



South Africa and the African Continental Free Trade Area: Assessing the opportunities and risks

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DECLARATION

I Maye Elmardi declare that except for the references indicated in this text, this study represents my original work. I guarantee that no similar work has been submitted by anyone at any other university or institution of higher learning.

Signature

mayeyassin

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to South African and to Africa.

PREFACE

Africa speaking

I hear people talk in honest ire,
Of a hopeless continent in quagmire;
But the hopelessness in me I don't understand,
I am merely a mass of bountiful land.
The hopelessness in people I see,
In those who fight day and night,
O'er petty lanterns of power,
In dazzling, broad daylight.
Hopeless are those who bury me dead,
With my untapped resources intact,
And blame others far and beyond,
For a brief episode of historical act;
So brief like the blink of an eye,
For a continent of aeons of age,
Whose people crossed borders and seas,
And filled the earth from edge to edge.
Hopeless are those who scorch me in war,
In tireless generations of petty fight,
Those who give no time to think and know,
That I am the richest land in nature's might.
Blame me not, blame no history of times gone,
Wake up and think, people of luck,
Only through diligence and sweat and toil
In the quagmires of hopelessness you won't be stuck.

By Amare (2013)

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ABSTRACT

The AfCFTA aims to boost economic growth and development across Africa by creating a single market with free movement of goods, services, and investments. Looking further ahead, AfCFTA would provide countries with a clear path for integration and the introduction of growth-boosting and socio-economic reforms, which is essential for long-term economic stability. Regional integration aims to facilitate economic growth, cooperation, and mutual development. Socio-economic aspects of regional integration encompass efforts to enhance living standards, reduce poverty, and improve social well-being across participating nations. By pooling resources and fostering cross-border collaboration, regional integration can lead to increased job opportunities, access to better healthcare and education, and the reduction of socio-economic disparities. This process often involves the harmonization of policies related to labour, education, and healthcare, contributing to a more integrated and equitable society. Regional integration profoundly influences socio-economic aspects within participating regions. It can drive economic growth, improve living conditions, and address various social challenges and promoting sustainable development.

South Africa, as both a member and a trailblazer of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, is positioned at the forefront of a transformative economic initiative. Its participation in this landmark agreement presents a spectrum of opportunities and challenges, along with possible potential risks that demand nuanced responses. In assessing these complexities, South Africa can make the most of its membership in AfCFTA by strategically addressing domestic and regional concerns. This involves a balanced approach that maximizes the opportunities while mitigating potential risks and challenges by ensuring a win-win scenario for South Africa and its African partners. The deal offers an extraordinary opportunity to construct a united market spanning the entire continent, a critical step toward fulfilling the vision of the "Africa we desire," which is compatible with the aims established in the African Union Agenda 2063.

Keywords:

Regional Integration, Intra-Trade, Socio-economic, opportunities, Challenges, Risk.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDC	Least-developed country
MFN	Most-favored nation
NTB	Non-tariff barrier
NTM	Non-tariff trade measure
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PTA	Preferential trade arrangement
REA	Regional economic arrangement
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TFTA	Tripartite Free Trade Area
UN	United Nation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WB	World Bank
WDI	World Development Indicators
WTO	World Trade Organization

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) stands as a shot of hope and transformation for the African continent. In a region historically characterized by economic challenges, heavy dependence on exporting natural resources, and barriers to intra-regional trade, the AfCFTA emerges as a ground-breaking initiative with the potential to reshape Africa's economic landscape. This agreement, which aims to create a single market within Africa, holds the promise of not only boosting trade and economic growth but also of addressing deep-seated issues such as poverty, unemployment (Woode, 2021:1), infrastructure deficits, and regulatory obstacles (Akinkugbe, 2021:294).

As we review into the rise, ambitions, and implications of the AfCFTA, it becomes evident that this initiative is both a response to historical economic constraints and a vision for a brighter African future. While the AfCFTA offers substantial opportunities, it also presents challenges that must be addressed. These include disparities in development (Akinkugbe, 2021:283), infrastructure gaps, and the potential for disruptions to establish a trade pattern (Levin *et al.*, 2023). As the complexities and dynamics of this transformative agreement are explored, it is crucial to understand its potential impact on South Africa, as considered a key player in the region due to its developed economy and industrial capabilities (Diao & Yanoma, 2003).

The AfCFTA seeks to address the aforementioned challenges by creating a single market, facilitating the free movement of goods, services, and people within the continent (Aniche, 2020:3, 12). By doing so, the agreement aims to increase intra-African trade, which has the potential to drive economic growth, development, good governance, peace and security, as well as transforming African states into a coherent system in the context of integration and globalisation (Mude, 2020:42). Furthermore, the agreement could also facilitate trade relations between African countries and other regions outside of the continent. The AfCFTA introduces a variety of activities. It is projected to reduce tariffs between member countries, include services and trade facilitation as policy issues (African Union, 2022b). In addition, covering regulatory measures like sanitary standards and technical trade obstacles (Obasun, 2023:2054), markets and economies in the region would undergo a significant transformation with the full implementation of the AfCFTA. This includes increased production in the manufacturing, natural resource, and service industries (Fofack, 2020:2, 6).

It is crucial to remember that each country's role in the AfCFTA will be influenced by a number of variables, including its level of economic development, industrial base, trade policies, and domestic laws. Negotiations on a range of topics, including tariff reductions, rules of origin, trade facilitation, and dispute resolution systems, would probably be required if one were to take part in the AfCFTA (Apiko *et al.*, 2020:12). Additionally, coordination with other African nations would be necessary to improve infrastructure and connectivity, coordinate trade laws and regulations, and advance inclusive and sustainable development.

The AfCFTA presents business owners with a significant opportunity to expand their operations into new markets and raise their production levels. In order to facilitate the entry of smaller businesses into the continental market across national borders, public authorities are required to offer both financial and technical assistance to these businesses. In this case, the benefits of the AfCFTA would be accessible to only the largest of businesses. The Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Mr Fikile Majola indicated that (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2021b), to ensure that a larger number of businesses in Africa are able to seize the opportunities presented by this agreement, it is imperative that African governments put in place comprehensive national strategies in the areas of infrastructure, finance, and technology, respectively. Given that smaller-scale firms will be competing against larger firms that are likely to be more aggressive, it is imperative that these national strategies be applied to them as well. Therefore, in order to ensure their continued existence, it is of the utmost importance to assist them in integrating into the export markets and to urge them in order to broaden the scope of their production in order to contend with the severe competition from abroad (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2021b).

Although some commentators claim that the AfCFTA is overly ambitious due to the many differences in the countries' stages of development, particularly in terms of trade capabilities, infrastructure, and administrative frameworks like competition and intellectual property policies, where the AfCFTA's potential benefits will be significant in boosting intra-African trade and foreign direct investment despite these shortcomings (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2020a).

1.2 Background

The historical setting of Africa's economic environment is the root of the major issues hindering African economic development, for example many of African nations are heavily dependent on the export of natural resources, which are sold to non-African countries like minerals and agricultural goods (Apiko *et al.*, 2020:4). This pattern of trade has been reinforced by the lack of

infrastructure, weak regulatory environments, and high tariff barriers that make it difficult to trade within the continent (Abrego *et al.*, 2020:13-15). The reliance on exports of raw materials makes people more susceptible to price changes, restricts economic diversification, and impedes the pursuit of sustainable development (Kararach, 2017:91). Eventually that leads to minimize the chances for the African economy to flourish, and constrained intra-regional commerce. Add to that, African nations had difficulty creating robust industrial sectors and high-value products. Industrial development was hampered by a lack of economies of scale, poor infrastructure, and restricted access to money and technology (Srivastava *et al.*, 2021:9).

As soon as the majority of African countries obtained their independence during the latter half of the '50s and the early '60s, the road toward African collaboration in development initiatives and unity was under way (Albert, 2019:4). Historically, intra-African trade has lagged behind compared to trade in other continents. Songwe (2019:98) states that, although it has increased significantly from approximately 10% in 1995 to approximately 16 % today, the percentage of total African exports that is comprised of intra-African trade is still relatively low when compared to the levels seen in Europe (59 %), Asia (51 %), and North America (37 %) (IATF, 2023). This predicament was exacerbated by weak trade ties and trade restrictions among African nations. African nations must come to understand the value of regional integration in overcoming fragmentation and trade barriers throughout time. Increasing intra-African trade was seen as a critical step toward promoting economic development, job creation, and poverty reduction (Anyanwu, 2014a:304-306).

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which are regional associations of African states, were established with the assistance of the African Economic Community (AEC) to promote regional economic integration among the citizens of the various regions and through the larger AEC (African Union, 2023a), many regional economic communities were created including the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Magu, 2023) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Turner, 2012). These groups worked to advance regional economic integration, trade liberalisation, and unrestricted movement of people and goods, see Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: The Regional Economic Communities (Source: African Union (2023a)).

<p>1- Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) - 29 Members (Benin, Burkina, Faso, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea, Bissau, Kenya,</p>
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Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, São Tomé, Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, and Tunisia).

2- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) - 19 Members
(Burundi, Comoros, DR Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

3- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) - 15 Members
(Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea, Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo).

4- East African Community (EAC) - 10 Members
(Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé, and Príncipe).

5- Southern African Development Community (SADC) - 15 Members
(Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, UR of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe).

6- Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) - 8 Members
(Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda).

7- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) - 6 Members
(Burundi, Rwanda, DR Congo, Sao Tomé, Principe, and Angola).

8- Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) - 5 Members
(Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia).

The convention advocated that RECs serve as the building blocks toward the establishment of an African single market to facilitate economic integration and the establishment of the Free Trade Areas (FTAs) (African Union, 2023a). By 2017, it was planned that RECs will form customs unions or monetary communities (African Union, 2023b), see Table 1-2.

Table 1-2: African Monetary and Customs Union (Source: African Union (2023a)).

Southern African Customs Union (SACU).
(Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa).

West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

(Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo).

Central African (CFA) franc-zone.

(Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon).

It is essential to emphasise that none of the eight RECs are contiguous with any of the monetary unions, and that each customs union represents a distinct island of greater integration that is either within or close to a REC (Gumede, 2020:5). Due to the existence of numerous RECs and trade restrictions, the African market became instead a fragmented (Olayiwola, 2020:1, 120). This hindered trade, investment, and economic cooperation, resources were not used to their full potential. This condition made it difficult for the continent to advance industrialization and sustainable development while also maximising its economic potential (Anyanwu, 2014b:487).

According to UNCTAD (2019), more goods are traded with the rest of the globe by the African continent than by any other continent, and more than it does with its own countries. The EU accounting for the highest share of exports from Africa, accounting for an average of more than 30%, as seen in the Table 1-3, the RECs' combined export volume by partner from 2010 to 2017.

Table 1-3: Export trade of the RECs by partner (2010–2017) average per cent (Source: UNECA (2019:5)).

REC	Intra-Community	China	United States	European Union	Africa	Rest of the World
ECCAS	2	34	15	20	4	25
SADC	19	20	8	20	3	30
UMA	3	5	8	63	2	19
ECOWAS	9	3	12	29	7	40
COMESA	9	12	4	37	8	30
IGAD	14	21	3	16	12	34
CEN-SAD	7	5	9	40	5	34

EAC	20	5	4	19	18	34
Africa Average	10	13	8	31	7	30

There is a correlation between the low level of intra-African business and threats to peace and security, a lack of infrastructure, and little macroeconomic convergence (UNECA, 2019:1). Macroeconomic convergence would be implied by a steady macroeconomic environment e.g., a small budget deficit, low inflation, and manageable public debt. In addition, macroeconomic convergence indication is a decrease in differences in economic variables e.g., inflation, growth rates, and per capita income (UNECA, 2019:2). To get members of economic groups to respond consistently to factors including budget deficits, price stability, and debt-to-GDP ratios, macroeconomic convergence is sought after (UNECA, 2019:2).

The Trade and Industry Ministers from the three RECs: EAC, SADC, and COMESA resolved to unite their organisations trying to get out of this position. As a consequence, the Heads of State of the EAC, SADC, and COMESA kicked up the discussions for the Tri-Partite Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in June 2011, held in Johannesburg, South Africa (Erasmus & Hartzenberg, 2013:345). With a total population of just under 600 million and a GDP of just over US\$1.0 trillion, the 26 nations that make up the Common Market for COMESA-EAC-SADC are quite prosperous. Strengthening and advancing the region's economic integration is the primary goal of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite (Inama & Crivelli, 2014:2). The three RECs' policies and programs in the areas of commerce, customs, and infrastructure development will be harmonized in order to accomplish their goals.

At the same time, on the 10th of June in 2015, 26 countries of the AU states met in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, to sign the Trans-Frontier Trade Agreement (TFTA) (UNECA, 2019:109). The Sharm el-Sheik declaration, which served as the impetus for the formation of the TFTA, restated the “developmental integration approach built on the three pillars of industrial development, infrastructure development, and market integration” (Tralac, 2015). The TFTA strongly recommended to the heads of the African Union (AU) that they adopt a more expansive vision for the regional integration and economic cooperation that was to take place. A short time later, a meeting of the Heads of State of the AU of the 25th ordinary session of the assembly, took place in Johannesburg on June 15th, 2015 (Tralac, 2015). This summit marked the beginning of discussions toward a Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) (African Union, 2015). It was concluded that the CFTA Phase II negotiations should move concurrently in conjunction with the

TFTA Phase II negotiations. This established a time frame of twenty-four months for the completion of the CFTA negotiations in the second phase concerning trade in services, competition policy, and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and other topics. The goals and guiding principles of the CFTA were laid out during this summit, which ultimately resulted in the signing of the Abuja Treaty (Ismail, 2017:138).

As African leaders and policymakers realised the need for a more ambitious and thorough integration framework (Gumede, 2020:3), the notion of creating a continental free trade area gained traction. Motivated by a desire to increase intra-African commerce, spur economic growth, and hasten development, the AU championed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), with one goal of creating a single market encompassing the whole continent with the intention of producing a thorough trade liberalisation pact (Apiko *et al.*, 2020:2).

The AfCFTA was proposed during the regularly scheduled meeting of the AU in January 2012, by the African nation’s leaders and state government, held in the Ethiopia capital Addis Ababa (Saygili *et al.*, 2018). The agreement outlined a 54 of the 55 current AU members and so far, signed by 44 of its 55 members, including South Africa, on 30th March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda (Onwuka & Udegbumam, 2022). The intra African trade pact came into effect on the 30th of May 2019, and the Operational Instruments that would govern trade under the AfCFTA regime were launched after multiple rounds of discussions, marking a critical turning point in the process of economic integration, at a meeting in Niamey, Niger in July 2019 (African Union, 2022b). The making of AfCFTA has been characterised by a number of turning points, see Figure 1.1.

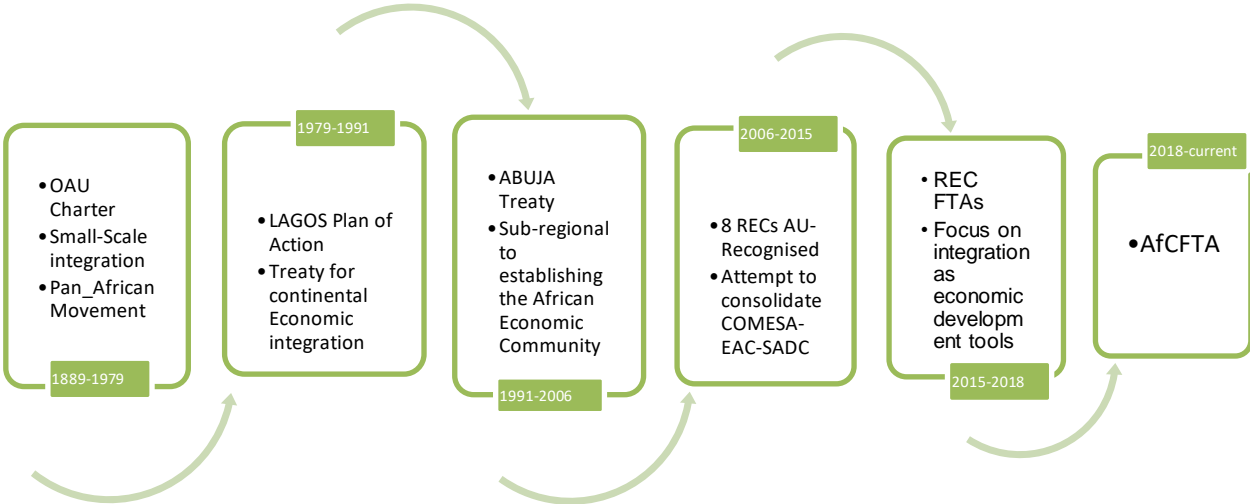


Figure 1.1: Regional Integration in Africa (Source: UNECA (2019:66)).

The discussions covered a range of topics, including intellectual property rights, rules of origin, trade facilitation, and tariff reductions. The processes for ratification and implementation came

next after the AfCFTA agreement was signed. To become effective, the agreement needed a minimum of 22 ratifications. The majority of African nations have ratified the pact as of this point, demonstrating their commitment to and excitement for regional integration. Ratification indicates that these countries officially agreed to be bound by the terms and obligations outlined in the treaty. The ambitious AfCFTA proposal seeks to unify the continent of Africa's markets for goods and services. The AfCFTA represents a significant step toward addressing Africa's challenges and advancing regional integration in Africa by expanding markets and encouraging intra-African investment and cooperation (Songwe, 2019:97).



Figure 1.2: The Countries that have ratified the AfCFTA Agreement (Source: Tralac (2023a)).

As of September 7th, 2023, a total of 47 countries had ratified the AfCFTA treaty. The ordered of the countries that they have deposited their instruments of AfCFTA ratification by date as follows:

Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Niger, Chad, Eswatini, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Namibia, South Africa, Congo, Rep., Djibouti, Mauritania, Uganda, Senegal, Togo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Rep., Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, São Tomé & Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritius, Central African Rep., Angola, Lesotho, Tunisia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia, Algeria, Burundi, Seychelles, Tanzania, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco, Guinea-Bissau, Botswana and Comoros (Tralac, 2023a), see Figure 1.2.

While there are still implementation challenges and potential risks, the AfCFTA holds the potential to unlock Africa's economic potential, foster inclusive growth, and promote sustainable development across the continent. The implementation of the AfCFTA treaty entries into force on May 30, 2019, and the AfCFTA treaty became legally effective. This means that the treaty's provisions, rules, and regulations became binding for all countries that had ratified it at that point.

One can agree that since the AfCFTA trade agreement established the African leaders have united to achieve a common goal, regardless of affiliation and individual or political interest (Ojo, 2021). The AfCFTA is going to be considered as the world's second largest trade agreement when measured by the number of countries that are participating in it, and since the existence of World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Crabtree, 2018). The main objectives of the AfCFTA according to the AU agenda, from (African Union - AfCFTA, 2023) are:

- Create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with the Pan African Vision of “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa” enshrined in Agenda 2063;
- Create a liberalised market for goods and services through successive rounds of negotiations;
- Contribute to the movement of capital and natural resources and facilitate investments building on the initiatives and developments being undertaken by the State Parties and Regional Economic Communities;
- Lay the foundation for the establishment of a Continental Customs Union (CCU) at a later stage;
- Promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation of the State Parties;
- Enhance the competitiveness of the economies of State Parties within the continent and the global market;

- Promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security;
- Resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes.
- The historic African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Establishment, and Right of Residence was approved during its 30th regular assembly session on January 29, 2018, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (African Union, 2018:1-18). Africa is moving closer to allowing unrestricted cross-border travel, the protocol has been adopted, but nation ratifications have been difficult to come by, only four have ratified the Protocol on the movement of people (UNECA, 2023). The programme encourages the free-movement of people throughout Africa through rights of entrance, visa-free access for brief trips, rights of residence and establishment, as well as the freedom to create a business (UNECA, 2019). The agreement's goals are all of which relate to the simplification of commercial transactions. They are aiming to achieve a more thorough removal of trade obstacles, as well as the harmonisation and execution of instruments designed to facilitate commerce across Africa. The operational instruments of the AfCFTA are as follows (African Union, 2023a):
 - (i) The Rules of Origin: A regime governing the conditions under which a product or service can be traded duty free across the region.

The concept of "origin" plays a crucial role in the AfCFTA agreement. It refers to the determination of the country or region where a product originates from, which is essential for applying tariff preferences and rules under the AfCFTA. The specific rules of origin for the AfCFTA are developed through negotiations among member countries and are detailed in the agreement's protocols and annexes, see (African Union - AfCFTA, 2023). These rules typically take into account various factors such as the transformation or substantial processing of materials, the percentage of value added in the member country, and other specific criteria to determine the origin of a product (AU, 2023a). The rules of origin serve as criteria to determine whether a product qualifies for preferential treatment, such as reduced or zero tariffs, within the AfCFTA. These rules aim to prevent non-African goods from entering member countries through a third country and benefiting from preferential treatment. The role of origin under the AfCFTA is to create a fair and transparent system that encourages value addition and industrial development within Africa while preventing circumvention and ensuring that preferential trade benefits are enjoyed by goods that genuinely originate from member countries. By establishing clear rules of origin, the AfCFTA

aims to promote intra-African trade, foster economic integration, and stimulate industrialization across the continent (Tsowou & Davis, 2021: 88).

(ii) The Tariff concessions

It has been agreed that there should be 90% tariff liberalisation. Over a 10-year period with a 5-year transition, there will be an additional 7% for "sensitive products" that must be liberalised. This will be supported by the AfCFTA Trade in Goods online portal where Member States will upload their tariff offers covering 90% of the tariff lines. The AfCFTA Online Negotiation Tool will:

- Facilitate the negotiations on tariff liberalisation between State Parties, Customs Unions or Regional Groupings under the AfCFTA;
- Provide tools to ensure the technical quality of the offers made;
- Increase transparency while safeguarding confidentiality; and
- Provide tools for users/negotiating groups to interact.
- While the goal is to liberalise commerce, certain commodities may be excluded or labelled as sensitive. Tariff reduction promises do not apply to excluded items, and sensitive goods may have delayed tariff reduction timeframes to protect specific businesses or address concerns about sudden disruptions to domestic markets.

(iii) The Continental Online Tool/Mechanism for monitoring, reporting, and elimination of Non-tariff Barriers (NTBs).

Non-tariff trade barriers are those that do not entail the imposition of tariffs (taxes on imports or exports) but nonetheless obstruct the free flow of goods and services across borders. Quotas, licencing requirements, trade barriers, and discriminatory legislation are examples of NTBs. The Continental online tool will ensure NTBs are monitored with a view to ensuring they are eliminated.

(iv) The Pan-African Payments and Settlement System (PAPSS).

PAPSS is a centralised payment and settlement infrastructure for intra-African trade and commerce payments. This project is being developed in collaboration with the African Export-Import Bank, Afreximbank which will facilitate payments as well as formalise some of the unrecorded trade due to prevalence of informal cross-border trade in Africa.

(v) The African Trade Observatory.

A trade observatory is an organisation or entity that observes and analyses trade-related data and activities within Africa due to lack of information about opportunities. These observatories strive to provide useful insights, statistics, and information to policymakers, corporations, and the general public in order to support informed decision-making and economic progress about exporters and importers. The AfCFTA negotiations take place in phases (TUTA, 2022), see Figure 1.3:

- Phase I covers trade in goods and services and dispute settlement.
- Phase II covers intellectual property rights, investment, and competition policy.
- Phase III covers digital trade and women and youth in trade.

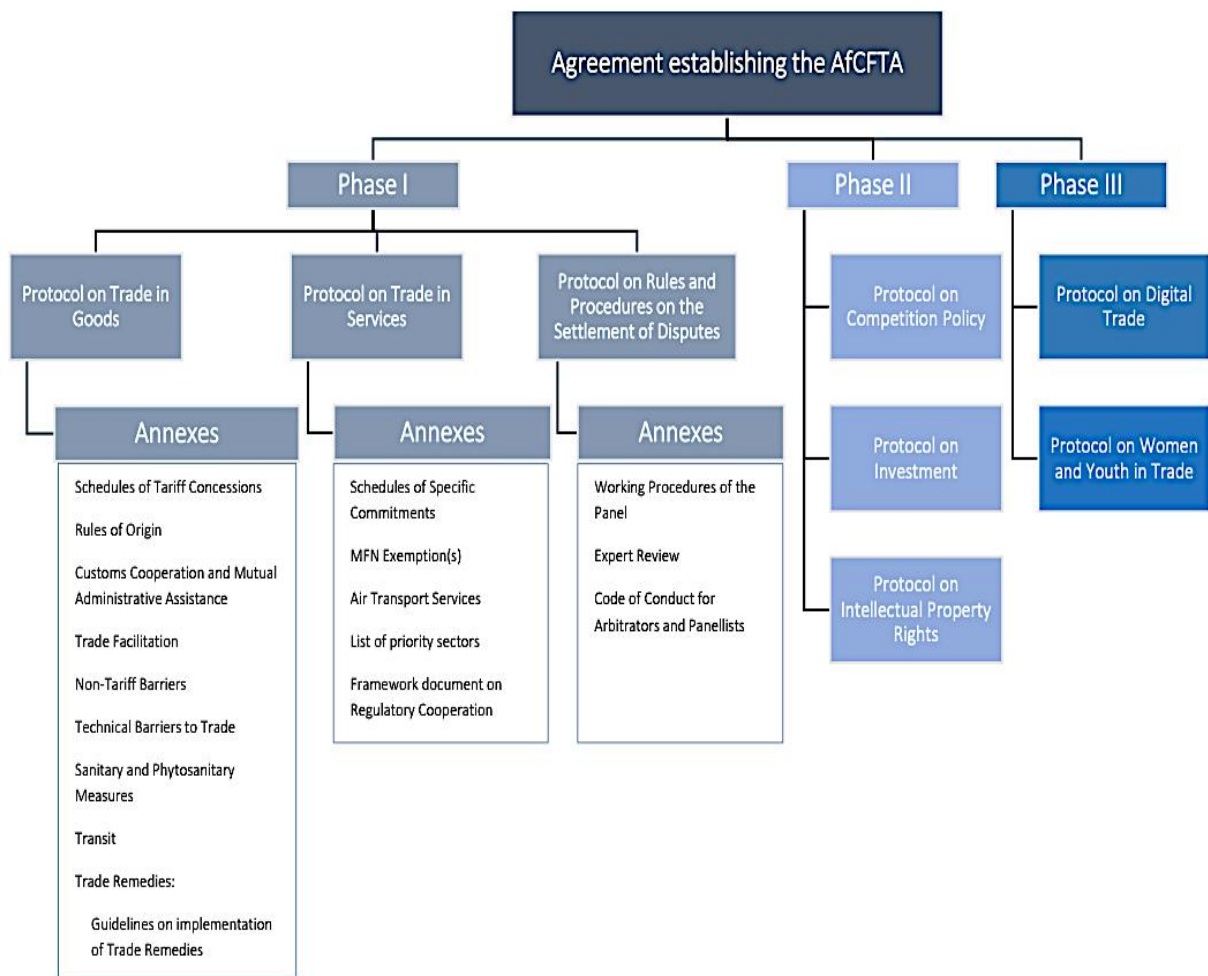


Figure 1.3: The AfCFTA Phases (Source: Tralac, 2023a)

Phase I established as the AfCFTA officially came into force in 2019 (UNCTAD, 2022). During the 12th Meeting of the African Union Ministers of Trade (AMOT), which was held virtually on

October 27, 2020, with the participation of 38 African Union Member States, significant progress was reported in the finalization of additional Rules of Origin. These rules are essential for enabling preferential trade under the AfCFTA. Tariff offers are initially presented as an opening bid during negotiations. The negotiation process involves requests and counteroffers until an agreement is reached.

The goal is to liberalize 90% of tariff lines over a five-year period, with Least Developed Countries (LDCs) implementing their agreed tariff reductions over ten years (Tralac, 2023b). The remaining 10% of tariff lines are divided into two categories: 7% may be designated as sensitive products and liberalized over ten years (LDCs have 13 years), while the remaining 3% may be excluded from liberalization, provided it does not exceed 10% of the value of trade (Tralac, 2023b). Criteria for designating products as "sensitive" or "excluded" were agreed upon. Factors such as food security, national security, fiscal revenue, livelihood, and industrialization can influence the designation of products as "sensitive" or "excluded."

The issue of the tariff liberalization timeframe has been raised due to the inclusion of at least one LDC in all customs unions, with the expectation that all will follow the LDC liberalization timeframe for managing common external tariffs. Negotiations to finalize the rules of origin, schedules of tariff concessions, and Dispute Settlement are still ongoing (Tralac, 2023b). The trade in goods agenda also includes important matters such as standards (sanitary and phytosanitary standards and technical barriers to trade), customs and border management, trade facilitation, and transit arrangements. Annexes covering these issues have already been concluded (African Union, 2018).

Trade under AfCFTA rules requires the establishment of legal arrangements, the AU Summit decided in December 2020 to permit trade based on the reciprocal offers made during Phase I negotiations. Some AU nations like South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya, and Morocco have demonstrated readiness for export-oriented production under the AfCFTA. Addressing disparities in production capacity across all member states remains a significant challenge, closing these gaps is essential for the overall success of the AfCFTA (Dowokpor, 2023). However, this trade has not yet commenced. During the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly held on February 5-6, 2022, Heads of State and Government determined that the initiation of "commercially meaningful trade" would be set for a future date to be determined (African Union, 2022a).

Currently, the remaining negotiations pertain to Rules of Origin for clothing, textiles, and automotive products. Out of the State Parties, 46 have tabled tariff offers, with 36 of them meeting the agreed modalities and being "technically verified." These verified offers have been submitted by various groups, including CEMAC, ECOWAS plus Mauritania, EAC, and individual countries

like Egypt, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Algeria, Tunisia, and Zambia. The Assembly has endorsed a Ministerial Directive that governs the commencement of trade under Provisional Schedules of Tariff Concessions submitted by Member States, although the actual start date remains to be determined (Tralac, 2023b).

During the 9th Meeting of the Council of Ministers in July 2022, the AfCFTA Secretariat introduced the Facilitated and Guided Trade Initiative. This initiative aims to assess the functionality of the institutional, legal, and trade policy framework under the AfCFTA, enable substantive trade within the AfCFTA, and send a positive message to African economic operators. The Guided Trade Initiative (GTI) was officially launched in October 2022, with eight State Parties participating. These parties are currently trading various goods under the GTI, including ceramic tiles, batteries, horticultural products, flowers, avocados, palm oil, tea, rubber, and air conditioner components. A committee has been established to coordinate and operationalize trade transactions under the GTI, and Ad Hoc Committees have been formed in participating State Parties (Tralac, 2023b).

The Services Protocol became effective from May 30, 2019, as well. This Protocol requires each State Party to provide a schedule of specific commitments. The Assembly ratified five priority services sectors for initial commitments: transport, communications, tourism, financial, and business services. A total of 46 State and non-State Parties have submitted services offers, with the AfCFTA Secretariat verifying these offers to ensure compliance with agreed modalities, negotiations are still ongoing (Tralac, 2023b).

The AfCFTA Phase II Protocols, which include Investment, Intellectual Property Rights, and Competition Policy, were concluded in October 2022. The legal review of these protocols was completed in January 2023, and they were officially endorsed by the AU 36-Assembly in February 2023. However, the final versions of these protocols have not yet been made public, and the ratification process has not commenced (Tralac, 2023b). Phase III Protocols on Digital Trade and Women and Youth in Trade are currently in progress. National consultations were held to gather input from women and youth regarding the challenges faced in cross-border trade and their expectations from the AfCFTA Protocol, with negotiations expected to conclude due course of 2023 (Tralac, 2023b). Also, there is currently no regional REC framework for digital trade within Africa.

The 2023 AU Theme, "The Year of AfCFTA: Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area Implementation," aims to promote closer collaboration among various AU organs, specialized agencies, regional mechanisms, and RECs. This collaborative effort aligns with their respective mandates to expedite the implementation of the AfCFTA, ultimately benefiting the African population. This theme for 2023 intends to foster stronger political commitment towards

trade as a developmental agenda for Africa. It seeks to inspire the generation of solutions and solidarity, transforming the vision of the AfCFTA into a reality. This effort aims to establish connections with member states, African Union entities, private sector participants, development partners, and other stakeholders who play crucial roles in accelerating the AfCFTA's implementation (African Union, 2023c).

1.3 Motivation

While the world economy is in disarray as a consequence of the widespread COVID-19 epidemic, this is an important opportunity to assist African nations diversify their exports, accelerate their growth, and attract foreign investment with the creation of the sizable AfCFTA regional market (Fofack, 2020:6). "One of the instructive lessons learned from this crisis is that economic resilience is critical. It is critical to build up industrial capabilities, trade and supply chains across African countries. Greater supply-chain resilience needs to include efforts to spread risk by enabling the greater geographic spread of manufacturing. This resonates with bringing to fruition the goal of 'Made in Africa' initiative. "We have to seize the opportunity presented by the AfCFTA, which is aimed at boosting intra-Africa trade," said the deputy minister of trade, industry, and competition of South Africa, Mr Fikile Majola (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2021), where he aligned with the initiative. The AfCFTA has the ability to enhance the number of job opportunities as well as incomes, which will serve to extend chances for all people living in Africa continent.

"Africa's vulnerabilities and limited participation in global trade is a function of its traditional over-dependence on the export of low-value raw materials and commodities and the import of high-value manufactured goods and services. The continent's full potential will remain unfulfilled unless we address the challenges of poor infrastructure, small and fragmented markets, underdeveloped production structures and inadequate economic diversification," said by Mr. Majola from the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, (2020c). The opportunities emphasised by Mr Majola are in increasing the industrialist's scheme where he urged local entrepreneurs to be conscious of the opportunities that will be presented by the AfCFTA and strengthen their capacity to supply products to the entire African continent, that alone could grow the South African economy and create jobs according to Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (2019).

South Africa is one of the most developed economies in Africa and is often considered one of the economic powerhouses on the continent (Vickers, 2012:550). The country has a major role to play role as a secretary general of the AfCFTA Secretariat presented by Mr. Wamkele Mene due to its economic size, industrial capabilities, and regional influence. A country like South Africa participating in the AfCFTA, would certainly have an impact on the agreement. As a major

economy driver, it would contribute to the overall economic size of the agreement, the size of the market, trade volumes, and the agreement's overall economic integration process. (Abrego *et al.*, 2020:11). South Africa as a significant exporter and importer, is vital to the dynamics of regional commerce (Diao & Yanoma, 2003:4). Its exclusion from the AfCFTA would interfere with current value chains and economic flows in the region.

South Africa's participation in the AfCFTA negotiations provides an opportunity to shape the agreement's rules, regulations, and modalities. It has the influence in decision-making processes, and it participates in advocating for its interests to ensure that its concerns are adequately addressed within the AfCFTA framework. The participation of South Africa may have an impact on the overall development of regional integration initiatives in Africa. The country is a significant participant in the SADC (SADC, 2023) and COMESA regional economic communities, and has the potential to interfere with the cohesiveness and coordination of these efforts at regional integration.

The AfCFTA impression among other African nations and international stakeholders may be impacted by South Africa's participation in it. It might make people rethink how committed everyone is to promoting regional integration and the growth of the continent's economy. This might have an impact on future regional projects, cooperation, and trust-building. South Africa's participation in the AfCFTA could have significant implications for the success and impact of the agreement, and in bringing this enormous agreement into reality.

It's important to note that South Africa signed the AfCFTA Agreement in 2018, indicating its initial commitment to the process. It might benefit from increased market access, trade opportunities, and economic growth by joining the AfCFTA. However, it would also have to deal with challenges including heightened competition, adjusting to tariff reductions, addressing infrastructure requirements, and ensuring inclusive growth. South African's businesses may face trade barriers and reduced competitiveness in the African market, potentially affecting trade patterns and investment decisions within the region. To maximise the advantages of joining the AfCFTA and minimise any potential disadvantages, strategic planning, policy coordination, and targeted interventions would be essential.

The wider development integration objective must be viewed as having the AfCFTA as a cornerstone of market integration. He argued that colonial-era small, fragmented economies must be overcome in order to move beyond their constraints. Mr. Majola made this statement during a speech that he gave at the Progressive Business Forum's (PBF) webinar on the trade potential for South African companies in Africa. He continued by saying that by establishing a framework for increased intra-African trade, the AfCFTA took Africa one step closer to realizing the historic

objective of an integrated market in Africa (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2021b). South Africa's involvement could contribute to increased intra-African trade, investment, and economic growth, as well as further regional integration. As a member of the AfCFTA, South Africa can potentially gain several benefits and increase their business opportunities in the continent. This all will add to the prosperity of the country's economy. But as with any country, South Africa may face several challenges in implementing the AfCFTA agreement as well.

There is a lot of research that has been done on the opportunities and the challenges of the AfCFTA for Africa and for particular countries in Africa e.g., (Abrego *et al.*, 2020; Albert, 2019; Cofelice, 2018; Fauzel *et al.*, 2022; Nwankwo & Ajibo, 2020; Olayiwola, 2020; Raga *et al.*, 2022; Saygili *et al.*, 2018), but there is a significant gap in research regarding the potential impact of the AfCFTA for South Africa's trade relations within and outside the continent, as well as the opportunities and challenges South Africa could face in the implications of this agreement and the potential risks South Africa could face in implementing this deal.

1.4 Problem statement

The AfCFTA will link 1,3 billion people in 54 countries with a combined GDP of \$3,4 trillion, creating the largest free trade area in the world by the number of participating nations. However, to make this reality South Africa as a member of the AfCFTA agreement, faces opportunities, challenges and might be some risks in implementing the agreement, which requires addressing complex issues related to trade liberalisation and measures reformations, economic disparities, infrastructure and connectivity, regulatory harmonisation, domestic policy adjustments, institutional capacity, and political coordination. While the AfCFTA presents potential benefits such as expanded market access, increased intra-African trade, diversification of trade partners, business opportunities, industrialisation and value addition, enhanced competitiveness, and regional integration, South Africa also needs to navigate challenges in effectively implementing the AfCFTA to ensure that its economy and people can fully capitalise on the opportunities while mitigating potential risks and addressing domestic and regional concerns.

The deputy minister Mr. Majola emphasized that “the intention to dissect the content of the AfCFTA and to expose its potential impact on the South Africa economy” (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2020b) given that South Africa is a signatory and a member of this agreement, it is crucial that our business community understands its details in order to be best-positioned to participate and ultimately generate the deal's economic advantages for the nation. Stakeholders from organised business, chief executive officers, academia, organised labour, government departments and civil society will all be in attendance to engage, interrogate and advance the economic and public policy view of the AfCFTA. This research will be addressing

the following question: What are the main challenges, opportunities and risks taken of the AfCFTA for South Africa in the upcoming years?

Therefore, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive document of the potential benefits and challenges implementing risks for South Africa from the AfCFTA agreement, including its impact on trade relations with the rest of Africa and beyond. Also, the South Africa could play such an important role for the success and impact of the agreement to the rest of Africa. The findings of this research will be useful to policymakers, academics, and practitioners interested in African and South African trade and economic development.

1.5 Research objectives

- Primary objective
 1. What are the opportunities, challenges and risks taken by South Africa in participating in the AfCFTA?
- Secondary objectives
 2. What kind of reform can South Africa take to ensure its success in this agreement?
 3. What are the factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement?
 4. Which recommendations can be made based on the findings of the study?

1.6 Research method

Qualitative research using a thematic document analysis will be performed using secondary data sources. Creswell (2014) suggests using a "six-step linear," hierarchical method to thematic analysis to support in-depth qualitative research. This method organises and analyses qualitative data to discover themes and patterns. The six phases assist researchers in becoming acquainted with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and completing an analysis. By understanding the data's underlying meanings and insights, researchers can create rich, nuanced interpretations. Creswell's six-step hierarchical model assists researchers in conducting comprehensive thematic analysis and developing qualitative research methods.

Organise and prepare the data

A qualitative research and document analysis will be conducted. The process of conducting the research - secondary data sources, will be utilised to compile a database of articles, media statements of key role players, credible business news, government statements, interviews, reports of international organisations such as the World Bank and the African union, each of which will be assessed according to the degree to which it will be able to contribute to our understanding of the study issues.

Obtain a general sense of the data

The thematic analysis begins by getting a comprehensive understanding of the data gathered and considering the overall significance of the information gathered. This stage entails going over all the collected data. Based on the study's research questions, codes (single phrases), categories (groups of codes), and themes (overarching participant characteristics) will be created.

Coding the data

When transforming unprocessed data into an understandable and persuasive "narrative," coding is a crucial tool (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:266). The core of coding entails examining a cohesive chunk of empirical data and the data with a phrase or word that concisely expresses the material's meaning (Friese, 2019). In qualitative research, there is often a lot of information collected, and coding helps to reduce this amount while making the data easily accessible for future analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2007:267). Inductive coding, which creates codes directly from data, will be used to carry out the coding procedure.

Description of the data

In this step, a thorough explanation of the information acquired will be carried out to facilitate further study. The codes are compiled into larger groups and topics. The titles in the study's findings and results section frequently employ the themes as main findings of the investigation.

Representation of qualitative narrative

The qualitative narrative's presentation of the topics is described in this stage. The most widely utilized strategy, according to Creswell (2014), is to undertake a narrative section to present the results of the qualitative study. The findings may be presented using a thorough discussion of the themes (including subthemes and quotations), a discussion of related themes, or a discussion of an event timeline.

Interpret the qualitative research

After the process of conducting a thematic analysis of these research-data, an encompassing method that may be used to map out the theoretical perspectives and practices that are prevalent in the topic.

Ethical considerations

This research study conforms to the ethical guidelines and principles of the North-West University (NWU, 2016:15). It uses secondary data sources, and no human participants will be involved in this study. Therefore, there will not be any contact between the researcher and the respondent/participant of the study.

1.7 Chapters outline

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, the background and motivation of the study as well as the problem statement, objectives, and the research method.

Chapter 2 as follow: 2.1 Literature overview: regional integration and its benefits, and socio-economic development 2.2 Contextual framework: South Africa's history in region integration and socio-economic as well as and the general expected outcomes of the AfCFTA.

Chapter 3 is the document analysis where a qualitative method will be used and a thematic analysis will be conducted to show the results of the document analysis in which the opportunities, challenges and risks presented by the AfCFTA for South Africa have been identified.

Chapter 4 includes findings of the data analysis and discussion.

Chapter 5 includes the summary, conclusion and recommendations to policy makers and future research.

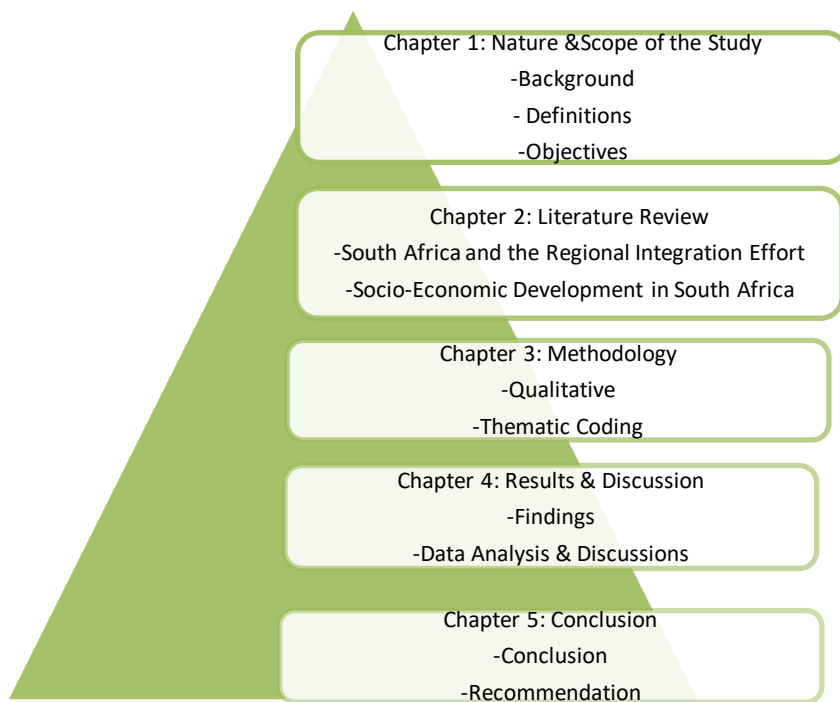


Figure 1.4: Chapters Layout (Source: Author's compilation)

1.8 Conclusion

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is a historic chance for the African continent to solve long-standing economic challenges and pave the way for greater regional integration and prosperity. Africa's historical trade patterns, which have been characterised by a high reliance on natural resource exports, have hampered economic diversification and intra-regional commerce. The AfCFTA aims to address these concerns by establishing an African single market, fostering free movement of products, services, and people, and lowering trade obstacles. The RECs have played a critical role in developing African economic integration, laying the framework for the larger AfCFTA. Given its standing as one of the continent's most developed economies, South Africa's involvement in the AfCFTA is significant. South Africa's participation has an impact on the development of rules and regulations, as well as the overall success of the agreement.

While the AfCFTA has significant benefits, such as improved market access and the ability to pull millions out of poverty, it also has drawbacks, such as infrastructural gaps and disruptions to existing trading patterns. Furthermore, actual trade under the AfCFTA had not yet begun at the time of writing, emphasising the importance of cautious implementation and monitoring. The AfCFTA is a game-changing effort with the potential to revolutionise Africa's economic landscape. However, its success will be determined by how well it is implemented, how well it addresses obstacles, and how well it capitalises on the opportunities it provides. South Africa's role in this

process is critical, and as the AfCFTA takes shape, careful analysis of the ramifications for the country's commercial relations is required.

The AfCFTA is a transformative trade agreement that can create a massive market for products and services benefiting 1.3 billion people across 55 countries (Moremong, 2019). The AfCFTA stands as a significant initiative within the African Union's long-term development vision, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (AU-AfCFTA, 2023). Up to this point, the AfCFTA Secretariat has attained notable accomplishments, which encompass the establishment of protocols regarding Rules of Origin, Dispute Settlement, as well as the creation of Tariff Concessions and Service Offers schedules.

1.9 Summary

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is a historic chance for the African continent to solve long-standing economic challenges and pave the way for greater regional integration and prosperity. Africa's historical trade patterns, which have been characterised by a high reliance on natural resource exports, have hampered economic diversification and intra-regional commerce. The AfCFTA aims to address these concerns by establishing an African single market, fostering free movement of products, services, and people, and lowering trade obstacles. The RECs have played a critical role in developing African economic integration, laying the framework for the larger AfCFTA. Given its standing as one of the continent's most developed economies, South Africa's involvement in the AfCFTA is significant. South Africa's participation has an impact on the development of rules and regulations, as well as the overall success of the agreement.

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CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In order to create a free trade area, one should have a clear understanding of regional integration and socio-economic development. The two are multi-faceted and encompass a wide range of objectives and activities. These initiatives intend to foster cooperation among nations to achieve common socio-economic development goals (Robert, 2004:32). Their aim is to stimulate economic growth within nations by creating larger and more attractive markets (Apiko *et al.*, 2020:3). One of the central objectives of regional integration is to alleviate poverty by promoting economic growth, creating jobs, and facilitating the flow of goods and services especially where socio-economic objectives also encompass improving access to education, healthcare, and social services for all citizens. This includes reducing gender disparities and addressing inequalities (Schiff & Winters, 2003:13). A solid comprehension of both aspects will enhance our ability to fully grasp the opportunities, challenges, and potential risks associated with the AfCFTA agreement.

AfCFTA prime goal is to create a single market for goods and services (Marinov & Zlatinov, 2022:49), making it easier for African countries to trade with each other. Many regional integration programs include infrastructure development projects, such as the construction of roads, railways, ports, and energy networks. Improved infrastructure facilitates trade, connectivity, and access to basic services (Ndulu, 2006:212). African countries often seek to accelerate industrialization through regional integration. By pooling resources and promoting cross-border value chains, countries can develop manufacturing sectors, create jobs, and reduce dependence on raw material exports (Jerome & Nabena, 2016:89). Economic cooperation can contribute to political stability by fostering mutual interests and reducing conflicts over resources. When countries are economically interdependent, they are often more inclined to resolve disputes through negotiation rather than confrontation (Erasmus, 2023).

This chapter, will review the concepts of regional integration, exploring its historical evolution in Africa and the challenges it has encountered with its initiative solutions, all while considering its impact on African socio-economic development. Additionally, South Africa's initiatives will be examined in regional integration within the region and its corresponding socio-economic advancements.

2.1.1 Regional integration

Regional Integration is a process which aims to entail connecting nations in a same continent, region, or sub-region in respect of achieving collaboration and/or coordination. Regional

integration is increasingly being accepted as essential in facilitating economic and political development (Chingono & Nakana, 2009:396). Once the nations sign a free trade agreement, leading to full economic integration. The establishment of an economic community necessitates the elimination of all trade restrictions, including tariffs and non-tariff barriers, as well as the coordination of economic policy among the nations that are participating in the community (Ravenhill, 2008:474).

Regional integration initiatives often include capacity-building programs to strengthen institutions, regulatory frameworks, and human resources. This enhances the ability of member states to implement agreements effectively. It can facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge-sharing among member states, helping countries advance in various sectors, including agriculture, mining, industry and services sectors (Sako, 2006:15).

Economic integration also known as market integration, is the process by which the economic barriers against exchange of goods, services, capital and people between two or more countries are eliminated or reduced (Chingono & Nakana, 2009:400). Economic integration starts with a Preferential Trade Area (PTA), moves to a Free Trade Area (FTA), to a customs union and common markets and ends with an economic and political union (Chingono & Nakana, 2009:400). The European Union (EU) serves as an illustration of a foundational structure for the European Economic Community (EEC). Some regional blocs in Africa aim to establish common monetary unions and financial institutions. For example, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) shares a common currency (CFA franc) and central bank.

An agreement between two or more states to establish a common currency region is known as a monetary union. The adoption of a unified monetary policy and the formation of a single central bank in this region, or the consolidation of the various central banks that are currently in existence into a single central banking system (Puetter, 2019). Many governments have adopted, the integration strategy e.g., Social, economic, political, security, and cultural challenges are all related to this integration. The strategy to developmental integration focuses on the cross-border infrastructure development links, industrial development, and market integration, which is an economic initiative instead of political initiative (Gumede, 2020:4).

When discussing regional integration, four theories are frequently brought forward: The **first theory** is the market integration school of thought is the most prevalent. In the context of regional or sub-regional trade, the aim is to reduce or eliminate barriers that impede trade between nations within that area. These trade integration models, as initially proposed by Viner (1950), outline a stepwise approach involving the establishment of a free trade area, followed by a customs union, then a common market, and ultimately a monetary union, as discussed by Gumede (2019b:101).

To exemplify this concept, Viner's work demonstrates that a customs union can result in either trade creation or trade diversion. He also highlights that trade creation can enhance the welfare of the home country, whereas trade diversion diminishes it. The majority of subsequent analyses regarding the welfare implications of customs unions have leaned on this differentiation. To illustrate this, consider Lipsey's assertion (1957), it is now recognized that "the straightforward conclusions that trade creation is beneficial" and trade diversion is detrimental are no longer valid, as noted by Cooper and Massell (1965:742).

The **second theory** is one well-known theory developed within the context of the neoliberal school of thought is open regionalism. The notion advocates for the liberalisation of international trade as a method of connecting economies around the world. According to Garnaut (2004:2), the open regionalism hypothesis, was influenced by the elimination of barriers, removal of obstacles and guaranteeing that economic collaboration occurs openly. Open regionalism is frequently propelled by national economic reforms intended to liberalize trade and investment (Phillips, 2004:70). Developing nations are aware of the need to boost their competitiveness, draw in foreign direct investment, and support indigenous companies. Reducing trade obstacles, enhancing infrastructure, and putting new regulations into place are a few examples of these reforms. Setting the stage for open regionalism is the domestic process of implementing such reforms. The downside of this theory shows how wrong it is to think of regionalism as nothing more than a reflection of domestic processes. Instead, of how it is connected to both regionalism and domestic political economy (Phillips, 2004:47-50).

The **third theory** is known as the "new geography hypothesis" and it proposes that countries that are smaller or less powerful should combine with countries that are larger or more powerful in order to profit from international trade (Gumede, 2019b:101). Economic geography is crucial for understanding the regional structure of production even though it may not explain much about the global structure of production (Davis & Weinstein, 1999). The **fourth theory** is called the developmental cooperation method, and it encourages the preservation of new industries, the implementation of import substitution measures, and industrialization. This theory is part of the developmental cooperation method (UNCTAD, 2013). According to UNCTAD (2011), the goal of the developmental regionalism approach is to increase member countries' integration into global markets as a method of promoting sustainable development while also reaping the conventional benefits of regional integration (Gumede, 2020:9).

2.1.2 Regional integration in Africa

Through African history there were couples of strong integration groups formed as a post-colonial African nation-state that emerged in the early sixties (Olaosebikan, 2011:219). First was the

Casablanca group i.e., Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, and Morocco, by their prominent leaders at that time: Sékou Touré, Gamal Abdel Nasser, King Mohammed V, and Kwame Nkrumah. The second group was mainly a French colony is the Brazzaville group i.e. Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Dahomey, Mauritania, People's Republic of Congo, Upper Volta, Gabon, Niger, Senegal, Madagascar, and Chad, promoted a gradualist strategy beginning with having economic and cultural ties to the region collaboration (Norman & Perkins, 1985).

The Monrovia group i.e., Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Senegal, Cameroon, Madagascar, Chad, Burkina Faso, Dahomey, People's Republic of Congo, Niger, Togo, Liberia, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Gabon, Tunisia, and Somalia, helped to establish the OAU in 1963 in the presence of leaders like Mali's Modibo Keita, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, Guinea's Sékou Touré, Algeria's Ben Bella, Liberia's William Tubman, Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie, Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, Nigeria's Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Nnamdi Azikiwe (Olaosebikan, 2011:223).

However, it's important to note that political dynamics and regional integration efforts can evolve over time. The RECs in Africa were primarily regional organizations focused on economic integration and cooperation among their member states (Bach, 2014). Some of the RECs have gone closer to a political federation, while others have gotten even closer to a monetary and financial union (Tavares, 2009:64-66). The fact that many countries are members of more than one REC is a challenge for the regional economic communities. According to the most recent Regional Integration Report from the UNECA, there are only 12 African nations that are members of a single REC, while 33 African nations that are members of two RECs, 8 African nations that are members of three RECs, and 1 to 4 African nations that are members of four RECs (UNECA, 2010). In order to harmonise economic indicators, 5 of the 8 RECs have established objectives for both macroeconomic and monetary convergence (Babić, 2020:82). However, the nations that are a part of these RECs have not yet converged to a significant degree. The endorsed programmes have been difficult to coordinate in order to help countries fulfil the goals established by the RECs and the AU, as a result, some nations have advanced more than others (Chingono & Nakana, 2009). For instance, ECOWAS and EAC, have made progress in terms of regional integration, including the establishment of a common market and the adoption of common policies (Reinold, 2019), while the SADC set goals for a single currency by 2018, a single currency by the year 2016, and a common market by the year 2015. These goals, however, proved to be unduly ambitious (UNECA, 2019).

2.1.3 Socio-economic development in Africa

Usually, the economic growth reflects on the social development. In Africa the economic growth in the well-known time has been elusive, and that accounts for the poor or insignificant growth in the well-being of the African citizens (Macamo, 2017). But before we get into that, let's start by defining the idea of development: In Africa, the idea of development typically revolves on the concept of good governance and respect for human rights. This is something that has been forced from the outside on the African leaders for years, as well as the correlation between development and democracy (Gumede, 2020). In accordance with the so-called "Right to Development", the OAU in 1981 unanimously approved the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (HPR) that defines the framework of rights which development should be governed and encouraged. They consist of peoples' rights, political and civil rights, and economic and social rights. People have the right to self-determination, add to that national and international peace and security, as well as an environment that is suitable for both economic and social growth. These rights also include protection against all forms of discrimination, persecution, and exploitation (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2002).

African came into a conclusion that African development was impacted by global disparities characterised by post-colonial arrangements and unfair trade laws on a worldwide scale through numerous international agencies (Gumede, 2020). In the year of 1986 the UN declared their support for the proclamation on the 'Right to Development' as a human right (Kamga, 2018). The question remains 'what has constrained African development?' in Mkandawire (2015) he argued that the slow African economic performance is due to neopatrimonialism, where individual African leaders can practice a different style of authority, idiosyncratic mannerisms. Meanwhile Gumede (2020) argued that neopatrimonialism cannot be the case in holding the African economy's performance, where to some extent Africa has witnessed a growth in the post-colonisation era. According to the Table 2-1, representing the GDP growth from the 1961-1970 for some African countries, the information utilised in the calculation is from the World Bank 2018 data.

Table 2-1: GDP Growth (1961-1970) Source: Gumede (2020)).

Country	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
Botswana	6.3	6.7	5.9	6.8	5.8	6.3	5.9	10.6	15.1	17.1
Ghana	3.4	4.1	4.4	2.2	1.4	-4.2	3.0	0.4	6.0	9.7
Kenya	-7.7	9.4	8.8	5.0	2.0	14.7	3.4	8.0	7.9	-4.6
Malawi	7.6	0.7	-1.4	2.7	13.6	13.2	7.3	-1.9	5.9	0.5
Nigeria	0.2	4.1	8.6	4.9	4.9	-4.2	-15.7	-1.2	24.2	25.0
Rwana	-4.3	11.3	-9.8	-12.5	7.0	7.0	6.9	7.0	11.0	6.0

South Africa	3.8	6.2	7.4	7.9	6.1	4.4	7.2	4.1	4.7	5.2
Zimbabwe	6.3	1.4	6.2	-1.1	4.9	1.5	8.3	2.0	12.4	22.6

Some countries performed well during that period e.g., Ghana growth was relatively good barring the 1966, Nigeria and Kenya growth was notable. Rwanda performed well in the latter half of the same decade as well as Malawi and Botswana. Countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa remained under colonial rule where they still had growth but not like the other countries. The 1970s oil crisis (Issawi, 1978), followed by the 1980s structural adjustment programmes caused great suffering in many African nations e.g., Sub-Saharan African countries were facing fundamental problems: high rates of population growth, low levels of investment and saving, inefficient use of resources, weak institutions and human capacity, and a general decline in income and living standards (Heidhues & Obare, 2011:56). Prior to a significant global economic crisis beginning in 2007 (Fosu, 2010:1), there were several economic disasters throughout the 1990s that also affected the African growth development.

In the post-colonial era, Africa has witnessed remarkable economic growth in the last twenty years. Around two-thirds of African countries with available per capita income data, as reported by the World Bank (2018), have consistently achieved an annual growth rate of 3.5% or higher for a continuous period spanning from 1950 to 2016. This is understandable considering that several African nations have resources that are in high demand, including sugar, coal, uranium, diamonds, gold, platinum, silver, oil, and petroleum (Custers & Matthysen, 2009:5-14). Examining the human development index in contrast to the good economic performance in Africa it has been mediocre, and social development has not been improved as well. However, the African economy's structure needs to be altered, nonetheless, in order to guarantee the long-term health of its economies and a significant increase in the levels of human development. The African economy has to be completely overhauled. Politics and institutions must also be run effectively in the lately industrialised nations (Gumede, 2020:25).

2.1.4 Agenda 2063: The Africa we want

It represents Africa's blueprint and comprehensive strategy for propelling the continent into a dominant global force of the future (African Union, 2023d). Agenda 2063 is a strategic, long-term planning tool for shaping Africa's development over the forthcoming five decades, formulated by the AU Commission as part of the celebrations marking the OAU/AU Golden Jubilee in 2013 (Ndizera & Muzee, 2018:1, 142-154). The AfCFTA treaty, a historic continental pact and

considered as one of the Agenda 2063's centrepiece projects, aspires to create a single, united market for products and services across the continent, with unrestricted investments and business travel. The 2063 projects include endeavours to maintain peace on the continent as well as projects related to Infrastructure, education, research, technological advancements, cultural expressions, and artistic endeavours. Part of this project has been explored by Prof. Parsons during his interview with Minister Naledi Pandor Minister of International Relations and Cooperation in (2022). The main objectives of the 2063 projects are (African Union, 2023d):

- (i) Integrated high speed train network: The project seeks to build an African High-Speed Train Network that will link all African capitals and commercial hubs, facilitating the movement of people, products, and services. The expanded rail connectivity also seeks to lower transportation costs and ease traffic on existing and new networks.
- (ii) Formulation of an African commodities strategy: To enable African nations to add value, extract higher rents from their commodities, integrate into global value chains, and encourage vertical and horizontal diversification grounded in value addition and local content development, a continental commodities strategy is seen as essential. The goal of the plan is to make Africa into a continent that actively exploits its own resources to secure the economic growth of Africans, rather than only serving as a supplier of raw commodities to the rest of the world.
- (iii) Establishment of the AfCFTA: Enhance Africa's trading position in the international market by accelerating intra-African trade. By doubling intra-African trade and bolstering Africa's common voice and policy space in international trade discussions, the AfCFTA seeks to significantly accelerate intra-African trade growth and use trade more effectively as an engine of growth and sustainable development.
- (iv) The African passport and free-movement of people: Enable Africans to travel, work, and live anywhere on their own continent without constraints. With the intention of encouraging Member States to issue visas to increase the free movement of all African citizens in all African countries, the initiative seeks to change Africa's laws, which remain generally restrictive on people's ability to move about the continent despite political commitments to remove borders.
- (v) Silencing the guns by 2020: Africa must seek to put an end to all wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence, violent conflicts, and genocide in order to fulfil the objectives of Agenda 2063. In addition, the creation and implementation of an African Human Security Index (AHSI) will be used to track progress in the areas.

- (vi) Implementation of the grand Inga dam project: The construction of the Inga Dam is anticipated to produce 43,200 MW of power, supporting the region's existing power pools and their combined efforts to transition Africa from traditional to modern energy sources and guarantee that all Africans have access to clean and reasonably priced electricity.
- (vii) Establishment of a single African Air-Transport market (SAATM): As a boost to the continent's economic integration and growth strategy, the SAATM aspires to secure intra-regional connectivity between the capital cities of Africa and create a single, unified air transport market in Africa. The SAATM enables qualifying airlines to fully liberalise intra-African air transport services in terms of market access and traffic rights for scheduled and freight air services, enhancing air service connectivity and air carrier effectiveness. It does away with ownership limitations and offers complete liberalisation of frequencies, rates, and capacity. Additionally, it offers standards for safety and security, fair competition, dispute resolution procedures, and consumer protection procedures, as well as eligibility requirements for African community carriers.
- (viii) Establishment of an annual African economic forum: The annual African Economic Forum is a multi-stakeholder conference that brings together African political leaders, business leaders, academics, and members of civil society to discuss how to hasten Africa's economic transformation while utilising its abundant resources to advance the welfare of the continent's people. The forum addresses important prospects as well as the barriers to economic growth and suggests actions to be implemented in order to realise the aspirations and objectives of Agenda 2063.
- (ix) Establishment of the African financial institutions: The establishment of organisations that will be crucial in the mobilisation of resources and management of the African financial sector is the goal of the creation of African Continental Financial Institutions, which seeks to hasten the integration and socioeconomic growth of the continent. The African Investment Bank, Pan African Stock Exchange, African Monetary Fund, and African Central Bank are the financial institutions that are intended to foster economic unity.
- (x) The Pan-Africa E-Network: This aims to implement policies and strategies that will result in transformative e-applications and services in Africa, particularly the intra-African broadband terrestrial infrastructure and cyber security, making the information revolution the foundation for service delivery in the bio and nanotechnology industries and ultimately transforming Africa into an e-Society.

- (xi) Africa outer space strategy: The goal of the Africa space policy is to increase Africa's use of space to advance its development. The development of Africa in all areas—agriculture, disaster management, remote sensing, climate forecasting, banking, and finance, as well as defence and security—depends critically on space. Access to space technology products in Africa is no longer a luxury, and access to these technologies and products must be accelerated. African nations already have access to satellite technology thanks to recent advancements, and regional markets for space goods in Africa must be developed using the right policies and tactics.
- (xii) An African virtual and E-university: This initiative intends to enhance access to postsecondary and continuing education in Africa by concurrently reaching a sizable number of students and professionals in several locations using ICT-based programmes. In order to provide students with guaranteed access to the university at any time and from any location in the world (24 hours a day, seven days a week), it aspires to provide pertinent and excellent Open, Distance and eLearning (ODEL) resources.
- (xiii) Cyber security: The choice to make cyber security the centrepiece programme of Agenda 2063 is a glaring indication that Africa needs to not only account for the rapid changes brought about by emerging technologies in its development plans, but also to ensure that these technologies are used for the benefit of African people, institutions, or nation-states by ensuring data protection and safety online. The African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection serves as the project's guiding principle.
- (xiv) Great African Museum: The African Charter for African Cultural Renaissance acknowledges the significant contribution that culture makes to mobilising and bringing people together around shared ideas as well as the importance of fostering African culture to advance Pan-Africanist principles. The Great African Museum initiative seeks to raise awareness of the enormous, dynamic, and diverse cultural artefacts of Africa as well as the influence that Africa has had and continues to have on the many cultures of the world in regard to things like art, music, language, science, and other fields. The Great African Museum will serve as a focal point for safeguarding and advancing the cultural legacy of Africa.
- (xv) Encyclopaedia Africana: The goal of the Encyclopaedia Africana is to offer a reliable source on the real history of Africa and African culture. With foundations in all facets of African life, including history, law, economics, religion, architecture, and education, as well as the systems and practises of African cultures, the Encyclopaedia offers Africans a body of truth to lead and unite them in their growth. Encyclopaedia Africana offers an African perspective

on the people, culture, literature, and history of Africa. It is a crucial instrument for educating people about the history, culture, and contributions of Africans to the world.

Agenda 2063 serves as Africa's comprehensive roadmap and overarching strategy to propel the continent into a prominent global force of the future. This strategic framework outlines Africa's commitment to achieving inclusive and sustainable development, embodying the tangible realization of the continent's pursuit of unity, self-determination, freedom, progress, and shared prosperity, as advocated under the principles of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.

2.1.5 Regional Integration Challenges in Africa

They are some challenges facing the regional integration in Africa which emphasises the importance of REC coordination because individual countries cannot face these issues alone:

- (i) **Diverse Economies and Development Levels:** The economic sizes, development levels, and industrialization levels of African countries vary greatly. Because of this diversity, it might be difficult to develop integration agreements that benefit all member states equally. Less developed countries may be concerned about falling behind, whereas more established economies may be concerned about losing their competitive advantages (Thonke & Spliid, 2012:42).
- (ii) **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation networks, energy systems, and communication links, is a fundamental impediment to regional integration. Poor connection raises trade costs and impedes cross-border movement of goods, services, and people (Tuluy, 2016:342).
- (iii) **Trade Barriers and Tariffs:** High trade barriers, such as tariffs and non-tariff obstacles, impede the movement of products and services within the region. These impediments can stifle intra-regional commerce and economic cooperation (Kayizzi-Mugerwa *et al.*, 2014:1).
- (iv) **Lack of Coordination and Harmonization:** Differences in legislation, standards, and policies across member countries can stymie the free flow of products and services. Harmonizing these components is critical for effective integration, but it can be difficult due to national objectives and capacities (Geda & Kebret, 2008:372).
- (v) **Political Instability and Conflicts:** Political insecurity and conflict in several African countries can stymie integration efforts. Insecurity and uncertainty can deter investment and economic cooperation, weakening integration's benefits (Olu-Adeyemi & Ayodele, 2007: 214).

- (vi) **Limited Industrial Diversification:** Many African countries rely primarily on exporting a few main commodities. Because of this lack of diversification, the opportunity for value-added intra-regional commerce is limited, and the region is vulnerable to global commodity price changes (Chingono & Nakana, 2009:406).
- (vii) **Bureaucratic and Administrative Hurdles:** Difficult administrative procedures and bureaucratic red tape at border crossings can cause delays and increase transaction expenses, add to that bribery aiming to expedite the unlawful movement of goods and individuals across national boarder (Jancsics, 2020:215). It is critical to simplify and streamline these processes for effective integration (Ladan, 2021:7).
- (viii) **Lack of Trade Facilitation Infrastructure:** Border posts and customs infrastructure are frequently insufficient to handle rising trade volumes as a result of integration. This might cause traffic jams and delays at border crossings (Abuka, 2005:2).
- (ix) **Lack of Financial Integration:** A lack of financial integration impedes cross-border investment, capital access, and efficient financial transactions. Financial regulations must be harmonised, and cross-border payment systems must be improved (Wakeman-Linn & Wagh, 2008:18).
- (x) **Lack of Public Awareness and Support:** Many residents and businesses may be unaware of the benefits of regional integration, which may result in a lack of public support for integration efforts (Chingono & Nakana, 2009:407).
- (xi) **Many Regional Blocs:** Africa is home to a number of RECs, each with overlapping membership and distinct agendas. Instead of cohesive regional integration, this can sometimes lead to competition and duplication of efforts (Hartzenberg, 2011:1).
- (xii) **Weak Institutional Capacity:** Some RECs and African institutions lack the capacity to effectively implement agreements, coordinate integration initiatives, and mediate conflicts (Hartzenberg, 2011:17).

To address these issues, governments, regional organisations, corporations, and civil society must work together. To realise the potential benefits of African regional integration, a mix of policy reforms, infrastructure development, institutional improvement, and persistent political commitment is required.

2.1.6 Initiatives to Overcome Some of The Challenges

2.1.6.1 The AU Initiatives (ECA, AU & ADB, 2012): as follows:

- Agenda 2063 'The Africa We Want', is a long-term development plan that seeks to transform Africa into a global powerhouse by addressing key issues, promoting sustainable growth, and fostering unity and prosperity across the continent.
- The policies on continental integration are not new to Africa. To improve continental economic integration, the Organisation of African Unity and its successor, the African Union, adopted the Abuja Treaty, the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade, and the Tripartite Free Trade Area. These policies have not been implemented yet, which creates uncertainty regarding the implementation of AfCFTA. To achieve its objectives, the AfCFTA requires member states to implement a complementary set of measures as part of Agenda 2063's First Ten-Year Implementation Plan ranging from 2014 to 2023, which seeks to accelerate structural transformation in Africa. The implementation will ensure that some non-tariff barriers are eliminated to facilitate intra-African trade. However, the low aggregated implementation score of 51% against the 2021 targets might have negative implications for the AfCFTA.
- The process of streamlining the RECs has resulted in acknowledging the existence of eight RECs.
- Additionally, efforts have been directed towards formulating and accepting the African Charter on Statistics (currently undergoing country ratification).
- Furthermore, progress has been made in the creation of financial institutions in accordance with Article 19 of the Constitutive Act. The foundational documents of the African Investment Bank have been adopted, with ongoing ratification of protocols and statutes.
- Moreover, there has been the endorsement of an Action Plan aimed at enhancing intra-African trade, along with a roadmap to expedite the establishment of a continental free trade area by around 2017.

While these goals are achievable, they necessitate a significant shift in attitude and culture. Achieving the ambitious plans for Africa's development and integration will rely on widespread acceptance and a commitment to embrace change across the continent. However, historical challenges in the implementation of policies related to continental integration have raised concerns about the successful realization of the AfCFTA. Agreements such as the Abuja Treaty, the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade, and the Tripartite Free Trade Area have not been

fully implemented, casting uncertainty over the AfCFTA. To achieve its goals, the AfCFTA depends on member states' commitment to implement a complementary set of measures as part of Agenda 2063's First Ten-Year Implementation Plan, which spans from 2014 to 2023 and aims to accelerate Africa's structural transformation by eliminating non-tariff barriers for intra-African trade still on going. However, the modest aggregated implementation score of 51% against the 2022 targets may hinder the AfCFTA's success (Hendriks *et al.*, 2018:41).

2.1.6.2 Minimum Integration Programme

As a solution the African countries have agreed on a Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) in 2004. Where MIP is a pragmatic approach to African regional integration that takes into account the continent's diversity and various levels of development. The MIP aims to overcome challenges and drive meaningful progress toward greater economic cooperation and integration across Africa by identifying specific priority areas, aligning with strategic plans, fostering collaboration with development partners, and accommodating different levels of integration progress. The MIPs could include a set of programmes to achieve goals such as establishing a regional brigade for the African Stand-by Force, coordinating, and adopting a common approach to international trade negotiations, trade liberalisation, free movement goals within each REC, regional common policy in various areas, common monetary policy, common policy in various sectors, and so on (African Union, 2004). The MIP objectives are (ECA, AU & ADB, 2012):

- Position the RECs within the context of implementing the Abuja Treaty.
- Emphasize regional and continental priority programs initiated by the AUC, where their implementation aligns with the subsidiarity principle, falling under national or regional authorities' jurisdiction.
- Recognize regional and continental projects within both the AUC and the RECs that adhere to the subsidiarity principle for their successful implementation.
- Enhance existing efforts for economic cooperation among RECs and pinpoint strategies to expedite integration in crucial sectors or domains.
- Identify key sectors demanding robust coordination and harmonization, both within individual RECs and across multiple RECs.
- Draw inspiration from successful integration models within certain RECs and replicate these achievements in others, like the COMESA-EAC-SADC partnership.

- Assist RECs in identifying and executing priority actions to accomplish integration stages outlined in Article 6 of the Abuja Treaty and to effectively execute the MIP, adhering to a well-defined schedule.
- Identify projects and programs that rely on inter-REC relationships for their execution.

The next phases involve reaching an agreement with RECs on MIPs, which will lead to Strategic Plans for each REC, which will serve as the foundation for Protocols between RECs and the Commission. The Commission intends to set up Delegations in RECs and launch connectivity projects to promote skill management. Sharing PRC meeting summaries, coordination meetings, and yearly Union status reports are all aimed at increasing REC involvement. The second procedure comprises a discussion about the roles, capacities, and standardised integration programmes of RECs. UNECA studies will guide the evaluation of RECs, with the goal of reaching an agreement on standardisation mandates. The implementation goal is to improve regional institutions. To demonstrate their regional leadership, RECs are encouraged to open missions in member nations and ensure representation at REC Headquarters (AU, 2004).

2.1.6.3 COMESA–EAC–SADC

Inter-regional collaboration among RECs is on the rise. For example, the COMESA-EAC-SADC consortium held its inaugural tripartite summit in October 2008. During this summit, the Heads of State and Government from these three RECs concurred on formalizing the establishment of a Free Trade Area (FTA). This tripartite FTA encompasses 26 African nations, uniting a populace of 530 million individuals and an aggregated GDP of \$630 billion, constituting more than 50% of Africa's economic output. This initiative has notably sparked the enthusiasm of African policymakers for a more extensive Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA). This led to the AU Summit's resolution in January 2012 to accelerate CFTA implementation, targeting a tentative deadline of 2017. An all-encompassing Action Plan was devised to amplify intra-African trade (ECA, AU & ADB, 2012).

2.2 South Africa and the Regional Integration Effort

South Africa plays a significant role in regional integration efforts in Africa, particularly within the southern region, where it is actively involved in promoting economic cooperation i.e., by being the powerhouse of the regional economy, political stability, and social development in the region. South Africa is a key member of the SADC, a regional organization aimed at promoting economic integration and cooperation among its 16-member states. South Africa's economy is the largest in the region, making it an influential player. The country has actively participated in various SADC

initiatives, such as the establishment of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), which facilitates trade and economic integration among its members (Chingono & Nakana, 2009).

South Africa has been actively involved in regional trade agreements and initiatives. It has pursued trade liberalization measures to enhance regional trade flows, including the negotiation and implementation of the SADC FTA deal (Edwards & Lawrence, 2008). The FTA aims to eliminate tariffs and other barriers to trade among SADC member states, fostering economic integration (Visser & Hartzenberg, 2004). South Africa has been instrumental in driving infrastructure development projects within the region. These projects aim to improve transportation networks, energy supply, and communication systems, fostering regional connectivity and economic integration. For example, the Trans-Kalahari and Maputo Development Corridors, which facilitate the movement of goods and services across borders (Mutambara, 2009).

South Africa has played a significant role in promoting political stability and resolving conflicts in the region. The country has mediated in various regional conflicts, including its efforts in brokering peace deals in Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Alden & Le Pere, 2009). South Africa's diplomatic engagement has contributed to peacebuilding and regional cooperation. South Africa has also been actively involved in regional initiatives addressing health challenges, particularly the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Regondi *et al.*, 2013). The country has played a leading role in regional programs to combat the spread of the disease and improve access to treatment and care. South Africa has also contributed to social development efforts, including education and poverty alleviation programs in the region (Ssewamala *et al.*, 2010).

South Africa has actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to strengthen regional integration (Soko, 2008). It has hosted various regional summits, conferences, and dialogues aimed at fostering cooperation, dialogue, and consensus-building among African nations. South Africa's diplomatic initiatives have focused on promoting peace, stability, and socio-economic development in the region (Pityana, 2001). South Africa has advocated for industrialization and economic diversification within the region. It has supported initiatives to develop manufacturing sectors, promote value-added production, and enhance intra-regional trade. By encouraging economic diversification, South Africa aims to reduce dependency on primary commodities and foster sustainable economic growth in the region (Østergaard, 1989).

South Africa has been actively involved in regional energy cooperation efforts (Flemes, 2007). It has collaborated with neighbouring countries to develop cross-border energy infrastructure, such as transmission lines and power generation projects (Flemes, 2009). These initiatives aim to

enhance energy security, promote renewable energy sources, and support the electrification of rural areas in the region (Flemes, 2009). South Africa has been engaged in discussions and initiatives related to migration and the free movement of people within the region (Pécoud & Guchteneire, 2007). It has advocated for policies that facilitate the movement of goods, services, and skilled labour across borders. South Africa recognizes the potential benefits of regional migration, such as increased trade, knowledge exchange, and economic integration (Sadoff & Grey, 2005).

South Africa has collaborated with other African countries in the field of education and research (Boshoff, 2010). It has supported academic and scientific partnerships, exchange programs, and joint research projects. These collaborations aim to enhance human capital development, knowledge sharing, and innovation within the region. South Africa recognizes the importance of cultural and sports exchanges in fostering regional integration (Onyanacha, 2011). The country has hosted numerous cultural events, festivals, and sporting tournaments that bring together people from different African countries (Lavery, 2010). These initiatives promote cultural understanding, people-to-people interactions, and a sense of shared identity among African nations (Murray & Pigman, 2014).

2.3 Socio-Economic Development in South Africa

Socio-economic development in South Africa refers to the efforts and initiatives undertaken to address social and economic challenges, reduce inequality, and improve the well-being of its citizens (Kaggwa *et al.*, 2013). Since the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa has made significant strides in various areas of socio-economic development (Shava, 2016). South Africa has implemented several poverty alleviation programs to address the high levels of poverty and inequality in the country. The government has introduced social grants, including the Child Support Grant and the Old Age Pension, to provide financial assistance to vulnerable groups (Woolard & Leibbrandt, 2013). These programs have helped lift millions of South Africans out of poverty and provided a safety net for those in need (Zikhali, 2021).

Job creation is a critical aspect of socio-economic development (Kongolo, 2010). South Africa has implemented various initiatives to stimulate economic growth and increase employment opportunities. This includes investment in infrastructure development, the promotion of entrepreneurship and small businesses, and targeted sector-specific programs (Chigunta, 2017; Masutha & Rogerson, 2014). However, despite these efforts, unemployment remains a significant challenge in the country, particularly among the youth (De Lannoy *et al.*, 2020).

Access to quality education is essential for social and economic advancement (Bloom *et al.*, 2014). South Africa has made significant investments in education, focusing on improving infrastructure, teacher training, and access to basic education (Bainton *et al.*, 2016). Efforts have also been made to address historical disparities and provide opportunities for skills development and vocational training to equip individuals with the necessary competencies for employment (Horwitz & Jain, 2011).

South Africa locally faces high burden of HIV/AIDS, the government has implemented various programs to address these issues, including the provision of antiretroviral therapy, prevention campaigns, and increased access to healthcare services (Uebel *et al.*, 2007). However, access to quality healthcare remains unequal, particularly in rural and underserved areas (Van Rensburg, 2014; Wilson *et al.*, 2009). South Africa has prioritized the provision of housing and basic services to address the housing backlog and improve living conditions. The government has implemented programs such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the National Housing Subsidy Scheme to provide affordable housing to low-income families (Nnadozie, 2013). Efforts have also been made to improve access to basic services such as water, electricity, and sanitation (Nnadozie, 2013).

Addressing historical injustices related to land ownership and access has been a critical component of socio-economic development in South Africa. The government has implemented land reform policies aimed at addressing land inequality and supporting land redistribution (Bob, 2010). These efforts seek to ensure equitable access to land, promote agricultural development, and empower marginalized communities. Promoting social cohesion and nation-building is vital for long-term socio-economic development (Ralebipi-Simela, 2015). South Africa has undertaken initiatives to foster social integration, unity, and reconciliation among its diverse population. This includes efforts to promote cultural diversity, strengthen social dialogue, and address historical divisions through platforms such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This method was critical to South Africa's transition from a segregated apartheid society to a democracy in the late twentieth century (Van der Merwe & Chapman, 2008).

2.4 Conclusion

Regional integration and socio-economic development in Africa seek to harness the collective strengths of African nations to promote economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve the overall well-being of African citizens. These initiatives vary in scope and objectives depending on the regional bloc and its specific challenges and opportunities. Regional integration in Africa has faced several challenges, including political instability, lack of infrastructure, low levels of trade, and weak institutions. However, these challenges are being addressed through various initiatives,

such as Agenda 2063 and the AfCFTA, which its main aim is to create a single market for goods and services in Africa.

South Africa has played a substantial role in regional integration efforts in Africa, particularly within the southern region. It has actively contributed to economic cooperation, political stability, and social development in the region. South Africa's involvement in organizations like SADC and initiatives like the SADC FTA demonstrates its commitment to fostering economic integration and trade facilitation. Furthermore, South Africa has been proactive in driving infrastructure development projects that enhance regional connectivity, such as the Trans-Kalahari and Maputo Development Corridors. These projects aim to improve transportation networks and energy supply, thereby fostering economic integration.

In addition to its economic contributions, South Africa has played a pivotal role in promoting political stability and conflict resolution within the region. Its diplomatic efforts have contributed to peacebuilding and cooperation in various conflict-prone areas. Moreover, South Africa has actively engaged in addressing health challenges, particularly the HIV/AIDS epidemic, through regional programs. It has also been involved in social development initiatives, including education, poverty alleviation, and housing, to improve the well-being of its citizens and reduce inequality. South Africa's commitment to regional integration extends to advocating for industrialization, economic diversification, and the free movement of people within the region. These efforts aim to reduce dependency on primary commodities and foster sustainable economic growth.

2.5 Summary

Regional integration is critical for Africa's economic progress and stability. Although there are numerous challenges e.g. trade barriers, logistics, movement of goods and people, political instabilities, socio-economic disparities among African nations. Addressing these difficulties will necessitate strong political will, African country cooperation, and a long-term commitment to regional integration. By overcoming these obstacles, Africa will be able to realise the enormous potential of regional integration for economic prosperity and stability. Various regional integration projects are making headway in tackling them. The determination of stakeholders to follow the Abuja Treaty and actualize the AEC will determine the success of regional integration. RECs must maintain their commendable efforts to strengthen programme coordination and share best practises and other experiences through regional programmes and events. The AU, with the support of member states, should take the lead in integration.

South Africa has been a leading influence in Southern African regional integration initiatives. Its economic might, political clout, and dedication to collaboration have elevated it to the forefront of regional integration, commerce, and development. South Africa's commitment to regional integration is demonstrated by its strong participation in a variety of industries. Through cooperation, dialogue, and mutual understanding, the country's initiatives aim to leverage the combined capabilities of African states, promote sustainable development, and address common difficulties. While progress has been made in numerous elements of socio-economic development in South Africa, problems persist. Inequality, unemployment, and a lack of access to decent education and healthcare all continue to stymie inclusive growth. The South African government, in collaboration with civil society organisations and the corporate sector, is working to address these difficulties and promote long-term socioeconomic development for all of its residents.

Socio-economic development in South Africa focuses on reducing inequality and improving well-being. Poverty alleviation programs, social grants, and job creation efforts have made strides. Education investments, including skills development, are prioritized. HIV/AIDS programs, healthcare access, housing, and land reform address pressing challenges. Social cohesion initiatives foster unity and reconciliation in the diverse population.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research design, methodology, and techniques employed by the researcher to fulfil both the primary and secondary research objectives. It also elucidates the rationale behind the selection of the method and techniques. The primary research objective sought to address the opportunities, challenges, and risks associated with South Africa's participation in the AfCFTA. Additionally, the secondary research objectives included evaluating South Africa's current status within the AfCFTA agreement and its future trajectory over the next three years, assessing the progress of AfCFTA implementation in South Africa, identifying potential stumbling blocks in the agreement's implementation, and outlining the steps South Africa can take to ensure success within the agreement. The subsequent sections offer a detailed, step-by-step outline of the methodologies and techniques used to attain these objectives, along with the measures taken to ensure that the findings of this study maintain a high level of credibility.

In the previous chapter, the literature review conducted to encompass this study's purpose. This chapter, on the other hand, focuses on the research methodology implemented to fulfil the study's overarching objective of evaluating opportunities, challenges, and risks for South Africa. This process followed by a comprehensive assessment, each of these components will be thoroughly discussed. Additionally, the chapter will explore the ethical considerations inherent in this study, address any methodological limitations, and conclude with a summary of its key points.

3.2 Research Approach

In this research study, the researcher has adopted a qualitative research approach, specifically employing thematic document analysis, guided by Creswell's principles (Creswell, 2014). This method offers a comprehensive exploration of pre-existing secondary data sources, unveiling patterns, themes, and insights relevant to our research objectives. This approach has greatly enhanced the researcher's understanding of the study's subject matter, thereby facilitating the achievement of the research aims (Anas & Ishaq, 2022: 90). The selection of a qualitative research approach hinges on our pursuit of in-depth exploration and finding. The researcher recognizes that within the pages of existing documents, articles, texts, and archives lie, valuable accounts, and essential knowledge in the understanding of the meaning and mechanism of implementing a continental-wide agreement on trade in Africa, and recognise the potential opportunities, the downfall challenges, and the risk it might counter.

Creswell's qualitative research approach, which places a strong emphasis on comprehensive, interpretive investigation, aligns seamlessly with our research intentions. Through this approach, the researcher collects, interprets, and documents information pertaining to the potential benefits, drawbacks, and potential risks associated with the AfCFTA agreement, particularly within the context of its impact on South Africa. Furthermore, the research finds the fundamental issue surrounding the AfCFTA, particularly its implications for both intra-African and international trade relations via the increase of import export patterns (World Bank, 2022: 71). The utilization of qualitative methods has contributed to the existing body of knowledge in this field.

3.3 Research Design

The research design enables to look deeply into secondary data sources, gaining a nuanced understanding of the content, contexts, and themes contained within. The research design summarises the processes used to perform the study, including the details of the method and techniques used, as well as the reasons for selecting those method and approaches. According to Vizcarguenaga-Aguirre and López-Robles (2020:4), a research design is determined based on the objectives of the study, existing knowledge, and accessible resources (including the time needed to conduct the study). See Figure 3.1

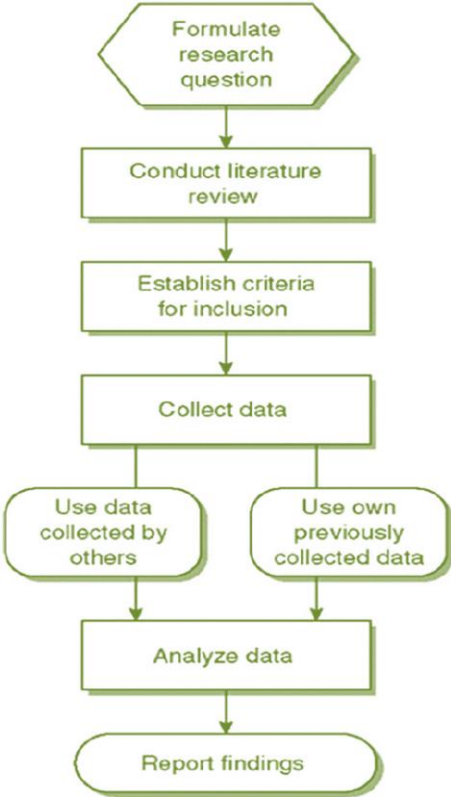


Figure 3.1 Secondary Data Analysis Framework (Source: Shah et al. (2022))

- Primary objective

1. What are the opportunities, challenges and risks taken for South Africa for participating in the AfCFTA?

Table 3-1: Summary of Theme 1: Primary Objective.

Themes	Categories	Merged Theme
South Africa's opportunities from the AfCFTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intra-trade • Export-Import • Income gain • Lift poverty • Skilled Employment • Unskilled Employment • South African Women • Productivity • Tax Revenue • Foreigner Direct Investments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment
South Africa's Challenges from the AfCFTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic challenges • Integrated challenges • Sustainable challenges 	
South Africa's Risks from the AfCFTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Movement of Persons • Growth Volatility • Short-Term Costs • Discontinuity 	

In Table 3-1, the Skilled Employment and Unskilled Employment have merge into Employment theme.

- Secondary objectives

1. What reform South Africa can take to ensure its success in this agreement?

Table 3-2: Summary of Theme 2: Secondary Objectives 1.

Themes	Categories	Merged Themes
Reforms South Africa Can Take to ensure its success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance reforms • Policy reforms • Strategies reforms • Integration problems reforms • Sustainable reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Reforms

In Table 3-2, the Themes: Governance reforms, Policy reforms, Strategies reforms, Integration problems reforms and Sustainable reforms have merged in Economic Reforms theme.

2. What are the factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement?

Table 3-3: Summary of Theme 3: Secondary Objectives 2.

Themes	Categories
Factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Disparities • Trade Barriers • Political Instability in Partner Countries

To address the objectives of this study, the selected data have been examined in subsequent discussions, considering its relevance in answering each specific objective and the underlying purpose of each one.

Theme 1: South Africa's opportunities from the AfCFTA

In answering to this theme the references has been used are the following:

1. The World Bank 2020 Report “African Continental Free Trade Area Leveraging Trade and Foreign Direct Investment to Boost Growth and Reduce Poverty” (World Bank, 2020). The World Bank gathers extensive data from member countries of the agreement and other sources. This data is then analysed to provide insights into the potential benefits of the AfCFTA deal, for time range of 12 years in implementing the AfCFTA and the effectiveness of development programme, and the challenges faced by countries in achieving the full potential. The study provides statistics and estimated figures.
2. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa report “Governing the Interface between the African Continental Free Trade Area and Regional Economic Communities Free Trade Areas: Issues, Opportunities and Challenges” (Olayiwola, 2020), this report delves into critical aspects shaping the interaction between the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Regional Economic Communities Free Trade Agreements (RECs-FTAs). It explores ways to capitalize on the successes of RECs in trade integration to enhance the implementation of AfCFTA, while also drawing insights from the failures of RECs-FTAs to improve the Agreement's effective implementation. Employing various research methods, the report examines the concept of RECs as foundational elements of the African Economic Community (AEC), the interplay among RECs-FTAs, AfCFTA, and AEC, and the mechanisms for constructing and managing this interface, considering their implications on the successful implementation of the AfCFTA.
3. The combined report by the African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, joint report 2019 “Assessing Regional Integration in Africa V: the next step for the African Continental Free Trade Area” (ECA-AU-ADB, 2019). This report is primarily centred on the forthcoming phase II negotiations of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), set to begin later in 2019. These negotiations extend beyond simple tariff liberalization, encompassing profound aspects such as investment, competition policy, and intellectual property rights. These transformative subjects constitute the core focus of the phase II negotiations. Specifically, the report delves into provisions related to investment, covering aspects of promotion, facilitation, and protection.
4. The combined report by the African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, joint report 2010 “Assessing Regional Integration in Africa: Africa IV: enhancing intra-African trade (ECA-AU-ADB, 2010). This report not only presents analyses and findings but also offers policy recommendations that support the achievement of the goals outlined in the Abuja

Treaty and the African Union's broader objectives. The suggested measures from the report have had a substantial impact, influencing consultations between the African Union Commission (AUC), regional economic communities (RECs), and member states. As a result, a political decision by the African Union (AU) was made to impose an embargo on the creation of additional RECs beyond the current eight recognized as the AU's primary building blocks. This decision underscores the leaders' acknowledgment of the significance of regional integration in fostering a strong and unified Africa, leading to the establishment of various initiatives on the continent.

5. The combined report by the African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, joint report 2012 “Assessing Regional Integration in Africa V: towards an African continental free trade area” (ECA-AU-ADB, 2012). This research specifically examines the potential for exporters through the elimination and negotiation of barriers within the C-FTA. The study emphasizes the importance of reducing obstacles to trade and investment. Furthermore, it explores fundamental rights such as the free movement of persons, rights of residence, and establishment, which constitute key principles in African law.
6. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report “African continental free trade area: challenges and opportunities of tariff reductions” (Saygili, Peters & Knebel, 2018). This study shows two scenarios of long-run and short-run significant welfare gains outputs and employment, expansion and intra- African growth.

Theme 2: South Africa's Challenges from the AfCFTA

1. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report “African continental free trade area: challenges and opportunities of tariff reductions” (Saygili, Peters & Knebel, 2018). This study shows two scenarios of long-run and short-run significant welfare gains outputs and employment, expansion and intra- African growth.
2. International Monetary Fund paper on “The African Continental Free Trade Area: Potential Economic Impact and Challenges” (Abrego *et al.*, 2020). They suggested to unlock the potential, African nations must proactively implement complementary structural and policy reforms. These reforms are essential for fostering long-term peace and security, addressing supply-side constraints, and mitigating short-term fiscal adjustment costs associated with the trade agreement. Such measures are crucial to steer the continental trade-integration project

toward successful implementation, ultimately achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for continental trade integration. This paper examines the potential developmental impact of the AfCFTA and offers a thorough analysis of the necessary reforms and programs crucial for ensuring the successful implementation of the agreement.

3. The paper by Cuts International in Geneva “The African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Opportunities and Challenges” (Albert, 2019). They address various challenges that may be encountered in the implementation of the AfCFTA, including strategic challenges, integration challenges, and sustainability challenges.

Theme 3: South Africa's Risks from the AfCFTA

1. The Africa Growth Initiatives’ paper on “Making the AfCFTA work for ‘the Africa we want” (Fofack, 2020). To unlock this potential, African nations must proactively implement complementary structural and policy reforms and risks associated. These reforms are essential for fostering long-term peace and security, addressing supply-side constraints, and mitigating short-term fiscal adjustment costs associated with the trade agreement. Such measures are crucial to steer the continental trade-integration project toward successful implementation, ultimately achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for continental trade integration. This paper examines the potential developmental impact of the AfCFTA and offers a thorough analysis of the necessary reforms and programs crucial for ensuring the successful implementation of the agreement. Governance reforms are poised to yield positive ripple effects for institutional stability and regional integration in the long term, and as such, they should be sustained and expanded across the continent. Notably, enhanced institutional stability and predictability can mitigate the risk of disruption in the commitment to regional integration during political and democratic transitions. Given that integration is a protracted process, maintaining political dedication to the vision of regional and continental integration during political transitions is crucial for its success. This is especially pertinent in Africa, where countries are at different developmental stages and will face varying fiscal adjustment costs after the removal of tariffs on existing intraregional traded goods (Fofack, 2020).
2. The International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2019) for Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Economic Outlook: Recovery Amid Elevated Uncertainty. They discuss Sub-Saharan African countries that they may have diverse economic prospects and policy priorities, they collectively face the common challenge of fortifying resilience and fostering robust, inclusive, and enduring growth. Effectively tackling these challenges involves the imperative

of constructing fiscal space and bolstering resilience against shocks. This necessitates proactive measures to mobilize revenues, coupled with policies aimed at amplifying productivity and stimulating private investment.

3. Fofack in (2019) discuss the conclusion of the previous commodity boom spanning from 2000 to 2014 and the subsequent fluctuations in global oil prices have once more highlighted a critical impediment to long-term growth and economic development in Africa. This enduring challenge stems from the lasting impact of colonialism on Africa's trade patterns and the dynamics of global markets. Despite several decades of independence, minimal transformation has occurred in Africa's growth and trade patterns, which continue to be predominantly influenced by primary commodities and natural resources. This persistence underscores the ongoing repercussions of historical colonial legacies.

Theme 4: Reforms South Africa Can Take to ensure its success

4. The paper by Cuts International in Geneva “The African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Opportunities and Challenges” (Albert, 2019). They address various challenges that may be encountered in the implementation of the AfCFTA, including strategic challenges, integration challenges, and sustainability challenges. And the reforms and initiatives needed to overcome these challenges.
5. The rise and fall of open regionalism? (Phillips, 2004), this article posits that the foundational framework of 'open regionalism' supporting Mercosur is diminishing, leading to a redefinition of the regional governance project in the Southern Cone. The aim is to comprehend the nature of this redefinition, emphasizing the necessity for a reorientation in approaching the study of regionalism. In particular, the article underscores the constraints of viewing regionalism solely as a reflection of domestic processes and advocates for economic reforms.
6. The African continental free trade agreement and Intra-African trade (Mude, 2020), this article acknowledges the increasing momentum in African integration, particularly following the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which established the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and was operationalized by the African Union (AU) in 2019. The critical inquiry raised is whether this significant development signifies transformative integration or maintains the continuity of neo-liberal organized hypocrisy in Africa. The central argument presented is that, while the agreement signifies a transformation in African trade integration, the prevailing neo-liberal structural economic and political configurations that hinder free trade on the continent persist. Nevertheless, the article

contends that with structural adjustments backed by political will, the anticipated benefits of free trade are likely to be realized. Drawing on secondary data from various sources such as books, journal articles, newspaper articles, policy papers, and organizational reports, the article establishes that the AfCFTA has laid a robust foundation for transforming intra-African integration by fostering trade on the continent.

7. The Africa Growth Initiatives' paper on "Making the AfCFTA work for 'the Africa we want'" (Fofack, 2020). To unlock this potential, African nations must proactively implement complementary structural and policy reforms and risks associated. These reforms are essential for fostering long-term peace and security, addressing supply-side constraints, and mitigating short-term fiscal adjustment costs associated with the trade agreement. Such measures are crucial to steer the continental trade-integration project toward successful implementation, ultimately achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for continental trade integration. This paper examines the potential developmental impact of the AfCFTA and offers a thorough analysis of the necessary reforms and programs crucial for ensuring the successful implementation of the agreement.
8. "Infrastructure and regional integration in Africa" an article by Jerome & Nabena (2016). This study makes a persuasive argument for regional integration in Africa as the optimal strategy for enhancing its underdeveloped infrastructure, expediting industrialization, fostering deeper integration into the global economy, and achieving inclusive growth and elusive structural transformation.

Theme 5: Factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement

1. "Region-Building in Africa: Political and Economic Challenges" a book by Levine & Nagar (2016). This ground-breaking book is the inaugural examination of the challenges associated with region-building and regional integration across all five African sub-regions, spanning over five decades of experience and encompassing both political and economic dimensions. Renowned scholars and practitioners collaborate to scrutinize various interrelated topics, such as the theoretical foundations shaping Africa's regional integration trajectory and the political economy of integration, including the origins of distinct 'waves' of integration across the continent.

- 2. The World Bank (2020) outlines strategies crucial for optimizing the potential benefits of the AfCFTA. Their study discusses the statutory tariffs have been reduced for about half of the countries, barriers remain high for sensitive sectors, hindering continental economic integration. Nontariff barriers, weak rules promoting investment and competition, and inadequate institutions further impede trade. The results of the World Bank (2020) for the AfCFTA analysis are sensitive to assumptions regarding the reduction of nontariff barriers in goods and services, as well as trade facilitation.

- 3. Gerhard Erasmus, in his blog Tralac (Erasmus, 2023), contends that economic cooperation plays a pivotal role in fostering political stability by creating mutual interests and minimizing conflicts over resources. the ambitious goals of the AfCFTA, aiming for economic integration and cooperation, face significant challenges posed by the prevailing wars, coups, and instability across Africa. The success of the AfCFTA is contingent on stability, peace, and good governance, fundamental for the flow of goods, services, and investment across borders. The realization of long-term regional policies that attract foreign direct investment is crucial for implementing the AfCFTA and fostering deeper ties among state parties.

3.4 Methodological choice

Qualitative research has been defined as the study of phenomena, typically in great depth and breadth, through the collection of rich narrative materials and the application of a flexible research approach (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Interviews and observations are frequently used in qualitative research methodologies. They may, however, incorporate case studies, surveys, historical and document analysis (Mohajan, 2018:7). Furthermore, Haradhan (2018:7) claims that. Qualitative research is a catch-all word that incorporates narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, action research, case study, ethnography, historical research, and content analysis theoretical approaches. Furthermore, Moser and Korstjens (2017) state that qualitative research comprises a variety of designs, all of which share some key characteristics as shown in Figure 3.2

Box 1. Key features of qualitative research.

Qualitative research studies phenomena in the natural contexts of individuals or groups.
Qualitative researchers try to gain a deeper understanding of people's experiences, perceptions, behaviour and processes and the meanings they attach to them.
During the research process, researchers use 'emerging design' to be flexible in adjusting to the context.
Data collection and analysis are iterative processes that happen simultaneously as the research progresses.

Figure 3.2: Key features of qualitative research (Source: Moser & Korstjens, 2017:272).

This study applied qualitative approach to determine the opportunities and challenges and risk associated to South Africa in implementing the African continental trade deal in the context of the literature review in chapter 2.

3.5 Critical Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review involves the meticulous assessment and evaluation of numerous sources to explore the existing body of knowledge pertaining to a specific concept. In the context of this study, the literature review was conducted to analyse the ramifications of the African Continental Free Trade Area on regional integration and its subsequent influence on the socio-economic landscape of Africa, with a particular focus on South Africa, the primary subject of interest.

The critical review scrutinized South Africa's initiatives in regional integration and their broader impact on the socioeconomic dynamics of the region as a whole, with specific attention to South Africa's unique position. This analytical review was guided by the themes derived from the study's objectives and sub-themes that emerged during the information-gathering process. Consequently, the critical review was systematically executed, with each theme being rigorously analysed within the broader contexts of the global, African, and South African perspectives. This comprehensive critical review played a pivotal role in bringing clarity to the study's aims and objectives, aligning it with the research goals (Saunders & Rojon, 2011:2).

3.6 Data Collection

According to Fowler (2013: 68), one of the most far-reaching decisions a researcher must make is the way in which the data will be collected. Data collection must be methodical and focus on variables of interest to reach the required research outcomes (Kabir, 2016: 204). Data collection in this study involves the systematic retrieval of secondary data sources, a step recommended by Creswell that meets the criteria for qualitative document analysis. These data sources will be selected to ensure their relevance to our research questions. It includes acquiring documents from reliable repositories, Scholar publications, journal articles, organisational publications, and reports from reputable organisations or archives that provide valuable insights into our research topic. Data collection aligns with ethical guidelines and ensures that appropriate permissions and copyright regulations are observed. Secondary data, often overlooked in favour of primary data collection, are a wellspring of untapped insights. These data sources represent the collective knowledge of diverse communities, the historical records of societies, and the artefacts of intellectual exploration. As Creswell has advocated, a qualitative examination of secondary data

not only respects the labour and intent of those who compiled it but also provides researchers with a unique opportunity to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

3.7 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves the examination of textual data, employing methods like content and thematic data analysis, which ultimately yield research outcomes (Turner et al., 2021:5). In this study, a textual analysis was conducted on journal articles, grey data, organisations' publications. Further elaboration on these procedures can be found in the upcoming sub-sections.

3.7.1 Thematic Data Analysis

In this research, a thematic document analysis had employed as a methodological foundation (identification, coding, and interpretation of themes) within the secondary data sources, an approach that Creswell himself has employed and endorsed. Thematic analysis involves systematically sifting through textual materials, identifying recurring themes, and constructing a narrative that encapsulates the essence of the data. This method enables us to make sense of the data's complexity, drawing meaning from the multiple voices and viewpoints represented within. A following of Creswell's guidance in this phase, ensuring that themes and patterns are derived from the data without imposing preconceived notions.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reflecting on patterns in data. It organises and explains your data collected in the most straightforward way possible (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, according to Bryman and Bell (2014:350), theme analysis is a convenient procedure that is not based on a certain spiritual position. Systematically examined according to six phases highlighted by (Braun & Clarke, 2006:87). Figure 3.3 shows the procedures to familiarise yourself with your data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name themes, and produce the report. It is crucial to understand that qualitative analysis principles are guidelines, not rules, and that they must be applied appropriately to complement the study objectives and data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:86). According to these authors, an analysis is not a sequential process in which one phase is followed by the next. Rather, it is a more continuous approach, with back and forth movement between stages as needed.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Figure 3.3: Phases of thematic analysis (Source: Braun & Clarke, 2006:87).

3.7.2 Secondary Data Analysis

In the process of conducting secondary data analysis, the examination of journal articles and business documents revolved around the selection of documents that supplied essential information. This information aimed to provide the researcher with a multi-faceted perspective, spanning global, African, and local (South African) levels. The analysis encompassed a review of the historical progression of African initiatives for economic integration, toward the realization of an African single market and the creation of a free trade area followed by the form of customs unions or monetary communities (African Union, 2023a). This approach was not limited to Africa alone but also have looked to the European Union context (Chingono & Nakana, 2009: 396-404), shedding light on successful measures for implementing trade agreements in Africa.

The study also investigates the roles that different countries and world regions have played in the historical evolution of similar monetary agreements e.g. Regional Economic Communities. It sought to identify the key components that contribute to the successful implementation of such deals (Tavares, 2009: 64-66). The subsequent discussion shifted focus to contrasting the World Bank's perspective on African economic integration with the narratives proposed by the African Union, United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD), and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Development Bank (ADB), African Growth Initiative (AGI), World Economic Forum (WEF), South Africa National Treasury, (SANT) and the benefits could come to South Africa from implementing such a deal, see Figure 3.4, as the World Bank report 2020 and 2022.

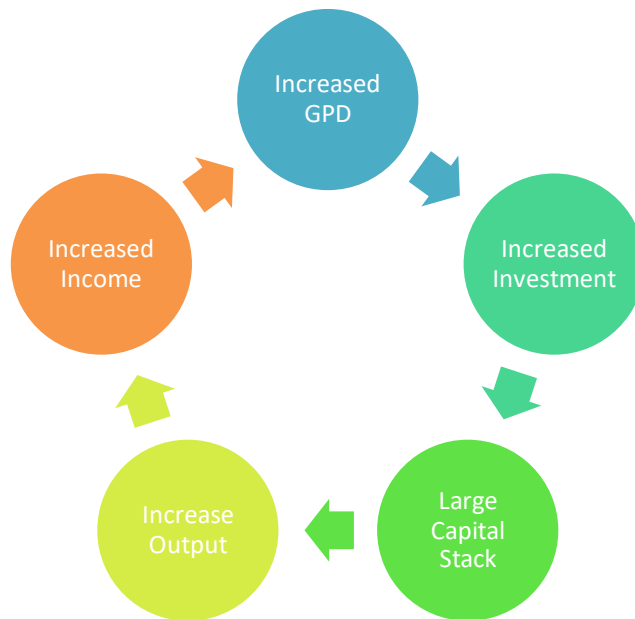


Figure 3.4: Harrod-Domar Model for Economic Growth (Source: Models of Economic Growth and Development (2023)).

In the concluding section, the study formulated policy recommendations. However, the feasibility of these recommended strategies for policymakers or the relevant sectors depends on the availability of resources and the existing skill sets within the country. The following model Figure 3.5 could be used to determine what priorities should be addressed first in order to ensure along the value proposition obtained from this deal to South Africa.



Figure 3.5: Themes Extracted and Their Effects on Economic Growth (Source: Models of Economic Growth and Development, 2023).

3.8 Trustworthiness

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility involves the researcher's efforts to substantiate the authenticity of the study's information and findings. To achieve this, the researcher employed a triangulation approach by cross-referencing academic articles and industry publications (Stahl & King, 2020:26). The study also ensured the use of peer-reviewed journal articles and well-known and trusted organizational reports from reputable organisations, thus enhancing the reliability of the information presented. A competent study supervisor assessed the study proposal after it was submitted for peer review and approved. To ensure that the study findings are trustworthy or credible, member-checking approaches will be used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability focuses on the researcher's dedication to providing comprehensive contextual information that enables readers to relate the research to their own circumstances or similar situations (Johnson et al., 2019:8). This measure assesses the extent to which the study's findings can be applicable to other research finding. To facilitate this, the researcher included detailed information in the report concerning the referencing of all secondary data sources used, as well as the results and findings. The ability of the study to be translated to another context and compared to other studies. A detailed overview of the research and methods is provided (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:314).

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability, in the context of this study, revolves around the potential for replicating the research. It places significant emphasis on the necessity for the researcher to furnish comprehensive explanations of the methods and techniques employed throughout the research process. This commitment to transparency ensures uniformity and consistency in the application of these methods and techniques, ultimately heightening the probability of obtaining similar results in future studies.

The researcher's meticulous descriptions of both the execution and the underlying rationale for each technique serve to empower fellow researchers, enabling them to replicate this method and potentially yield congruent results and findings. Moreover, this commitment to transparency equips researchers with a deeper comprehension of the research procedures, leading to

enhanced research efficiency, as aptly noted by Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017:3). To reach an agreement on the study's issues, data was analysed and consensus discussions with the research leader has been held. The study looked at consistency and whether the results could be repeated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:314).

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is aimed at ensuring the credibility of the study's outcomes, affirming that they faithfully represent the analysis conducted and remain untainted by any bias or personal interpretation on the part of the researcher, as articulated by Johnson et al. (2019: 8). To achieve this, the researcher diligently cross-referenced the study's results with those of other research, thus substantiating and validating the findings through a comprehensive comparison with existing studies.

3.8.5 Ethical Considerations

As outlined by Creswell, ethical considerations are of paramount importance in our study. We ensure that our data collection and analysis adhere to ethical principles, protecting the copy rights of the organisations associated with the secondary data sources.

3.9 Data Presentation

The findings of this study will be presented in Chapter 4, where the themes and insights derived from the secondary data analysis will be discussed in detail.

3.10 Methodological Limitations

Minor methodological limitation was the limited scientific articles and studies concerning the South Africa's opportunities, challenges, and risks by joining and implementing the AfCFTA agreement.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology employed in this qualitative study. It emphasized the research approach, data source, data selection, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and strategies for ensuring trustworthiness. The next chapter will present the findings and analysis of the data collected, adhering to the university's formatting and style requirements. This research study employs a qualitative approach using thematic document analysis to explore secondary data sources, in accordance with Creswell's qualitative research

guidelines. The utilization of existing data allows us to gain a deep understanding of the research topic. The thematic analysis will uncover key themes and patterns in these documents.

3.12 Summary

The scope of this research is driven by a profound interest in uncovering the hidden narratives, perspectives, and insights embedded within secondary data sources. These sources, rich repositories of information collected and documented for varied purposes, hold the potential to unravel intricate patterns and unveil compelling themes within the context of our research objectives. This chapter provides a comprehensive account of the research methodology, detailing the design, data sources, data collection processes, and the thematic analysis framework. The outcomes of this study will offer fresh insights, contribute to existing knowledge, and hopefully inspire further study in the field.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the opportunities, challenges and risks associated with South Africa's involvement in the AfCFTA. This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding on what are the opportunities, challenges and risks taken for South Africa for participating in the AfCFTA. The study also aimed to explore what reform South Africa can take to ensure its success in this agreement as well as what are the factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement. The outcome of the study was structured around these key research objectives, each addressing distinct aspects of the implementation of the AfCFTA for South Africa, they guided the exploration of the opportunities, challenges and risks associated to South Africa from this deal. The primary objective of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings derived from the secondary data have been used. For enhanced clarity in the study, the findings have been organized based on the sub-research questions, themes, and categories. A detailed analysis of the emerged themes and categories is presented for each research question, providing a comprehensive overview. This chapter plays a crucial role as the study formulates policy recommendations. However, the feasibility of implementing these proposed strategies for policymakers or the relevant sectors is contingent on the availability of resources and the existing skill sets within the country. This chapter represents a pivotal step in addressing the research objectives and progressing further.

4.2 Thematic analysis

As outlined by Terry and Hayfield (2021), thematic analysis is a qualitative research approach utilized for examining and discerning patterns, themes, and meanings within textual or visual data. This method entails systematically organizing and categorizing data to reveal recurring themes or concepts. In the context of this study, thematic analysis is applied to attain a more profound comprehension of the content, opinions, and perspectives embedded in the collected data.

4.3 Overview of the Themes

- The initial scrutiny of the data primarily focused on addressing the sub-question of the research, ensuring its alignment with the overarching research topic, and verifying its capacity to provide comprehensive information. This evaluation involved closely analysing how well our secondary data aligns with each specific research objective. The main research objective of this study is to identify the opportunities, challenges and risks taken by South Africa in participating in the AfCFTA. To effectively tackle this overarching inquiry, we investigated two

secondary research questions to gather data relevant to the main research objective. The secondary objectives were to:

- What kind of reform can South Africa take to ensure its success in this agreement?
- What are the factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement?

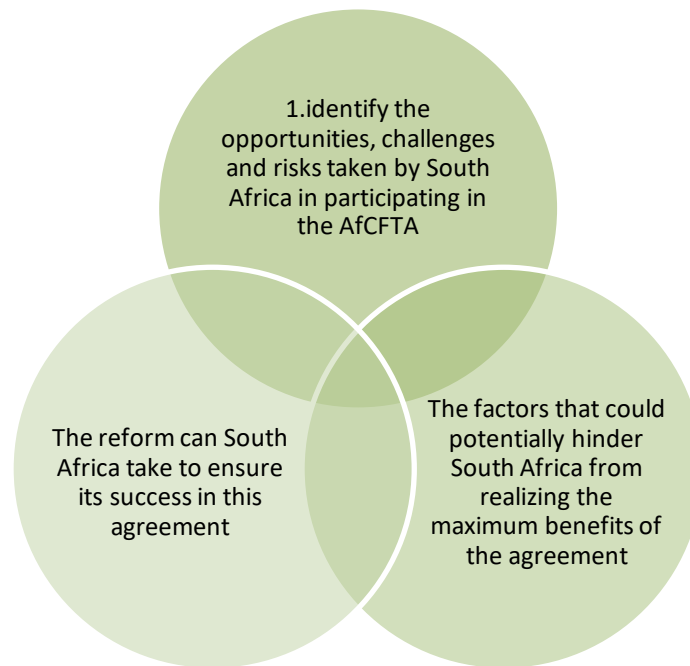


Figure 4.1: Illustrates a summary of the themes identified through the conducted thematic analysis in the study.

As Usmonova (2022:116) notes, "themes" in research represent recurring, significant patterns or concepts observed during data analysis. They encapsulate the primary ideas or subjects that effectively encapsulate the research's conclusions. The introduction of themes in research serves to establish a systematic and organized framework for comprehending and analysing data, aiding both researchers and readers in breaking down complex information for easier acquisition and understanding. In this study, themes played a pivotal role in addressing research questions, reinforcing claims, and contributing to the overall narrative, thereby enhancing clarity and impact. The study encapsulates key insights from the analysis and succinctly summarizes the most crucial findings by representing the themes in Figure 4.1. Additionally, a comprehensive summary of findings, encompassing sub-research questions, themes, and categories derived from the study, is presented in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Summary of Findings.

Sub-research question	Themes	Categories	Merged themes
<p>RQ1: What are the opportunities, challenges and risks taken by South Africa in participating in the AfCFTA?</p>	<p>South Africa's opportunities from the AfCFTA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intra-trade • Export-Import • Income gain • Lift poverty • Skilled Employment • Unskilled Employment • South African Women • Productivity • Tax Revenue <p>Foreigner Direct Investments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment
	<p>South Africa's Challenges from the AfCFTA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic challenges • Integrated challenges • Sustainable challenges 	
	<p>South Africa's Risks from the AfCFTA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Movement of Persons • Growth Volatility • Short-Term Costs • Discontinuity 	

<p>RQ2: What kind of reform can South Africa take to ensure its success in this agreement?</p>	<p>Reforms South Africa can take to ensure its success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance reforms • Policy reforms • Strategies reform • Integration problems reform • Sustainable reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Reforms
<p>RQ3: What are the factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement?</p>	<p>Factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Disparities • Infrastructure Challenges • Trade Barriers • Political Instability in Partner Countries 	

Table 4-1 provides an overview of the findings related to the overall objective. The following section introduces and interprets Theme 1.

4.4 Presentation of Theme 1: South Africa's Opportunities from the AfCFTA

This section discusses the opportunities that South Africa can leverage through full commitment to the AfCFTA. The findings were grouped into three themes which include: (1) Intra-trade, (2) Export-Import, (3) Income Gain, (4) Lift poverty, (5) Skilled Employment, (6) Unskilled Employment, (7) South African Women, (8) Productivity, (9) Tax Revenue, (10) Foreigner Direct Investments. And one merged theme (11) Employment, . Table 4-2 presents the summary of Theme1

Table 4-2: Summary of Theme 1: South Africa's Opportunities from the AfCFTA.

Sub-research question	Themes	Categories	Merged Themes

<p>RQ1: What are the opportunities, challenges and risks taken by South Africa in participating in the AfCFTA?</p>	<p>South Africa's opportunities from the AfCFTA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intra-trade • Export-Import • Income gain • Lift poverty • Skilled Employment • Unskilled Employment • South African Women • Productivity • Tax Revenue • Foreigner Direct Investments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment
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Table 4-2 provides a synopsis of the findings from Theme 1 (research question/objective 1). The subsequent section offers interpretations of the findings within the sub-themes of Theme 1.

4.4.1 Theme 1.1- Intra-trade

The main constraints to African trade are attributed to high trade costs. The AfCFTA aims to create a single continental market by eliminating tariffs on 90% of goods traded among African countries, which could significantly expand market access for South African goods and services across the African continent (Apiko *et al.*, 2020: 7). South Africa average tariffs on intraregional imports are low because tariffs are formed as part of sub-regional trade agreements, such as the South African Customs Union (SACU) and the South African Development Community (SADC). As a result of AfCFTA, South Africa has no large liberalization expected unlike countries with high initial barriers such as Cameroon or Nigeria, see Figure 4.2. While South Africa might not be greatly affected by the elimination of tariffs due to its existing preferential trade agreements, the broader implications of AfCFTA could still hold strategic importance for the country's economic development and regional leadership (Soko & Qobo, 2021: 428).

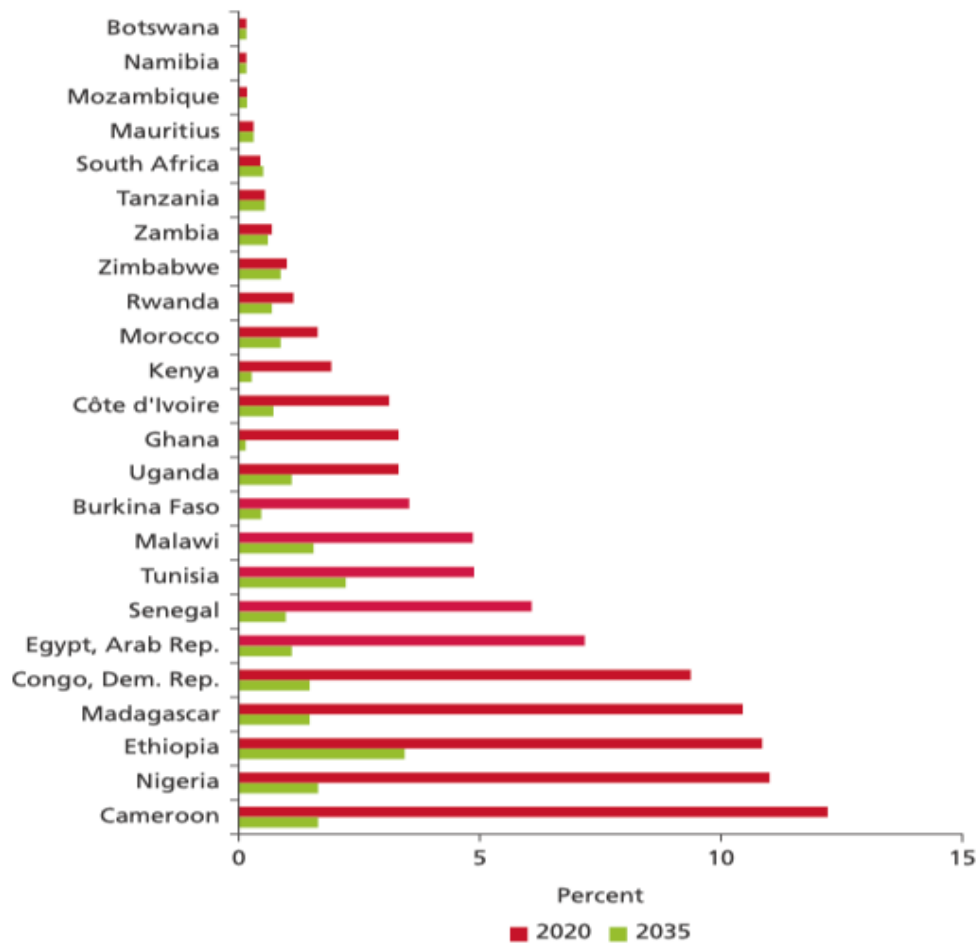


Figure 4.2: South Africa Trade-Weighted Tariffs Imposed on AfCFTA Imports Compared to Other Countries by 2020 and 2035. (Source: World Bank (2020)).

Under the AfCFTA scenario, manufacturing exports would gain the most 62% overall, with intra-Africa trade increasing by 110% where exports to the rest of the world rising by 46%. Agriculture would see smaller gains around 49% for intra-Africa trade and 10% for extra-Africa commerce. The growth in services trade is more modest around 4% worldwide and 14% inside Africa (World Bank, 2020). This could open-up new opportunities for South African businesses to access larger markets and increase their exports especially in agriculture to other African countries, leading to increase in manufacturing-trade and hence economic growth.

4.4.2 Theme 1.2 - Export-Import

African trade is becoming increasingly significant to overall trade with South Africa. 2021 saw intra-African trade account for 33.44% of South Africa's global exports and 31.46% of its global imports (Global Edge, 2023). With over 50% of its total exports going to the rest of Africa, South Africa continues to have a sizable trade surplus with the region. Its principal exports are machinery, chemicals, iron and steel goods, and mineral products. Exports from South Africa to

Africa increased from over R 9 billion in 1994 to over R 340 billion by 2019. South Africa's contribution of world exports to Africa is still quite little when you consider that in 2019 Africa imported items worth roughly R 8 trillion (DTIC, 2021a), see Figure 4.3.

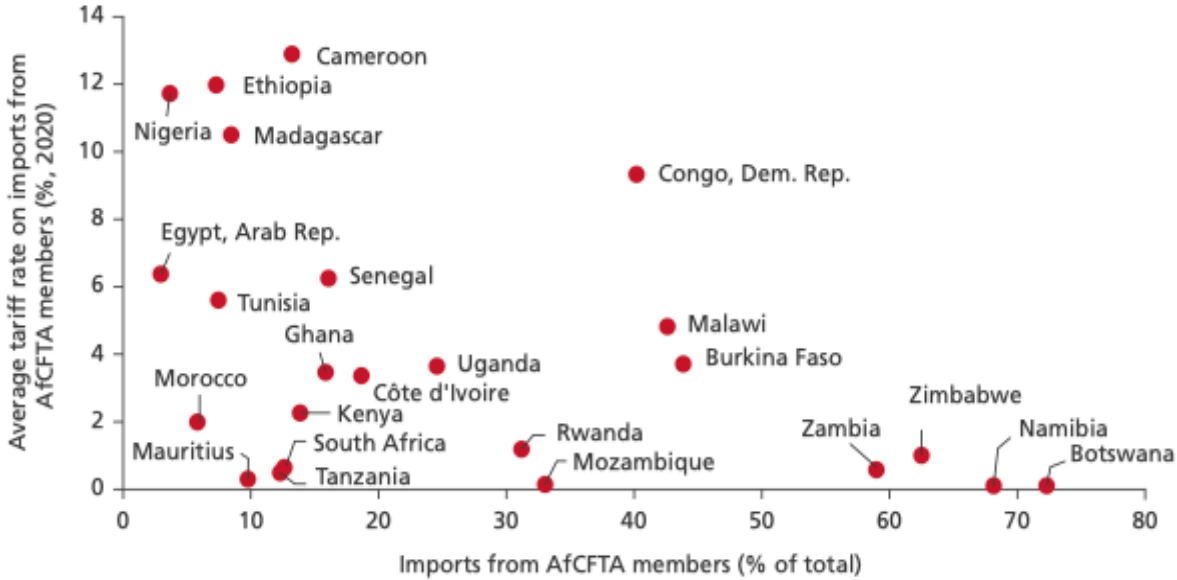


Figure 4.3: South Africa share of imports and average tariffs imposed on AfCFTA imports. (Source: Estimates World Banks Study Team, 2020).

With the AfCFTA's introduction, this is sure to change. Under the AfCFTA regime the volume of total exports would increase by almost 29% by 2035. Intracontinental exports would increase by over 81%, while exports to non-African countries would rise by 19% according to the world bank study (2020: 4), and exports to the rest of the world rising by 46%. South Africa could take a range of opportunities to increase its export import. The income gains projected under AfCFTA can contribute to South Africa's economic growth. With a diversified economy, South Africa can tap into various sectors, including services, manufacturing, and natural resources, to enhance its economic output.

4.4.3 Theme 1.3 - Income gain

The World Bank report 2005 (Neff, 2007: 313) and the United Nation (Hull *et al.*, 2020: 2059) classify South Africa as an upper-middle-income country in worldwide comparisons. A recent South Africa study shows that an income increase raises happiness at the individual level even if is not collectively observed in country level (Kollamparambil, 2020: 201), nevertheless reflects on the Living Standards Measurement (LSM) of South Africa as it is an important factor as a developed country (Leibbrandt *et al.*, 1996).

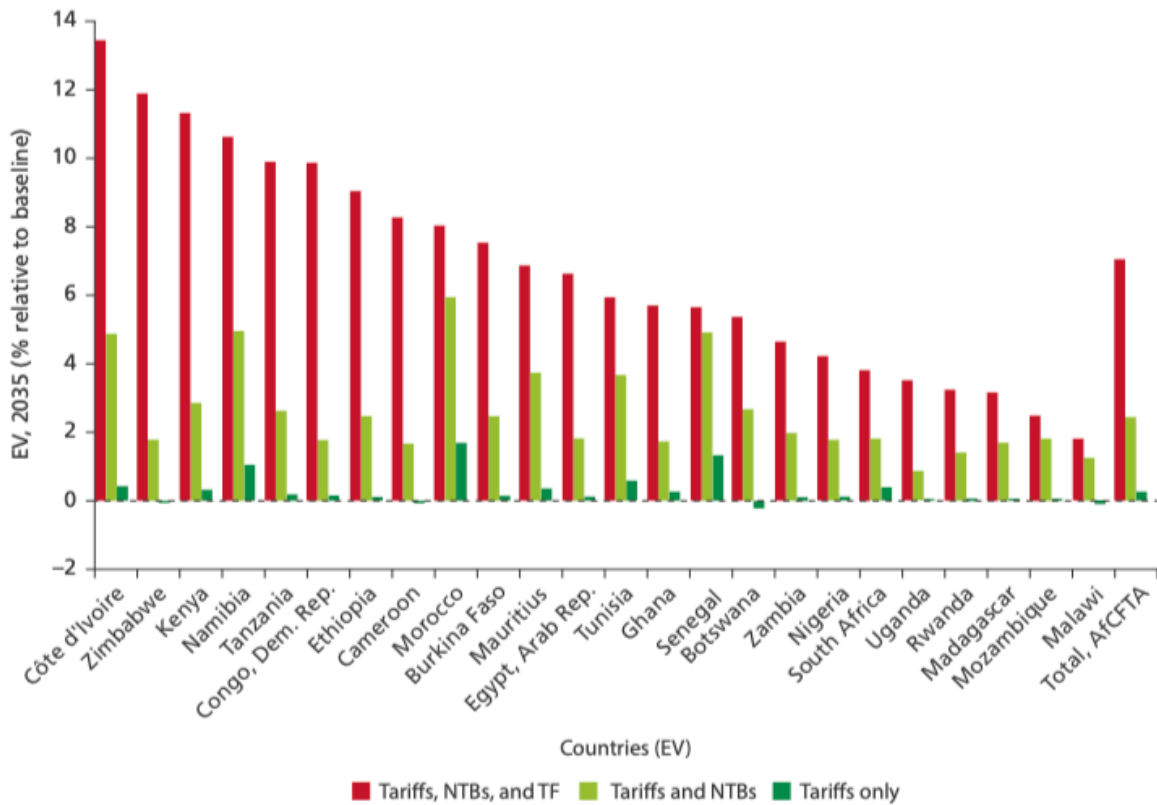


Figure 4.4: Real Income Gain by country (Source: World Bank, 2020:4).

The income gains from tariff liberalization alone are relatively small, about 0.2% at the continental level, although some countries would experience gains of more than 1%. The most significant gains would come from the reduction in NTBs and the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), when combined with tariff liberalization. This would lead to a real income gain of 2.4% in 2035 at the continental level. Implementation of the former mentioned with the AfCFTA would result in even higher gains, raising the income gains for AfCFTA members to 7% with full implementation by 2035. That is equivalent to nearly US\$450 billion, however, these gains vary across countries, between highest income gains of 14% in Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe and lowest like 2% in Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique. South Africa income gain will initially rise more than 4%, as it shown in Figure 4.4, (World Bank, 2020: 3-4).

4.4.4 Theme 1.4 - Lift Poverty

Although South Africa is classified as an upper-middle-income country (Neff, 2007: 313-314), it is estimated that it has one of the greatest levels of inequality in the world, with high percentage of people classified as poor (Hull *et al.*, 2020: 2059). Despite the fact that South Africa has made great progress in the past few decades in terms of raising living standards and reducing poverty, more trade can offer an incentive for improvements that encourage the productivity and job development. i.e. reducing poverty even further (Wold Bank, 2020).

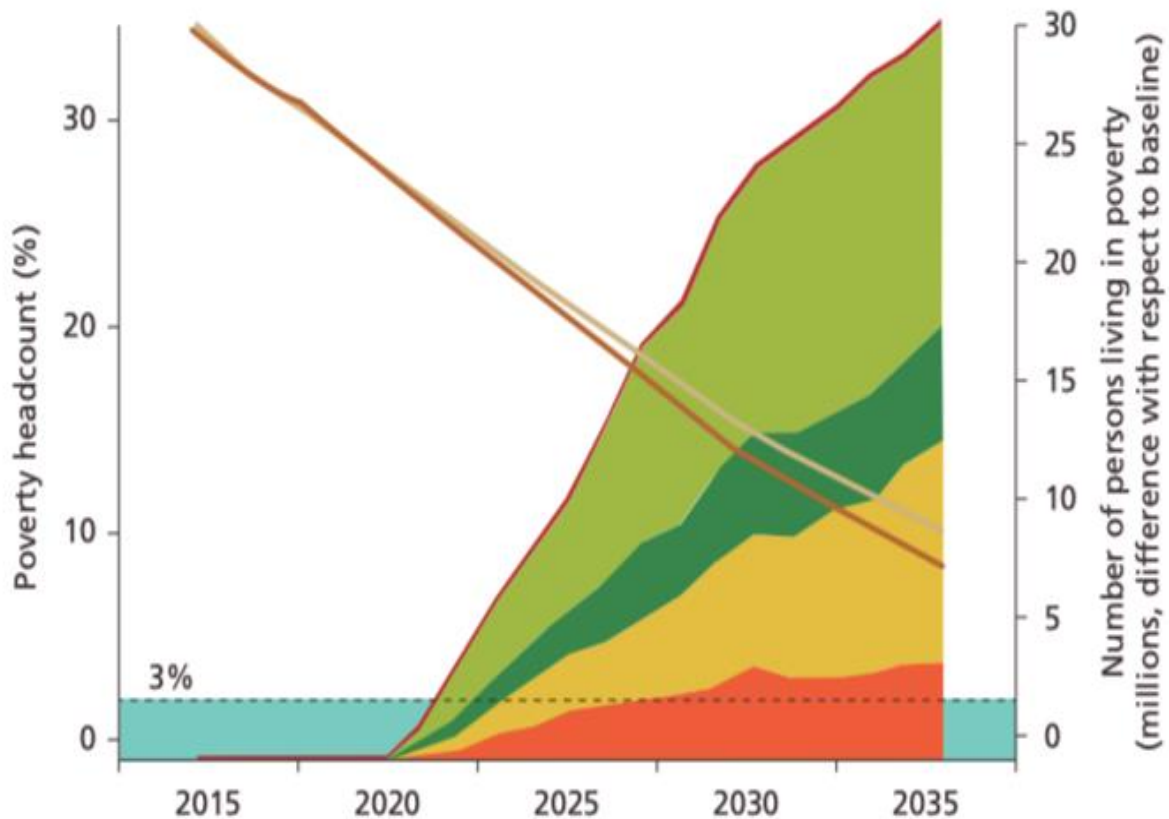


Figure 4.5: The Extreme Poverty and the AfCFTA Implementation, 2015-35, (Source: World Bank, 2020:6).

The implementation of the AfCFTA presents significant opportunities for South Africa to make a maximum integration into the global economy, alleviate poverty, and promote social inclusion. By 2035, an estimated 30 million people could escape extreme poverty in Africa (World Bank, 2020: 5) including South African citizens, which is 1.5% of the entire the continent’s population. The extreme poverty Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is US\$1.90 per day according to the World Bank (2020: 5). The headcount ratio of extreme poverty in Africa in general is projected to decline from 34.7% in the latest estimate (2015) by the World Bank to 10.9% by 2035 with the full implementation of AfCFTA, see Figure 4.5. The continent's overall output would increase by over 212 billion US dollars (Wold Bank, 2020:5).

Southern Africa region in orange colour above includes Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, the Seychelles, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. At the moderate poverty line of PPP US\$5.50 a day, AfCFTA has the potential to lift 67.9 million people, or 3.6% of the continent’s population, out of moderate poverty by 2035 (Wold Bank, 2020: 7), see Figure 4.6.

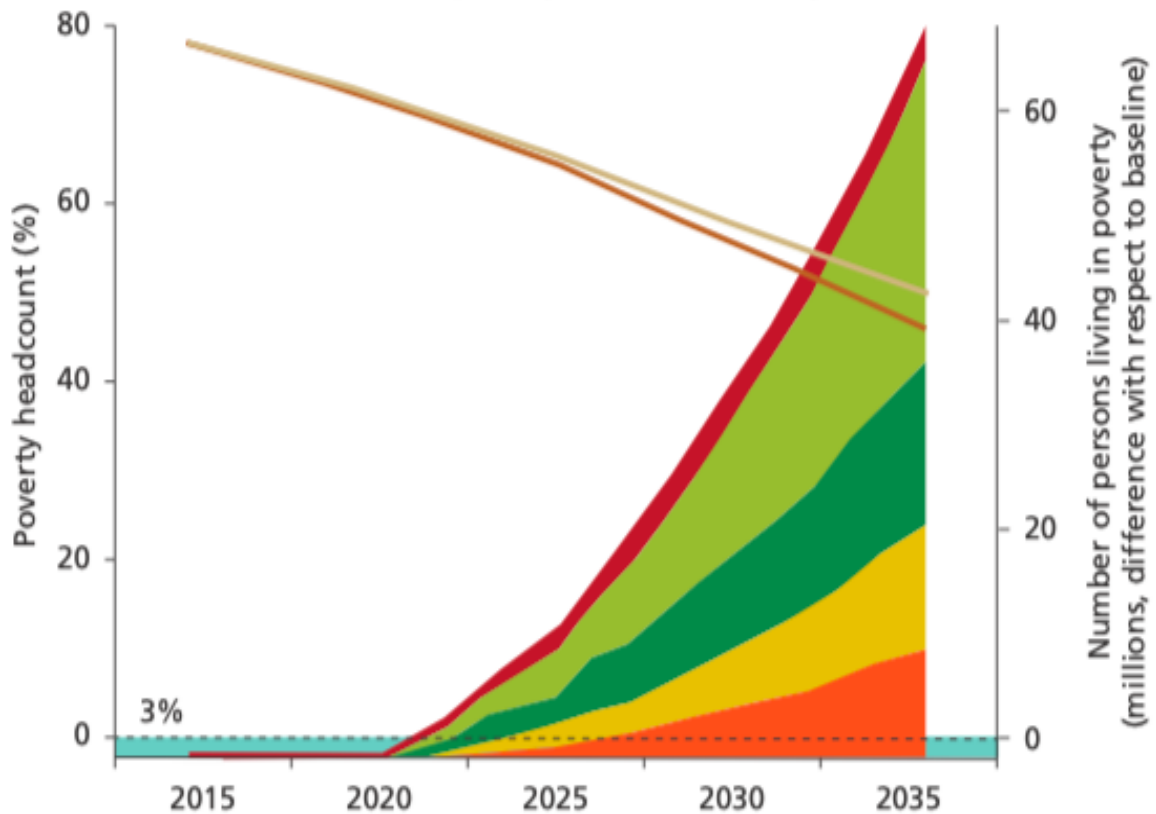


Figure 4.6: The Moderate Poverty and the AfCFTA Implementation, 2015-35 (Source: World Bank, 2020:6).

4.4.5 Theme 1.5 - Employment

4.4.5.1 Theme 1.5.1 and Theme 1.5.2 - Skilled Employment and Unskilled Employment

South Africa currently holds the highest unemployment rate globally (Mseleku, 2022: 1). The increased frequency of load-shedding has resulted in the closure of numerous small businesses, exacerbating the problem of unemployment (Mlambo, 2023: 1). According to Trade Economic census (2023), the unemployment rate in June 2023 reached at 32.6% of the South African population. A recent United Nations report on unemployment in South Africa, delivered to Deputy President Paul Mashatile just last month, characterized the situation as a "ticking time bomb." (Mogomotsi, 2023). Furthermore, youth unemployment reached an alarming 60.70% by the same date of this year. The implementation of AfCFTA is expected to enhance employment opportunities and wages for unskilled workers while also making progress in narrowing the gender wage gap (World Bank, 2020). In particular, unskilled labour is likely to see a 10.3% increase in wages by 2035, with this growth being more pronounced in areas where agricultural employment expands.

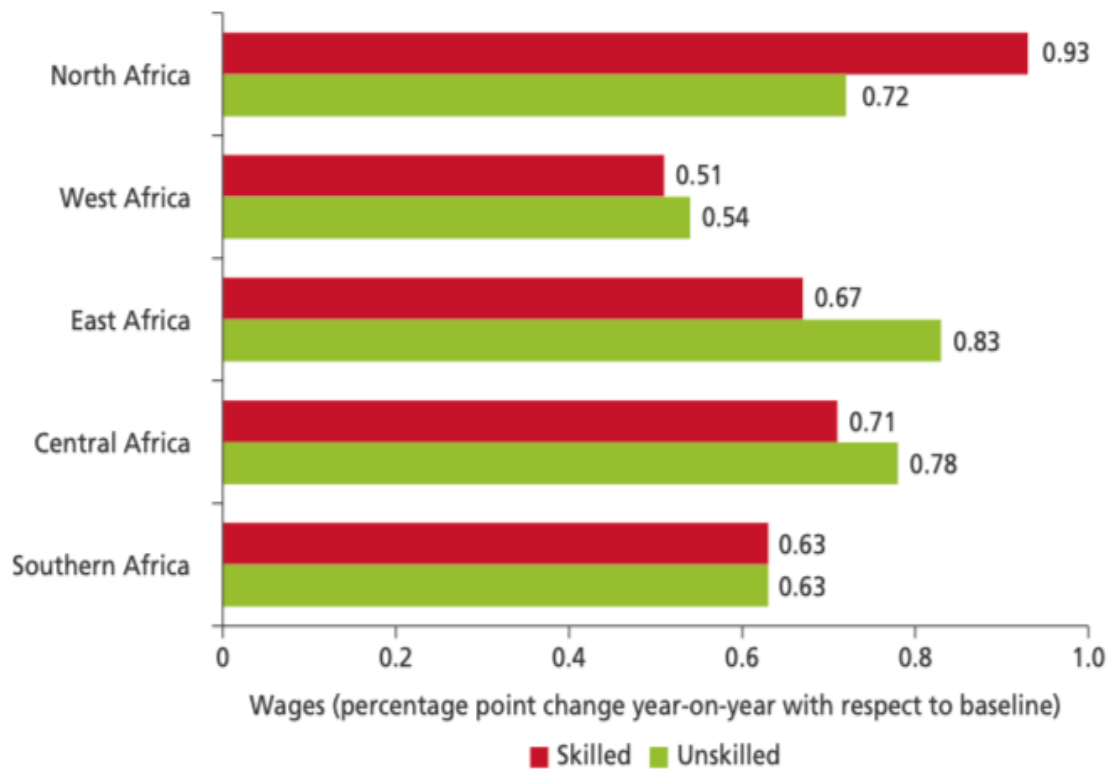


Figure 4.7: The Effects of AfCFTA on Wages by Skill (Source: World Bank, 2020).

According to the World Bank in (2020), see Figure 4.7, the adoption of AfCFTA would lead to a growth in employment opportunities. Skilled workers, in particular, are projected to experience a 9.8% increase in job opportunities. Furthermore, the continent as a whole would witness a rise in the proportion of workers engaged in energy-intensive manufacturing in general, and agricultural employment would expand in 60% of the countries.

4.4.5.2 Theme 1.5.3 - South African Women

This is done to ensure that women and young people in South Africa are not excluded from the system. The new language and narrative for Africa's structural change has identified the advancement of gender parity and the development of women's economic independence as two of the continent's most pressing objectives. According to a survey that was conducted in 2017 by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 70% of the women who engage in informal trading in the SADC region are in that profession. Women are responsible for more than half of all informal trading that takes place across borders in West and Central Africa, and it contributes between 40% - 60% to the GDP of the nations involved. Women who engage in informal cross-border trade continue to face challenges such as invisibility, stigmatisation, abuse, harassment, poor working conditions, and an absence of acknowledgement for the contribution they make to the economy (Woode, 2021).

In South Africa, the data reveals a stark contrast in poverty rates between female-headed and male-headed households. Female-headed households experience a poverty rate of 60.3%, whereas their male-headed counterparts have a lower rate of 31.3%. This disparity underscores the gendered dimensions of poverty within the country (Akinboade, 2005: 256). Women's participation in economic activities in the region remains often unnoticed and disregarded. For instance, key national development indicators like gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP) fail to encompass a significant portion of women's economic contributions. The substantial efforts made by millions of African women in terms of family care responsibilities and their contributions to household income through small-scale agriculture and trade often go unaccounted for in conventional employment data (Akinboade, 2005: 258). Women Self-employment is a major component of the informal sector in Africa and it counts for 86.2% in South Africa (Akinboade, 2005: 263). However, despite these challenges, women are still able to play a vital and prominent role in the informal economies (Magidimisha & Gordon, 2015: 278).

The AfCFTA will open-up new opportunities in economic activity where there is a concentration of women, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and trade in services; nevertheless, the benefits for women are not guaranteed to occur automatically. In order for women to be able to make the most of these opportunities, South Africa as a members of the AU needs to take conscious steps toward the development and implementation of gender-sensitive policies with complementary measures (Thusi *et al.*, 2022). A more open trade environment inside South Africa would be beneficial to women by reducing the wage difference between the sexes, and it would be beneficial to all workers by increasing the likelihood of finding decent job. The expansion of manufacturing would result in the creation of additional employment possibilities, particularly for women. According to the findings of the study, putting into effect the AfCFTA would lead to a nearly 10% gain in earnings in comparison to continuing business as usual, with larger increases for unskilled workers and women (Sabela *et al.*, 2023).

The growth in wages is anticipated to be slightly higher for women compared to men, especially as output increases in sectors with a significant female labour presence. By 2035, women's wages are projected to rise by 10.5%, while men's wages are expected to increase by 9.9% estimated by the World Bank (2020), see Figure 4.8.



Figure 4.8: The Effects of AfCFTA on Wages by Gender (Source: World Bank, 2020).

The AfCFTA ought to additionally make it easier for women and younger people to participate in the global trading system. Both the Protocol on Trade in Goods and the Protocol on Trade in Services highlight the significance of enhancing the capabilities of women and young people in order to strengthen their participation in the economic and trading system. This is done in order to help South African women and young people more fully participate in these systems.

Young people would gain from the implementation of free movement because many African countries are experiencing a shortage of skilled workers (Thusi *et al.*, 2022). If they were free to move about, they could look for work in the countries that are nearby and take advantage of the possibilities that might be available to them there. The success of the AfCFTA will be determined by how well women and young people are integrated into the current political and economic climate. The establishment of national AfCFTA committees presents an opportunity to ensure that gender is taken into account and that inclusive policies will be put into effect.

4.4.6 Theme 1.6 - Productivity

The implementation of AfCFTA is anticipated to enhance productivity and trigger a reallocation of resources across various sectors and countries. By the year 2035, the continent's total production is projected to increase by nearly US\$212 billion compared to the World Bank baseline. This boost in output is expected to be most pronounced in the natural resources and services sectors, with

a respective growth of 1.7%. Manufacturing is also expected to see a notable rise, estimated at 1.2%. However, agriculture is anticipated to contract by 0.5% in comparison to the 2035 baseline at the continental level (World Bank, 2020), see Figure 4.9.

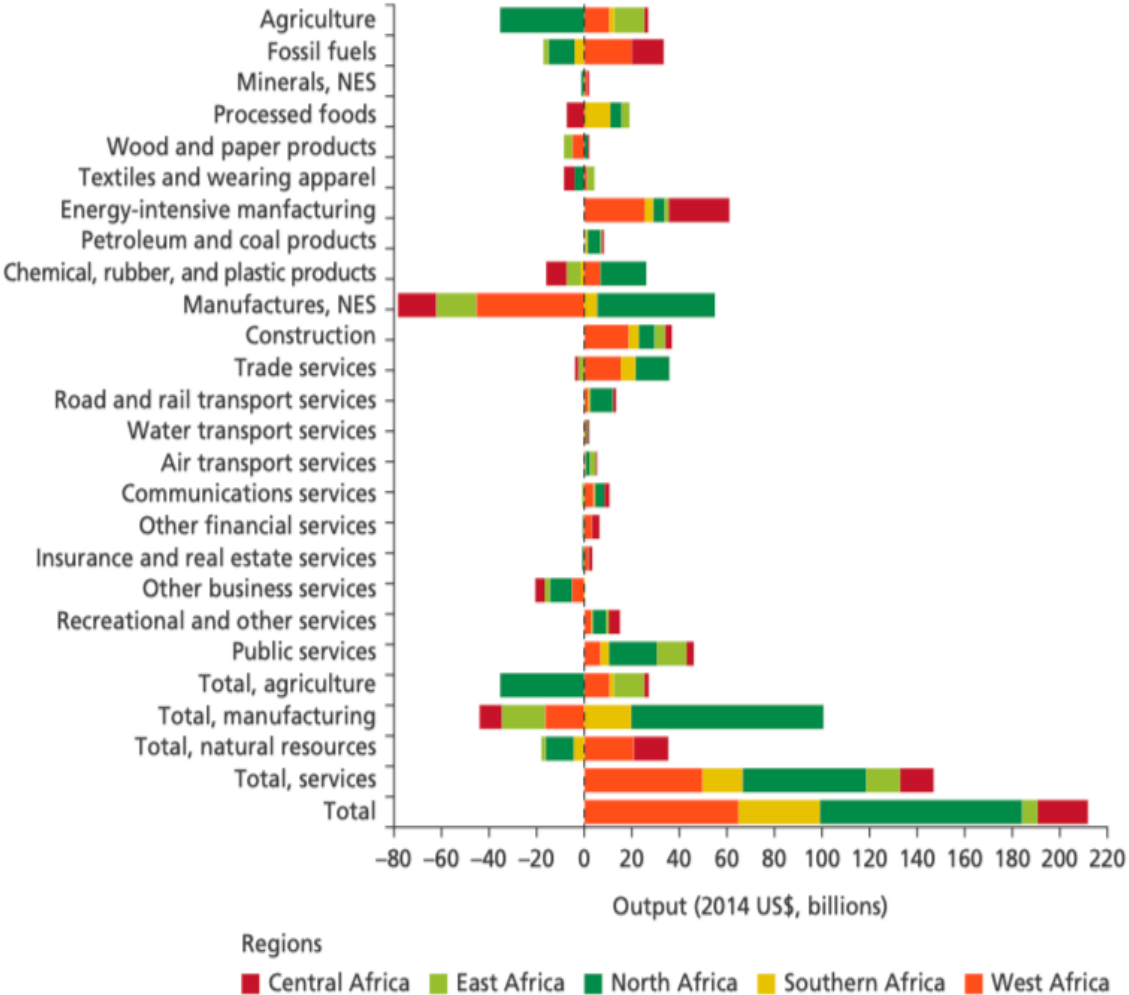


Figure 4.9: The Output Difference Relative to Baseline, 2035 (Source: World Bank Study Team, 2020:52).

In terms of absolute figures, the services sector is poised to experience the most substantial gains, with an estimated increase of US\$147 billion. Manufacturing and natural resources sectors are expected to register smaller but still significant gains, amounting to US\$56 billion and US\$17 billion, respectively. Conversely, agricultural output is projected to decline by US\$8 billion by the year 2035 relative to the baseline. It's worth noting that agriculture is set to grow more rapidly in various regions of Africa, except for North Africa, which, under AfCFTA, is undergoing a shift toward manufacturing and services (World Bank, 2020). The impact of AfCFTA is expected to be widespread, with approximately 90% of countries witnessing an increase in the volume of services, reflecting the growing demand for these services as Africa's economy expands. Similarly, around 60% of countries are expected to experience growth in the value of their output

in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. This indicates the potential for economic development and diversification across the continent and for South Africa in particular, as South Africa's agriculture is considered a powerhouse in the continent.

4.4.7 Theme 1.7 - Tax Revenue

The study team from the World Bank forecast, the implementation of AfCFTA is not expected to have a significant impact on tax revenues for most countries including South Africa. As South Africa maintains low average tariffs on intraregional imports, largely influenced by tariffs established within sub-regional trade agreements SACU and the SADC. Tariff revenues are projected to decline by less than 1.5% in 49 out of 54 countries due to the tariff elimination, with a few exceptions such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, The Gambia, the Republic of Congo, and Zambia experiencing slightly higher declines. Total tax revenues would also see minimal declines, with less than 0.3% reduction in 50 out of the 54 countries. These minor revenue impacts can be attributed to the relatively small share of tariff revenues originating from imports from other African countries, averaging less than 10% on average. Furthermore, exclusion lists, which protect specific tariff lines, significantly mitigate revenue losses, as a mere 1% of tariff lines contribute to over three-quarters of tariff revenues in almost all African countries (World Bank, 2020). In the medium term, the overall effect on import tariff revenue is anticipated to be positive at the regional level within the AfCFTA scenario. Despite the reduction in tariffs, the increase in import volumes in South Africa is expected to lead to higher tariff revenue collections, resulting in a 3% increase at the continental level compared to the 2035 baseline. Moreover, faster economic growth in South Africa, driven by increased economic activity caused by the AfCFTA, may also lead to higher total revenue from other taxes expected in South Africa.

4.4.8 Theme 1.8 - Foreigner Direct Investments

The second round of AfCFTA negotiations is set to emphasize investment, competition, and intellectual property rights, aiming to diversify exports and boost economic growth. Notably, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the US Trade Representative and the AfCFTA Secretariat during the US-Africa Leaders' Summit in December 2022 (Africa Business, 2023), promoting cooperation and investment opportunities for Africa, especially in light of recent geopolitical changes such as the Russian war. This agreement positions Africa to provide goods in high demand, with new supply chain protection measures potentially placing the continent in a favourable position to contribute significantly to reliable resource supply chains. This approach aligns with the idea of "delinking" or influencing the global system, advocated by Amin & Bush in 2014, to transform global relations and leverage opportunities within global value chains.

In spite of that, the expanding AfCFTA membership holds greater potential benefits. Figure 4.10, highlights the advantages of broader country coverage within the AfCFTA. High beneficiaries include countries with lower existing integration levels among potential members in 2017, experiencing substantial positive changes in FDI net stock. Countries already highly integrated with other African nations show a slight decrease, mainly influenced by South Africa, a key source of intra-Africa FDI.

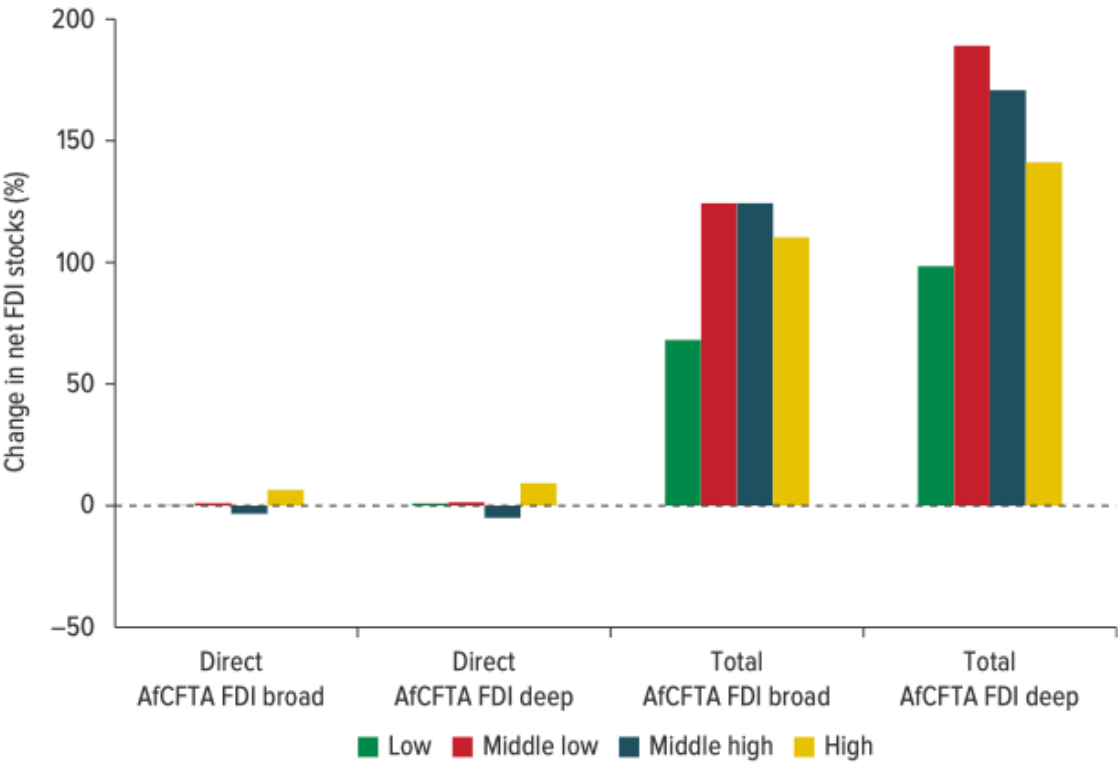


Figure 4.10: Change in FDI Net Stock From 2017 (Source: World Bank, 2022:54).

The AfCFTA holds significant potential for South Africa, with expected foreign direct investment (FDI) increases of 111% under the broad scenario and 159% under the deep scenario, driven by intra-Africa growth and FDI from the rest of the world, primarily from Europe. Africa's least integrated economies are poised to benefit the most in relative terms. Under AfCFTA, there will be substantial changes in sectoral trade and output patterns, particularly in the deep scenario that enhances regional value chain integration. Exports of textiles, apparel, chemical products, and processed foods are expected to see significant growth under the trade scenario. The FDI deep scenario further boosts selected sectors due to reduced trade costs. The informal sector and small businesses offer the potential for millions of new job opportunities, with approximately 2.45% of the workforce expected to shift to expanding sectors by 2035.

In 2017, intra-Africa FDI reached a peak of US\$52 billion, accounting for 11% of the region's total FDI stock. South Africa was a major source of intra-Africa FDI, representing 60-70% of such investments. West Africa has also emerged as an important source, and investment from Northern Africa has increased significantly. South Africa, as the continent's primary FDI recipient, is poised to solidify its role as Africa's investment hub, further consolidating its position due to its large and diverse economy. By 2035, under the AfCFTA trade scenario, the largest increases in export value to regional partners are anticipated for Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire, ranging from US\$48 billion to US\$11 billion according to the world Bank (2020).

Under the AfCFTA FDI broad scenario, countries with higher FDI inflows stand to gain the most, including Mauritius, South Africa, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, see Figure 4.11.

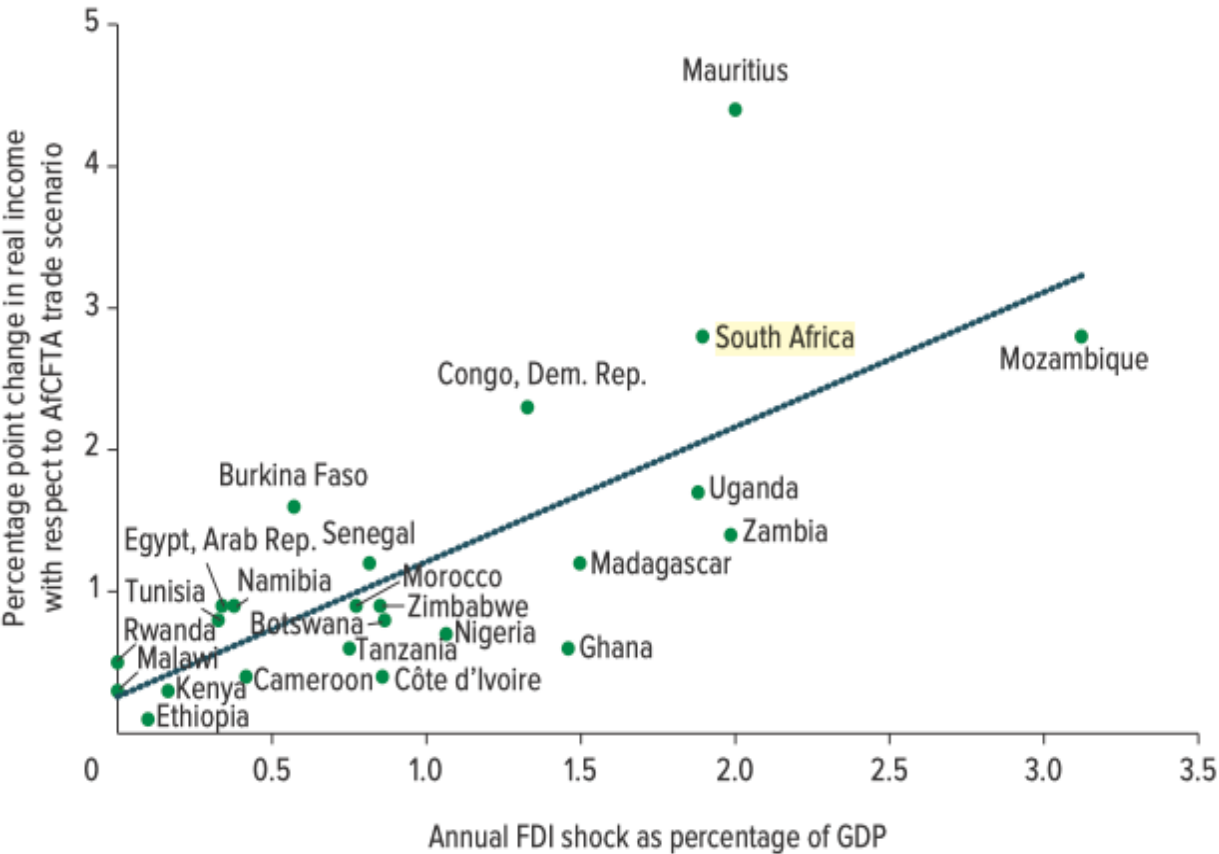


Figure 4.11: AfCFTA FDI Broad Scenario, 2035 (Source: World Bank, 2022:74).

In terms of absolute gains, larger nations like Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa lead the way. In the AfCFTA FDI deep scenario, Mozambique, Mauritius, Burkina Faso, and South Africa experience relatively greater gains compared to the AfCFTA trade scenario, attributed to the size of the FDI impact and the average reduction in trade costs, as seen in Figure 4.12.

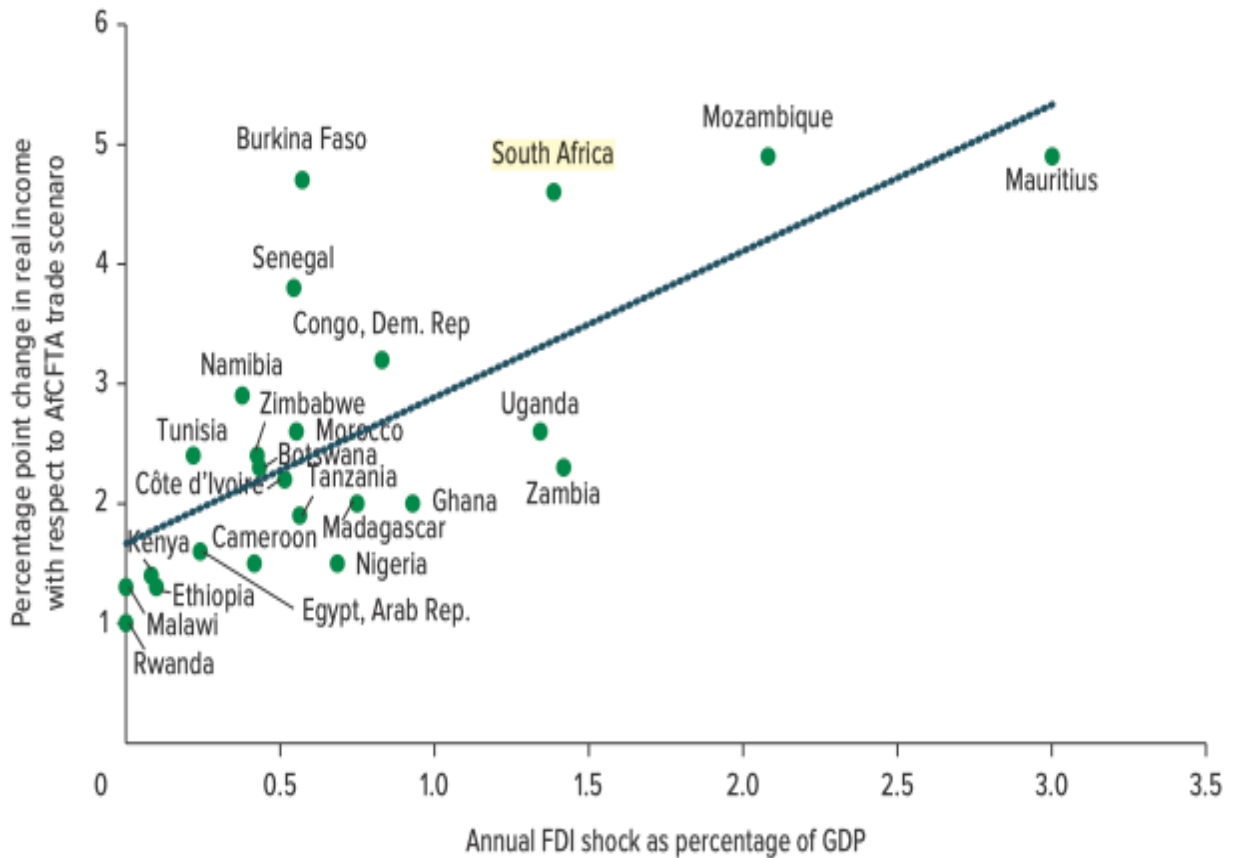


Figure 4.12: AfCFTA FDI Deep Scenario, 2035 (Source: World Bank, 2022:75).

However, for South Africa to realize these potential gains requires thorough implementation and a parallel set of actions. The AfCFTA negotiations should be deep and comprehensive, covering not just goods but also services, investment, competition policy, intellectual property rights, and e-commerce. Engaging the South Africa private sector more deeply in the process and promoting a favourable trade and investment policy ecosystem are crucial to maximizing the benefits. A strong complementary agenda is needed to ensure effective implementation, administration, and monitoring of the AfCFTA agreement in all nations so South Africa could gain the best of it all, add to that, involving the domestic stakeholders will maximize the opportunities as well and minimize the risks taken during the transition toward a more open continental market.

4.5 Presentation of Theme 2: South Africa's Challenges from the AfCFTA

This section discusses the challenges that South Africa can face during the implementation of the AfCFTA. The finding were grouped into three themes which include: (1) Strategic challenges, (2) Integrated challenges, (3) Sustainable challenges. Table 4-4 presents the summary of theme 2.

Table 4-3: Summary of Theme 2: South Africa's Challenges from the AfCFTA

Sub-research question	Themes	Categories
RQ1: What are the opportunities, challenges and risks taken by South Africa in participating in the AfCFTA?	South Africa's Challenges from the AfCFTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic challenges • Integrated challenges • Sustainable challenges

Table 4-3 provides a synopsis of the findings from Theme 2 (research question/objective 1). The subsequent section offers interpretations of the findings within the sub-themes of Theme 2.

4.5.1 Theme 2.1- Integration Challenges

The full implementation of the AfCFTA by South Africa is confronted with both internal and external threats, and an overlap between internal and external challenges. The full success of the AfCFTA would minimise the South African bilateral trade arrangement with countries in Europe and North America as well as China benefit from (Global Edge, 2023), such an agreement considered a problem for AfCFTA implementation because it takes focus away from making sure that African nations can fully trade with one another (Gumede, 2020: 31).

Also, Policy restrictions imposed by the government and a challenging regulatory environment means that South Africa's investment climate remains hampered, preventing the development of a highly favourable environment for quality FDI. Simplifying rules helps to streamline investment into the country, benefiting both international and domestic entrepreneurs as the ease of doing business improves. Although South Africa does not have a complicated regulatory system, its issues stem mostly from a lack of regulatory clarity, which impedes possible investments. To address these concerns, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) formed TISA, an organisation aimed at lowering barriers to FDI and offering critical insights into the regulatory and legal landscape to international investors. Several nations, notably Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela, have also terminated their Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) with South Africa. Political and economic developments have a significant impact on the country's business environment and investment climate (Faku, 2022: 1).

Despite facing challenges stemming from weak institutions, the South African government continued its substantial spending, resulting in an increased debt deficit and adverse effects on

the currency resulting in the interest rates on bank loans being frequently rather high (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). These institutional shortcomings also impacted inflation, undermining investor confidence, and raising the cost of doing business. Key State Owned Enterprise, Eskom, faced governance issues and capacity constraints, leading to increased electricity costs. Moreover, the Home Affairs department's inability to handle tourism policies and immigration laws contributed to social unrest and a decline in tourism, hampering economic growth. The South African government ministries' general inability to consult effectively with stakeholders before implementing laws and regulations has produced unintended, detrimental consequences for investors (Faku, 2022: 6).



Figure 4.13: South African Corruption Ranking (Source: Faku, 2022:6)

South Africa's foreign direct investment (FDI) experienced a decline to 1.1%, equivalent to the nominal GDP in 2017, compared to the 1.4% growth in the previous quarter, see Figure 4.13. Corruption also played a significant role in deterring investment and delaying economic growth linked to FDI. High-level corruption, characterized by the abuse of public positions for private gain, increased investment costs and prolonged decision-making processes as officials awaited bribes. Furthermore, challenges in trading across borders persisted, with concerns over the cost and duration required to compile documents and gain approvals from relevant authorities, despite some improvements in cross-border transactions. Electricity, essential for business operations, posed a significant challenge due to extended waiting times and delays in completing external

connection works. In the long run, there is a positive correlation between electricity production and FDI inflows. The market in Africa is more accessible to do business with but there are obstacles doing business between South Africa and other African countries. The major one is the logistic capacity for intra-African trade e.g., railways and roads that can make South Africa accessible to other African nations (Longo, 2001).

4.5.2 Theme 2.2- Strategic Challenges

This presents South African business owners with a significant opportunity to expand their operations into new markets and raise their production levels. In order to facilitate the entry of smaller businesses into the continental market across national borders, public authorities are required to offer both financial and technical assistance to these businesses. In that case, the benefits of the AfCFTA would be accessible to only the largest of businesses in South Africa (Albert, 2019). To ensure that a larger number of businesses in South Africa are able to seize the opportunities presented by this agreement, it is imperative that the South African government puts in place comprehensive national strategies reform in the areas of infrastructure, finance, and technology, respectively. Given that smaller-scale farmers will be competing against larger firms that are likely to be more aggressive, it is imperative that these national strategies reform be applied to them as well. Therefore, in order to ensure their continued existence, it is of the utmost importance to assist them in integrating into the export markets and to urge them in order to broaden the scope of their production in order to contend with the severe competition from abroad (Albert, 2019).

4.5.3 Theme 2.3- Sustainable Challenges

The South African government and the United Nations in South Africa have completed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2020-2025. Outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The formulation process involved extensive consultations with various stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, academia, research institutions, women, and youth. This process confirmed the following principles: the government of the host country taking ownership and leading the initiative, involving multiple stakeholders, and ensuring alignment with national priorities. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global call to action to end poverty, protect the earth's environment and climate, and ensure that people everywhere can enjoy peace and prosperity, see Figure 4.12. South Africa currently scored 64% with index rank of 110/166.



Figure 4.14: The 17 Goals for a Better World by 2030 (Source: United Nations, 2023).

One of the top priorities of the AfCFTA is the implementation of a sustainable development plan. The impacts of climate change are currently posing significant challenges to South African. Rising temperatures lead to more frequent and prolonged droughts, putting pressure on water resources and having adverse effects on agriculture and public health sectors (Albert, 2019). In response, it is crucial for AfCFTA member countries to embrace environmentally friendly practices that fundamentally transform agricultural methods and production processes. Key objectives would include reducing carbon emissions and adopting sustainable use of veterinary medicines and pesticides. Additionally, promoting environmentally friendly agriculture and raising awareness about climate change effects through information dissemination would be essential actions for the Member States to undertake (Albert, 2019).

Implementing multi-stakeholder dialogues becomes highly important to develop sustainable production techniques. This involves utilizing renewable resources, introducing eco-friendly packaging for goods, and improving waste disposal systems to mitigate environmental impact. By fostering sustainable practices, the AfCFTA aims to address the challenges posed by climate change and contribute to achieving the SDGs (Albert, 2019).

4.6 Presentation of Theme 3 : South Africa’s Risk from the AfCFTA

This section discuss the Risks that South Africa can encounter in implementing the deal. The finding were grouped into four themes which include: (1) Free Movement of Persons, (2) Growth Volatility, (3) Short-Term Costs, (4) Discontinuity. Table 4-4 presents the summary of Theme 3.

Table 4-4: Summary of Theme 3: South Africa's Risks from the AfCFTA

Sub-research question	Themes	Categories
<p>RQ1: What are the opportunities, challenges and risks taken by South Africa in participating in the AfCFTA?</p>	<p>South Africa's Risks from the AfCFTA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Movement of Persons • Growth Volatility • Short-Term Costs • Discontinuity

Table 4-4 provides a synopsis of the findings from Theme 3 (research question/objective 1). The subsequent section offers interpretations of the findings within the sub-themes of Theme 3.

4.6.1 Theme 3.1- Free Movement of Persons

The endorsement of free movement between countries under this agreement poses a significant risk, particularly associated with the Free Movement of Persons (FMP) supported by the agreement. This could lead to a potential influx of undocumented immigrants into South Africa (Faichamps, 2003). This risk may stem from member states lacking the resources needed to establish proper civil registers for identity verification and integrated border management systems. Additionally, the absence of bilateral return agreements among AU member states raises security concerns. Overcoming these potential risks is essential for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA for South Africa (Bisong, 2022).

4.6.2 Theme 3.2- Climate Change

Luke, the coordinator of the African Trade Policy Center at UNECA, highlighted that climate change poses a threat to the AfCFTA through two primary channels. According to him, "Firstly, climate change has the potential to alter comparative advantage and the international trade landscape, adversely affecting specific sectors like agriculture, tourism, and infrastructure." Luke emphasized, "These changes may diminish the competitiveness of African products and services, impacting the potential for mutually beneficial trade among African countries within the AfCFTA." He also pointed out, "Secondly, climate change can have detrimental effects on the continent's infrastructure. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified port facilities,

buildings, roads, railways, airports, and bridges as particularly vulnerable to damage from rising sea levels and increased occurrences of extreme weather." Luke proposed that climate change should be a key focus in the second phase of AfCFTA negotiations on intellectual property rights. He argued that intellectual protection plays a crucial role in fostering the development and use of green technology to address the challenges posed by climate change.

4.6.3 Theme 3.3- Growth Volatility

In the swiftly evolving global economic landscape, characterized by a surge in trade driven by technology-intensive manufactured goods, primary commodities and natural resources continue to dominate African trade. Moreover, these resources have consistently posed recurring risks and served as conduits for growth volatility. This is attributed to the fluctuations in commodity prices and the sustained decline in the terms of trade for commodities over the long term, as highlighted by Fofack in 2015 and 2019.

4.6.4 Theme 3.4- Short-Term Costs

The act of signing the AfCFTA agreement was a political gesture that did not immediately impact the finances of the signatory nations. It served to unite the continent and fortify the groundwork for the trade integration framework envisioned decades ago by the Organization of African Unity. However, the effective implementation of the continental free trade agreement may involve substantial costs, particularly in terms of short-term fiscal adjustments, especially for the most vulnerable countries. These costs have the potential to transform the initially mutually beneficial continental trade-integration project into an outcome where some gain while others lose, particularly if abrupt tariff revenue losses and other adjustment expenses lead to persistent macroeconomic instability (Fofack, 2019).

Hence, one of the significant risks facing Africa in the initial stages of AfCFTA implementation is the negative repercussions stemming from short-term costs. Any uneven distribution of benefits during the early phases of the continental trade-integration reform could undermine the widespread support necessary to fully realize the substantial potential associated with increased economies of scale and efficiency gains throughout implementation (Fofack, 2019). Effectively managing these short-term fiscal adjustment costs from the outset is crucial for the successful realization of the AfCFTA and should be a top priority for all stakeholders, whether they are potential winners or losers in the process.

4.6.5 Theme 3.5- Discontinuity

Governance reforms are poised to yield positive ripple effects for institutional stability and regional integration in the long term, and as such, they should be sustained and expanded across the continent. Notably, enhanced institutional stability and predictability can mitigate the risk of disruption in the commitment to regional integration during political and democratic transitions. Given that integration is a protracted process, maintaining political dedication to the vision of regional and continental integration during political transitions is crucial for its success. This is especially pertinent in Africa, where countries are at different developmental stages and will face varying fiscal adjustment costs after the removal of tariffs on existing intraregional traded goods (IMF, 2019).

While integration is fundamentally a political endeavour, achieving success in this venture requires recognizing its significance beyond politics. In other words, the commitment to advancing the economic integration process under the AfCFTA should not be swayed by political considerations or economic cycles. Instead, a consistent reinforcement of the security and development nexus is essential to optimize the allocation of limited resources in support of growth and to mitigate the risk of regression in integration efforts (Fofack, 2020).

The stability of Africa's security and development nexus, and its implications for long-term growth, is also contingent on conflict prevention. Although the drivers of intrastate conflicts are multifaceted, including social inequality, state failure, human rights violations, and resource predation, they largely fall within the socioeconomic sphere. Consequently, national development strategies addressing deteriorating economic and social conditions, promoting good governance, and preserving the environment will not only thwart conflicts but also steer countries toward a sustainable economic growth trajectory (Fofack, 2020).

4.7 Representation of Theme 4: Reforms South Africa can take to ensure its success

This section discuss the reforms that South Africa can take to reinsures its success in implementing and harnesses the deal's full potential benefits. The finding were grouped into five themes which include: (1) Governance reforms, (2) Policy reforms, (3) Strategies reform, (4) Integration problems reform, (5) Sustainable reforms. Then merged themes highlighted in green presented in Table 4-5.

Table 4-5: Summary of Theme 4: Reforms South Africa can take to ensure its success.

Sub-research question	Themes	Categories	Merged Categories
RQ2: What kind of reform can South Africa take to ensure its success in this agreement?	Reforms South Africa can take to ensure its success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance reforms • Policy reforms • Strategies reforms • Integration problems reforms • Sustainable reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Reforms

Table 4-5 provides a synopsis of the findings from Theme 4 (research question/objective 2). The subsequent section offers interpretations of the findings within the sub-themes of Theme 4.

4.7.1 Theme 4.1- Economic Reforms

Regional Integration is often propelled by national economic reforms focusing on trade and investment liberalization (Phillips, 2004:70). Developing nations like South Africa recognize the need to enhance competitiveness, attract foreign direct investment, and support indigenous companies. The AfCFTA endeavours to address these challenges by establishing a unified market for the free movement of goods, services, and people across the continent (Aniche, 2020:3, 12). This initiative aims to boost intra-African commerce, fostering economic growth, prosperity, good governance, peace, and security, while uniting African governments within the framework of integration and globalization (Mude, 2020:42).

Implementing reforms, such as reducing trade barriers, enhancing infrastructure, and enacting new regulations, exemplifies efforts toward regional integration, with domestic implementation forming a crucial connection to both integration and the domestic political economy (Phillips, 2004:47-50). Addressing these challenges requires collaboration among governments, regional organizations, corporations, and civil society. To unlock the potential benefits of African regional integration, a combination of policy reforms, infrastructure development, institutional enhancements, and unwavering political commitment is essential. According to Jerome & Nabena (2016) they argue that regional integration in Africa is the optimal strategy for enhancing its

underdeveloped infrastructure, expediting industrialization, fostering deeper integration into the global economy, and achieving inclusive growth and elusive structural transformation.

These reforms are crucial for fostering long-term peace and security, addressing supply-side constraints, and mitigating short-term fiscal adjustment costs associated with the trade agreement. Such measures are vital to steer the continental trade-integration project toward successful implementation, ultimately achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for continental trade integration. To ensure that a larger number of businesses in South Africa can seize the opportunities presented by this agreement, it is imperative that the South African government implements comprehensive national strategies reform in the areas of infrastructure, finance, and technology, respectively. Given that smaller-scale farmers will be competing against larger firms likely to be more aggressive, these national strategies reform must apply to them as well. Therefore, to ensure their continued existence, it is of the utmost importance to assist them in integrating into export markets and encourage them to broaden the scope of their production to contend with severe competition from abroad (Albert, 2019).

Fofack (2020) argued that to unlock this potential, African nations must proactively implement complementary structural and policy reforms and risks associated. These reforms are essential for fostering long-term peace and security, addressing supply-side constraints, and mitigating short-term fiscal adjustment costs associated with the trade agreement. Such measures are crucial to steer the continental trade-integration project toward successful implementation, ultimately achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for continental trade integration.

4.8 Representation of Theme 5: Factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement

This section discuss the factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement. The finding was grouped into three themes which include: (1) Economic Disparities, (2) Trade Barriers, (3) Political Instability in Partner Countries. Table 4-6 presents the summary of Theme 5.

Table 4-6: Summary of Theme 5: Factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement.

<p>RQ3: What are the factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement?</p>	<p>Factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Disparities • Trade Barriers • Political Instability in Partner Countries
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Table 4-6 provides a synopsis of the findings from Theme 5 (research question/objective 3). The subsequent section offers interpretations of the findings within the sub-themes of Theme 5.

4.8.1 Theme 5.1- Economic Disparities

While the AfCFTA provides significant opportunities, it also poses challenges that need addressing. These challenges encompass development disparities (Akinkugbe, 2021:283), infrastructure gaps, and the potential for disruptions to establish a trade pattern (Levin et al., 2023). Given the intricate nature of this transformative agreement, it is vital to comprehend its potential impact on South Africa, recognized as a key player in the region due to its developed economy and industrial capabilities (Diao & Yanoma, 2003).

The AfCFTA agreement, with its opportunities, challenges, and potential risks in implementation, necessitates addressing complex issues related to trade liberalization, measures reformations, economic disparities, infrastructure and connectivity, regulatory harmonization, domestic policy adjustments, institutional capacity, and political coordination. A central objective of regional integration is to alleviate poverty by fostering economic growth, creating jobs, and facilitating the flow of goods and services. This broader socioeconomic agenda also includes improving access to education, healthcare, and social services for all citizens, thereby reducing gender disparities and addressing inequalities (Schiff & Winters, 2003:13). A comprehensive understanding of both aspects enhances our ability to grasp the opportunities, challenges, and potential risks associated with the AfCFTA agreement.

Regional integration plays a crucial role in Africa's economic progress and stability, despite facing challenges such as trade barriers, logistics, movement of goods and people, political instabilities, and socio-economic disparities among African nations. Effectively addressing these difficulties requires strong political will, cooperation among African countries, and a sustained commitment to regional integration. Overcoming these obstacles will enable Africa to realize the vast potential of regional integration for economic prosperity and stability emphasised by Levine & Nagar (2016).

4.8.2 Theme 5.3- Trade Barriers

The World Bank (2020) outlines strategies crucial for optimizing the potential benefits of the AfCFTA. The success of AfCFTA in becoming a significant driver for regional development depends on several key factors. Firstly, the thoroughness and scope of detailed commitments made during negotiations to eliminate trade barriers are pivotal. Secondly, the effectiveness of implementing AfCFTA commitments on the ground is crucial for its success. Finally, the

implementation of specific complementary initiatives facilitating a smooth transition to free trade and encouraging increased flows of productive investment in non-traditional sectors is essential for creating more and improved job opportunities.

The AfCFTA aims to address long-standing economic fragmentation in Africa, where trade barriers persist across the continent. While statutory tariffs have been reduced for about half of the countries, barriers remain high for sensitive sectors, hindering continental economic integration. Nontariff barriers, weak rules promoting investment and competition, and inadequate institutions further impede trade. The results of the World Bank (2020) for the AfCFTA analysis are sensitive to assumptions regarding the reduction of nontariff barriers in goods and services, as well as trade facilitation. Three scenarios are considered, with Scenario 1 assuming a 50% reduction of nontariff barriers in trade with all partners and Scenario 2 assuming a 50% reduction of nontariff barriers only with AfCFTA partners.

Scenario 1, with full liberalization of tariff lines, a 50% reduction of nontariff barriers with all partners, and trade facilitation measures, leads to continental welfare gains of about 5%. Scenario 2, representing the lower estimate, assumes a 50% reduction of nontariff barriers only with AfCFTA partners, resulting in continental welfare gains of 1.2%. These scenarios underscore the significance of reducing trade barriers and implementing trade facilitation measures within the AfCFTA for the realization of substantial welfare gains across the continent. Then the real income gains for South Africa under these three scenario will as follows, see Table 4-7.

Table 4-7: South Africa Real Income Gains Under Three Scenarios, percent deviations with respect to baseline by 2035 (Source: World Bank (2020)).

	AfCFTA	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
South Africa	4	2	2
Total Africa	7	5	1

4.8.3 Theme 5.4- Political Instability in Partner Countries

Gerhard Erasmus, in his blog Tralac (Erasmus, 2023), contends that economic cooperation plays a pivotal role in fostering political stability by creating mutual interests and minimizing conflicts over resources. Economically interdependent countries tend to resolve disputes through negotiation rather than confrontation, contributing to overall stability (Erasmus, 2023).

However, the ambitious goals of the AfCFTA, aiming for economic integration and cooperation, face significant challenges posed by the prevailing wars, coups, and instability across Africa. The success of the AfCFTA is contingent on stability, peace, and good governance, fundamental for the flow of goods, services, and investment across borders. The realization of long-term regional policies that attract foreign direct investment is crucial for implementing the AfCFTA and fostering deeper ties among state parties. The current closure of borders, exemplified by the Niger-Nigeria border, impedes trade growth, emphasizing the need for open borders for trade to flourish.

The numerous wars in Africa, characterized by severity and mass displacement, pose substantial threats to regional stability. These conflicts can destabilize individual states and entire regions, with foreign forces intervening in unstable countries. The disruptions caused by military conflicts not only impact trade flows but also lead to changes in economic structures, shifts in trade policies, resource wastage, and the disruption of established trade patterns within regional and multilateral trade arrangements. Furthermore, the resettlement of refugees gives rise to long-term structural, health, and political challenges. The risk of African countries becoming battlegrounds for global tensions has increased since the war in Ukraine.

In West Africa, the RECs and FTAs, are crucial building blocks of the AfCFTA, face threats to trade liberalization and deeper integration due to conflicts. In the East, Sudan grapples with internal strife, and Ethiopia has been embroiled in a civil war for over two years, affecting significant regional economies. Nigeria and Ethiopia, both important players, are grappling with destabilization in the Sahel region.

While the AfCFTA is not designed as an African peacekeeping agency, the responsibility for peacekeeping lies with the RECs and the African Union. The AU's initiative to "silence the guns" by 2020 has faced challenges, with ongoing conflicts not discussed, like the crisis in Niger. The United Nations deploys peacekeeping forces in Africa, and RECs such as ECOWAS convene to address crises, exemplified by discussions about the coup in Niger. The political and diplomatic challenges in resolving conflicts within member states, particularly Nigeria, demonstrate the complex landscape the AfCFTA operates in, with peacekeeping initiatives and interventions still a pressing need for stability and successful economic integration.

The stability of the interconnection between Africa's security and development, and its repercussions for sustained growth, relies significantly on conflict prevention. The complex drivers of intrastate conflicts encompass factors such as social inequality, state failure, human rights violations, and resource predation, primarily situated within the socioeconomic realm. Consequently, the effectiveness of national development strategies that address worsening economic and social conditions, advocate for good governance, and safeguard the environment

is pivotal. These strategies not only serve to prevent conflicts but also guide countries toward a trajectory of sustainable economic growth.

4.9 Conclusion

Chapter 4 presented the analysis and interpretation of our secondary data. The successful execution of this agreement can impact regional integration, economic growth, and the impression of the AfCFTA among other African nations and international stakeholders, influencing future regional projects, cooperation, and trust-building. South Africa has opportunities to gain from the AfCFTA, particularly in terms of intra-trade, export-import dynamics, income gains, poverty reduction, employment, productivity enhancement, tax revenue, and foreign direct investments. By tapping into these opportunities and implementing gender-sensitive policies and complementary measures, South Africa can enhance its economic development, reduce poverty, promote social inclusion, and create more employment opportunities. The potential benefits extend to various sectors, with a focus on manufacturing, services, and natural resources, offering South Africa a way to diversify its economy and boost productivity.

In terms of tax revenue, while minor changes are expected in the short term, the medium-term outlook suggests positive impacts due to increased economic activity. Regarding foreign direct investments, South Africa has the potential to become a significant investment hub in Africa, benefiting from increased FDI inflows and strengthening its role in the continent's economy. South Africa's participation in the AfCFTA holds the promise of fostering economic growth, reducing poverty, creating employment opportunities, and boosting trade and investment in the region.

Integration challenges include the potential diversion of focus from intra-African trade due to existing bilateral agreements with countries outside of Africa, such as those in Europe, North America, and China. Additionally, policy restrictions, a challenging regulatory environment, and the termination of Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) with several countries impact South Africa's investment climate. Furthermore, weak institutions, corruption, and difficulties in trading across borders are key issues that need to be addressed. The lack of logistics capacity for intra-African trade is another significant concern, hindering the free flow of goods within the continent. Strategic challenges revolve around the need for comprehensive strategies, infrastructure, financial, and technical assistance to facilitate the entry of smaller businesses into the continental market, ensuring that the benefits of AfCFTA are accessible to a wide range of businesses. This becomes particularly crucial for smaller-scale farmers to compete with larger firms.

Sustainable challenges highlight the importance of environmentally friendly practices in agriculture and production to combat climate change effects. South Africa's vulnerability to rising

temperatures and droughts necessitates a shift towards sustainable development practices. In terms of risks, the endorsement of free movement within the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) carries inherent risks, with potential concerns about undocumented immigration into South Africa due to inadequate resources for identity verification and border management. The absence of bilateral return agreements among African Union member states further raises security issues, emphasizing the need to address these challenges for the successful implementation of AfCFTA (Fafchamps, 2003; Bisong, 2022). Climate change poses a dual threat to AfCFTA, impacting comparative advantages and international trade dynamics, particularly in sectors like agriculture, tourism, and infrastructure. The vulnerability of African infrastructure to climate change, as identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, underscores the importance of incorporating climate considerations, especially intellectual property rights related to green technology, in the second phase of AfCFTA negotiations.

The act of signing the AfCFTA agreement served political purposes, uniting the continent, but the effective implementation may incur substantial short-term fiscal adjustments, particularly for vulnerable countries. Managing these costs is crucial to prevent macroeconomic instability and ensure widespread support for the continental trade-integration project (Fofack, 2019). Discontinuity is identified as a risk to AfCFTA, emphasizing the need for sustained governance reforms to ensure institutional stability and regional integration. Political dedication during democratic transitions is crucial for successful regional and continental integration, and the commitment to economic integration should transcend political considerations (IMF, 2019; Fofack, 2020). The stability of Africa's security and development nexus is contingent on conflict prevention, recognizing that intrastate conflicts often arise from socioeconomic factors. National development strategies addressing economic and social conditions, promoting good governance, and preserving the environment are crucial for steering countries toward sustainable economic growth and mitigating the risk of conflicts (Fofack, 2020).

Growth volatility in African trade is highlighted, with primary commodities and natural resources continuing to dominate, exposing the region to risks associated with fluctuations in commodity prices. The long-term decline in the terms of trade for commodities adds to the challenges faced by African economies (Fofack, 2015, 2019). Regional integration, driven by national economic reforms focusing on trade and investment liberalization, is a key objective for developing nations like South Africa. The AfCFTA plays a pivotal role in addressing challenges by establishing a unified market for the free movement of goods, services, and people across the continent, aiming to boost intra-African commerce and foster economic growth, prosperity, good governance, peace, and security (Phillips, 2004; Aniche, 2020; Mude, 2020).

Implementing reforms, such as reducing trade barriers, enhancing infrastructure, and enacting new regulations, is crucial for successful regional integration. Collaboration among governments, regional organizations, corporations, and civil society is necessary to unlock the potential benefits, requiring a combination of policy reforms, infrastructure development, institutional enhancements, and political commitment (Jerome & Nabena, 2016). According to Albert (2019), comprehensive national strategies reform in infrastructure, finance, and technology is imperative for South Africa to enable businesses, including smaller-scale farmers, to seize opportunities presented by the AfCFTA. Assistance to smaller-scale farmers in integrating into export markets is vital to ensure their continued existence amid competition from larger firms. Fofack (2020) emphasizes the proactive implementation of complementary structural and policy reforms to unlock the potential of African nations, addressing long-term peace and security, supply-side constraints, and short-term fiscal adjustment costs associated with the trade agreement. These measures are essential for steering the continental trade-integration project toward successful implementation and achieving mutually beneficial outcomes for continental trade integration.

The AfCFTA presents substantial opportunities but also challenges, including development disparities, infrastructure gaps, and potential disruptions in trade patterns. South Africa's pivotal role in the region, with its developed economy and industrial capabilities, underscores the need to understand the agreement's impact comprehensively. Addressing challenges requires attention to trade liberalization, economic disparities, infrastructure, regulatory harmonization, and political coordination. The broader socioeconomic agenda aims to alleviate poverty, promote economic growth, create jobs, and improve access to education and healthcare, emphasizing the importance of understanding both the opportunities and risks associated with the AfCFTA (Akinkugbe, 2021; Diao & Yanoma, 2003; Schiff & Winters, 2003; Levin et al., 2023; Mude, 2020).

The World Bank outlines key strategies for optimizing the benefits of the AfCFTA, emphasizing the importance of detailed commitments, effective implementation, and complementary initiatives to eliminate trade barriers. Despite reductions in statutory tariffs, persistent barriers, including nontariff barriers and weak investment and competition rules, hinder continental economic integration. Various scenarios highlight the significance of reducing trade barriers for substantial welfare gains across the continent. The real income gains for South Africa under different scenarios underscore the importance of addressing trade barriers within the AfCFTA to realize economic benefits (World Bank, 2020). Economic cooperation is seen as a vital contributor to political stability, minimizing conflicts over resources and fostering mutual interests. However, the ambitious goals of the AfCFTA face challenges from existing wars, coups, and instability across

Africa. Political stability is crucial for the flow of goods, services, and investment, with the closure of borders hindering trade growth. Wars in Africa pose threats to regional stability, impacting trade flows, economic structures, and established trade patterns. The responsibility for peacekeeping lies with regional organizations and the African Union, emphasizing the complex landscape the AfCFTA operates in. Conflict prevention, driven by national development strategies addressing socioeconomic factors, is pivotal for sustained growth and successful economic integration (Erasmus, 2023).

However, effective implementation and comprehensive strategies are essential to realize these benefits fully. The AfCFTA offers a historic opportunity for South Africa to play a pivotal role in the transformation and development of the African continent. The main findings, conclusions, and recommendations are discussed in Chapter 5, as well as the recommendations of this study.

4.10 Summary

Chapter 4 presented the analysis and interpretation of our secondary data. South Africa's active involvement in the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is of paramount importance for the success of this extensive agreement. South Africa's participation in the AfCFTA has the potential to contribute to increased intra-African trade, investment, and economic growth, thereby enhancing regional integration and prosperity. However, the effective implementation of the agreement is crucial and presents various challenges and little risk. The AfCFTA offers numerous opportunities for South Africa, including intra-trade expansion, enhanced export-import dynamics, income gains, poverty reduction, employment generation, productivity improvement, increased tax revenue, and foreign direct investments. These opportunities, coupled with gender-sensitive policies, could lead to diversification of the economy and poverty alleviation. South Africa's active participation in the AfCFTA is expected to influence the impression of the agreement among African nations and international stakeholders, potentially impacting future regional projects and cooperation. South Africa has a historic opportunity to play a pivotal role in the transformation and development of the African continent through its engagement in the AfCFTA.

Strategic challenges involve both internal and external threats. The AfCFTA's success could diminish South Africa's existing bilateral trade arrangements with regions like Europe, North America, and China, diverting attention from intra-African trade. Complicated policies, regulatory ambiguity, and the termination of Bilateral Investment Treaties with certain countries hinder the investment climate. Corruption, along with difficulties in trading across borders and electricity supply, further complicate matters, affecting foreign direct investment (FDI). South Africa's AfCFTA implementation is riddled with strategic, integration, and sustainability challenges, along with potential risks. Successfully addressing these issues is vital to unlocking the agreement's economic potential and fostering regional integration while mitigating associated risks. Careful management and collaboration among stakeholders are essential for achieving AfCFTA's goals in South Africa. Integration challenges centre on enabling a broader range of businesses, including small enterprises and farmers, to benefit from AfCFTA. National strategies are needed in infrastructure, finance, and technology to facilitate their participation in the continental market and compete effectively with larger firms.

Sustainability challenges relate to climate change, as rising temperatures lead to droughts affecting agriculture and public health. AfCFTA promotes eco-friendly practices and the reduction of carbon emissions to address these challenges and align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The introduction of free movement under AfCFTA presents risks, particularly

concerning the Free Movement of Persons (FMP). South Africa may face security and immigration issues due to undocumented immigrants arriving from countries without proper registration and border management systems. The endorsement of free movement within the AfCFTA raises concerns about potential undocumented immigration into South Africa, emphasizing the need for resources and bilateral agreements among AU member states (Fafchamps, 2003; Bisong, 2022).

Climate change threatens AfCFTA through altered comparative advantages and infrastructure vulnerabilities, requiring consideration in intellectual property rights negotiations for green technology. Growth volatility in African trade, driven by primary commodities, poses risks due to fluctuations in prices and a sustained decline in terms of trade (Fofack, 2015, 2019). While signing the AfCFTA served political purposes, effective implementation may incur short-term fiscal adjustments, particularly for vulnerable countries, impacting macroeconomic stability (Fofack, 2019). Discontinuity poses a risk to AfCFTA, emphasizing the need for sustained governance reforms to ensure institutional stability and regional integration during political transitions (IMF, 2019; Fofack, 2020). The security and development nexus in Africa relies on conflict prevention through national strategies addressing socioeconomic factors, promoting good governance, and preserving the environment for sustainable economic growth (Fofack, 2020).

Addressing these risks is crucial for the successful implementation of AfCFTA in South Africa. The main findings, conclusions, and recommendations are discussed in Chapter 5, as well as the recommendations of this study. The pursuit of regional integration, particularly exemplified by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), is driven by national economic reforms with a focus on trade and investment liberalization. South Africa, among other developing nations, recognizes the imperative to enhance competitiveness, attract foreign direct investment, and support indigenous companies. The AfCFTA aims to establish a unified market, promoting the free movement of goods, services, and people across Africa, with the overarching goal of fostering economic growth, prosperity, good governance, and security (Phillips, 2004; Aniche, 2020; Mude, 2020).

Critical to the success of regional integration are comprehensive national strategies reform, particularly in areas such as infrastructure, finance, and technology. South Africa must implement these reforms to enable businesses, including smaller-scale farmers, to capitalize on opportunities presented by the AfCFTA. Collaborative efforts involving governments, regional organizations, corporations, and civil society are essential to unlock the potential benefits of regional integration, encompassing policy reforms, infrastructure development, institutional enhancements, and unwavering political commitment (Albert, 2019; Jerome & Nabena, 2016; Fofack, 2020).

AfCFTA presents both significant opportunities and challenges. Economic disparities, infrastructure gaps, and potential disruptions in trade patterns are acknowledged as challenges, with South Africa's role as a key player in the region underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of the agreement's impact. Addressing challenges involves tackling issues related to trade liberalization, economic disparities, infrastructure, regulatory harmonization, and political coordination. The broader socioeconomic agenda of the AfCFTA aims to alleviate poverty, promote economic growth, and improve access to education and healthcare. Strategies outlined by the World Bank emphasize the importance of detailed commitments, effective implementation, and complementary initiatives to eliminate trade barriers for optimal benefits. Additionally, the link between economic cooperation and political stability is recognized, highlighting the challenges posed by existing wars, coups, and instability across Africa. Political stability is deemed crucial for the success of the AfCFTA, emphasizing the complex landscape it operates in and the necessity of conflict prevention through national development strategies that address socioeconomic factors.

CHAPTER 5 MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the findings of the critical literature review in chapters 2 and the finding in chapter 4. The first section focuses on the conclusions concerning the critical literature and the finding. The second section is the recommendations that were informed by the findings of this study.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

The assessment's findings come with both underestimations and overestimations. It may underestimate AfCFTA's positive impacts by not considering informal trade and dynamic gains, while possibly overestimating its impacts by neglecting costs associated with non-tariff barrier reduction and transitional challenges.

5.3 ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The study's success is determined by whether and to what extent its objectives were met.

The primary objective was:

This research project's primary objective is to assess the opportunities, challenges and risks taken for South Africa for participating in the AfCFTA.

The following secondary objectives were formulated to achieve the primary objective:

- To determine the reform South Africa can take to ensure its success in this agreement?
- To determine the factors that could potentially hinder South Africa from realizing the maximum benefits of the agreement?
- To make recommendations based on the study's findings and conclude the research.

5.4 EXPECTATION SUMMARY

To address the opportunities and challenges and risk associated with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the researcher identified the socio-economic and regional integration as the key factors.

The AfCFTA represents a significant departure from the prevailing global trend of uncertainty and retrenchment from multilateralism. This ambitious regional trade agreement aims to establish a unified market for goods, services, and investments while facilitating the movement of people to enhance economic integration and the socio-economic integration across the African continent.

AfCFTA relies on three key instruments, including gradual tariff reduction, addressing non-tariff barriers, and trade facilitation measures, all aimed at stimulating intracontinental trade and economic integration. The assessment underscores several critical priorities for South African policymakers. While tariff reduction seems straightforward, implementing non-tariff and trade facilitation measures is challenging, requiring significant national-level policy reforms. Achieving the full potential of AfCFTA hinges on ambitious liberalization and comprehensive implementation. Despite the opportunities AfCFTA offers for South African development, its implementation poses a formidable challenge, particularly with non-tariff and trade facilitation measures. The agreement must address deep-seated structural and socio-economic inequalities among South African states, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The identified opportunities for South African entrepreneurs in advancing industrialization align with the broader objectives of the AfCFTA (DTIC, 2020c). Additionally, the call for inclusive economic growth and job creation in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic emphasizes the importance of resilience and adaptability. The AfCFTA emerges as a pivotal framework, offering the potential to establish a robust foundation for equitable economic growth and strengthen South Africa's position in intra-African trade and regional supply chains (DTIC, 2021a).
- Africa's economic history reflects fragmented national economies that primarily export raw materials, necessitating a focus on diversification and value addition to achieve economic transformation. The political momentum behind AfCFTA is on the rise, with over 54 countries signing the agreement. This promises to significantly enhance trade flows and economic advantages, but challenges remain. Effective implementation and addressing unique challenges are essential.
- The AfCFTA offers substantial opportunities for South Africa, such as the potential for robust economic growth and increased intra-African trade. The removal of tariffs on most of goods supports industrialization, job creation, and economic diversification. Additionally, the agreement aims to attract foreign direct investment by aligning trade and

investment policies among member countries. Despite these advantages, challenges in effective implementation and compliance exist, impacting not only South Africa but also intra-AfCFTA trade. Issues like inadequate infrastructure, capacity and skill gaps, and uneven development among member countries pose obstacles. The potential for trade imbalances and disruptions due to political and geopolitical factors adds complexity. Overcoming these challenges through collaboration, infrastructure development, and diplomatic efforts is vital for realizing the full potential of the AfCFTA.

- In South Africa, addressing the infrastructure deficit is crucial for leveraging the growth potential of the AfCFTA. This deficit encompasses both physical and digital infrastructure, historically hindering economic growth and intra-African trade. Overcoming these challenges is essential for realizing economies of scale and attracting investment within the continent or external. The focus on infrastructure extends to trade-enabling sectors like energy, transportation, and logistics, with the power sector alone estimated to impact South African's GDP. Closing these infrastructure gaps is pivotal for industrial productivity, efficient distribution channels, and successful AfCFTA implementation. The historical burden of this deficit, particularly in cross-border infrastructure, remains a constraint on growth and trade in the short term. The agriculture sector, for example, highlights the potential benefits of reliable transportation and logistics in connecting regions, reducing post-harvest losses, and boosting productivity. The AfCFTA has renewed interest in infrastructure development as both a productivity enhancer and an attractive asset class for investors seeking stable, long-term returns that can foster regional trade, and address supply-side constraints during the AfCFTA implementation.
- South Africa, as a major African economy, plays a pivotal role in the agreement's success. Historically, weak infrastructure, high tariffs, and inadequate trade facilitation limited intra-African trade. AfCFTA seeks to rectify these issues by establishing a single market, enhancing trade relations, and improving business environments. This research aims to bridge gaps in understanding AfCFTA's impact on intra and inter-African trade for South Africa, valuable for policymakers, academics, and practitioners involved in African trade and economic development. Historically, weak infrastructure, high tariffs, and inadequate trade facilitation limited intra-African trade. AfCFTA seeks to rectify these issues by establishing a single market, enhancing trade relations, and improving business environments. This research aims to bridge gaps in understanding AfCFTA's impact on intra and inter-African trade for South Africa, valuable for policymakers, academics, and practitioners involved in African trade and economic development.

- Since 2010, South Africa has been a member of BRICS, a group that serves as a bridge between developed and developing nations, with the shared goal of advancing humanity's development and fostering a fairer world. South Africa's priorities are in harmony with these principles, emphasizing the importance of equitable partnerships and averting the marginalization of both the African continent and the global South. During the 2023 BRICS summit in Johannesburg, an important announcement was made regarding the group's expansion to include six new nations. Notably, this expansion includes Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, standing alongside China, the world's foremost oil importer within BRICS. This inclusion introduces an intriguing dynamic into the mix. Furthermore, there is a growing interest in exploring the possibility of creating a common currency within BRICS. This idea has garnered attention from experts like Professor Parsons, who is associated with the NWU School of Business & Governance and serves as a Special Policy Advisor to Business Unity South Africa (BUSA). He is among the advisors contributing to a study examining the wisdom of South Africa entering into a monetary union with BRICS. This study reflects South Africa's commitment to regional integration through initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which could potentially lead to the emergence of an African monetary union in the near future. This choice requires careful consideration, as it will necessitate a significant investment of time and effort. And His recommendation and advise to the South African leaders is to reconsider the spared and for South Africans to focuses on the next-door agreement.
- These statements emphasize the profound impact of South Africa's involvement in the AfCFTA, extending beyond immediate economic considerations. The country's participation is anticipated to shape the trajectory of future regional projects, foster cooperation, and contribute to trust-building initiatives. Furthermore, there is a recognized potential for substantial growth in intra-African trade, increased investment, and enhanced regional integration, aligning seamlessly with South Africa's broader economic and developmental goals, as indicated by the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition (DTIC) in 2021.
- The AfCFTA is viewed as a catalyst for creating opportunities for South African entrepreneurs, particularly in the realms of heightened industrialization and increased production capacity. This aligns strategically with the goals outlined in the AfCFTA (DTIC, 2020c). The belief that the AfCFTA provides a comprehensive framework for fostering

equitable economic growth is underlined, further solidifying South Africa's pivotal role in intra-African trade and regional supply chains, as outlined by the DTIC in 2021a.

- In addition to economic considerations, Mr. Wamkele Mene advocates for a unified set of trade and investment rules within Africa. This emphasizes the need for a cohesive regulatory framework, which, when implemented, is expected to play a vital role in promoting stability and enhancing economic interactions across the continent. Furthermore, the significance of linking Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to digital platforms is underscored. This highlights the recognition of technology as a critical enabler for SMEs and emphasizes the potential for digital platforms to elevate their market access and competitiveness. The economic development potential of properly sequencing and calibrating tariff liberalization is also emphasized, signifying a nuanced approach to trade policies for optimal economic benefits (DTIC, 2021b). These initiatives and perspectives collectively portray a multifaceted approach to South Africa's participation in the AfCFTA, encompassing economic growth, regulatory coherence, technological integration, and strategic trade policy considerations.
- In light of these factors, South Africa's participation in the AfCFTA could influence the impression of this agreement among other African nations and international stakeholders. It could lead to a reassessment of the commitment to regional integration and the continent's economic growth, impacting future regional projects, cooperation, and trust-building.
- Emphasize the need for South Africa and other participating nations to prioritize comprehensive national reforms, particularly in infrastructure, finance, and technology. These reforms are essential to create an enabling environment for businesses, including smaller-scale farmers, to fully leverage the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA.
- Encourage collaboration among governments, regional organizations, corporations, and civil society. This collaborative effort should focus on aligning policies, enhancing infrastructure, and creating supportive institutional frameworks to unlock the potential benefits of regional integration. Strengthening partnerships across these sectors is crucial for successful implementation and sustainability of the AfCFTA.
- Acknowledge the challenges faced by smaller-scale farmers in the competitive landscape and recommend targeted support measures. This could include assistance programs

aimed at helping them integrate into export markets and strategies to diversify their production to effectively contend with larger, more aggressive firms.

- Recognize the diversity among participating nations in terms of development stages and economic capacities. Advocate for flexibility in the implementation of AfCFTA, allowing countries to tailor their approaches and pace of integration to their specific circumstances while maintaining the overall objectives of the agreement.
- Highlight the importance of proactive implementation of complementary structural and policy reforms to address potential risks associated with the AfCFTA. This includes measures to ensure long-term peace and security, address supply-side constraints, and mitigate short-term fiscal adjustment costs. Encourage continuous monitoring and adjustment of strategies to navigate unforeseen challenges.
- Recommend efforts to enhance public awareness and participation in the AfCFTA. This involves transparent communication about the benefits and potential impacts of the agreement, ensuring that stakeholders are well-informed and engaged in the implementation process. Public support is vital for the success and sustainability of regional integration initiatives.
- Conduct a thorough impact assessment of the AfCFTA, with a specific focus on economic disparities, infrastructure challenges, and potential disruptions in trade patterns. This assessment should consider South Africa's pivotal role, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the agreement's effects on various aspects, including trade liberalization, economic disparities, infrastructure development, and regulatory harmonization.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to address challenges associated with the AfCFTA, encompassing measures to mitigate economic disparities, bridge infrastructure gaps, and prevent potential disruptions in trade patterns. This strategy should include targeted policies for trade liberalization, economic development, and regulatory alignment, fostering an inclusive approach that considers the broader socioeconomic agenda of poverty alleviation and improved access to education and healthcare.
- Foster collaboration among governments, regional organizations, corporations, and civil society to collectively address challenges and optimize the benefits of the AfCFTA. Strong political will and sustained commitment to regional integration are essential, requiring a

collaborative effort to overcome obstacles related to trade liberalization, infrastructure development, and regulatory harmonization.

- Implement detailed commitments to eliminate trade barriers as outlined by the World Bank, emphasizing the thoroughness and scope of commitments made during negotiations. Effectively implementing AfCFTA commitments on the ground, particularly with respect to the reduction of nontariff barriers, is crucial for the success of the agreement and should be a priority for participating nations.
- Recognize the link between economic cooperation and political stability and prioritize conflict prevention measures. Address existing wars, coups, and instability across Africa, as they pose significant challenges to the success of the AfCFTA. Encourage peacekeeping initiatives led by regional organizations and the African Union, emphasizing the role of open borders in fostering trade growth and stability.
- Establish mechanisms for continued monitoring and adaptation of strategies based on evolving challenges and opportunities. Given the dynamic nature of the African economic and political landscape, a flexible approach is crucial for the sustained success of the AfCFTA. Regular assessments and adjustments will enhance the ability to navigate unforeseen challenges and optimize the benefits of regional integration.
- Effective implementation is a key challenge that needs to be addressed, as noted by Minister Patel (DTIC, 2020b).

5.6 Suggestions for further research

- This research needs to be performed on a wider scale in Africa with each country assessment for opportunities and challenges and risk.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This research sought to investigate the prospects, hurdles, and risks faced by South Africa. The comprehensive review of relevant literature, coupled with the study's findings, successfully addressed both primary and secondary research objectives. The concluding chapter evaluates the fulfilment of each secondary research objective and concludes with recommendations based on the research findings. The insights provided by the World Bank study (2020) are crucial to our findings, as they offer valuable data and comprehensive analysis to support the potential benefits of the AfCFTA's progression for South Africa.

5.8 Summary

The study focused on exploring opportunities, challenges, and risks in South Africa. Through a thorough literature review and research findings, it successfully addressed primary and secondary research objectives. The final chapter evaluates the fulfilment of secondary research objectives and provides recommendations based on the study's findings. The World Bank research (2020) insights are critical to our conclusions since they give significant data and extensive analysis to support the potential benefits of the AfCFTA's advancement for South Africa.

AFRICA

*When you have acquired a taste for the dust,
and the scent of our first rain,
You're hooked for life on Africa,
and you'll not be right again.
Until you can watch the setting moon
and hear the jackals bark,
And know they are around you
waiting in the dark.*

*When you long to see the elephants
or hear the coucal's song,
When the moonrise sets your blood on fire,
then you've been away too long.
It is time to cut the traces loose,
and let your heart go free,
Beyond that far horizon
where your spirit yearns to be.*

*Africa is waiting – come!
Since you have touched the open sky
And learned to love the rustling grass
and the wild fish eagle's cry.
You'll always hunger for the bush;
for the lion's rasping roar,
To camp at last beneath the stars
and to be at peace once more.*

Author unknown

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APPENDICES A: ETHICS APPROVAL



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-484
Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

28 July 2023

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)** on, 28/07/2023 the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: The African Continental Free Trade Area: Unravelling the Opportunities and Challenges for South Africa

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof R Parsons

Student: M Elmardi (28923510)

N W U - 0 0 7 4 9 - 2 3 - A 4

Institution Study Number Year Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type:

Commencement date: 28/07/2023

Risk: Minimal

Expiry date: 28/07/2024

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

•

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*

n the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:

- *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
- *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
- *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
 - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
 - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
 - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
 - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Crizelle Els
Acting Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

APPENDICES B: SOLEMN DECLARATION



NWU Higher Degrees Administration

SOLEMN DECLARATION AND PERMISSION TO SUBMIT

1. Solemn declaration by student

I, **Maye Elmardi**

declare herewith that the thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation entitled (exact registered/approved title),

South Africa and the African Continental Free Trade Area: Assessing the opportunities and risks.

which I herewith submit to the North-West University is in compliance/partial compliance with the requirements set for the degree:

Master of Business Administration

is my own work, has been text-edited in accordance with the requirements and has not already been submitted to any other university.

LATE SUBMISSION: If a thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation of a student is submitted after the deadline for submission, the period available for examination is limited. No guarantee can therefore be given (should the examiner reports be positive) that the degree will be conferred at the next applicable graduation ceremony. It may also imply that the student would have to re-register for the following academic year.

Ethics number: **0074823A4**

ORCID: **0 0 0 0 - 0 0 0 1 - 8 8 3 9 - 8 0 9 X**

Signature of Student:

mayeyassin

University Number:

2 8 9 2 3 5 1 0

Signed on this **27** day of **November** of 20 **23**

2. Permission to submit and solemn declaration by supervisor/promoter

The undersigned declares that the thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation:

- Complies with the A-rules and the technical requirements provided for in the Manual for Master's and Doctoral studies and in faculty rules;
- Has been checked by me for plagiarism (by making use of Turnitin software for example) and a satisfactory report has been obtained, and;
- That the work was language edited before submission for examination.

Faculty specific requirements as per A-rules: 1.3.2, 433, 4.2.4, 4.10.4, 5.3.2

- Complies with regards to faculty rules on submission or acceptance by an accredited scientific journal;
- Complies with regards to faculty rules on peer reviewed conference proceedings;
- The student is hereby granted permission to submit his/her mini-dissertation/ dissertation/thesis for examination.

Signatures of supervisor(s) and Promoter(s): (only compulsory in cases where there are co- or assistant- supervisor(s/promoters)

Raymond Parsons
Digitally signed by Raymond Parsons
Date: 2023.11.28 15:53:44 +02'00'

Johannes Coetzee
Digitally signed by Johannes Coetzee
Date: 2023.11.29 12:10:52 +02'00'

Assistant -Supervisor
Assistant-Promoter

APPENDICES C: DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
MAFIKENG CAMPUS

Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

Tel: +27 18 3892308

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E-mail: David.Isabirye@nwu.ac.za

Internet: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

24th November 2023

This serves to confirm that I have read and edited the MBA Mini-Dissertation of Dr M. Elmardi (student number 28923510) entitled:

"South Africa and the African continental free trade area: assessing the opportunities and risks".

The candidate corrected the language errors identified to the satisfaction of the supervisor.

The document presentation is of an acceptable academic and linguistic standard.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Isabirye'.

.....
Prof D.A. Isabirye
Language Editor,
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences.

APPENDICES D: TURNITIN REPORT



Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

DECLARATION WITH REGARDS TO SIMILARITY REPORT

Turnitin (TI) is the plagiarism- prevention service of choice for the North-West University. A thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation/article is submitted to the TI website, to be checked for similarities in the document by comparing submitted papers to several databases/repositories on the World Wide Web. It is important to note that TI does NOT identify plagiarism – only similarities. The aim is to draw students' attention to these similarities so that they improve their academic writing style and reporting of sources before submission for examination.

The undersigned declares that the thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation/article with the title mentioned below, was submitted, assessed and that the issues (if any) have been addressed, and that a satisfactory report has been obtained.

South Africa and the African Continental Free Trade Area: Assessing the opportunities and risks

Title of dissertation/mini-dissertation/thesis

MYA. Elmardi

RWK Parsons

Student (Initials and surname)

Supervisor/Promoter (Initials and surname)

28923510 Master of Business Administration

JC Coetzee

Student number and degree

Co-supervisor

Declaration with regards to similarity report
File reference: 7.1.11.3.5

APPENDICES D: TURNITIN REPORT

28923510:South_Africa_and_the_African_continental_free_t...

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