• Trade creation, trade diversion and transfers occur when external trade policy and internal free trade lead to a shift in production from high to the low cost partner state in the community [29, p. 554].

Other benefits include the following:

- Improvement of transport and communication infrastructure.
 - Collective employment and poverty reduction.
 - Security stability and conflict resolution
- Motivation for the privates sector for increase efficiency in the continent.
- Financial and macroeconomic integration high on the agenda of RECs [13, p. 13; 46].

AU Agenda 2063 Framework. AU marked the framework Agenda 2063 will concentrate on 2063, when the OAU/AU will observe its 100th anniversary since its inception as OAU in 1963. A detailed review of African developments, analysis of today's challenges and opportunities as well as national plans, regional and continental frameworks and technical studies were carried out in preparation for Agenda 2020, with the use of publications and research materials from institutions and organizations. The structural transformation plan and a common strategy framework for integrated growth and sustainable development that can be achieved for continental integration.

The Vision for 2063. As practical as all of the possible motivating elements for the continuing existence of the continent may be, around seven (7) probable motivation factors evolved as a consequence of their interests, as a consequence of which they wish (Fig. 2):

1. A progressive Africa to guarantee social security and protection through coordinated growth and development to eradicate poverty differences in income and opportunities, generate employment, highlight the problem of fast urbanization. Increase young women's quality of life and experience Africa's rich natural resources [5, p. 8].

2. To align PAN Africanism's political views with the goal of rapid development integration, in the areas of development, free movement of

people, accelerated free trade, and links in the areas of rail, aviation, maritime and frontier border [5, p. 9].

3. Improving good governance, enshrining human rights in land governance and promising imaginative development leading institutions.

4. Africa will develop with a desire for peace, accountability and stability for robust financial advances [5, p. 10].

5. Africa with a strong commitment to be unified and able to promote the continent on international issues in the field of growth and transforming strategies in order to fund non-programmes in global affairs, and to reduce its reliance on assistance in the developed world [5, p. 12].

6. Eradicating any prejudice and violent acts of discrimination against girls and women, and giving them with security and early childhood development.

7. A continent with a tremendous cultural identity, traditions, ethics, value system to explore vast possibilities for upgrading progress and transformation [5, p. 11].

The changing dimensions:

1. It stated the foundations on which Agenda 2063 is built, as well as the great zeal towards the goals, priority areas, targets and indication strategies. It features in presented three formats at national, regional and continental levels. It envisaged should what must be done to

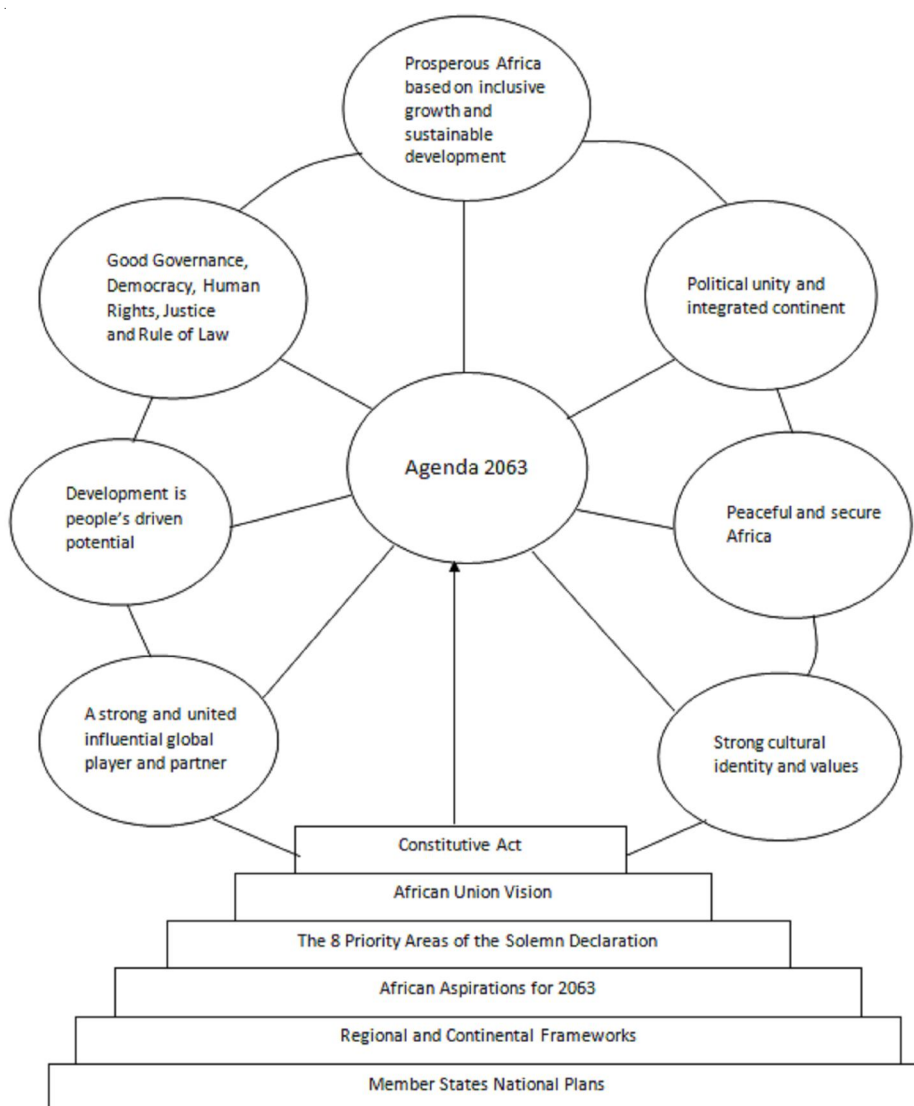


Fig. 2. Schematic Presentation of the Foundation of Agenda 2063, the Aspirations and the Goals
 Note. Source: AU Agenda 2063, 2015:12.

actualise the vision for 2063. This included the following:

- (a) Conceptual approach:
 - i. Affirmation of Africa's differences.
 - ii. Erecting upon existing programmes.
- (b) Foundation of Agenda 2063.
- (c) Goals, priority areas, targets and indication strategies.
- (d) Agenda 2063's flagship programmes:
 - i. The co-ordinated high-speed train network.
 - ii. A pan-African E-university.
 - iii. Creation of a commodities strategy.
 - iv. Creation of an annual African forum.
 - v. Speeding-up the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area by 2017 (Now in place for proper implementation after 54 states in Africa have signed the agreement)
 - vi. The African passport and free movement of people.
 - vii. Eliminating the guns by 2020.
 - viii. Execution of the Grand Inga Dam Project, aimed at boosting Africa's production of energy.
 - ix. The pan-African E-Network designed to boost services.
 - x. Outer space.
 - xi. A single African airspace.
 - xii. Continental financial institutions [5, p. 99].

2. To actualise Agenda 2063 certain considerations are critical, namely: implementation, monitoring and review, principles and responsibilities, financing partnerships, capacities for execution and information outreach. In greater detail, these considerations involve the following:

- (a) Execution, monitoring and review arrangement:
 - i. Objectives and principles.
 - ii. Subsidiarity.
 - iii. Accountability and transparency.
 - iv. Participation/inclusiveness and integration.
 - v. Differences.
 - vi. Leveraging existing institutions and systems.
- (b) Financing Agenda 2063:
 - i. Agenda 2063 financing needs.
 - ii. Method for financing Agenda 2063.
 - iii. Financing and domestic resource mobilization and intermediation strategy.
 - iv. Access to finance.

v. Implementation of Agenda 2063 financing and domestic resource management (DRM) strategy.

(c) Partnership for Agenda 2063:

i. Preparing a comprehensive AU policy framework and articulating a partnership strategy for all high-potential partners around two to three core areas of interventions.

ii. Maximizing Africa's potential of all the five major strategic partnerships.

iii. Deepening transformational benefits of the partnerships.

(d) Capacity development for Agenda 2063:

i. The need for holistic and effective capacities.

ii. Types of capacity and needs of Agenda 2063.

iii. Key stakeholders of Agenda 2063 and capacity needs.

(e) Communication strategy for Agenda 2063 [5, p. 108].

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In June 2015, the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) agreement in Egypt was the first significant sign of Africa adopting regional economic integration seriously. The pact featured 26 nations with a population of 720 million and US\$1.3 trillion in GDP [34]. Over the last few of years, African heads of Government want to see a single and united African market without any trade restrictions. They envisioned a common market modeled on the united European market of the EU. The African leaders ultimately resolved, in January 2012, during the 18th regular meeting of the AU heads of State and Government, to establish a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) after a series of fruitless initiatives due to varied economic and political concerns. It is an economic alliance aimed at promoting strong trade connections between Member States [49]. The AfCFTA aims to expand commerce inside Africa, which is believed to be just 10%. It seeks to run a single product and services market just as the EU, with a projected population of more than 1,2 billion and a combination of 55 nations, has the potential to become, depending on the number of nations engaged, the world's biggest regional economic bloc. The Free Trade Area has been the world's largest since the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995.

Abati (2018) noted that, the African continental Free Trade Agreement is perhaps the most important and paradigm-shifting event since the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which eventually became the African Union (AU) in 2002. Additionally, it is likely the largest trade deal since the founding of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and a tangible, verifiable completion of the African Renaissance and Afro-optimism. This vision of a changed Africa culminated in the establishment of policy initiatives and bodies such as NEPAD, APRM, and the New Africa Initiative (NAI), among others. Much of this may have been influenced by similar developments in the West, for example, the EU. It is part of a broader effort to strengthen Africa's capability to compete, integrate, cooperate, and progress in the future. The AfCFTA is one of the fruits of that development, and it is perhaps the most significant crop [1].

AfCFTA's Working Structure. The AfCFTA Agreement was implemented by the AU on March 21, 2018 (see: Fig. 3). Article 3 of the Constituent Act of the AU ensuring the political and socio-economic unification of the African continent was grounded in the Agreement. On May 30, 2019, the AfCFTA came into force. The agreement represented a move for the AU to bring the continental integration of people, capital, goods and services to free movement with a view to economic integration and the promotion of agricultural development, food security, industrialisation and the structural economic transformation in the African continent [23, p. 86]. It now has three protocols: Trade and Goods Protocol; Trade in Services Protocol; and Dispute Resolution Protocol. These treaties provide for measures relating to tariff reductions, customs cooperation, administrative aid for reciprocal purposes, the removal of technical trade obstacles, for example, compelling signatory countries. 54 of the 55 AU Member States have signed the agreement since March 2018. [8]. The primary mechanisms governing the free trade agreement's operational phase include: rules of origin cooperation; the surveillance and removal of non-tariff barriers; digital payment systems; and a dashboard on trade observatory. These steps are vital if trade connectivity and efficiency are to be improved and the advantages for the Member States will ultimately expand. Ghana was chosen

as host for the headquarters/secretariat where more work to execute the agreement would be done [71]. The AfCFTA is historically fast-track, with the AU legislative instruments in place likely to take effect more rapidly than the norm of five years. This would allow nations to enjoy pooling and increased sovereignty sooner. In accordance with Agenda 2063 [44], the historic agreement will provide all Africans a dignified life, while the laws of origin allow commodities to move duty-free inside the FTA [72].

AfCFTA Institutions. The functions of AfCFTA institutions include political oversight and policy direction as well as technical guidance and assistance.

i. The AU Assembly is the top AfCFTA decision-making body with a responsibility to offer supervision and strategic direction, including an action plan to stimulate intra-African trade (BIAT). It can adopt the interpretation of the agreement with the exclusive authority accorded it by the Council of Ministers, and taking decisions is by consensus and on a simple majority of states that are parties to it on substantive cases [5].

ii. The Council of Ministers.

The Agreement should be effectively implemented and implemented, and all essential measures must be undertaken to promote AfCFTA goals. The Assembly reports to the AU Executive Board.

iii. The Committee of Senior Trade Officials.

It is composed of a permanent or main secretariat for implementing the Council of Ministers decisions by each nation. It may set up working groups to carry out specified tasks. It may regulate, provide instructions and suggestions [70].

iv. The Secretariat.

It is to be established by the AU Assembly which will decide its nature and approve its structure. It is a functional body and an independent legal personality with autonomy within the AU. It gets its funds from the overall annual budgets of the AU, and its headquarters is in Accra, Ghana. Its roles and responsibilities will be determined by the Council of Ministers of Trade. The African Trade Observatory (ATO) will offer trustworthy and timely information on trade statistics, regional value chain opportunities, market conditions and regulatory compliance, registered exporters and importers, and permitted economic players [70].

Objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area:

- Establish a continental internal market for products and services that will accelerate the creation of the Continental Customs Union via free mobility of businesses, professional and investment.

- Expand intra-African commerce via improved harmonization and coordination in RECs and throughout Africa of trade, liberalization and facilitation.

- Find solutions and speed up integration procedures to the issues of various and overlapping memberships.

- Improve capital and business competitiveness through explore options for large-scale economies of production, continental market access and improved resource relocation [15].

CONCLUSION

The study has been able to trace the evolution of African integration process and its emergent regional economic communities. (RECs), their objectives and mandates towards the continent. The study equally x-rayed problems confronting their growth and expansion, while noted their benefits to the continent member states and

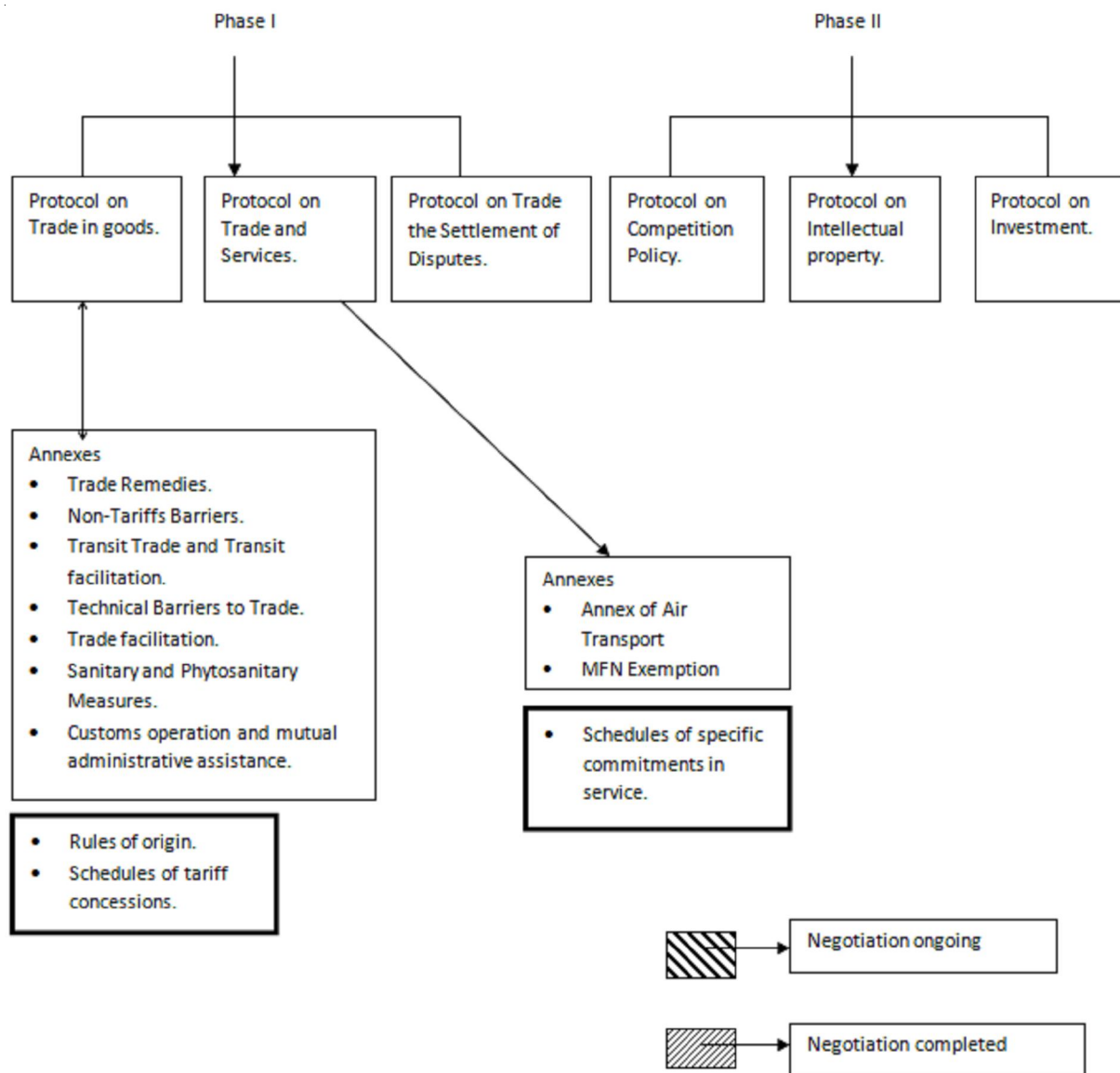


Fig. 3. Agreement Establishing AfCFTA

Note. Source: [65, p. 3].

Africans as well, future prospects for RECs were noted with the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). The actualization of the objectives of the African Union with regional economic communities towards economic and monetary integration have benefited the continent enormously since the creation of economic groupings in their various sectors. These collaboration and cooperation with their associated programmes have taken a central aspect to promote economic growth, sustainable development and improving the bargaining power of Africa in the global politics for optimal recognition through a strong political and economic integration platforms.

PROSPECTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

- The regionalization of economic activities will enable national economies to build capacities in all critical areas from the absorption and generation of new technology for production and marketing as a springboard for more meaningful participation in the world economy.

- While the foundation for regional economic cooperation and integration in Africa has been well laid through the establishment of the African Economic Community (AEC) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should continue to build their capacities, harmonize and coordinate their institutions, improve performance and avoid wasteful duplication of efforts. This will include the harmonization of national reconstruction programme of the member states with those of the RECs in such a way that one can complement the other.

- External aid is incentive to African states to signal their supports for the programmes and policies of regional economic integration.

- Rationalizing Africa's many different regional economic communities/institutions to reduce overlap and inefficiency [33].

- Improved regional economic communities coordination and commitment of donors to such policies which will equally breeds success for the creation of a stable monetary union [12, p. 8].

- With the collaboration and integrative efforts of RECs in Africa, the African Union is expected to accelerate its project of Agenda 2063 for the development vision which will contribute to the achievement of United Nations 2030

sustainable development goals and the actualization of African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) through regional economic interventions and cooperation [56].

- The idea of common security is evolved from the acknowledgment that the new technology where common problems transcend national boundaries and countries could not protect their people through unilateral military ways. They have and need to share intelligence information and strategies in joint interest, therefore organize/input their security policies in cooperation/collaboration with one another for collective safety [21, p. 64].

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