INTRA-AFRICA TRADE INTEGRATION AND CONTINENTAL ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

RHULANI ERNEST MAHLAULE
STUDENT NUMBER: 10932

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Management in Technology and Innovation

at The Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management

Supervisors: J Dickinson, PhD and TL Ngobeni, LLD

2023

Declaration of Authenticity

I declare that the research project, Intra-Africa Trade Integration and Continental Prosperity: Africa beyond the Tactics of the Powerless, is my own work and that each source of information used has been acknowledged by means of the Harvard Referencing System. This thesis has not been submitted before for any other research project, degree or examination at any University.

(Signature of student)

04 AUGUST 2023

(Date)

Da Vinci Copyright Information

I agree that I have read and I understand the copyright notice.

(Signature of student)

06 DECEMBER 2022

(Date)

Abstract

The developed world has long demonstrated that there is collective leverage to be obtained in countries of the same continent, putting aside any differences they may have and optimising those opportunities that can be achieved through working together as a united economic and socio-political force. This is a function of countries that maintain the necessary levels of mutual trust as evidenced by electing to trade more with one another before considering other continents. This practice usually contributes to improved levels of economic growth and political stability. Several studies refer to the high levels of intra-trade in the European Union and Asia, amongst others, but the question that remains unanswered is why Africa, with all its natural resources, continues to lag behind. This research, therefore, aims to identify what needs to be done for Africa to realise its full potential. The current low levels of an estimated 12% to 18% intra-trade in the African continent require concerted efforts to improve financial outcomes to attain levels on par or even above those of its counterparts, such as the European Union (EU) and Asia, that are in excess of 60%. This study aims to identify the constraints that contribute towards the current sub-optimal intra-Africa trade activities and the recommended solutions in seeking to address these issues. The qualitative research methodology was determined to be most suitable because the study is based on real-life data and experiences from the sample size of eight respondents who are leaders and experts within the intra-Africa trade environment. The sampling method selected for this study is nonprobability sampling. The key findings indicate that due consideration should be given to the fact that for the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement to be scalable towards the realisation of the intended outcomes, the adoption and customisation of identified catalytic digital solutions will play a central role in enabling the process. The findings point to a conceptual framework for a continental social compact where all key stake holders put their trust deficit pre-occupations aside and work collaboratively. The study recommendations are that in achieving the lofty am-

bitions of growing the economy of the continent, the key stakeholders comprising business, government, academia, social partners and labour should be willing to embrace the digital era; which, in this context, is underpinned by the Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies, such as blockchain, as a platform to enable the chosen e-commerce-based solutions.

Key words

Intra-Africa trade, Regional Economic Communities, African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), International trade theories, Blockchain, Pan-Africanism

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

AEC	Africa Economic Community
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
Afreximbank	African Export-Import Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BIAT	Building Intra-African Trade
CET	Common External Tariff
DLT	Distributed Ledger Technology
DFI	Development Funding Institution
EUEES	European Union Entry-Exit System
EEC	European Economic Community
ECOSOCC	Economic and Social Council
FTA	Free Trade Area
IAT	Intra-Africa trade
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PIDA	Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreement
REC	Regional Economic Community
ROI	Return on Investment
SACU	South African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TFTA	Tripartite Free Trade Area
TIPS	Technology, Innovation, People, Systems
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA or ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organisation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the study

Continental integration is important in facilitating trade; intra-continental trade is good for development of the continent and countries that constitute it. Despite this view, African states still conduct limited trade amongst themselves. For example, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2021) reports that intra-Africa continental trade constitutes between 12% and 18% of Africa's total trade. UNCTAD (2021) further juxtaposes these trade levels with the European Union (EU) at 66.9%, Asia and Oceania at 63.8%, and the Americas at 44.4%. These statistics indicate that Africa is lagging on its internal trade relative to other regions. Meanwhile Africa is endowed with a variety of resources necessary for the production of goods that can be traded. As a result, the continent imports goods made from raw materials emanating from within. This dependence on external markets exposes the African continent to crises and shocks in other parts of the world, as shown by the impact of the COVID-19 on global value chains. The Africa Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) (2018) defines intra-Africa trade as the trade in goods and services between African countries and the flow of goods and services between Africa and Africans in the Diaspora.

Steinberg (2001) describes African integration and its related trade activities as an anticipated and existing political, cultural and socio-economic and geographical solidarity amongst the citizens and the states in the African continent that engender a sense of belonging, or Pan-Africanism. A central feature of intra-Africa trade, which has had some adverse implications for its effect on economic growth and development, is its high external alignment and orientation characterised by low trade levels.

The World Bank's (2011) report on African competitiveness identifies factors that limit the ability of African countries to trade with one another, including transportation modes and trade facilitation regimes contributing towards the constraints. Transport costs in Africa are regarded as the highest in the world. Behar and Venables (2011) support this observation and they further link the high costs of transportation to poor logistical infrastructure, more so for landlocked countries, which is characterised by inadequacies in customs, information technology and telecommunications, amongst others. According to the African Development Bank (AfDB) (2018), Africa has lost about 25% in growth in the past two decades due to inadequate infrastructure which negatively affects trade through its impact on costs.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2020) the decline in the value of total intra-African trade which fell from US$156 billion in 2018 to an estimated US$147.8 billion in 2019, representing a decline of 5.23%. However, the thriving trade for manufactured goods and services in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region tempered the extent of the decline (IMF, 2020). What could be noted in the profile of intra-African trade is the increasingly enabling role of regional champions in North, Southern, West, East, and Central Africa in promoting cross-border trade on the continent (IMF, 2020).

The IMF (2020) further suggests that the African continent is the destination of 26% of South Africa's total exports, and the source of about 10.7% of its total imports, with the leading import commodity being crude oil. Following the decline in oil prices, South Africa's oil imports from the rest of the continent fell by 16% to US$5.6 billion in 2019, contributing to a net decline in its total intra-African trade. South Africa imports nearly 55% of its crude oil from the continent, with Nigeria accounting for more than 70% thereof. Nigeria is also the largest global supplier of crude oil to South Africa, ahead of Saudi Arabia. Botswana is South Africa's largest bilateral regional trade partner.

Other key regional trading partners include Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The African Union (AU) has long been aware of the low levels of intra-Africa trade. Hence in 2012, it adopted the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-Africa Trade (BIAT) resolution. The BIAT became the basis on which the decision was made to move the regulation of African trade away from regional economic communities (RECs) to the AU by the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Hence the first preamble to the AfCFTA agreement (2019), pays homage to the BIAT.

According to Article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement (2019), the overall mandate of the AfCFTA is to create a single continental market with a population of about 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately US$ 3.4 trillion. This is currently beyond the ability of the prevailing eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the AU. Chingono and Nakana (2009) cite incompatible economic and political systems, uneven benefits of integration, lack of adherence to agreed trade protocols, institutional incapacity, infrastructure, financial and technical challenges and poor economic and political governance as some of the limitations of the RECs resulting in their inability to attain continent wide trade impact. This failure of RECs to promote trade has led to the status quo, which has resulted in negative implications on Africa remaining under-developed and characterised by sustained inequality, unemployment and poverty for the majority of its population.

Article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement (2019) further highlights that the AfCFTA is not an end in itself, rather it is a milestone in the creation of the African Economic Community (AEC) as contemplated in the Abuja Treaty (1991). In this regard, one of the objectives of the AfCFTA is to lay the basis for the creation of an African customs union in due course. The effect of the role of the AfCFTA is that African trade should be facilitated and regulated in the

context of regional integration rather than as a stand-alone initiative. Thus, African trade and regional integration are interlinked.

By 2020, 43 countries had deposited their ratification instruments with the depository (Chairman of the African Commission) together with the 54 countries that had signed the consolidated text of agreement establishing the AfCFTA. Based on the level of ratification the threshold of 22 states has been exceeded and this demonstrates the level of commitment by African states. This bodes well for the success of the AfCFTA as it demonstrates political will, among others.

The AfCFTA is a consolidation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) and other regional free trade areas, and is expected to create the largest free trade area with a single market of over 1 billion people in Africa. According to Article 23 of the AfCFTA agreement (2019), the agreement comes into force 30 days after the 22nd instrument of ratification is deposited with the designated depository for this purpose, who would be the seating Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC). According to AU End of Term Report (2017-2021), the Commission is currently chaired by His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, who is also the prime minister of the Republic of Chad. The agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019 for the 24 countries that had deposited their instruments of ratification by this date. The operational phase of the AfCFTA was launched during the 12th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union on the AfCFTA in Niamey, Niger on 7 July 2019. Trading under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement was enabled to begin on 1 January 2021; however, no actual trade had yet taken place under the AfCFTA regime by this date. As of May 2022, 43 of the 54 signatories (80%) have deposited their instruments of AfCFTA ratification. According to the Afreximbank (2021), the promotion of intra-African trade is the first pillar of the African Development Bank's fifth strategic plan, informed by the view that intra-Africa trade presents tremendous potential that mitigates against adverse external shocks and global volatility.

1.2. Key objectives of the of the AfCFTA

Article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement (2019), illuminates the following as the main objectives of the Agreement: Firstly, to create a single continental marketplace for goods and services, with free movement of persons, investments and business with the sole aim being to pave a way for the establishment and acceleration of the Continental and the African Customs Union. Secondly, to improve competitiveness at the enterprise and industry level through exploiting opportunities for scale production, continental market access and better allocation of resources. Thirdly, to expand intra-African trade through improved coordination and harmonisation of trade liberalisation, facilitation regimes and instruments across Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and across Africa in general. Lastly, to resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships whilst expediting the regional and continental integration processes.

According to Sow (2018), the historic AfCFTA aims to unite participating countries into a single trading market leading to one of the largest free trade zones in the world since the World Trade Organization (WTO) was established in 1995. It can therefore be expected that the free trade zone should contribute towards coordinating and improving trade activities amongst African states. This is an important observation if one considers that Schiff and Winters (2003) state that identification of best partners is important in successful intra-trade while keeping in mind that the natural traditional partner is not necessarily the best partner. Sow (2018) suggests that the AfCFTA is being implemented in parallel with the Building Intra-African Trade (BIAT) Action Plan, which aims to address intra-African trade constraints and challenges in relation to seven priority policy clusters: trade policy restructuring, free trade enablement, economic health, trade-related infrastructure, trade finance, trade information, and market integration.

It can be opined that given the reality that globalisation may not always take into consideration the fact that there are historical injustices that may have

contributed to unequal power relations between different economies in the world, it is left to each economy to compete at the same level as those who perpetuated the inequalities in the past. This may explain in part why the African economy is still operating at lower levels coupled by heightened levels of dependency syndrome including reliance on international loans and donor funding. International aid consists of long-term loans repayable in foreign currency, grants and "soft loans" repayable in local currency, sale of surplus products for "local currency" payments, and most importantly, technical assistance which is one of the most critical parts of aid to underdeveloped countries. Some international donor aid may come with conditions that may make it difficult for African governments to implement their own economic policies and priorities. This suggests that concerted efforts are necessary to develop the African continent's economies in keeping with other developed economies around the world.

Against this backdrop, the study explores knowledge in relation to the dynamics of intra-Africa trade and in the context of regional integration in Africa. It seeks to establish the constraints to intra-Africa trade, and to develop strategies to unlock these for increased investment attraction and shared prosperity for all Africans. In keeping with its objectives, the study takes an integrated approach in not only evaluating the current status of intra-Africa trade, but also the anticipated trade significance such as social and economic impact of intra-Africa trade. The integral role and efforts made by respective governments to create an enabling environment for all key stakeholders who could contribute in the development of intra-Africa trade is taken into consideration. This research further seeks to contribute towards such an outcome by examining feasible African solutions to be implemented by Africans themselves, including assessment of both constraints and enablers for intra-African trade. The rationale of the study is to provide an in-depth insight in determining the current low levels of intra-Africa trade, the impact of such levels to the future of the African economy and the socio-

economic impact to its population. The study also investigates the importance of inclusive stakeholder approach underpinned by the appropriate and scalable innovative digital solutions and advancing recommendations thereto.

1.3 Ontology

Blaikie (2010) defines ontology as a system of belief that reflects interpretation by an individual about what constitutes a fact. The candidate is, amongst others, a director of companies internationally and chairs several boards of directors. He continues to serve in organisations that have taken a keen interest in expanding their footprint into the African continent and beyond, in sectors such as technology, international trade and investment facilitation, renewable energy, education and infrastructure development. Such leadership responsibilities include, inter alia, interacting with different stakeholders internationally comprising high commissioners, ministers, presidents, internationally based chambers of commerce, investment promotion agencies, regional institutions, private sector companies and funding institutions. He served as group chairman of the board of directors for an Economic Growth and Development organisation in the Gauteng Province and past president of one of the internationally renowned Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

One of the candidate's several observations that sparked the curiosity to embark on the research was from travelling and speaking in different parts of the continent and realising the extent to which misconceptions and trust deficit still exist between African countries. One such example of the prevailing trust deficit was a comment from some participants during a panel discussion in a conference, to the effect that, "South Africa acts and behaves like a hegemony and allows itself to be used by foreign investors as a platform to perpetuate economic manipulation and exploitation in the continent." Such comments have potential to erode trust and resentment

amongst people of the same continent but can be resolved through research outcomes such as inclusive economic development, amongst others.

It has become evident during these ongoing activities that there are constraints and enablers to be identified if intra-trade and regional integration is to significantly improve in Africa. According to Kgomoeswana (2014), Africans tend to focus excessively on countries that are in their respective regions or speak their preferred language such as the Francophone countries that trade to a large extent with each other rather than with Anglophone countries.

It must, however, be emphasised that there are examples of successful engagements in Africa with some African countries recording the fastest GDP growth in the world. According to the IMF (2017) Ethiopia, Rwanda, Ghana, Tanzania, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Uganda and Niger have averaged between 5.6% and 9.8% GDP growth over the past ten years. Overall growth in Africa was 3.7% in 2017, up from 2.8% in 2016.

Several factors have contributed to this, including stronger commodity prices and faster growth recovery, especially among non-resource-intensive economies, with more African countries appearing on the list of the fastest growing top ten economies in the world. An improved macroeconomic fundamental in some countries underpinned the rebound in the continent's growth, which started during the second half of 2016 and strengthened further in 2017 where Southern African economies witnessed growth accelerate to an estimated 2.8% in 2017, up from 2.2% in 2016.

The IMF (2017) further suggests that Ethiopia's growth was stimulated because of public spending on infrastructure. In Rwanda growth was driven by agriculture and services. Expansion in the Republic of Congo fast-tracked

as new oilfields became operative. Nigeria and Zambia recorded an increase in manufacturing.

The above analysis indicates that there are certain aspects that are already working well and are enabling greater potential to leverage off scalability that should position the continent at large as one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Based on these observations the ontology is therefore a relativism stance because there is no absolute truth to the approach but co-created and dynamic knowledge. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2011), relativism refers to the doctrine that knowledge, truth and morality exist in relation to culture, society or historical context, and are not absolute. The need to address the problem in the study is influenced by the realisation during practical experiences in different parts of the world in general and the African continent in particular, that there is a generally perceived tendency for Africans to draw on countries outside of Africa and import solutions for African problems without appropriate customisation. Africans should rather seek to intensify their own body of knowledge in a way that will enable the continent to engage in ongoing research and analytical processes that result in practical and relevant solutions for African problems. There is a need to promote a shift from situations that encompass dependence on historically dominant countries. Kgomoeswana (2004) highlights a risk associated with a situation where there is a lack of sustainable balance in engagement which could result in the notion that Africa being open for business can easily achieve the opposite outcome of Africa being open for exploitation instead.

The candidate is a relativist in that one believes that there are different approaches to addressing the current low levels of intra-trade in the African continent. The rationale for the decision to select the ontology and relativism doctrine is based on the paradigm and nature of the study. This suggests that the best way to arrive at a credible outcome is by moving from a premise that there is no single truth in seeking to enhance intra-African trade. On

the other hand, the choice of qualitative design provides the researcher with an opportunity to engage multiple methods and lived experiences to gather data to generate new knowledge based on primary sources and related research.

This aligns with the selection of the inductive approach which is characterised by the reality that a range of examples should be considered because there are many possibilities to consider in order for new theories to ultimately emerge from the data generated.

1.4 Problem statement

The problem that the study attempts to solve is two-fold; firstly, Africa has persistent low levels of internal trade as shown in the preceding section. Secondly, the constraints and possible remedies thereto remain moot. The preceding discussion illustrates that the AU had to intervene by introducing the AfCFTA as a possible solution. But that does not necessarily mean that the challenge of low intra-Africa trade levels has been fully resolved. And the fact that RECs have not succeeded in maximising intra-Africa trade does not entail that they alone are the reason why trade levels were depressed from the start. The root causes of the low levels, as well as possible solutions are a matter of ongoing research.

Low levels of trade have dire consequences, such as Africa's poor socio-economic position. Africa is endowed with a variety of raw materials that should they be beneficiated into finished goods, the amount of economic activity that would follow is immense. Businesses would grow and make more investments to increase capacity, jobs would be created, governments would collect more taxes, exported goods would lead to an inflow of funds, etc. Low levels of trade have the effect of affecting the trade balance and the continent's GDP, which in turn has a negative impact on the socio-economic development of Africans. The entire continent has been impacted by the low trade levels. Africa has become synonymous with hunger, poverty

and political instability, in part due to the low levels of development in some parts. The status quo is not sustainable, as acknowledged by the AU in creating the AfCFTA, among other initiatives.

The study explores the cause of these low levels of intra-Africa trade, and identifies possible solutions that may mitigate these. As indicated in the background of the study, Africa's trading partners such as EU and Asia have built their respective intra-trade activities to levels above 60% (UNCTAD, 2019). It is generally observed that some African states do not always adhere to compliance with agreed trade protocols and agreements due to low levels of consequence management from their peers, amongst others. This has an impact on implementation of the agreed protocols. The AfCFTA should implement mechanisms without exception and set very low tolerance levels for non-compliance, monitor compliance and effectively resolve disputes before they hinder the potential success of intra-trade. The evidence to demonstrate that intra-Africa trade is improving would be through economic prosperity indicators such as improved socio-economic development resulting from anticipated economic growth. Tralac (2020), also supports that the AfCFTA is expected to create the largest trade area with a single market for over 1 billion people in Africa which should mitigate persisting constraints such as limited economic integration and slow growth associated with the prevailing regional based approach by the prevailing eight RECs.

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The main aim of the study was to investigate how the low levels of intra-Africa trade can be enhanced through continental and regional integration.

1.5.2 The objectives of the study
The objectives of the study are to:

1.5.2.1 Evaluate the current state and nature of intra-Africa trade.

1.5.1.2 Investigate the constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade.

1.5.1.3 Examine the nature and extent of the impact of low trade levels on the African economy.

1.5.1.4 Establish the role which the AfCFTA can play in enhancing intra-Africa trade.

1.5.1.5 Identify the key stakeholders in the development of intra-African trade.

1.5.1.6 Establish strategies to minimise the constraints associated with intra-Africa trade using regional integration.

1.6 Research questions

1.6.1 The main research question was: How can the low levels of intra-Africa trade be enhanced through continental and regional integration?

1.6.2 The secondary research questions

1.6.2.1 What is the current state and nature of Africa's regional integration?

1.6.2.2 What are the constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade; and to what extent do these stifle or enhance intra-Africa?

1.6.2.3 To what extent do the low intra-Africa trade levels have an impact on the socio-economic development efforts being made?

1.6.2.4 What role can the AfCFTA play in the enhancement of intra-Africa trade?

1.6.2.5 Who are the key stakeholders in intra-African trade enhancement?

1.6.2.6 How can the constraints associated with intra-Africa trade be resolved using regional integration?

1.7 The epistemological perspective

According to Creswell (1998), epistemology is the lens through which humans look at the world and the methods used to shape what humans can see. People form and develop their understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and reflections on those experiences. When one encounters something new, she/he needs to reconcile this with the previous experience, perhaps changing what they believe, or discarding the new information as immaterial since human beings are active creators of own knowledge.

The epistemological perspective that directed the study was intended to promote an understanding of the research problem and answer the research question while taking into consideration the research paradigm or methodology that the researcher used. The epistemological lens through which the study was directed is interpretivism. This is because according to Ryan (2018), interpretivism is a qualitative method used to analyse data related to human actions in sociology and holds that humans construct knowledge as they interpret their experience of and in the world. The research paradigm refers to a set of common principles and agreements between scientists regarding how problems should be understood and addressed.

The research paradigm that informed this research is constructivism because there is no single reality or truth in the world. According to Gordon (2009), constructivism has emerged over the past decades as a model for explaining how knowledge is produced. For this reason, reality was interpreted through the use of qualitative methods in order to arrive at the relevant multiple realities. Lastly, the choice of constructivism theory in the epistemological framework supported the approach that the researcher did not subscribe to a single truth but to multiple realities in seeking to be a co-creator towards addressing low levels of intra-African trade.

1.8 Theoretical framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) emphasise the importance of the theoretical framework that it is not only the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed for a research study, but also serves as the structure and support of the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research question. O'Shea and Lysaght (2011) similarly highlight the necessity of identifying theoretical framework for a thesis. This is because it serves as a base, or an anchor for the literature review, explanation of phenomena, drawing connections, the methods and analysis. The primary theory guiding this study is the international trade theory which comprises various sub-theories such as Mercantilism theory, Absolute advantage theory, Heckscher-Ohlin theory, Country similarity theory, Product life cycle theory, Global strategic rivalry theory, and Porter's national competitive advantage theory.

According to Rangasamy (2003) international trade theories can broadly be categorised into Classical and Modern Firm based trade theories. Classical international trade theories include theory of Mercantilism, theory of Absolute advantage, and theory of Comparative cost advantage. Modern international theories include Country similarity theory, Product Life cycle theory, Global strategic rivalry theory, and Porter's national competitive advantage theory. Over time, all these international trade theories have helped countries, governments, companies and researchers to understand international trade. All theories may not be applicable to all countries and may not help in understanding the trade tactics of all companies as there is no single dominant theory that is popular globally, but in practice governments and companies use one or a combination of these theories to both interpret trends and develop strategy.

Rangasamy (2003) further suggests that one of the important disagreements between modern and classical trade theories relates to the policy recommendations needed for industrial development. According to the

modern trade theory, neutral incentives and laissez-faire policies are not always conducive to industrial development as advocated by conventional trade theory. The modern trade theories have challenged three underlying assumptions of the conventional trade models. These include:

a. The assumption of perfect competition which is replaced by imperfect competition.

b. Constant or non-increasing returns to scale which is replaced by increasing returns to scale.

c. The definition of industry in terms of homogeneous goods which is replaced by product differentiation.

Classical international trade theories are not ideal as primary theories for this study because they are, inter alia, premised on competition between two states.

For purposes of this study data was gathered through qualitative design using interview techniques with a sample of different stakeholders such as business, government, social partners, academia, and DFI's.

1.8.1 International trade theory best suited for the study

The modern international trade theory that best underpins this study is Porter's competitive advantage of nations theory. Porter (1990) argues that national prosperity is created, not inherited. It does not grow out of a country's natural endowments, its labour pool, its interest rates, or its currency's value, as classical economics insists. This is an important consideration for Africa in that it is usually argued that the mere presence of strategic mineral resources, arable land, and pool of labour should entail the necessary conditions for success. There would have to be intentional and concerted joint effort to create and implement the catalytic innovative digital and trade infrastructure driven solutions as suggested by the study. This will galvanise and ignite the economic activities albeit in selected key industries because there is no nation that can be competitive in every industry. Nations succeed

in particular industries because their home environment is the most forward-looking dynamic and is challenging. Porter (1990) maintains that in international markets, innovations that yield competitive advantage consider both domestic and foreign needs. With few exceptions, innovation is the result of unusual effort, characterised by continuous upgrades, often in the face of harsh criticism and tough obstacles. Once competitiveness is achieved through innovation, it can only be sustained through relentless improvement because almost any advantage can be imitated and even overtaken (Porter, 1990).

Porter (1990) uses the diamond model to illustrate the determinants of national advantage and the reasons why certain companies based in particular nations are capable of consistent innovation and attain competitive advantage whilst overcoming barriers to change that usually accompany success. The Diamond four attributes comprise factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, as well as firm strategy, structure and rivalry. In sophisticated industries that form the backbone of any advanced economy, a nation does not inherit but instead creates the most important factors of production. This is because, as earlier indicated, basic factors, such as a pool of labour or local raw material source, do not constitute an advantage in knowledge-intensive industries, as these can be accessed through global strategy or even circumvented through technology. Competitive advantage results from the presence of world class institutions that first create specialised factors and then continually work to upgrade them (Porter, 1990).

The study deduces from Porter's analysis that for the African economy to succeed internationally, it must first succeed locally by enhancing its own intra-African trade and the demand of the products and services in the local markets. This is because with factor conditions, as the local markets become increasingly sophisticated, buyers pressure companies to meet high standards, force them to improve, to innovate, and to upgrade into more

advanced segments. The study further aligns with the view that if an inclusive stakeholder-based approach, which is underpinned by innovative digital and related trade infrastructure, is successfully implemented it will result in scalable self-reinforcing competitive advantage.

Porter (1990) asserts that government's role is to act as a catalyst and challenger; it is to encourage and push companies to raise their aspirations and move to higher levels of competitive performance. The study concurs with the view that government policies that succeed are those that create an environment in which companies can gain competitive advantage rather than those that involve government directly in the process, except in nations that are in the early stage of their development processes. The extent of government involvement should be determined by the development stages of every economy. In Africa, for instance, the developmental stages of some African states are still not fully realised and therefore the governments should play a greater role in influencing and supporting business development without trying to take control of the entire economic system. Government's envisaged involvement in the economy includes, but is not limited to, the deregulation of competition, promotion of goals that lead to sustained investments, enforcement of strong domestic antitrust policies, influencing cooperative efforts, such as research, among industry rivals to achieve economies of scale, enforcing strict product, safety, and environmental standards, as well as rejecting managed trade.

Porter (1990) further suggests that leaders should believe in change and energise their organisations to embrace technology for continuous innovation. They should recognise the importance of their home country as integral to their competitive success and work to upgrade it. The study considers this as an opportunity not only for captains of industry, but also for different leaders of society or social partners to participate in key developments such as influencing the regulatory environment during public participation of new

and amended regulations, holding government and the private sector to account where they may be inadequate in as far as national priorities are concerned, whilst ensuring a well-educated and sophisticated buyer throughout the nations of the continent.

In summary, this chosen international trade theory holds greater relevance for the study in that it brings together most of the important factors such as the importance of a nation's ability to identify its competitive advantage and use that to create an enabling environment for scalability of resultant economic growth whilst attaining economies of scale. The complementary roles played by all key stakeholders such as governments as facilitators of AfCFTA and the private sector as the technologically driven innovative solutions implementing stakeholder indicate the extent to which the theoretical framework guides the study towards the necessary conditions for intra-Africa trade enhancement.

The study, therefore, does not only highlight the impact of globalisation on the African economy but analyses the theoretical underpinnings of intra-trade and the efforts embarked upon towards integrating the current eight regional economic blocks. Most importantly, the study attempts to identify and highlight both the current and future game changing opportunities.

1.8.2 The most appropriate approach to theory development

The most appropriate theory for this study is an inductive approach since it is concerned with the generation of new theory emerging from the data or reasoning that goes from general to specific information. According to Smart, Witt, and Scott (2012), an inductive approach begins with the observations and theories that are only proposed towards the end of the research process as a result of observations. Inductive research includes the search for patterns and themes from observation and the development of explanations and theories for those patterns and themes through various hypotheses.

Smart *et al.* (2022) suggests that inductive reasoning begins with detailed observations of the world, which moves towards more abstract generalisation and ideas and comprises observation, pattern and theory. The choice of this method and the implementation thereof is determined by the research question above, while influenced by practical considerations such as the involvement of stakeholders through questionnaires as well as leveraging off existing empirical data.

1.9 The significance of the study

The study is significant for several reasons; Firstly, it attempts to provide an in-depth insight into the exploratory work done to determine the current persistent low levels of intra-Africa trade, the impact of such levels to the future of the African economy and the socio-economic impact to its population. Another indicator for the significance of the study is its attempt to investigate the importance of inclusive stakeholder approach underpinned by the appropriate and scalable innovative digital solutions and advancing recommendations thereof. As the study would demonstrate, Africa currently has RECs whose function is to facilitate intra-regional trade, amongst others. The impact of these RECs is however, not very visible at continental level. According to Article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement (2019), one of the functions of the AfCFTA Agreement is to harmonise trade at continental level and create a single market for over 1 billion people. Another significant contribution of the study is to illuminate options that could be considered in rectifying the persistence of low levels of trade to take advantage of an estimated 1.3 billion persons single market for Africa-intra trade and obviate the repeat of the past weaknesses that emanated from the previous structural interventions. In Article 3 of the AfCFTA Agreement (30 May,2019), further suggests that the AU, upon identifying the limited impact of the RECs, took a decision to create a single market for goods and services that are 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" as enshrined in Agenda 63.

1.10 Organisation of the study

Chapter 1 provides introductory overview of the study by outlining the background, Ontology, the problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research question, the Epistemological perspective, theoretical framework, and the most appropriate approach to theory development.

Chapter 2, theoretical underpinnings of the study, defines and describes concepts such as intra-Africa trade, the socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy, the current status of intra-Africa trade, constraints and enablers for intra-Africa trade, takes into consideration the role played by the sub regional bodies. It suffices to say that chapter 2 summarises the findings of the literature review.

Chapter 3 provides detailed research design and methodology for the study.

Chapter 4 deals with the analysis and presentation of emerging themes from the participants in line with the semi-structured interviews conducted.

Chapter 5 presents the discussion and interprets the research outcomes of the interviews conducted in chapter 4.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter that provides empirical data-driven conclusions and recommendations for the thesis, and further recommends future research opportunities. Most importantly the chapter provides recommended solutions towards improving intra-Africa trade.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter provides a framework and the rationale to the study by high-lighting its main objectives, the problem that the study is addressing, the Ontology, and the Epistemological perspective. It further identifies Porter's competitive advantage of nations theory as the primary theory that guides the study towards its logical recommendations with regards to enhancing intra- African trade, whilst taking into consideration the most appropriate approach to theory development. This is all in a quest to answering the research question; How best to identify and minimise the impediments or constraints to African intra-trade, while identifying ways to optimise the estimated 84% intra-trade deficit as an opportunity rather than a challenge or even mountain to climb.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the study's literature review. A literature review is a detailed report that considers available written works in relation to a given theme in a topical area (Paul & Criado, 2020). A literature review is also described as analysis and discussion of what is already known about a particular area of interest. It is an important part of knowledge building that guides researchers in identifying critical research gaps (Hempel, 2019). This chapter serves as the study's literature review, in which various literature from institutions and researchers is examined under topics related to intra-African trade with a specific focus on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and potential levels of regional integration. The literature defines the central concepts of the study before looking at the current state of intra-African trade. The chapter examines the grand theories of regional integration and Pan-African ideologies behind regional integration on the continent. The Chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, it provides a theoretical foundation and empirical reviews. Secondly, it defines and conceptualises intra-Africa trade within its current status quo. Thirdly, it examines potential socio-economic impact and dynamics of intra-Africa trade on the African economy. It further identifies constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade. The chapter concludes by illuminating the areas of both convergence and differences among scholars.

2.2 Definition and conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade

The United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD) defines a free trade area as, "a grouping of countries within which tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers between the members are abolished, however with no common trading policy towards non-members" (UNCTAD, 2019, xviii).

A preferential trade area is defined as a trade region or bloc that gives members preferential trade terms that are not available to non-members (UNCTAD, 2019). Regional integration is a phenomenon where neighbouring countries create a common cooperation zone guided by uniform or standard policies (UNCTAD, 2019). Trade occurring within a regionally integrated zone is often referred to as interregional trade (UNCTAD, 2019). Vickers (2022) labels regional PTAs, economic and trade blocs and any regional trade agreements as hierarchical in nature. The preferential trade agreement is the smallest of these and involves market access agreements between or among states (Ishiguro, 2017). The preferential trade area consists of preferential trade agreements occurring in a set geographical region (UNCTAD, 2019). This does not require members to have uniform trade regulations and policies and the members set and maintain their own trade tariffs (Vickers, 2022). A customs union adds common tariff management in a preferential trade area and non-members are required to pay tariffs while members may pay reduced or no tariffs (Bickel, 2021).

From a customs union, agreements mature into a common market area in which members give each other free access to each other's broad markets (Aniche *et al.*, 2021; Viner, 2014; Bickel, 2021). An economic union is an advanced agreement that adds the use of similar trade and economic regulations by members as well as the development of a union-regulated economic system (UNCTAD, 2019). An example is the European Union (EU). Finally, the integration of common economic systems with a single political system yields a political union. In a political union, sovereign governments become subjected to a supra-governmental body that governs members' executive, legislative and parliamentary affairs (UNCTAD, 2019). The AfCFTA is neither an economic nor political union but can be envisaged as a step toward enhanced continental integration (Luke & Macleod, 2019). The African Union (2021) recognises a free trade area, a customs union, a common market, and an economic community as amongst the different levels of regional integration. As countries move up the hierarchy from a free

trade area to more coherent regional integrated forms, they must be willing to lose part or an element of their freedom and flexibility for the common good (Africa Union, 2022).

Nagar (2019) views AfCFTA and general attempts towards regionalisation as exhibited in the actions of the SADC, COMESA and the EAC as a Pan-African response to global economic inequality. Under Pan-Africanism, Africa's regionalisation efforts are seen as part of the reinstatement of Pan-Africanist values that originate from the first Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah. Protracted and continuing discrimination against African output on global markets and the general views that repressive world economic systems tend to favour non-African systems demanded a united politico-economic front, and the AfCFTA is an example of such a front (Nagar, 2020). Figure 2.1 summarises the hierarchical nature of regional integration.

Figure 2.1: Levels of regional integration (Bela Balassa, 2013)
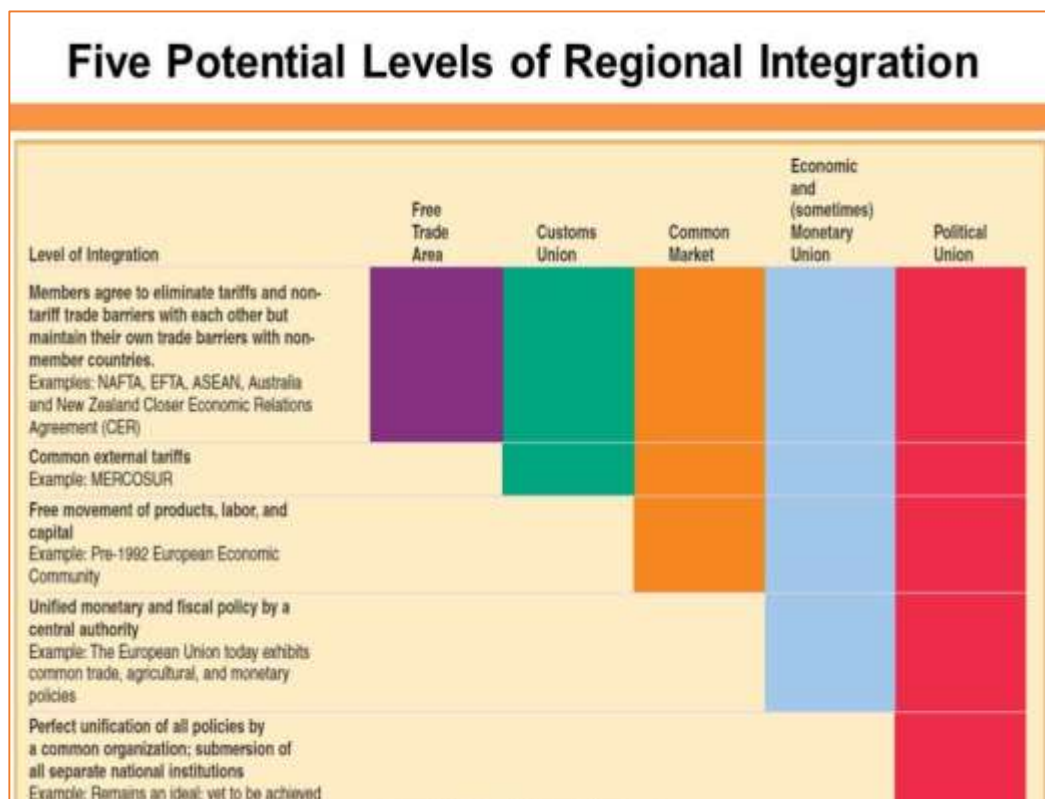
Figure 2.1 indicates that with each hierarchical progression comes greater integration through the removal of trade and movement barriers and enhancement of areas and forms of cooperation among states. Based on the above hierarchy, the AfCFTA aspires to be a common market area. Many such areas exist on the African continent, each with its own successes and failures.

The African Union (2021) refers to Afreximbank's definition of intra-Africa trade (IAT) as being the trade in goods and services between or among African countries and the flow of goods and services between Africa and Africans in the Diaspora. The definition further expands to identify informal trade as an indispensable part of intra-Africa trade (African Union, 2021). In the researcher's view, this definition incorporates the Pan-African element of the African Diaspora, subsequently linking intra-Africa trade to Pan-Africanist thought. Another important aspect of this definition is the inclusion of informal trade as an aspect of intra-Africa trade, which suggests a localised perspective of international trade that is cognisant of the significance and expansiveness of informal cross-border trade in Africa. It is therefore important to provide context by highlighting some of the established mechanisms that are already functional and will be taken into consideration as a foundational framework for more knowledge to be explored.

2.2.1 The transition from the OAU to the AU

In 1963, several independent African countries convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the objective of forming an integrated union and named it the Organization of African Unity (OAU), with 32 signatory governments, whose aims and objectives were to decolonise Africa, protect its sovereignty, achieve global competitiveness as well as attaining socio-economic transformation (South African Department of Foreign Affairs, 2004). The ideological formation of the OAU was a sequel to the late 19th century Pan-Africanist movement, which emerged in the United States of America (USA) among

Black American intellectuals such as Martin Delany and Alexander Crummel, who drew similarities between Africans and Black Americans (SA History, 2017). The movement drew the attention of other Africans in the continent including prominent intellectuals and heads of state such as Sékou Touré from Guinea and Kenneth Kaunda from Zambia, who chose to support a programme that aimed to promote African integration (Africa-EU Partnership, 2013).

Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first black president, advocated a United States of Africa (USA) formation in which African nations would come together to form a single government that would work towards the realization of fairness in the allocation of resources in order to create a stronger force to compete in the world markets. On the other hand, Julius Nyerere, the Republic of Tanzania's first president, while supporting the same objectives, differed methodologically, stating that the United States of Africa can only be achieved as a gradual process (Okhonmina, 2009). At the Pan-African meeting in Cairo in 1960, Nyerere outlined the realities that the region faced at that time. Steinberg (2001) and Shinkaye (2006) suggest that the OAU was formed mainly to foster and preserve unity, solidarity and continental cooperation among African states against colonialism and to defend its member states' recently gained liberation as well as to encourage the autonomy of member nations.

It is with this context in mind that the candidate takes into consideration the foundational work of the following institutions and interventions. According to Wiebe and Tsegaw (2012) the AU was established in 2002 with the aim of addressing the shortcomings of the OAU, as a loose arrangement that depended on each country's political will to participate, whilst still maintaining key objectives such as maintaining a united front, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation amongst the people of Africa and the African States.

The objectives of the AU as enshrined in the Constitution Act mark a significant departure from the OAU as it includes the five aspects as outlined in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: The objectives of the African Union.
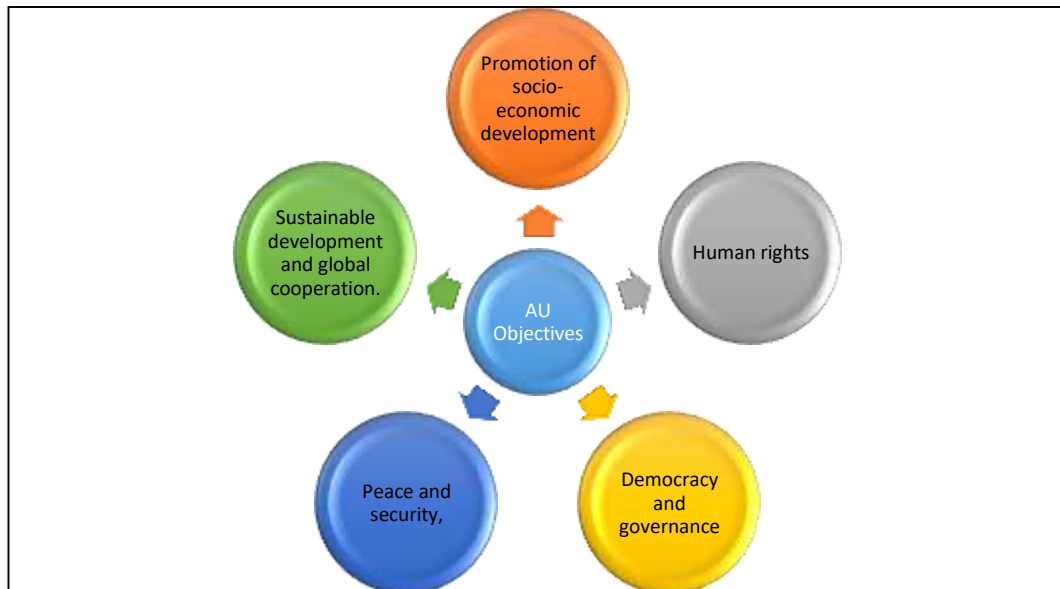
Figure 2.2 further highlights that because all African states have achieved their democracy this should result in an increased economic liberation and social development instead of the OAU's historical focus on political liberation. Secondly, governance has also evolved in that African women who were virtually absent from occupying leadership positions under the OAU can now be seen participating and leading some of the commissions. Finally, the Peer review mechanism obviates the non-interference policy stand of the OAU and allows AU member states to hold each other accountable for human rights violations. It can be seen from the above that the promotion of African trade, such as through the creation of the AfCFTA, is well within the AU's socio-economic development mandate.

The AU comprises eight economic communities, as depicted in Figure 2.3

Figure 2.3: The African Union 8 Regional Blocs
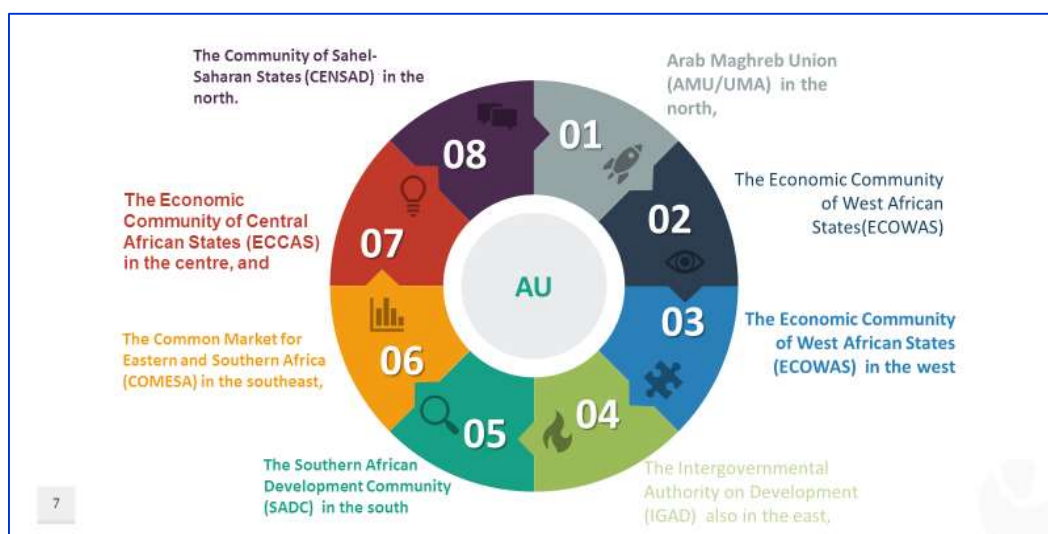
Africa's current integration framework consists of an array of regional economic communities recognised as the building blocks of the AU. The AU further has different institutions, over and above the eight economic communities, that play specific roles towards integrating the continent. For instance, the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) (1991) is responsible for the legislative and oversight function in actions of African executive accountability. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOCC) role is to act as a central platform for reflection, debate and innovative thinking on sustainable development.

It must be emphasised that continental integration is not necessarily a single solution. For example, In June 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the EU and this exit was indicative of trends in domestic politics and in the United Kingdom's relationship with the EU that had been built over many years (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2007).

The underlying philosophies for development have been informed by the contextual factors of neo-liberalism, globalisation and the quest for regional and country political stability (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1999).

Free-flowing capital leads to growth in investments resulting in increased finance allocation where it generates productivity. Rupiya (2012) puts forward the argument that whilst the OAU concerned itself mainly with decolonisation, the AU's focus on regional peace, safety and democractic consolidation became evident during its intervention that saw the conflict between Khartoum and Juba in Sudan result in the 2005 comprehensive peace agreement and the ultimate establishment of South Sudan in 2011. In spite of recording some degree of success, Sessay (2008) contends that the AU is no different from the "new wine in old bottles" due to human rights failure.

Researchers hold different perspectives around dismissing or confirming the view that African trade is limited, and the emphasis is usually on intra-regional rather than overall trade. Foroutan and Pritchett (1993) suggest that there is no reason to be concerned about the low levels of intra-trade because in their view the trade flows between African countries are within expectation. Rodrik (1998) went further to highlight that the trade/GDP ratios of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries compare favourably to those of countries of similar size and income and that Africa's marginalization should mainly be attributed to low levels of income growth. On the other hand, Shinkaiye (2006) provides a perspective that African states' shortcomings emanate from the low levels of checks and balances when observing human rights. Roach and Schaefer (2012) express a concern regarding dependency on foreign funders such as the USA. The candidate observes that the contradictory view held by Foroutana and Prictchett (1993) suggests that the low levels of intra-trade in Africa align with its peers which stands in contrast to the generally held view that Africa is far from achieving appropriate levels of intra-trade. In any event, it cannot be correct to posit that Africa's low trade levels are acceptable merely because its peers also have similar levels thereof.

Although the AfCFTA provides an opportunity for Africa to boost intra-Africa trade and accelerate the process of structural transformation to reduce the susceptibility of its economies to external shocks, the execution of the agreement will be complex given the large number, varied nature and various stages of economic development of Member States. At the same time integration may carry substantial adjustment costs for some countries, including fiscal adjustments, effective implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), accessibility and availability of appropriate trade finance, and risk-bearing facilities that can facilitate the trade.

According to Article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement (2019), the overall mandate of the AfCFTA is to create a single continental market with a population of about 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately US$ 3.4 trillion. This is currently beyond the ability of the prevailing eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the AU. Chingono and Nakana (2009) cite incompatible economic and political systems, uneven benefits of integration, lack of adherence to agreed trade protocols, institutional incapacity, infrastructure, financial and technical challenges and poor economic and political governance as some of the limitations of the RECs resulting in their inability to attain continent wide trade impact. This failure of RECs to promote trade has led to the status quo, which has resulted in negative implications on Africa remaining under-developed and characterised by sustained inequality, unemployment and poverty for the majority of its population.

Article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement (2019) highlights that the AfCFTA is not an end in itself, rather it is a milestone in the creation of the African Economic Community (AEC) as contemplated in the Abuja Treaty (1991). In this regard, one of the objectives of the AfCFTA is to lay the basis for the creation of an African customs union in due course. The effect of the role of the

AfCFTA is that African trade should be facilitated and regulated in the context of regional integration rather than as a stand-alone initiative. Thus, African trade and regional integration are interlinked.

2.3 The prevailing status of intra-Africa trade

Compared to other continents and sub-regions, Africa is performing badly with regard to regional integration (UNECA, 2021). The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (2021) cites a report that shows Africa's score of 0.2 out of 1 on the productivity of its regionalisation efforts. The UNECA Africa (2021:15) lists seven types of integration, also referred to as convergence areas. These are "trade integration, social integration; productive integration; macroeconomic integration; services trade liberalization; free movement of persons; infrastructure and energy; governance, and peace and security." An economic bloc or REC can focus on one or more of these (UNECA, 2021). These closely resonate with the Africa Union's African Regional Index Integration (ARII) (Africa Union, 2020). The AU (2020:3) highlights "free movement of persons, trade integration, infrastructure integration, integration of people or social integration, financial integration and the free movement of capital, monetary integration, environmental and institutional integration" as aspects of interest.

The 2019 integration indicators for the continent on five key integration areas are shown in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: African integration indicators: "Source: Extracted from AU (2021)
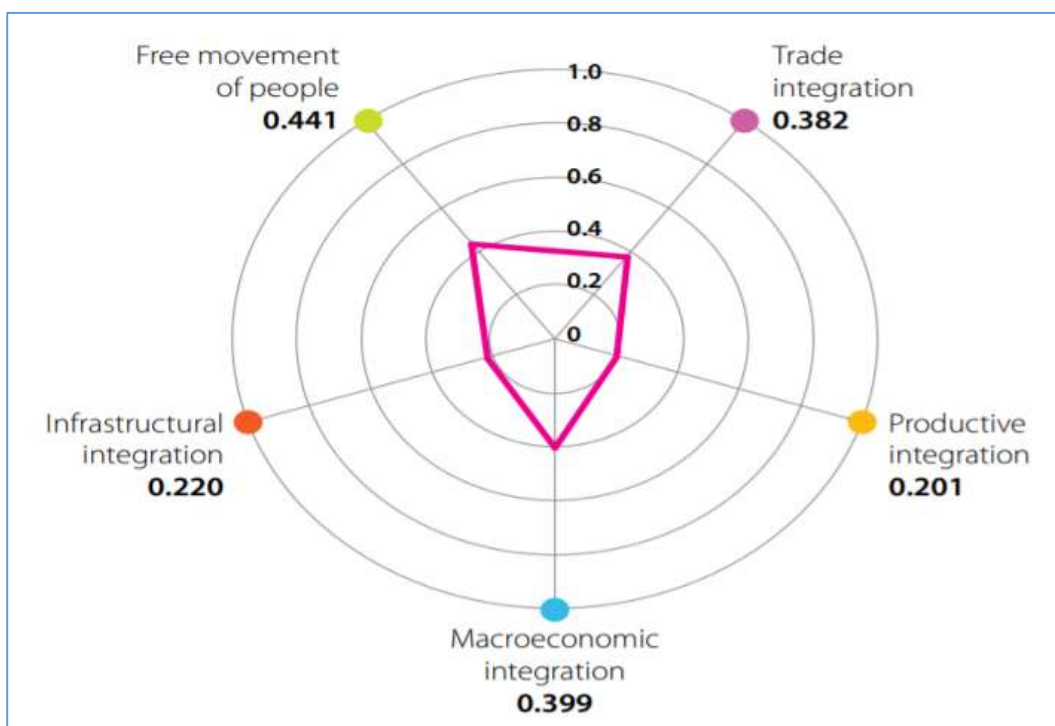
This figure depicts that out of a perfect score of 1.0 indicating full integration, in 2019 the continent scored 0.4 on movement of persons which was the highest. It scored below 0.4 on productive, infrastructural and macroeconomic convergence while it had a 0.38 index on trade integration. These indices are interpreted as being low with productive and infrastructural integration as being very low (Africa Union, 2021).

The African Union (2021) highlights that trade integration was measured using five indicators. These are:

a. The Common External Tariff (CET)
b. Within-region goods import as a proportion of GDP
c. Within-region services import as a proportion of GDP
d. Within-region goods exports as a proportion of GDP
e. Within-region services exports as a proportion of GDP.

In 2019 the regional integration trade score of 0.383 for 2019 and 0.3 for 2020 suggests that even in the presence of eight recognised RECs and

many unrecognised ones, the continent's trade was poorly connected (African Union, 2019; 2020). Individually each of the eight RECs performed below the 0.5 regional trade index (of a maximum index of 1.0) indicating general underperformance. For 2019, the best performer among these was AMU with 0.488, followed by COMESA (0.445), IGA (0.4440, EAC (0.44), and ECOWAS (0.438). The SADC had a low score of 0.34 (African Union, 2019; 2020). In 2020, however, the SADC recorded the highest integration index of 0.78, indicating an improvement in intra-bloc trade in the southern region. This was the highest among all the regions. This was followed by the EAC with an index of 0.73 and the ECOWAS with an index of 0.68 (African Union, 2020).

The intra-Africa trade levels of the African RECs noted above were further emphasised in a report from UNCTAC in 2019, titled "Key Statistics and Trends in Regional Trade in Africa". Table 2.1 depicts the state of intra-REC trade.

Table 2.1: State of intra-REC trade in Africa "Source: Extracted from UNCTAD (2019)

Reporting Economy (# of member states)	Trade Partner		
	Intra-REC	Rest of Africa	Rest of the World
AMU (5)	3.3	2.5	94.1
CEN-SAD (28)	7.5	4.1	88.4
COMESA (19)	7.0	9.3	83.7
EAC (5)	11.5	10.1	78.4
ECCAS (11)	2.8	9.5	87.7
ECOWAS (15)	10.7	5.6	83.7
IGAD (8)	7.3	8.0	84.8
SADC (15)	21.0	2.7	76.2

According to UNCTAD (2019), the SADC region was recorded as the most progressive in terms of intra-REC trade. SADC's 15 states traded 21% of the total region's trade between each other. However, most of the region's trade was with other countries outside the region. This was followed by EAC with 11.5% inter-REC trade, and ECOWAS with 10.7%. The rest of the RECs did not trade extensively within themselves and recorded intra-REC trade of between 3.3% and 7.5%. In all cases, these trade volumes were reportedly too low and raise questions on the effectiveness of RECs on the continent. For instance, Jiboku (2015) and Aniche (2015) suggest that the proliferation of RECs could be impeding development as a result of too many conflicting treaties and interests. In the researcher's view the above state of REC trade disintegration demands a supra-continental body that could harmonise cross-REC trade policy and treaty differences.

2.4 The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy

2.4.1 Increased trade among partners

According to Vickers (2020), regional trade benefits can be viewed from a trade diversion versus trade creation perspective. Trade creation occurs when regional trade pacts and programmes result in the creation of new products and services trade areas that were previously non-existent. Trade diversion occurs when products and services are simply traded with new partners as a result of trade pacts (Vickers, 2022). Trade agreements like the AfCFTA are only beneficial if they result in new trade rather than simply the diversion of existing trade to new trade partners.

There is some scepticism that the AfCFTA will indeed boost trade. Nagar (2020) states that as of 2019, COMESA, SADC and the EAC, like the AfCFTA, had a combined total of 23 signatories. Regardless of such a significant membership, the 2019 COMESA trade levels among members accounted for only 16% of the continent's total trade. Simultaneously, Nagar

(2020) notes that signatories to COMESA continued to focus on trading with non-member off-continent partners more than they did with African partners. Such historical occurrences could also befall AfCFTA. As of 2020, the World Bank believed that the AfCFTA could result in a continent-wide annual income increase of USD450 billion which is 7% higher than the pre-agreement annual increases.

2.4.2 Employment, inequality and poverty

The World Bank (2020) notes that the AfCFTA's socio-economic impact will be felt in three main areas: employment generation, income provision, inequality reduction and the concomitant reduction of poverty. The World Bank observes that increased economic opportunities that may come with the agreement have the potential to uplift women as an economically disadvantaged social group that has comparatively fewer opportunities than males. Additionally, it provided an opportunity to reduce the gap between economic classes as it would foster employment and economic opportunities for the unskilled and semi-skilled (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2017; World Bank, 2020). Obeng-Odoom (2020) observes, however, that the AfCFTA may increase inequality on the continent as it does not focus on redistributive justice and encourages the continuation of land and resource ownership unfairness.

As of 2019, Africa contained 70% of the world's least developed economies. Luke and McLeod (2019) believe that the AfCFTA is a credible arrangement that can positively affect this situation. UNECA (2021) believes that the non-convergent and fragmented nature of Africa's trade and economic activity is one of the reasons why the continent ranks poorly in terms of growth and wealth creation.

2.4.3 Economic diversification and liberalisation

The AfCFTA promotes economically beneficial opportunities for industrial diversification on the African continent. According to Mkhabela (2019), UNCTAD (2019) believes that AfCFTA will allow African countries to trade more complex goods with each other to a greater extent than with off-continent countries. This will encourage the development of new products and sectors with the assurance that African neighbours will be willing to buy these, although their degree of interest may vary. Vickers (2020) believes that regional trade can support economic liberalisation in cases when a conducive environment for trade creation rather than diversion is developed. This liberalisation process also results in more valuable trade as independent countries' manufacturing capacities are encouraged and enhanced. Economic diversification is a matter of concern considering that the majority of countries in Africa have shallow, primary product-dependent economic value chains (Luke & Macleod, 2019). Simola *et al.* (2021) asserts that AfCFTA's economic diversification facilitation will be the main driver of positive economic growth on the continent. This diversification will include a move away from agro-based production toward value-added products (Simola *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, an increase in value-added non-primary commodities in economic value chains will buoy equally diversified trade which will include increased volumes and values of both secondary and primary goods (Mkhabela, 2021).

The AfCFTA facilitates a self-paced economic liberalisation process for African countries (UNCTAD, 2019). Countries can open and liberalise new economic sectors buoyed by the increased trade support from neighbours. Historically, trade liberalisation on the continent has been conceptualised and driven by international multilateral bodies with Africa's readiness to cope with this kind of change being of less concern to these bodies (Luke & Macleod, 2019). Luke and McLeod (2015) further suggest that locating the AfCFTA within a decolonisation narrative is influenced by the view that addressing the consequences of colonial legacy requires independent and

sustainable home-grown trade regimes. In addition to economic liberalisation, regional integration strengthens individual economies' trade negotiation powers when dealing with international non-members (UNECA, 2021).

Industrialisation and liberalisation, as asserted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), will have far-reaching effects on almost all sectors of the African economy. Figure 2.5 summarises intra-Africa trade growth estimations.

Figure 2.5: Impact of AfCFTA: "Source: Extracted from WTO (2021)
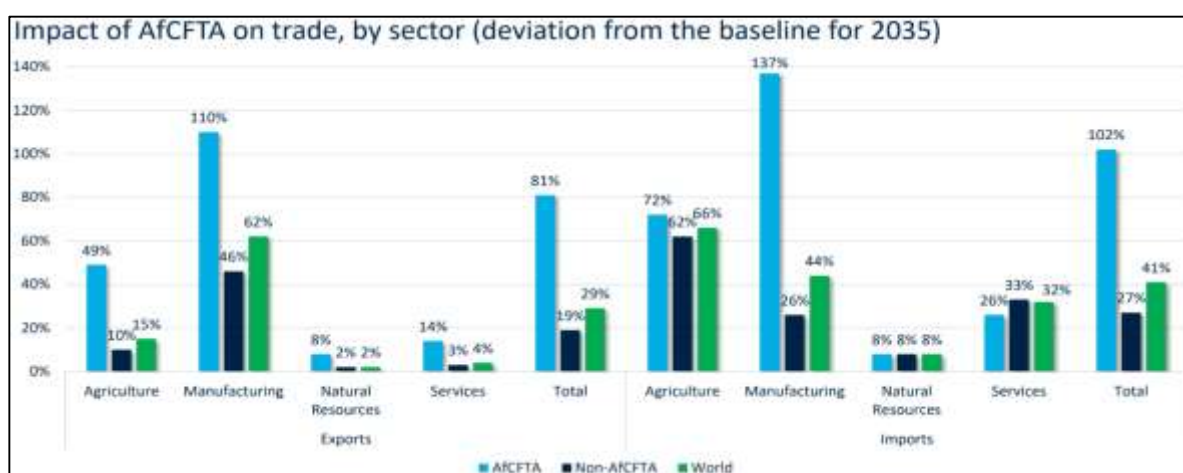
In terms of exports, the manufacturing sector is poised to experience the largest growth under AfCFTA followed by agriculture, services and natural resources. Under non-AfCFTA arrangement the manufacturing sector would grow by 46% in 2045, the same sector would grow by 110% under the AfCFTA (WTO, 2021). In contrast, Haile-Gabriel (2021) believes that the agricultural sector would outperform manufacturing in export and revenue growth. Agricultural exports would grow by 49% under AfCFTA and by only 10% under non-AfCFTA arrangements (WTO, 2021). Across all sectors captured above, intra-Africa trade is projected to outperform world trade. UNECA (2021) suggests that intra-Africa trade on agri-foods will increase by 41.1% by 2045, while services will grow by 39.2% and manufacturing by 39%. Despite forecasting for different periods, both the WTO (2021) and UNECA (2021) see the energy sector being the least performing sector.

Overall, strong optimistic views suggest that the AfCFTA would enhance intra-Africa trade.

The development method of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is firmly based on the political economic reality and the development challenges of Africa. Nynes (2018) argues that the establishment of a Continental Free Trade Area is a significant development in Africa's long integration process. Songwe (2019), further highlights that if successfully implemented, the agreement will create a single African market of over a billion consumers with a total GDP of over 3 trillion dollars, making it the largest free trade area in the world. Intra-Africa trade has the potential to promote the exchange of more manufactured and processed goods, more knowledge transfer, and create more value. The implications are that, depending on the ambition of the liberalisation, the share of intra-African trade can increase by an estimated 40 percent to over 50 percent by 2040 which will significantly improve the socio-economic impact of poverty alleviation, increased entrepreneurship and job opportunities in the African continent (Songwe, 2019).

2.4.4 Political and development closeness

The AfCFTA has the potential to politically and economically unite African countries in a world where regionalism is becoming a norm (UNCTAD, 2019). Several sources perceive regional integration as a facilitator of regional security, peace and stability (Nagar, 2020). The reasons are, *inter alia*, that trade among nations initiates, encourages and fosters foreign diplomatic relations between and among partners and these extend into better political cooperation which improves regional stability.

El-Anis (2018) found, however, that in some regions of Africa, increases in trade and investment cooperation may not result in increased cooperation on peace and stability matters. A study focusing on the Middle East and

North Africa (MENA) regions found a correlation between economic cooperation and trade but not between economic cooperation and regional stability, prompting the researchers to conclude that the trade-stability relationship was not an obvious one. It might apply to some of the continent's regions but not to all (El-Anis, 2018).

The Institute of Security Studies (ISS) sees the AfCFTA in particular as a potential enabler of peace and stability in Africa (ISS Africa, 2020). This view is underpinned by the observation that instability and extremism on the continent are widely driven by poverty, unemployment and economic marginalisation. The ISS Africa (2020) links Africa's hotspots with these challenges and comments that if AfCFTA succeeds in stabilising the poverty and unemployment landscape, peace and stability may prevail in some parts of the continent. At the same time, however, ISS Africa (2020) also notes that the very same political instabilities may impede the successful implementation of the AfCFTA. This highlights a dichotomous situation for the continent (ISS Africa, 2020).

The potential benefits of the AfCFTA have been identified by a range of stakeholders as being useful in seeking to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. However, the conditions that come with such benefits present some cause for concern. There is a need for an adequate level of political commitment from the country's leaders in order to fully implement a free trade area and avoid the AfCFTA being minimised in impact as has occurred with certain economic zones on the continent.

2.4.5 Increased continental competitiveness

One of the expected benefits to the continent of the AfCFTA is increased competitiveness of African products on global markets (African Union, 2019). According to Shinyekwa, Bulime and Nattabi (2020), enhanced intra-

Africa trade will support continent-wide economic and market competitiveness. African markets are not as competitive as European, American and Asian markets that have increased capacities to provide high quality goods at comparatively lower prices. The enhancement of intra-Africa trade will result in increased production capacities and output volumes underpinned by improved allocation of resources as more investment and market opportunities are made available as well as increased market access (Shinyekwa *et al.*, 2020). The combined result of these efforts will be lower prices and increased competitiveness of the continent's products (Shinyekwa *et al.*, 2020).

While continental level competitiveness might increase, Okadia *et al.* (2021) express a concern that competition among countries as well as competition among RECs may have an adverse effect on trade. Unfair or inconsistent competition regulation policies across RECs may hinder the free flow of trade and overall obstruct the realisation of AfCFTA's free market objectives (Okadia *et al.*, 2021; Fox, 2022). Okadia *et al.* (2021) further observes that the establishment of a continental competition protocol that regulates and standardises competition laws across RECs as a solution to the current situation where competitive laws are considered either too restrictive or generally unfair, could significantly benefit the continent. Fox (2020) notes that the establishment of a competition protocol under the AfCFTA would result in tougher monitoring of antitrust and collusive behaviours that are rampant on the continent. The World Bank (2016) notes that anticompetitive behaviour in Africa contributes to considerably high costs in basic foodstuffs which were up to 24% higher in 2016 compared to other parts of the world. According to Gachuiri (2020), anticompetitive behaviours that include collusion, monopolies and market power abuses are a challenge in Africa, considering that some countries do not even have competition laws. Such anticompetitive behaviours stifle entrepreneurship and business growth, denying benefits for Africans from the AfCFTA (Gachuiri, 2020; Fox, 2022). Table

2.2 depicts consolidated views from reviewed literature with regards to the socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy.

Table 2.2. The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy.

Increased trade	UNCTAD (2019), Luke and McLeod (2019), Vickers (2020),
Creation of a mega African market	Apiko *et al.*, (2020), Ismail (2021)
Economic growth for countries	Luke and McLeod (2019), UNCTAD (2019), Ismail (2021)
Increased industrialisation	UNCTAD (2019), (Simola *et al.*, 2021), Vickers (2022)
Increased self-financing abilities	OECD (2021)
Reduced reliance on external funders	OECD (2021)
Skills and knowledge development and sharing	Apiko *et al.* (2020)
Increase in national incomes	World Bank (2020)
Increase in entrepreneurship	Apiko *et al.* (2020),
Increased social cohesion	El-Anis (2018)
Removal of colonial partisans	Luke and McLeod (2015)
Ease of movement by people	Apiko *et al.* (2020),
Employment creation	Apiko *et al.* (2020), World Bank (2020)
Sustainable growth and development	(UNECA, 2021)
Reduction in poverty	World Bank (2020), Ismail (2021)
Inequitable distribution of economic benefits	Obeng-Odoom (2020)
Increased technology use and productivity	Apiko *et al.* (2020), Ismail (2021)
Increased regional peace and stability	El-Anis (2018), ISS Africa (2020)
Infrastructure development	Apiko *et al.* (2020), Ismail (2021)

Table 2.2 presents both summarised and consolidated views on the

economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy from different scholars and related literature reviewed. UNCTAD (2019), together with scholars such as Luke and Mcleod (2019), and Vickers (2020), share a common view that the AfCFTA would enhance trade and economic benefits and this would contribute towards economic growth for African countries. Apiko *et al.* (2020) and Ismail (2021) further maintain that the AfCFTA seeks to create a single mega market of an estimated 1,3 billion people which would enhance Africa's attractiveness as a preferred destination for trade and investments. Apiko *et al.* (2020) also identifies potential skills, employment creation, knowledge development, increased technology usage and productivity, infrastructure development, entrepreneurship and ease of movement by people as important benefits that would translate into an impactful socio-economic advancement for the African economy. Simola *et al.* (2021) and UNCTAD (2019) identify increased industrialisation as a significant contributing factor towards social and economic development. According to the OECD (2021), African countries' ability to self-finance would increase, thereby reducing reliance on external funders. The world bank (2020) views increased national income as an enabler towards eradication of poverty and reduction of socio-economic challenges. Meanwhile UNECA (2021) is concerned with the sustainable growth and development aspects of the African economy. Luke and McLeod (2015) see the introduction of the AfCFTA contributing towards the removal of colonial partisans whilst El-Anis (2018) together with ISS Africa (2020) advance the argument further to include increased regional peace and stability in the continent as the necessary contributing factors towards socio-economic development of the people.

2.5 Constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade

The World Bank (2020) is among several institutions that place conditionality on AfCFTA's success. The agreement comes with a promise of several social, economic and political benefits but in reality, these are not automatic

and are dependent on the extent to which African policymakers create enabling scenarios that empower the agreement's full implementation while also reducing any surrounding constraints (World Bank, 2020).

2.5.1 The role and extent of trade tariffs on intra-Africa trade

There is extensive debate on the role and extent of tariffs in the promotion and/or undermining of intra-Africa trade, although there is a strong tendency to view them as exerting a negative impact on the process. The trade tariff issue can be looked at from a protectionist and non-protectionist perspective (Korn, 2021). Protectionists believe that there are positive economic benefits that can emerge from tariffs whilst non-protectionists assert that any economic benefit from tariffs cannot offset the harm they cause (Korn, 2021). The African Union (2020) notes that while a non-tariff environment has proven to benefit regional and international trade, there is evidence that it can also have destabilising effects for some regions or economies. The African Union therefore suggests a non-protectionist stance albeit with due consideration of risks that this might bring.

Under AfCFTA, a less protectionist, rather than a complete, non-tariff environment is proposed (Apiko, Woolfrey & Byiers, 2020).

Table 2.3. highlights product tariffs on least developed and non-list developed countries. The table also demonstrates that only a limited number of products will continue to have tariffs paid on them.

Table 2.3. Product tariffs on least developed and non-list developed countries "Source: Extracted from AU (2019).

	Least developed countries (LDCs)	Non-Least developed countries (non-LDCs)
Full liberalisation	90% of tariff lines	90% of tariff lines
	10-year phase down	5-year phase down
Sensitive products	7% of tariff lines	7% of tariff lines
	13-year phase down (current tariffs can be maintained during first 5 years – phase down starting in year 6)	10-year phase down (current tariffs can be maintained during first 5 years – phase down starting in year 6)
Excluded products	3% of tariff lines	3% of tariff lines

In the first ten years, less developed African economies are expected to remove tariffs on 90% of their goods while the relatively more developed countries are expected to achieve the same target in five years (African Union, 2019; Apiko, Woolfrey & Byiers, 2020). As targeted, only 3% of products will continue to carry tariffs after the defined timelines.

2.5.1.1 The non-protectionist view

According to Meti (2021), tariffs serve three core functions. They provide revenue to states through charges collected from exports and imports; they protect local industries from adverse import-driven competition; and they are used as bargaining or punitive tools in international trade. The African Union (2020) agrees that tariffs are an import revenue source for many African governments which is why their liberalisation should not be haphazardly executed. The African Union notes, however, that given that trade in Africa is already low, the removal of tariffs might not have a significantly unmanageable effect. To justify this view, the AU (2020) asserts that only 0.1% of GDP from African countries comes from tariffs raised through intra-Africa trade. This is in comparison to 1.5% raised in trade with non-African economies. This suggests that African countries have very little to lose, if anything, from the removal of tariffs among African countries (African Union, 2020). Further to that, it states that "At the continental level, tariff revenue losses would be fully offset by gains in GDP by the mid-2030s", indicating a view that any such losses of revenue will be a temporary or short-term affair.

Tariffs are associated with the problem of productive resources misallocations because they protect industries and result in economic entities buying local products that are produced at higher costs than imports and compel consumers to subsidise local firms for inefficiencies (Longley, 2018; Korn, 2021; Kilumelume *et al.*, 2021). Under protective tariff regimes, firms may see no need to improve their efficiencies in comparison with regional or international competitors, yet inflationary pressures result that also adversely affect consumers (Korn, 2021; Kilumelume *et al.*, 2021). As Kilumelume *et al.* (2021) argue, tariffs can also result in local firms overpricing their goods on the basis that there is very little international competition. The above scholars therefore see tariffs as a phenomenon that directly and adversely affects the poor consumer.

2.5.1.2 The protectionist view

The protectionist view justifies the existence of tariffs based on the advantages and benefits that tariffs bring to economies as well as the purported harm they prevent (Longley, 2018; Korn, 2021). Tariffs protect local industries, especially in developing economies where industrialisation and productive efficiency is still too low for competition with the rest of the world (Longley, 2018). In so doing, tariffs increase the chances of industrial survival and therefore support entrepreneurial development. As argued, this comes with several socio-economic benefits that include job creation, wealth creation and distribution, and greater social stability (Balassa, Bertrand & Wonnacott, 2020). Balassa *et al.* (2020) further assert that governments may need to impose tariffs as a way of managing balance of payment deficits and unemployment and, depending on the outcomes, these actions are viewed by certain stakeholders as justifiable. According to Longley (2018), one of the reasons why protectionism fails is the belief that economies can become extremely self-sufficient and produce whatever their citizens require. In most scenarios this has proven to be unrealistic and forced many countries away from extremist protectionism (Longley, 2018).

2.5.2 The balanced view

Scholars like Balassa *et al.* (2020) assert that the manner in which both the protectionist and non-protectionist advantages and disadvantages are felt depends on country-specific dynamics. Under the balanced view, it is worth considering that "both total protectionism and free trade have been tried in the past, and the results were usually harmful." (Longley, 2018:1). This view is meant to discourage blanket imposition of either protectionist or non-protectionist views on economies. In countries with low import substitution, the introduction or increase of tariffs may not result in the protection of an industry as economic agents will still be forced to import, albeit at much higher prices (Balassa *et al.,* 2020). In low-income countries, there might be a need to protect infant industries against unfair trade practices that may be exercised by dominant regional trade partners (Longley, 2018). However, Longley (2018) further argues that such protectionist benefits will have short term benefits rather than long-term sustainable growth outputs. The balanced view is also confirmed by findings that show both positive and negative economic outcomes from tariffs. For instance, a study by Eugster (2022) titled "The Effect of Tariffs in Global Value Chains" found that tariffs stifled employment creation and economic activity at different value chain points, particularly lower and upper ends. Tariffs did, however, protect jobs and enhance economic activity on the middle level (production stages) of global value chains. These findings imply that African countries that mostly operate on the lower levels of global value chains could positively benefit from tariff removals or reductions.

2.5.3 Non-tariff barriers

The UNCTAD (2019) conceptualises a non-tariff barrier as any constraint excluding levies, taxes, customs duties or any administrative payments made to governments and government agencies when trading across borders. These barriers come from regulation, infrastructure and corruption,

among others, and because there are so many of them can generally be characterised as non-exhaustive (UNCTAD, 2019).

2.5.4 Infrastructure

Poor infrastructure is widely discussed as one of the major impediments to trade on the continent. It is believed that without adequate infrastructure, the AfCTFA's objectives of increasing trade across the region will not be realised (Deloitte, 2020). According to the OECD (2020), Africa's infrastructure lags significantly and fails to effectively support current trade. For instance, only 45% of Sub-Saharan African households have access to electricity while 65% have access to clean water. In terms of digital connectivity, only 18% of the African population have access to the internet while 77% have access to mobile technologies (OECD, 2020). These statistics indicate that the basic infrastructure necessary to sustain economic development is lacking and the OECD suggests that this prevents Africa from playing a significant industrial development role under the AfCFTA (OECD, 2020).

With regard to direct trade infrastructure that includes rail and road networks and border systems that facilitate trade connectivity, Berahabi and Dadush (2018) observe that Africa has 84 000 kilometres of rail over a 30 million square metre area in comparison to Europe with 211 409 kilometres of rail over 4 million square kilometres. This shows a very slow railroad penetration on the continent. In addition, there are poor road-to-rail network connections (Berahab & Dadush, 2018). UNCTAD has expressed concern that over the years this infrastructure has deteriorated giving an example that Africa had a longer road network 30 years ago than at the present time. NEPAD (2020) identifies border and port infrastructure and improved regional links between members as being an essential service. NEPAD (2020) further argues that most road and rail networks were designed to link Africa's major primary goods-producing areas with Europe. Such legacy infrastructure remains and challenges new road/rail connectivity networks that link African trade centres with each other (NEPAD, 2020).

There are nonetheless many infrastructure developments and upgrade projects across the continent, although their likely impact on facilitating increased trade is unclear (UN Economic Commission for Europe, 2017). The AU (2022) suggests that trade integration, therefore, needs to be linked with infrastructure integration to facilitate the cross-border and regional development of infrastructure that enables and facilitates trade.

According to Deloitte (2020) and the OECD (2020), the major reason behind Africa's trade infrastructure backlog is funding. This is followed by lack of technical capacity to develop such infrastructure. What is encouraging, however, is that Africa's capacity to fund its own infrastructural development has been increasing. The African Development Bank (AfDB) is the second-largest funder of bulk infrastructure on the African continent, second to the World Bank (OECD, 2020). Nonetheless, the OECD comments that new regional infrastructural funding models that do not depend solely on state actors are needed. Deloitte (2020) sees increasing public-private partnerships as a potential solution to both funding and technical infrastructure development challenges on the continent.

2.5.5 Political will

Political will is a general term that refers to the commitment of political leaders to bring about, support and drive change. Hence it is described as a key requirement in the successful implementation of desired or communicated policy change across public sector domains (Lassa *et al.*, 2018). Strachan (2018) maintains that political will is a critical determinant in the success of regional trade integration efforts and may influence how individual countries in a bloc experience different benefits from common trade and investment benefits. Political dilemmas that prevail in regional trade integration include agreement on the level and extent of national sovereignty a state is willing to give to a regional body (Ibrahim & Ogbeidi, 2015). These arguments underpin the debates on the theories of regional integration that are discussed later in this research. Taye (2019) asserts

that in Africa, there is evidence of low political will to implement trade treaties. Taye (2019) gives an example of the Abuja Treaty which, while being ratified, did not have most of its provisions coming into existence. Taye (2019) also believes that African leaders are split between paying their allegiance to different RECs and this results in them not fully committing to any of them. In response to such views, Chibira and Moyana (2017) believe that unless regional trade development concerns supercede limited sovereignty concerns, intra-Africa trade will remain curtailed.

Chibira and Moyana (2017) further emphasise that African countries need to review priorities in policy frameworks to obviate a situation whereby sovereignty supersedes the need for economic growth, growing trade and development, as these circumstances contribute to the continued limitations on intra-Africa trade.

UNCTAD (2019) sees the high number of signatories of the AfCFTA as a sign of positive political goodwill. In total, 44 out of 55 countries were represented at the signing of the agreement in Kigali in 2018. The UNCTAD (2019) however, cautions about the need to capitalise on existing political goodwill to implement the agreement's major clauses in case such goodwill loses its momentum. This is in consideration of the fact that such political will has manifested itself as early as 2012 when discussions and negotiations on AfCFTA started.

In the past, REC related agreements and conventions have received more verbal support but very little to no implementation action support (Taye, 2019). This has been because they promise long-term rather than immediately realisable, more politically appealing, outcomes (UNESE, 2017). This is a risk and a threat that could also befall the AfCFTA, although there is evidence of comparatively greater leadership involvement than in the past (UNESE, 2017).

2.5.6 Unequal development

African countries exist at different levels of economic development. This results in challenges in seeking to create win-win situations (UNESE, 2017). A review by Abrego *et al.* (2020) highlights the extreme socio-economic parameters that exist in African countries. For instance, some have population sizes below 2 million while others have over 100 million persons. Aside from demographics, gross trade balance ranged from 38% to 140% of GDP as of 2020, highlighting differing and unbalanced trade benefits on the continent (Abrego, *et al.*, 2020). Such differences are also reflected in country classification by income. Close to 50% of the continent's countries were classified as low-income and the other half were middle-income countries. More economically advanced economies could benefit more as exporters while the less-developed economies will shift their role of exporting low-value primary resources to other African countries instead of Europe, the Americas or Asia (UNESE, 2017). The continuation of such practises could discourage participation and result in AfCFTA stalling (UNESE, 2017).

Currently, there is much evidence that some African countries were performing very poorly in terms of integrating with the various blocs and regional bodies that they belonged to (African Union, 2021). For instance, in 2019, 25 countries recorded a trade integration index below average and considering that this average was already too low at 0.383 out of a possible maximum of 1.0, this was considered a concerning situation (African Union, 2021). A systematic literature review by Strachan (2018) revealed that regional trade integration might not result in a whole region experiencing economic growth, although individual members may benefit more and experience above regional average economic growth. This highlights a tendency of some members to gain more than others from such arrangements (Strachan, 2018).

Mcleod and Luke (2019) suggest that the Americas trade agreement failed

as it did not take into account the heterogeneous developmental stages of its members. There was also a perception that it was developed and driven by the high-income states for their benefits. As these two authors warn, Africa is not immune to making such mistakes. This serves as important guidance on what not to do in an economic pact of the AfCFTA magnitude.

2.5.7 Political and economic hegemony

Hegemony occurs when one country assumes economic and political power over others. A hegemon dominates regional policies including the trade agenda and often to the displeasure of fellow countries. For example, Nagar (2020) suggests that South Africa may be observed as a hegemony within its Southern African Customs Union (SACU).

Diverging conceptual views on regionalism between South Africa as one of Africa's strongest economies and its continental partners are not a threat to AfCFTA's success yet they are of some concern (Nagar, 2020). Nagar (2020) goes further to explain that while continental partners theoretically prefer pan-Africanist based regional integration, South Africa prefers a "functionalist" one, that works regardless of philosophy. It is for this reason that South Africa interacts with its BRICS partners and adopts a trade investment and attraction focus aimed at the developed economies (Nagar, 2020) and overall, Nagar fears that this perpetuates a trade divergence rather than a trade convergence trend.

A study by Ishiguro (2017) found negative relationships between economic and political hegemonies (as measured by GDP and trade capacity) and the formation of PTAs. As hegemonic powers decreased in comparison to regional non-hegemonic states, PTA growth tended to increase indicating that for PTAs to work effectively, members needed to enhance their GDPs to counter the dominance of a hegemony.

2.5.8 Primary commodities and undiversified economies

The UNCTAD (2019) comments that intra-Africa trade was being hampered by excessive reliance on primary goods exports. Primary goods exports resulted in high volume but low-value trade flows among countries and in turn this decreased values of trade (UNCTAD, 2019). In other regions, however, countries were able to increase intra-REC trade values through value-addition (UNCTAD, 2019). According to Gazzan and Hassani (2021), the development of regional value chains that support inter-African value addition is a critical step toward achieving AfCFTA success. Nubong (2021) links value chain enhancement with a need for rapid industrialisation and this calls for a regional developmental approach that involves countries assisting lowly-industrialised countries to catch up (Nubong, 2021). Figure 2.6 shows Africa's exports with the rest of the world in monetary value terms.

Figure 2.6: Africa exports with the rest of the world: "Source: Extracted from UNCTAD (2021)
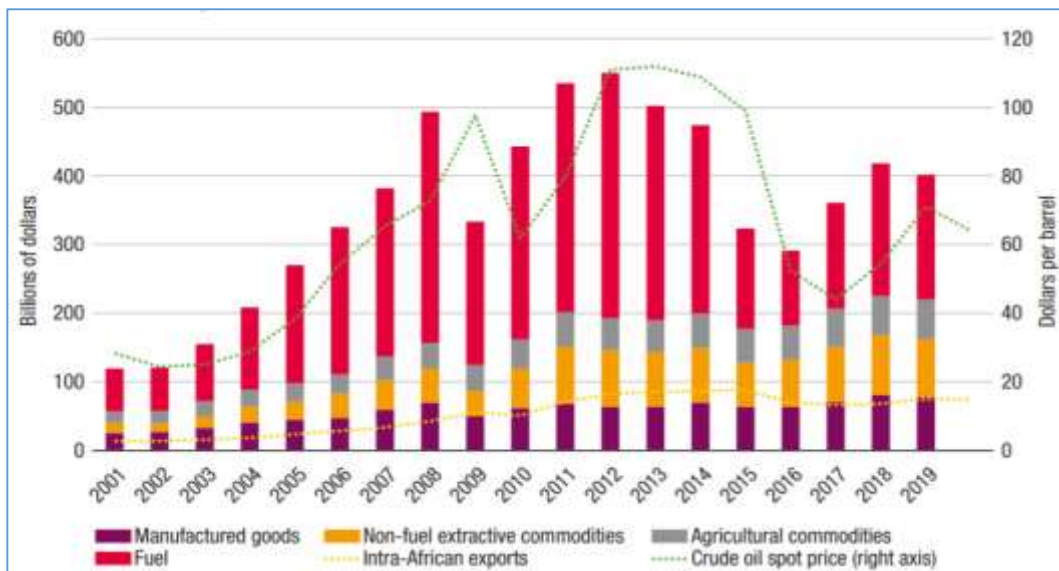
The above chart shows that while exports in manufactured products have been gradually increasing, exports in primary commodities were even higher. Agricultural products and non-fuel minerals were almost twice as

much as the export of manufactured goods in any given year from 2001 to 2019 (UNCTAD, 2021). The UNCTAD (2021) clarifies that this high degree of dependency on low-value chain export activities increased the continent's vulnerability to global commodity price volatilities (Asante-Poku & van Huellen, 2021). However, African countries tended to trade more manufactured goods in percentage terms amongst each other than with the rest of the world and the increase of Intra-Africa manufactured goods exports has recorded continuous growth since 2001, and this could be exploited to further enhance trade through rapidly ensuring more enabling conditions.

2.5.9 Inbuilt agreement drawbacks

The UNESE (2017) cautions that no REC or trade bloc agreement is perfect. As such, continuous improvement on terms, conditions and meanings that may impede the agreement from moving towards its goals should be managed. UNESE (2017) uses the example of the Brexit situation where Britain chose to exit the European Union, citing unfairness and disadvantage to its economy. According to Yuanyuan (2018), trade agreements between countries can be continuously improved to meet new developments or to address old but pertinent issues that include perceptions of unfairness, among others. Continuous improvement can be a solution in ensuring trade agreement longevity.

Abrego *et al.* (2020) views agreement implementation complexities that emerge from conflicts between different REC policies and laws as contributing to the failure of a number of trade agreements in the continent due to poor implementation and a lack of support and guidance. Different countries that form part of regional blocs possess different levels of bloc agreement implementation capacity. This may be due to different reasons that include human capital development and the effectiveness and efficiency of trade regulatory and operational systems to adapt to meet regional demands (Strachan, 2018).

With specific reference to the AfCFTA, Berahab and Dudash (2021) list inclusivity issues, rule of origins complications and product exceptions as potential inbuilt treaty challenges. They believe the rule of origins was complex and cumbersome and could motivate trade with third parties. They furtherbelieve that all and not only some of the continent's products should be governed under the AfCFTA trade policies similar to European REC systems and in line with the World Trade Organisation's Article 40 on free trade area regulation. Nubong (2021) further believes that a developmental rather than a trade approach should drive the AfCFTA. In their argument, many of Africa's countries lack the necessary capacity to benefit from AfCFTA due to excessive underdevelopment. With the AfCFTA focusing more on trade rather than development, these countries are bound to be overlooked. This view resonates with ENECE (2017) which suggests that unequal development may lead to ineffective RECs as some members may not be in a position to benefit from them.

2.5.10 Trade policies, processes and systems

A common theme that emerges in AfCFTA and general REC development discussions is the need to create uniform trade and investment regulatory systems and structures. Many scholars, including George (2019), Nubing (2021) and El-Gassani and Hassani (2021) believe that unless trade processes across Africa are immediately standardised, the AfCFTA would fail to reach its potential targets. Common standardisation issues included trade documentation requirements, rules of origin regulation consistency, product quality standards and regulation in trade dispute resolutions (Nubing, 2021; El-Gassani & Hassani, 2021). George further adds the need for a unified regional currency as part of bringing about a uniform trade environment on the continent. The trade policy challenges on the continent are a result of increasing individualism and national protectionist tendencies by some states (El-Gassani & Hassani, 2021). At the same time, the existence of multiple RECs in which African states have multiple membership complicates the trade policy systems.

One of the commonly discussed problem areas in intra-Africa trade is border management (Anouche & Boumaaz, 2020). Border management is defined as "the government functions of immigration, customs and excise, and policing, with the aim of controlling and regulating the flow of people and goods across a country's physical border or boundary" (Southern Africa Trust (2021: 2). Administrative and operational hurdles at borders reduce the time and cost efficiencies of trade resulting in high trade costs (Barka, 2012; Kathuria, 2018). Such inefficiencies are further compounded when land-locked countries that do not have access to sea ports are involved (Kathuria, 2018). The value of agricultural products and other perishable output is often lost at border posts as delays reduce freshness and quality (Barka, 2012). Corruption is presented as one of the major challenges at border posts (Barkar, 2012) and a response to highly bureaucratic systems. It is important to note that the respondents did not discuss this as a challenge that incapacitated border operations. Uncoordinated border activities in most African borders result in traders and travellers having to go through too slow and bureaucratic systems (Barka, 2012; UNECA). This means at each border post, traders encounter multiple regulatory agencies that include tax and revenue authorities, road freight regulators, immigration, agricultural produce inspections, and law enforcement, among others (Barka, 2012; Anouche & Boumaaz, 2020). These agencies are poorly coordinated with each other (Southern Africa, Trust, 2021). In its June 2021 report, the Southern Africa Trust listed the following challenges at Southern Africa border posts:

a. Limited operation times – some border posts operated for 24 hours a day while others did not.

b. Excessive traffic and congestion – due to the low operating capacities (small facilities and few staff members) as well as limited operational times, most borders failed to cope with traffic volumes.

c. Excessive administrative work at borders – freight clearing services and customs matters were still centralised at borders, also causing congestion and delays.

d. Corruption as parties took advantages of delays whilst others attempted to circumvent harsh regulations.

e. The dominance of dual border systems – most border posts were not coordinated and there were fewer than five one-stop-border posts in the region.

f. The employment of unskilled trade logistics and administrative personnel.

g. Freight logistics challenges, including shortages or absence of bonded warehouses.

Some scholars believe that such challenges can be resolved through coordinated border management (CBM) approaches. These approaches are a first attempt to coordinate internal functions within a border before further coordination with others (World Customs Organisation, 2018). The World Customs Organisation (2018) further describes the coordinated border management approach by both domestic and international border control agencies to be an important pursuit of greater efficiencies over management of travel and trade flows, while preserving an equilibrium with compliance requirements. It is important to note that CBM is almost impossible without changes and realignment in legislation on trade and migration and regulations on border operations. Thus border-level challenges are a sign of uncoordinated or old regulatory systems. As the Southern Africa Trust (2021) notes, while the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries ratified one-stop-border systems, these are still very few owing to regulatory hurdles as some countries' laws have not been updated to reflect this type of system. Anouche and Boumaaz (2020) believe that border coordination in Africa can be improved through using the fourth industrial revolution technologies. These could facilitate a quicker exchange of information, shared data and transaction processing and better digital security. The outcome of this, as expected by Anouche and Boumaaz (2020), is the provision of better border services to traders and travellers. Chibira and Moyana (2017) argue that border management improvement will not have a

significant impact on intra-African trade as there are other regulatory and political commitment factors that have more significant negative pulls on intra-Africa trade.

2.5.11 The role of SMEs

Small-to-medium sized enterprises are a common and growing socio-economic phenomenon on the African continent. These entities that employ from as few as one person are considered a critical employment vehicle, as well as income generation and poverty alleviation mechanisms in many parts of the continent (Mujaja, 2019). By their nature, these entities exist as both formal and informal businesses, as privately owned entities as well as community enterprises and co-operatives, among others (Mhlope, 2021; Zonwire, 2021).

Woolfrey and Karkare (2021) note that very few SMEs in Africa are involved in direct exports. Compared to Europe's 24%, only 13% of Africa's SMEs are direct exporters although some are indirect exporters who provide goods that are eventually exported by other export value chain players. Woolfrey and Karkare (2021) cite compliance hurdles that include product certifications and obtaining export permits as a major hindrance to increasing SME exports. In addition, SMEs risk economic exclusion and have comparatively less access to markets, finance and infrastructure (Mhlope, 2021). This exclusion also extends to regional and international trade (Abdulquadir, 2021) and the exclusion occurs even if SMEs employ and benefit the majority of African populations. Their exclusion therefore creates exclusion risks for poorer populations that could benefit from increased businesses and employment coming from intra-Africa trade (Abdulquadir, 2021). One of the ways of enhancing SME participation in intra-Africa trade is through capacity building (UNECA, 2021). This involves the upskilling of entrepreneurs on continental market entry and export and import financial systems (UNECA, 2021).

2.5.12 Stakeholder involvement in intra-Africa trade

Intra-Africa trade is a multistakeholder phenomenon. Stakeholders that include government regulatory and administrative agencies, financial institutions, the private sector, and donor communities interplay and affect the continental trade systems in various ways (Chibira &Moyana, 2015). One of the key processes that is needed in the facilitation of intra-Africa trade is the creation of interest, commitment and synergy among the stakeholders (Chibira & Moyana, 2015).

Kombo (2020) believes that role clarity among stakeholders was important for the minimisation of conflict, hence the AU as the custodian of intra-Africa trade initiatives that includes the AfCFTA must facilitate this process. Kombo (2020) lists important stakeholders who might not play a direct role in the actual trade processes as human rights entities, civic organisations, and trade unions. While Chibira and Moyana (2017) and Kombo (2020) takes governments, RECs and the private sector as central stakeholders whose actions can lead to the success or failure of intra-Africa trade, although there are many supporting groups as well. Furthermore, Jordaan (2014) believes that intra-Africa trade has failed to economically uplift the continent because of limited private sector participation. This suggests the need for more extensive engagement between government and businesses in negotiating and implementing regional trade pacts. It was important to ensure that regional trade agreements and plans are based on developing and supporting a private sector that can harness any benefits from such agreements. This therefore demands the creation of an enabling regulatory and operational environment for entrepreneurship and business (Yushi & Borojo, 2019). Stevens (2021) reiterates the need to support a robust private sector that has adequate production capacity to provide finished goods as an indispensable requirement for the success of intra-Africa trade.

Multilateral funding institutions are discussed as critical stakeholders mostly responsible for funding and strategically supporting intra-Africa trade

(McKenzie, 2022). According to McKenzie (2022), there has been a general decline in trade financing activities by African banks over the years. They report that between 2013 and 2019, total trade finance made available to the continent fell by 18%. The Global Trade Review (2021) attributes this to decreasing profitability in trade-finance lending as well as increasing risks and regulation. This, in their view, has resulted in a severe trade finance deficit that demands committed funding action from entities such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Import and Export Bank (McKenzie, 2022). According to the Global Trade Review (2021), 80% of world trade is financed by trade finance entities. With Africa facing a trade finance gap, immediate solutions that included the actions of multilateral banks were necessary. Phillip (2021) discusses the African Import and Export Bank as assuming a significant portion of the continent's trade finance needs. Additionally, it was supporting trade development through market access activities that included trade fairs (Phillip, 2021).

2.5.13 Political instability and intra-Africa trade

Political instability and regional security concerns are some of the challenges that affect intra-Africa trade and these are also perceived as potential threats to the success of the AfCFTA (George, 2019; WEF, 2020). The Institute of Security Studies (ISS) (2022) lists six countries as potentially major war hotspots in 2022, namely Libya, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Northern Mozambique, Ethiopia and Cameroon. This therefore suggests a war in every region of Africa. Sources of instability on the continent include religious and political extremism, the existence of unregulated armed militia, civil and ethnic conflicts, and military coups, among others (ISS, 2022). These conflicts distract from developmental efforts and deprive communities of any chances of economic prosperity (ISS, 2022). According to Wook (2017), political instability disrupts trade routes and redirects the continent's focus from developmental economics and politics towards conflict resolution. Most commonly, economic activity is undermined and the

fear of instability discourages both current and future local and foreign investment (Wook, 2017). In Africa, wars have also tended to destabilise whole regions rather than individual and warring nations.

Regionalisation can be threatened by political instability while at the same time regionalisation is seen as a solution to such instabilities (Aniche, *et al.*, 2021). Grand theories of regional integration also take regionalisation as a solution to national security (Börzel & Risse, 2019). Nonetheless, evidence on the African continent shows both possibilities. In cases where regional leaders lack adequate commitment to regional treaties, insecurities are bound to increase as acts of instability are not met with decisive actions from members (Nathan, 2013). Nathan gives examples of SADC highlighting how the body's leadership has shown reluctance to intervene in conflicts in the region. Naude (2013) cites cases that include the Angolan civil war, the Zimbabwean political crisis, the Madagascar coup of 2009 and various electoral, political and constitutional crises that occurred in Malawi, and Zambia, among others, as indications that the region does need to resolve instabilities. As of 2013, Naude (2013) believes that the SADC region had not had any successful peacekeeping efforts or security threat resolutions. Similarly, in West Africa, inadequate regional bloc intervention has seen the region becoming one of the most politically unstable and war-prone zones in Africa (Marc, *et al.*, 2015). Four Western African countries (Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone) have experienced complete state system collapse in the face of civil wars and coups (Marc, *et al.*, 2015).

2.6 Intra-Africa trade and sub-regional bodies

Africa has the largest number of RECs in the world and yet continues on a trajectory of low economic growth and rising poverty. This suggests existing regional and continental integration (Joboku, 2015 and Aniche, 2015) adds to the existence of many regional blocs on the continent but is not a positive development but rather a problem on its own. As Aniche (2015) and Kassa and Sawadogo (2021) assert, the regionalisation has furthered the

disintegration of the continent rather than its unification, as many RECs with conflicting and clashing needs and demands cause further divisions among already disintegrated systems. Such views suggest that the roles of the AfCFTA in such a multi-REC and disintegrated environment may require review and critical examination.

Abrego *et al.* (2020) suggests that African bloc-related trade exists under three broad systems. The first is under Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) with continental and off-continental partners. The second is through RECs including countries within and without the continent. Finally, Africa has trade agreements between regional blocs and these are spread across its several regions guided by specific regional blocs. The administration of the relationships between and across these formations must be considered under the AfCFTA while noting that countries were not completely at liberty to eventually withdraw from these or implement changes that could be seen as contradicting old arrangements (Kassa & Sawadogo, 2021).

The SADC, COMESA and ECOWAS are the largest REC while the Tripartite Free Trade Area is the largest FTA on the continent. The complex linkages indicate all countries being a member of one or more agreements, and such agreements being interconnected as well. It is this institutional complexity that Abrego *et al.* (2020) believe could adversely affect AfCFTA's members' ability to migrate to AfCFTA while complying with the varying provisions under these many entities. However, Vickers (2022) comments that even though Africa has the most RECs globally, some of them lack the recognition and significance to influence members' actions. Kassa and Sawadogo (2021) believe that the ECOWAS and the SADC were the only RECs with a major trade and economic footprint on the continent. On the other hand, the African Union recognises only eight of these as official and significant (UNECA, 2021). These are the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), SADC, COMESA, EAC, Intergovernmental Authority of Development (IGAD), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and

the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) (Vickers, 2022). From this perspective, there are arguably fewer RECs, considering the 55 states of Africa as depicted in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7: African Regional Economic Communities as of 2020: "Source: Extracted from Vickers (2022).
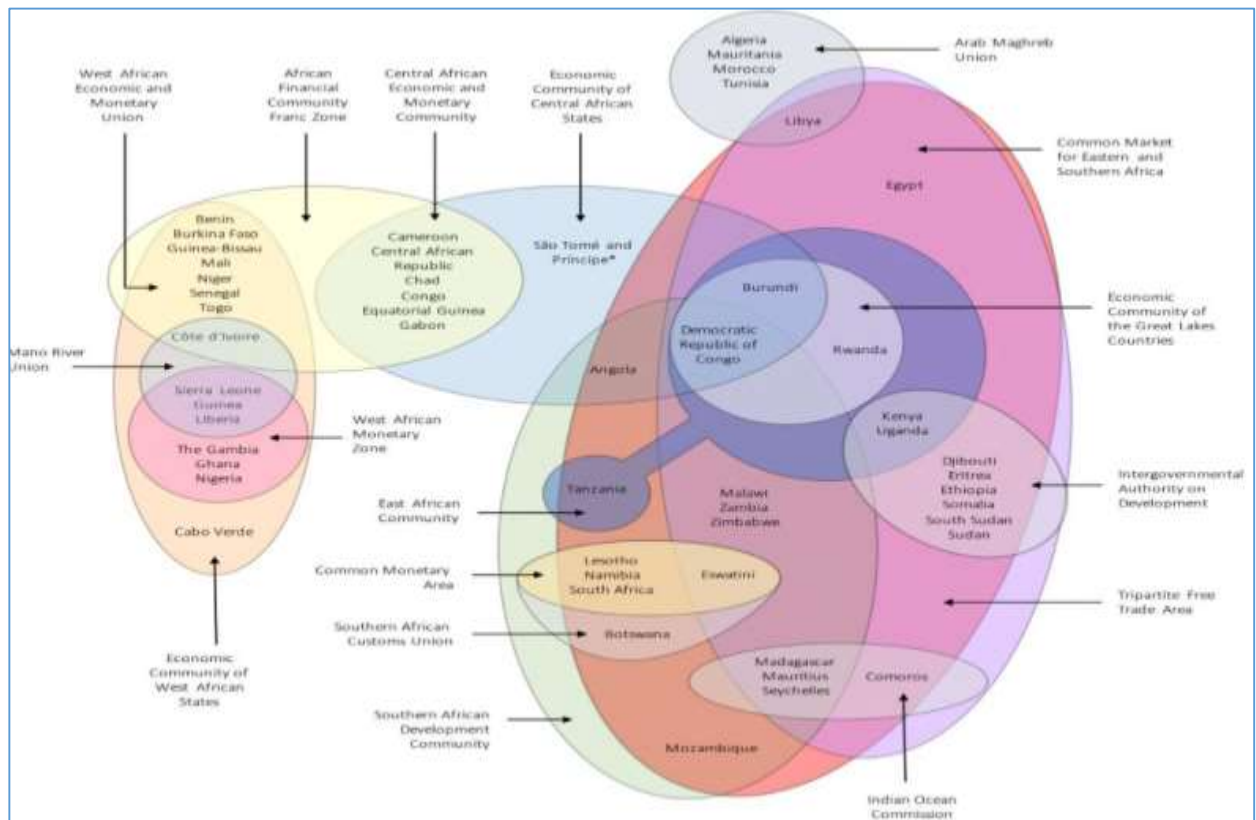
Figure 2.7 further illuminates that some of the states have their membership with more than one REC in an attempt to broaden their economic opportunities. The World Bank (2020) believes that the AfCFTA will improve the regulatory and policy-level interaction among and within sub-regional economic bodies like SADC and ECOWAS, among others. Currently, the sub-regional bodies' focus and concerns do not cover critical economic cooperation areas like intellectual property and investment protection laws. Their focus has mainly been on the improvement of non-tariff barriers management. The AfCFTA comes with a wider and more comprehensive system that facilitates regional investment management and administration (Eras-

mus, 2021). These complement and potentially improve the roles and inter-actions of regional bodies under a common investment law and policy re-gime (World Bank, 2020).

On the continent, different regional economic blocs (RECs) have diverging trade and investment policies and models. These differ in terms of effective-ness and targeted country uptake (UNESE, 2017). The AfCFTA could act as a REC standardisation mega policy to ensure that these bodies become more effective continental trade facilitators (UNESE, 2017; Erasmus, 2021). In the researcher's view, the degree and extent to which individual RECs are willing to give up some of their powers to allow the AfCFTA to take a supranational authority position is a key determinant of the AfCFTA's suc-cess. This creates a dilemma as AfCFTA's success will be determined by how third-party RECs will respond to the need for regional harmonisation. Historically, the formation of many uncoordinated RECs highlights Africa's appetite for the defragmentation of power and it remains to be seen if these RECs will give way for the full and undisturbed implementation of the AfCFTA, even if this means they will lose an element of their power, with some risking becoming irrelevant altogether.

2.6.1 Theories of regional integration

The international trade theories, as discussed under section 1.8 above, rep-resent a body of knowledge that encompass the prevailing contributions be-ing pursued by key scholars in the subject matter under consideration. Ac-cording to Smith (1994), international trade theory is a sub-field of econom-ics which analyses the patterns of international trade, its origins, and its welfare implications. The importance of international trade theories is in ex-plaining and facilitating international trade because an inadequately in-formed position on international trade can severely affect a country's long-term financial status. Coldwell (2000) argues that international competitive-ness, within the context of trade in goods and services, refers to the nation's trade advantage over the rest of the world and occurs whenever a nation's

economic condition improves because of trade. Hence Porter's (1990) competitive advantage of nations theory underpins this study. For a balanced and integrative approach purposes, it is important to also analyse the prevailing theories of regional integration as outlined below.

In considering theories of regional integration, it is notable that a set of three theories dominate the discourse on why and how regional blocs are formed. These theories, also collectively referred to as the grand theories of regional integration or regional integration schools of thought, are the intergovernmental, neo-functionalist and post-functionalist theories (Hooghe & Marks, 2019) or classical theories of regional integration (Laursen, 2008). According to Laursen (2008), these theories were designed with a Eurocentric perspective specifically aiming to develop and enhance an understanding of the European Economic Community (EEC). Nonetheless, these theories have been applied to other parts of the world including Asia and Latin America (Laursen, 2008). This section discusses these grand theories and in relation to the formation of the AfCFTA. The Pan-Africanist theories of regional integration are discussed as a single body of independent theories advanced by various scholars and institutions over the years.

2.6.1.1 Intergovernmentalism

The intergovernmental set of theories asserts that regional integration through the formation of regional blocs, economic zones and trade areas, among others, are driven by governments (Schimmelfennig, 2018; Borzel & Rise, 2019). This is also referred to as liberal intergovernmentalism to distinguish from regional cooperation within and among formed command economies. Intergovernmentalism was propounded by Hoffmann (1966) with major additions and refinements to the theory being made by Moravcsik (1983; 1996).

According to the theory, governments establish RECs with the realisation that they must give up a certain level of autonomy to regional bodies in return for an established set of economic, political and social benefits (Borzel & Rise, 2019). For instance, governments can realise that to increase national security, being part of a regional bloc to which they cede certain aspects of their security policies will offset their authority losses as they achieve more in state security. Similarly, in economic and trade policy, governments may notice that their trade policies have better economic benefits for their territories if they are integrated with regional trade policies (Schimmelfennig, 2018).

Regional integration thus reflects the power of sovereign governments to choose to be part of a regional system. They do this by weighing whether they will achieve more by giving up part of their power or not. The theory therefore views governments as powerful entities and central players in regionalisation. Consequently, the terms and conditions of regional blocs are determined by the governments involved, and these are theoretically optimised to meet the collective needs of these governments as well.

Laursen (2008) expands on the work of Moravcsik (1993; 1998) and highlights the following framework presented in figure 2.8 which is based on how the REC was formed and developed.

Figure 2.8: Intergovernmentalism framework: "Source: Extracted form Laursen (2008).

Stages	National Preference Formation	Interstate Bargaining	Institutional Choice
Alternative independent variables underlying each stage	What is the source of underlying national preferences?	Given national preferences what explains the efficiency and distributional outcomes of interstate bargaining?	Given substantive agreement, what explains the transfer of sovereignty to international institutions?
	Economic interests or Geopolitical interests?	Asymmetrical interdependence or Supranational entrepreneurship?	Federalist ideology or Centralized technocratic management or More credible commitment?
Observed outcomes at each stage	Underlying national preferences	Agreements on substance	Choice to delegate or pool decision-making in international institutions

In the above framework, from left to right with the first stage of forming or joining a regional body, a state questions and assesses how its economic and/or geopolitical desires will either be addressed or compromised by its membership. This is based on the view that governments have a set of known national economic and geopolitical priorities and needs and their responses to proposals for regional integration will be guided by existing national policy (Laursen, 2008). The second stage involves bargaining and negotiations among nations, these being driven by each nation's interest in ensuring the best economic and geopolitical outcomes based on its existing policy interests. As highlighted by Laursen (2008), Moravcsik's (2008) framework introduces a debate on who then drives this bargaining and negotiation process, and two forces that emerge are "asymmetrical interdependences" and "supranational entrepreneurship". In the former, states considered powerful can assume more power in the negotiation processes

and in the latter, an existing or new institution can drive the process. After the general agreement to form a regional bloc is reached, negotiation shifts on the type and structure of the body that best represents the interest of a particular region (Laursen, 2008). This is where the arguments for or against federal approaches or less centralised regional systems are decided. As highlighted above, different types of economic agreements from free trade areas up to political unions exist (African Union, 2021; Vickers, 2022). It is the researcher's interpretation of the narrative that the power dynamics of each regional formation versus the powers of individual states eventually determine the type of regional formation that comes into existence.

a) Intergovernmentalism and regional integration in Africa

Some scholars have examined intergovernmentalism from an Afrocentric perspective, specifically how this particular line of thought is reflected in the continent's bloc creation efforts. Nzewi (2011) is among the scholars who believe that the intergovernmentalism groups of theories can explain some, but not all, the aspects of regional integration in Africa. While African regional integration processes to some extent exhibited the patterns shown in Moravcsik's framework as discussed by Laursen (2008), some substantive behavioural elements differed significantly. Similarities existed in the attempts to balance national interests with regional integration needs, in relation to the general grand bargaining stages and the institution-form and type determination stages (Nzewi, 2011). What differed was the content of agreement processes and the level of treaty commitment that African regional integration agreements came with. Nzewi (2011:898) introduces the concept "treaty rhetoric" in relation to African treaties on regional integration. African leaders were generally interested in agreement on any treaty elements that seemed to create strength in numbers and openly supported sovereign power reduction that might be required to make treaties imple-

mentable (Nzewi, 2011; Igwe *et al.*, 2021). However, nations expressed re-sistance to regional treaty implications, indicating a strong desire to hold on to full sovereignty instead (Nzewi, 2011; Ibrahim & Ogbeidi, 2015).

Nzewi (2011), Ibrahim, and Ogbeidi (2015) further assert that the AU's for-mation and progression over the years is a strong testimony to Africa's in-tergovernmentalism stance. The AU was seen as a slow-moving body in asserting integration as a result of the reluctance of states to relinquish their sovereignty. It was the African states rather than the AU as a supranational body that drove the pace of continental integration in Africa (Ibrahim & Og-beidi, 2015). The two authors further highlight this as an undesirable situa-tion that threatened the AU with dysfunctionality and irrelevance. Intergov-ernmentalism tendencies are also widely observable in the failure of ECO-WAS to bring rapid regional integration to West Africa (Igwe *et al.,* 2021). State players continue to wield powers that enable them to surpass regional treaties without consequence. They cite Nigeria's 2019 arbitrary closure of trade routes in direct defiance of ECOWAS treaties as a recent example of this (Igwe *et al.*, 2021).

b) Intergovernmentalism and the AfCFTA

Manboah-Rockson (2021) maintains that the AfCFTA formation exhibits in-tergovernmentalism approaches juxtaposed with functionalist and neo-functionalist thinking. Focusing on the intergovernmental aspects of the AfCFTA treaty building and implementation processes, the power of individ-ual governments supersedes both existing free trade area agreements and AU aspirations. Manboah-Rockson (2021) observes that, for example, free trade areas that are supposed to cede to the AfCFTA have still not done so and this results in multiple free trade area agreements. This is an example where governments as part of free trade areas (FTA's) are too powerful for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA to be realised (Manboah-Rock-son, 2021). Manboah-Rockson (2021) simultaneously sees the AfCFTA as a part of the AU's decisive plan for effective regionalisation that is driven by

RECs rather than governments. In this regard, there is an anti-intergovernmental component to the AfCFTA and this could create more powerful and robust trade cooperation that is driven by the region as a whole rather than by its individual governments.

2.6.1.2 Neo-functionalism

Neo-functionalism is a regional integration school of thought associated with the works of Haas since 1958 (Dedeoglu & Bilener, 2017). Dedeoglu and Bilener (2017) further argue that neo-functionalism developed as an attempt to explain the existence and evolution of European integration. According to Jiboku (2015), neo-functionalism differs from intergovernmentalism in that it is not based on the "spill-over" effects of policies (discussed later in this section) and it does not assume that non-state players have significant enough power to bring about any form of regional integration (Jiboku, 2015). Dunn (2012) emphasises the importance of non-state players, specifically the iron and coal industry's influence on the ideologies that informed the harmonisation of market and labour laws governing the trans-Europe component of the industry.

Nicoli (2019) explains the neo-functionalism theory according to its identifiable assumptions. These are: Bounded rationality, Constructed preferences, Distinctions between high and low politics, Government minimalism and policy synergies.

Bounded rationalism implies that governments, alongside other actors, made their decision to be part of a regional economic community with the knowledge of what to expect but with limitations as to choices and times. While they are rational in their choices, they are not in full control of existing challenges that influence them to join RECs. Nicoli (2019) further asserts that RECs are driven by high rather than low political priorities. This means that a more powerful political agenda on security and economics, that is, any agenda that threatens the existence of an individual state, is what drives

them towards integration. Any challenges that affect societies but are not considered threats to nation or state existence do not drive the REC agenda. The fourth assumption is that of governmental minimisation. Under it, it is assumed that governments are willing to lose only enough power to attain the resolution of the high political challenges they face. They are not willing to lose any power that is not necessary for state preservation (Nicoli, 2019; Hakan, 2019). The fifth assumption is that of the existence of synergies in national policies, where such synergy also affects regional policy. One policy works well in the company of others (Nicoli, 2019). Several scholars see the last assumption as the key tenet of neo-functionalism, also referred to as the spill-over effect of policy (Hakan, 2019).

According to Dedeoglu and Bilener (2017), policy spill-overs pressurise states into further cooperation and thereby drive the integration agenda beyond what individual states planned. For instance, a regional trade policy will work well if nations integrated it with economic regulatory policies as well, and as such states find themselves giving more power to supranational bodies than previously assumed (Hakan, 2019). As a result of spill-overs, regional bodies take a direction that is not ordinarily projected but which could be predictive (Dedeoglu & Bilener, 2017). The first stage is the emergence of integration stimulus which, as highlighted earlier, is a challenge that states are convinced they cannot tackle independently. Once regional policies have been put into motion in an attempt to arrest this supranational challenge, spill-overs come in and further and deeper integration comes into effect. Upon deep integration, complexities related to the need to preserve national identity may emerge. Supranational bodies like the AfCFTA, therefore, needed to gain the full confidence of citizens in member states as disintegration often sets in as citizens question and protest supranational authority (Dedeoglu & Bilener, 2017).

While intergovernmentalism is predicated on the view that governments are the main actors in regional integration, neo-functionalism is based on the

view that governments and other players are all involved in the motivation and formation of regional blocs and in regional integration in general (Börzel & Rise, 2019). The logic behind regional integration is based on two realisations – the first is that national governments do not have the capacity and ability to resolve geopolitical and economic challenges on their own (Schimmelfennig, 2018). Hence other non-state players are required at both local and international levels (Ibrahim & Ogbeidi, 2015). At the international level or regional level, governments need regional blocs to assist in the resolution of their internal problems and this includes the provision of public goods (Börzel & Risse, 2019). Supranational bodies rather than governments, therefore, drive regional integration.

a) Neo-functionalism and regional integration in Africa

Some sources view African regional integration with reference to neo-liberalism. According to Jiboku (2015), neo-functionalism can explain some of the integration challenges on the African continent, in that regionalisation requires nations to put interests ahead of identities. It is the common interest, like economic and security challenges, that should drive the agenda rather than national and regional identities as is presently often the case. In contrast, Aniche (2015) notes that the neo-functionalist frame of mind and the proliferation of so many RECs on the continent have divided rather than united Africa. Aniche (2015) cautions that neo-liberalism should therefore be problematised and nations and institutions should be guided by other paradigms.

Jiboku (2015) questions the commitment of African nations to cede authority to a supranational body that will drive regional policies. As a result of political instability and conflict as well as the disintegrated nature of African nations, governmental rather than regional body dominance impeded and disempowered regional bodies (Jiboku, 2015). According to Aworawo (2016), neo-functionalists assume that a given set of conditions must exist before a region can integrate. Aworawo (2016) notes that in Africa these could be

political stability and democracy, industrial capacities and the reduction of dependence on raw commodity exports. However, Dedeglou and Bilener (2017) counter that it was challenges rather than choices that drove nations towards integration and this is demonstrated by the proliferation of regional bodies on the continent. Nonetheless, the questionable effectiveness also prompts arguments on whether the basic conditions for a neo-functionalism dispensation in Africa have been met. In concurrence, Muzee and Eanifoghe (2019) assert that Africa may not be ready for neo-functionalist types of integration based on a disenabling economic environment. The continent lags behind in infrastructure which is needed to drive the integration stimulus (Muzee & Enaifoghe, 2019). Thus, even when conditions dictate regional integration for the resolution of identified economic and political challenges, this has not happened successfully, prompting Muzee and Eanifoghe (2019) to consider the possibility that Africa needs new and different theoretical approaches to regional integration.

2.6.1.3 Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism has been described as simultaneously an ideology, a theory and a movement (Kasanda, 2016; Oroluntoba, 2020). An ideology is defined as a method or the content of thinking characteristic of a group, an individual or culture or a methodical form of ideas, particularly about culture or human life (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022:1). As an ideology, Pan-Africanism relates to a collected body of ideas on what it means to be African. As a theory, Kasanda (2016) believes that Pan-Africanism encapsulates African identity, sovereignty and solidarity concerns as raised and discussed by various protagonists of this movement. According to Peter (2020), Pan-Africanism is associated with the ideologies expressed by African diaspora leaders that notably include Garvey (1922), who was regarded as the pioneer of Africanism. The movement's embodiment is the African Union, formerly the Organisation of African Unity (Wapmuk, 2021). In the twentieth century, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of democratic Ghana, is credited for expanding and further popularising Pan-Africanist

theories and ideologies (Ola, 1979). These theories include the economic perspectives of Pan-Africanism which are of significance to this study as they relate to intra-Africa trade as well.

Pan-Africanism and the AfCFTA

Wapmuk (2021) sees regional integration starting with the formation of the OAU in 1963 as Africa's attempt towards the realisation of Pan-African aspirations. These include, among others, the development of a united and self-sufficient Africa independent from political, social and economic dominance by other continents (Wapmuk, 2021). The AfCFTA is a direct product of Pan-Africanist thought and its intended actions to highlight the rejection of dominant political economies like Marxism and neo-liberalism towards an African-focused solution (Obeng-Odoom, 2020:167). In Obeng-Odoom's (2020) view, the AfCFTA is best described as non-aligned Pan-Africanism.

The above theoretical foundations highlight the challenges of placing the AfCFTA within any specific theory. The AfCFTA exhibits symptoms of inter-governmentalism, neo-functionalism and Pan-Africanism all juxtaposed. There is evidence of excessive governmental determination and control of the AfCFTA processes while low economic growth and regional insecurities point to a need for supranational bodies that have greater power over individual governments. The need to achieve African unity, growth and self-determination is also evident in AfCFTA discourse bringing in a Pan-Africanist interest in regional integration. The candidate believes that the AfCFTA may prosper under a neo-functionalist approach where the AU is afforded enough power and authority to fully implement the continent's economic and trade agenda. This supposition is based on the observation that one of the reasons for regional integration stagnation in Africa has been the granting of limited power to supranational bodies followed by a very limited political commitment to implement change. Under an intergovernmentalism

approach, this could be repeated in the case of AfCFTA, resulting in the limited or non-achievement of intended goals.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature from academic scholars and institutions. The literature indicates general agreement that intra-Africa trade is significantly underperforming. It also looked at both regional and international trade theories and it remained poignant that an international trade theory, Porter's competitive advantage of nations, is more appropriate for the study. What differed among scholars and institutions was the strength and significance of different causal factors derived from a list of causes. These causes can generally be categorised into political stability and security issues, political commitment to trade agreements, the existence of many REC and trade agreements, non-standardised trade policy environments and lack of adequate economic liberalisation on the continent. What needs to be answered through empirical research is whether the AfCFTA would be able to significantly increase Africa's trade in the presence of such barriers and impediments. There are also questions as to whether the AfCFTA is sufficiently empowered to dismantle unfair trade legacies with the rest of the world and also whether it will attain sufficient commitment and respect from heads of states and other politicians. The next chapter discusses the research methods used to interrogate the issues, challenges and problems that were identified in the literature study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research design is presented and the selected methodology chosen to carry out the research is explained. The overview of the theoretical underpinning the research design and methodology is given consideration. The inductive approach, sampling techniques, data collection and analysis methods, data integrity as well as ethical considerations are discussed before conclusion is arrived at. Creswell (2014), states that an inductive method is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis, which involves making sense of the data by dividing it into brief, summary format. The design of this study is qualitative study. The reasons behind the qualitative design are explained by referencing the work of several researchers. In selecting a procedural position, consideration was given to the various case study approaches to assess the design that best addresses the purpose of the study and that aligns with the worldview of the candidate. Steward (2014) suggests that the aim of such alignment is to achieve consistency between the philosophical position of the researcher, the research question, the research design and the approaches to be used. The views articulated by, amongst others, Creswell (2007), Hacking (1983), Yin (2014), Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) were considered with regard to procedures and the research tool used to record data in this study, as explained below.

Hacking (1983) argues that post-positivism recognises that all observation is fallible, except for minor differences, and there is no major difference between the way scientists think and work relative to the way people think in their everyday life. On the other hand, Yin (2014) advises that the selected design should provide maximum instrumentality to respond to the research

questions yet consider the strengths and limitations of each design and certain challenges to be averted during the process of implementation. Drawing on the perspective of Yin (2014), the research design consists of five components: question from the study, proposals, units of analysis, reasons for linking the information to the proposals, and sequencing for understanding the results.

Presenting an alternative view to Yin (2014), Stake (1995) supports the use of a flexible design, which permits researchers to make key changes even after proceeding from design to research. Stake's (1995) approach to research is qualitative and closely affiliated to constructivist and interpretivist alignment, since a strong motivation to uncover meaning and understand experiences in the context is reinforced. The role of the researcher in building this knowledge is critical. Stake (1995) emphasizes the interpretive role of the researcher as being central to the process of knowledge building. The knowledge gained through the research process is related to the study's time and background and the researcher is involved, by participating and contributing significantly to the study. Regarding epistemology, Stake (1995) contends that the situation in its context shapes activity, knowledge and interpretation of the case. Merriam (1998) maintains a constructivist method of dealing with research methodology, wherein the researcher expects that the truth is made inter-subjectively through socially and experientially developed implications and understandings.

3.2 Overview of the research design and methodology

Merriam (1998) provides more comprehensive guidance on data collection procedures with the aim of providing a rich holistic description that irradiates one's understanding of the phenomena and emphasizes that interviews are the most common technique for gathering qualitative data. Although Merriam (1998) does not suggest prioritising a strategy for information gathering or investigation, the significance of thorough measures is emphasised, that

will outline the research procedure by encouraging cautious planning, arranging, development, and execution of research within the logical structures, so that the research process is manageable, reasonable, thorough, reliable, and pertinent.

Based on the views presented above, the candidate has chosen to align the work in this study with the views presented by Merriam (1998), in which a step-by-step research design processes is presented in a detailed manner, including literature analysis, the development of a theoretical framework, the identification of a research problem, the elaboration and sharpening of research questions and the selection of the sample.

The research design, methodology, population and sampling, data collection and analysis, data integrity, ethical considerations, scope and limitations of the study will be examined in detail. According to Neuman (1997:89), a literature review is based on the assumption that knowledge builds up and that lessons are drawn from what others have done and then built on. Reviews of literature can take various forms: circumstantial, historic, hypothetical, integrative and procedural. Each type of examination has a specific objective. Neuman (1997:89) specifies that the objectives of a literature review are to prove the familiarity of the researcher with a body of knowledge that already exists on research topics and to create the reliability of such knowledge; to show the path of prior research and how the project underway is connected to research previously completed; to integrate and summarize what is known in and about the researcher's area; learning from others; and fostering new ideas.

3.3 The research design

According to Mouton (1996), the research design assists to "plan, structure and implement the research to maximise the legitimacy of the findings". It provides direction from the underlying philosophical assumptions related to

research design and data collection. Van Wyk (2012) observes that research design is the overall plan for connecting the theoretical research problems to appropriate and achievable empirical research. The research design articulates what data is required, what approaches should be used to collect and analyse this data, and how all of this is going to respond to the research question. Burns and Grove (2001) maintain that a research design helps the researcher to plan and implement the study in a manner that will assist in obtaining the required information, thus increasing the likelihood of obtaining information that could be associated with the real situation under consideration. The research design is an outline of how one aims to conduct the research (Thyer, in Fouché & De Vos, 1998; Mouton, 2001). Furthermore, Huysamen, in Fouché, *et al.* (1998), refines this definition by specifying that the blueprint offers the framework in accordance with which data is collected to inform the research hypothesis in the most efficient manner.

Creswell (2007) captures the complexity and extent of the concepts and descriptions of research design by describing research design as a qualitative approach whereby the researcher investigates a restricted system or number of restricted systems over time utilising thorough and detailed data including various sources of data such as "examinations, observations, interviews, varying media material, records and reports and in addition reports about case description and case-based topics". Based on the above definitions it can be said that the research design includes the logic or master plan of a research that creates a path for how the study will be conducted.

3.3.1 Ascertaining the research design for the study

Quantitative research entails generating numerical data or transforming data into usable statistics in order to quantify the problem. It is used to measure attitudes, views and behaviours and generalize results from a larger sample population. Qualitative research on the other hand is primarily ex-

ploratory research. A qualitative approach is used to determine the motivations, beliefs and reasons behind certain behaviours. It helps to develop ideas and hypotheses for possible quantitative research. A researcher in most instances is the main data collector. This study will therefore follow a qualitative design because the nature of the problem follows multi-methods and aims to explore practice and analyse content as well as historical data. For the purposes of this research, surveys and interviews were conducted with a sample of business people, stakeholders doing business on the continent, social partners, government officials, as well as investment agencies and political leaders.

In the context of this study, the selection of methods to be used by researchers is supported by scholars such as Domegan and Fleming (2007); Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2004); Denzin and Lincoln (2003); and Richardson (1995) who argue that human learning is best investigated using qualitative data. The above view is further supported by Myers (2009) who notes that qualitative research is intended to help researchers comprehend people and the social and cultural circumstances within which they live. Figure 3.1 highlights five research objectives.

Figure 3.1: Five Research Objectives (Maxwell, 1998).

1	2	3	4	5
Understanding the meaning that participants in a study give to the events, situations and actions that they are involved with; and of the accounts they give of their lives and experiences;	Understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence this context has on their actions;	Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generating new, grounded theories about them;	Understanding the process by which events and actions take place	Developing causal explanations

Figure 3.1 emphasises the importance of understanding many dynamics associated with the participants. For example, it is important to understand the meaning given by the participants in the study for accurate interpretation. This should also take into account particular context within which they act, identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, understanding the process by which actions events and actions take place, as well as developing casual explanations to their responses.

Spradley (2016) observes that he would appreciate the world from another person's viewpoint because he would like to identify with what other people know and identify with. He would further wish to comprehend the meaning of someone else's experience, to sense and describe things as someone else does. This research will examine why events occur (such as, why there are so many binding constraints for doing trade in the continent), what causes these constraints, what those events mean to the participants studied and the impact of these constraints as understood by participants. Qualitative research generally draws on constructivist beliefs that there is no single reality, but that the researcher elicits participants' views of reality.

3.3.2 The inductive approach to the qualitative study

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2007) state that the inductive approach focuses on data collection and theory development through data exploration and analysis by the researcher. Aligned with the view of Saunders *et al.* (2007), and Yin (2011) who state that inductive methods tend to lead to the development of theories by providing information. According to Thomas (2003), the rationale behind using an inductive approach include to condense raw documented information into summary format, to create clear links between research objectives and the summary conclusions derived from the raw data, as well as to build a framework of the underlying structure of experiences that are evident in the raw data.

An inductive approach can be contextualised within the four aspects as out-lined in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: **Inductive Approach in the Context of this Study.**
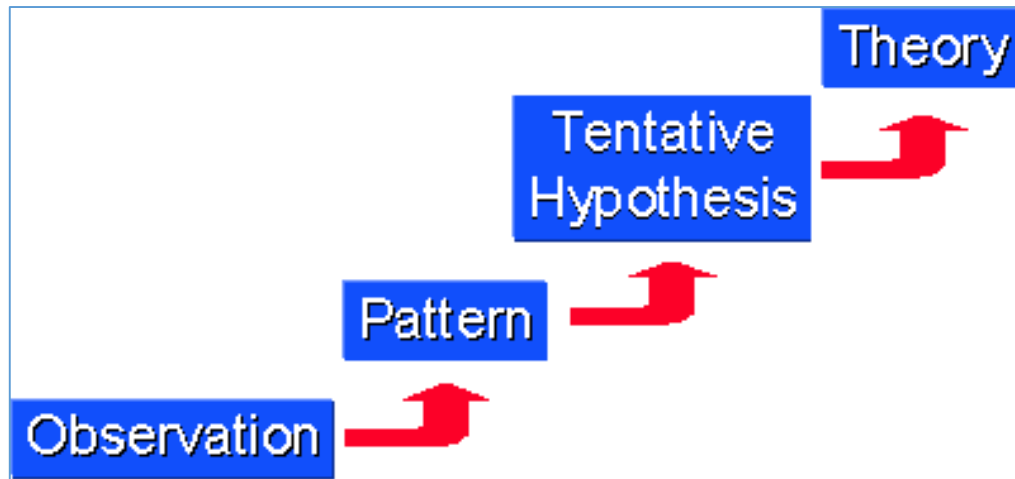
Based on Figure 3.2 it can be deduced that the general inductive method provides an easily used and methodical set of procedures for analysing qualitative data that can produce trustworthy and valid outcomes in that it offers a simple, straightforward method for deriving results in the context of focused evaluation questions. This study adopted an inductive approach because the candidate aimed to derive conclusions related to the current intra-Africa trade binding constraints being investigated and future barriers which can arise over time because of data collection and analysis, instead of merely testing a current theory.

3.3.3 Population and sample for the study

The study's sample population is comprised of 8 participants. The design was based on the premise that if new and varying themes keep emerging, more participants would be interviewed until common themes are repeated. Once the themes are repeated there would be no need to continue with interviewing more people only to arrive at the same outcome. However, the study's objective was reached after 8 participants were interviewed as the themes began repeating themselves from interviewee number 6. Polit and

Hungler (1999) refer to the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, themes or members that conform to a set of stipulations. Mark (1996) explains that a population comprises all individuals, families, groups, or organisations, communities, and events that together contribute information to a study. According to McBurney, cited by Strydom and Venter (2002), a population comprises all persons, events, organisation units and case records related to a particular study. These definitions suggest that a population includes a broader group of people to whom the researcher intends to generalize the results of the study.

On the other hand, Brink (2001:129) argues that a sample is a "fraction of a whole, or a subsection of a bigger set, selected by the researcher to participate in a research project. This view is supported by LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) together with Polit and Hungler (1999) who clarify that the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the whole population is known as sampling. Scholars such as Bryman and Cramer (1998) have shown that a large and sufficient survey sample is the primary technique for ensuring that the collected data provides a reliable basis for inferences, recommendations and decision-making.

A research sample represents a group of individuals who participate in the study. In this study the individuals interviewed include a seasoned high commissioner, business people, social partners, politicians, representatives of global finance institutions, as well as academics and related stakeholders. Figure 3.3 depicts the random sampling of an identified population to be researched.

Figure 3.3: Sampling Method in Research: Random Samples.
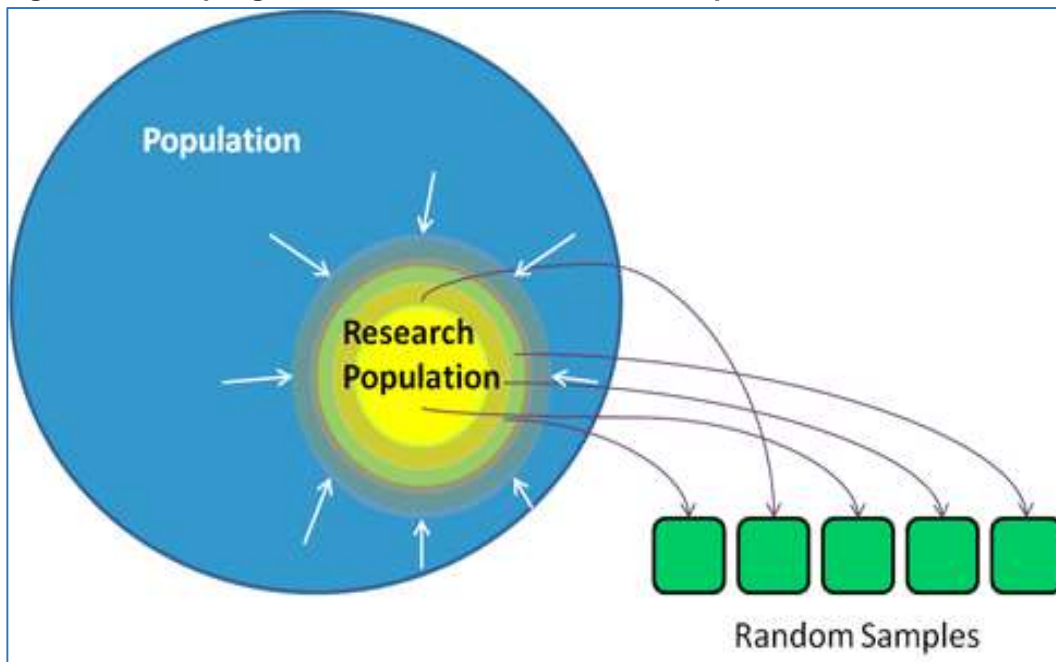
3.3.4 Sampling Techniques

Sampling is structured so that the research does not over represent certain groups or in other cases, to purposively oversample certain minority groups. There are two main categories of research samples, namely; probability and non-probability samples. De Vaus (1996), Schofield (1996), Sekaran (2000) and Bryman and Bell (2003) define a sample of probabilities as a sample in which each element in the population is equal to the likelihood of being se-lected within the sample, whilst non-probability sampling, on the other hand, does not have a known possibility of being nominated as in convenience or voluntary response surveys. For this reason, according to Neuman (2003), qualitative researchers usually tend to collect a non-probability sample. Non-probability samples can be divided into convenience sampling, quota sampling and purposeful or judicial sampling" (Sekaran 2000). Table 3.1 illustrates both convenience and in quota sampling methods.

Table 3.1: Convenience sampling and In-Quota sampling "Source: (Candidate's own table)

Convenience sampling	In Quota sampling
Applicable if the researcher selects the conveniently available sampling units.	The population is initially divided into fundamentally unrelated sub-groups, generally as in stratified examining. At that point, judgment is utilized to choose the subjects or units from each section focused around an indicated proportion.
Purposive (Judgemental, subjective) sampling	

Purposive sampling happens when a researcher chooses sampling units for a certain purpose (De Vaus, 1996). Merriam (1998) maintains that the most common form of non-probability sampling is purposive sampling because it is based on the hypothesis that the investigator wants to discover, comprehend and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most must be learned. Merriam (1998) and Du Plooy (2002) both suggest that purposive sampling includes typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, snowball, chain, and network sampling. To further emphasise, it is important to reflect on elaboration on the characteristics of purposive sampling as follows:
 	
    a. It is not a mutually exclusive category of the sampling technique rather many other nonprobability techniques are purposive in nature.
    b. The sample is approached having a preceding purpose in mind.
    c. The criteria for the elements who are to be included in the study is pre-defined.
    d. Does not include everyone who is available but only those who meet the defined criteria (Alvis, 2016).
 	
The judgment viewpoint is around the fact that the choice of sample objects is reliant mainly on the researcher's knowledge and expert judgment.	

The research followed a nonprobability (purposive/judgemental) sampling approach, that based on pre-defined criteria which included but was not limited to position, sector, level of authority and country. The sample was divided into four (4) groups, namely government representatives dealing with trade and policies, international funding institutions, business people already trading or seeking to trade in the African continent, social partners including organised business, and academics.

3.3.5 Data collection

Data is obtained from structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews, observing certain behaviours, from public papers and from written thoughts (Sprinthall, Schmutte, & Surois, 1991). Based on the degree of constructing, interviews can be separated into three categories: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Table 3.2 provides an overview of these three categories;

Table 3.2: Structured, Semi-structured and Unstructured interviews.

Structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Unstructured interviews
The interviewer asks in a specific order a set of standards, pre- determined questions on topics. Interviewees should choose their answers from a list of options. Some questions may be clarified by the interviewer. Typically, structured interviews are used in surveys.	The interviewer uses a set of predetermined questions and the interviewees answers these themselves and in their own words. Some interviewees use a subject guide to make sure that all respondents provide information on the same subjects. The interviewer can test areas based on the answers of the respondent or ask additional questions for clarification. Semi-structured interviews are helpful if one needs to collect information from a number of respondents or interviewees or needs to collect detailed information in a systematic way.	The interviewer has no specific guidelines, limitations or predetermined questions. The interviewer asks a couple of broad questions for an open, informal and un-prompted discussion with the respondent. The interviewer also examines further questions and/or examines inconsistencies in order to collect more detailed information on the subject. Unstructured interviews are especially useful for telling stories about the experiences of respondents or when there is little information on a subject.

Table 3.2 illustrates that there are three different interview methods and it is important for the researcher to identify an appropriate method depending on the nature of the study. For example, whilst structured interviews are suitable for surveys, unstructured interviews are appropriate for telling stories, and semi-structured, as selected for this study are important for collection of systematic information from a number of respondents or interviewees.

Table 3.3 provides an overview of different data collection methods.

Table 3.3: Overview of the different data collection methods "Source: Extracted from CDC PIES for IPV/SV Prevention Education Step (2011).

Method	Purpose	Advantages	Challenges	Resources/Capacity Required
Questionnaires, surveys, checklists	When need to quickly and/or easily get a lot of information from people in a non-threatening way	• Can complete anonymously • Inexpensive to administer • Easy to compare and analyze • Can administer to many people • Can get lots of data • Can be adapted into many forms (online, paper, verbal) • Many sample questionnaires already exist (but you may still need to adapt them)	• Might not get careful feedback • Question wording can bias respondent's answers • Are impersonal • Doesn't get the full story • Adapting existing surveys takes time	Low
Interviews	When want to fully understand someone's impressions or experiences, or learn more about their answers to questionnaires	• Get full range and depth of information • Develops relationship with stakeholders • Can be flexible	• Can take much time • Can be hard to analyze and compare • Can be costly • Interviewer can bias responses	Moderate-High
Document review	When want impression of how strategy operates without interrupting the strategy; is from review of applications, finances, memos, minutes, etc.	• Get comprehensive and historical information • Doesn't interrupt strategy or stakeholder's routine in strategy • Information already exists	• Often takes much time • Info may be incomplete • Need to be quite clear about what looking for • Not flexible means to get data; data restricted to what already exists	Moderate
Observation	To gather accurate information about how a strategy actually operates, particularly about processes	• View operations of a strategy or PSC activity as they are actually occurring • Can adapt to events as they occur	• Can be difficult to interpret seen behaviors • Can be complex to categorize observations • Can influence behaviors of strategy participants • Can be expensive	High
Focus groups	Explore a topic in depth through group discussion, e.g., about reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints, etc.; useful in evaluation and marketing	• Quickly and reliably get common impressions • Can be efficient way to get much range and depth of information in short time • Can convey key information about strategies	• Can be hard to analyze responses • Need good facilitator for safety and closure • Difficult to schedule 6-8 people together	Moderate-High
Case studies	To fully understand or depict stakeholder's experiences in a strategy, and conduct comprehensive examination through cross comparison of cases (if cases are comparable)	• Fully depicts stakeholder's experience in strategy input, process and results • Powerful means to portray strategy to outsiders	• Usually quite time consuming to collect, organize and describe • Represents depth of information, rather than breadth	High

Table 3.3 highlights different data collection methods and it is out of the highlighted methods that this research selected semi-structured interviews to arrive at its common themes as discussed in chapter 4 and interpreted in chapter 5. A semi-structured qualitative study was preferred against options such as case study, because it is an approach to qualitative analysis usually consisting of interviews and observations that have some explicit structure but are not completely structured, based on a theory or method.

Based on literature review, such studies typically involve systematic, iterative coding of verbal data, often supplemented by data in other modalities. The justification for selecting semi-structured interviews was addressed by answering the following questions in defining semi-structured interviews:

a. Why were semi-structured interviews selected for this study?

b. What are the most appropriate questions for semi-structured interviews?

c. How will the data be recorded and collected?

3.3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews.

Scholars define a semi-structured interview in various ways. A semi-structured interview consists of open-ended questions that the interviewee is expected to answer. Interview formats such as semi-structured, in-depth interviews are frequently used for individual or group interviews. In semi-structured interviews, questions or topics are presented schematically and are based on a semi-structured interview guide.

These interviews contain predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. The way the questions are worded can be amended and explanations provided, and irrelevant questions for an interviewee can be deleted or additional questions included.

3.3.5.2 Why were semi-structured interviews selected for use in this study?

According to Bernard (1988), semi-structured interviews are best used when there is unlikely to be more than one chance to interview someone and when several interviewers may be sent out into the field to collect data. Semi-structured interviews are normally preceded by observation, unstructured and informal interviewing to allow the researcher to develop a deep understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions.

It can therefore be said that semi-structured interviews provide topics and questions to the interviewee that are carefully designed to elicit the interviewee's ideas and opinions on the topic of interest instead of leading the interviewee toward preconceived choices. The interviewee depends on the

interviewer following up with questions to obtain detailed information on top-ics of interest.

The use of the semi-structured type of interview will allow for some open-ended as well as closed questions to be posed and the respondents to ex-press their views freely. Based on the literature review this approach is more flexible as questions can be tailored and changed depending on the re-spondents' answers.

3.3.5.3 Questions most suited for semi-structured interviews

Spradley (1979) states that a grand tour question is the best question for a semi-structured interview. These questions ask respondents to give a verbal excursion of what they know very well. The main advantage of these types of questions is that the interviewer talks to the respondents in a focused and structured manner. The goal is to listen to key terms and get the respondent to say more about the issue, thereby providing the re-spondent with room for discussion. Spradley (1979) states that if respond-ents leave the subject, they can finish, then be guided back to the problem that is under discussion. However, there should not be excessive control exerted or important points overlooked. It can therefore be concluded that questions and floating prompts are sometimes used in combination to ob-tain almost all the information that a semi-structured interview may re-quire, with planned prompts ready if the floating prompts are not working well.

Several essential questions are included in semi-structured interviews to outline the areas to be covered, which also give the interviewer or inter-viewee the freedom to veer off course to explore an idea or response fur-ther. Such an interview format is useful because it gives participants some direction regarding what to talk about. The flexibility of this approach, espe-cially in comparison with organized interviews, also enables the discovery

or development of data that participants value but that the research team may not have at first deemed relevant.

Sample questions from a semi-structured interview may include, inter alia, the following:

a. How is intra-Africa trade defined? What has been the most difficult case concerning intra-Africa trade in Africa that you have faced? What kinds of issues arose? Have you seen problems with regulations, and if so, what kinds of problems? What happened?
b. What do you think are the barriers in conducting trade in Africa? Do you perceive any grey areas or problems weighing issues about trade among African countries? If so, what? How do you address these?
c. Do you have any other thoughts about these issues?

3.3.5.4 The instruments to be used for data capturing

A research interview as defined by Rubin and Rubin (2005) is an extended dialogue with important characteristics. Qualitative interviews might be led independently or in gatherings/group sessions in the form of face-to-face, telephonically, online using video conferencing or through online survey.

3.3.6 Alignment of the research questions and interview protocol questions

The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to define meanings of focal themes in accordance with the primary task of interviewing and under-standing the importance of what the interviewees express (Kvale, 1996). The researcher's interview protocol is a tool of inquiry used to ask specific questions and topic for data related to the aims of a study, according to Patton (2015).

The research protocol forms an essential part of a research project and serves as a full description of the research study. It acts as a manual to

ensure compliance with the process. As the study develops, it can be used to monitor the study's progress and evaluate its outcomes. The researcher will adopt the principles of alignment based on the outline included in Ellsberg and Heise (2005).

The sample interview cycle on the other focuses on four phases as outlined in figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: The interview process: Source: Extracted from SANPAD et al. (2007).
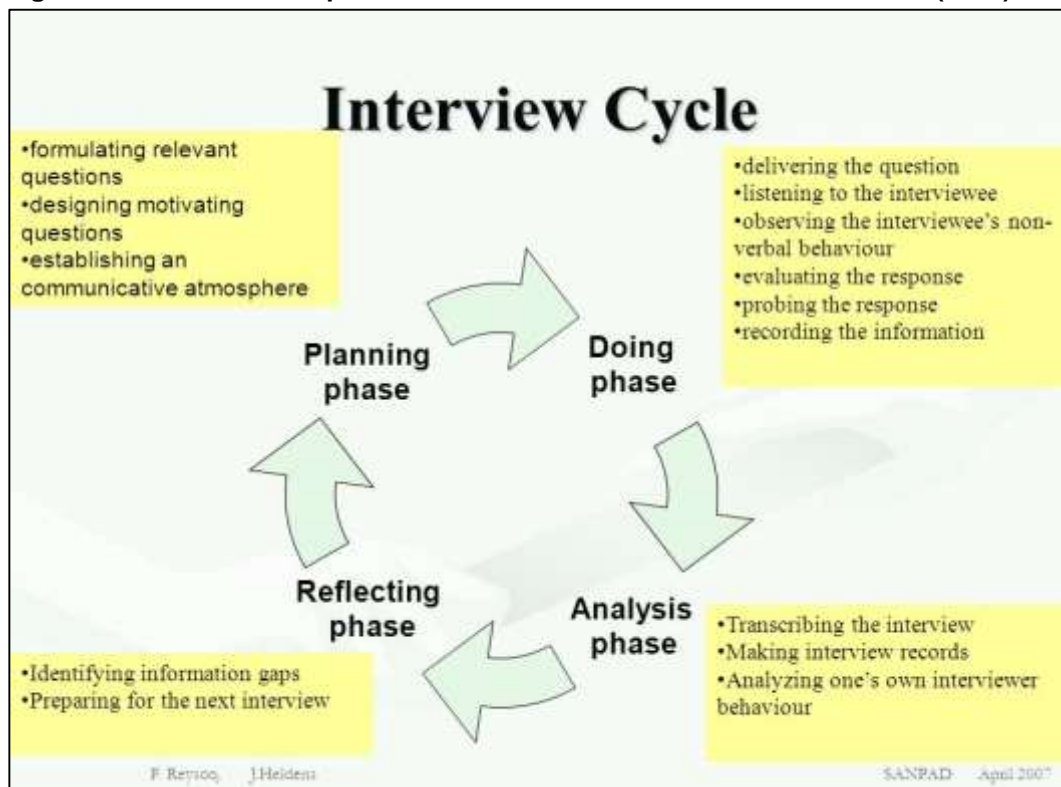
3.3.7 Data analysis

Marshall and Rossman (1995) hold a view that data analysis is not only a dynamic, creative and fascinating process but also messy, ambiguous and takes a lot of time. According to Krueger and Casey (2000), analysis begins by considering the primary objective of the study. According to Schatzman and Strauss (1973) qualitative data analysis primarily involves categorisation of persons, events and the properties which characterise them.

3.3.7.1 Data analysis process selected for this study

Stake (1995) emphasizes the impression and intuition of researchers in analysis. A list of significant ideas that developed were recorded as recommended by Merriam (1988). Recorded interviews and the participant's recorded diary were transcribed, and field notes and diary entries reviewed. During data analysis, the researcher organised data categorically and chronologically, reviewed repeatedly, and continually coded until a minimum of five to a maximum of seven themes emerged. Once the prescribed themes emerged, the coding process as depicted in Figure 3.7 was followed to analyse the themes and draw conclusions.

Figure 3.5: Coding process.
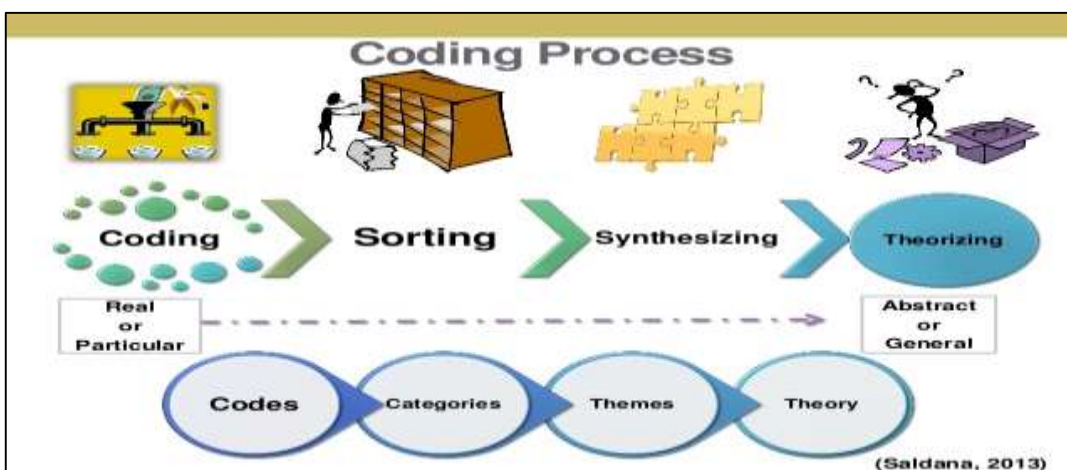
Bailey (2007) defines coding as a process of assigning codes, words, or phrases that identify to which topics or issues portions of the data refer,

and organising the data in a way that is useful for further analysis. How one decides to code should be driven by the chosen methodology. In this qualitative research, the coding process will assist in identifying different themes and the relationship between them.

3.3.7.2 Data Integrity

Qualitative research approaches are different, comprising an assortment of philosophical models, for example interpretivism, phenomenology, semiotic, ethnographic, ethnomethodology, feminism, constructivism, social authenticity, contemporary hermeneutics and critical theory, and symbolic interactionism, among others (Avramidis & Smith, 1999). Blaikie (2010); Bryman (2008); Guba and Lincoln (1994) also highlight the above qualitative research approaches. Blaikie (2018) further suggests that qualitative research is quite broad and clarifies that meaningful discussion of sample size in qualitative research cannot occur with reference to an undifferentiated conception of the nature of qualitative research because clear distinctions need to be made within this approach in terms of methodology, ontological and epistemological assumptions and broader research paradigms. As indicated in Guba's (1981), there are four trustworthiness concerns that all researchers need to address regardless of the research hypothesis, as represented in Table 3.4

Table 3.4: Trustworthiness concerns to be addressed.

i. How can a researcher trust her/his findings?	Truth value concern
ii. How do we know or determine the applicability of the survey results in other environments or with other respondents?	Applicability concern
iii. How can one know if the results are consistently repeated with the same participants in the same context?	Consistency concern)
iv. How do we know if the findings come only from participants and the research was not influenced by the researchers' bias, motivations or interests?	Neutrality/unbiased concern.

Based on Guba's and Lincoln's (1994) ideas, Willendorf and Belk (1989) added a fifth concern that was not addressed in Guba's original paper by expanding the fourth question that the researcher should also ask.

v. How do we know whether the results are not false information provided by the participants in the study?	Integrity/completeness concern

Consequently, Guba and Lincoln (1982) suggest that internal validity should be replaced by credibility, external validity by transferability, reliability by stability, and objectivity by confirmation, as shown below.

Credibility	Credibility is described as the certainty of the research findings (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002; Macnee and McCabe, 2008).
Transferability	Transferability refers to the extent to which qualitative research results with other respondents can be transferred to other contexts (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004).
Dependability	Bitsch (2005) explains that reliability has to do with "stability of results over time".
Confirmability	Confirmability means to what extent other researchers can confirm the results of a survey (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

3.3.7.3 Ethical considerations

This study obtained ethical clearance from the Da Vinci Institute Ethics Committee. Creswell (2003) asserts that the researcher is responsible for respecting interviewees' rights, needs, values and desires. Miles and Huberman (1994) highlight a number of aspects to be considered by researchers in the examination of data. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) comment with regard to ethics in research that "researchers must be more than technically competent to understand the importance of sound ethical principles They must open themselves to the feeling worlds of their subjects, whether these worlds are pleasant or disgusting to them".

Resnik (2015) states that, given the importance of ethics for the conduct of research, it can be expected that numerous different professional associations, government agencies, and universities have adopted specific codes, rules and policies concerning research ethics. The following is a summary of some ethical principles that numerous codes address (Resnik, (2015).

Honesty: Do not falsify, fabricate or misrepresent data.

Objectivity: Strive to avoid unfairness

Carefulness: Avoid recklessness and maintain good records of research activities.

Openness: Be open to criticism and new ideas and honour copyrights, patents and other methods of intellectual property.

Confidentiality: Protect confidential communications

Responsible Publication: Publish to advance research and not to advance just own career.

Legality: Understand and observe relevant laws, institutional and governmental policies.

Respect for Colleagues: Respect your colleagues and treat them equally.

Social Responsibility: Attempt to promote social good and prevent or alleviate social harms through research, public education, and support.

Non-Discrimination: Avoid discrimination of people on the basis not related to their scientific competence and integrity.

Competence: Uphold and improve own professional competence and expertise through lifelong education and learning.

Human Subjects Protection: When conducting research on human subjects, minimize harms and maximize benefits.

However, Silverman (2000) argues that Cultural sensitivity is one of the unexpected concerns about ethical issues. Silverman (2000) argues that the link between the subject and the researcher should be well thought-out in relation to the values of the researcher and cultural attributes during an interview.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research design, research methodology, population and sampling, most common techniques for qualitative data collection and analysis, the importance of data integrity, and ethical considerations as well as the scope thereof. It also explained the differences between

structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews to arrive at a clear determination of why semi-structured interviews were selected as appropriate for this study. The chapter emphasised the alignment of the research questions and interview protocol questions. Finally, the importance of trustworthiness together with ethical considerations and principles were identified as areas to be taken into serious consideration when conducting fieldwork. Chapter four will focus on data analysis and presentation of emerging themes.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis and the findings obtained using thematic and narrative analysis techniques discussed in the previous chapters. The chapter starts with a description of the sample before a discussion of the findings under four broad themes. Inductive thematic analysis which involves reading through textual data and identifying and coding emergent themes within the data investigations that add content and substance to these themes was followed. The broad themes that were explored were:

a. Understanding alignment,

b. Social and economic impact,

c. Governance or regulatory concerns, and

d. Unlocking the potential of intra-Africa trade.

Each of these yielded subthemes that were mostly derived through semantic coding of the respective interview questions that fell under each theme. Each theme is associated with a study objective or research question, as summarised in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1 Relating research question to objectives and associated themes

Related Research Question	Related Research objectives	Corresponding Themes
(a) What is the current state and nature of Africa's regional integration and intra-Africa trade?	(a) Evaluate the current status and nature of intra-Africa trade.	**A. Understanding alignment** (i) Definition and conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade (ii) The current status of intra-Africa trade
(b) What are the constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade; and to what extent do they stifle or enhance intra-Africa trade? (c) To what extent would the low intra-Africa trade levels have an impact on the socio-economic development efforts? (d) Who are the key stakeholders in intra-African trade enhancement?	(b) Investigate constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade (c) Examine the nature and extent of the impact of low trade levels on the African economy. (d) Identify the key stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade	**B. Social and Economic Impact** (i) The feasibility of enhancing intra Africa trade (ii) The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy (iii) Constraints and enablers of intra-Arica trade (iv) Personal experiences of challenges with intra-Africa trade (v) Long-term effects of trade constraints (vi) Roles of various stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade
(b) What are the constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade; and to what extent do they stifle or enhance intra-Africa trade?	(e) Investigate constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade	**C. Governance or regulatory concerns** (vii) Regulatory and policy barriers experienced (viii) Challenges associated with current trade among African countries

Eight high-ranking professionals from five different countries who worked directly with international trade-related activities were interviewed. These countries were South Africa, Mauritius, Namibia, Kenya and the United States of America. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Sample description

Respondents	Summary of roles and experiences
Respondent 1 (R1)	Entrepreneur and exporter, Chief executive of a Johannesburg trade association with strong links to 14 thousand chambers internationally
Respondent 2 (R2)	Former Chief Economist of a major South African based DFI and senior lecturer at a South African university with previous experience in state-owned enterprises at executive level
Respondent 3 (R3)	Trade facilitation expert at a regional developmental bank; previously worked for the Kenyan government in related trade administration capacities
Respondent 4 (R4)	An Advocate and former president of a strong South African Chamber of commerce and currently serving as the Chairman of International Chamber of Commerce representative office in South Africa
Respondent 5 (R5)	World Bank Economist and trade expert focusing on trade affairs in the African regions
Respondent 6 (R6)	High Commissioner, and past minister, representing one of the SADC countries currently based in South Africa with vast knowledge of trade as long serving high commissioner in different countries including the United States of America
Respondent 7 (R7)	An international investor with business interests in different countries in the African continent, based in Mauritius and other parts of the continent
Respondent 8 (R8)	Executive in the Economist publication responsible for Sub-Saharan Africa

The respondents were drawn from multiple sectors, backgrounds, experiences and different countries and regions. The sample has contributions

from academic, entrepreneurial, political, and diplomatic leaders, as well as trade experts from regional and international level developmental financial institutions, together with business association leaders. The common factor among them is their direct connection with the African and global trade environment. The inclusion of such a combination of experts was significant in the development of important themes and findings presented in this chapter. By reaching out to experts across various professional disciplines, the reliability and validity of the data was enhanced. The diverse nature of the expert respondents also strengthened the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of findings.

4.2 Theme 1: Understanding Alignment

This section discusses the themes established from the data analysis process, informed by the need to understand how the interviewees defined and contextualised intra-Africa trade, based on how the interviewees defined intra-Africa trade as well as on their perceptions of its current status. Its sub-themes were the definition and conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade and the current status of intra-Africa trade.

4.2.1 Subtheme 1: Definition and conceptualization of intra-Africa trade

The interviewees produced varying conceptualisations of what intra-Africa trade was. These definitions and conceptions were classified as a theme with two sub-themes, namely the broad intra-Africa trade perspective and the narrow intra-Africa trade perspective.

Table 4.3 summarises the interviewees' definitions or views on what intra-Africa trade is.

Table 4.3: Definitions of intra-Africa trade

Respondent	Definition/view
R1	A platform where goods and services are bought and sold among African states
R2	A process of liberating African trade and related economic activities from international dependence
R3	A process aimed at increasing trade and regional economic co-operation among all African nations
R4	Barrier-free formal and informal cross-border trade among African countries
R5	Buying and selling of goods and services among African countries
R6	Buying and selling of goods among African countries focusing on goods and services produced in Africa
R7	Cross-border trade within Africa encompassing and involving a majority of the continent's countries
R8	Africa trading with itself

The broader perspective is not evident in all the respondents' definitions of intra-Africa trade. The common view as expressed by respondents 1, 5, 7 and 8 is simply the trade in goods and services among African economies. It conforms to the simplified definition of international trade that focuses on source and origin of goods and services.

In R5's view which epitomises the broad perspective, intra-Africa trade is simply any form of trade in specified goods and services among African economies:

> "I would define it as the purchase and sale of specific services across borders within Africa" (Respondent 5).

> R7 saw intra-Africa trade simply as cross-border trade among African countries with the trade involving most of the economies on the continent:

"Therefore, intra-African trade would be cross-border trade between the 54 countries within the African region in general, instead of trading with nations outside the continent. Currently, trade based on, I guess, some of the latest estimates would be between some 15% and 20% and it will be interesting to see how that number may have changed given the pandemic which we are still dealing with, but it is between country trade within the Africa region" (Respondent 7).

R1 believed that intra-Africa trade was a platform that created a conducive trade mostly in finished goods amongst African economies, further enabling them to competitively export to markets beyond Africa:

*"I will define intra-Africa trade as a platform where countries in Africa can trade their products with services to boost and develop all participating countries of the 55 countries, 80% of export are to other continents and are maybe raw or finished products. So, I would say the intra-Africa trade can really beat the manufacturing and also the supply of products within Africa and make Africa a sustainable continent where we can start exporting globally to the rest of the world as well" (*Respondent 1*).*

On the other hand, Respondent 8 sees intra-Africa trade simply as Africa trading with itself.

In the researcher's view, the above definitions and conceptualisations of intra-Africa trade carried connotations from the common perspective, which was generally expected considering that intra-Africa trade is an evolving process. The broader perspectives to the definition differ from the common view and these were expressed by Respondents 2,3,4 and 6.

The broader perspective definition of intra-Africa trade generally incorporates key aspects or characteristics that further distinguish intra-Africa trade from general regional or international trade.

R2 conceptualised intra-Africa trade within a political-historical context where trade involving African economies should be liberated from the domination of former colonial masters of each African country. R2 cited that

post-colonial domination, African countries still depend on former colonisers for imports and intra-Africa trade was a way of abolishing this and replacing it with trade reliance among African countries:

> "*The African Continental Free Trade Agreement is of historical significance because we want to see trade increasing from Cape Town to Cairo for the first time, and we want to ensure that investment infrastructure opens doors for small businesses, for the complementarity in exchange amongst Africans and in this process, we want Africa to become its own teacher than we stark in the old colonial relationship that I have just described*" (Respondent 2).

In the above view, intra-Africa trade was therefore more than commercial trade but a type of philosophy to minimise trade and economic dependence on former colonial systems.

R3 saw intra-Africa trade as a response to trade imbalances between Africa and the rest of the world where the continent members sought to increase trade with each other for developmental agenda that included poverty alleviation:

> "*In my definition of intra-African trade, I will refer to efforts begun by the 54-member countries of the African Union to increase trade among themselves and between regional economic communities. It is very well known that trade is at 15% to 18 % which is the lowest when you compare to other regions elsewhere in the world like 54% in North America, maybe close to 70% in Europe. So, the idea is to increase trade amongst African countries so that they can be able to trade themselves out of poverty*" (Respondent 3).

R4 perceives intra-Africa trade as not just any form of trade among African states but as one in which there is a complete movement of goods and ser-

vices across African countries without any tariffs and excessive documentation. In this regard, it was, therefore, relatable to informal cross-border trade:

> "*Well, my understanding of intra-Africa trade is the free trade between two or more African countries, and this also includes trade post Africa's borders amongst traders who are not necessarily formally registered and may not be paying taxes. So, in a way this is normally referred to an informal cross-border trade" (*Respondent *4).*

Under the simplistic definition of intra-Africa trade, R6 disqualified the re-exporting of goods imported from outside the continent as intra-Africa trade:

> "*Well, I will define intra-Africa trade in my very own simple words that trade between African countries. So, in my view, I think that would be a bit of a too wide definition, so I would call it, I would define African trade as trade between African entities for goods that are produced within Africa"* (Respondent 6).

In the researcher's view, from the above conceptualisations, four key intra-Africa trade features can be deduced. These are; dominance of trade among African economies, the dominance of finished manufactured goods in trade, the focus on African produced goods, the occurrence of trade in a barrier-free environment.

These four characteristics build on the general perspective that intra-Africa trade is the buying and selling of goods and services among African states. The four characteristics above all warrant further review as they seem to challenge the common definitions of intra-Africa trade that society has become accustomed to.

4.2.2 Subtheme 2: The current status of intra-Africa trade

In seeking to determine the current status of intra-Africa trade an attempt was made to understand alignment from the different responses given by the interviewees. A theme that arose was the current status of intra-Africa trade. This theme arose from general responses across various interview questions but was mostly underpinned by the question, "What are your views on the current status of intra-Africa trade in general, given the fact that it is currently estimated that it constitutes between15% and 17% versus the European trading partners that is estimated to be at around 67% of intra-trade? The interviewees' varying views were expressed as subthemes to this theme.

4.2.2.1 Primary goods focused

The current status of intra-Africa trade was characterised by heavy reliance on raw material exports (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8). This state of extensive primary goods trade applied to both trade among African countries and trade with non-African countries and regions. This view was supported by respondents 3, 1 and 4:

> "*Currently, most African countries participate in global value chains at the lower levels, but we also have regional value chains in a wide range of sectors before we export out of the country, mainly in the Agri-business, in the mining sector, in the petroleum industry and the manufacturing field*" (Respondent 3).

> "*It is crucial that we focus on manufacturing or growing products, and providing finished products- at the moment, we are exporting most of our raw materials." So, I think if we should really start working collectively where we supply the finished product*" (Respondent 1).

> "*The primary goods focus status of intra-Africa trade also came with trade resilience issues especially because raw commodity prices*

were more volatile than the prices of finished goods. Commodity prices fluctuate and they are not predictable. So intra-Africa trade, although it is currently limited, is more in processed and manufactured goods and can create more sustainable jobs and incomes, than trade in primary commodities such as minerals and unprocessed raw materials." (Respondent 4).

Hence R4 also classified the current status of intra-Africa trade as a low-resilient one.

Most interviewees generally saw the African continent as a trade region that is full of potential and in which intra-Africa trade can thrive in the right environment. R3 and R5 summarised this low capacity with huge potential perspective:

"Yes, I think the intra-Africa trade is still very, very low, but all the indications are that the potential could be increased"
(Respondent 3).

"Well, I believe that it is perfectly accurate. I think there is a lot of potential to increase the current levels of intra-regional trade within Africa" (Respondent 5).

The interviewees observed that once various existing constraints and barriers (discussed in later themes) are resolved, the continent's low-capacity status could positively change. While R2 saw this potential as characterised by "guaranteed opportunities", R6, R7 and R8 did not believe that success was guaranteed. There were too many constraints that restricted trade and apart from that there was a poor understanding of these constraints as expressed by R6 below:

"I am afraid unless we address some of the basic boxes on a serious basis, we will just continue going round and round." (Respondent 6).

In the researcher's analysis, while there was an element of optimism

amongst the interviewees, there were differences regarding the ease with which the noted potential can be transformed into actual increased and higher value chain trade among African states. The above descriptions of the current status of intra-Africa trade challenge a further analysis of the reasons behind these deficits and the potential solutions for addressing them.

4.3 Theme 2: Social and Economic Impact

The second theme was motivated by the need to appreciate the social and economic impact of intra-Africa trade. It features subthemes on the feasibility of intra-Africa trade before specifically focusing on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement. Other areas of presentation under this theme were: The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade for the African economy; Constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade; Personal experiences challenges with intra-Africa trade; Long-term effects of trade constraints and the roles of various stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade.

4.3.1 Subtheme 1: The feasibility of enhancing intra-Africa trade

An open-ended question to the interviewees was, "In your view is it possible to enhance intra-Africa trade given the complex historical context and the ongoing dynamics in the African continent and why do you think so?" This prompted much discussion on the feasibilities of intra-Africa trade on the continent. It further generated this theme that captures varying interviewees' views. In the question, "enhancement" related mostly to increasing trade volumes across nations, and increasing the number of African country participants in intra-Africa trade. Some respondents, among them R3, had already highlighted intra-Africa trade as comparatively low, i.e., accounting for "15% to 18% which is the lowest when compared to other regions". This low trade was one of the theme's concerns. None of the interviewees believed that it was impossible to enhance intra-Africa trade given the complex

historical context and the ongoing dynamics in the African continent. How-ever, there were differences in the ease of such possibility as well as factors affecting it.

4.3.1.1 The growing importance of SMEs

R1 believes that the African continent has seen extensive growth in SMEs, and these have shown interest and potential in regional trade. An expanding SME base was therefore creating an impetus large enough to support re-gional trade:

> "*Yes, it is definitely possible that we can enhance intra-Africa trade, small and medium size enterprises are keen to participate in the growth in Africa. They count for around 80% to 90% of the region's businesses. These businesses usually struggle to penetrate more advanced overseas markets, yet they are well-positioned to tab into regional export destinations and can use African markets as step-pingstones for expanding into international markets in the future*" (Respondent 1).

The exclusion of African SMEs from international markets resulted in in-creasing their focus on the local market creating a potentially sustainable export market. R2 emphasised the significance of entrepreneurship in en-hancing intra-Africa trade stating that:

> "*The African Continental Free Trade Agreement is going to really be driven by private sector and entrepreneurs who continue to venture at their own risk with their own capital.*" (Respondent 2).

Growing entrepreneurship on the continent provides a pool of goods and services that can dominate intra-Africa trade. The research suggests that intra-Africa trade is perceived as part of the general African economic sys-tem whose value chains include ordinary small-scale businesses. These businesses, as producers of goods in a continent where SMEs are consid-ered as major income and employment creators, play a role in providing

both current and future goods required to increase trade among African states.

4.3.1.2 The increasing sense of regionalisation

Some interviewees, specifically R2, R3, R5 and R8, believe that a growing sense of regionalisation on the continent has already began enhancing intra-Africa trade. R2 believes that it was through international blocs that non-African countries got to benefit from African trade – such blocs being colonially driven. New Afrocentric blocs can also reverse this situation resulting in greater coordination among African trading partners. R3 stated that:

> *"If you look at how Africa is currently divided, there are around eight REC zones that are recognized by the African union. It is highly feasible to enhance intra-African trade." (*Respondent 3).

This supports the argument that African regionalisation is rising. Further to that, African trade is moving from being country-partitioned to being region-partitioned. With only eight regions, it is easier to negotiate trade terms than when dealing with over 50 countries, each acting separately:

> "*Like you find that in many cases there are two to three regional economic communities, so whichever region comes before country, there is nothing to stop them from making some of their policy activities into one that focuses on the intra-Africa trade in the context of a free trade area and that is why your 54 out of 55 countries that have signed that agreement because they see the benefits, they see the benefits of coming together and trading amongst themselves."* (Respondent 3).

R6 and R8 explain that the benefits of regionalisation can offset current trade complexities underpinned by weak individual trade capacities among African nations:

> *"Great integration can actually lead to mutual benefits, and I believe that historically they have; I believe that this is typically the case with many of the larger economies."* (Respondent 5).

Such benefits have also been part of regional agreements meant to enhance regional trade on the continent. Intra-Africa trade is part of regionalisation, although it must be noted that economic blocs are not a new reality in Africa. Intra-Africa trade could therefore be part of renewed rather than completely new interests towards creating economically resilient blocs that could politically and economically benefit member states. The drivers of such renewed efforts could be the observation of how other global blocs like the European Union have achieved economic success.

4.3.1.3 The African Continental Free Trade Agreement as a facilitator of regional trade

Some interviewees observed that it was possible to enhance intra-Africa trade regardless of both historical and current complexities through the intervention of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement as a facilitator of regional trade. R2, R3, R5 and R7 discussed the possibilities of enhancing intra-Africa trade in the context of current and historical complexities.

R7 saw the African Continental Free Trade Agreement as an opportunity and attempt to address both past and current challenges. Its presence was a commitment for the resolution of any past or current barriers that stood in the way of intra-Africa trade:

> *"In assurance yes, I think that the intention which has been backed by action on display with the African Continental Free Trade Agreement coming into effect at the beginning of this year, shows that there is the understanding that some of the issues that*
> *I highlighted need to be addressed and it needs to be as part of that to put a framework in place to address them and not necessarily one by one but in bunches, systematically so that the level of trade can grow, economic and socio-economic development can be advanced in a direction that I think all would agree it should."* (Respondent 7).

This is supported by the broader ratification of this agreement by most African countries. With most countries agreeing to it, the opportunity to resolve

any current trade complexities is also perceived as increasing:

> "*The fact that certain nations are still lagging behind in as far as their ratification status does not indicate that they won't do so in the future because no nation wants to be left behind. In fact, they could be moving at different paces in terms of readiness for the market, but in the fullness of time we hope that there would be one single market for the continent.*" (Respondent 8).

R2 notes that the African Continental Free Trade Agreement will be driven by entrepreneurs and this would empower them to have a determination in current trade affairs. This is in view of the belief that governments may find it complex to deal with current trade issues as they focus on internal public investments. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement, according to R2, gives the private sector space to manage regional trade affairs, ensuring that this economic facet is not neglected:

> "*The private sector and entrepreneurs who continue to take risks with their own money and resources will really be the ones driving the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and therefore I am very optimistic that there's huge potential for Africa but then because the governments in many African countries are preoccupied with meeting public investments than supporting entrepreneurship as well as their businesses.*" (Respondent 2).

Thus, for various reasons, the researcher notes that the African Continental Free Trade agreement is considered a positive development that could enhance intra-Africa trade despite the existence of both current and historical complexities. At the same time, many agreements on African trade as well as several economic blocs are already in existence, forming a base upon which the African Continental Free Trade Agreement can be strengthened. Attention should be given to why and how Africa's contribution to global trade remains low despite previous agreements and economic blocs. This is important because such an understanding could help in making the African Continental Free Trade Agreement an even more effective facilitator of intra-African trade.

4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy

The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade for the African economy as a theme emerged from a specific question: What are your views on the socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade for the African economy? and from general views expressed across the interviews. Table 4.4: depicts the socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy.

Table 4.4: The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Increased trade	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Creation of a mega African market	●					●		●
Economic growth for countries	●						●	
Increased industrialisation	●							
Increased self-financing abilities	●							
Reduced reliance on external funders	●							●
Skills and knowledge development and sharing		●						
Increase in national incomes		●						
Increase in entrepreneurship		●						
Increased social cohesion			●					●
Removal of colonial partisans			●					
Ease of movement by people			●	●			●	
Employment creation				●				
Sustainable growth and development		●		●			●	●
Reduction in poverty				●			●	
Unbalanced inter-regional trade risks					●			●
Inequitable distribution of economic benefits					●		●	
Increased technology use and productivity					●		●	●
Increased regional peace and stability							●	
Infrastructure development							●	●

The common outcome of intra-Africa trade is an increase in trade among African economies as indicated in the responses of all the interviewees. R1 believes that:

> "*The African Continental Free Trade Agreement will grow an esti-mated 2.5 trillion selected products and 1.2 billion people across all the African Union member states under the African continental trade agreement.*" (Respondent 1).

The results of this, as envisaged by R1, would be increased economic growth for countries, increased industrialisation, increased self-financing abilities and reduced reliance on external funders.

R4 mentioned employment creation of sustainable growth and development and reduction in poverty as potential benefits being strongly aligned to economic growth.

R2 stated that it "allows those countries that do not have strong extra abilities of their workers to climb the ladder much faster", indicating the importance of importing skills across countries. R2 also saw entrepreneurs as the major winners of intra-Africa trade particularly with the view that the African Continental Free Trade Agreement will be "driven by entrepreneurs".

R3 emphasised the social impact of intra-Africa trade, specifically that it would result in increased social cohesion, removal of colonial partisans and ease of movement by people. R3 generally associated existing trade patterns that aligned African continents with their previous colonisers as trade partners, arguing that intra-Africa trade could reverse this as well as address colonial boundary mentalities that set people apart:

> "*I believe intra-African trade to be of utmost importance for the region's economy to solve the colonial era problems. This is because before colonisation started in 1967, we realised that African countries*

did not have boundaries that set people apart, but when the colonialists came, they demarcated these regions by merely sitting and writing on a piece of paper which was meant to keep African communities divided, and which has resulted in many social ills as the impact of colonialism." (Respondent 3).

This strongly aligns with a view that trade cannot be distinguished from social and political histories of colonialism. An important socio-political benefit of intra-Africa trade was increased regional tranquillity as discussed by R7. Giving an example of the crisis in Mozambique, R7 states that:

"*The kind of things that are unfolding at Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, you can as you begin to peel it back, realise that it is not just an Islamist/Jihadist conflict movement, it is also kind of nurtured and promoted on the back of lack of economic development and socio-economic kind of declaration or deficits there and we see that kind of example replicated in many places across the region and indeed outside the region. So, this has the potential to boost living standards, to promote peace and development as part of that process and hopefully those kinds of theoretical ideals will be achieved."* (Respondent 7).

Poverty and the lack of economic opportunities bred political discontent that was, amongst other things, expressed as extremism. Economic growth, local and regional growth, and the availability of economic opportunities were benefits that could offset such instabilities. These benefits were discussed by R1, R2, R5, R6 and R8.

R5 was concerned that the highlighted benefits of intra-Africa trade could be limited to a few countries and be enjoyed by certain groups and not by everyone. The opening up of trade may remove local entry barriers exposing local firms to unsustainable competition. In such cases, the benefits of intra-Africa trade will go to strong African economies at the expense of weaker economies.

"But I think you know, what will be really important but gets often neglected in a lot of the integration processes, is really making sure that those gains are shared, that the benefits are distributed across the economy and then also that I think the political perspective, but I think surely of just from an overall economic view, that those industries, those regions that are likely to lose out from the increased input competition, that there are ways that are bound to support those industries and adjusting, if necessary compensates some of the potential losers from this." (Respondent 5).

R5 noted the importance of the continent's aggregate benefits as a measure of intra-Africa trade success rather than growth in individual economies. This was in view of an argument that focusing on how individual states benefit from intra-Africa trade would blur inequalities that may arise in the overall intra-Africa trade process.

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement is widely viewed as having the potential to positively impact on African societies and economies. However, there is an element of caution in expressing these benefits possibly driven by the fears of agreement failures. Key benefits like economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation are discussed; and one of the interviewees mentioned the strong potential for disappointment that may come with optimistic expectations of the impact of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement on intra-Africa trade.

4.3.3 Subtheme 3: Constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade

Interviewees discussed the current constraints that undermined effective intra-Africa trade. In the same context, they highlighted the enablers of intra-Africa trade. Generally, the intra-Africa trade enablers were derived as opposite aspects and elements of constraints. The semantic codes for this theme were generated from responses relating to the question – "What do you think are the prevailing binding constraints for intra-Africa trade and

what are the enablers?" Latent codes on constraints and enablers were de-
rived from the interviewees' discussions and implications thereof in other
parts of the interviews. Table 4.5 summarises the constraints and enablers
of intra-Africa trade as depicted by the various interviewees.

Table 4.5: Constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade.

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Logistics (transport)	●			●	●			
Trade infrastructure	●		●	●			●	●
Transport costs	●		●		●			●
Security/stability			●	●	●	●		
Trade finance availability	●							
Product supply and demand	●			●	●			●
Product quality	●							
Tariffs and surcharges	●	●	●	●			●	●
Trade regulation as barriers		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Trade documentation	●		●		●			
Border systems and movement		●				●		●
Archaic border systems			●					
Administrative barriers		●		●	●	●	●	
Trade integration coordination			●	●			●	
Business environments and markets				●	●	●	●	●
Economic development							●	
Political will and implementation thereof			●		●	●		●

4.3.3.1 Logistics and infrastructure-related factors

The constraints discussed were classifiable into four broad categories. The first was related to logistical and physical infrastructure related to trade. R1, R3, R4, R5 and R7 observed that such barriers slowed down or curtailed trade and made it more expensive. For instance, R1 provided a brief case study about their attempts to export medical equipment to Malawi focusing on the unavailability of quick and affordable transportation systems, infrastructure and logistics management:

> "*So, the biggest barrier was the transportation, it (the product) was transported to the main centre and then from the main centre to transport to 300 kilometres outside of Lilongwe. If it was sent by airfreight then we had the cost that would be between three or four times higher, so it had to be done by road transport. So, if the correct infrastructure was in place, that would be able to be delivered at a much sooner time, as mentioned if it had to be done by airfreight, it would be also very costly.*" (Respondent 1).

R1 asserted that the enabler of the above situation was transportation options and infrastructure provision:

> "*Therefore, it is crucial to lower the cost of logistics as well. If we compare it globally, South Africa's transportation and logistics costs with trade partners in the continent are among the most expensive in Africa. So, we can really look at working with different transportation systems including airlines, or freight forwarding whilst looking at how we can reduce the costs of transport throughout Africa. That is one of the main barriers and the infrastructure as well.*" (Respondent 1).

R3, R4, R5 and R6 added security concerns within African trade corridors as a factor that constrained intra-Africa trade:

> "*They all add up to the cost of conducting business, and some of the roads are in bad condition due to lack of maintenance. Lack of secu-*

rity also sends a message that African operators can't function effi-ciently as this increases the cost of doing business in Africa." (Respondent 3).

At a wider scale, local and regional conflicts stifled intra-Africa trade as trade parties feared loss of life and resources as highlighted by R6, who provided an example of the Ethiopian-Tigray issue where a major market's potential was being undermined by political and conflict risks:

"Because, for example, when you hear the word Ethiopia nowadays, you don't immediately think of the African Union or the fact that it's one of the greatest markets with a 100 million people which it still grows, but immediate thing that comes to your mind and my mind is the Tigrayan rebels that is 100 kilometres away from Addis Ababa. So even if we wanted the best of African considerations to say look here, I am, I want to trade with Ethiopia and Ethiopia is saying to you, oh by the way we have all these great policies and that's what we want to attract into African trade." (Respondent 6).

Consequently, these resulted in increased cost of trade making it less price competitive and therefore less attractive. While the positive impact of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement on intra-Africa trade is cautiously discussed, the constraints and barriers thereof are discussed in clear terms. This highlights the greater certainty of facing constraints than that of realising positive impacts.

4.3.3.2 Product-related factors

For trade to take place, African states involved needed to supply the products that were in demand on the continent. Additionally, price and quality as product-related factors needed to be addressed. This, as discussed by some interviewees (R1, R4 and R5 and R8), was not always the case. R4 stated that:

"I think the most critical constraints are things like inadequate pro-ductive capacity and mostly supply-side constraints, because Africa does not produce what it consumes, and it consumes what it does not produce." (Respondent 4).

As part of creating an enabling environment against a background of low industrial productive capacities, R4 stated the continent needed to focus on regional value chain development that had a continental import substitution focus:

"Africa can actually encourage the establishment of its own regional value chains, which is something that the SADC countries have been actively attempting to pursue over the past few years. We must own our regional value chain by importing inputs plus finished goods and the services from each other and develop Africa products." (Respondent 4).

This resonates with R6's view that true intra-Africa trade revolves around African entities for goods that are produced within Africa. Africa was mostly trading in raw materials and not finished products. This left a huge product demand-versus-supply gap that was addressed through importing from outside the continent. With product availability, supported by a conducive tariff regime, R1 believes that African products would become price competitive and could even outdo those from the continent's major import sources:

"So that would make it possible for the African nations to trade with one another, which would lower the tariffs and increase the afforda-bility of the goods or services in comparison to nations that were forced to import from China, India, or Europe." (Respondent 1).

R7 believed that the continent faces both costs and quality issues with re-gard to production. This could be traced to manufacturing capacity issues that are a function of infrastructure investments that include electricity avail-ability:

"There are numerous, and some of them, in my opinion, will be related to regional demands that can be met again efficiently in terms of cost and quality, as well as the connection to how those kinds of infrastructure gaps play a part." (Respondent 7).

"So, the lack of access to electricity is a big issue, right, it is a very big issue and that will have an impact on manufacturing amongst others." (Respondent 1).

R4 linked product availability not only to productive capacities in individual states but to trade management at both the logistical and regulatory levels. R4 cited road border delays as an example:

"A trader is now forced to throw away the truck full load of perishable goods anytime there are prolonged delays experienced at the border, because perishable products would expire, and they become unsellable when they reach their final destinations, due to slow border processes or inefficiencies." (Respondent 4).

Among these interviewees there was a common view that product quality and availability were a function of a myriad of factors that also demanded to be addressed as part of creating a conducive intra-Africa trade environment. This highlights that intra-Africa trade must not only be looked at from a final buying and selling perspective. It encompasses production systems and technologies that are part of the product quality and quantity determination processes. Intra-Africa trade as a focus area is therefore intertwined with individual companies' production processes. To reiterate, this highlights how intra-Africa trade should be looked at as a value-chain system rather than an event concerned with the exchange of goods and services among African states.

4.3.3.3 Tariffs and surcharges as intra-Africa trade constraints

Tariffs and surcharges were generally discussed as being an immovable and widely known challenge on the continent by almost all the interviewees. For instance, R1 stated the need to reduce tariffs and surcharges as part of the process of increasing intra-Africa trade:

> "*And also, the high tariffs. So, if the tariffs and surcharges can be reduced, and can be very minimal, that can really facilitate the intra-African trade.*" (Respondent 1).

At the same time, interviewees believed that non-tariff barriers on the continent were too rigid with R2 arguing that it was not tariffs that were letting Africa down but the non-tariff aspects of trade. R2 argues that the existence of many blocs on the continent had reduced tariff-based constraints but unfortunately had not fully addressed the non-tariff aspect of trade:

> "*So, the binding constraints will always be clear to all of us, they are the non-tariff type of barriers. So usually, we all know in economics many countries impose barriers of trade, but in the African continent there are not tariffs based on any economic based tariffs that try to enhance trade. A lot of things have to do with the informal taxation that we get and what you call non-tariff barriers to trade in the African continent.*" (Respondent 2).

R2, therefore, believed that the AfCFTA with its view of reducing trade and human flow barriers across borders will play a critical intra-Africa trade enabling role.

> "*So, we believe that with the African Continental Free Trade Agreement these barriers are going to go away because suddenly we are not going to have to use the borders when you cross from one country to another.*" (Respondent 2).

Tariffs and surcharges were closely related to the regulatory and adminis-trative trade factors. The tariff and surcharge challenges appeared to be widely discussed and at the same time a matter that African countries are reluctant to dispense with. This challenges a new way of thinking in relation to how African countries benefit from trade. At this point, countries seem to place greater impetus on benefitting from tariffs rather than from down-stream benefits of unconstrained trade like employment creation and in-creased economic activity due to reduced prices emanating from the elimi-nation of trade barriers. These are discussed as a new subtheme below.

4.3.3.4 Regulatory, administrative and trade barriers

Regulatory and administrative trade barriers were widely discussed by all interviewees as part of the prevailing binding constraints for intra-Africa trade. Regulatory barriers mostly related to laws and regulations on how trade was carried out between states. As part of regulatory barriers, strict border systems restricted movements that were part of general regulation impeding the movement of goods and persons and were also part of the constraints as they either impeded trade flow or slowed it down, with both processes making it costly, as clarified by R4.

Administrative barriers related to trade operation practices affected the free flow of goods and services. These included processing delays at ports of entry as highly discussed by R4. Archaic border systems, especially those that were not digitalised were described as a severe technical constraint by R3:

> *"When you go through many African borders, you find that there has not been intra-Africa trade and lack of digitalisation means that for-mal trade cannot happen in the context that is expected, there is still a lot of informality that makes trade very difficult for a lot of con-straints in terms of all these things."* (Respondent 3).

Non-standardised trade processes and documentation across trade partners that are supposed to have integrated and coordinated systems is also a common constraint, as discussed by R1, R3, R5 and R7. For example, on a regulatory level, African countries could work on laws that standardised trade protocols and documents. On an administrative level, effective integration and coordination of trade processes and the introduction of standard border practices could enhance intra-Africa trade, as stated by R7:

> *"In order to emulate that sort of friction of having to foresee items and sell them in different territories or jurisdictions in the region, there is still a lot of work that has to be done in terms of developing common standards for the products and services."* (Respondent 7).

Creating an enabling intra-Africa trade environment standardisation process that includes product certification coordination was recommended by R1:

> *"If we could have one set of product compliance or certification that meets all the standards, it says if I am looking to maybe export to Ghana, I have to go through a long process, it could be up to two or three months or even longer to be registered on their database, all these different regulations. So, if we could have one set of regulations that can comply with all the countries, it would actually save time and also save a lot of money as well. So, it's important to have standard product compliance certification."* (Respondent 1).

R3 shared similar sentiments, referring to the process needed to correct the above challenges as harmonisation and integration of African countries' trade systems. The above highlights the importance of systems, regulatory and administrative alignment in supporting intra-Africa trade. Unaligned systems will continue to be a source of multiple bottlenecks that may reduce or even eliminate any benefits emerging from intra-Africa trade.

4.3.3.5 Political will and implementation challenges

R3 linked the administrative and regulatory barriers discussed to political will and matters that may relate to political will. While political leaders had appended their signatures to various previous trade agreements, they had not effectively supported the implementation of ratifications on trade integration and coordination. This, in R3's view, highlights low political will and the fears of politically losing trade advantages to other African countries. R3 stated that:

> *"So, these are just to mention but two of the most important binding constraints, then the third one because there are many, fear of losing trade advantage, trade integration and coordination and the third one is the issue of political will and its related issues. "I have seen that there are contradictions in that many of the things which need to be said about changing focus of regional integration and trade in Africa, have been said, but when you come to implementation, that is the missing piece that we need to look at. So, I am talking the value constraints."* (Respondent 3).

R6 asserted that until the necessary political will has been garnered, intra-Africa trade would remain under constraint. To correct the scenario and to create an enabling intra-Africa trade environment, stakeholders should also focus on transforming the "political will and getting more interested and involved:

> *"So, what we need to do is to say to ourselves, look the first enabler we need to look at is political will of our countries."* (Respondent 6).

R5 highlighted a view that political systems, particularly governments, need to be coerced into facilitating intra-Africa trade as they showed limited enthusiasm with regard to implementation:

> "*The governments are not going to move on their own without being pushed by other stakeholders, in fact they will not implement on their own, and I think they also do not really understand fully what the*

goals are, focusing more on growing inter-regional commerce, and I mention trade in general." (Respondent 5).

To enable intra-Africa trade, governments, as opined by R5, needed to be lobbied, and the private sector as a major stakeholder in intra-Africa trade was cited as a group that could drive this lobbying process. The above suggests the role of political offices in the economic sphere. This also demands a shift in the thinking that views politics and economics as instruments of conjointly improving intra-Africa trade. In many African environments, democracy is becoming stronger although challenges with despotism remain a concern. This presents serious challenges when presenting new solutions to rigid governmental systems that are outdated. Despite this not being widely discussed in the interviews, the information offered indicates that this is potentially one of the challenges that intra-Africa trade faced. It also suggests the need for the establishment of strong regional bodies that can enforce agreed trade regulations amidst political challenges.

4.3.3.6 Poor business environments and markets

The interviewees indicated that for intra-Africa trade to be effective, there should be conducive business environments amongst the African countries. This is because foreign trade, as argued, is an extension of the local business environment. Hence where entrepreneurship is poor, both service and product supply will be curtailed even beyond borders. This view therefore strongly relates to the assertions that for intra-Africa trade to improve, there must be adequate, well-priced and acceptable quality products and services emanating from a supportive entrepreneurship environment.

4.3.4 Subtheme 4: Personal experiences of challenges with intra-Africa trade

Interviewees were invited to give personal experiences about trading on the African continent. Their responses to the question, "What are the most chal-

lenging situations involving intra-Africa trade in Africa that you have encountered or are aware of, and what kinds of issues arose?" To understand each interviewee's responses and connect it to the study's focus areas see Table 4.6 for a summary of the interviewee's narrative.

Table 4.6: Challenges facing intra-Africa trade

	Issue/matter	Challenge	Consequence
R1	Turnkey intra-Africa trade - infrastructure to service development (SA to Malawi)	No adequate road and freight systems, airfreight extensively expensive; balancing between cost and time	Completion/delivery delay, cost overruns
R2	Purchasing and leasing locomotive trucks (SA to DRC)	No product supply guarantees from SA; Different legal systems between SA and DRC	Loss of railway wagons due to negligence; no adequate legal protection for wagon leasing company; challenges to replenish rolling stock
R3	No experience but an observation on trade and economic diversity on the continent	Lack of product and service diversity across countries; limited value addition; limited technology and digitalisation	Limited product diversity
R4	Technical and procedural delays and bureaucracies at ports of entry	Procedural delays when dealing with perishable stock that eventually goes bad while negotiating entry	Loss of value to exporters/importers due to inefficiencies
R5	Getting goods to landlocked countries (Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi through Maputo and Durban ports	Procedural and technical delays, congestion at multiple entry points; rail and road integration challenges from port to destination; uncoordinated regulation and systems; information asymmetries on logistics management	Delays, increased costs of trade, low trade competitiveness for landlocked countries
R6	Trade preferences outside Africa even when costs are higher - a Zambian copper exporter	A Zambian copper cable manufacturer preferred trading with Asian countries neglecting SA where demand and prices for the same commodity were higher and cost of trade were cheaper due to distance	Loss of trade opportunities among African countries
R7	Challenges in moving people and goods within Africa	Procedural, legal and technical challenges including visas, flights shortages make it easier to trade and move from Africa to non-African countries compared to moving within Africa	Loss of trade opportunities among African countries increased cost of trade
R8	Lack of trade policy standardisation in different African countries	Lack of political will; be driven by personal interests	Slow Foreign Direct Investments due to red tape and corruption perceptions associated with expediting the entry processes.

R1 was concerned by the significant costs of exporting medical equipment that was part of a turnkey project to Malawi due to infrastructural and logistical challenges. A 300 km distance between the capital city and a remote location for the project demanded more than expected costs and time. The

story tells of how infrastructural matters like road surfacing can have severe adverse cost and time impacts on intra-Africa trade.

R2's story speaks of two challenges – firstly, not obtaining guarantees that desired products will be supplied (rolling stock/locomotive/trucks) and secondly, not obtaining adequate legal coverage for the maintenance of leased equipment. Product supply availability issues and regulatory standardisation factors have both been discussed in the study. While R3 did not have a specific experience to share, the lack of product diversity on the continent as a trade barrier was highlighted. R4 narrated the ordeals of trading perishable, time-bound goods in an environment where technical and procedural delays at borders can take days to resolve. Once the problems have been resolved, it might be too late to continue with the consignment as it might have deteriorated due to the excessive delays. R5 highlighted procedural delays at borders and ports and emphasised how this damaged the economies of landlocked countries through increased costs of trade and trade delays.

R6 explained how a Zambian copper cable exporter neglected a lucrative South African market, choosing to trade with Asian countries, while R7 discussed general experiences with visas and trade documents as intra-Africa trade challenges. R8 expressed a concern about trade policies standardisation as a barrier to Foreign Direct Investment and an enabler for possible corruption as some investors may feel compelled to deviate from regulations to avoid the convoluted country policies.

These stories and experiences add weight to the challenges associated with intra-Africa trade and highlight complexities that may seem easily resolved but appear to hamper trade, in the process affecting the economic well-being of the countries involved. They further highlight the intensity of the work that needs to be done in making the aspirations for an African Continental Free Trade a reality.

4.3.5 Subtheme 5: Long-term effects of trade constraints

Various views emerged from discussions on the long-term impact of constrained intra-Africa trade in response to the question – "What are the long-term effects of these constraints on the African society at large including the business sector?" Table 4.7 summarises these responses.

Table 4.7: Long-term impact of constraints on intra-Africa trade

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Economic growth losses	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
High price inflation/trade costs				●			●	
Lost employment creation opportunities	●		●		●		●	●
Lost global economic competitiveness	●		●	●	●	●	●	
Loss of infrastructure development opportunities	●							
Low investment opportunities					●	●	●	●
Diminished socio-cultural cohesion/stability		●		●				●
Reduced knowledge sharing		●						
Constrained entrepreneurship growth		●						
Poverty		●	●					●
Low-income primary industrial growth			●			●		●
Excessive dependence on the west and Asia						●		

Almost all responses saw the curtailment of economic growth because of intra-Africa trade constraints. It reduces export opportunities that support

revenue inflows while curtailing low-cost imports that are needed in production. R4 and R7 believed that trade barriers increase costs of trade and this is inflationary to African countries. In this regard, R4 stated that: "The long-term effect of non-tariff barriers is slow trade, it is the raised prices, or the high cost of trading." (Respondent 4)

R2, R3, and R8 expressed concerns about the effect of poor levels of intra-African trade on high levels of poverty in the continent. R1, R2, R5 and R7 associated increased trade with employment creation opportunities. With the perpetuation of intra-Africa trade constraints, job creation on the continent will remain curtailed. On the employment creation issues, R1 stated that:

> "*It causes constraints because it would otherwise create employment, so if we had to embark our projects where we could involve the different countries in working on different logistic routes or working on alternative routes as well, this would in turn create employment. It creates constraints because it would otherwise generate jobs, therefore if we were to start our programmes where we could involve the various nations in working on various logistical routes or working on alternate ways as well, this would in turn generate employment.*"
> (Respondent 1).

R7 associated job creation with curtailed investment opportunities and reduced economic growth prospects, highlighting the association among these factors:

> *"You do not have the same necessary scale of investments that you otherwise might and had arranged and that has an effect on employment, on tax collection overall and on economic growth."* (Respondent 7).

All the interviewees other than R2 discussed or suggested the opportunity costs associated with a constrained intra-Africa trade environment with loss

of potential trade opportunities. These would have a positive impact on economic growth if they were to be fully realised.

In the interviews, R2 saw intra-Africa trade as an opportunity for enhanced socio-cultural cohesion among the continent's inhabitants. Unless the intra-Africa trade constraints are removed, such an opportunity will not be realised. In R2's opinion, the continent would continue to suffer from reduced knowledge sharing and constrained entrepreneurship growth which are the expected benefits of an enabling intra-Africa trade environment. Together with R2 and R3, R8 also suggested that poverty would continue to be a problem. On the question of continued poverty, R8 stated that:

> *"If Africa cannot address its own regulatory and institutional constraints that impede its development with regard to trade, through taking advantage of enabling platforms offered by digitalisation, then it means that in the long term it will not be able to lift this huge young population out of poverty."* (Respondent 8).

R6 further argues that if no real changes are implemented in line with enhanced intra-Africa trade aspirations, Africa will continue to be a low-income primary goods producer that is heavily dependent on the west and on Asia for finished goods and aid:

> *"The first long-term result is that the economy of Africa will remain restricted and dependent on outside factors, namely intra-African forces, but we are now also talking extra-African influences. So, they will continue to be dependent on extra-African influences. So many years ago, when the Americans sign a thing saying come into my market, that is when the African now starts producing for the American market, EU partnership agreements and China through its development bank making all kinds of concessions along the way."* (Respondent 6).

The interviewees thus highlight the long-term severe consequences of the

continuation of the current, constrained state of intra-Africa trade. The implications are that all these tended to gravitate towards reduced economic growth for the continent. This means constrained employment creation and the perpetuation of poverty amongst Africa's majority and therefore effort must be made in ensuring that intra-Africa trade grows amidst the many challenges it faces.

4.3.6 Subtheme 6: Roles of various stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade

From the interviewees' perspectives, four key stakeholders discussed were government, the private sector, academia and multilateral agencies and organisations. Table 4.8 summarises arising responses.

Table 4.8: Roles of various stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade

	Government	Private sector	Academia	Multilateral agencies
Skills development		R1, R2	R2	
Regulatory/policy environment alignment	R1, R3, R7			
Strategic, goal development	R4, R7	R4, R8	R4	R4, R7
Enabling business environment	R3, R5			R7
Infrastructure development	R1, R2	R2	R8	R3
Logistics development	R8	R1		
Trade finance		R1		R3, R5
Research/analysis and advice		R3	R2, R3, R5	R3, R8
Product and market development	R8	R2, R3, R5, R7		

The government was perceived as the central policy and regulatory body in intra-Africa trade with the responsibility of creating and harmonising trade facilitating laws and policies. It was also responsible for creating an environment conducive for business operation (R3, R5) as well as crafting national strategies for businesses (R4). These views on the role of the government were captured in the following statement:

> "*So, government has a role; hence it should not be captured by business and only focus on the short term in line with the limited political office tenure. It must rather have a conciliatory and long-term view with business, despite commercial pressures, by ensuring that an ideal environment to doing business with sustainable conditions is in place in a manner that outlives their service period in government and should understand the rules of the partnership for continuity.*" (Respondent 7).

R7 further cautions that the government's role in business should not be seen as obstructing normal business flow but simply regulating it for a properly coordinated flow. R1 puts the government at the centre of trade infrastructure development in addition to its regulatory and policy-related roles.

The private sector is considered the major direct beneficiary of a conducive intra-Africa trade environment. It should focus on developing markets and products as well as taking advantage of emerging opportunities (R2, R3, R5, R7). It also plays infrastructure development roles (R2), logistics development, trade finance through interventions such as the Developmental Finance Institutions (DFIs) and research including analysis and advisory support. Some of these roles are explained below.

> "*I believe the private sector should also come to the party in a big way when it comes to skills development necessary for growing the economy of the continent. This could be through funding students and allowing them access to their premises for practical education purposes.*" (Respondent 2).

Respondent 1 added that:

> *"So, trade finance and funding could be very important where we could get involved in various construction projects or other projects where we could jointly get involved in such projects."* (Respondent 1).

The role of academia is that of a researcher, analyser and advisor on government policies and strategies as well as on private sector operations. Its important role is highlighted in R6's comment:

> *"So, they provide us with the relevant data and then they provide us also with the context and they provide us with what is possible."* (Respondent 6).

The private sector could also play a strong role in critical skills development to capacitate economies to effectively take part in intra-Africa trade, as highlighted by R2. Multilateral agencies exemplified in the study include the African Development Bank, the World Bank, and local and regional level Developmental Financial Institutions. The African Union as a multilateral body as well as SADC, COMESA, and ECOWAS were all part of the interview discussions. The latter was supposed to be responsible at regional level. DFIs were seen as responsible for trade finance (R3, R5), infrastructure development financing (R3) and research services (R3).

Regardless of the multi-stakeholder demands of intra-Africa trade, R4 believed that the uniting factor that should harmonise and help to integrate the varying roles of the identified players was a common purpose:

> *"Whether it is academia, whether it is private business, whether it is government, whether is civil society, we ought to have the same goal underpinned by the people knowing various policies and the programmes that are important for the national development priorities of the country."* (Respondent 4).

R4's view is seen against a background perceptually characterised by poor

integration of policies, strategies, regulations and activities among different stakeholders. As the researcher observes, in addition to being a multi-nation process is also a multi-stakeholder reality. This brings new areas of interest into international trade, specifically how well stakeholders within and across states collaborate to bring about desired intra-Africa trade realities.

4.4 Theme 3: Governance/regulatory concerns

The third theme focuses on the governance and regulatory barriers and concerns of intra-Africa trade. It is divided into two subthemes, these being rregulatory and policy barriers experienced, and challenges associated with current trade practises amongst African countries.

4.4.1 Subtheme 1: Regulatory and policy barriers experienced

The interview process collected data on the regulatory and policy barriers that the eight interviewees had experienced in their own countries. The countries represented in the study were South Africa, Namibia, Kenya and Mauritius. Some of the barriers discussed were listed under a trade con-straints theme. This section focuses on the regulatory and policy con-straints. Table 4.9 highlights regulatory and policy barriers experienced by the respondents.

Table 4.9: Regulatory and policy barriers experienced

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
High duties and sur-charges	●			●				
Exporter registration pro-cesses	●				●			●
Product compliance certifi-cation differences	●				●			
Limited-service pricing and quality controls		●						
General regulation harmo-nisation challenges			●		●			●
Non-implementation and evaluation of regulation			●					
Restriction of skilled labour movement across borders				●		●		
Unilateral trade restrictions and bans on products				●				
Regulatory changes and inconsistencies					●		●	●
Policy failure to support business environment						●		

R1 highlighted three commonly discussed regulatory and policy barriers, these being the existence of high trade tariffs and surcharges, the existence of multiple product compliance standards and certification systems and delays in exporter registration processes, some of which were captured under different headings above:

> *"I would say one of the constraints would be the surcharges and the high duties to be paid on certain products. Certain products carry a surcharge of 30% to 40%, so we have been looking at the products,*

it makes it very expensive. So, government can really look at sur-charges and the duties. Another area as well is the product compli-ance. If we could have one set of product compliance or certification that meets all the standards, it says if I am looking to maybe export to Ghana, it could take up to two or three months or even longer to be registered on their database, all these different regulations. So, if we could have one set of regulations that can comply with all the countries, it would actually save time and also save a lot of money as well. So, to have standard product compliances certification is a key requirement." (Respondent 1).

R3 reiterated the concern over the poor harmonisation of trade laws across borders and how these made trade difficult to conduct. An important matter discussed by R3 was the poor implementation of new and existing trade supporting regulations. In his view, while policies and regulations were implemented at the political level, they did not effectively filter down to the operational levels. This results in differences between regulation and practice. In R3's view:

> *"You will see that on a political level, the leaders would declare that they want to remove every barrier, every physical restriction, and every restraint that makes cross-border trade challenging. But it does not trigger down to the officials, so they are unable to implement this, also because the political leaders do not push enough so as to en-sure that implementation is effective."* (Respondent 3).

At the same time, the existence of multiple blocs resulted in conflict which exerted pressure on countries to resist some policies from other blocs:

> *"Sometimes this is due to pressure from various blocs that also op-pose the political leaders' ability to properly implement these pro-grammes."* (Respondent 3).

Policies and regulations that failed to recognise the relationships between the movement of skilled labour and trade were also a challenge in some countries. Without the free movement of skilled labour, it was a challenge for some economic activities depending on its labour to thrive, including trade-related activities:

> *"I would say, as an example, that policies and regulations that influence people, including employees, professionals, notably the slowness of obtaining business visas, and work permits."* (Respondent 4).

R4 discussed bans and restrictions on some products as stifling intra-Africa trade. On the same matter, R7 gave an example of how Nigeria banned rice imports even when it did not have enough supplies, resulting in both local price increases and smuggling:

> *"Because this intoxicating drug of self-sufficiency at all costs and the failure to recognise that there is actually resiliency and redundancy created when you have alternative channels to access products from both locally and elsewhere. For instance, in Nigeria there were restrictions, no rice could be imported and interestingly enough the rice produced in Nigeria was not sufficient to cater for the local population and the cost at which that rice is provided may be much higher than what the imported products would provide, and it just promoted other channels for the stuff to come in."* (Respondent 7).

R6 discussed how South African business support policies failed to effectively grow and support intended ventures and failed to create a conducive environment for business. Poor operational environments characterised by low, or no service support was blamed for constrained business activity and ultimately trade activities. Where heavy regulatory and policy-level restrictions stifle intra-Africa trade, this suggests that the role of government is both as a facilitator and a disabler of intra-Africa trade. While the private sector might produce required goods and services in appropriate qualities

and quantities, its efforts can be rendered fruitless by government-imposed barriers. As highlighted, governments believe that these barriers are critical in protecting local economies and unless a new view that protectionism can actually harm rather than benefit economies emerges, the full realisation of intra-Africa trade will remain an unfulfilled dream.

4.4.2 Subtheme 2: Challenges associated with current trade practices among African countries

Several challenges that directly emanated from the abovementioned practices were also discussed in the interviews as reflected on Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Challenges associated with current trade practices among African countries

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Restricted access to trade resources	●				●			●
Trade delays (loss of productive time)	●	●	●	●	●			
Increased cost of trade			●					●
Restricted flow of trade				●		●		●
High-risk trade environment					●			●
Loss of trade opportunities for countries					●	●	●	
Product shortages							●	

According to R2, the identified barriers resulted in the delayed flow of trade and in goods getting to their sources very late:

> *"It takes a long time to meet goods from Mombasa all the way to the port of Durban, but you know what, it happens. So, the difficult points are the borders to all these countries." (*Respondent 2)*.

At the same time, the cost of moving the same goods is comparatively higher:

153

"You will find that the cost of moving from the coastal country into the landlocked countries concerned is so high to the extent that it could be about 50% of the production costs eventually." (Respondent 3).

R6 was of the view that it resulted in businesses looking for alternative markets where trade flow was smoother and came at comparatively lower costs. This, therefore, resulted in the loss of trade opportunities by African economies:

"Because if it is going to take your truck which you want to bring your goods into Zambia seven days to wait at the border, you are going to say, wow, wait a second, maybe there are easier places for me to do trading and this has been a fact at times." (Respondent 6).

R5 and R7 expressed concerns that trade operational inconsistencies and unpredictability made trading on the continent a risky affair:

"So, I think the biggest challenge is inconsistency and unpredictability. I think the fact that exporters generally cannot, I think on the whole firms are able to handle difficulties if they know what those difficulties are going to be, but I think the kind of uncertainty that is created by closure of border crossings are enormous delays by the ports as well by bottlenecks that you see at borders. By the time the uncertainty of how long it will take to get certain permits, it really creates an environment where there is no investment that is necessary for growth." (Respondent 5).

In this subtheme, as highlighted by the researcher, the effects and consequences of trade protectionism through the use of regulation is harmful to societies. Trade becomes riskier, costlier and takes too long to complete. Taking the value chain approach highlighted by the researcher, downstream industries that attempt to produce goods for export could be discouraged from starting or expanding their operations because of such barriers.

4.5 Theme 4: Unlocking potential

This theme dwelled on how intra-Africa trade potential can be unlocked and transformed into a socio-economic reality that could benefit the continent. Subthemes explored hereunder were the roles of the African Continental Free Trade Area in unlocking intra-Africa trade potential; Continued roles of regional blocs in intra-Africa trade; Regional Economic Communities, and potential conflicts thereof; Economic sectors with potential to unlock intra-Africa trade; the catalytic role of digitalisation in the current trade and integration context; and intra-Africa trade potential based on the views of the international community.

4.5.1 Subtheme 1: Roles of African Continental Free Trade Agreement in unlocking intra-Africa trade potential

The interviews focused on the ratified AfCFTA' s role in intra-Africa trade. The interviewees were accordingly asked for their opinions on how this treaty will have a bearing on intra-Africa trade. This theme was therefore mostly in response to the question – "What role do you see the recently ratified African Continental Free Trade Area playing in the unlocking or otherwise of the intra-Africa trade potential?" The identified roles are tabulated in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Roles of African Continental Free Trade in unlocking intra-Africa trade potential.

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Reduction of duties and tariffs	●			●				
Increased foreign direct investment	●							●
Enhancing price competitiveness of goods	●			●				
Removal of general operational barriers			●	●			●	
Increased trade volumes among African states			●	●			●	
Integration of multiple trade blocs and protocols			●		●			
Trade regulation and policy alignment across Africa			●		●		●	●
Higher value chain development		●		●			●	
Infrastructure development focus		●						
Improved industrial relations				●				
Economic diversification				●				
Investment attraction into the continent				●				●

R1 and R4 believe that AfCFTA would lead to the reduction of trade tariffs and surcharges. This would result in the increased price competitiveness of goods and services traded between and among African states. R1 stated:

> *"Specific important areas to consider would be the lowering or elimination of tariff or import duties so that African countries could trade*

with one another, as this would contribute towards making the products or services more affordable.” (Respondent 1).

R1 and R8 also saw AfCFTA as a tool to promote foreign direct investment as international entities see the potential of setting up in Africa as a way of benefitting from intra-Africa trade. R3, R4 and R7 saw AfCFTA as a broad instrument that would facilitate the removal of the many general operational trade barriers. R7 stated that:

“*The AfCFTA will deal with various category trade on investments to the movements of people to the standardisation of protocols linked to different products to investments that can be linked to intellectual property and so on and so forth.”* (Respondent 7).

R4 reiterated:

“I am very hopeful and really happy to see that the African Continental Free Trade Agreement will in the first place reduce and eliminate tariffs on the intra-Africa trade in Africa thereby making imports cheaper for consumers and producers and thereby enhancing trade amongst African countries. It will also reduce and eliminate tariffs, no, no, I wish to say reduce the incidences of non-tariff barriers thereby it reducing the costs of doing their business. It will also surely promote investments in Africa as it will create a bigger market for business opportunities, it will also include the efforts to promote economic diversification in Africa thereby diversifying productions in the market. Overall, one could say it will enhance Africa's industrial relations and the economic development.” (Respondent 4).

R4 also saw the AfCFTA's potential in improved industrial relations, economic diversification and investment attraction into the continent. In an earlier theme, he emphasised uncoordinated trade regulation as barriers, unstandardised trade documentation, thick border systems, archaic border systems and uncoordinated administrative barriers. These constraints were

coded as being part of the operational barriers that the interviewees were referring to.

R3, R4 and R7 further associated AfCFTA with the potential of increased trade volumes among African countries as a result of the removal of the above constraints. These interviewees, therefore, saw AfCFTA as a major milestone that would address identified intra-Africa trade constraints and barriers. R3 asserted that given the multi-regional bloc status of the African continent, the AfCFTA would play a significant role in integrating and coordinating varying trade regulations, philosophies and policies across these blocs. R3 highlighted ECOWAS, COMESA and the SADC as some of the key regional blocs that each have varying trade protocols, regulations and agreements. AfCFTA could be a super agreement that integrates the varying agreements within these blocs:

> *"West Africa has about 15 or 16 countries in ECOWAS, but among those 15, 16 countries in ECOWAS, there are also eight countries that are members of other blocs as part of West Africa. So, you see if you come to East Africa, you will see the confederation where about five out of seven countries, in eastern African communities are also part of COMESA. You go to Southern Africa; you will find that more than half of the member countries are members of both SADC and also members of COMESA. So, another important thing that the intra-Africa trade will do will be to try to dismantle all these multiple memberships so that we have one single market and then the intra-Africa trade in the context of the AfCFTA will also benefit from these regional initiatives."* (Respondent 3).

R3 went on to state that AfCFTA would be powerful enough to completely "dismantle" different African communities towards the creation of a single bloc with unionised and integrated trade systems. Nonetheless, R5 was adamant that AfCFTA would achieve the coordination and integration fits highlighted by R3. R5 believed that governments had not made a convincing effort towards trade integration. Rather it was AfCFTA that was driving the

trade agenda (top-to-bottom approach) rather than governments driving the trade agenda:

> *"I think we spoke about it before; I think it has huge potential, but I think it is still at a very early stage and the most difficult parts are really to come amongst governments and they have not really linked up through a lot of the energy that exists at the level of the private sector or of academia and so I think there is a lot of that to do."* (Respondent 5).

R5 attempted to strengthen the argument by referring to how past and existing integration efforts exemplified by ECOWAS had not had the desired regional trade integration effort:

> "*There are numerous examples where African integration efforts have failed to produce the desired results, whether it is South Africa and SADC or ECOWAS or any other efforts, and I think there is really a need to kind of take that as a long-term project while also looking for a kind of lower hanging fruits."* (Respondent 5).

R4 also expressed faith in the AfCFTA but was quick to caution that there were no guarantees that it would result in significant intra-Africa trade growth mainly because the constraints hampering intra-Africa trade were intense and not easily resolvable: "It is a great recognition of a concept whose time is well overdue and should have been looked at 50 years or so ago and at our independence. So as a tool for the improvement of intra-Africa trade, on a recognisable basis, I think it is a commendable tool, but that tool should not underestimate those constraints that we have talked about." (Respondent 6).

Thus, there were diametrical views on the AfCFTA' s potential and effect on intra-Africa trade via the bloc integration route. As per R3's beliefs, the bloc integration efforts would facilitate trade policies and regulation integration as well. This too was considered a doubtful fit by R5. R2 and R4 noted that

the AfCFTA could unlock Africa's potential by creating an environment conducive for value addition resulting in African countries participating in higher value chain product development. In other words, it would result in a decrease in the trade of primary goods and commodities and an increase in processed, higher-value output.

R2 asserted that because trade infrastructure development is one of the AfCFTA' s key interest areas, this will motivate infrastructure development by governments. R2 gave South Africa as an example of a country that had embraced infrastructure development as part of a response to its intra-Africa trade needs.

While concerns were raised regarding the highly restrictive trade practices in Africa, the AfCFTA brings an element of cautious hope. The responses above show a belief that non-protective, barrier-free and seamless trade can become a reality even when there is much evidence of extreme tariff and non-tariff-driven protectionism. This brings an element of hope that must, however, be based on the practical implementation of AfCFTA with the respective stakeholders effectively playing their part.

4.5.2 Subtheme 2: Continued roles of regional blocs in intra-Africa trade

The existence of several economic blocs on the continent was widely discussed in the interviews. The study explored the relevance of the regional blocs in facilitating and supporting intra-Africa trade including post the ratified AfCFTA era. The identified and discussed blocs were SADC, ECCAS, COMESA, EAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, AMU and CEN-SAD.
Table 4.12 summarises these blocs based on their continuing roles.

Table 4.12: Continued roles of regional blocs in intra-Africa trade

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Negotiation of new tariffs	●							
Enhancing co-operation	●		●		●		●	
Curtailing conflict arising from change	●						●	●
Integrated financial system including currency		●						●
Inter-bloc policy harmonisation and integration		●	●		●	●	●	●
Inter-bloc support for AfCFTA			●				●	

R1 believes that the eight regional bodies would be important in negotiating trade terms that are beneficial to the whole continent with the focus area of such negotiations being new tariffs and surcharges.

> "*So, I think quite a lot of negotiating, quite a lot of discussions will still have to take place, so to avoid any conflict taking place as well.*" (Respondent 1).

R1, R3, R5 and R7 believe that these bodies would drive the desired levels of continental integration and include integration and harmonisation of trade. In R1, R7 and R8's views, this would also entail curtailing out-of-hand conflict on trade regulations and policies. R2 together with R8 were optimistic that these bodies would play an even bigger role in integrating the African financial system into one. This would include facilitating a common currency to facilitate trade and economics. According to R2 and R8:

> "*The most recent currency discussion topic is whether or not the African Development Bank is geared towards creating a single African currency. So, all those things underline the agreement, so I mention that the regional bloc revolves around harmonisation and the African Development Bank should then be able to do so.*" (Respondent 2).

R3 and R7 opined that the eight regional economic blocs would be important platforms upon which AfCFTA support can be garnered. Each bloc could influence its members to support and implement the AfCFTA protocol. Additionally, some of the protocols could also be implemented at the bloc level. R4 believed that blocs will continue to be important in regional economic growth facets and agendas that are not directly under AfCFTA:

> "*The economic blocs have been in existence for a while now and it is clear that for the foreseeable future this regional community will remain in place and they will continue to implement their own integrating agenda, for example, SADC will continue to remain with its trade regime.*" (Respondent 4).

R6 also believed that regional blocs would continue to exist although they would gradually phase out as AfCFTA succeeds:

> "*I see those institutions continuing to exist for that purpose, but eventually if the AfCFTA proves itself successful in harmonising them completely, I see them fading out, because that is the whole objective, the whole objective of each REC is intra-Africa trade and you know if you have achieved it by federated structure, which has harmonised all our practises, then that is it, it should be done.*" (Respondent 6).

The interesting aspect of the above discussion borders on whether regional blocs will become necessary or not post the AfCFTA. As noted by the researcher, almost all of the intra-Africa trade challenges discussed in this research occurred under the watchful eye of these regional blocs. If this was the case this could stir a debate that these entities may need to be discarded

in favour of a new dispensation that bases its intra-Africa trade views, poli-
cies, regulations, strategies and programmes on AfCFTA. An interesting
question that might be raised is the extent to which these bodies will be
selfless in seeking to facilitate intra-Africa trade, especially in cases where
they believe that their interests may potentially be sacrificed. While the in-
terviewees hold some positive views that these bodies could play important
roles in harmonisation of AfCFTA implementation, the researcher cautions
that self-interest might dominate regional and continental interests. Despite
the positive effects discussed above, there were views of potential conflict
as well and some of these are captured below.

4.5.3 Subtheme 3: Regional communities, AfCFTA and potential conflicts

The interviewees discussed potential conflict among the regional communi-
ties as a result of AfCFTA. Conflict was also considered from the perspec-
tive of individual countries existing in different regional blocs with trade re-
gimes that were not fully harmonised with the AfCFTA. Table 4.13
identifies potential conflicts between Regional communities and AfCFTA.

Table 4.13: Regional communities, AfCFTA and potential conflicts

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Quest for intra-bloc dominance/competition		●			●			
Inter-bloc non-conformity potential				●				
Readiness level related conflict			●	●				●
Lack of interest to break out of isolation					●			
No significant conflict areas	●					●	●	

R1 saw opportunities for collaboration rather than conflict among the regional communities as a result of and in response to AfCFTA.

> *"I see more cooperating, more team efforts and I see more collaboration as well and also working together with a common goal, let us see how we can all work collectively and at the end we can now, instead of us continuing with importing quite a bit of products and services, we would be working together with a common goal to enhance our exporting capacity."* (Respondent 1).

This view was underpinned by the belief that despite their different existences these regional bodies were inspired by the need to boost value-added mutually beneficial trade on and off the continent. R6 and R7 also did not perceive any significant conflict among regional communities:

> *"Therefore, those regional blocs are crucial and, as already indicated, I believe they will continue to be so in the short to medium term in order to support regional economic development. Then we*

> *are talking about a fairly large continent with those kinds of discrep-*
> *ancies, the development, the integration and so on and so forth."*
> (Respondent 7).

According to R7, this was also because these regional communities' roles were already recognised within the AfCFTA framework:

> *"So I do not really see tension as such and the treaty, the Continental*
> *Free Trade Agreement, which came into effect in January 2020, rec-*
> *ognises that those blocs have a role to play and it is about those gaps*
> *in those existing agreements, because you may have one country*
> *being part of COMESA but not part of the EAC where they are and*
> *so on and it creates this kind of complex spaghetti bowl of trading*
> *relationships and how do I navigate, which loops I have to jump*
> *through and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement is really*
> *meant to bridge those gaps."* (Respondent 7).

In addition, AfCFTA was more likely to bridge the gaps between regional blocs, for example, between COMESA and the EAC rather than push them apart. AfCFTA should play a conflict-reduction role rather than a source of conflict among blocs.

R2 and R5 saw potential conflict for intra-bloc competition and quests for dominance as a potential source of conflict. R2 cited Nigeria and South Africa's quest for continental economic growth dominance as an example and a potential case:

> *"I think for example, in Africa Nigeria always wants to dominate any*
> *African institution."* (Respondent 2).

In R2's views, Nigeria always attempted to dominate African institutions but under the AfCFTA arrangement, there is evidence that South Africa would prefer to lead the harmonisation processes. Such leadership preferences can foster competitiveness rather than collaboration in AfCFTA implementation. Another potential conflict area was the readiness to migrate towards

AfCFTA protocols. With some blocs being more advanced than others in terms of economic and trade integration as well as readiness to adapt to AfCFTA, finding common ground in moving towards the ratified AfCFTA requirements could present a challenge. R4 gave an example of ECOWAS which might be ready to integrate with AfCFTA while others might not. The conflict that would arise would mostly be on the pace of harmonisation and integration:

> *"Some blocs are advanced in trading within themselves and I can easily say that a bloc like ECOWAS I think they are really much ahead, there might be others that maybe did not engage properly and some have the initiative from industries infrastructure in the political stability and thereby consolidating intra-Africa trade."* (Respondent 4).

Nonetheless, R3 believed that even when integration and harmonisation is at different speeds, potential conflict would be short-term and collaboration will quickly be restored:

> *"In reality, they might be developing at various rates in terms of market preparedness, but we aspire for a single market across the continent in the fullness of time."* (Response 3).

R4 believes that the harmonisation process itself was a source of conflict as it involved trade-offs across various regulations and policies. Ironically, it was the same harmonisation process that would resolve the said conflict:

> *"I could be incorrect, but I believe that to be the case. However, from a trade standpoint, there might be tensions or conflicts about trade commitments, and there might be overlaps in the criteria for compliance that could be resolved by harmonizing sector standards."* (Respondent 4).

As the researcher notes, the interviewees discussed potential conflict areas but did not see this conflict as disenabling the AfCFTA process. At the worst, it was noted as a short-term phenomenon. This was a positive indicator regarding the feasibility of a barrier-free or at least barrier-minimised intra-Africa trade environment.

4.5.4 Subtheme 4: Economic sectors with potential to unlock intra-Africa trade

This subtheme addressed the question of "What economic sectors pose the greater potential to unlock the full potential of the African economy going forward considering the new normal necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic and Fourth Industrial Revolution?". Table 4.14 explores the respondents' identified economic sectors with potential to unlock intra-Africa trade

Table 4.14: Economic sectors with potential to unlock intra-Africa trade

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Agri-processing	●	●				●	●	
Value-added mining	●			●		●	●	
Transport and communication				●				●
Tourism				●				
Professional services		●		●			●	
All industries					●	●		
Manufacturing		●				●	●	●
Energy							●	
Digital technologies			●					
Infrastructure		●						●
Medical and pharmaceuticals					●			
Retail		●						

R1, R2 and R3 believed that agri-processing was an important economic area that had the potential to unlock the African economy. R1 observed that value addition in the sector if supported by adequate exporting activities could enhance the continent's export performance while decreasing imports:

"I think it would always be very strong in agri-processing and in mining sectors. So, we can really work together to build very strong sectors, and I think the real goal is how we can produce products and services and add value and now we can export it as finished products and that would add value to the continent." (Respondent 1).

R1, with R7 and R4, observed that both mining and manufacturing have a significant capacity for improving employment volumes. R4 stated that:

"For both internal consumption and exports to the African and global markets, mining and manufacturing are crucial. These resource base sectors can create more jobs and they are more labour-intensive. They can also promote inclusive employment of the labour force, especially women and the youth because there are so many opportunities in these sectors." (Respondent 4).

In contrast, R7 commented that the manufacturing sector was widely spread across the continent in comparison to the tertiary level industries whose roles in driving global economies were growing. The era of manufacturing sectors as major economic bases of states was closing, and many countries were looking to the tertiary industry for growth. In that context, R7 encouraged increased focus and support to advanced professional services industries:

"The service sector has enormous potential, and many economies today are not solely dependent on manufacturing. I cannot think of one in our region that I will not say that they do not have manufacturing basis, they do but it is not kind of like the majority of the economy, a lot of it is service based. So, I think services widely defined presents great opportunities and it is across everything, from accounting to IT services, the tourism will fall into that category as well." (Respondent 7).

R4 and R7 agreed on the significant role that the services sector could play in the continent's economic recovery:

"Services sector is also another critical one, such as transport com-munications, assignments, tourism, business and professional ser-vices, these are important services sectors that input into manufac-turing and these services are also important in promoting competi-tiveness of economies. So really the sky is the limit." (Respondent 4).

In R4's perspective, however, the tertiary industry would only add value to the economy if there is room for it to support a growing manufacturing sec-tor. R5 and R6 were of the view that all economic sectors had the potential to unlock African economies. At the same time, R5 believed that the medical and pharmaceutical sectors could play an even larger role in Africa's econ-omy than they had done in the pre-Covid-19 era:

"One industry I neglected to mention in the previous query is the one for health services, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment, where there is currently a very strong growth potential. There is a need for increased capacity within the continent, an increased cooperation in trade and especially as you see in technological advancement but also you know the ultimate risky pandemic is climate change." (Re-spondent 5).

R6 believed that it was not a matter of economic sector but of whether ad-equate value was being added before exporting to other regions:

"You know, when you look at the Agri sector, 95% of African goods go and there is no value addition. You look at the mining sector apart from South Africa possibly, same thing.
So, we need to start looking at how again within the AfCFTA, African value addition first." (Respondent 6).

R3 listed the digitalisation and the technology sector in particular that serves as a catalyst and enabling virtual interaction as a response and a new nor-mal beyond the Covid-19 pandemic:

"If Africa can enhance the digitalisation, then it would also serve as a catalyst for all other sectors. The digital sector is still underdeveloped in Africa, but it remains an opportunity as the economy might have accepted the physical activities like construction and related physical sectors." (Respondent 3).

R2 believed that with the infrastructural demands of AfCFTA, the infrastructure development sector could play a pivotal role in unlocking the African economy. The same interviewee also saw the consumer goods sector as a major catalyst in economic rebound considering the high demand for such goods which are mostly imported from outside the continent. The above views highlight a broad view that many economic sectors could be seen as having the potential to unlock intra-Africa trade, also amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This is a preferable option as various diverse economic sectors will play important roles in Africa's economic development, enabling different states with different comparative advantages in these sectors to benefit as well.

4.5.5 Subtheme 5: The role of digitalisation in the current trade and integration context

The study took the current trade and integration context as unravelling in a period where economic activity has been adversely affected by Covid-19. In the same contextual background, there is much discussion on how the Fourth Industrial Revolution would and is affecting Africa's society, economics, technology and politics. The research therefore investigated the above in relation to intra-Africa trade. Table 4.15 shows responses related to the question: "What catalytic role do you see digitalisation play across different sectors as the economy traverses through unforeseen disruptions arising from major events such as the Fourth Industrial Revolutions and pandemics such as Covid-19, and how can this potential be unlocked?"

Table 4.15: The role of digitalisation in the current trade and integration context.

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
International trade		●	●		●	●		●
Innovation			●		●		●	
Transactional efficiency				●		●		
Integration with the world	●			●	●		●	
Knowledge and learning				●	●			
Technological advancement					●		●	
Problem solving					●			
Market integration	●	●				●	●	●
Border management systems integration		●						●

R2, R3, R5 and R6 were of the view that digitalisation would enhance international trade operations, especially the ease of interaction and transaction processing between African exporters, importers and their clients. In this regard, R3 stated that:

> *"African countries would trade with their partners not only being in the continent but all over the world through digitalisation."* (Respondent 3).

R4 noted that digitalisation would enhance efficiency in trading processes but would also support further technological advancement in trade, commerce and economics:

> *"So, it is something now that is integrated in every single activity on a daily basis of a lifetime, and it is very important that everybody appreciates what this new era can bring. It also brings efficiency; it also brings that you can learn immediately the mistake that you make or that you are going to make because of this technology. I think it is a*

wonderful world we are moving into an advanced world, advanced technology, it is a new normal." (Respondent 4).

According to R2 and R8, digitalisation would extend physical retail markets beyond borders. It would remove several border-related commercial barriers between the importer and exporter:

> *"Digitalisation once fully implemented around the food chains and perishables that are prevalent as a result of delays at ports of entry will eliminate logistical nightmares almost overnight."* (Respondent 2).

More advantages come from its online trading and shopping support capabilities as it has a market integration aspect. Nonetheless, its extensive growth is mostly hinged on income adequacy:

> *"But more crucially, I believe that as we raise earnings on the African continent, we will see an increase in the number of people there, just as we did see people shifting to online shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic. So, you get everything online, you do not have to go to shop for anything. So, we are witnessing a new revolution technically in front of our eyes, the shift to digitalisation."* (Respondent 2).

Digitalisation would bring transformation beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, even changing how people work as the future of work becomes increasingly hybrid:

> *"So many industries are never going to be the same again, so we are going to see working from home more than before, you know."* (Respondent 8).

R4 saw digitalisation as complementing Africa's efforts to integrate trade and increase economic cooperation. With digitalisation, African countries and citizens can source inputs from others with greater ease. It is therefore a tool or a driver that enhanced the operational side of integration and cooperation:

> *"It can also create an opportunity for cooperation. There is much stronger imperatives cooperation and I think we need to diversify*

your sources of input; you need to make sure that you have access to a lot of these kinds of essential goods, you know, the more the better and also you know work on developing a lot of that has to be just not within their individual countries but within the region. So, I think it could in some ways be a driver towards more advanced than less integration." (Respondent 5).

R4 observed that with greater cooperation and integration, the continent stood a better chance of surviving economic shocks including those brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and industrial shifts:

"I think if each country operates on an island, it becomes very difficult to be resilient against a lot of these kinds of shocks" (Respondent 5).

The researcher notes that digitalisation is considered a critical catalyst that could reduce trade barriers, and enhance harmonisation and integration efforts among economies globally. It could help to automate and eliminate some of the binding constraints associated with trade process flows, provided a conducive regulatory environment exists. At the same time, the role of digitalisation in the harmonisation and integration of intra-Africa trade and in economic development, in general, should raise the question of the state of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (together with subsequent industrial revolutions) readiness of African states. While it has advantageous aspects, it could reduce the competitiveness of less digitalised countries in intra-Africa trade.

4.5.6 Subtheme 6: Intra-Africa trade potential - International community views

Intra-Africa trade as well as the ratified AfCFTA are contextualised in a world where regionalism was a common norm and where different regions had achieved varying degrees of economic integration success. The researcher gathered the interviewees' perceptions on what the global political and business communities could be saying about the potential of intra-Africa trade.

Such views were important considering that Africa interacts with the rest of the world in trade and politics, amongst others. In the trade context, over-arching concerns were Africa's role as a primary commodities exporter and an importer of finished goods, a scenario that depressed the value of African trade. To explore these and other views, the question – "What is the international community's political and business communities' views of intra-Africa trade potential?" was asked. Table 4.16 presents the interviewees' broad responses.

Table 4.16: Intra-Africa trade potential - International community views

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Respondent 6	Respondent 7	Respondent 8
Interest in investing in Africa	●			●	●			●
self-interest and protective view							●	
Support as it will bring geopolitical stability					●		●	
Global scepticism at large-scale intra-Africa trade feasibility				●		●		
Uncertainty on international community perceptions					●			
Diverse views depending on stakeholder/party			●					●

In R1's view, intra-Africa trade was positively conceived as it came with enormous business opportunities for international stakeholders as well. Various intra-Africa trade and AfCFTA initiatives were already attracting attention and enquires, and this was mostly because the trade agreements and related incentives will benefit any entity located in Africa regardless of its origins:

> "It really created a great opportunity for foreign investments as well, we find quite few, through our different delegations, we find we had several enquiries where different international companies are looking to setup offices, factories, businesses in Africa, where they can setup a corporation because with them setting up here and then they can access the agreements and also they will be able to export and take

the access or the different incentives that are available through our different agreements." (Respondent 1).

R1 thus saw a foreign direct investment benefit that included factory set-ups that would follow the attainment of AfCFTA, and any other agreements aimed to improve intra-Africa trade:

"The value of international investors creating factories in the African continent has a multiplier effect as it creates both business and job opportunities. Hence an inclusive growth to investment in necessary." (Respondent 1).

R5 stated that the international business community would be interested in taking up investment opportunities created by intra-Africa trade:

"I believe there is a lot of foreign direct investment, a lot of initiatives, a lot of diplomacy that can accrue into the African continent, but I believe there is only so much that development partners and the international community can do. At the end it will be dependent on the African leaders and by the African private sector working together to leverage the opportunity." (Respondent 5).

R5 also cautioned that international investors will however not be the main drivers of intra-Africa trade success. This still rested on the African community that should take ownership and control of trade in its midst:

"At the end of the day, I believe the international community may play a supportive role but should not be perceived as driving the intra-trade process." (Respondent 5).

In R7's view, perceptions of protective self-interest should not be ruled out as some may see it as an exclusive arrangement that does not take cognisance of the interests of other regions. This is the case even though such parties also protect their own national and regional interests sometimes at

Africa's expense. R7 further gave an example of how the United States puts its interests first regardless of the regime in place:

> *"Politically, nations are likely to view this through the lens of self-interest, as they indeed should, and it is not necessarily new merits; for some, it is binary. For instance, in the United States you have a change between Biden and Trump, they both would share the America first approach, but would execute on it very differently."* (Respondent 7).

At the same time, there might be an element of support as intra-Africa trade would be supporting Africa's stability and development. R7 focuses on United States support, suggesting that the current Biden administration, as a government that supports institutionalism, might lend its support to AfCFTA:

> *"I believe Biden is much more of an institutionalist, and the United States decision to go back and pledge support for the World Health Organization is fairly strong proof of that. That is the kind of framework that was rejected by, for example, the Trump administration. So, it would be using the US example in the US interest to see a stronger Africa."* (Respondent 7).

R6 believes that the international community would possibly downplay AfCFTA and any intra-Africa trade integration processes whilst looking down upon the continent. The view that Africa as a continent is a net exporter of raw commodities is globally entrenched to an extent that some will question Africa's value-addition capacity:

> *"The first question that is typically posed is, "Okay, but what value can Africans contribute?"* (Respondent 6).

Such parties' views may be premised on the experiences that value-addition needs skills and resources that may not be readily available in some African countries:

"But the issues are not as simplistic as that, because what you find is sometimes the value addition has certain costs and then they need certain technologies and then they need certain human resources. Definitely from my international partners that I relate to, particularly on the value addition as a conduit platform for the intra-Africa trade that is one of the views I keep getting." (Respondent 6).

As R4 expanded, there is also global scepticism that African countries are too poor to sustainably rely on each other without extensively resorting to external markets for exports as a way of raising income. This view will also affect how the international business community perceives intra-Africa trade agreements including AfCFTA:

"Secondly, I also keep hearing that African nations who trade with one another are underdeveloped and too poverty stricken to add significant value to one another. So, how do you get, you know, these poor countries to pay for the services that they have got." (Respondent 6).

In R5's view, there is an element of uncertainty over the effectiveness of the AfCFTA and this would result in a "wait-and-see" approach to investing in Africa. Such uncertainties are driven by the general underperformance of regional blocs since as far back as the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU):

"Since the Organisation of African Unity was founded in the 1960s, there has been a lot of underperformances, so I think there is a degree of wait and see, that African integration is just a few years away that will increase inter-regional trade that there is a lot of focus and so forth, and investment in a lot of these regional communities have not really yielded real results on the ground." (Respondent 5).

R3 believes that AfCFTA perceptions will depend on who is looking at this agreement and which part of Africa they are focusing on. As R3 explained,

African economies exist at varying levels of growth and sophistication with some being dominated by the informal sector. At the same time, some economies were advanced enough to engage in effective value-added global trade. Any positive or negative perceptions will be a result of focusing on the economic dynamics of different countries.

> *"I think that would depend on who you ask, because first, the African continent is very, very interesting. Now it depends on which country you are looking at; in some countries you will find that informal sector is regarded as a private sector. You will find the private sector is not fully developed. Where the private sector is well developed you will see that they are also informed and they are already trading across some of these countries, except they need the constraints to be removed, but where you find that there is the means on the informal sector is this, you will find that they are not better informed, they are not even aware about what an informal sector is and they are not better organised in terms of intra-Africa trade solutions."* (Respondent 3).

The international community's political and business sectors hold diverse views of the intra-Africa trade potential. Some international players have already shown interest in intra-Africa trade, specifically under the AfCFTA dispensation. At the same time, there is a cautious view that the ultimate objectives will not be achieved. Such scepticism, despite being displeasing, is not wholly unfounded considering the general failure of existing agreement systems in bringing considerable trade and economic improvement to the continent. Furthermore, the positive views are encouraging as they could motivate the continent to work towards a successful and highly integrated and progressive region.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data analysis results for the study. Four themes were extracted from the data using inductive thematic analysis methods. The first theme was understanding alignment, and its subthemes were the definition, conceptualisation and the current status of intra-Africa trade. The second theme was unlocking potential and its subthemes included the roles of AfCFTA in unlocking intra-Africa trade potential. The third theme focused on regulatory and governance issues surrounding intra-Africa trade and the fourth theme addressed how intra-Africa trade potential could be unlocked.

The findings generally point to a view that intra-Africa trade is a highly constrained activity characterised by excessive export of low-value unpredictable raw commodities versus the importation of finished goods. Additionally, it is characterised by significantly low volumes compared to other regions. Various regulatory, economic and operational barriers account for this situation. There were views expressed that the AfCFTA could remedy the situation resulting in an intra-African trade environment with fewer trade barriers that in turn supported the continent's social and economic progress. However, for this to happen there was a need to manage identified threats and concerns while taking advantage of innovative opportunities such as digitalisation to optimise global supply chain and minimise higher levels of foreign dependency syndrome. Chapter 5 will focus on the discussion of results and emerging themes that were analysed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, qualitative data was analysed under four broad themes relating to intra-Africa trade: (1) Understanding alignment, (2) Social and economic impact of intra-Africa trade, (3) Governance/regulatory concerns surrounding AfCFTA, and (4) Unlocking the potential of intra-Africa trade. This chapter further discusses these findings by comparing and contrasting data analysis results to existing concepts, theories and practices as captured in the literature. This chapter follows a similar pattern to Chapter Four and data analysis results are discussed in the same order they appear in Chapter 4. The chapter starts with an overview of data analysis results and then a discussion of the data analysis results. In the last sections, the findings from the data analysis are also compared with existing theories on regional integration including intergovernmentalism, neo-functionalism and Pan-Africanism. These theories were extensively discussed in Chapter 2.

5.2 Overview of findings

Table 5.1 shows the study's four main themes and their various subthemes. In total there were 18 subthemes across the four themes.

Table 5.1: Summary of themes and objectives

Theme	Subtheme	Objectives
Theme 1: Understanding alignment	Subtheme 1: Definition and conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade	Evaluate the current status and nature of intra-Africa trade
	Subtheme 2: The current status of intra-Africa trade	Evaluate the current status and nature of intra-Africa trade
Theme 2: Social and economic impact	Subtheme 1: The feasibility of enhancing intra-Africa trade	Investigate constraints and enablers of intra-African trade
	Subtheme 2: The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy	Examine the nature and extent of the impact of low trade levels on the African economy
	Subtheme 3: Constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade	Investigate constraints and enablers intra-Africa trade
	Subtheme 4: Personal experiences challenges with intra-Africa trade	Investigate constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade
	Subtheme 5: Long-term effects of trade constraints	Establish strategies to minimise the constraints associated with intra-Africa trade using continental and regional integration
	Subtheme 6: Roles of various stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade	Identify the key stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade
Theme 3: Governance/ regulatory concerns	Subtheme 1: Regulatory and policy barriers experienced	Investigate constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade
	Subtheme 2: Challenges associated with current trade practices among African countries	Establish the role that the AfCFTA can play in enhancing intra-Africa trade
Theme 4: Unlocking potential	Subtheme 1: Roles of AfCFTA in unlocking intra-Africa trade potential	Establish the role that which the AfCFTA can play in enhancing intra-Africa trade
	Subtheme 2: Continued roles of regional blocs in intra-Africa trade	Establish strategies to minimise the constraints associated with intra-Africa trade using continental and regional integration
	Subtheme 3: Regional communities, AfCFTA and potential conflicts	Identify the key stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade
	Subtheme 4: Economic sectors' potential to unlock intra-Africa trade	Establish the role which the AfCFTA can play in enhancing intra-Africa trade.
	Subtheme 5: The role of digitalisation in the current trade and integration context	Establish strategies to minimise the constraints associated with intra-Africa trade using continental and regional integration
	Subtheme 6: Intra-Africa trade potential - International community's communities views	Establish the role which the AfCFTA can play in enhancing intra-Africa trade

To summarise, Theme 1 is necessary for establishing an understanding of intra-Africa trade as well as understanding its current status. This relates to Theme 2 which focuses on the social and economic impact of intra-Africa trade, its status and how it was conceptualised by the interviewees. The third theme focused on the regulatory and governance issues affecting intra-Africa trade and touching on operational and strategic challenges emanating from these concerns. The fourth theme looks at concerns relating to how intra-Africa trade potential could be unlocked in response to its current socio-economic impact that is a function of the African trade policy environment as governed and regulated by sovereigns and regional blocs. The theme also examines the AfCFTA to unlock intra-Africa trade potential bringing the desired social and economic benefits to the continent. The four themes are intertwined.

5.3 Theme 1: Understanding alignment

Two subthemes emerged under Theme 1; these were the definition and conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade and its current status. The various definitional views from the respondents are discussed first.

As outline on Table 4.2 the candidate classified respondents' definitions of intra-Africa trade into narrow and broad definitions. A narrow definition and conceptualisation focused on the trade aspect of intra-Africa trade specifically the exchange of services and goods among African countries. This narrow view mimics general definitions of international trade including UNCTAD's (2019) definitions. An interesting aspect of the respondents' definitions is that both the narrow and broad definitions of intra-Africa trade are captured in the AfCFTA's objectives. The narrow definitions capture the objective to increase trade across African countries via the removal of trade barriers (Tralac, 2019). The broad definitions capture economic transformation while also implying reducing dependency on international markets like the third objective to "enhance competitiveness and support economic transformation" (Tralac, 2019:2). Scholars that include Nagar (2019) and

Obeng-Odoom (2020) associate intra-Africa trade with the broader pan-Africanist view captured in some of the respondents' expressions and definitions. This Pan-Africanist view is highlighted in the AfCFTA agreement which speaks of a "Pan African Vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" as a key objective of the agreement, as well as a key precept in intra-Africa trade (Africa Union, 2019:4).

In the literature review, the AU's reference to Afreximbank's definition of intra-Africa trade as encompassing informal trade is also captured in the broad definition in the interviewee responses, specifically by R4 (African Union, 2021). However, in the respondents' definition and conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade, there is no inclusion of the African Diaspora as a part of that trade as per the AU-adopted Afreximbank's definition (African Union, 2021).

The respondents' conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade also encompassed an element of the numbers of participating countries. As highlighted for it to be true intra-African trade, almost all or the majority of the African countries need to be involved in it as noted in R3 and R7's definitions. Important points in this view are that mere regional trade within REC blocs and trade between two African countries cannot be interpreted as intra-Africa trade. The concept applies when most countries are free and able to trade with each other. This inclusivity approach is also captured in the AfCFTA agreement which focuses on the inclusion of all, rather than a few African economies (Africa Union, 2019). Another critical element that reflects in the respondents' definitions is continental self-sustenance in trade. This view challenges the production and distribution of African goods and services only as part of intra-Africa trade. The issue of output origin which is widely discussed in the literature is brought out by R6 in contrast to R1 who does not distinguish goods and services by ultimate origin, if they are traded on the continent by the continent's countries. Nubing (2021) and EL Gassani and Hassani (2021) discuss the view that rules of origin of goods and services are a

contentious issue in trade and this has tended to stifle the free flow of goods as traders needed to prove where their goods were produced. This origin-focus, as encapsulated in the definitions stems from such views where the intention is to ensure that goods were indeed coming from trade bloc members. Signé and Madden (2020) highlight the importance of this origin view as it separates non-African goods and services that may percolate into African markets from authentic African goods. They however advise on reducing compliance burdens associated with sources or origins for small businesses.

An important principle raised by R4 is that intra-Africa trade is also defined by the existence or non-existence of trade barriers among African countries. As per this definition, trade cannot be intra-African if there are significant barriers to it, especially those that do not distinguish between African and non-African countries. Intra-Africa trade can exist with or without barriers albeit the idealised scenario is one where they are kept at a minimum or do not exist at all.

5.3.1 The current status of intra-Africa trade

The subtheme on the current status of intra-Africa trade was discussed under two categories. These are related to its primary goods focus and low-capacity nature.

5.3.1.1 Primary goods focus

Understanding how the respondents defined and conceptualised the intra-Africa trade was important for, among other things, comprehending their views on the phenomenon's current state. From the responses, intra-Africa trade was widely dominated by primary goods traded between members as raw material. These were from the agricultural, mining and petroleum industries. This observation is neither new nor uncommon. It is a widely discussed issue that Africa, due to low industrialisation, has found itself as a

net trader of primary, low-valued goods. According to the UNCTAD (2019), intra-Africa trade was mostly in primary exports and this severely reduced revenue and economic growth that countries could derive from such trade. Simola *et al.* (2021) and Luke and Macleod, (2019) make similar observations. Despite this high trade in primary goods, African states tended to trade more finished goods among themselves compared to the volumes of finished goods they trade with other continents (UNCTAD, 2021).

5.3.1.2 Low capacity with huge potential

Like some scholars and studies, specifically George (2019) and Signé *et al.* (2020), some respondents like R3 and R5 saw growth potential in intra-Africa trade. This potential related to increases in the volumes of value-added trade. In contrast, some respondents expressed considerable reservation that intra-Africa trade faces too many challenges and hindrances that need to be immediately addressed. It is doubtful that these challenges will be resolved in the short term that creates a pessimistic attitude that intra-Africa trade could experience significant growth in both volumes and value of trade. Similarly, Nubing (2021) and EL Gassani *et al.* (2021) saw this potential as conditional rather than guaranteed. There was a need to resolve current trade hindrances to facilitate trade volume and value increases as well as to realise the continent's trade potential (UNCTAD, 2021). These hindrances include regulatory issues, political stability issues and the previously discussed challenge of the dominance of primary exports over valued-added goods and services as confirmed in the literature as well as among the respondents (UNCTAD, 2021).

5.4 Theme 2: Social and economic impact

Two subthemes are captured under this theme, and they focus on the socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade within the context of SMEs and regionalisation.

5.4.1 The growing importance of SMEs

Among the respondents, there were further discussions that intra-Africa trade could be enhanced by supporting Africa's SMEs as economic entities that will contribute to trade growth. This view is shared by UNECA (2021) which mentions the significant trade roles played by African women and youth. The dominance of SMEs on the continent could be harnessed to increase trade as well under a conducive supportive environment. This view aligns well with previous discussions that the definition of intra-Africa trade should be inclusive of informal cross-border trade as this activity is broadly categorised as an SME activity (Abdulquadir, 2021). Abdulquadir (2021) further agrees that intra-Africa trade potential will be difficult to realise without the consideration and inclusion of SMEs which dominate the African business landscape in the trading system. Additionally, this will adversely affect the AfCFTA's ability to positively impact the lives of Africa's citizens (UNECA, 2021; Abdulquadir, 2021). The AfCFTA agreement acknowledges the importance of uplifting SMEs as part of improving intra-Africa trade and African livelihoods in general:

> "Improving the capacity of both formal and informal service suppliers to export, with specific attention to micro, small and medium-sized women and youth service providers" (AU, 2019:52).

Like UNECA (2021) it also realises the significance of capacitating SMEs to take part in trade.

5.4.2 The increasing sense of regionalisation

The respondents discussed the increasing sense of regionalisation on the continent as a positive attribute that can be harnessed toward improving intra-Africa trade. Africa is seen as moving from fragmented socio-economic systems towards regionally centred systems through the operations of its various regional economic blocs. Such regionalisation attitudes are viewed as conducive to continental trade enhancement. Such views are highlighted by several scholars including Aniche (2015), Joboku (2015) and Abrego *et al.* (2020) who believe that the increasing propensity to regionalise as a solution to weak individual economic capacities is a trend that is gaining momentum and support on the continent.

5.4.3 The socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade on the African economy

The findings from this study concurred with findings, views and concepts shared by various scholars and institutions in the literature. The findings on the socio-economic impact of increased intra-Africa trade can be summarised into economic, social and political benefits as commonly found in the literature. On the economic benefits, like the respondents in this study, several scholars and institutions cited in the literature saw the AfCFTA's most visible benefit as the increase of trade among African countries and the creation of a mega African market. Such views are shared by UNCTAD (2019), Luke and McLeod (2019), and Vickers (2020), among others. The general scepticism that the AfCFTA could fail to benefit African trade is shared by Nagar (2020). These scholars were optimistic that the poor state of intra-Africa trade could be improved through the removal of trade barriers and regulations that facilitate freer trade among nations. Increased trade as a key benefit is expected to come with several benefits that include increased job opportunities for the continent's population and sustainable development. Apiko *et al.* (2020) highlight how regional blocs that promote intra-Africa trade could increase skills and knowledge transfers across African

countries. Such skills include digital technology expertise which was also mentioned by R8 as a potential outcome of enhanced intra-Africa trade. Concerning the creation of a mega-market, Apiko *et al.* (2020) like R1 see the possibility of Africa transforming into a single, large market. The view that an enhancement of intra-Africa trade could also result in increased entrepreneurship as highlighted by R2 is shared by Apiko *et al.* (2020) who also link it with increased movement of people, goods, and services across the borders.

Like the respondents, UNCTAD (2019), Luke and McLeod (2019), and Vickers (2020) saw the continent reaping downstream economic benefits that also has a positive socio-economic impact that includes poverty reduction.

Other economic benefits discussed by the respondents, scholars and institutions reviewed in the literature include economic growth for countries (Luke and McLeod, 2019; UNCTAD, 2019); increased industrialisation (UNCTAD, 2019; Simola *et al.,* 2021; Vickers, 2022); increases in national incomes (World Bank, 2020), infrastructure development and sustainable growth and development (UNECA, 2021). R1 discussed less commonly held views that intra-Africa trade would reduce the continent's dependency on external funding and boost its capacity to self-finance. This view emanated from the fact that with increased trade value and volumes, the continent could have adequate revenue streams to self-finance. The OECD (2020) holds a similar approach and sees the effective implementation of AfCFTA as a potential solution to the continent's reliance on external funding that also exposes it to financial shocks.

On the social front, the enhancement of intra-Africa trade is expected to come with increased social cohesion, ease of movement by people and the reduction of poverty as core benefits. From the respondents' perspectives, these benefits were interrelated with free movement to strengthen social integration among African people. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2017) and

189

the World Bank (2020) share the poverty reduction view which they saw as a direct function of the reduction in unemployment on the continent.

Politically, both the respondents and the cited sources indicate that increased intra-Africa trade could stabilise some problematic regions on the continent. Specifically, the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) views the AfCFTA as a potential enabler of peace and stability in some of Africa (ISS Africa, 2020). This view is based on the notion that poverty, inequality and unemployment are key drivers of extremism and political insecurity. If the AfCFTA addresses these challenges, there is a considerable probability that this will bring peace to these regions. The study's findings, therefore, go against opposing views such as the one held by El-Anis (2018). El-Anis (2018) believes that there was no direct relationship between economic stability including via the trade enhancement route and regional peace and security. The scholar strengthens their argument by referring to wars and instabilities in some economically prosperous regions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

5.4.4 Constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade

For intra-Africa trade to grow, there was a need to reduce constraints and barriers to it while optimising its enablers. This was brought out under this subtheme.

5.4.4.1 Logistics and infrastructure-related factors

The view that logistical challenges associated with poor physical infrastructure could undermine the growth of intra-Africa trade, even under the auspices of the AfCFTA, was commonly shared in the literature. According to Deloitte (2020), for intra-Africa trade to grow, Africa needs to rapidly develop its infrastructure to meet the needs of the AfCFTA. Other sources further mention dilapidated road and rail networks as well as the existence of many poorly linked productive areas on the continent (Berahabi & Dadush, 2018;

OECD, 2020). This results in high transportation costs (OECD, 2020). Respondent 1 highlighted that the limited availability of trade finance reduced the volumes of trade among African countries, a matter that was also discussed by Geda and Seid (2015). Additionally, Geda and Seid (2015) view poor international payment systems and currency convertibility issues as a major concern. Three immediate outcomes of poor infrastructure as highlighted in the responses were the slowing down of trade; the increasing costs of trade; and the impossibility of trading in some instances. These were discussed by Ismail (2021) who noted infrastructure as a pillar of the AfCFTA's success, further recommending the need for cross-border infrastructural development rather than country-focused and independent infrastructure programmes. The AfCFTA agreement holds the view with one of its sub-objectives as the "development of trade-related infrastructure" (African Union, 2019:36).

5.4.4.2 Peace and security threats

The literature reveals that political instability in some parts of the continent came with severe trade security threats (George, 2019; WEF, 2020). In the interviews, a common example of such conflict was the Ethiopia-Tigray issue and the insurgencies in the northern parts of Mozambique. Similarly, the ISS (2022) relates how the crises in Mozambique prevent citizens from reaching the affected parts, from actively participating in economic activities including trade. This diminishes the overall market. In addition, as highlighted by R6 and further corroborated by Wook (2017) it is difficult, if not impossible, to trade in conflict zones. The existence of conflict disempowers any trade or economic policy, and this makes it one of the most significant constraints to trade. A view by Aniche *et al.* (2021) that increased trade and its positive effect on economic growth and income can bring political stability to Africa is also shared by some respondents such as R8 in this study.

5.4.4.3 Product-related factors

The respondents discussed that product-related factors could constrain the enhancement of intra-Africa trade and two sets of factors of interest were product demand on one hand and the product price-quality relationship on the other hand. Product demand issues were linked with the existing unbalanced import-export product categories a situation also mentioned by Vickers (2022). Africa was discussed as having a high demand for finished goods which unfortunately it tended to import. Its markets, because of importing finished goods, did not have much of a demand for these primary goods. As highlighted by R4, a deficit therefore existed between finished goods demanded by the African market and finished goods supplied by the same market, as confirmed by Ismail (2021). This deficit was met by imports and as the respondents stated, unless reversed this scenario will continue to impede intra-Africa trade growth.

To meet its finished product demand, the continent needed to enhance its industrial capacity, and this was linked to developing adequate trade and investment infrastructure. This industrial production capacity is raised in the literature by Mkhabela (2021) who mentions that most of Africa's countries had very low industrialisation levels and this made them rely on Europe and Asia for finished imports. Mkhabela (2021) further highlights that industrial capability, which is more of a production competence issue was also very low as exhibited by low product qualities when compared to imports from outside the continent. Both these capacity and capability concerns are raised in the study with respondents believing that a solution to this is economic transformation and diversification.

One of the suggestions for the improvement of continental industrial capacity came from R4 who recommended that the continent as a whole as well as through its existing RECs should focus on developing regional value chains. Regional value chains would facilitate the efficient movement of primary goods from one African country to another and the use of such goods

for the manufacturing of products that are traded on the continent. Thus, regional value chains would replace European and Asian markets as buyers of primary goods. African countries with low production capacity and capabilities would import goods from other African countries that had a positive comparative advantage in producing finished goods. The development and/or strengthening of existing value chains within economic regions is viewed as a key driver of economic bloc-level industrialisation by Pasquali, Godfrey and Nadvi (2021). Like the respondent in the interviews, they believe that focusing on regional value chains could protect regional, rather than local economies from competition posed by developed markets. African countries could get cheaper raw materials from their regions enabling them to produce price-competitive finished products (Pasquali, et al., 2021).

The respondents discussed Africa's constraining product price-quality relationships with R1 asserting that with increased industrialisation, the continent's products will become more affordable to its people. R8's view that low quality versus high prices constrained African countries' export potential is similar to findings by Tsvakirai and Moskairi (2021) who investigated the role of product quality on export earnings focusing on South African agricultural exports. The product pricing and quality issue are further linked to infrastructural challenges that result in, among other things, electricity shortages or high energy prices, both factors affecting export prices and quality as reiterated by R1. Infrastructure as one of the causes of high prices of manufactured goods in Africa is confirmed by Odendaal (2017) who identifies high freight costs as diminishing the continent's product price competitiveness.

Another matter that needs more consideration is whether the removal of tariffs will offset high infrastructural deficiency costs that are built into the continent's product prices. One respondent (R1) held a related view. In the sources consulted by the researcher, no clear discussions on this matter

could be found. Nonetheless, the respondent presents an interesting perspective that tariff removal could have an immediate effect that could overshadow infrastructural challenges that are commonplace on the continent. The view that tariffs would result in reduced or at least more competitive prices on the continent is however commonly held including by Shinyekwa, Bulime and Nattabi (2020) who however do not share the view that this will be immediate and direct. Rather, tariff removal would increase manufacturing and trade volumes and market access and this will result in the reduction of prices and therefore increased price competitiveness among African countries (Shinyekwa *et al.*, 2020).

5.4.4.4 Tariffs and surcharges as intra-Africa trade constraints

The view that tariffs act as barriers to intra-Africa trade is commonly discussed in the literature and is not a new finding. In the study, the respondents believed that trade tariffs were a major impediment to continental trade. They made products more expensive and therefore stifled demand. This stifled demand scenario came with low incentives for industrialisation and among other things resulted in the continent being a net exporter of raw commodities – this is one of the major challenges that came out in the study according to the researcher's observation. Mostly, the study's respondents took a non-protectionist view believing that tariffs did more harm than good to the continent's economies. Such views were also shared by the African Union (2020) which asserted that with tariffs contributing only 0.1% per year of African GDP, their removal will be easily offset by benefits that will emanate from increased trade, lower product processes and consequential economic growth. The respondents held that it was not Africa's tariff regime that was the problem. Rather it was the non-tariff restrictions imposed by regulation, infrastructure, and security. Such views were also widely shared in the literature including by scholars like Gachuiri (2020) and Ismail (2021).

5.4.4.5 Regulatory, administrative and trade barriers

Operational and administrative barriers at ports of entry included slow processing systems, the existence of a myriad of procedures and the requirements of multiple cross-department compliance documents. Like in the literature, these were seen as contributing to high costs of trade that eventually reduced the price competitiveness of exports (Kathuria, 2018). According to the Southern Africa Trust (2021), there was very little or no coordination between countries sharing a border when it came to compliance and regulation. This resulted in traders and travellers having to go through two slow systems (Barka, 2012). This view was also held by among others, R8 and R4. Respondent 7 discussed a view that there was a need to establish common border standards that eliminated inefficiencies and delays at borders. Similarly, the Southern Africa Trust (2021) reported that there was a need for one-stop border systems giving an example of the Chirundu Border Post between Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition to operational and administrative challenges, borders used manual systems that added to the above delays and inefficiencies - a view discussed by R3 who saw border digitalisation as a solution to this challenge. UNECA (2019) also recommends the digitalisation of African borders using e-commerce systems. Anouche and Boumaaz (2020) also suggest the use of digital technologies to improve border management efficiencies. As UNECA (2019) comments, this could increase the ease of trading, encourage trade growth and facilitate the secure and efficient movement of goods and people.

5.4.4.6 Political will and political wins

While the UNCTAD (2019) sees the high number of signatories of the AfCFTA as a sign of positive political goodwill, some respondents in the study are not convinced. There was a degree of scepticism on whether all appending signatories will back that up with decisive implementation action. Such scepticism was also evident in a report by the UNESE (2017) that cites that low commitment to past trade agreements in Africa reflects a low

propensity to free trade commitment. Similar views are also held by Taye (2019) who asserts that political will remains the key ingredient missing in all of Africa's regional integration efforts. Taye (2019) highlighted three stages of treaty implementation, these being ratification, adoption and actioning. Like Taye (2019), while the ratification process was quite simple, it was the adoption and action phases that were ignored. According to Chibira & Moyana (2017), most of Africa's trade challenges have solutions that are well-documented. These include the need for improved trade facilitation and removal of regulatory bottlenecks and barriers among others but there is no commitment toward implementing change.

5.4.4.7 Poor business environments and markets

Like R3 and R7, some scholars including Ismail (2021) and funding institutions such as the World Bank (2020) discussed the negative effect that poor economic, business and regulatory policies can have on intra-Africa trade.

5.5 Subtheme 5: Long-term effects of trade constraints

Almost all respondents saw the curtailment of economic growth because of intra-Africa trade constraints. The results or outcomes of constrained intra-Africa trade were economic growth losses, high price inflation/trade costs, limited employment creation opportunities, low global economic competitiveness, loss of infrastructure development opportunities and low investment opportunities. Several scholars highlighted similar sentiments. A study by Anyanwu (2014) found that intra-Africa trade increased both economic performance and reduced unemployment, specifically youth unemployment which was a major continent-wide challenge. Unless the continent harnessed intra-Africa trade, the continent would continue to feel the impact of high unemployment that included significant levels of poverty.

In general terms, the long-term effects of constrained trade were the non-realisation of any trade benefits. In an earlier theme, such benefits were

also discussed. Increased inflation as a result of high trade costs and barriers was discussed as a challenge that challenged the African continent and was a major contributor to poverty and socio-economic instability (Kilumelume *et al.,* 2021). Global competitiveness which is, among other things, a function of costs of production and trade would remain low and this would constrain the continent as an importer of finished goods and exporter of raw materials as is the dominant status of trade (Odendaal, 2017). The possibilities of curtailed industrial growth (Simola et al., 2021; Vickers, 2022); reduced infrastructure development and constrained entrepreneurship (Ismail, 2021) are well discussed as potential losses that could continue to affect the continent if trade remains slow and curtailed. The respondents highlighted the continent's risk of failing to realise critical social benefits that include socio-cultural cohesion/stability and poverty reduction, these being discussed in the literature by World Bank (2020) and Ismail (2021), among others. In other words, the curtailment of intra-Africa trade will result in the continuation of the continent's major economic problems and their consequences include poverty and joblessness.

5.6 Roles of various stakeholders in the development of intra-Africa trade

Under this subtheme, the key stakeholders discussed were government, the private sector, academia and multilateral agencies and social partners. In the interviews, national governments were perceived as the key policy and regulatory bodies in intra-Africa trade with the responsibility of creating and harmonising trade facilitating laws and policies. This responsibility is well-documented in the literature by scholars who include Longley (2018), Taye (2019), Stevens (2021) and Fox (2022). Governments have the role of ensuring a conducive operating environment for the private sector including SMEs as these entities contributed products and services traded on the continent, as discussed by R3 and R5 and corroborated by Yushi and Borojo (2019) as well as Stevens (2021).

The respondents do not generally see the private sector as the drivers and or forces behind the initiation of intra-Africa trade agreements on the continent. They mainly perceive them as facilitators and beneficiaries with governments having the power and responsibility to bring such trade formations into existence. This suggests and highlights intergovernmentalism-based views on regional integration. Respondent R2 believes that intra-Africa trade should be "driven" by the private sector, suggesting neo-functionalism-based views (Manboah-Rockson, 2021). While the literature on the role of academia in intra-Africa trade is limited, there is evidence of its research, analysis and strategic advisory roles. Multilateral agencies are, among other things, expected to play crucial trade finance roles in strategic goal development, supporting an enabling business environment, infrastructure development, logistics development, trade finance and research/analysis and advisory roles in intra-Africa trade.

According to Gupta and Young (2015), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) plays a technical advisory role that attempts to integrate trade liberalisation with the macroeconomic policies of member states. Such advisory role is captured in the respondents' views. On trade finance, Phillips (2021) and McKenzie (2022) note that the multilateral banks like the African Development Bank and the African Export-Import Bank have a larger role to support trade liberalisation, given the diminishing interest to support the same process among private financiers. The private sector was also viewed as a trade finance partner by R1, although this view was not strongly shared by other respondents. This compares with the emphasis afforded to multilateral funders by Phillips (2021) and corroborated by McKenzie (2022).

5.7 Theme 3: Governance/ regulatory concerns

Under this theme regulatory and policy barriers and challenges associated with current trade practices among African countries are discussed.

5.7.1 Regulatory and policy barriers experienced

Several regulatory and policy barriers were identified and either briefly mentioned or discussed in the interviews. To summarise the views of respondents, the following barriers are further discussed in this section; high tariffs (duties and surcharges), exporter registration, product compliance certification differences, Limited service pricing and quality control, general regulation harmonisation challenges, non-implementation and evaluation of regulations, restriction of skilled labour movement across borders, unilateral trade restrictions and bans on products, regulatory changes and inconsistences as well as policy failure to support the business environment. High tariffs are widely discussed as a major challenge to trade on the continent and this is reiterated across sources and institutions. Generally, the respondents view Africa as a protectionist territory regarding trade, despite the existence of various RECs' views also shared by the African Union (2020) and Kilumelume *et al.* (2021). The view that protectionism with tariffs will do more harm than good is also commonly discussed by respondents who believe that a non-tariff environment advocated for by the AfCFTA could economically uplift countries. The African Union (2020) notes that the removal of tariffs would result in a 0.1% loss of revenue but would have significant benefits that will offset such a loss.

5.7.2 Challenges associated with current trade practices among African countries

While a previous subtheme (Long-term effects of trade constraints) addressed the long-term socio-economic effects of curtailed trade, this theme specifically focuses on the direct economic costs of the current trade regulatory practices, and includes the following: restricted access to trade resources, trade delays and loss of productive time, increased cost of trade, restricted flow of trade, high-risk trade environment, loss of trade opportunities for countries, and product shortages.

There are monetary costs associated with losses and decreases in trade as well as opportunity costs associated with missed trade and investment chances. Efficiency related costs include delays and restrictions. Additionally, the existence of constraints and restrictions increases the risks of trade, a phenomenon that is associated with a decrease in trade investments. Mlambo (2021) suggests that port and related logistical inefficiencies directly and adversely affected trade efficiency including the costs and rate of trade.

5.8 Theme 4: Unlocking potential

The AfCFTA was widely associated with, and discussed, alongside intra-Africa trade efforts. Under this theme, the focus was on coalescing various views on whether the treaty would result in the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers as well as the overall improvement of intra-Africa trade. It covered the following subthemes: Roles of African Continental Free Trade Area in unlocking intra-Africa trade potential; continued roles of regional blocs in intra-Africa trade; regional communities, AfCFTA and potential conflicts; the potential of economic sectors to unlock intra-Africa trade; the role of digitalisation in the current trade and integration context; and intra-Africa trade potential - International community views.

5.8.1 Roles of African Continental Free Trade Area in unlocking intra-Africa trade potential

Under this theme, several roles of African Continental Free Trade in unlocking intra-Africa trade potential were mentioned or discussed, and included: reduction of duties and tariffs, increased foreign direct investment, enhancing price competitiveness of goods, removal of general operational barriers, increased trade volumes among African states, integration of multiple trade blocs and protocols, trade regulation and policy alignment across Africa,

higher value chain development, infrastructure development focus, improved industrial relations, economic diversification, and investment attraction into the continent.

One of the commonly discussed perspectives about the AfCFTA is that its non-protectionist stance on tariffs will reduce the prices of products traded among members, resulting in better price competitiveness against non-African imports. This view is widely discussed in the literature and is viewed as part of the optimistic belief that while various trade treaties and RECs have failed to bring the desired changes in intra-Africa trade, the AfCFTA will succeed (Lin, 2021). The view that the AfCFTA will bring more investment into the continent because it will create a more enabling trade environment was discussed by R1 and was also shared by Lin (2021). This could encompass the removal of a range of operational and technical trade barriers including those existing at ports of entry (Lin, 2021). Lin (2021), like the respondents, saw the AfCFTA as an important tool for the industrialisation of Africa. While the respondents did not discuss actual figures, Lin (2021) believes that the AfCFTA will facilitate the doubling of Africa's manufacturing revenue from US$500 billion in 2015 to US$1 trillion in 2025. Some views that were however not discussed in the interviews were that the AfCFTA will facilitate the growth and protection of women and vulnerable businesses (Lin, 2021). R5 and R6 like Apiko, Woolfrey and Byiers (2020) expressed a cautious view that for any of the above benefits to be realised, there was a need for adequate commitment to transform plans into action and actions into results. This view strongly supports the political commitment and stakeholder engagement perspectives discussed earlier in this chapter. According to Apiko *et al.* (2020) and R6, the developmental cycle from the removal of trade barriers to economic growth requires the activation of identified enablers that include supportive business and regulatory environments. Assuming that these enablers are activated, Apiko *et al.* (2020), like the other respondents, were positive that the AfCFTA will indeed

unlock intra-Africa trade on the continent and suggested an 81% increase in inter-Africa trade by 2035 as a possibility.

5.8.2 Continued roles of regional blocs in intra-Africa trade

As discussed in both the literature and the empirical findings, Africa is a multi-bloc environment with diverse RECs existing in different regions and with various levels of continental recognition. It emerged from this study that the RECs will continue to play the following positive roles in enhancing intra-Africa trade: negotiation of new tariffs, enhancing cooperation on the continent, curtailing conflict arising from trade-related changes, supporting an integrated financial system including currency, supporting inter-bloc policy harmonisation and integration, and garnering intra-bloc support for AfCFTA.

Similar to Aniche (2015) and Jokobu (2015), the common view was that there were too many RECs on the continent and integrating them into stand-ardised trade could present a challenge. In this section, the discussion focuses on the roles and effects of these blocs on intra-Africa trade under the AfCFTA. This subtheme took a more positive perspective on the potential relationships between the AfCFTA and existing RECs. The World Bank (2020) believes that the AfCFTA will improve the regulatory and policy-level interaction among and within sub-regional economic bodies and such a view was partially shared by the respondents, including R2 and R3. The respondents believed that positive relationships between AfCFTA and continental bodies could facilitate inter-bloc policy harmonisation and integration, inter-bloc support for AfCFTA, negotiation of new tariffs and potentially mitigating conflict arising from change. Such processes were important considering that different regional economic blocs (RECs) have diverging trade and investment policies and models (UNESE, 2017).

The World Bank (2020) asserts that because some RECs did not have functionalities that the AfCFTA had such as intellectual property and investment protection laws, their need to benefit from these could see them cooperating

closely with the AfCFTA. According to Erasmus (2021), the AfCFTA agreement does not require the disintegration or amalgamation of RECs. Rather they are perceived as pillars of the agreement as they can facilitate the implementation of various AfCFTA protocols by their followers.

The respondents are also cognisant of this view and believe that even in their non-integrated existence, these entities still had important roles to play under the AfCFTA. In the study, a matter that was less discussed but nonetheless appears to be widely covered in the literature is the issue of a common currency as a tool to facilitate smooth intra-Africa trade. In this study, R6 observed that RECs, as already existing systems with loyal adherents, were capable of being key negotiating entities in the development of a common African currency and a single financial system. The role of RECs in common currency development, as discussed by R6, could have emanated from discourse that suggests regional currencies of different RECs. This includes the SADC's view that "The final step in the process of deepening regional economic integration in SADC is the implementation of a Single Currency" (SADC, 2022:1).

5.8.3 RECs, AfCFTA and potential conflicts

While the previous subtheme discussed the role of RECs in the AfCFTA under more cooperative regimes and expectations, this subtheme examines potential conflicts that may arise between RECs and the AfCFTA. From the respondents' perspectives, the following act as potential conflict areas: quest for intra-bloc dominance or competition, inter-bloc non-conformity potential, readiness level related to conflict, and lack of interest to break out of isolation. R2 and R5 observed that the existence of several RECs on the continent is a source of potential conflict in their quest for dominance, as discussed by Aniche (2015) and Vickers (2022). This competitive rather than collaborative approach could have negative implications for the success of AfCFTA. According to one of the respondents, within the AfCFTA

as a bloc, contesting interests and the quest for hegemonic dominance between Nigeria and South Africa as two of Africa's biggest economies cannot be discounted. These economies could compete for dominance rather than collaborating for the AfCFTA and intra-Africa trade success. In the literature, similar views on how the need to gain and preserve hegemonic status could foster intra-bloc competition within the AfCFTA and any other economic blocs were discussed by Nagar (2020). Ishiguro (2017) suggests that preferential trade areas work well when involved economies curtailed their hegemonic tendencies, a view that was shared in this study by R2.

Another conflict envisaged in this study related to the readiness to migrate toward the AfCFTA protocol (Abrego et al., 2020). R4 gave an example of the ECOWAS as a highly advanced and AfCFTA-ready entity compared to other RECs. Kassa and Sawadogo (2021) confirmed the generally high readiness of ECOWAS, noting that SADC too was in a comparatively developed position.

Conflict may arise at the rate and extent to which other RECs should or are expected to adapt to AfCFTA (Abrego et al., 2020). This is mainly because the trade harmonisation process demands some trade-offs that will result in RECs losing certain advantages for the greater good, and that conflict may thus be inevitable (Abrego et al., 2020). This view is shared in the study. Another challenge identified by R5 was that RECs may see more advantage to staying in isolation than of fully committing to the AfCFTA. A similar argument exists in a paper by Kassa and Sawadogo (2021) who observed that RECs could find that trading outside a common market like the AfCFTA may come with more advantages than trading within the AfCFTA, and the resulting trade diversion could decrease rather than increase intra-Africa trade. With a general sense of optimism, the respondents believed any inter-REC conflict would be at worst a short-term phenomenon.

5.8.4 Economic sectors' potential to unlock intra-Africa trade

The respondents believed that generally almost all of Africa's economic sectors will contribute to the enhancement of intra-Africa trade under the AfCFTA. The sectors identified in the interviews were agri-processing, value-added mining, transport, communication, tourism, professional services, manufacturing, renewable energy, digital technologies, real estate, infrastructure development, medical and pharmaceuticals as well as retail and distribution. According to Haile-Gabriel (2021), the director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), agriculture is a key requirement for the success of the AfCFTA because of its capacity to provide food security and input required in production. It also accommodates large numbers of economic participants that include vulnerable groups (Haile-Gabriel, 2021).

UNECA (2021) extrapolates that the agricultural sector will play a more significant role in uplifting intra-Africa trade and the AfCFTA. It estimates trade in agri-foods to increase by 41.1% by 2045. This is in comparison to services, specifically transport and tourism, which will grow by 39.2% over the same period (UNECA, 2021). This resonates with R4's view that the services industry will play a much larger role in export growth than in the past. Manufacturing will follow closely with 39% growth (UNECA, 2021). These sectors were widely discussed in the study. Intra-Africa trade in energy resources is expected to grow by 16.1% over the same period owing to envisaged decreases in carbon-based fuels (UNECA, 2021). Like R5, Ncube, Dube and Ward (2021) believe that continental integration of pharmaceutical production and trade standards will result in an increased African market for these products. The World Trade Organisation (2021), however, believes that the manufacturing sector will grow the most, followed by agriculture. Regardless of these differences, they generally capture the AfCFTA as benefitting almost all sectors of the African economy.

5.8.5 The role of digitalisation in the current trade and integration context

The digitalisation of trade was discussed as having several benefits, among them facilitating international trade processes, supporting trade management innovation, enhancing transaction processing efficiency, and market and border systems integration. With over 50 countries needing to be integrated under common trade protocols and regimes, the role of digital systems in intra-Africa trade was considered to be significant. All the respondents hold the view that digitalisation is a critical enabler of intra-Africa trade within and without the AfCFTA context. This was a highly discussed matter in the literature with one of the epitomic views on this matter being the view that "Digital trade is the next big thing in Africa" attributed to Wamkele Mene, the AfCFTA secretary-general (Ighbor, 2020:1). In an interview with Ighbor, (2020), Mene further commented that digital trade did not have to be complex. It could feature simple everyday devices like smartphones to connect traders. The respondents however mostly discussed the digitalisation of trade concerning formal trade by established entities as well as intergovernmental interaction.

Some of the respondents, including R5 and R6, discussed the critical role of digital technology in facilitating international trade operations, especially regarding the ease of interaction and transaction processing between African exporters, importers and their clients. Similar views were expressed by Wonyra (2022) who found positive relationships between levels of digitalisation and growth in intra-Africa trade in an assessment of the continent's 53 countries between 2005 and 2017. Under a different subtheme, Anouche and Boumaaz (2020) mentioned the use of digital technologies to improve border management efficiency, a view that was also suggested by the respondents, including R8. Among other things, digitalisation would facilitate the sharing of information and thereby improve coordination among border management agencies as well as between countries.

5.8.6 Intra-Africa trade potential - International community views

In the interviews, the international community emerged as one of the external stakeholders of intra-Africa trade as well as of the AfCFTA. Some of the expressed views on this topic were that the international community could: gain new interest in investing in Africa. Becoming self-interested and adopting a protective attitude against the AfCFTA. Support it as it will bring geopolitical stability to the continent. Hold a sceptical view of large-scale intra-Africa trade feasibility. Hold views that are difficult to ascertain, and hold diverse views depending on stakeholder/party alignment.

According to Kende-Robb (2021:1), the AfCFTA is a "global game-changer" with an impact that will be felt beyond Africa. Among the respondents, there were both positive and negative expectations of how the international community, especially trade partners within the continent, will perceive it. The respondents shared a view by Forere (2018) that the enhanced intra-Africa trade will support FDI growth as the African market becomes more open, integrated and profitable. This growth-in-investment view is shared by the World Bank which, among other things, associated it with increased stability on the continent, a view that was also expressed in this study.

5.9 Discussion of findings in relation to theories

In the literature, several theories on international trade, regional trade and integration were consulted. Porter's (1990) competitive advantage of nations international trade theory was identified as the main theory underpinning the study, as discussed in detail under 1.8 above. For deeper analyses and integrative approach purposes, prevailing regional theories were also discussed. These were Intergovernmentalism, Neoliberalism, Neo-functionalism and Pan-Africanism. The Intergovernmental theories assert that regional integration through the formation of regional blocs, economic zones and trade areas, among others, are driven by governments (Schimmelfennig, 2018; Borzel & Rise, 2019). From the study, there was much evidence

of stronger government influence and control over regional integration and intra-Africa trade. Drawing on the study, views that suggest that Intergovernmentalism exerts a strong influence on the process were the following: Governments influenced the implementation of intra-trade and regional integration efforts including changes in regulations. Government- driven factors including bureaucracy, regulation, policies and laws seem to act as major constraints to intra-Africa trade. Political commitment and goodwill, which were government driven, among other things, chose to be loyal to certain RECs or increase sovereign control of trade via tariff and non-tariff barriers.

These findings highlight the significant effects that governments have on intra-Africa trade in comparison to the private sector and other stakeholder groups. Under a Neoliberalist dispensation, the private sector is considered a key driving force for regional integration (Dunn, 2012; Jiboku, 2015; Nicoli, 2019). In the study, the private sector is discussed as a beneficiary rather than an initiator and driver of intra-Africa trade, although a respondent 3 believed that the private sector could drive such processes, suggesting a need for a Neoliberalist view from some sections of the respondents. The results also highlight the influence of Neoliberalism on intra-Africa trade and regional integration processes. One of the most important elements that are strongly reflected in the principle of bounded rationality, as explained by Nicoli (2019), is that African governments resort to RECs when they encounter hard rather than soft political priorities. One of the assumptions with Neo-functionalism is that of governmental minimisation in which governments are seen as ready to lose as little power as possible and only when they are dealing with extensive political challenges that threaten the existence of the state itself (Hakan, 2019; Nicoli, 2019). In the study, there is much discussion of limited commitment to RECs and trade pacts by governments.

Limited commitment to such pacts could emanate from the observation that economic challenges in Africa, despite their unpleasantness and the extent to which they drive millions towards impoverishment, are not considered a serious threat that could destabilise the state in some countries. In some cases, however, there is a view that such economic dynamics have resulted in serious conflicts and one such example cited in the study was the rise of insurgencies in Mozambique. In the former case, low levels of regional commitments could be explained by poor macroeconomic conditions being considered a threat by some economies, as suggested by the general government minimalism principle discussed by Nicoli (2019).

At the same time, the findings reflect strong Pan-Africanist sentiment as a driver of intra-Africa trade. Such Pan-Africanist views were exemplified by beliefs that intra-Africa trade could free African economies from the dependence on former colonial powers and non-African countries. Additionally, it would result in greater social, political and economic cohesion as historically expressed by Pan-Africanist leaders. The epitome of Pan-Africanism, as discussed by the respondents, was the establishment of a common union that utilised a similar financial system and currency, more or less like the European Union. The above general views show that intra-Africa trade, including via the AfCFTA route, was a multiple theory environment encompassing international theories such porter's competitive advantage of nations and regional ones such as intergovernmentalism, neoliberalism, neofunctionalism and Pan-Africanism thought. The implications of the multiplicity of theoretical views on the conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade suggest the need for multi-stakeholder engagement to accommodate, reconcile and integrate the various viewpoints as a way of reducing conflict and increasing collaboration and cooperation towards the attainment of positive benefits like economic growth, industrialisation, employment creation, and poverty reduction, among others.

Table 5.2 summarises the central pillars and milestones that serve as the building blocks towards achieving the intra-Africa trade objectives.   The candidate traced these pillars from the formation of the OAU in 1963 to all the key milestones that have been achieved until the adoption of the AfCFTA agreement in 2018. These milestones serve as an important broader foundation upon which intra-Africa trade is being anchored.

Table 5.2: Key pillars and milestones towards intra-Africa trade "Source: (Candidate's own).

1963: The Organisation of African Unity (OAU),	1964: African Development bank	1991: Pan African Parliament	1993: Africa export-import bank	2002: African Union	2003: African Mechanisms which include African Peer review	2004: The Africa court of Justice and human rights	2006: AFRICA 50	2006: BRICS	2013: Agenda 2063	2018: African Investment Forum	2018 – 2022 African Continental Free Trade Area
Safeguard the interests and independence of African states and encourage the continent's development.	Assists African countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable economic development and social progress	Ensures Africans are fully involved in the economic development and integration of the continent	Finance, promote and expand intra-African and extra-African trade.	Accelerate the political and social and economic integration of the continent	Peer to Peer review (Self-monitoring tool)	To complement and reinforce the functions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights	Infrastructure investment platform that contributes to Arica's growth by developing and investing in bankable projects	To cooperate between the member nations for development, provide financial assistance, support various projects, infrastructure etc.	Anchored on the AU vision of the "Africa we want" by 2063 which s based on the seven Aspirations The first ten-year implementation plan 2013 to 2023	Platform to actively engage the private sector and to facilitate projects that have the capacity to transform the continent	**2018:** Adopted the AfCFTA agreement and open for signature on 21 March 2018 in Kigali **2019:** 30 May 2019 AfCFTA enters into force with 27 Countries. Twenty-seven countries ratify the instruments of the AfCFTA in July 2019. Twenty-eight countries signed but not yet ratified with one member state Eritrea yet to sign. **2021:** 1 Jan 2021 Commencement of Trading under the AFCFTA Agreement. February 2021, 54 out of 55 African union member states have signed on, 36 ratified as a pre-requisite to enjoy the benefits **Five additional instruments to support AfCFTA** 1. Rules of origin 2. An online portal for tariff negotiations 3.Online mechanism for reporting and monitoring 4. Pan African payment and settlement system 5. The African trade observatory

5.10 Integrating the TIPS Managerial Leadership Framework

The discussions and results presented in the study point to the importance of integrating management of technology, innovation, people and systems (TIPS) to best address the challenges associated with the necessary shifts towards achieving high levels of intra-Africa trade that will position the continent more favourably at the international level. The Da Vinci TIPS managerial framework embraces both the employee and the end user and it concerns itself with the process that organisations deploy in the development of their human capital, and how they retain and reskill existing employees, how they incentivise their people and how they plan for succession to ensure organisational longevity.

The management of technology is more concerned with the ability of stakeholders to identify or implement the necessary tools such as digital and trade infrastructure as well as other associated techniques to achieve best outcomes for the movement of goods and people through digitalisation and integration of infrastructure. The management of innovation is concerned with the ideation aspect of the recommended solutions. This means that private sector partners from different countries in the continent should work together with government, organised labour, academic institutions and social partners in generating ideas that will contribute to value creation that would justify the Return on Investment (ROI) and related sustainable solutions. For instance, in digitalising the processing of the movement of people and goods, consideration should be given to the fact that e-commerce solution that is conceptualised and ultimately implemented should be scalable and adaptable to future changes whilst designed in a manner that generates incremental revenue against stabilising or even decreasing the cost of ownership. The same argument can be made for the call to remove the tariff and non-tariff barriers and still be innovative enough not to incur losses but be able to remain not only sustainable but profitable from the upside brought about by increased economic activities enabled by the removal of such constraints.

The management of people is concerned with the human interface that should be leveraged to form part of the process of sustainable implementation of the recommended solutions. This ranges from consultative processes, selection of the best people for the

job based on meritocracy instead of random deployments, continuous upskilling and capacitation, strategic planning and team-driven approaches, retention and succession planning of the critical skills in order to minimise disruptions and failures during implementation and upkeep of the change management process. Lastly, the management of systems culminates in systematically synthesising all stakeholder activities and processes in seeking to address the problems associated with the implementation of the recommended blockchain based e-commerce solution.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter examined the findings presented in the previous data analysis chapter, and where possible compared them with findings, concepts and views presented in the literature. Various scholars and institutions have researched one or more areas covered in this study and provided information aligned with the study. While several of the study's findings resonated with views already expressed in the literature, different perspectives emerged, including on the definition and conceptualisation of intra-Africa trade, international community views, and REC competition and collaboration in intra-Africa trade enhancement, the need to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution as a catalytic platform for change, among others. Most importantly, the study was able to consolidate various factors related to the enhancement of intra-Africa trade in a more intense and expanded manner than most sources that were consulted. The next chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations from the research conducted.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study with a summary of research findings as well as recommendations that emanate from these findings. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the main aim of the study was to investigate how the low levels of intra-Africa trade can be enhanced through continental and regional integration. The main aim is underpinned by six objectives and guided by six related research questions as outlined in Chapter 1. Both the research questions and objectives are aligned to the themes that came out of the study, as shown in Chapter 4 and 5. Aligned to the main aim is the main research question: How can the constraints of intra-Africa trade be enhanced through continental and regional integration? As mentioned in Chapter 3 and 4, the study was qualitative and used semi-structured interviews to arrive at the emerging themes. This chapter commences with the summary of findings, followed by an overview of the research findings before outlining the study's recommendations.

6.2 Summary of findings

The study's research questions were addressed using thematic analysis as a data analysis method, in the form of themes and subthemes. The research questions were as follows:

6.2.1 What is the current state and nature of Africa's regional integration and intra-Africa trade?

6.2.2 What are the constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade; and to what extent do these stifle or enhance intra- Africa trade?

6.2.3 To what extent would the low intra-Africa trade levels have an impact on the socio-economic development efforts?

6.2.4 What role can the Africa Continental Free Trade Area play in the enhancement of intra-Africa trade?

6.2.5 Who are the key stakeholders in intra-African trade enhancement?

6.2.6 How can the constraints associated with intra-Africa trade be identified and be resolved using continental and regional integration?

Findings relating to each of these research questions are discussed in greater detail below.

Research question 1: What is the current state and nature of Africa's regional integration and intra-Africa trade?

It was revealed in Chapter 2 literature review and confirmed in Chapter 4 that the current state and nature of Africa's regional integration and intra-Africa trade were below the desired levels. Despite considerable integration through at least eight regional economic communities (RECs), intra-Africa trade remained very low, indicating the low impact that such integration effects had on African economies. Intra-Africa trade was described as mostly focused on exporting low-valued primary goods and importing higher-valued finished goods. Nonetheless, the respondents believed that intra-Africa trade had the potential to grow significantly. Regarding the nature of regional integration, this was described as exhibiting Pan-Africanist sentiment, albeit there was extensive influence from governments indicating a strong Intergovernmentalism aspect in African integration.

Research question 2: What are the constraints and enablers of intra-Africa trade; and to what extent do these stifle or enhance intra- Africa?

The drivers and enablers of intra-Africa trade were discussed under Theme 2 and the constraints of intra-Africa trade were identified as tariff and non-tariff barriers. Non-tariff barriers that constrained trade were poor logistics (transport), poor digital infrastructure, trade infrastructure shortages, high transport costs, poor security/stability, low trade finance availability, low product supply and demand, poor product quality, non-standardised, fragmented and poor integrated regulatory systems and technologically enhanced border management. Lack of political will to implement regional trade protocols was also discussed as a key constraint to intra-Africa trade, while poor business and economic conditions in member countries curtailed the private sector contribution

to trade. The enablers of intra-Africa trade were mostly the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers that were identified as trade constraints. Regulatory changes to enable free trade were amongst the most discussed enablers, while trade digitalisation was considered an important process for integrated, efficient trade facilitation.

Research question 3: To what extent would the low intra-Africa trade levels have an impact on the socio-economic development efforts?

The research found that intra-Africa trade could have significant positive social, economic and political impacts on the continent. However, this was not guaranteed and was dependent on the extent to which barriers to the process are removed and enablers are activated. Nonetheless, important benefits were noted that included increased industrialisation and economic growth, the reduction of poverty and unemployment, reduced dependency on other continents, and increased political and social stability as well as social cohesion.

Research question 4: What role can the Africa Continental Free Trade Area play in the enhancement of intra-Africa trade?

The study found that there were positive sentiments that the AfCFTA would unlock and thereby enhance intra-Africa trade in terms of value of trade, volumes of trade and the number of African countries participating in it. The AfCFTA would achieve the above through the creation of a single market for over 1 billion persons, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers and the enhancement of technological driven integration among African countries. It would promote increased foreign and domestic direct investment, enhancing price competitiveness of goods, removal of general regulatory and operational trade barriers, integration of multiple trade blocs and protocols, higher product value chain development, infrastructure development, and economic diversification, among others. Although all economic sectors are set to benefit from intra-Africa trade, its impact would be felt most across the agricultural, manufacturing, pharmaceutical and services sectors such as tourism and financial services (Fin-Tech in particular), however, there was an element of pessimism that its role may be weakened by low political will among countries and poor relationships with RECs.

Research question 5: Who are the key stakeholders in intra-African trade en-hancement?

Besides the African countries and their citizens, key stakeholders in the success of intra-Africa trade were identified as governments and their agencies, the private sector including SMEs, Regional Economic Communities, multilateral agencies, social part-ners, as well as academic sector and research communities. There were concerns that the AfCFTA could encounter competition rather than obtain collaborative support from RECs that may be desire to maintain their previous powers. At the same time, they were viewed as critical partners who may rally their members to support and implement AfCFTA protocols. The international community was also seen as a stakeholder whose views and support of the AfCFTA as a platform for intra-Africa trade enhancement varied, ranging from being supportive to non-supportive.

Research question 6: How can the constraints associated with intra-Africa trade be resolved using continental and regional integration?

The highlighted constraints identified in both Chapter 2 and 4 include tariff and non-tariff barriers, lack of digital trade infrastructure, financial constraints, academic skills not linked to industry requirements, and lack of political will. These constraints can be minimised through implementing key stakeholder collaborative rather than non-coop-erative strategic and problem finding mechanisms as highlighted in the objectives. The solutions will include reaching consensus on building an overall enabling environment characterised by standardisation of scalable digital trade processes including imple-mentation of an integrated e-commerce system for complete border management and facilitation of global value chains. Concerted effort to align academic programmes with current and future industry requirements would ensure sustained scalability of research and development based innovative solutions.

6.3 The scope

6.3.1 Scope of the study

The context and background of the study are to explore knowledge towards enhancing intra-Africa trade and promote higher levels of integration between African economies in a manner that will result in significantly reducing the prevailing binding constraints associated with doing business in the African continent. The African Competitiveness Report by the World Bank (2011) identifies factors that limit the ability of African countries to trade with one another and these include transportation modes and trade facilitation regimes that contribute towards the limited economic development in the continent. For instance, transport costs in Africa are regarded as the highest in the world. Behar and Venables (2011) support this observation in that they link the high costs of transportation to poor logistical infrastructure, more so for landlocked countries, which is characterised by inadequacies in the customs function as well as information and telecommunications infrastructure, amongst others.

6.3.2 Risks and uncertainties

The risks and uncertainties that may have influence on the challenges encountered in Africa include the following:

a. The weak recovery of the global economy has an impact on the performance of Africa through trade, investment and transfers.

b. Despite the current increase, low oil prices will continue to have a negative impact on hydrocarbon exporting countries, but the overall outcome for Africa as a whole may be positive.

c. The depreciation of leading African currencies is likely to put pressure on monetary stability, although it may be beneficial to exports.

d. The effects of Brexit can slow African growth, primarily through trade and finance.

e. Trade relations between the United Kingdom and Africa may weaken, as some of the current trade deals between the EU and Africa will need to be renegotiated over a long period. Development aid from the United Kingdom could also decrease.

f. Low interest rates could increase the appetite of speculative investors for emerging markets, and rising United States policy rates can divert some flows back to mature.

6.4 Summary of contributions and Recommendations

The contributions made by the research are presented as recommendations directed to key stakeholders. The successful implementation of intra-Africa trade will require an integrated approach from all key stakeholders and must include political will coupled with embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution in general and digitalisation in specific as a catalytic tool for implementation. Additionally, the support of organised business underpinned by the elimination of trust deficit with the public sector cannot be overemphasised. The Regional Economic Communities need to demonstrate an ability to work with the AfCFTA, and the social partner organisations need to bring their strong involvement, as well as academic institutions in developing the curriculum that delivers fit-for-purpose graduates, as well as continuous research and development, as clarified below.

6.4.1 The main recommendation: Recommendations for joint effort between governments, DFIs and FIR inclined businesses

As shown in Chapters 1 and 4, the main recommendation for the study is for key stakeholders to work together towards the implementation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution based innovative solutions that are underpinned by the blockchain technology. This also draws linkages with one of the objectives in Chapter 1 that emphasises the need for a strategic approach in implementing the findings.

a. Purpose: The purpose of proposing blockchain as the key recommendations is to demonstrate how best, as one of the Fourth Industrial Revolution solutions, it can be integrated with some of the latest scalable e-commerce solutions that can be customised into the key African international trade environment in a manner that enhances Africa intra-trade.

b. The challenges that the recommended solution seeks to address includes the elimination of redundant manual systems that result in significant congestions at most ports of entry and exit in the African continent.

c. The proposal: A system such as Thales Gemalto European Union Entry Exit System (EU-EES) is an example of the recently developed e-commerce system for complete Border Management. In its current form the system can be strengthened

even further by integrating blockchain technology because this will provide additional benefits and enhance trust by all stakeholders as explained below.

6.4.1.1 Integrating blockchain Solution and an e-commerce solution such as the Gemalto system

In its current form, the Gemalto system uses a centralised form of control, there is one main source of dependency for the system, and it is privately owned. Implementing the blockchain technology with such a system will increase trust, security, transparency and the traceability of data shared across a continent network through building subunits that are able to communicate with each other throughout the continent. With the implementation of blockchain technology in the continent, countries are able to create a seamless data flow between each other, each subunit in a country will have multifunctional elements in them for diverse functions like migration, documentation of people of the various countries, traceable transportation of goods, facilitated flow of goods transported on land, sea or freight in general, and easily traceable people migrating or travelling between countries in the continent.

Access to country databases will be based on permission and policies that govern the structure of the system, these to be decided at continental conventions and applied by all stakeholders. This will result in facilitated movement of both people and goods, where, for example, a goods train or truck may be scanned on point at a border with their relevant documentation and pass through quickly, minimising congestion at borders, and promoting greater integrity of goods through significantly enhanced delivery times. This would require DFIs such as the Afreximbank which seeks to provide adequate and affordable financing for trade projects through its mandate to finance and promote intra- and extra-African trade using Credit (Trade Finance and Project Finance), Risk Bearing (Guarantees and Credit Insurance), Trade information and Advisory services, to create a dedicated fund that will prioritise supporting all the African States to be in a position to afford current technological solutions.

As one of the key intra-Africa trade stakeholders, government plays various critical roles that include the regulation of trade, ensuring elimination of trust deficit with other stakeholders, and enabling the business environment and inclusive policy formulation

and implementation, among others. Intra-Africa trade in the continent requires significant efforts to identify and prevent threats challenging land, maritime, and points of entry to each country. This has created excessive bureaucracy in people's movements and in relation to the shipping and transportation of goods between countries in the continent.

Government policy development objectives in partnership with business should incorporate prioritising the procurement and implementation of innovative and disruptive technology that integrates e-commerce solutions that will digitalise effective revenue collection whilst facilitating the global value chains. Innovative technology serves as a key driver of economic growth in the current globalised economy. For example, many countries have adopted country-specific border management systems integrating freight, tourists, citizens, and goods transportation inland. One example of such technology, as earlier indicated, is a solution referred to as the Gemalto Border Management System, which was developed by a border management and associated self-service solution company called Thales.

The Thales Gemalto European Union Entry Exit System is a complete Border Management EU Entry Exit System (EU-EES) that has been customised to meet the European Union, National Border Authorities and International Airports functional and operational requirements. This system has a full range of best practice end-to-end immigration process applications that are hosted at border management headquarters and border control points of entry such as self-service kiosks, hand-held and operated border equipment, suitcases and ABC gates, for air, land, and sea border mobile checkpoints.

Ghana is generally known to be the first African country to adopt the system in its VISA system. This therefore means that there are new cutting-edge systems that can be adapted to the African Union regulations and standards or used as a guide to develop similar ones. This can include fast-tracking applications such as an integrated single point of check-in using both biometric and facial recognition with immediate document verification at a single point of entry. The data is replicated on the exit side and backed up in the central database or cloud, thereby enabling instant decisions by immigration

officers that will eliminate duplication and mitigate the vulnerability of any single point in the system which is currently one of the main binding constraints to intra-Africa trade and the movement of people.

The system can also be customised to include applications such as advanced digital bookings by truck drivers and self-check-ins at the point of entry or exit. Currently some borders such as Beit Bridge between Zimbabwe and South Africa are characterised by long queues and extensive delays, resulting in fresh produce and other foodstuffs deteriorating before delivery due to the slow manual processes at the border posts. The study highly recommends the integration of cutting edge and scalable technologies as this is one critical way in which the continent can leverage its position as a key role player than the current position of being reduced to dependent on global value chains. The study seeks to identify solutions and opportunities that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is creating in enabling the application of non-conventional technological innovations and digitalisation within a broader framework of activities. It is for this reason that the study has identified blockchain technology as the key enabler that will complement a system such as the innovative Thales technology solution mentioned above. blockchain is a record-keeping technology which prevents systems from being hacked or data being compromised in the system, thereby making it secure and immutable. This solution will therefore serve as a type of distributed ledger technology (DLT), a digital system for recording transactions and related data in multiple places simultaneously whilst recording the identities of every user. The goal of blockchain technology is to allow the recording and distribution of digital information in a manner that cannot be edited once recorded. The fact that blockchain technology serves as the foundation for immutable ledgers, or records of transactions that can neither be altered nor destroyed means that security, scalability, revenue growth, efficiencies and trust between trading partners would also be enhanced.

6.4.2 Recommendations for governments

Recommendation 1: Political commitment and political will towards AfCFTA implementation

Literature reviewed in Chapter 1 and 2 point out to the importance of political will towards successful realisation of intra-Africa trade. The following recommendations attempt to address this challenge. In Chapter 1, Porter's (1990) Competitive Advantage of Nations international trade theory suggests that government should act as both a catalyst and a challenger that pushes and raises performance standards for companies. National governments are recommended to politically commit to the implementation of the AfCFTA agreement focusing on meeting or surpassing the agreements deadlines on non-tariff and tariff-related barriers removal. Such commitment must reflect in national trade and economic policies including national budgets. The AfCFTA targets should also be well communicated across all spheres of government and their respective departments and must be set as evaluated targets.

Recommendation 2: Alignment of national trade policies with AfCFTA trade protocols

Strongly aligned to Recommendation 1, governments must align the trade regulatory laws, policies and systems with AfCFTA protocols to remove any regulation-related barriers to integration. This implies that any laws, policies and regulations that are not in harmony with the AfCFTA should be amended for alignment purposes.

Recommendation 3: Balancing priorities and loyalties between AfCFTA and RECs

It is important to highlight the reality that it is not always easy to balance priorities because very few governments, if any, have unlimited resources and the recommendation for pulling the resources through a common platform is based on this reality. Almost all governments belong to one or more African RECs and there is a need for national-level policy guidelines that direct how governments relate to other RECs and

REC-level anomalies with the AfCFTA. In line with the objectives of the study in Chapter 1, Governments will need to develop and implement appropriate strategies to balance conflicting priorities between RECs.

Recommendation 4: An enabling economic and business environment

As discussed in both Chapter 4 and 5 of the study, poor business and economic environments reduce the participation of the private sector in intra-Africa trade. The recommendation that Governments have a role in ensuring that business regulation supports the ease of participating in trade and removes excessive barriers and bureaucratic hurdles relating to business formalisation and import/export participation, seeks to respond to this challenge. Economically, policies must support price and currency stability to encourage business activity.

Recommendation 5: Trade processes digitalisation

Data gathered and analysed in Chapter 4 together with literature reviewed in Chapter 2 indicate that trading with large numbers of partners in an integrated, harmonised regulatory and operational environment is a function of efficient and secure digital systems. The recommendation that Governments must build digital systems that easily interface with systems of trade partners to facilitate ease of data sharing and information processing attempts to respond to the digitalisation challenge. For example, collaborative efforts with business chambers should results in certificates of origin being electronically processed for ease of export. Additionally, it is important that government agencies be linked with functional digital technologies that eliminate duplication of activities, increase transaction processing speed and support inter-departmental coordination.

Recommendation 6: Coordinated border management and elimination of inefficiencies

Chapter 4 further highlights the necessary role played by government in ensuring appropriate border control systems. The recommendation is that Governments that share borders need to develop border integration and coordination mechanisms that reduce

transaction turnaround times, reduce border delays, simplify processes and overall re-duction of entry and exit level transactional costs. One-stop border systems that are in some parts of Africa should be set as a standard and a norm for African ports of entry. Government should also streamline border systems to enhance inter-departmental and inter-agency coordination amongst the various entities involved in regional trade.

Recommendation 7: Facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement

In keeping with literature reviewed in both Chapter 1 and 2, together with Chapter 4 and 5's analysis and discussions, the role of government in identifying and incorporat-ing key stakeholders is emphasised. Porter (1990) emphasises that nations succeed because their home environment is forward looking, dynamic and it's challenging. The recommendation for this challenge includes government's role in spearheading the fa-cilitation of multistakeholder engagement among entities that are critical for the suc-cess of intra-Africa trade. These comprise the private sector corporates, SMEs, social partners, including organised labour, interest groups, academia, financial institutions and multilateral agencies, among others. As recommended, governments could lead the establishment of national, provincial and municipal level AfCFTA facilitation com-mittees consisting of multiple stakeholders. These have the potential of driving the stakeholder coordination and engagement process to identify actions and programmes that need to be implemented at various levels and among different stakeholders.

Recommendation 8: Supporting SMEs and informal businesses

As highlighted in Chapter 1, governments together with the private sector should ac-celerate their support for SMEs and informal businesses as these are identified as important economic entities within African trade systems that create more jobs com-bined than big corporates. While there is a common narrative of poor SME support across the continent, governments should take the AfCFTA as an opportune platform to enable these entities to attain greater market access, access to production technol-ogy, skills and finance. Innovative trade finance products that resonate with SMEs' needs and repayment capacities should be developed across the continent.

Recommendation 9: Facilitating national and regional security and political stability

As alluded to by the data gathered and analysed in Chapter 4, Governments have a role to play in ensuring that their national and regional environments are sufficiently peaceful and stable to facilitate intra-Africa trade. This is consistent with the African Union Commission (2015) which refers to the African Agenda 2063 aspiration number 4 which focuses on a peaceful and secure Africa. This recommendation therefore, challenges governments to implement democratic processes in the countries where this may still be lagging, more especially in younger democracies.

6.4.3 Recommendations for businesses including DFIs and SMEs

Chapter 4 highlights the practice that DFI's usually focus on funding big corporates and governments and neglect SME's due to risk considerations. The recommendation for DFI' as drawn from the findings of the study, is to liberalise their funding policies in a manner that include SMEs in a way that would enable them to grow and create much-needed job opportunities. The risks associated with funding SME's could be mitigated by packaging the funding together with dedicated support interventions such as access to market, technical support and mentorship, amongst others. On the other hand, big business should be open to create synergistic partnerships with SME's

Recommendation 1: Extending focus beyond local and regional markets

As discussed and analysed in Chapter 4, intra-Africa trade requires that businesses understand the dynamics, demand, supply and quality expectations of markets beyond their borders. The recommendation is that focal areas could include understanding African markets and macroeconomic dynamics using models like PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological and Legal) analysis, among others. Private sector entities and SMEs can extend their markets and increase their revenues and their likelihood of success by diversifying their focus to other African markets as well.

Recommendation 2: Upgrading skills and capacity for business and operational processes to meet export and import demands

In Chapter 1, 4 and 5 the need for outcome-based education through partnering with academic institutions and industry was highlighted. Related to the above, businesses need to capacitate themselves for increased intra-Africa trade. This could happen through staff continuous training and fit for purpose reskilling to meet the needs and expectations of the AfCFTA.

Recommendation 3: Lobbying for change towards a conducive intra-Africa trade environment.

Chapter 1 indicates that one of the weaknesses in the current intra-Africa trade activities is lack of adherence to trade protocols by some African leaders. The recommendation based on inclusive stakeholder participation also implores the private sector to play its role. For example, one of the recommendations is that through business and trade associations, the private sector can play a critical lobbying role to convince both governments and regional economic blocs to implement change that supports intra-Africa trade. This includes the effective and efficient implementation of AfCFTA protocol and regulatory changes that support integration in trade.

Recommendation 4: The strengthening and refocusing of regional and continental chambers of commerce toward AfCFTA support

While governments across the continent attempt to coordinate the implementation of the AfCFTA through RECs, the private sector could also do the same by strengthening private-sector level regional and continental business associations. Companies from countries participating in the AfCFTA should obtain membership with regional and continental organised business associations to ensure the representation of Africa's private sector interests in trade related activities.

Recommendation 5: Keeping informed and updated with intra-Africa trade environments and dynamics

One of the objectives of the study in Chapter 1 is to establish the role played by AfCFTA in enhancing intra-Africa trade. The private sector would be well advised to remain well informed about changes in trade policies, regulations, systems and processes occurring within the ambit of intra-Africa trade. As explained in the study, the AfCFTA requires a range of changes that do not all take effect simultaneously. This challenges the private sector to track all these continuous changes as this may allow them to adapt to the requirements more effectively.

6.4.4 Recommendations to Regional Economic Blocs

Recommendations that apply to the continent's RECs are presented, based on the study's findings, particularly the potential for conflict between existing RECs and the requirements of the AfCFTA as well as the generally low implementation appetite for regional trade protocols.

Recommendation 1: Collaboration rather than competition

It was shown in Chapter 1 that for it to succeed, intra-Africa trade would require an inclusive stake holder participation and partnership approach. The following recommendations, therefore, aim to address this challenge. RECs should increase collaborative efforts toward the growth of intra-Africa trade. This is because, competitive and non-cooperative approaches among RECs were perceived as risks that could derail the growth in intra-Africa trade. Wherever RECs' interests appear to clash with AfCFTA interests, RECs are expected to consider continental co-operative interests ahead of intra-REC interests as part of the collaboration process.

Recommendation 2: Building an intra-Africa trade enabling environment

Alongside governments, RECs should enhance their involvement in building an environment that is conducive for the development of intra-Africa trade including through the implementation of the AfCFTA. The RECs could facilitate intra-regional transport and infrastructure network development, trade digitalisation, harmonising their regulations and policies, fostering regional and continental peace, democracy and security and supporting enabling regional economic policies.

Recommendation 3: Supporting member efforts to meet AfCFTA requirements and changes

As illuminated in Chapter 1 the challenges facing RECs include being mainly regional in approach. RECs should support and facilitate their members' transition into the AfCFTA. This support includes technical assistance, financial support, trade policy and regulation harmonisation guidelines as well as the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers hindering trade.

Recommendation 4: Monitoring and evaluation of trade performance among members

The lack of monitoring and evaluation as well as any enforcement of trade protocol is a major impediment to intra-Africa trade. This involves the degree and extent to which they have implemented regional trade protocol and trade enabling environments. As highlighted in Chapter 1, RECs should strengthen their monitoring and evaluation of members' intra-Africa trade facilitation and capacitation.

Recommendation 5: Initiating REC dissolution debates and dialogue

The inadequacy of the current RECs in growing intra-Africa trade which contributed to the problem statement of low levels of intra-Africa trade and constraints thereto is highlighted in Chapter 1. The AU should initiate and encourage debate and discourse on the need to dissolve or disband some of the RECs on the continent. In the long term,

difficult decisions related to maintaining the AfCFTA must be made as a way of foster-ing even greater and stronger continental coordination and integration through the AfCFTA whilst maintaining fewer RECs to facilitate speedy, integrated and coordinated processes. Due consideration must be given to the fact that despite the existence of many RECs, the continent remains the least integrated.

6.4.5 Recommendations for Social Partners

The study indicates that social partners such as organised labour, faith-based organi-sation and nongovernmental organisations are not always asserting themselves or taken cognisance of whenever governments and business consider and implement key decisions. The dichotomy within this context is that they are ultimately the stake-holders most impacted upon by the decisions of both government and business. Hence the need for a partnership approach together with them as key stakeholders.

Recommendation 1: Ensure equal inclusion in decision-making government structures

It's important for African governments to embrace an inclusive approach by including key stakeholders since they have a pivotal role to play in holding political role-players accountable to the electorate and in ensuring that there is increased accountability to the electorate rather than elected officials becoming political elites.

Recommendation 2: Ensure civil society representation via appropriate structures

Social partners have a role to play through their organised formations to ensure that when businesses invest in the economy, including foreign direct investment (FDI), it must be based on inclusive growth accompanied by job creation, SME development as well as social impact within the communities in which they operate.

6.5. Broad recommendations

Chapter 1 and 4 reflect on the importance of critical skills and the integral role that academic institutions should play in producing fit for purpose graduates. The recommendation that would resolve the common criticism directed against academic institutions, that of being unable to remain current in producing relevant skills that are required for the rapidly developing economies, could be resolved by ensuring that there is broader consultation and collaborative approach with industry before any study materials are developed, as standard practice. This is because industry research and development capacity can be matched with academic research capacity in a way that takes future technologies and other unforeseen industrial revolutions into consideration.

Recommendation 1: Co-creation of academic programmes that will contribute to relevance in the workplace

Academic institutions play a central role in developing fit-for-purpose human capital. This should be done in consultation with employers by intensifying their inclusion during curriculum development stages to focus on co-creating and developing academic skills that are relevant for the dynamic economy.

Recommendation 2: Promotion of academic programmes to support Fourth and subsequent Industrial Revolutions and digitalisation objectives

Chapter 4 further emphasises the importance of outcome based educational approach. Another recommendation in this chapter is that academic institutions should further strengthen international linkages to create best practice with industry and create joint platforms that allow for students to have sufficient international industry exposure during their study years for continuous innovative environments such as the ever evolving industrial revolutions. This could result in increased well researched business solutions by senior students from academic institutions at a lower the research and development costs for industry. This could also strengthen relations between academic institutions

and industry making it easier for students to gain employment upon completion of their studies.

6.6. Limitations of the study and areas for future research

The study follows the framework provided in Chapter 3, broadly outlining anticipated limitations that may have affected the study. The study may suffer from a few limitations, just like many other scientific research.

The sample size of eight participants may be too small even though the themes were beginning to be repetitive after respondent number six. Although the participants interviewed came from multiple sectors, backgrounds, experiences and different countries, the study only focuses on South Africa, Namibia, Kennya and Mauritius, but reference is made to intra-Africa trade in general.

Another limitation is the academic literature availability due to limited peer reviewed studies in the selected research area particularly the AfCFTA which was recently established.

Furthermore, some of the targeted high-level participants such as politicians and business leaders were not always available due to demanding schedules.

Lastly, instead of face-to-face interview the study relied on Microsoft Teams and Zoom technologies due to factors such as COVID-19 considerations.

Although these limitations could have affected the empirical results and evidence given in this study, it is assumed that their effects are minimal and that they have not significantly influenced the theoretical and empirical findings of this study. As the study unfolded several areas emerged as suggested areas for future studies.

This study focused on themes relating to the enhancement of intra-Africa trade, placing significant emphasis on the AfCFTA as a potential platform to uplift African economies through increased trade. Various themes and subthemes emerged and as the study

focused on the areas such as inclusive participation, technology and political will amongst others, but it was not able to further explore these in sufficient detail. In this regard, the study therefore recommends the following as areas to be considered for future research endeavours:

a. The fully costed innovative role that the Fourth and subsequent Industrial Revolutions oriented digital technology, such as blockchain, can play in removing logistical and related constraints associated with the movement of goods and people by sea, air freight and road in pursuit of enhanced intra-Africa trade.

b. The radical and less risk-averse role that development funding institutions, such as the African Development Bank and Afreximbank, should play in availing capital for infrastructure, technological enhancement and other business development activities.

c. Detailed assessment of the political, social and economic relationships between existing regional economic communities and the AfCFTA. Such studies could also investigate whether there is sufficient justification for all eight RECs on the continent and offer greater insights into the feasibility of dissolving or integrating some of them.

d. The challenges of integrating various trade and economic regulatory systems under both the AfCFTA and existing RECs, in the context of the existence of studies that recommend such integration and few that outline and discuss its feasibility, challenges and dynamics.

e. Assess sustainable roles that can be played by private business and through chambers of commerce in the promotion of intra-Africa trade under the AfCFTA. Specific focus should be on the operation of regional and continental level chambers of commerce on the continent.

f. Understanding how political will and commitment towards the implementation of regional and continental trade pacts can be garnered from governments. This emanates from the continued non-implementation of trade protocols across the continent.

These represent some of the important areas where knowledge gaps on intra-Africa trade continue to prevail. While some areas have been studied, the existence of recurring problems suggests the need to continually undertake research to identify further potential solutions and to remain apprised of current knowledge in these areas.

6.7 Return on Investment (ROI)

According to Beattie (2022), ROI is the ratio that compares the gain or loss from an investment relative to its cost. It is helpful in evaluating the current or potential ROI, be it stock portfolio performance, considering a business investment, or deciding whether to undertake a new project, as in the case of this study. This study places, amongst its overall objectives, a significant degree of emphasis on the importance of inclusive stakeholder partnership approaches to enhancing intra-Africa trade. In addressing the research question on how best to identify and minimise the impediments or constraints associated with intra-Africa trade, while identifying ways to optimise the estimated 84% intra-trade deficit as an opportunity rather than an insurmountable challenge, it has demonstrated a significant ROI at the personal, professional, organisational, and social levels.

Personal Return on Investment (PROI) has been realised through personal capital and the ability to realise one's worth in maximising time, effort, networks, knowledge, skills, continental and organisational value. The PROI achieved by the study includes in-depth literature review and enhanced engagements with different experts that range from the World Bank, African Development Bank, academia, diplomats, thought leaders, organised business and international trade and investment practitioners. This contributes to the knowledge and understanding of the complex African socio, political and economic factors characterised by a multiplicity of country-specific regulations and trade dynamics that should assist in better navigating and leveraging the untapped potential of the continent. In addition, the study contributes to the development of innovative solutions by Africans for African solutions through a broader body of theory.

The professional objectives of the study have included the attainment of its stated objectives and this is expected to have two kinds of benefits. The first is the emphasis on

234

academic institutions to collaborate more closely with business and government to enhance the development of relevant programmes and production of fit-for-purpose professionals, including professionals in the public sector, technology, innovation, international trade-related activities as well as multinational business operations. Moreover, digitalisation of the border control processes and related logistics will assist with the movement of people and goods whilst accelerating the implementation of operations and improved efficiencies.

The economies of the African continent are predominantly occupied by multinationals from the European Union, Asia, and North America who are well established, with a high-risk appetite and capital to continue their expansions within the main sectors of the economy. The ROI on business, and most importantly African business, lies in stimulating the risk appetite to expand their operations beyond their respective borders through the recommended enabling environment that is characterised by inclusive stakeholder partnership, trade and digital infrastructure, free movement of goods and people, as well as other related reduced constraints for engaging in intra-Africa trade activities. Most importantly, revenue growth from the efficiencies brought into economic activities is important for reinvestment into the growth of the economy. Political will also ensures integrated stakeholder partnerships by all key stakeholders including government, civil society, organised labour, business and academic institutions and elimination of concerns such as possible trust deficit.

The ROI on social partners such as organised labour, religious communities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) lies in ensuring that decisions taken by stakeholders such as business and government ultimately have a positive impact instead of a negative one on their respective constituencies. Any investment and economic growth in the continent should be inclusive in nature. This means that the envisaged resultant economic growth should contribute to the creation of jobs and expand business opportunities. By being included in the critical developmental decision-making processes, social partners play an important role in upholding progressive legislation, including in relation to employee rights, environmental rights, and contributing to social cohesion.

6.8 Conclusion

This study examined how intra-Africa trade on the continent can be enhanced in relation to the value of trade, volumes of trade and the number of participating African countries. The study assumed a generally optimistic view towards the AfCFTA, informed by the fact that it is the largest trade pact to be established on the continent as regards the extent of ratification. It is therefore viewed as a possible platform for the enhancement of intra-Africa trade. The study found that it was possible to enhance intra-Africa trade albeit this was not a guaranteed fit. The achievement of intra-Africa trade is predicated upon the resolution of major trade constraints and barriers that exist on the continent, being regulatory, political, economic and business-related in nature. These were compounded by the multi-REC environment of Africa that came with potentialities and actualities of non-commitment to trade agreements. The resolution of the identified impediments requires multi-stakeholder approaches including removal of business environment barriers and enlisting high levels of political will that can unlock far-reaching regulatory changes and investments in regional and continental infrastructure, innovative technology and financial systems.

The primary theory that informed the study is the international modern trade theory, Porter's (1990) competitive advantage of nations theory, which takes into consideration that for a nation to achieve its developmental objectives, it must enhance its international competitive advantages. The benefits of all such actions are considered as critical for the continent's poor and marginalised citizens. They include the reduction of poverty and increased job creation emanating from increased product demand, trade liberalisation and industrial growth, among others. Such positive changes have also been considered from a Pan-Africanist perspective that will contribute to greater continental cohesion and harmony among African countries and Africans in the diaspora. Thus, a positive view holds that despite the failure of previous regional trade pacts and the perceptions of weaknesses in existing RECs, the AfCFTA will indeed support the continent's social, economic and political objectives that seek to promote improved developmental levels of the African economies. The study further suggests that this should progressively contribute to the elimination of international trade barriers such

as border barriers, business environment barriers, technical barriers, government influenced barriers, reputational as well as perceived risk-related barriers.

REFERENCES:

Abdulquadir, A. 2021. *Participation of Agribusiness Sector Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):* Challenges and Prospects. Lagos: University of Ilorin.

Abrego, M.L., Zamaroczy, M.M., de, Gursoy, T., Nicholls, G.P., Perez-Saiz., H. & Rosas, J.N. 2020. *The African Continental Free Trade Area: Potential Economic Impact and Challenges.* Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

African Union. 2019. *Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade* Area. Available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty consolidated_text_on_cfta_-_en.pdf (Accessed: 09 January 2022).

African Union. 2020. *Conditions for Success in the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.* Addis Ababa: AU

African Union. 2021. *Intra-Africa Trade Fair 2018.* Addis Ababa: AU.

African Union. 2013. *Year of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance.* Addis Ababa: AU.

Agarwal, P., Black, A., Lemma, A., Mkhabela, V. & Stuart, J. 2022. *The African Continental Free Trade Area and the Automotive Value Chain.* South Africa: University of Cape Town: ODI Report.

Anele, K.K. 2021. *The Potential Impact of Piracy on the ACFTA: A Nigerian Perspective.* Journal of Territorial & Maritime Studies, 8(1), pp. 5-26.

Aniche, E.T., Alumona, I.M. & Moyo, I. 2021. *Regionalism, Security and Development in Africa.* London: Routledge.

Anouche, M. & Boumaaz, Y. 2020. *The potential of the Blockchain for coordinated border management in developing countries*. 2020 IEEE 13th International Colloquium of Logistics and Supply Chain Management (LOGISTIQUA). *pp. 1-7.* Available at: https://doi.org/10.1109/LOGISTIQUA49782.2020.9353892 *(*Assessed: 19 February 2021).

Anthony, S. & Jack, S. 2009. *Qualitative case study methodology in nursing research: An integrative review*. Journal of Advanced Nursing 65(6), pp. 1171-1181.

Anyanwu, J. C. 2014. *Does Intra-African Trade Reduce Youth Unemployment In Africa?* Working Paper Series No. 201*.* Tunis*:* African Development Bank

Apiko, P., Woolfrey, S. & Byiers, B. 2020. *The promise of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (No. 287).* ECDPM Discussion Paper. Available at: https://www.ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/Promise-African (Accessed:02 February 2021)

Asante-Poku, N.A. & Van Huellen, S. 2021*. Commodity exporter's vulnerabilities in times of COVID-19: the case of Ghana.* Canadian Journal of Development Studies Revue canadienne d'études du développement *42, pp. 122–144.* Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2020.1857225 (Accessed:10 June 2021).

Ayemibo, B. & Salas, A. 2021*. Identifying The Critical Success Factor for the Utilisation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) by African Businesses*. Hawaii: LIGS University.

Balassa, B. 2013*. The Theory of Economic Integration (Routledge Revivals).* London: Routledge*.*

Balassa, B., Bertrand, T. & Wonnacott, P. 2020. *Arguments for and against interference.* Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/international trade/Arguments-for-and-against-interference (Accessed: 5 February 2021).

Barka, H.B. 2012. *Border Posts, Checkpoints, and Intra-African Trade: Challenges and So-lutions.* Abidjan: African Development Bank.

Beattie, A. 2022. *How to calculate Return on Investment (ROI).* Investopedia. Available at: https://www.investopedia.com (Accessed: 04 February 2023)

Behar, A., & Venables, A. J. 2011. *Transport costs and international trade. In A Handbook of Transport Economics.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing*.*

Bliss, L.A. 2016. *Phenomenology Research: Enquiry to Understand the meaning of Peo-ple's Experiences.* International Journal of Adult Education and Technology*.* USA: Florida International University WordPress.

Boblin, S. L., Ireland, S, Kirkpatrick, H. & Robertson, K. 2013. *Using Stake's qualitative case study approach to explore implementation of evidence-based practice.* Qualitative Health Research, 23(9), pp. 1267-1275.

Börzel, T.A. & Risse, T. 2019. *Grand theories of integration and the challenges of compara-tive regionalism.* Journal of European Public Policy *26, pp. 1231–1252.* Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1622589 (Accessed: 12 June 2019).

Brown, L. 2008*.* A review of the literature on case study research. *Canadian Jour-nal for New Scholars in Education, 1(1), pp. 1-13.* Available at: https://cdm.ucal-gary.ca/index.php/cjnse/article/view/30395 (Assessed: 2 November 2018)

Buckley, J.W., Buckley, M.H. and Hung-Fu Chiang (1976). *Research methodology and busi-ness decisions.* Montvale, Nj: Naa.

Caprotti, F., Cowley, R., Datta, A., Broto, V.C., Gao, E., Georgeson, L., Herrick, C., Oden-daal, N. & Joss, S. 2017*. The New Urban Agenda: key opportunities and challenges for policy and practice.* Urban Research and Practice, 10(3), pp.367- 378.

Casey, D. & Houghton, C. 2010. *Clarifying case study research:* Examples from practice. Nurse Researcher.vol 17(3), pp. 41-51.

Chibira, E. & Moyana, H. 2017. *Enhancing Intra-Africa Trade: the need to go beyond hard infrastructure investment, border management reform and customs processes enhancement.* Pretoria: Southern African Transport Conference.

Chingano, M. & Nakana, S. 2009. *The challenges of regional integration in Southern Africa: Harare:* University of Zimbabwe.

Chirisa, I. E., Mumba, A. & Dirwai, S. O. 2014. *A review of the evolution and trajectory of the African union as an instrument of regional integration.* SpringerPlus, 3(1), pp. 1-8.

Clarke, H.D., Matthew. G. & Whiteley. P. 2017. Brexit: *Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Codwell, D. 2000. *The question of International competitiveness.* International Advances in Economic Research, 6(3), pp. 417-426.

Creswell, J.W. 2014. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. 1994. *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. 2013. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* Sage Publications. Available at: https://www.researchdesignreview.com (Accessed October 2016).

Dedeoglu, B and Bilener, T. 2017. *Neo-Functionalist Regional Integration Theory Put To Test in Asia: New regional Integration around India and Asean.* Insight Turkey, 19 (4), pp. 155-174.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. 2005. *Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research (3rd Edition).* Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.

Dunn, T. M. 2012. *Neo-Functionalism and the European Union. E-International Relations.* Available at: https://www.e-ir.info/2012/11/28/neo-functionalism-and the-European-union/ (Accessed: 4 November 2012).

ECA & African Union. 2017*. Assessing regional integration in Africa VIII: bringing the Continental Free Trade Area about.* Addis Ababa: UNECA.

El-Anis, I. 2018*. Economic Integration and Security in the Middle East and North Africa: What Prospects for a Liberal Peace?* Journal of Developing Societies, 34, pp. 233–263. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0169796X18784683. (Accessed: 28 August 2018).

Eugster, J., Jaumotte, F., MacDonald, F. & Piazza, R. 2022*. The Effect of Tariffs in Global Value Chains.* IMF Working Paper wp22/40. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

Forere, M.A. 2018. *Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: Will it spur foreign direct investment in Africa?* Acta Juridica 1(1). Available at: https://journals.co.za/doi/10.10520/EJC-1a70ead6ed(Accessed: 21 December 2018).

Foroutan, F. & Pritchett, L. 1993. *Intra-Sub-Saharan African trade: Is it too little?* Journal of African Economies, 2(1), pp.74-105. Available at: https://www.academic.oup.com/jae/article/2/1/74/708890. (Accessed: 05 May 2021).

Fox, E.M. 2022. *Integrating Africa by Competition and Market Policy.* Rev Ind Organ, 60, pp. 305–326. Available at https://www.doi.org/10.1007/s11151-02209854-1. (Accessed: 05 May 2022).

Gachuiri, E. 2020*. African Continental Free Trade Area Phase II Negotiations: A Space for a Competition Protocol?* UNCTAD Research Paper No. 56 UNCTAD/SER.RP/2020/15.

Available at: https://www.unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ser-rp-2020d15_en.pdf (Accessed 15 December 2020).

Geda, A. & Seid, H.D. 2015. *The potential for internal trade and regional integration in Africa,* Journal of African Trade, Volume 2, (1–2), pp. 19-50.

George, S. 2019. *Trade implication of African Continental Free Trade Area: A case of United Republic of Tanzania.* Unpublished Thesis. Morogoro: Mzumbe University.

George, T. 2022. *What is Theoretical Framework?* Guide to Organising. UK: Sara Vinz. Available at:
https://www.google.com/search?q=George,+T.+2022.+What+is+Theoretical+Framework?+Guide+to+Organising.+UK:+Sara+Vinz.(Accessed:18 February 2023)

Giorgi, A. 2009. *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology:* A modified Husserlian approach. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Global Trade Review. 2021. *Intra-African trade: The next frontier.* Available at:
https://www.gtreview.com/supplements/gtr-africa-2021/intra-african-trade nextfrontier/ (Accessed: 30 November 2021).

Gordon, M. 2009. *Towards a pragmatic discourse of construction: Reflections on Lessons from practice educational studies.* Educational Studies, 45(1), pp. 39-58.

Grant, C. and Osanloo, A. 2014. *Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research:* Creating the blueprint for your house". Administrative Issues Journal, 4(2), 12-26.

Gupta, S. & Yang, Y. 2005. *Role of the IMF. Chapter 5.* Washington DC: International Monetary Fund.

Hacking, I. 1983. *Representing and intervening, Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Haile-Gabriel, A. 2021*. FAO: Agriculture will make or break free African trade – Changing agricultural food systems could unlock Africa's potential.* Africa Renewal April 28. Available at: https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may 2021/agriculture-will-make-or-break-africas-free-trade (Accessed:28 May 2021).

Hakan, C. 2019. *The Cost of Brexit: Neo-Functionalism Strikes Back.* Romanian Journal of European Affairs, 19(1), pp. 65–78.

Ibrahim, S. and Ogbeidi, D. 2015. *An Intergovernmentalism Approach to Regional Integration in Africa:* The efficacy of the African Union, 1 (1), pp. 2454–6119.

Igwe, P.A., Ochinanwata, C. & Madichie, N.O. 2021*. The "Isms" of Regional Integration: What Do Underlying Interstate Preferences Hold for the ECOWAS Union?* Politics Policy 49, pp. 280–308. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1111/polp.12396 (Accessed 13 February 2021).

International Monetary Fund Direction of Trade Statistics. 2020. *Top 10 intra-trade Champions in Africa*. Washington DC: IMF.

Ishiguro, K. 2017*. Preferential Trade Agreements under Declining American Hegemony*. International Journal of Financial Research 9, pp163.

Ismail, F. 2021. *The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Developmental Regionalism.* Pretoria: TIPS.

Jordaan, A.C. 2014*. Regional integration in Africa versus higher levels of intra Africa trade.* Development Southern Africa, 31(3), pp. 515-534. Available at: https//www.DOI: 10.1080/0376835X.2014.887997*.

Jung, J. W. 2017*. The Impact of Political Instability on Trade Agreements in Africa.* Seoul: Korea Institute for International Economic Policy.

Kasanda, A. 2016. *Exploring Pan-Africanism's theories: from race-based solidarity to political unity and beyond.* Journal of African Cultural Studies *28, pp.179–195.* Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2016.1158093 (Accessed: 30 May 2019).

Kathuria, S. 2018. *A Glass Half Full: The Promise of Regional Trade in South Asia.* South Asia Development Forum*.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

Kende-Robb, C. 2021 *Six reasons why Africa's new free trade area is a global game changer.* Available at: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/02/afcfta africa-free-trade-global-game-changer/ (Accessed: 09 February 2021).

Kgomoeswana, V. 2014*. Africa is open for business.* Johannesburg: Pan MacMillan.

Killam, L. 2013*. Research terminology simplified: Paradigms, axiology, ontology, epistemol-ogy and methodology.* Sudbury, ON: YouStudyNursing.

Kilumelume, M., Morando, B., Newman, C. & Rand, J. 2021. *Tariffs, productivity, and re-source misallocation 1-29.* Available at: https//www.doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2021/114-3 (Accessed: 20 January 2022).

Korn, D. 2021. *The Counterproductivity of Protectionist Tariffs.* Liberty University Journal of Statesmanship & Public Policy, Vol. 1, Issue 2, Article 8. Available at: https://www.digitalcommons.liberty.edu/jspp/vol1/iss2/8 (Accessed: 28 August 2021).

Krathwohl, D.R. 1998*. Methods of educational & social science research:* An integrated ap-proach. (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

Kuhn, T.S. 1970*. The structure of scientific revolutions. (Vol. 111).* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lassa, J.A., Surjan, A., Caballero-Anthony, M. & Fisher, R. 2019*. Measuring political will: An index of commitment to disaster risk reduction.* International Journal of Disaster Risk

Reduction 34, pp. 64–74. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2018.11.06 (Accessed: 06 January 2020).

Laursen, F. 2003. *Comparing Regional Integration Schemes: International Regimes or Would-be Polities?* Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series, 3 (8) pp.

Levitt, T. 1983. *The globalisation of markets.* Harvard Business Review. pp. 61,92-102. Available at: https://www:hbr.org/1983/05/the-globalization-of- markets (Accessed: 09 February 2023).

Li, Y. 2018. *Agricultural Issues in The Negotiations for An Upgrade of The New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement.* Doctoral dissertation. Auckland: Auckland University of Technology.

Lin, M.R. 2021. *AfCFTA: The benefits of the AfCFTA for the African economy.* Available at: https://www.borgenproject.org/the-afcfta/ (Accessed: 01 July 2021).

Longley, R. 2018. *Understanding the Pros and Cons of Protectionism.* Available at: https://www.thoughtco.com/protectionism-definition-and-examples-4571027 (Accessed: 19 January 2022).

Luke, D. & MacLeod, J. (Eds.) 2019. *Inclusive Trade in Africa: The African Continental Free Trade Area in Comparative Perspective.* London: Routledge.

Luke, D., Sommer, L., Schillinger, H.R. & Theeman, Y. 2017. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa-Human Rights Perspective.* Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Makhathini, M. S. M., Moyo, I. & Nshimbi, C. C. 2021. *Human mobility in the Southern African Development Community region: Some best practices for migration management from the European Union.* In Intra-Africa Migrations (pp.70-85). Abingdon: Routledge.

Manboah-Rockson, J.K. 2021. *Grabbing the 'Bull' by the 'Horns': A Critical Analysis of the Establishment of AfCFTA.* Open Journal of Political Science 11, pp. 301–315. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2021.112020 (Accessed: 02 May 2021).

McKenzie, B. 2022*. Africa: Trade finance and the efforts to boost Intra-African Trade, 6, pp 3-9.* Available at: https://www:insightplus.bakermckenzie.com/bm/banking finance_1/africa-trade-finance-and-the-efforts-to-boost-intra-african-trade (Accessed:14 May 2022).

Merriam, S.B. 1998*. Qualitative research and case study applications in education (2nd ed.).* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S.B. 2009*. Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (2nd ed.).* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass*.*

Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. & Saldaña, J. 2018*. Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Mills, J. 2014*. Methodology and methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mlambo, C. 2021. *The Impact of Port Performance on Trade:* The Case of Selected African States. Economies 9: 135. Available at: https:// www.doi.org/10.3390/economies9040135 (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

Moyer, J.D., Kabandula, A., Bohl, D. & Hanna, T. 2021. *Conditions for Success in the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.* SSRN Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3941470 (Accessed: 10 February 2022).

Muzee, H. and Enaifoghe, A.O. 2019. *Towards an Inclusive Model of African Regional Integration: How Effective has the Linear Model been so far?* Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies, 11, pp. 55–65. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.22610/jebs.v11i1(J).2748 (Accessed:28 November 2019).

Nagar, D. 2019. *Politics and Pan-Africanism: Diplomacy, Regional Economies and Peace-Building in Contemporary Africa.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Nathan, L. 2013. *Synopsis of Community of insecurity: SADC's struggle for peace and security in southern Africa.* African Security Review, 22(3), pp.181-189.

Ncube, B.M., Dube, A. & Ward, K. 2021. *Establishment of the African Medicines Agency: progress, challenges and regulatory readiness.* J of Pharm Policy and Pract 14, 29. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1186/s40545-020-00281-9 (Accessed: 27 June 2021).

Ncube, C.B. 2022. *Intellectual property and the African continental free trade area: lessons and recommendations for the IP protocol, Journal of International Trade Law and Policy,* Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 105-121. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/JITLP-09-2021-0051 (Assessed on 30 July 2021).

Nicoli, F. 2020. *Neo-functionalism revisited: integration theory and varieties of outcomes in the Eurocrisis. Journal of European Integration 42, pp. 897–916.* Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2019.1670658 (Accessed: 27 February 2020).

Nkrumah, K., Arrigoni, R. & Napolitano, G. 1963. *Africa must unite.* London: Heinemann.

Nubong, G.F. 2021. *Developmental regionalism and the success prospects of Africa's continental free trade area (CFTA):* lessons from Africa's early integration experience. Africa Review 13, pp. 123–138.

Obeng-Odoom, F. 2020. *The African Continental Free Trade Area. The American Journal of Economics and Sociology 79, pp. 167–197.* Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12317 (Accessed: 04 June 2020).

Odetayo, B. & Walsh, M. 2021. *A policy perspective for an integrated regional power pool within the Africa Continental Free Trade Area.* Energy Policy, 156, pp. 112-436.

OECD. 2020. *COVID-19 and Africa: Socio-economic implications and policy responses.* Available at: https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid 19-and-africa-socio-economic-implications-and-policy-responses-96e1b282/ (Accessed: 3 December 2020).

Okadia F., Wa-Kyendo E., Njeru M., Jattani D. & Kemboi L. 2021*. Designing an AfCFTA-Driven Continent-Wide Competition Policy Around the Regional Economic Communities.* The Antitrust Bulletin pp. 556-575. Available at: https//www.DOI10.1177/0003603X211045749/ Accessed: 13 January 2022).

Okhonmina, C. 2009*. The challenge of Regional Economic Integration in Africa.* Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review, 3(4), pp. 5.

Oloruntoba, S.O. 2020*. Pan Africanism, Regional Integration and Development in Africa.* Berlin: Springer Nature*.*

Olowu, D. 2003. *Regional integration, development, and the African Union agenda: challenges, gaps, and opportunities.* Transnat'l L. & Contemp. Probs., 13, pp. 211.

Omotola, J. S. 2010*. Globalization, new regionalism and the challenge of development in Africa.* Africana, 4(1), pp. 103-136.

Oramah, B. 2021*. Afreximbank in the Era of the AfCFTA.* Journal of African Trade, 8 (2), pp. 24–35.

O'shea, S.E. & Lysaght, P. 2011*. Peer-led transition strategies and the first-year experience- implementations, implications and insights.* Manchester: United Kingdom.

Pasquali, G., Godfrey, S. & Nadvi, K. 2021. *Understanding regional value chains through the interaction of public and private governance:* Insights from Southern Africa's apparel sector. J Int Bus Policy 4, pp. 368–389. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1057/s42214-020-00071-9.

Phillip, X. 2021. *AfCFTA: How Afreximbank is 'rising to the moment' to bolster intra Africa trade.* The Africa Report. Available at: https://www.theafricareport.com/154677/afcfta-how-afreximbank-is-rising-to-the moment-to-bolster-intra-africa-trade/ (Accessed: 20 June 2022).

Porter, M.E. 1990. *The competitive Advantage of Nations.* New York: Free Press

Rangasamy, J. 2003. *Trade Theory and its Implications for Competitiveness.* Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Roach, R. M. & Schaefer, B. D. 2012. *How the new African Union leadership should improve the organisation.* Washington DC: The Heritage Foundation.

Rodrik, D. 1998. *Why is trade reform so difficult in Africa?* Journal of African Economies, 7(1), pp. 10-36.

Rupiya, M. 2012. *A review of the African Union's experience in facilitating peaceful power transfers: Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Libya and Sudan: Are there prospects for reform?* African Journal on Conflict Resolution, 12(2), pp. 161-183.

Ryan, G. 2018. Introduction to positivism, Interpretivism and Critical theory. Nurse Researcher, 25(4), 14-20.

Schiff, M. & Winters, L.A. 2003. *Regional Integration and Development.* Washington DC: World Bank.

Schimmelfennig, F. 2018. *Regional Integration Theory.* Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shinkaiye, J. K. 2006. *Governance Challenges in Africa and the Rule of the African Union. European Institute for Public Administration, Netherlands.* Addis Ababa, Ethopia: African Union Commission.

Shinyekwa, I.M.B., Bulime, E.N.W. & Nattabi, A.K. 2020. *African Continental Free Trade Area: The Potential Revenue, Trade and Welfare Effects for The East African Community*. Nairobi: Economic Research Centre.

Signé, L. & Madden, P. 2020. *Considerations for Rules of Origin under the African Continental Free Trade Area.* Journal of African Trade 8(2). Pp. 1-12.

Simola, A., Booysen, O., Ferrari, E., Nechifor, V. & Boulanger, P. 2021. *Potential Effects of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on African Agri-food Sectors and Food Security.* Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union.

Simons, H. 2009. *Case study research in practice.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Smith, A. 1994. *Strategic trade policy in the European car Market. An Empirical studies of strategic trade policy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Southern African Development Community (SADC). 2022. *Towards a common future.* Available at: https://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/integration milestones/singlecurrency/ (Accessed: 2 December 2022).

Songwe, L. 2019. *Intra-African trade: A path to economic diversification and inclusion*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Sow, M. 2018. *Figures of the week: Africa's intra-and extra-regional trade.* Africa in Focus. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Spulber, D.F. 2007. *Global competitive Strategy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Stake, R.E. 1995. *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stake, R. E. 2006. *Multiple case study analysis. New York: Guilford Press.*

Stevens, J. 2021. *Manufacturing for Intra-Africa Trade: A Focused Response to China's Dominant Position in Africa for South Africa.* In: Alden, C., Wu, YS. (eds) South Africa–China Relations. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54768-4_6 (Accessed: 15 May 2021).

Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J. 1990. *Basics of qualitative research:* Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J.M. 1998. *Basics of qualitative research:* Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Taye, S.D. 2019. *Creating the Political Will for Realizing the Gains of the AfCFTA.* Available at: https://www.afronomicslaw.org/index.php/2019/06/05/creating-the-political-will-for-realizing-the-gains-of-the-afcfta (Accessed: 10 November 2019).

Tsvakirai, C.Z. & Mosikari, T.J. 2021. *The Influence of Product Quality on Export Performance: Eco-Efficient Value in South African Peach and Nectarine Fresh Exports.* Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing, 34(4), pp. 389-409. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.1080/08974438.2021.1900017 (Assessed on 08 August 2022).

UNCTAD. 2019. *Economic Development in Africa Report:* Made in Africa – Rules of Origin for Enhanced Intra-African Trade. Geneva: United Nations.

UNECA. 2019. *Ratification of the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.* Addis Ababa: UN Economic Commission for Africa.

UNECA. 2021. *Africa's women traders are poised to transform economies through intra-African trade.* Available at: https://www.uneca.org/stories/africa's-women traders-are-poised-to-transform-economies-through-intra-african-trade (Accessed: 15 June 2021).

United Nations Development Program. 1999. *Global Environment Facility.* Bonn: UNFCCC.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. 2019. *Digital Trade in Africa: Implications for Inclusion and Human Development.* Addis Ababa: UNECA.

Vickers, B. 2017. *A Handbook on Regional Integration in Africa:* Towards Agenda 2063. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Wapmuk, S. 2021. *Pan-Africanism in the 21st century: African Union and the challenges of cooperation and integration in Africa.* Brazilian Journal of International Relations 10, pp. 283–311. Available at: https://www.doi.org/10.36311/2237-7743.2021.v10n2.p283-311 (Accessed: 02 February 2022).

Weiss, R.S. 1994. *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies.* New York: Free Press.

World Bank. 2020. *The African Continental Free Trade Area.* Washington DC: World Bank. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/the-african-conti-nental-freetrade-area (*Accessed: 15 November 2020).*

World Bank. 2016. *Boosting Competition in African Markets Can Enhance Growth and Lift at least Half a Million People out of Poverty.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. 2011. *Africa Competitiveness Report. African Development Bank and World Bank.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Customs Organisation. 2019. *Coordinated Border Management.* Brussels: World Customs Organisation.

Yin, R. K. 2014. *Case study research: Design and methods.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Young, A. R. 2016. *Not your parents' trade politics: The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations.* Review of International Political Economy, 23(3), pp. 345-

378. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2016.1150316 (Assessed on 03
May 2016).

Yushi, J. and Borojo, D. 2019*. The impacts of institutional quality and infrastructure on over-all and intra-Africa trade.* Economics, 13 (1) pp. 209-220. Available at:
https://www.doi.org/10.5018/economics-ejournal.ja.2019 10 (Accessed: 15 July
2019).

Appendix A: Sample Letter of Permission to Conduct the study

Introduction

My name is Ernest Mahlaule. I am a PhD candidate at the **Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management** in South Africa. I am doing research on **enhancing intra-Africa trade through continental and regional integration.**

The purpose of this letter is to request for your voluntary participation in this study. Below is detailed information about the study and should you be able and willing to participate, please show your acceptance by signing in the relevant spaces at the end of this letter. Should you require further information or clarity on some of the aspects of this study please do not hesitate to contact me directly on the numbers which will be provided below.

Background, purpose and objectives

The study intends to explore new knowledge towards enhancing African economic intra-trade and higher levels of integration between African economies in a manner that would result in significantly reducing the prevailing binding constraints associated with doing business in the African continent.

The main aim of the study is to explore the context underpinning the existing intra-trade practices in order to contribute new knowledge that would assist in enhancing not only Intra-Africa trade but economic integration and subsequently continuous growth as al long-term objective.

The main research question is therefore how best to identify and minimise the binding constraints whilst optimising on the estimated 83% to 85% intra-Africa trade deficit as an opportunity rather than a depressing or hopeless position.

The objectives of the study are as follows to:

1. Take an integrated approach that seeks to identify the prevailing constraints on Intra-Africa trade whilst identifying enablers towards enhanced socio-economic development;
2. Critically examine contemporary theories and constructs related to socio economic development through intra-Africa trade
3. Collect data in order to interrogate/investigate the extent to which current intra-Africa trade practices either constrain or enable integration and socio-economic development
4. Use data analysis to critique current practices and instruments.
5. The role that the digital economy can play as a catalyst for economic facilitation and integration
6. The role of the eight (8) regional economies in enhancing intra-Africa trade

The role of the African Continental Free Trade agreement in enhancing intra-Africa trade

7. Make recommendations towards enhancement of the intra-Africa trade to move beyond the current estimated 15% to 17% towards a higher percentage enjoyed by Europe and other continents.

What does the study entail?

The research method will be interviews. For purposes of this study, the sample will be selected based on pre-defined criteria which will include but not limited to position, sector, level of authority, country etc. The sample will be divided into mainly three (4) groups, namely; government representatives dealing with trade and policies, international funding institutions representatives, academics and business people and or organised business who are already trading or seeking to trade in the African continent.

What will happen to the samples and the information about you?

The samples and data that are registered about you will only be used in accordance with the purpose of the study as described above. All the information that can identify

you will remain confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. If there are any questions about this study, please contact me or supervisor using the contact details on this consent form.

Voluntary participation

Participation in the study is voluntary. You have the right to decline to participate or if you decide to participate you may withdraw your consent at any time and without stating any particular reason/s for your withdrawal.
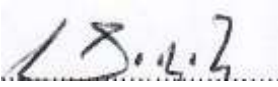
If you are able to participate, please sign the declaration below.

By signing this declaration, you are confirming that you have read and understood the contents of this document and freely give your consent to participate.

Consent for participation in the study

I am willing to participate in the study

Full name of Participant: V. K.
Surname of Participant: N
Employment Sector: DIPLOMACY
Position: AMBASSADOR

Signature ………………………………………………………Date: …25. 03.2021…

Researcher: Ernest Mahlaule, PhD candidate in **Enhancing intra-Africa-trade through continental and regional integration.** at the **Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management** in South Africa.

Address: P O Box 6852 Halfway house Midrand 1685

Tel: (011) 315-6971

Cell: +27 83 419 0037

E-mail: ernest@hih.co.za

Supervisor: Dr Dickinson

Tel: +27 832670480

E-mail: jean@age.co.za

Co- Supervisor: Dr Lawrence Ngobeni

Tel: +27 662079230

Tel: +27 796804106

Email: masuluke27@gmail.com

Email: Lawrencengobeni96@gmail.com

Appendix B: Data Collection Instruments

Dear Participant

My name is Ernest Mahlaule, I am currently busy with my PhD at Da Vinci Institute. I would like to thank you for your agreement to participate in my research project. This recorded interview will take about 30–45 minutes and questions will focus on "Enhancing intra-Africa trade through regional integration" All the information collected will be kept confidential. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the information and only anonymized data will be included in the final report.

<u>**Semi Structured questions**</u>

Introduction Question:

1. Please state your name, designation and the number of years in business?
2. Please elaborate briefly on your present responsibilities

In order to enhance the sound quality, I would suggest that we continue with the rest of the interview with the video turned off.

Conceptual Frame	Research Questions
Understanding alignment	In your own words, how would you define intra-Africa trade? --- --- --- --- --- --- ---

	What are your views on the current status of intra-Africa trade in general, given the fact that it's currently estimated that it constitutes merely between 15 to 17% versus the European counter parts that is estimated to be at 67% of intra-trade? --- --- --- --- --- In your view is it possible to enhance intra-Africa trade given the complex historical context and the ongoing dynamics in the African continent- and why do you think so? --- --- --- --- --- --- --- --- ---
Social and Economic Impact	What are your views on the socio-economic impact of intra-Africa trade for the African economy? --- --- --- --- --- --- --- What do you think are the prevailing binding constraints for intra-Africa trade and what are the enablers? --- ---

	-- -- -- -- -- What has been the most difficult case concerning intra-trade in Africa that you have experienced or know of and what kinds of issues arose? -- -- -- -- -- -- -- What are the long-term effects of these constraints on the African society at large including the business sector? -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- What do you think are the respective but integrated roles for the key stakeholders such as Governments, Funding institutions, Private equity investors, Private sector companies, Academia, and Civil society?

	-- -- -- -- -- -- --
Governance/ regulatory concerns	What kinds of barriers have you experienced with policies and regulations in your own country? -- -- -- -- -- -- -- What are your views on challenges associated with current trade practices among African countries? -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- --

	--- --- ---
Unlocking potential	What role do you see the recently ratified African Continental Free Trade Area playing in the unlocking or otherwise of the Intra-Africa Trade potential? --- --- --- --- What continued role do you see the eight regional economic communities comprising, SADC, ECCAS, COMESA, EAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, AMU, CEN-SAD continuing to play in the unlocking or otherwise of the intra-Africa trade? --- --- --- --- How do you see the long existing eight regional economic communities working with the recently ratified African Continental Free Trade Agreement towards intra-Africa trade enhancement or otherwise, and what kinds of conflicts or tensions do you arising from these entities? --- --- --- --- What economic sectors pose the greater potential to unlock the full potential of the African economy going forward considering

	the new normal necessitated by the pandemic and Industrial revolutions?
	_____ -- -- -- -- -- -- -- What catalytic role do you see digitalisation play across different sectors as the economy traverse through unforeseen disruptions and pandemics such as the current 4th industrial revolution, Covid-19, and how can this potential be unlocked?-------------------- -- -- -- -- -- What is the International community's political and business communities views of the intra- Africa trade potential---------------------- -- -- -- -- -- --
Departing thoughts	Do you have any other thoughts about these issues? -- -- -- --

Appendix C: Sample interview protocol

Title:	This will be a short statement covering and indicating the research problem.
Researchers:	List of researchers, their titles and professional affiliations.
Background:	To explain why the study should be done, what is already known about the problem through other studies and the theoretical framework.
Research questions:	Specify each of the research questions.
Research objectives:	Will state the general objectives of the study
Study area:	Specify the geographical area for the study. What is known about the social, economic and epidemiological contexts?
Study design:	Unstructured in depth interviews
Study population:	Who constitutes the study population (ages, sex and other characteristics)?
Sampling design and procedures:	Sample size and the rationale for the sample size calculation, eligibility requirements for participants and how the respondents will be located, recruited and selected?
Study methods:	Detail description of methods to be used and any research instruments to be used.
Ethical consideration:	Ethical issues will specified and assessed by the researcher
Social Value	What the knowledge gained by the study will contribute to the field of study and the world at large
Fair selection of participants	Participants selected will be relevant to the research question and vulnerable groups will be excluded
Ongoing respect for participants	Reports on the study should take care to protect confidentiality and preserve anonymity of participants, appendices and footnotes included.
Informed consent	Consent from participants to be part of the research study
Data management and analysis plan:	Process to process data and analysis
Organization of fieldwork:	All the steps in the fieldwork will be described: What will be done, when, how and by whom?
Timetable:	Project plan with timelines for preparations, data collection, analysis, writing and reporting.
Budget:	Associated costs for conducting the research
Methodological challenges and study limitations	realistic view of the challenges presented to the aims and objectives of the study
Appendices:	The research instrument or CV of the researchers.
References	References (of literature cited in preceding sections)

Appendix D: Sample interview form

Sample Interview Protocol Form

Method: Face to Face / Video Conferencing/ Telephonic

Institution: _____

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interviewer: _____

Interview Background: _____

Institutional Perspective: _____

Country/Region: _____

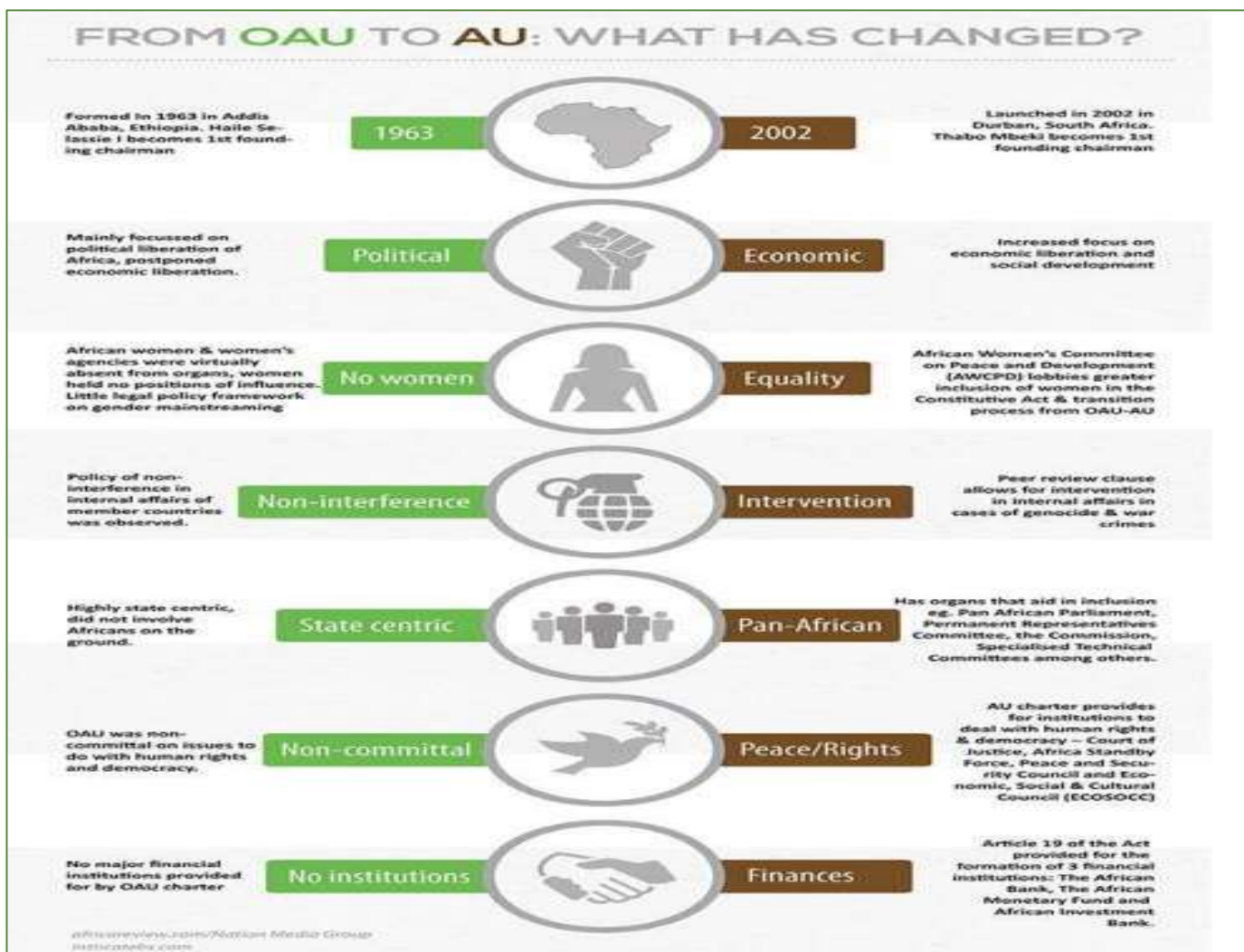Department and Discipline: _____

Educational background: _____

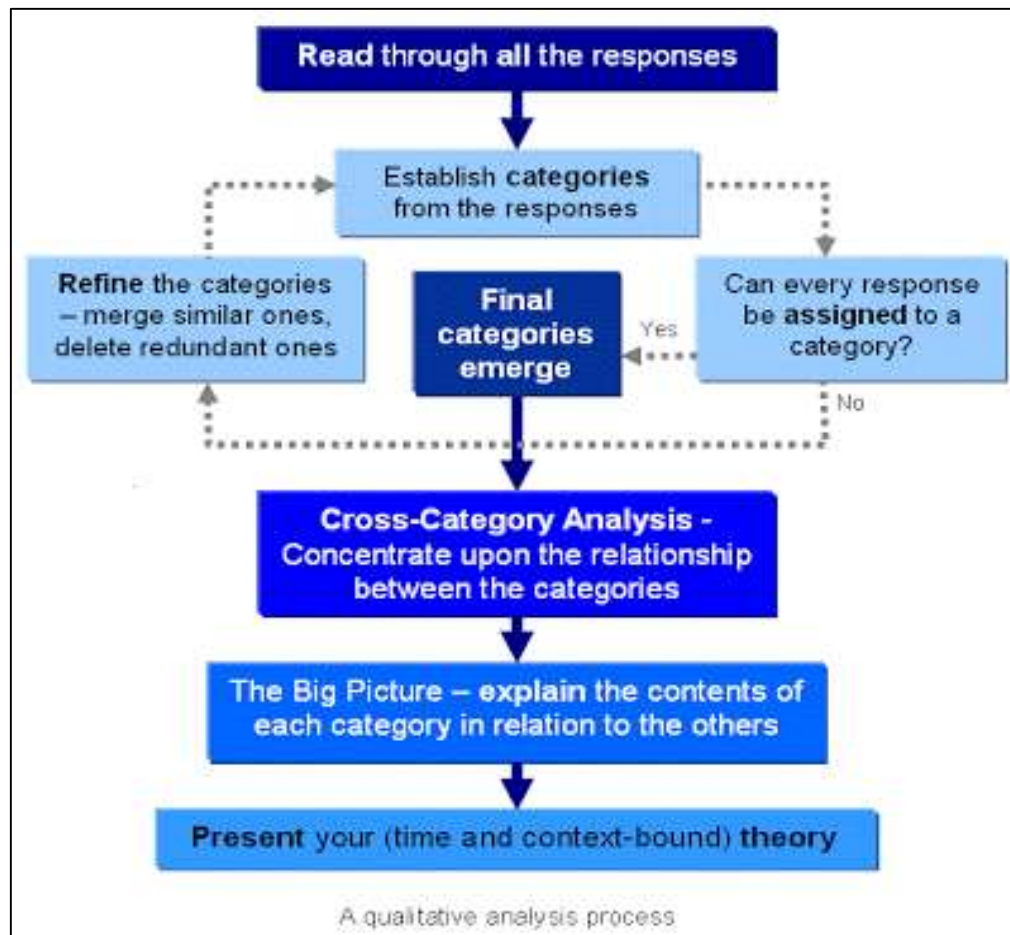Topics Discussed: _____

Comments: _____

Documents Obtained: _____

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

Appendix E: Changes in focal areas from OAU to AU


FROM OAU TO AU: WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Formed in 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Haile Selassie I becomes 1st founding chairman	**1963** — **2002** — Launched in 2002 in Durban, South Africa. Thabo Mbeki becomes 1st founding chairman
Mainly focussed on political liberation of Africa, postponed economic liberation.	**Political** — **Economic** — Increased focus on economic liberation and social development
African women & women's agencies were virtually absent from organs, women held no positions of influence. Little legal policy framework on gender mainstreaming	**No women** — **Equality** — African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD) lobbies greater inclusion of women in the Constitutive Act & transition process from OAU-AU
Policy of non-interference in internal affairs of member countries was observed.	**Non-interference** — **Intervention** — Peer review clause allows for intervention in internal affairs in cases of genocide & war crimes
Highly state centric, did not involve Africans on the ground.	**State centric** — **Pan-African** — Has organs that aid in inclusion eg. Pan African Parliament, Permanent Representatives Committee, the Commission, Specialised Technical Committees among others.
OAU was non-committal on issues to do with human rights and democracy.	**Non-committal** — **Peace/Rights** — AU charter provides for institutions to deal with human rights & democracy — Court of Justice, Africa Standby Force, Peace and Security Council and Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)
No major financial institutions provided for by OAU charter	**No institutions** — **Finances** — Article 19 of the Act provided for the formation of 3 financial institutions: The African Bank, The African Monetary Fund and African Investment Bank.

africareview.com/Nation Media Group
instiranels.com

Appendix F: Data analysis form

A qualitative analysis process

Appendix G: Research project consent form

My Submissions

Part 1

Title	Start Date	Due Date	Post Date	Marks Available
Thesis Submission Link - Part 1	23 Sep 2021 - 09:59	31 Jul 2022 - 23:59	30 Nov 2022 - 23:59	100

Refresh Submissions

	Submission Title	Turnitin Paper ID	Submitted	Similarity	Grade		
View Digital Receipt	ENHANCING INTRA-AFRICA TRADE THROUGH REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL INTEGRATION	1981057040	14/12/22, 14:42	6%	--/100		--

Appendix H: Overall Similarity Index (Turnitin Report)

Research Project Consent Form

Part A: Participant's Copy

Title of the Project:

{Copy any text typed here into the Researcher's copy below}

Details and Purpose of the Project:

{Copy any text typed here into the Researcher's copy below}

1. I've read and understood the details of this project.

2. I had the opportunity to ask any questions I had about the project to the researcher; and I understand my role in it.

3. My decision to consent is completely voluntary and I understand that at any time without giving any reason I am free to withdraw.

4. I understand that the data collected in this project may form the basis for a report or for any other publication or presentation form.

5. I understand that no report, publication or presentation will use my name and that every effort is being made to protect my confidentiality.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name (in CAPITALS): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Full Name and Contact Details:
{Copy any text typed here into the Researcher's copy below}

Appendix I: Ethical Declaration

Ethical Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the Doctoral Research of the student named below has received ethical clearance from The Da Vinci Institute Ethics Committee. The student and supervisor will be expected to continue to uphold the Da Vinci Institute's Research Ethics Policy as indicated during application.

Proposed Title: Enhancing Africa Intra-Trade through Continental and Regional Integration

Student Name: Rhulani Ernest Mahlaule

Student number: 10932

Supervisor: J Dickinson

Co-Supervisor: n/a

Period: Ethics approval is granted from 2019/08/23 to 2024/04/30

Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Krishna Govender
Dean: Research

Signature:

Date: 23 August 2019