



Chapter Ten

The African Continental Free Trade Area and Peacebuilding: A Turning Point for African Peace and Security?

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Abstract

This chapter examines the dynamics of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)'s developmental approach, which serves as a peacebuilding framework capable of advancing peace and security in Africa. The primary concern of this chapter relates to the contribution of the AfCFTA in conflict stabilisation, sustaining peace and catalysing security in Africa. This is against the background of the problems of peace, security and development being more prevalent in Africa than elsewhere. Nonetheless, debates on the prospects for harnessing the AfCFTA as an avenue for advancing African transformation have left gaps in exploring the importance of this epic development from a peace–security–development perspective. Nevertheless, the AfCFTA, as the African Union's (AU) flagship project, envisages an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa. Arguably, establishing a single market covering 1.3 billion Africans boosts intra–Africa trade and lays the foundation for peace, security and development. As underscored in Article 3(a) of the AfCFTA Agreement, the free trade area creates a single market to deepen the economic integration in Africa towards the pan–African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa enshrined in Agenda 2063. Hence, it can be argued that apart from economic implications, the AfCFTA's developmental approach



has significant peace, security and development connotations for Africa. This is because trade cannot be treated primarily as an economic growth and development issue but also as a conflict stabilisation and peacebuilding mechanism. Therefore, what warrants exploration pertains to the contribution of the AfCFTA in setting the stage for transformative integration towards accelerating peace and security on the continent. Hence, this chapter concludes that the trajectory of the AfCFTA provides a nascent framework for building peace and security in Africa. Data for this chapter were obtained from secondary sources, including books, journal articles, organisational reports and policy papers.

Introduction

This chapter examines how the AfCFTA's developmental regionalism approach potentially builds peace towards advancing economic development, peace and security in Africa. This is because it warrants interrogation of how the AfCFTA could neutralise the foundations of domestic privilege-protective barriers to free trade, a traditional setup that enhances internal powers of societal groups that likely support conflict, aggressive foreign policy and potentially generate political support for war. Already gaining traction with AfCFTA, development regionalism denotes cooperation on a broader scope beyond trade and trade facilitation dynamics. It is conceptualised as intensive cooperation on industrial development, upgrading regional value chains, cross-border infrastructure development, fair trade and strengthening good governance, peace and security (Ismail, 2020; UNECA, AU and AfDB, 2017; UNCTAD, 2013).

Against this backdrop, the chapter explores the extent to which the emerging trajectory of the AfCFTA trade integration accelerates peacebuilding towards reducing the ubiquitous military and non-military security threats on the continent. This is against the background that the contribution of trade integration under AfCFTA in preventing war and transforming conflicts towards a peaceful and prosperous Africa, as envisaged by Agenda 2063, is a critical issue that academics and policymakers are yet to explore. In other words, literature

is scarce on building and sustaining peace through the opportunities, interventions and policy options presented by the AfCFTA.

This is because existing scholarly interest or inquiry in the AfCFTA have concentrated on the continental free trade area's implications for economic development by transforming intra-African trade (Mude, 2021; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2018), boost Africa's manufacturing sector (Mambongo, 2019) and promote African youth entrepreneurship opportunities (Lungu, 2019). Furthermore, little has been said about the continental free trade area's contribution to peace and security because it is still nascent in its early implementation stages, and institutionalisation is not yet fully consolidated. Therefore, it is necessary to initiate scholarly conversations on the peacebuilding potentialities of the AfCFTA to provide context, insight, and foresight for further exploration of its effective implementation. By attempting to fill the AfCFTA literature gaps, this chapter constitutes an epistemic break by generating and expanding the urgently needed academic and policy-relevant knowledge of the dynamics of advancing peace and security through the AfCFTA.

Hence, this timely exploration of the AfCFTA peacebuilding prospects aims to generate debates to inform the academic and policy environment upon which the AfCFTA and associated peace-security-development dynamics are espoused and advanced. This is against the background of inherently deep intra-African divisions, instability and volatility attributed to conflicts which regional economic communities (RECs)¹ among other African trade blocs, have so far illuminated pitfalls in preventing, resolving, transforming and managing conflicts to build as well as sustain peace.

1 These RECs include the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community for West African Community (ECOWAS) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Since the proliferation on regional integration in Africa beginning in the 1960s, slow progress has been made in preventing conflicts, sustaining peace and advancing security.

In continuation of the above, it can be argued that inherent pitfalls in these RECs' conflict stabilisation and peacebuilding mechanisms emanate from disunity, individualistic foreign policies and limited incentives to collectively resolve common problems. With the AfCFTA setting the stage for transformative African integration (Mude, 2021), the question is how the continental free trade area presents opportunities for protecting trade gains under it through compelling African states to bridge these peacebuilding gaps. For instance, the ways through which the continental free trade area's developmental regionalism approach catalyses peace, security and development, warrant interrogation. To this end, this chapter demonstrates the dynamics that make the AfCFTA a potential and significant peacebuilding actor with a promising capacity to maintain peace and security on the continent.

With trade under the AfCFTA having commenced in January 2021, the concomitant role, significance and prospects for the contribution of this monumental development towards peace and security in Africa warrants urgent scholarly exploration. The aim is to expansively illuminate to academics, policymakers and relevant stakeholders the significance of exploiting trade integration for catalysing Africa's peace and security agenda. This chapter generates thought-provoking insights about the significance of capitalising on the AfCFTA's developmental regionalism approach towards attaining sustainable peace and security. The key objective is to examine the role of and extent to which the AfCFTA presents opportunities for accelerating peacebuilding towards harmony and security in Africa. The chapter, therefore, maintains that the AfCFTA is a promising peacebuilding initiative that, if effectively implemented, can be a powerful tool for promoting peace and security in Africa by addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting economic growth and development. This chapter is organised into six sections. The first section introduces the chapter, followed by a section exploring the debates on how trade promotes peace and security. Third is a section on the chapter's theoretical foundation, followed by a discussion of the methodological parameters employed in the chapter. The

fifth section discusses the chapter's findings, followed by the conclusion, which is the last section.

The next section historicises the dynamics of integration in Southern Africa and delves into the debate underpinnings of this chapter.

Does AfCFTA trade promote peace and security?

Answering whether the emerging trajectory of the AfCFTA has a peacebuilding capability warrants reflection on the nexus between trade and peace as well as the dynamics of the continental free trade area's developmental approach. The conventional belief embraced in this chapter maintains that free trade lays the foundation for peace (Krugman, 2022). One example cited regarding the nexus between trade and peace is how European integration's developmental regionalism approach locked traditional rivals France and Germany into economic, political security and development partnership, which minimised incentives for hostility (Francis, 2006). Even though the AfCFTA is not comparable to the European Union (EU) in terms of the levels of integration, the benefits of AfCFTA trade can also eliminate Rwanda-Uganda, Egypt-Ethiopia and Kenya-Tanzania rivalries, among others.

Arguably, cooperation on mutually beneficial trade, infrastructural development, development of value chains and governance under the auspices of the AfCFTA catalyses unity and minimises the incentives for conflicts. Therefore, African countries could capitalise on the integration opportunities presented by the AfCFTA to cooperate in addressing deep-rooted political, economic, and ideological problems that generate instability on the continent. According to Article 3(a) of the Agreement Establishing the AfCFTA (2018), the AfCFTA established a single market of goods and services towards deepening economic integration in Africa in accordance with the pan-African vision of "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" enshrined in Agenda 2063.

The broad scope of the AfCFTA, which transcends boosting intra-African trade to include cooperation on inclusive socio-

economic development, industrial development, structural transformation and food security outlined in Article 3 of the AfCFTA Agreement (2018), also illustrates the peacebuilding orientation of the continental free trade area. Therefore, it is beyond doubt that peace and security are on the agenda of the AfCFTA. More so, building on the governance, peace and security mechanisms of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), African countries can combine this with the integration framework and economic cooperation dynamics of the AfCFTA to pool their efforts as a region towards the pursuit of good governance, peace and security. Having said this, it is crystal clear that the AfCFTA constitutes a monumental framework for advancing African peace and security with comparable magnitude to which the Marshal Plan created stability in post-World War II European affairs. It suffices to mention that the peacebuilding potential of the continental free trade area depends largely on its effective implementation in addition to the commitment of African states to capitalise on the AfCFTA's free trade benefits.

Of particular interest is how the provisions of the AfCFTA Agreement and the benefits of the continental free trade area bridge conflict management gaps, improve cooperation, enhance conflict resolution, and reduce aggression in foreign policy towards building peace in Africa. This is against the background that Chapter 8 of the Charter of the United Nations (UN) recognises the role of regional institutions in advancing peace and security. More so, Article 3(a) of the AfCFTA Agreement (2019) sets the tone of the key mandate of the agreement, which is to deepen the economic integration of the African continent in accordance with the pan-Africanist vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

While theatres of conflicts in the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, Great Lakes Region and East Africa have exposed the weaknesses of integration, trade and collective security in peacebuilding processes, it is anticipated that the AfCFTA offers distinct structural and normative frameworks which are compatible with reducing the scourges of conflicts in Africa. For instance, Article 3(d) of the AfCFTA Agreement (2019)

envisioned the continental free trade area as the foundation of an African customs union, which is a step closer to reaching the EU's peacebuilding capabilities, which neutralised hostilities in Western Europe.

The above explains why the AfCFTA has become the world's largest free trade area since the formation of the World Trade Organisation in 1994 (Tralac, 2019). Moreover, Article 19 of the AfCFTA Agreement implores member states of other regional economic communities, regional trading agreements and customs unions to maintain higher levels of cooperation among themselves outside of the framework of the continental free trade area. Even though this is viewed as a limitation of the continental free trade area, an exploration of how and to what extent this poses an insurmountable challenge towards laying the path for sustainable peacebuilding in Africa constitutes the premise of this chapter.

According to the World Bank (2020), AfCFTA trade can lift approximately 30 million Africans out of extreme poverty. Studies have also shown that the AfCFTA establishes a single African market, which boosts intra-Africa trade by approximately 52.3 % and increases real income gains by 7%, approximately US\$450 billion (UNECA, 2021; World Bank, 2020). Moreover, it has also highlighted that the continental free trade area covers a market of 1.3 billion Africans with a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$2.5 trillion (World Bank, 2020). Suffice it to indicate that achieving these benefits is not automatic; it depends on implementing robust policy reforms and facilitation mechanisms. This is against the background of the AfCFTA Country Business Index (ACBI) findings.

The ACBI feedback, which has largely been neutral to negative and positive in some instances (UNECA, 2022), is key to strengthening AfCFTA trade policies and mechanisms. Since this chapter aims to examine the peacebuilding potential of the AfCFTA's transformation of African integration, it is significant for providing insights useful in formulating interventions for strengthening the continental free trade area's peacebuilding

capacity. The next section focuses on the theoretical foundations of this chapter.

Theorising the dynamics of AfCFTA and peacebuilding in Africa

Theoretically, this chapter employs the functionalist perspective of international relations, which explains how integration fosters the peaceful coexistence of states (Keohane & Nye, 1989). Arising from the experiences of the Second World War, the functionalist theory focuses on states' common interests in the integration process, illustrating how this minimises state individualism and international anarchy and subsequently fosters peace (Mitrany, 1943). The theory maintains that regional integration is an alliance that promotes interdependence and peaceful cooperation (Schimmelfenning, 2018). Hence, functionalism presents integration as the means to peace, security and development. In this chapter, the theory is used to examine the role and extent of the AfCFTA as a peacebuilding actor.

Since the main objective of the AfCFTA is to consolidate African integration by reducing embargoes, import taxes, subsidies, competition, human and capital flow restrictions and other tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade between African states, functionalism is appropriate for examining how and to what extent, from a peacebuilding perspective, this objective is achieved. This is against the background of functionalism, which is said to be exclusively applicable in the European setting, making it incompatible with comprehending African integration dynamics (Aworaro, 2015). Justification for applying this theory in the African context is premised on the fact that the globalisation of political ideas, economic systems and societal ideologies has culminated in the extinction of the two cultures problem that dichotomises North (Euro-North American systems) and South (Africa, South America and Asia) issues. Therefore, it can be argued that the proliferation of concepts and theories previously applied in a compartmentalised and discriminatory manner became obsolete in the 19th century.

Methodological parameters and procedures

The ontological and epistemological underpinning of the research for this chapter was compatible with a qualitative research methodology which relied on secondary data. To this end, the research was organised into two methodological phases. In the first phase, secondary research was conducted by critically analysing key literature representative of the AfCFTA and peacebuilding discourses. These include the AfCFTA Agreement, books, journal articles, policy documents and newspaper articles. Because of the dearth of literature on the continental free trade area, this phase constituted a systematic analysis of representative literature and theoretical paradigms that closely interact with the AfCFTA on the one hand and peacebuilding on the other hand. In the second methodological phase, data from the initial methodological exercise were organised, synthesised and interpreted through thematic analysis. Hence, data were critically analysed in search of common patterns, trends, themes, and inferences that are crucial in providing insights into the continental free trade area's peacebuilding role.

The AfCFTA, African integration and peacebuilding

The main thesis of the chapter is that while the AfCFTA presents opportunities for accelerating peace and security through trade, the pitfalls of African integration, whose dynamics also spill into the AfCFTA institutional mechanisms, limit its peacebuilding capacity. That the AfCFTA signals a new era of transformative African integration through which the continent speaks with one voice, boosts intra-African trade and lays a solid foundation for economic growth and development has been illustrated (UNECA, 2021; World Bank, 2020; Mude, 2021). What these outcomes entail for African peace and security has eclipsed scholarly attention. Yet, trade cannot be treated solely as an economic growth and development issue but as a conflict stabilisation and peacebuilding issue. Scholarly debates outside the African contexts have illuminated the centrality of trade in advancing the peace agenda in the post-World War II epoch and the post-Cold War political and economic developments. The arguments

maintain that the proliferation of free trade arrangements has led to peace through trade in non-African contexts (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2005; McDonald, 2004).

In advancing the above assertion, the European Union (EU) and North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) have been cited as case studies of integration arrangements through which regional peace, security and order have been maintained in the post-war era. Proponents of the trade-peace nexus have long maintained that providing common needs through functional strategies across national borders culminates in unity among people, and the subsequent mutual interactions and interconnectedness create a conducive environment for order, peace and security (Mitrany, 1966). During the early years of the proliferation of regional integration, Deutsch (1957) defined a framework for establishing a security community that prefers peace to using force in inter-state relations and pacific resolution of conflicts. As anticipated, trade integration fostered security communities, resulting in desirable peace and security levels in Western Europe and North America. Drawing from these successes to replicate their trajectories, questions should be posed about whether AfCFTA trade can build peace and advance security in Africa. Can trade under the AfCFTA culminate in the desirable African peace and security levels?

For some time now, the role of African integration and free trade in building peace has been discounted and attracted criticism and doubts. Shortcomings inherent in African RECs are cited as barriers (Nwangwu *et al.*, 2019; Mude, 2018; Adetula, Bereketeab & Jaiyebo, 2016) to the extent that conversations on trade and peacebuilding in the African context are branded as inapt and archaic. This leads to another question: Does the AfCFTA set the stage for defying these pessimistic views regarding trade and peace linkages in the African context? Since AfCFTA has a wide integrative and cooperative scope spanning Africa, there are strong chances that the AfCFTA can defy the odds by contributing to peacebuilding dynamics on the continent.

Free trade under the AfCFTA can be maximised to 'silence guns' in Africa by promoting economic growth and development, creating jobs, reducing poverty and increasing regional integration and cooperation. According to Collier (2000), unemployment generates grievance and greed as motives for joining a conflict because unemployment constitutes a grievance that leads to unrest and instability, which may escalate to conflict. Like unemployment, poverty is widely viewed as one of the underlying causes of conflict (Braithwaite, Dasandi & Hudson, 2016). By enhancing trade and investment among African countries, the AfCFTA can help address the underlying causes of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and economic marginalisation, and promote stability and peace. More so, the AfCFTA aims to include the formerly marginalised in the corridors of power, youth, and women. Therefore, the Protocol on Women and Youth will ensure the inclusion and beneficiation of women and youth through the AfCFTA trade. Given all these potentialities, the question is whether it will work.

It can be argued that it will work, albeit if political will is maximised on the continent, through developmental regionalism, fostering inclusive industrial growth and economic development, infrastructural development, cross-border investment and democratic governance (Ismail, 2020). In addition, the AfCFTA can also help to reduce the demand for illicit trade in arms by creating legal and legitimate channels for trade and investment. By reducing the incentives for arms trafficking and other illegal activities, the AfCFTA can help to enhance security and reduce the risk of conflict and violence. In an interview, Ambassador Martin Kimani, the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the UN and Chair of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States (2021), in Kuwonu (2021), stated that "The AK-47 rifle has probably claimed more African lives than many diseases". The continental free trade area's capacity to transform and deepen African integration, compounded by cross-border investment to plug illicit trade in arms, would go a long way in building peace on the continent. Above all, this requires African states' collective will and commitment to

change and transform procedures, mechanisms, and processes to unplug the aforementioned challenges.

Furthermore, the AfCFTA can facilitate the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and best practices among African countries, which can help promote peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. This can be achieved through the establishment of regional mechanisms for cooperation and collaboration, such as joint economic and development projects, capacity-building programs and research analysis. Research and development are crucial in Africa for enhancing cooperation on early warning systems, conflict management and resolution. The lack of seriousness in this area in Africa will likely render the AfCFTA's peacebuilding potential a pipedream.

The AfCFTA can also promote equality and fairness in the inter-African terms of trade. In their theory of complex interdependence, Keohane and Nye (1977) emphasise that interdependence in world politics refers to situations characterised by reciprocal effects among countries or non-state actors in different countries. Sensitivity examines how fast changes in one state influence another and how fast this could be reversed with policy changes. Sensitivity is a temporary problem as it can be fixed; vulnerability is permanent. It occurs when one does not have options due to policy changes except compliance. Additionally, Keohane and Nye (1977) note that cooperation and competition characterise the relationship between actors under mutual dependence. The theory suggests that even though states are mutually dependent, they are not equally dependent. One state is usually more dependent on another. This could be used as bargaining power by the independent actor. Therefore, through the protocol on Trade in services, the AfCFTA will ensure openness and transparency among traders by clearly defining the market access and national treatment, which will make the expectations from all actors very clear. Also, if the competition policy is adopted, it will promote healthy and equal competition as rules will apply to all members.

Furthermore, if realised, the perceived economic gains of the AfCFTA to the member states will strengthen their power to defend their territorial integrity and sovereignty, thereby minimising interference from powerful nations such as the United States, China and Russia. If the Agenda 2063 is to be achieved, it is high time that Africa looks within for self-sustained economic growth and development. Whilst trading with the powerful nations is unavoidable and brings its benefits, African leaders have for a long time now complained of the unfair terms of trade that come with inter-continental trade that the World Trade Organization regulates. The AfCFTA is a chance for Africa to rethink African Governance based on the traditional ethos of 'Ubuntu,' which can foster unity among Africans. Pan-Africanism, the ideology behind the formation of the African Union, which was founded as the Organization of African Unity in 1963, was based on 'Ubuntu', an adjective for 'Being Human', which promotes a spirit of unity and brotherhood. African governance was built around the values, traditions and norms of Africans. These forms of governance did not conform to the Western notions of constitutionalism, which entailed a unilateral form of governance where the need for a controlled, formal governmental authority is expressed in Western societies.

Having said all the above, the argument advanced in this chapter is that strengthening the linkages between peace, security and development in African integration is one of the crucial steps towards accelerating African peace and security through AfCFTA trade. While African integration under the auspices of the AfCFTA is yet to reach the normative level of political cooperation anchored on common foreign and security policy premised on trade integration, it can be argued that the AfCFTA lays the much-needed foundation for a peace-security-development model. The foundations of economic convergence laid by the continental free trade area would culminate in solidarity among African people whose mutual interactions and interconnectedness set the stage for political and security convergence. Political and security convergence are the two missing links in African integration, including in the AfCFTA

architecture. Therefore, it can be argued that political and security convergence can only ameliorate the amity-enmity divide that has plagued Africa since the 1884 Berlin Conference that drew colonial and ideological boundaries, haunting contemporary Africa, can only be ameliorated by political and security convergence. The subsequent diverse political divisions reflected in the Lusophone, Francophone, Germanosphere and Anglophone countries, which usually play out in the spectre of regional and sub-regional political economy dynamics, should be addressed to strengthen the AfCFTA's peacebuilding capacity.

Moreover, Article 19(2) of the AfCFTA Agreement implores member states of other regional economic communities, regional trading agreements and customs unions to maintain higher levels of cooperation outside of the framework of the continental free trade area (Agreement Establishing the AfCFTA, 2018). Even though this appears to be a limitation of the continental free trade area, how and to what extent this counters the insurmountable challenges of instability by laying the path for sustainable peacebuilding in Africa warrants exploration. First, even though it is not explicitly mentioned but directly implied, the continental free trade area recognises the significance of existing integration arrangements in driving economic convergence. One of the implications of this acquis preservation in Article 19(2) pertains to its flexibility to strengthen economic convergence through deepening economic integration in existing RECs, which are considered the building blocks of the African Economic Community. While it is desirable to persistently deepen economic integration, moving towards political and security convergence is overdue in Africa.

With that said, the peacebuilding role of the AfCFTA is limited in the absence of political and security convergence. Even though the African Union's key aims include intensifying African integration and safeguarding African states' sovereignty and territorial integrity, the organisation has exhibited weaknesses in creating a robust political community of African states and securitising development. Since succeeding the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 2002, the African Union (AU), to which the AfCFTA is a flagship programme,

has preoccupied itself more with pan-African rhetoric. In a continent plagued with instability more than any other, the AU should detach from the obsession with an anti-colonial agenda and embrace transformative policies and programmes on convergence towards accelerating political stability and democratic practices. Short of that, the AfCFTA's peacebuilding potential would remain a phantom on the horizon.

Since the continental free trade area's peacebuilding aptitude is premised on its capacity to strengthen integration and intra-African trade, the objectives of the AfCFTA will be difficult to achieve in an environment of wars, insecurity and instability. Recent intra-state conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, as well as Rwanda-DRC, Uganda-Rwanda, Egypt-Ethiopia and Tanzania-Kenya inter-state tensions, pose the threat of undermining and limiting trade under the continental free trade area. According to Francis (2006), the cumulative implications of instability and conflicts include deterring the attainment of desirable levels of integration and development objectives. As illustrated in Table 10.1, political instability has always been rife in Africa. For a continent rising and poised to harness trade, integration and development opportunities offered by the AfCFTA, a lot needs to be done to create a secure environment that accelerates peace, security and development.

The African political, economic and security environment is fragile yet promising with the emergence of the AfCFTA. Not all growth is seduced by trade integration unless the operating environment fundamentals are conducive and intact. Trade integration generates growth and development only if and when all the political, economic, social, security and ideological fundamentals are strategically wired to solve past and contemporary challenges rather than randomly adopted because they worked elsewhere. Unless and until Africa's political and security atmosphere is reconfigured along the lines of addressing the deep-rooted historical disadvantages, including the legacy of colonial divisions, insecurity, democratic deficit and contemporary problems such as instability and poor

Table 10.1: Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism Ranking in 2022

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Zimbabwe	22	24	22	24	25	21	20	15	13	14	13
Mozambique	59	38	32	28	13	15	18	20	11	12	12
Cameroon	27	27	12	15	13	12	8	8	10	10	10
DRC	3	3	5	5	4	3	4	8	6	8	14
Nigeria	3	4	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	6
Sudan	2	2	4	4	3	6	6	6	7	5	8
Ethiopia	7	8	9	8	8	8	11	11	6	4	20
C.A.R	5	3	0	7	7	5	4	4	3	4	6
Mali	3	6	7	8	9	6	5	3	4	3	5
Somalia	0	0	2	2	2	4	3	3	1	0	1

(*Percentile rank ranges from 0=lowest to 100=highest).

Source: Author, Compiled from World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (2022).

economic governance, leveraging on the peacebuilding capacity of the AfCFTA could be equivalent to chasing a mirage.

More so, the fact that some African states are still dragging their feet, including Eritrea, concerning participating in AfCFTA trade is the tip of the iceberg pertaining to the trade and peacebuilding future of the continental free trade area. Even though participating in integration arrangements is voluntary and non-membership has no sanctions, the lack of interest in cooperating and integrating with others mirrors disunity. Therefore, the African integration question that can be posed is how does the AfCFTA reshape the African market, boost trade and connect 1.3 billion people towards creating a political and security convergence in an economic environment marred by disunity?

The AfCFTA's objectives to accelerate economic integration and development goals are clearly outlined in the agreement establishing the AfCFTA. However, the agreement is not clear on how the continental free trade area architecture is geared towards embracing the peace, security and development mechanism as a sustainable strategy to foster African peace and security. Francis (2006) contends that this is the prerequisite for regional economic growth and development. Despite being a relatively old model tried and tested in Western Europe in the context of the European Union, the idea of securitising development to build what Francis (2006) calls diverse and interdependent states and people sharing a common identity is yet to be embraced in African integration.

This does not imply that the EU model of economic integration and securitising development is the best model Africa should adopt through the AfCFTA. But what if an Africanised hybrid model of it is the missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle required to deal with Africa's perpetual peace, security and development problems? In an increasingly globalised world in this 21st century, economic ideas, political systems, security orientations and integration models have permeated continents, ideologies and diverse peoples. Undoubtedly, the extent of this interdependence underscores the necessity of peace, security

and development as it was used elsewhere or in its hybrid Africanised form. Africa's integration model towards the peace, security and development model is not hard to come by if African states commit to formulating and implementing such a model.

Perhaps, it must come to waiting for the attainment of a political community after establishing an African economic community at a later stage as envisaged by the AfCFTA Agreement. Does this mean that the AfCFTA, as a free trade area, is not fit for Africa's peacebuilding aspirations? The answer is no. Through developmental regionalism, the AfCFTA has the potential to advance inclusive growth and economic development, enhance trade by stimulating robust and equitable economic growth, reduce conflict and enhance trade liberalisation (Faizel, 2020; Africa Development Bank, 2018). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2013) conceptualises developmental regionalism as "cooperation among countries in a broader range of areas than just trade and trade facilitation, to include—for example—investment, research and development, as well as policies aimed at accelerating regional industrial development and regional infrastructure provision, such as the building of better networks of roads and railway".

Hence, if the AfCFTA embraces a developmental regional approach, trade under Africa will be integrated into the global trade environment as a unified continent. At the heart of the AfCFTA is "a developmental approach that recognises the need for trade liberalisation to proceed, and at the same time, address supply capacities and promote structural transformation" (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Union and Africa Development Bank, 2017). While a developmental approach is embraced in the AfCFTA, a developmental regionalism approach to trade integration under the AfCFTA ought to be adopted to catalyse the process of transformative industrialisation, mutually beneficial trade, cross-border investment, strengthen democratic governance and enhance African peace and security.

Therefore, it can be argued that economic regionalism, which is essentially reducible to a notion of rational self-interest, will make states involved in economic regionalism unwilling to put the economic benefits or even simply the anticipated future benefits in jeopardy by engaging in aggression. With economic regionalism adopted within the AfCFTA context, the missing political and security aspects of convergence crucial for the AfCFTA-peacebuilding linkages will go a long way in strengthening mechanisms for African peace and security. With the AfCFTA emphasis on the developmental approach as a path to poverty reduction, non-economic benefits such as securitisation, the creation of collective identities, and the emergence of some collective bargaining capacity have been largely ignored. Nevertheless, there is ample time to make things right through securitising African trade and development towards building peace through free trade.

Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from this chapter is that the trajectory of the AfCFTA provides a nascent framework for building peace in Africa due to inherent pitfalls in African integration. Because the continental free trade area is the flagship programme of the AU, the challenges of the successful establishment of a political and security community since the 1960s are still prevalent to this day. The same pitfalls that have militated against the securitisation of development through strengthening peace, security and development linkages in African integration programmes and policies are yet to be addressed. With the continental free trade area operating in the same environment of instability and insecurity, it would be a mammoth task for the AfCFTA to foster unity among African people from across borders towards subsequent mutual interactions and interconnectedness to establish a conducive environment for order, peace and security. If these pitfalls are addressed in the continental free trade area's phased implementation, the AfCFTA will unlock remarkable peacebuilding opportunities in Africa.

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