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An Analytical Study of Algerian Intra-African Trade underthe African Continental Free Trade Area

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Abstract:

This study attempts to analyze trade data between Algeria and the African States as part of Algeria's accession to African regional integration and ratify the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement.The study found that Algerian trade among African countries was low compared to other regions,In addition, the African Continental Free Trade Area will provide opportunities for members, with intra-African trade expected to increase by 52% while establishing an integrated market for African products and services.The elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers under the Free Trade Agreement will provide the African continent with significant opportunities to improve industrial capacities and establish sufficient production institutions to support industrial expansion.

Keywords: Regional integration;Algerian Intra-African Trade; African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement; intra-African trade.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recent years have been marked by the escalation of free trade zone agreements,most developing and developed countries are members of these regionalagreements. According to the World Trade Organization, approximately 480 free trade zones were in force from 1948 to 2022 (*WTO | Regional Trade Agreements*, 2022).

Regional integration among States has contributed mainly to the integrated economic development of States, export diversification, and the strengthening of buy chains. Specifically, supporting investment growth at the regional level has played a vital role in the pivotal change of the European and Asian economies (Fofack et al., 2021).

The African continent faces complex crises. Despite rapid growth in their cities and populations, they are characterized by high poverty rates of 41 percent globally(Pasara & Diko, 2020). In addition, approximately 33% of Africans live below the poverty line (*Foresight Africa*, 2019). 27 African countries are also at the top of the list of the poorest countries in the world. Poverty rates are expected to rise to 87% by 2030.

The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area had preceded several efforts to unite African countries politically and economically since the 1960s when many African countries gained political independence from the colonizer. (Leshoele, 2020).

Algeria is one of the African countries characterized by the non-diversification of its economy and its dependence on petroleum incomes, and its intra-African trade is low.Their inclusion in the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement provides many economic and trade opportunities. In addition, it will enhance Afro-Algerian cooperation, strengthen regional relations and boost consolidated efforts toward establishing comprehensive and sustainable development bases in Algeria and all African countries.

This study focuses on the analysis of Afro-Algerian trade relations and the identification of the volume of export and import exchanges and their structure of goods and services, in addition to identifying the opportunities and benefits to be derived from the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement for the African States and Algeria in particular.

The question of the study is:

How would the African Continental Free Trade Area contribute to advancing intra-Algerian trade relations with the other African States?

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- Investigate the proportions and structure of the Algerian-African trade.
- To present the historical evolution of attempts at regional economic integration among the States of the African continent.
- To clarify the progress made by African regional economic groupings recognized by the African Union in intra-trade.
- Demonstration of the objectives, principles, and protocols of the African Continental Free Trade Area.
- Identification of benefits for the African States through the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement.

The current study's contribution highlights the African Continental Free Trade Area, which represents an excellent opportunity for all African States to activate cooperation among themselves to solve the problems that characterize their economies, particularly their weak industrial base and lack of diversification.

Thus, the study adds new scientific value because there are few studies on intra-Algerian-African trade.

- Previous studies

The African Continental Free Trade Area has received considerable attention from academics, experts, and specialists in African trade and international bodies. This study was based on several reports and research from the African Union (AU), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the South African Trade Law Centre (Tralac), as follows:

- Saygili, M., & Peters, R. (2018). *African Continental Free Trade Area: Challenges and opportunities of tariff reductions* -Tralac trade law centre

It addressed the long-term and short-term benefits of African integration, the effects of tariff elimination, and the economic welfare gains of African States. In addition, of presents the distribution costs issue, benefits, and the problem of the diversity of products suffered by all African States.

The study's main conclusion was that the total elimination of tariffs on all products in some African markets might stifle growth opportunities in others.

Therefore, African States should carefully review product exemptions to enable all members to benefit somewhat from the Convention.

- Leshoele, M. (2020). AfCFTA and Regional Integration in Africa: Is African Union Government a Dream Deferred or Denied.

This paper considers the basic features, expected benefits, and protocols of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and its compatibility with World Trade Organization policies. Further, one of the critical issues that the African integration agreements seek to establish is the ability of persons to move freely within the African continent, which gives a solid boost to economic growth and trade facilitation.

What distinguishes this research paper from the studies described above is an analysis of the reality of trade between Algeria and African countries. Their presentation of the status of regional economic groupings before and after the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, analysis and interpretation of data on intra-regional trade, and their progress in reflecting their integration project. It also analyses the opportunities and benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The structure of the present study consists of four sections. The first Section focuseson the brief on Intra-African-Algerian trade. The second Section presents the establishment of the AFCFTA. The third section includesthe main features of AFCFTA. The fourth section addressesthe Opportunities of AFCFTA.

1. A brief on Intra-African-Algerian trade

Algeria is a member of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area(GAFTA), which brings together several Arab countries on the continent of Africa, and other Arab countries on the continent of Asia and the Middle East. This free trade zone came into force in 2005, Also known as pan-Arab free trade area (PAFTA).It provides duty-free advantages for the movement of goods and services between the Member States, Applying a 40% rate to the principle of rules of origin (Péridy & Abedini, 2008).

1.1 Trade in goods and services

Algeria's trade with African countries accounts for a small proportion of total trade transactions, estimated at 5% for exports and 3% percent for imports in 2020

In terms of exports to African countries, Tunisia leads the list of Algeria’s goods trading partners with 41%, followed by Egypt with 25% (Bank, 2020) and this can be further illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Algeria's African trading partners (2018)

Export		Import	
Tunisia	41 %	Egypt	35 %
Egypt	25 %	Tunisia	28 %
Morocco	25 %	Morocco	22 %
Mauritania	3 %	Cote d'Ivoire	7 %
Senegal	1 %	South Africa	3 %
Togo	1 %	Cameroon	2 %
Libya	1 %	Togo	1 %

Source: Tralac Trade Law Centre, Algeria: Intra-Africa trade and tariff profile, 2018, at: https://www.tralac.org/resources/our-resources/13143-algeria-intra-africa-trade-and-tariff-profile.html

On the import side, Egypt leads the list of suppliers to Algeria with 35%, followed by Tunisia with 28% and Morocco with 22%.

Table 2. The structure of Algerian-African trade

exports		imports	
product	Ratio (%)	Product	Ratio (%)
Petroleum Gaz	87	Coffe	9
Cane or beet Sugar	5	Food preparations	6
Petroleum oils	2	Copper wire	5
Electric energy	1	tobacco	5

Source: by researchers based on: Tralac Trade Law Centre, Algeria: Intra-Africa trade and tariff profile, 2018, at: https://www.tralac.org/resources/our-resources/13143-algeria-intra-africa-trade-and-tariff-profile.html

Regarding the structure of Algerian-African trade, the export side consists of petroleum gas with 87 %, sugar with 5 %, petroleum oils with 2 %, electric energy with 1 %.

Furthermore, in the import side, coffee ranks first at 9%, followed by food preparation at 6%, copper wire at 5 %, and tobacco at 5 % (tralac trade law centre, 2018).

Algeria does not focus on exporting agricultural products because of its dependence on oil exports and the non-diversification of its economic structure. It is also mainly due to the non-tariff measures taken by NTMS in African countries, where 83.2 percent of Algeria's trade is affected by non-tariff barriers (Bouët et al., 2020). In this context, South Africa ranks first in the export of agricultural products to Africa at 32.2%, followed by Egypt at 8.7% and Uganda at 6.4%;

The intra-African services trade has a low ratio, estimated at 1% in 2017. Egypt, Morocco, and South Africa are the first to export services within Africa, while Algeria is in the final ranks.

In imports of services between African States, Nigeria, Egypt, and South Africa are in the top three, and Algeria ranks last.

1.2 Inter-Algerian-African tariffs

Goods transaction between Algeria and African countries are subject to high tariffs, up to 30%; this is a major obstacle to the development and rise of Algeria's intra-African trade (tralac trade law centre, 2018).

The exchange of goods between Algeria and some African PAFTA member States, such as Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia, is free of duties. In contrast, the rest of the African countries outside PAFTA are subject to high export and import duties.

Table 3. Inter-Algerian-African tariff Patterns

Tariff at 30 %	Tariff at 15 %
Cofee, tea, spices	Plastic products
beverage and vinegar	Tobacco products
Fruit and nuts	Frozen tuna
Dried grapes	Cocoa paste
Meat products	Organic chemicals
Clothing and textiles	Other base metals
Toys and games	Photographic or cinematic equipment

Source: by researchers based on: Tralac Trade Law Centre, Algeria: Intra-Africa trade and tariff profile, 2018.

Coffee is top of the list of products that Algeria imports from Africa, specifically Côte d'Ivoire, and the tariff is at 30%; Also,fruit, nuts, meat, and meat products.

It should be mentioned that some of the items imported are duty-free, such as works of art, antiques, wheat and sowing seeds.

In order to ease restrictions on trade in goods and services within the African States and towards the elimination of all duties and tariff, Algeria was invited to join the world's largest regional grouping, the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Algeria joined the African Continental Trade Area in 2019, and there are many opportunities for African States and Algeria in particular to benefit from the great potential and diversity of the African continent within the framework of this major regional treaty.

2. Establishment of the AFCFTA

Immediately after independence, African States began to develop plans to conserve and mobilize their natural wealth and diverse resources to promote the economic and social development of the African States, most of which mourn from underdevelopment in all areas.

The African nations have recognized that regional integration, consolidation of efforts, concerted forces, and policy coordination among African peoples and States will be a good option for the optimal exploitation of their resources and the elimination of the overall dependence on the colonizers.

In 1963, the Organization of African Unity OAU was established as an organizational framework to reflect the integration project.

OAU aimed to strengthen coherence among African countries within the international political and trading system. Accordingly, in 1980, it embraced the Lagos Action Plan to consolidate continental integration based on industry and local development.

After in 1991, OAU ratified the Abuja Treaty. It was agreed that Africa's integration would be achieved gradually, respectively, from establishing FTA rules to the second stage, the customs union, and then the transition to the common market phase, to the final stage, the monetary union (Théophile, 2019).

There has been a relative success in eliminating tariffs after the Abuja Treaty, but the African market remains thoroughly divided. So it was owing to non-tariff and regulatory barriers that raise exchange expenditures and hinder cross-border movements of goods, services, persons, and capital across Africa.

On the other hand, the Abuja Treaty discussed the status of the Regional Economic Communities RECs agreed upon in the 1980s, which had not made significant progress and had not been activated by its members.After replacing OAU in 2000, the African Union (AU) recognized eight regional Communities:

-Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), launched in 1975.
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) launched in 1983.
- Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) launched in 1989.
- Southern African Development Community (SADC) launched in 1992.
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) launched in 1993.
- Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) launched in 1996.
- Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) launched in 1998.
- East African Community (EAC) launched in 1990.

2.1 Status of African regional Communities

Of the eight regional economic Communities, only three have experienced significant progress in terms of integration. ESC successfully implemented the Free Trade Area and Customs Union and launched its common market in 2010. ECCAS also successfully implemented the Free Trade Area it launched in 2004 and then moved to the Customs Union phase. ECOWAS successfully implemented the FTA and moved to the customs union phase in 2015.COMESA and SADC have also succeeded in implementing the Free Trade Area, but both face difficulties moving to the second phase of economic integration.The Arab Maghreb UnionAMU, IGAD, and CEN-SAD notes that the economic integration project among their members has remained suspended and has not been implemented at any stage (Eca et al., 2012).

The African States constitute an essential part of the share of international trade, contributing $ 463,760 million to total trade in the 2015-2017 period, compared with $ 081,481 million from Oceania and $ 131, 109, 4 million from Europe, $5,139,649 million from America and $6,801,474 million from Asia (*Economic Development in Africa Report 2019*, 2019). However, intraregional trade within African regional Communities is weak compared to trade with the rest of the world, and this can be illustrated in table 4; 5.

Table 4. Export trade for African regional economic Communities (2010-2018)

REC	Intra-Import	China	USA	EU	Africa	Rest of the world
ECCAS	2	34	15	20	4	25
SADC	19	20	8	20	3	30
AMU	3	5	8	63	2	19
ECOWAS	9	3	12	29	7	40
COMESA	9	12	4	37	8	30
IGAD	14	21	3	16	12	34
CEN-SAD	7	5	9	40	5	34
EAC	20	5	4	19	18	34
Average African trade	10	13	8	31	7	30

Source: Economic Commission for Africa, Assessing Regional Integration In Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019, p:5**.**

The average intra-regional exports within regional economic communities are weak, with only 10% of total exports in Africa. EAC has ranked first in the proportion of intercontinental exports of 20% of their total exports. SADC came in at 19%. IGAD at 14%, AMU and ECCAS have come in the last ranks with 3% and 2%.

Table 5. Import trade for African regional economic Communities (2010-2018)

REC	Intra-Import	China	USA	EU	Africa	Rest of the world
ECCAS	3	34	13	19	5	26
SADC	16	27	8	21	3	25
AMU	3	5	8	64	2	18
ECOWAS	8	4	13	31	6	38
COMESA	9	13	5	38	5	29
IGAD	14	21	3	16	12	34
CEN-SAD	6	5	11	41	4	33
EAC	17	14	5	19	14	31
Average African trade	9	17	8	31	6	28

Source: Economic Commission for Africa, Assessing Regional Integration In Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 2019, p:5**.**

The same analysis of African regional economic communities' exports applies to their imports, with only 9% among African countries. The EU remains the first destination for imports of these communities at 31%, followed by other countries at 28% and China at 17%. Imports of economic groupings from African countries remain below the required level, with an estimated 6% of total imports. Analysis of exports and imports of African regional economic groupings indicates that the Community of Central Asian States is the most advanced in terms of the proportion of its members' intraregional trade.

2.2 Ratification of the AFCFTA

Owing to the weakness of intra-African trade, the African Union decided to promote the process of continental integration through trade. Accordingly, in December 2012, African Heads of State and Government approved Resolution 394 of the General Assembly of the Union, which provides for the formation of the African Continental Free Trade Area by 2017, as well as the adoption of the Plan of Action for the Promotion of Intra-African-African Trade (Union African, 2012). It resulted in the Fifteenth Summit of the African Union in 2015; Establishment of the CFTA Continental Free Trade Area in 2017. Its founding was signed and ratified on 21 March 2018 in Rwanda by 55 African countries, the most significant trade agreement in the world after the World Trade Organization (WTO) in terms of accession. The Convention entered into force on 30 May 2019 with the initial participation of 24 African States.

In 2019, at an exceptional summit of the African Union, the operational phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area was officially launched. An action plan has been identified to bring the region into force, starting with integrating all regional economic groupings into the African Continental Free Trade Area in 2015 and 2016, where COMESA-EAC-SADC will be consolidated into a tripartite free trade zone in 2014. Other regional groupings have the choice of being united under one commercial area. The remaining African Union member States not affiliated with the eight groupings should join AFCFTA Starting from 2017.

3. The main features of AFCFTA

Agreement establishing of the African Continental Free Trade Area (African Union, 2018) set out the following objectives and protocols:

3.1The objectives

Article three of the Agreement establishing sets out the overall objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area as follows: (African Union, 2018)

- Establishing a common market for goods and services accessible to the population deepened the African continent's economic integration.

- Promote and achieve sustainable and inclusive economic and social development, gender equality, and structural transformation of States parties, face the challenges of plurality and overlapping membership within the regional economic communities and accelerate regional and continental integration processes.

- Improving the competitiveness of States parties' economies within the African continent and in the global market and promoting industrial development through diversification, regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security.

The specific objectives for the implementation and achievement of the general objectives are set out in article four, namely, the phasing out of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods, as well as the progressive liberalization of trade in services, cooperation on investment, intellectual property rights and competition policy, cooperation in all trade-related areas, cooperation in customs matters and the implementation of trade facilitation measures, the establishment of a dispute settlement mechanism for rights and duties, the establishment of an institutional framework for the implementation and management of the African Continental Free Trade area (African Union, 2018).

3.2 Protocols

The agreement covered trade in goods, trade in services, investment, intellectual property rights, and competition policy through six protocols: the Goods Trade Protocol, the Services Trade Protocol, and the Dispute Settlement Protocol and was implemented during the Convention's first phase. The second phase includes the Competition Protocol, the Investment Protocol, and the Intellectual Property Rights Protocol. Phase I protocols have been negotiated and agreed upon. Phase II protocols are still under negotiation and have not been agreed (African Union, 2018).

4. The Opportunities of AFCFTA

- Implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement is expected to increase intra-African trade by 52% in 2022 compared to 2010 levels by creating a larger, more integrated regional market for African products. Thus reducing the gap in the share of intra-African trade currently going towards Asia by 51%, North America by 54%, and the European Union by 67%. However, Achieving this is being challenged by the extreme weakness of intra-African trade, estimated at 15% in 2021, as opposed to 67% for European countries, 60% for Asian countries, 46% for American states, 22% within the Mercosur group. Notably, the main reason for the decline in intra-African trade is the very high cost of cross-border transport of goods and goods, the highest globally.
- The long-term elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement will provide significant opportunities for the African States by improving industrial capacities and establishing sufficient numbers of productive institutions to support industry expansion within the region. Further, allowing the provision of manufactured goods destined for export within the African continent (Cofelice, 2018). SMEs representing 80% of the African continent's enterprises will be the primary beneficiaries through the vast market for the disposal of their products, thereby taking advantage of economies of scale and obtaining raw materials and intermediate inputs at the lowest cost. It will also give consumers within Africa less access to goods and products from other African countries (Saygili & Peters, 2018).

- Liberalization of services trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area will enhance African cooperation in services. especially since the proportion of restrictions on services trade among the African Union States was the largest in 2015 compared to the other regions, estimated at 70%, while it was estimated at 52%, 23%, and 16% in each of the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN), (MERCOSUR) and the European Union (Bank, 2019).

- The African Continental Free Trade Area will provide significant economic welfare gains of $16 billion. It will also help to promote the economic and trade growth of African States, achieve sustainable development goals, and implement the African Union agenda by 2063 (Saygili & Peters, 2018). However, to achieve the above, permanent tariff exemption of products would reduce the overall economic well-being gains for African countries from US $16 billion to US $11 billion, and the exemption of three sectors would reduce gains by half to the US $8, always because of the problem of inter-African trade focusing on a few products. To overcome that dilemma, African States must carefully re-examine the ratio of exemptions to products to enable all members to benefit somewhat from the agreement (Tröster & Janechová, 2021).

- The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area will allow for better allocation of resources and create conditions for the formation of regional value chains and integration with global value chains. Along with stimulating the structural transformation of African countries from economies based on natural resources and low technology to economies based on more diverse knowledge. And promoting direct capital flows among the African States. catalyzing cooperation in other areas such as technology transfer, innovation, investment, and infrastructure development, as well as eliminating some of the challenges associated with the multiple and interrelated trade agreements in Africa (Saygili & Peters, 2018).

Nonetheless, the significant challenge to the progress of the African Continental Free Trade Area is the uneven distribution of the benefits of trade growth and economic well-being among the African States in favor of countries with a greater capacity to produce, export, and compete. Ten of the 58 African States dominate foreign trade in Africa, as shown in table 6.

Table 6. Value of regional exports and imports of the top 10 African countries in 2019 (US $ million)

Exports to the rest of Africa		Imports to the rest of Africa	
country	value	country	value
South Africa	23,551	South Africa	8,563.00
Nigeria	9,718.00	Tunisia	7,476.46
Côte d'Ivoire	3,421.36	Zambia	4,864.70
Egypt	2,649.00	Ghana	3,859.58
Kenya	2,616.40	Côte d'Ivoire	3,454.34
Morroco	1,776.00	Congo	3,116.58
Zambia	1,698.70	Mozambique	3,008.42
Alegria	1,609.00	Zimbabwe	2,815.72
Angola	1,426.00	Nigeria	2,423.00
Zimbabwe	1,171.31	Cameron	1,751.190

Source: Stiftung, B., & Mariam Alli, L. (2017). *Boosting Intra-African Trade.* https://www.bertelsmann

Table 6 shows that few African States control trade within the African continent. For example, South Africa, Nigeria and Angola account for 42.2% of total African exports in 2016, owing to the lack of product diversification in most African countries. Oil accounts for more than 30% of Africa's intra-trade structure. Agricultural products account for 18% and manufactured goods 15%. There are African States that export only one commodity to the rest of Africa, like Seychelles, which only exports marine products like fish.

CONCLUSION

The African Continental Free Trade Area is an initiative by the African States organizing the African Union to arrange and regulate all economic integration agreements previously concluded within a bilateral or sub- regional framework. Then reintegrate them into a single agreement to achieve comprehensive cooperation among all States of the African continent. This research paper produced the following findings:

- The ratio of intra-Algerian-African trade is low, only 5% for exports and 3% for imports.

- African regional integration efforts date back and have been activated more than once. However, they have faced a wide range of challenges, first and foremost the economic and political dependence of colonial countries.

- The intraregional trade ratio of regional economic groupings within Africa is small compared to the rest of the world's regional groupings. As a result, the proportion of intra-African trade is deficient, and an estimated 10 to 12 percent poses an enormous challenge to the success of the AFCFTA agreement.

- The equitable distribution of opportunities and costs in the African Continental Free Trade Area requires States belonging to the African Union to examine in-depth exemptions and tariff concessions on products and adopta bottom-up approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- African cooperation in sustainable agriculture, such as organic agriculture, especially since Africa has nearly two-thirds of the world's arable and unused land that can be used to expand agricultural production for consumers in Africa.

- Accompanying the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area with complementary procedures and policies in the area of access to African markets for goods and services, competition policies, dispute resolution, and combating unfair trade practices, institutional issues, intellectual property rights, and tourism development.

- Adopt environmentally friendly mechanisms and policies to support sustainable development that safeguard African citizens' rights.

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