Coalition of the Developing?

EXPANDING REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

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> In the hall the Big Men make the obligatory speeches about the wisdom of cooperating with neighbours and the large expected benefits of trade liberalization. The audience dutifully applauds, there are smiles all around and the Big Men move to a prominent table for a ritual inking of a *regional free trade agreement*. The media's recording of the event is shown on the evening news and is captured prominently on the front pages of newspapers the next morning. The Big Men jet back home and await the prosperity their economists told them the agreement will bring.
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> —Kato Kimbugwe et al.[1]

Eager to spark growth in their marginalized economies, the "big men" of Africa have recently turned to regional free trade agreements as a potential development tool. Across the globe, regional trade agreements (RTAs) have proliferated over the past decades, growing in number from 19 in 1990, to 96 in 2002, to 288 by the end of 2018.[2] Even though an overall decline in global tariffs has made unilateral free trade easier than ever before, many countries have decided to join schemes of regional or preferential free trade, extending lower tariffs to fellow RTA members and maintaining high tariffs against external partners.[3]

Collective action problems and repeated breakdowns in multilateral trade negotiations coupled with weakened international institutions have only fueled the formation of such RTAs. Even though the most recent series of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, the Doha Round, intends to remedy trade constraints on development, countries lacking in economic size and geopolitical clout still feel as though the multilateral trade regime neglects their development needs.[4] With challenges in WTO negotiations making liberalization less appealing, world superpowers have moved away from unilateral free trade and crafted mega-regional trade agreements such as the EU and the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, causing other countries, even those at the periphery of global trade, to follow suit.[5] These prevailing conditions and trends at the international level have led to unprecedented growth in regional integration.

The proliferation of regional trade has prompted economists to discuss its associated welfare effects. Classical trade theory asserts that individual countries maximize economic welfare only when engaged in unilateral free trade with the rest of the world. The general equilibrium models set forth by David Ricardo in 1817 and Heckscher-Ohlin in 1933 illustrate that countries reap the highest economic gains from trade when they freely exchange goods based on comparative advantage and relative factor endowments. Both models reveal that tariff barriers only reduce the positive welfare effects of trade.[6] Thus, most economists conclude that because RTAs involve preferential tariffs, they cannot possibly achieve the same levels of welfare as unilateral trade liberalization.

Despite economic evidence that uninhibited free trade yields the greatest welfare for any nation, many developing countries have instituted preferential tariffs and formed RTAs so as not to fall behind in the evolving landscape of international trade. African countries in particular have prioritized regional trade, rejecting both unilateral free trade and multilateral trade agreements as viable paths to development. Most African countries cast aside the option of unilateral liberalization because they remain mired in poverty and fear that it will harm infant industries and leave their domestic economies even more vulnerable to macroeconomic shocks.[7]

Although RTAs do not completely liberalize trade, they require member countries to reduce the regional tariff and nontariff barriers acting as the most immediate obstacles to efficient trade. In this way, RTAs foster conditions for *freer* trade and can serve as building blocks, eventually leading to stronger negotiating power and deeper integration at the international level.[8] Using this reasoning, African countries have concluded that RTAs present the most feasible, albeit second-best, alternative to unilateral free trade.

African countries have also faced the option of constructing multilateral agreements with industrialized, non-African trading partners, but they have primarily pursued RTA formation within the continent. Although arrangements with industrialized countries may provide access to larger markets and foreign investment, they often include stringent regulations around environmental standards and intellectual property rights that limit the number of African goods that qualify for trade.[9] These provisions, often having little to do with trade itself, stunt opportunities for growth and provide further incentive to form RTAs with nearby partners that share similar development goals. African countries do partake in trade agreements with partners outside the continent, such as the EU and China, but they continue to encounter unfavorable or extractive provisions. Therefore, they have begun to prioritize RTA formation within the continent as a way to ameliorate the shortcomings of these arrangements and propel industrialization internally.

As regional integration has become the top priority of African development, the continent has witnessed a record number of RTAs. Currently, eight official RTAs exist in Africa, often overlapping in purpose and membership. These RTAs have sought to address the astronomical trade costs and constraints on market access, infrastructure, and economies of scale that continue to plague commercial transactions within the continent. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) illustrates the high costs that have hampered intra-African trade over the years, noting, "It is difficult to take advantage of economies of scale in Africa when shipping a car from Japan to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire costs $1,500 while the same car costs $5,000 to ship from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to Abidjan."[10] Interior, landlocked countries struggle even more than coastal countries to access the infrastructure and waterways needed to engage in regional and global commerce; thus, African RTAs intend to eliminate formal trade barriers and build sustainable regional infrastructure to begin surmounting these challenges.

While African RTAs pursue these goals in the hopes of building toward deeper trade integration, they have often fallen short of their targets. Scholars draw different conclusions about RTA progress in generating intra- and extra-regional trade flows but generally concur that the extent to which African RTAs actually enhance trade for individual members is limited.[11] Participating countries struggle to reap the anticipated trade benefits of the RTA because they often possess similar if not the same resource endowments, making specialization in a comparative advantage, the root of all gains from trade, difficult to achieve. Even if developing RTAs do foster greater intra- or extra-regional trade, the resulting development benefits are often unevenly distributed among member nations.

RTAs can further complicate trade relations and increase transaction costs by including rules of origin and non-trade regulations, which distract developing countries from their original goals of achieving liberal trade policy, poverty reduction, and economic prosperity.[12] As a result of complicated regulations, the implementation records across RTAs have varied and generally failed to meet expectations.

On the topic of implementation, IMF authors Yongzheng Yang and Sanjeev Gupta assert, "Moreover, [RTAs] require a strong political commitment, which does not seem to have been sustained in the past, judging from the long delays and reversals of policy changes."[13] Economic conditions and conflicting geopolitical interests have limited the extent to which many RTA members successfully execute and reap the benefits of the development plan.

Despite evidence of uneven economic gains and shaky implementation records, African nations have supported the growth of existing RTAs and continent-wide integration efforts. The African Union (AU), an entity resembling the EU launched by the Organization of African Unity in 2002, seeks to improve the breadth and depth of integration throughout Africa.[14] Most recently, the AU has turned its attention to consolidating overlapping RTAs through efforts such as the Tripartite Free Trade Area, a recent initiative to coordinate activity among the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).[15]

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The AU has also been working to implement a continent-wide integration scheme called the African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA). This arrangement involves 52 of the 55 African nations and strives to improve cross-continental market efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and enhance intra-African trade opportunities through bottom-up coordination among preexisting RTAs.[16] A number of countries support these efforts to fortify intra-African trade integration.

The tension between the disputed efficacy of RTAs and the persistent optimism of African policymakers toward the expansion of regional integration presents a striking empirical puzzle. Even though developing RTAs in general have not exhibited overwhelming economic success or laudable implementation records, African countries push for deeper integration in individual regions and across the continent. By continuing to uphold RTA formation as a comprehensive development strategy, these countries impose on themselves "a substantial demand for administrative capacity and a high degree of economic convergence," which only increases in difficulty the more member countries are involved.[17] Regardless of the apparent challenges, African policymakers remain preoccupied with furthering integration.

Considering this puzzle, I will investigate the expansion of regional integration schemes in Africa. The questions guiding my research are: Given the mixed or underwhelming performance of existing RTAs in Africa, under what conditions have countries decided to support the expansion of integration efforts? How might these countries' motivations influence the trajectory of integration?

I am most interested in exploring these questions through the lens of the CFTA, the current integration scheme and free trade area forming at the continental level.[18] Thus, the primary dependent variable of my study is country participation in expanding regional integration. In terms of my specific case study, this variable is the willingness of certain states to ratify the CFTA. Because I intend to illustrate the conditions under which states have ratified, the corresponding independent variables will include level of economic development, historical experience in existing RTAs, level of infrastructure development, and the influence of key sectors of the domestic political economy.

I argue that historical experience in an existing RTA significantly influences a state's willingness to participate in expanding regional integration. In my analysis, I differentiate between RTAs with records of high and low performance. I hypothesize that in high-performing RTAs, the regional hegemons that benefit from the existing agreement and exhibit infrastructure improvements will participate.[19] These hegemons either benefited from or were not hurt by their existing RTAs and expect the CFTA to yield similar results without requiring them to drastically alter their current behavior. Non-hegemons in a high-performing RTA remain economically disadvantaged and will not participate to avoid the administrative costs of instituting a larger agreement.

In low-performing RTAs, the hegemon is more likely to take a protectionist stance due to its perception that RTAs threaten its domestic industries. On the other hand, the same low-performing RTAs have non-hegemons that experience limited trade gains, possess poor infrastructure, and yet indicate potential for growth. These countries show more interest in participating because they have been held back by their current RTA membership and have little to lose by joining a broader arrangement. The countries most interested in expanding regional integration—the hegemons of high-performing RTAs and the non-hegemons of low-performing RTAs—sharply differ in their profiles and motivations, which will make coordination efforts even more difficult than policymakers anticipate.

Exploring state participation in RTA expansion matters because an RTA cannot serve as any sort of building block to economic development in Africa if it is a "mere acronym," or a loose, short-lived association of countries formed under the guise of trade creation rhetoric.[20] For RTAs to contribute substantially to long-term economic development, member nations must coordinate policies; otherwise, they will partake in cheating, free-riding, or defection, further complicating the continent's preexisting problems.

This exploration of state participation in expanding integration also contributes to the broader conversation about supranational institutions, rules, and enforcement mechanisms. This report recalls the relevance of state identities and interests to RTA participation and the forces that might contribute to maintaining a supranational organization in an anarchic international system. RTA participation is a particularly salient topic today as other regional integration schemes such as the EU struggle to maintain membership and uphold legal and regulatory frameworks that once appeared strong. Because African countries pursue continental integration despite countless challenges faced by existing RTAs, not to mention evidence of concurrent breakdowns within "exemplary" mega-regional arrangements such as the EU, this report seeks to address questions surrounding the trajectory of African development and seriously considers the dominance of mega-regionalism in global trade relations today.

In the following section, I review the literature and explain how my project fits into the already vast body of scholarship on RTAs and integration in Africa. I proceed to more thoroughly outline my argument and use evidence from the ratifying countries of the CFTA to support my claims. I conclude with the findings from my case studies and make predictions about the future of RTA expansion in Africa and the role of mega-regionalism in the world today.

Literature Review

Increasing international emphasis on trade liberalization through regional integration has led to more extensive scholarly analysis of the topic. Because RTAs exist in the space known as the international political economy, the literature contains both empirical economic studies of trade flows and international relations theory on strategic regional partnerships.

Over time, the discussion of RTAs has moved from the more static frameworks of old regionalism to the qualitative, multidimensional frameworks of new regionalism.[21] Studies of old regionalism focus on evaluating trade creation and diversion in large, developed RTAs—namely, the EU. While these early studies certainly help determine how regional integration influences countries' terms of trade, most scholars agree that they fall short in explaining the mechanisms by which countries form and maintain regional trading blocs. Often, the motivation is political.

Thus, the recent literature, particularly that in the field of international relations, has shifted toward analyzing the factors of governance and domestic politics that may incentivize regional integration and explain the persistence or dissolution of various RTAs. Scholars now discuss the dynamic aspects of RTAs having to do with power distribution, policy commitment, institutional design, and enforcement mechanisms. Just as regionalism has evolved over the past decades, so has scholarship on the topic.

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Notably, scholars have begun to fill gaps in the literature on RTAs among developing countries. While studies of developing RTAs and African RTAs in particular have increased in number, they do not explain the conditions that incentivize African states to expand integration schemes given the otherwise-poor track record of existing RTAs on the continent.

When considering the literature on expanding regional integration in Africa, I focus on reports produced by the United Nations, the African Development Bank, and other similar entities on creating and ratifying the CFTA, which serves as the primary case in my investigation. Many of these reports discuss how the CFTA represents a logical next step in Africa's plan for development and a significant opportunity to improve trade between individual countries and preexisting RTAs. They offer predictions for how the CFTA will perform if and when all countries ratify.

Although these reports do acknowledge the significant challenges involved in reconciling trade regulations throughout Africa, they propose only high-level suggestions on how to remedy these persistent disparities and push onward with advocating for the agreement. Overall, these reports do not always highlight the role of states as the primary negotiators and ratifying entities, nor do they explain the conditions under which certain states decide that continental integration presents the best option for propelling trade and development. As a result, these studies do not anticipate what kinds of states will actually be most willing to ratify the arrangement or how their existing profiles will influence the arrangement's ability to move forward in any meaningful way, which is exactly what I intend to determine through my investigation.

Theories of Old Regionalism. As mentioned, there exists a vast literature on RTAs and their role in the international political economy. Since the post–World War II era, economists have explored how RTAs contribute to or detract from the liberalization of the world economic order. Early studies understood RTAs to include clearly outlined components: linear implementation processes, formal institutions, state-centric leadership, exclusive formal membership, economic incentives, shared sovereignty, and territory-based identity.[22] These pillars of analysis emerged alongside the creation of the European Union but have since been deemed relatively static and less applicable to recent RTAs. Regardless, they shed light on early conceptions of regionalism and provide a baseline for understanding the evolution of RTA inquiry in both economics and political science.

Almost all discussion of regional trade begins with the seminal work of Jacob Viner, Canadian economist and leading figure of the early Chicago School of Economics, who investigates the economic outcomes experienced by members and nonmembers of regional customs unions. Viner argues that the primary purpose of a customs union is to reduce tariffs to shift sources of supply within a region, which will cause either trade creation or trade diversion.[23] He notes that RTAs are net beneficial and advance market liberalization if they result in trade creation, but most often,

> [A] customs union, if it is complete, involves across-the-board removal of the duties between the members of the union; since the removal is non-selective by its very nature, the beneficial preferences are established along with the injurious ones, the trade-creating ones along with the trade-diverting ones.[24]

Thus, Viner points out that the possibility of trade diversion always makes RTAs less than optimal when compared to complete economic liberalization. Viner's theory, while groundbreaking in RTA literature, exclusively examines the static impact of RTAs on trade creation and diversion, disregarding many relevant factors unrelated to tariffs.

The Emergence of New Regionalism. The concepts of trade creation and diversion dominated studies of RTAs for years. But as trends in global trade shifted, scholars following Viner began to paint a more dynamic picture of both RTA formation and outcomes.

Philippa Dee and Jyothi Gali, economists at the Australian National University, remark that increasingly, RTAs include a range of provisions outside tariff reductions that involve "services, investment, competition policy, government procurement, e-commerce, labor, and environmental standards."[25] Such nontariff provisions have introduced even greater complexity to regional trade arrangements. Thus, studies of new regionalism acknowledge and explore the nonlinear processes, informal institutions, diffused leadership, flexible membership, social dimensions, varying levels of cooperation, and identity politics that often shape the trajectories of RTAs.[26]

While taking a multifaceted approach to examining integration, many studies of new regionalism still try to measure outcomes and classify RTAs as "building blocks" or "stumbling blocks" to free trade, as exhibited by the frequently cited debate between economists Jagdish Bhagwati and Lawrence Summers. Bhagwati argues that RTAs are malign. They contribute to a messy "spaghetti bowl" of arrangements around the globe, always cause trade diversion, and ultimately "sabotage the efficient allocation among countries."[27] Summers rebuts Bhagwati's position, claiming that, trade diverting or not, RTAs can serve as welfare-enhancing tools. He does not think RTAs cripple economic liberalization to the extent that Bhagwati does.[28] While this debate remains concerned with questions of liberalization and welfare effects, Bhagwati exhorts that the RTA conversation must now include other relevant factors such as rules of origin, trade-related intellectual property rules, and nontariff barriers to trade.[29] This debate draws attention to the shift in paradigms for thinking about integration and the additional complexities that have arisen in the study of new regionalism.

As regionalism has changed in response to trends in globalization, international relations scholars have sought to remedy the shortcomings of the economics literature and have proposed more comprehensive ways of understanding RTAs. Due to increased recognition that RTAs now rarely emerge from purely economic, trade-creating motives, scholars have tried to explain the various political factors involved.

Realist scholars argue that countries participate in RTAs for geopolitical reasons, usually to project power and enhance security. Stephen Krasner, a professor at Stanford University, claims that an international open trading system requires a hegemon to supervise and enforce the rules; when a global hegemon declines in power, it seeks security in a regional trading bloc, and other states follow suit, instituting various measures of protectionism.[30] Some realists explain the creation of trading blocs as a way for participating members to reap private security advantages. Joanne Gowa and Edward Mansfield claim that trading blocs tend to form within preexisting military alliances to reduce trade-related "security externalities."[31] Thus, international relations literature in the realist school of thought explains how power distribution and security preferences influence the formation of trading blocs.

In contrast, liberal international relations scholars view regional integration as a way to reduce the collective action problems and transaction costs that plague trade liberalization efforts at the international level, particularly in organizations such as the WTO.[32] Liberal theorists assert that RTAs represent a second-best option to "exploit mutual gains from trade that are unrealized in global negotiations" and cause integration to deepen because participating members have no choice but to harmonize regulations and institutions when large-scale regional capital flows are involved.[33] Other parts of the literature discuss how domestic pressures and firm advocacy for economies of scale and integrated production networks underpin a country's desire to integrate.[34]

Both realist and liberal theories remain focused on the factors that influence the creation of a trade bloc rather than those that determine variation in member commitment across RTAs or participation in the expansion of regional integration. Although prominent theories have broadened the understanding of the role of RTAs in the world today, they do not entirely explain the current situation of RTA expansion among developing African countries that I find particularly puzzling.

Current Regionalism in Africa. A body of literature exists on RTAs exclusively among developing countries, and a number of scholars have published on African RTAs in particular. The literature specific to Africa does not fully explain why states exhibit continued optimism for regional integration despite evidence that current RTAs do not always result in economic gains or strong policy commitment. A systematic review of the literature on these RTAs reveals that the efficacy of integration has indeed varied across the continent and fluctuated within individual RTAs.

African RTAs have often emphasized loose cooperation based on mutual benefit and allowed plenty of leeway for domestic policy to respect national sovereignty during the ongoing process of postcolonial nation building. Without strong centralized bodies of authority, many African RTAs have faltered in their attempts to incentivize members to consistently follow the rules and regulations outlined in the agreement. Reports produced over the years have followed the progress of these efforts.

The 1992 report by IMF scholars Augusto de la Torre and Margaret R. Kelly lists the objectives of a number of developing RTAs and evaluates their implementation records. For the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the authors deem "progress negligible" in establishing a comprehensive customs union, harmonizing policy, eliminating nontariff barriers, and increasing labor and capital mobility. On the other hand, the authors conclude "some progress on tariffs" for the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa and highlight notable strides made by the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC).[35] Since 1992, these African RTAs have evolved, many changing in name and function, and additional RTAs have emerged. Yet, variation in both trade gains and the achievement of stated objectives has persisted.

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In 1999, Ademola Oyejide of the University of Ibadan, Ibrahim Elbadwi of the World Bank, and Stephen Yeo of the Centre for Economic Policy Research compiled case studies of six different African RTAs to shed light on implementation obstacles and assess the changing conditions of regional integration at the turn of the century. The authors again found variation in success levels of RTAs.[36] In the ECOWAS case study, the authors determined that the countries had crafted elaborate trade liberalization provisions that nonetheless had a relatively small impact on intra-regional trade flows. Substantial increases in intra-regional trade had been inhibited by overlapping memberships and conflicting mandates that ultimately facilitated "unhealthy rivalries and divided loyalties among the member states."[37] The authors also underscore how the Southern African Customs Union and SADC have stood apart in their ability to foster "monetary, industrial, financial, and fiscal policy coordination" but have also faced the challenge of trade and investment benefits being skewed toward South Africa.[38] These case studies only continue to underscore the diverse and constantly changing perceptions of RTA efficacy in Africa over the past decades.

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The most recent studies provide further evidence that implementation records have been mixed at best. A 2017 report produced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, and the AU underscores how African RTAs "are progressing at various speeds across the various components of the Abuja Treaty."[39] Trade share growth, transportation and other infrastructure developments, and tariff implementation have been uneven across the now eight officially recognized RTAs and among individual members of these RTAs. According to this report, the EAC has been recognized as one of the leading RTAs in terms of comprehensive progress, with many of the other RTAs staggering behind.[40] For the past decades, the literature on African RTAs has revealed relative differences in implementation success and development trajectories, fueling the puzzle surrounding the expansion of African integration that I seek to explore in this report.

Expanding Regional Integration in Africa. Despite the spectrum of RTA performance in Africa, countries across the continent have continued to view regional integration as a building block or the most viable path toward economic interconnectedness and growth. Many articles on expanding regional trade in Africa address the proposal for the CFTA. Scholars acknowledge that challenges will accompany the CFTA, but the literature nonetheless falls short in explaining how to reconcile the weaknesses in existing RTAs with the persistent optimism for expanded integration.

Reports on the CFTA narrowly focus on its role as the logical next step in the African development agenda. The CFTA is viewed as a product of the Lagos Plan of Action, championed by the Organization for African Unity in 1980. The Lagos Plan anticipated that small, regional economic communities would eventually lead to a cross-continental African common market. Although the institution of the common market imagined by the Lagos Plan faltered with the weak implementation of smaller African RTAs, the plan was never entirely dismissed. In 1991, the Abuja Treaty spurred the creation of the AU, which came into being in 2002 with a renewed enthusiasm for achieving continental trade integration. By 2012, successful trade integration had not yet taken off, which prompted the AU to propose the CFTA and put into motion the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade.[41]

Thus, this continental agreement has been over 30 years in the making and one of the most enduring priorities of African political leaders. In the grand scheme of African development, the AU views the CFTA as taking a crucial step toward achieving its rigorous plan for economic growth.[42] Because it represents the realization of a long-awaited development strategy, the CFTA is often treated as just that: the means to achieving the next listed objective in a predetermined development plan. As a result, reports do not often rigorously evaluate the feasibility of this ambitious agreement.

The literature also remains preoccupied with the CFTA's anticipated economic wins and losses. Statistics show that Africa remains behind the rest of the world in terms of trade shares, contributing only 2.4 percent of world merchandise exports, but has witnessed some progress in intra-African trade over the past decade. Trade within the continent has increased from 10.3 percent of Africa's total trade in 2008 to 19.6 percent in 2016.[43]

While the continent has experienced gains in intra-regional trade, World Economic Forum author Rilwan Akeyewale notes that cross-continental economic asymmetries persist: "For example, over 50% of Africa's cumulative GDP is contributed by Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, while Africa's six sovereign island nations collectively contribute just 1%."[44] These income disparities among potential CFTA members are "more than double the levels witnessed in blocs such as ASEAN [the Association of Southeast Asian Nations] and CARICOM [the Caribbean Community]."[45] Scholars acknowledge these obstacles, yet most analyses of the CFTA remain focused on its potential to enhance intra-African trade.

Simon Mevel and Stephen Karingi of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa conducted a study to calculate intra-African trade flows and predict the potential trade gains from the CFTA. According to their general equilibrium model, the CFTA will increase intra-African trade by 52.3 percent, with the highest impact in industrial sectors followed by agricultural sectors.[46] This study illustrates the potential economic incentives to participate in the CFTA, but these gains are calculated under the assumption that all countries will indeed ratify the agreement and remove tariffs across all economic sectors. The process of getting all countries on the same page will be incredibly challenging, and this study does not explain how more fragmented participation might alter these projections.

Pushing the CFTA as a win-win solution for all African countries, including the most vulnerable, the UN provides suggestions on how to make the CFTA a reality. First, it recommends that African governments allow non-state actors, such as private firms and scholars, a seat at the negotiating table.[47] These recommendations signal potential key stakeholders in the agreement but still look past the factors that have motivated only certain states and stakeholders to show an interest in expanded integration in the first place.[48]

Reports also underscore the need to foster cooperation and modify policy at the RTA level to fit the new reality of the CFTA, suggesting a process of bridging the gaps within the "spaghetti bowl" of arrangements already in operation. UN scholars Rodrigo Tavares and Vanessa Tang find that complex policies and overlapping memberships in existing RTAs inhibit trade gains as "25 percent of national policymakers think that overlapping agreements make it hard to meet intended integration commitments, while 23 percent find agreement overlaps as a reason for low program implementation."[49] Presenting these statistics, this part of the literature exhorts that RTAs harmonize their policies in a bottom-up approach to integrating trade across the continent. Tavares and Tang explore the potential impediments to integration but do not predict whether the requisite degree of policy convergence is even possible.

CFTA implementation will indeed require a high level of harmonization, and the coordination and merger of RTA policies still rely primarily on interstate negotiations, which have proved forbidding in the past. Existing RTAs are not traditional supranational institutions that can exercise sovereignty or real, autonomous decision-making power.[50] Thus, state identities *within* existing RTAs remain important, and their individual interests and perspectives of regional integration may not be as malleable as the literature often suggests.

I argue that certain conditions have fostered state willingness or unwillingness to participate in the CFTA, and the mix of state profiles that have been most interested in coming to the negotiating table unavoidably influences the agreement's trajectory, two considerations that appear absent from the current literature. By closely examining the factors that have motivated the current ratifying countries, I intend to contribute to the discussion of RTA implementation and persistence in Africa, which is ultimately related to the future of trade and development on a continent that still desperately needs to improve both.

Logic: Who Wants to Expand Regional Integration, and Why?

I return to the striking empirical puzzle surrounding trade and development in Africa today: Despite the inconsistent or indeterminate performance of RTAs across the continent, a number of states continue to push for deepening economic integration and expanding trade networks. Although one might assume the states supporting such initiatives are only states that have benefited from participation in existing RTAs, this has not been the case. Member states from both high- and low-performing African RTAs have advocated for expanding regional and continental free trade, particularly through ratifying the CFTA. Because existing RTAs have experienced different degrees of success, the factors propelling state support of larger trade integration schemes merit further investigation.

Examining the dependent variable of state participation in expanding regional integration, I consider two subcategories: members of high-performing RTAs and members of low-performing RTAs. A high-performing RTA has augmented intra-regional trade by effectively encouraging member states to coalesce around tariff-removal policies and implement trade integration standards. On the other hand, low-performing RTAs have experienced fewer gains in intra-regional trade and exhibited more difficulty in leveraging the RTA as a mechanism for development and growth.

Because members of RTAs with varying performance records face different motivating factors, I set forth a series of hypotheses for the conditions under which these types of states decide to participate. In particular, I argue that the economic leaders, or hegemons, of high-performing RTAs are more willing to participate due to their positive historical experience in the RTA and their progress in improving infrastructure. Non-hegemons of these high-performing RTAs are less eager to enter into larger agreements due to their still-fragile economic status. While these more peripheral states may ultimately follow the hegemons' lead and accept a plan for expanding regional integration, they are not the states spearheading it.

Historical experience has also influenced members of low-performing RTAs to participate, but in a different way. In a low-performing RTA, the states most likely to support the expansion of regional integration are the non-hegemonic states whose economic potential has been stifled. Although disadvantaged by the weak implementation of their existing RTA, these non-hegemons have exhibited greater commitment to integration than the hegemon of the region. They view a continental network as a means of achieving improved infrastructure, greater connectivity to nearby trading partners, and increased access to African trading hubs that can serve as destinations for their exports.

The hegemon of a low-performing RTA will be less willing to participate in an expanded integration plan because it does not receive the necessary support from key sectors of its domestic political economy, which prevented it from emerging as the champion of the existing RTA in the first place. Because of the lack of enthusiasm and leadership from the hegemon of a low-performing RTA, the non-hegemons have no choice but to seek new partners and paths to development.

My hypotheses suggest that the types of countries most interested in pursuing expanded regional integration—the hegemons of high-performing RTAs and non-hegemons of low-performing RTAs—sharply differ in their profiles and motivations. As a result, the puzzle pieces involved in integrating the continent will be even more difficult to put together than expected.

Conditions for Participation: Members of High-Performing RTAs. I claim that members of high-performing RTAs agree to participate in expanded regional trading blocs such as the CFTA under two conditions. First, states will participate if they have experienced positive, tangible economic gains under a regional integration scheme, making them regional hegemons with a vested interest in maintaining partnerships with neighboring countries. Benefiting from the RTAs' strong performance, these hegemons have witnessed increased intra- and extra-regional trade. Robust trade growth only encourages these members to continue to implement the standards of the integration scheme and foster ties with nearby trading partners.

These states that have benefited from RTA membership and show relatively strong commitment to the existing RTA expect to reap similar gains from an expanded trade arrangement. Thus, historical experience in existing African RTAs determines which countries emerge as regional hegemons. It further influences their perception of the value of regional partnerships and contributes to their willingness to participate in larger integration schemes.

Second, states from high-performing RTAs will be more willing and able to participate in the expansion of regional integration if they have strong infrastructure. With higher levels of income and increased trade and investment flows, hegemons in particular can pursue the infrastructure projects needed to connect their own commercial activities with those of other nearby countries. Infrastructure constraints often pose the highest costs and the greatest challenges to expanding integration.[51] Because hegemons have attracted more trade and investment, their infrastructure barriers to entry for expanded, cross-continental trade are already lower.

High-performing RTAs have put hegemons in a position to more seamlessly integrate regional infrastructure, making them more inclined to support the expansion of commercial networks on the continent. Overall, within high-performing RTAs, hegemons that gain economically from regional partnerships and exhibit infrastructure improvements fuel the project of expanding integration.

On the other hand, non-hegemonic members of the same high-performing RTAs will be less willing to participate. These countries, still struggling to augment growth and facing economic disadvantages in both African and world markets, do not seek to spend more resources on additional integration efforts. Anticipating the potential administrative costs of another arrangement, these countries have not jumped at the opportunity to participate. The non-hegemons prefer to pursue growth within the smaller existing RTA because it has proved relatively high performing and does not impose the same costs and collective action problems that inevitably accompany a larger continental agreement.

Conditions for Participation: Members of Low-Performing RTAs. Turning to low-performing RTAs, I hypothesize that members participate in the expansion of regional trade under two conditions. (See Table 1.) First, participants are regional non-hegemons that have recognized continental integration as the least-bad alternative to their current arrangements. These non-hegemons have had limited success in augmenting regional trade due to poorly facilitated integration programs and hegemonic states that glean most of the already-limited gains from trade and investment. However, these states recognize that their still-weak economies cannot viably grow through independent innovation. Especially when facing the challenges of an evolving international trade landscape shaped by current world superpowers, these states support RTA expansion to avoid falling even further to the periphery of global markets, regardless of the administrative costs of a larger arrangement.

Second, participating countries from low-performing RTAs have relatively weak existing infrastructure but indicate some progress and potential for improvement. Both domestic and regional infrastructure remain weak because these non-hegemonic members have not been able to address such problems on their own or attract a significant amount of foreign assistance. Therefore, they view a cross-continental integration program as a way to gain access to the resources and external partners necessary to fund these projects. Again, while these states recognize that their trade and infrastructure have been sidelined by a weak

Table 1. Summary of Conditions for Participation in Expanding Regional Integration

State Type	High-Performing RTA	Low-Performing RTA
Hegemon	**Participation:** High **Historical Experience:** Growth stems from regional partnerships **Infrastructure:** Relatively strong and improving **Case:** Kenya (EAC), South Africa (SADC)	**Participation:** Low **Historical Experience:** Does not play the role of cooperative hegemon; key domestic sectors remain protected and do not rely on regional liberalization for growth **Infrastructure:** Relatively strong **Case:** Nigeria (ECOWAS)
Non-Hegemon	**Participation:** Low **Historical Experience:** Takes advantage of regional partnerships to a degree but remains economically weak **Infrastructure:** Relatively weak **Case:** EAC and SADC non-hegemons	**Participation:** High **Historical Experience:** Interest in fostering regional partnerships; growth potential stifled by lack of hegemonic leadership in the region **Infrastructure:** Relatively weak and improving **Case:** ECOWAS non-hegemons

Source: Author.

existing integration program dominated by an unsupportive hegemon, they view continental integration as the next best option.

Conversely, hegemons of such low-performing RTAs do not see the same value in expanding regional integration. These hegemons have not invested much in regional partnerships in the past—hence the weak performance record of their existing RTA—nor do they intend to welcome additional regional partners in the future. Their resistance to liberalization, regional or otherwise, stems from strong opposition from key sectors of their domestic political economies. This type of hegemon has ascended to a position of economic strength in a low-performing RTA by upholding measures of protectionism for these key industries; therefore, it does not plan on altering policy and will maintain a stronger commitment to its domestic development agenda over that of the region or continent.

Ultimately, divergent profiles of participants from high- and low-performing RTAs will only further complicate policy harmonization efforts under the CFTA.

Selection of Cases

To evaluate states' willingness to participate in the expansion of African trade integration, I examine the CFTA initiative more closely. While establishing this CFTA remains a live policy action, certain states have been quick to ratify, highlighting the specific motives and profiles of the states driving this expansion. These participating countries come from both high- and low-performing RTAs. Members of the EAC, the SADC, and ECOWAS have ratified, even though the EAC and SADC have been perceived to be relatively more successful than ECOWAS. Participation by members of both the relatively high-performing EAC and SADC and the low-performing ECOWAS provides an opportunity to investigate the very empirical puzzle that this report seeks to address.

Although there are five other RTAs in Africa, the EAC, SADC, and ECOWAS provide strong cases for analysis because 15 of the current 22 ratifying countries hold membership in at least one of these three RTAs. Some of the other ratifying countries are members of different African RTAs, but I limit this project to a comparative analysis of the EAC, SADC, and ECOWAS.

Because I am interested in the specific drivers of participation in expanding regional integration, I examine the factors that have motivated members of these high- and low-performing RTAs to ratify. Before analyzing the empirics and evidence, I provide an overview of the CFTA and explain the differences in the performance records of the EAC, SADC, and ECOWAS.

Figure 1. CFTA-Ratifying Countries (As of April 4, 2019)

Source: Trade Law Centre, "Status of AfCFTA Ratification," 2019, https://www.tralac.org/resources/infographic/13795-status-of-afcfta-ratification.html.

The African Continental Free Trade Area. The CFTA refers to the proposed continent-wide free trade area that the AU has initiated. All 55 African states are members of the AU and were presented with the idea of the CFTA in January 2012 at the 18th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. At this time, policymakers agreed to establish the CFTA by 2017.

Yet as of April 4, 2019, only 52 of the 55 African states have signed the agreement, and 22 have ratified. Seven of these 22 ratifying countries have not yet officially deposited their instruments of ratification with the chairperson of the AU Commission.[52] The 22 ratifying countries are, in order of ratification: Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda, Niger, Chad, Eswatini, Uganda, Guinea, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, Namibia, Congo, Togo, Mauritania, Djibouti, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and the Gambia (Figure 1).[53] Although CFTA implementation has encountered delays, the agreement remains a live policy option as more of the signatories consider ratification.

The CFTA sets forth a number of objectives to increase intra-African trade and make African countries more attractive destinations for productive foreign investment. If implemented, the CFTA will bring together the largest number of participating countries since the WTO, influencing the lives of over 1.2 billion people and affecting total consumer and business spending of over US $4 trillion.[54] The agreement primarily requires members to remove tariffs on 90 percent of goods but sets forth a number of other stated objectives, including moving toward a pan-African common market and customs union, bridging trade policies among existing RTAs, sorting out issues of overlapping RTA membership, and creating opportunities for more countries and firms to access economies of scale and advanced supply chains.[55] To bolster the efficacy of the CFTA, AU policymakers have created the Action Plan on Boosting Intra-Africa Trade to provide a more comprehensive framework for implementing and measuring the proposed development targets.[56]

The CFTA will become operational 30 days after being ratified by at least 22 states. Between March 2018 (when the AU Ministers of Trade approved the draft of the agreement) and the end of 2018, only 14 states had moved forward with ratification. The number of ratifications has only recently increased to 22, and the agreement is expected to move into its enforcement phase soon.

Even though preexisting RTAs in Africa have had mixed results, AU policymakers are promoting the CFTA with optimism, claiming that if enough resources can be put toward implementation and monitoring, the agreement will succeed in bringing about the predicted benefits. Mukhisa Kituyi, secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, claims:

> If there is sufficient political goodwill, it can be done overnight. There is no reason why we would repeat the mistakes that have been done in other countries. We have to learn these processes within existing regional integration mechanisms and then scale them up. Scale up best practices.[57]

Kituyi suggests that political goodwill combined with best practices will surely yield a positive outcome, yet many divergent policies must be reconciled before the CFTA can be put into effect. Given the tension between the varying track records of African RTAs and current support and projected success for the CFTA as explained in the literature review, ratification of the new agreement by specific members of existing RTAs warrants further examination.

High Performer: The East African Community. RTAs in Africa have met varying and uncertain success, but the EAC has exhibited a strong commitment to removing tariff barriers, integrating trade networks, and deepening economic and political ties among member states. Although founded in 2000 and one of the youngest African RTAs, the EAC has been perceived as one of the highest-performing arrangements.

The EAC is an intergovernmental organization comprised of six member nations in the eastern region of Africa. Headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania, the EAC includes Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, all of which have joined the integration scheme "to widen and deepen economic, political, social and cultural integration in order to improve the quality of life of the people of East Africa through increased competitiveness, value added production, trade and investments."[58] The treaty establishing the EAC was first signed in November 1999. It included only three original members (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) and took effect in July 2000. Since its inception, the EAC has further developed institutions, legal frameworks, and plans for long-term integration.

Over the past two decades, the EAC has earned a reputation for a well-sequenced integration and liberalization program. The first step in its integration plan involved creating an East African Customs Union, meaning that all members of the EAC would completely remove internal tariffs, implement a common external tariff, and establish a common law and regulatory body. Fulfilling each of these targets, the customs union became operational in January 2005, and Burundi and Rwanda requested EAC membership soon after in 2007.[59]

The EAC continued on its path toward deeper integration, hitting its next target—establishing a common market for the free movement of goods, services, labor, and capital—in July 2010 when all five member states ratified the EAC Common Market Protocol. Later, in September 2016, South Sudan declared membership in the EAC, bringing the total member count to six.

The next two steps on the EAC's integration agenda involve creating a monetary union and ultimately achieving political federation. While there have been some delays, the EAC continues to progress toward these targets. The EAC's general speed of policy implementation and growing membership has increased confidence that the region does indeed plan to follow through with its trade program.

While members have had disputes about liberalization and the EAC has indeed met obstacles on its path toward deeper integration, it has removed tariff barriers and established a common market in the region in a timely manner. A report by the *Economist* comments, "The combined GDP of the trade bloc has grown from US$80bn in 2010 to US$146bn in 2016. Furthermore, since the inception of the customs union, the value of EAC trade has increased."[60] The EAC has also emerged as an exemplary RTA because it publishes a Common Market Scorecard that uses data collection to monitor members' commitment to implementation and hold them accountable for imposing any nontariff barriers.[61] Because of its relatively strong sequencing and progress, the EAC has earned distinction as one of the most integrated, high-performing RTAs in Africa.

Because of its relatively strong sequencing and progress, the EAC has earned distinction as one of the most integrated, high-performing RTAs in Africa.

Categorizing the EAC as a high-performing RTA is also supported by the pooled regression results of a study conducted by Craig R. MacPhee and Wanasin Sattayanuwat. These scholars use the gravity model to estimate trade creation and diversion for a number of RTAs. They find that trade-creating and trade-diverting effects indicate that the EAC members would be even better off if they unilaterally liberalized trade, but the EAC has indeed fostered greater intra-regional trade. They estimate that the EAC has increased trade among its members by 226 percent and has created conditions "favorable to trade regionalization."[62] This study further highlights the EAC's relatively strong performance.

High Performer: Southern African Development Community. SADC is another prominent African RTA that aims to deepen economic and political ties among member states to promote general quality of life and poverty reduction. It was officially established in 1992, but southern African states had engaged in informal schemes and loose cooperation as early as 1910. In the 1980s, SADC's preceding institution, the SADCC, was set up to organize development aid and balance the hegemonic influence of minority-ruled South Africa. In 1992, 14 countries agreed to a common agenda and institutionalized some of the informal principles of the SADCC, creating SADC.[63]

SADC currently has 16 member states: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The Union of Comoros was admitted as the 16th member state in August 2017.

SADC's original framework, like that of SADCC, remained largely decentralized and project oriented, with a vast portfolio of infrastructure projects, eventually prompting further reform and policy clarification. In 1997, SADC member states gathered to craft a plan for deepening integration. Such reform involved creating various commissions, "each with a mandate to plan and implement SADC programmes in a given sector."[64] Although members intended to complete this institutional overhaul between 2001 and 2003, by 2005 it had yet to be fully implemented.[65] SADC launched its free trade area in August 2008 with maximum tariff liberalization achieved by January 2012.

Although its free trade area has been operational, SADC has yet to implement a customs union and common market. Delays have been marked by the difficulty of getting the 11 existing tariff policies in the region to converge to one common external tariff.[66]

Despite these clear challenges to the sequencing of liberalization in the region, according to Tavares and Tang, SADC has become "the lead regional player in trade, whose exports by value are mostly destined for countries within its own geographical group."[67] In addition, SADC has prevented its framework from getting bogged down by complicated rules of origin, an often significant impediment to integration.[68] Overall, SADC has faced coordination and implementation problems, sometimes shaded by the region's colonial past and South African apartheid, but has generally progressed in improving its trade prospects as a regional bloc.

The model set forth by MacPhee and Sattayanuwat also upholds SADC's relatively high performance. In fact, SADC is the only RTA in their pooled regression that shows positive, statistically significant intra-bloc trade creation, import trade creation, and export trade creation. Trade among SADC members is 208 percent higher than it would be without the RTA in place.[69] Thus, the MacPhee and Sattayanuwat study bolsters SADC's status as a high-performing RTA.

Low Performer: Economic Community of West African States. Conversely, ECOWAS, an RTA established by the Treaty of Lagos in 1975, has exhibited a weaker record of regional integration. Historically, its customs and monetary unions have faced disruption, revision, and delay.

The original ECOWAS agreement, first signed in 1972, rested primarily on economic principles. But as policymakers realized that integration also involved noneconomic goals, they produced a revised treaty in 1993 that extended beyond trade regulations into the political realm. ECOWAS has been reformed two more times since then, in 2007 and 2013, creating new departments and counsels to advance the mission and improve past low performance.

ECOWAS boasts that its dense population and potential for labor mobility could contribute to improvements, yet it admits that these assets have yet to be exploited.[70] At the 2nd National Seminar on the Trade Liberalization Scheme of West Africa in 1993, even the Nigerian minister of commerce and tourism, Vice Marshal Mahmud Yahaya, remarked, "Ladies and Gentlemen, you are all aware that Nigeria's trade with the countries of the sub-region is nothing to write home about."[71] Especially at the beginning of integration efforts, continual setbacks and reports of inefficacy seemed to plague the liberalization scheme.

Even after multiple revisions to the agreement and the inclusion of more comprehensive provisions, member nations remained committed to their own national agendas. Charles D. Jebuni, E. Olawale Ogunkola, and Charles C. Soludo note, "No one country emerged to champion the cause of ECOWAS."[72] In addition, many individual countries in ECOWAS are also members of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, and some prioritize trade in this regional bloc over intra-ECOWAS trade.[73] To surmount challenges posed by disparate domestic policy agendas, ECOWAS has tried to coordinate efforts with the private sector and other regional intergovernmental organizations to create a range of programs, but to no avail.

ECOWAS faces the distinct obstacle that it does not have one comprehensive customs union. It remains divided into two different customs unions, one among primarily the former French colonies and the other among the former British colonies. Respectively, these customs unions are known as the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the West African Monetary Zone.

The West African Economic and Monetary Union grew out of the *Communauté Economique de L'Afrique de L'Ouest*, which was a parallel organization created at the same time as ECOWAS by francophone West African states. The presidents of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire initiated this organization to counterbalance the regional strength of Nigeria, a former British colony.[74] Thus, colonialism often enters the conversation regarding slow West African economic integration. Even today, more peripheral members of ECOWAS try to increase economic leverage against the regional superpower Nigeria, which has prioritized its domestic development agenda and taken few steps to contribute to or improve intra-ECOWAS trade.

Despite ECOWAS's efforts to reform institutions and provisions over the years, factors such as the colonial legacy and lack of leadership have limited the arrangement's strength and efficacy. MacPhee and Sattayanuwat conclude that intra-regional trade is only 128 percent more than it would be without ECOWAS, less than the 226 percent and 208 percent seen in the EAC and SADC respectively. While this static measure shows that the region's terms of trade have increased under the RTA, it masks the persisting underlying problems that have been documented over the years. Referencing the more dynamic factors involved in evaluating ECOWAS integration, MacPhee and Sattayanuwat also note that "nontariff barriers remain, and violence has also disrupted trade."[75] An unwilling Nigeria has only slowed progress, making integration more difficult in the region. Evidently, ECOWAS includes countries with disparate historical experiences and interests, and as a result, it has earned a reputation for relatively low performance.

Despite ECOWAS's efforts to reform institutions and provisions over the years, factors such as the colonial legacy and lack of leadership have limited the arrangement's strength and efficacy.

In terms of static intra-bloc trade creation and dynamic integration progress, the EAC and SADC have exceeded the performance of ECOWAS. Thus, for the purpose of my analysis, the EAC and SADC will represent relatively high-performing RTAs and ECOWAS a low-performing RTA, although each has indeed confronted its share of delays and implementation challenges.

According to my hypotheses, in the EAC and SADC, the regional hegemons will be the most willing to participate in the CFTA due to their historically positive experiences in the region and strong infrastructure. The economically weaker non-hegemons of the EAC and SADC will be more reluctant to participate. Due to the low performance of ECOWAS, the states most interested in ratification will be the non-hegemons, which have been sidelined in their existing arrangement but hope to capitalize on some of their growth potential by creating stronger ties with other African economies. ECOWAS's hegemon will resist expanding integration and attend primarily to its domestic agenda and industry protection. To test my hypotheses, I explore the conditions under which states have chosen to ratify or not ratify the CFTA, particularly looking at their historical experiences within these three RTAs, their commitment to projects of regional integration, and the role of infrastructure in supporting a transition to a trade area spanning the continent.

Empirics and Evidence

In this section, I analyze quantitative and qualitative evidence that suggests historical experience in existing RTAs and infrastructure readiness have influenced states' willingness to ratify the CFTA.

Ratification by Members of the EAC, a High-Performing RTA. Strides made by the EAC in rapidly implementing a customs union and common market have influenced members' participation in and view of regional trade as an effective tool for promoting economic growth. The states that have moved to ratify the CFTA and support the expansion of regional integration have had particularly positive experiences in the EAC. (See Figure 2.) These ratifying countries—Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda—all exhibit

Figure 2. EAC Members and Ratification of CFTA

State Type	Member	Ratification Status (As of April 4, 2019)
Hegemon	Kenya	Ratified
Non-Hegemons	Burundi	Not Ratified
	Rwanda	Ratified
	South Sudan	Not Ratified
	Tanzania	Not Ratified
	Uganda	Ratified

Source: Trade Law Centre.

high shares of regional income and trade, close ties with regional partners, and a relatively high index of regional integration.

Kenya has emerged as the regional hegemon, capturing most trade flows from both intra-regional and foreign partners. To some extent, it has already sought to expand regional integration by joining a record number of RTAs in Africa and funneling resources toward infrastructure projects that will lower transportation costs and facilitate trade. Kenya's economy stands to gain from enhancing regional partnerships through the CFTA.

Although Rwanda and Uganda are not the hegemon, they have nonetheless ratified the agreement under similar conditions as Kenya. Both countries have made strides in reducing the barriers that impede regional partnerships and shown progress in infrastructure development, two factors that underpin their decision to participate in the CFTA. Overall, the case of the EAC reveals that within a high-performing RTA, the hegemon and other countries that have benefited from regional partnerships and boast supportive infrastructure will partake in expanding opportunities for free trade across the continent.

Clear economic asymmetries exist among EAC members, and Kenya stands above the rest in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) and total volume of trade, making it the regional hegemon. While all the other EAC members fall into the World Bank–assigned category of low income, Kenya is the only member classified as a lower-middle-income country.[76] As seen in Table 2, its GDP far exceeds that of any other EAC member and represents 46.7 percent of the region's total income. In addition to being the top contributor to the region's wealth, Kenya is also the largest trader in the region in terms of sheer volume. It exports $5.7 billion worth of goods to the rest of the world, compared to the $4.3 billion, $2.9 billion, $1.2 billion, and $172 million exported by Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, respectively. Due to its income level and the volume of its exports, Kenya's standing as the regional hegemon in the EAC has influenced in its participation in the CFTA.

As hegemon, Kenya has dominated trade in the EAC and fostered strong commercial partnerships with fellow members, revealing its interest in taking advantage of regional networks, a factor underpinning its ratification of the CFTA. As seen in Table 3, in 2016, Kenya's individual exports accounted for 47.5 percent of all traded volume within the bloc. Exports to the EAC make up 21.1 percent of Kenya's own total exports, and while

Table 2. Income and Exports in EAC Members States, 2017

EAC Member	Income Classification	GDP (Million US Dollars)	Share of Regional GDP (%)	Total Merchandise Exports (Million US Dollars)	Export Share of GDP (%)
Kenya	Lower Middle	$79,263	46.7%	$5,748	7.3%
Tanzania	Low	$52,090	30.7%	$4,343	8.3%
Uganda	Low	$25,995	15.3%	$2,901	11.2%
Rwanda	Low	$9,135	5.4%	$1,189	13.0%
Burundi	Low	$3,172	1.9%	$172	5.4%

Note: Data are unavailable for South Sudan.
Source: World Bank, "World Bank Country and Lending Groups," https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups; and World Bank, "World Development Indicators," https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators.

Table 3. EAC Intra-Regional Trade, 2016

Exporter	Intra-Regional Export Volume (Million US Dollars)	Share of Total Intra-Regional Exports	Percentage of Country's Exports
Kenya	$1,199	47.5%	21.1%
Tanzania	$431	17.1%	9.1%
Uganda	$711	28.2%	28.7%
Rwanda	$156	6.2%	25.1%
Burundi	$25	1.0%	20.4%
South Sudan	$3	0.1%	0.2%

Note: The data from 2016 were used instead of 2017 because Rwanda has yet to report 2017 intra-regional exports.
Source: International Trade Centre, "International Trade Statistics 2001–2019," http://www.intracen.org/itc/market-info-tools/trade-statistics/.

not extremely high, these intra-regional exports still influence Kenya's economic growth and reflect its efforts to take advantage of opportunities to augment GDP through regional integration.

Notably, Uganda, one of the other EAC members that has ratified the CFTA, holds the second-highest share of the region's trade volume, accounting for 28.2 percent of intra-regional exports. While Rwanda remains a small country with a smaller fraction of overall regional trade, its exports to EAC members account for 25.1 percent of its total exports, similar in weight to the hegemon Kenya. Although the non-hegemon Tanzania contributes 17.1 percent to intra-regional trade volumes, exporting within the region makes up a much smaller fraction of its overall exports, which reveals that it prioritizes extra-regional destinations for trade.

This examination of intra-regional trade flows continues to paint the picture that Kenya has been the strongest player in the high-performing RTA, a condition that contributes to its willingness to partake in expanded regional integration. Rwanda and Uganda have similarly chosen to prioritize intra-regional trade, and Uganda in particular has proved to be a formidable EAC exporter, shedding light on why these two countries also ratified.

While Kenya remains the clear hegemon of the EAC with respect to intra-regional trade flows, all three EAC members that have ratified the CFTA stand apart in the way they have prioritized fortifying relationships with regional partners. For Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, other EAC members fall within their top-five trading partners in terms of export destination. The case is the opposite for the non-hegemon, non-ratifying countries of Burundi and Tanzania, whose top destinations for exports are outside the EAC and often outside Africa. Table 4 reveals that in the EAC, the countries that find regional partnerships beneficial have been the countries most willing to ratify the CFTA.

Not only do Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda prioritize regional partnerships, but they have emerged as the EAC members most committed to implementing integration efforts, scoring above average if not the highest in the African Regional Integration Index.[77] This index ranks RTAs and their individual members in their ability to improve across five dimensions: trade integration, regional infrastructure, productive integration, free movement of people, and financial and macroeconomic integration. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of individual EAC members' scores across these five integration dimensions.

The scores again reveal that Kenya has been the vanguard of integration efforts in the EAC, with a perfect score on the measurement of trade integration, meaning that it has lowered customs duties on imports and gained the highest share of intra-regional imports and exports.[78] Uganda and Rwanda follow closely behind Kenya, with Uganda scoring highly on trade and productive integration and Rwanda making strides in the free movement of people and financial integration, as labor and investment flows have proved crucial to its small but fast-growing economy.

The EAC's Common Market Scorecard also sheds light on the way in which Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda in particular have torn down both physical and financial nontariff barriers to trade in the region. Kenya has allowed for the free movement of capital across its borders according to requirements in the East African Common Market Protocol that call for the liberalization of 20 different capital operations. Of these 20 operations, Kenya has removed restrictions on 19. It is followed by Uganda and Rwanda, which have respectively made 17 and 15 capital operations restriction-free. In contrast, the non-hegemon, non-ratifying countries Burundi and Tanzania rank low on this scale, having freed only four capital restrictions.[79] This example of removing capital restrictions further indicates that certain countries in the EAC have been willing to integrate commercial activities, have gained some economic traction from doing so, and, as a result, have decided to partake in the expansion of continental integration.

The three countries that ratified the CFTA have been the more successful members to implement the EAC integration policy. This supports my first hypothesis that within a high-performing RTA, the states most interested in expanding continental integration are those that have experienced positive, tangible economic gains in their existing RTA, making them regional hegemons with a vested interest in partnerships with neighboring countries. Kenya is the clear regional hegemon of the EAC whose experience as an economic leader has influenced its willingness to participate in the CFTA. Rwanda and Uganda, although two non-hegemons, have also exhibited high performance records in terms of regional integration and policy implementation, which has propelled participation in the CFTA.

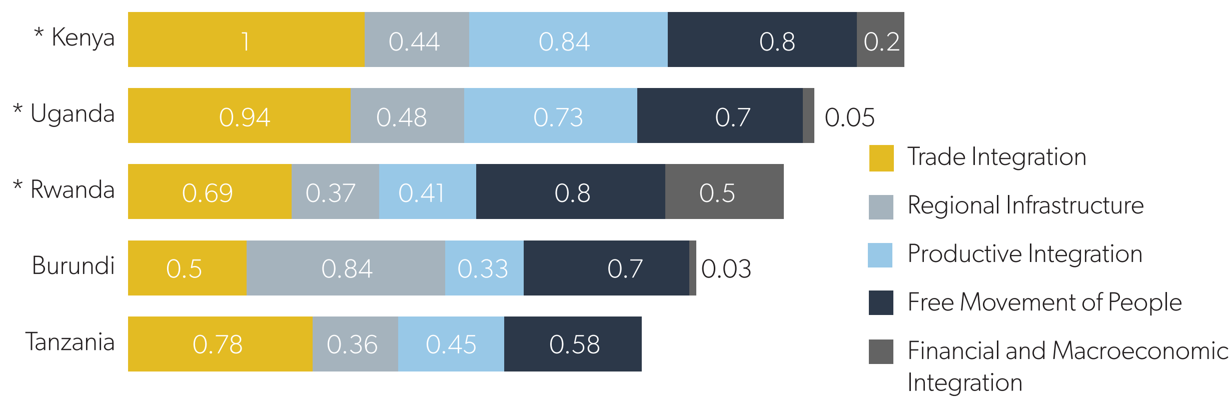
While economic status and commitment to the EAC have served as factors propelling the decision to expand integration, infrastructure improvements have also played a crucial role. As seen in Figure 4, the same three countries that ratified the CFTA also exhibit strong improvements to infrastructure in the EAC. Regional connectivity has proved crucial to trade, particularly reducing transportation costs and border delays that continue to bog down transactions. Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda have each made strides to improve the infrastructure that will be foundational to regional and cross-continental flows. Serving as a hub that connects trade between other countries and RTAs in the region, Kenya has exhibited the strongest upward trend in infrastructure development, moving from a score of 8.2 in 2004 to 25.6 in 2018 (Figure 4). Tanzania, a non-ratifying country, shows evidence of

Table 4. Top Five Trading Partners, EAC

Kenya	Destination	Percentage Exports
	EU (28)	21.9
	Uganda	11.9
	Tanzania	7.7
	United States	6.3
	Pakistan	5.1
	Other	47.2
Tanzania	**Destination**	**Percentage Exports**
	Switzerland	16.2
	India	14.8
	EU (28)	13.3
	South Africa	13.3
	China	7.5
	Other	34.9
Uganda	**Destination**	**Percentage Exports**
	EU (28)	17.4
	Kenya	16.3
	United Arab Emirates	15
	South Sudan	9.7
	Rwanda	7.8
	Other	33.9
Rwanda	**Destination**	**Percentage Exports**
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	31.8
	Kenya	16
	United Arab Emirates	14
	Switzerland	8.8
	EU (28)	6.6
	Other	22.7
Burundi	**Destination**	**Percentage Exports**
	United Arab Emirates	27.1
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	17
	European Union	15.9
	Pakistan	9.2
	Switzerland	5.5
	Other	25.4

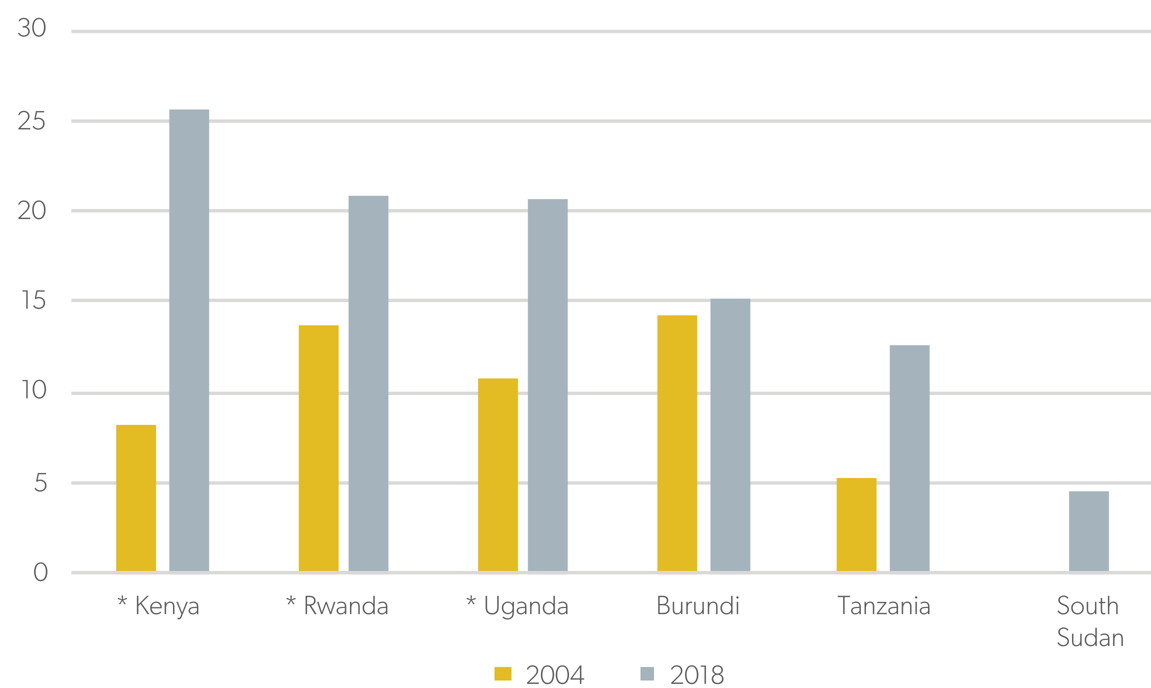
Source: World Trade Organization, 2013–17, http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountryPFView.aspx?Language=E&Country=BI%2cKE%2cRW%2cTZ%2cUG%2cSS.

Figure 3. Regional Integration Index EAC, by Dimension Scores



Note: *These states ratified the CFTA.
Source: Africa Regional Integration Index.

Figure 4. Infrastructure Development Index, EAC (2004–18)



Note: Infrastructure is evaluated on a scale of 0 to 100. No data are available for South Sudan in 2004. *These states ratified the CFTA.
Source: Africa Infrastructure Development Index.

infrastructure advancement but again has not used such development to prioritize intra-regional partnerships. Although infrastructure across the EAC still needs significant improvement, progress has been spearheaded by the hegemon Kenya, followed by Uganda and Rwanda.

Serving as such a trade hub, Kenya most recently turned to cross-border railway construction as a solution to the high transportation costs that continue to plague its own economy, the EAC, and Africa as a whole. Kenya constructed the northern line from its port city Mombasa to the Ugandan border. The line was supposed to extend further but was stalled due to disagreements between Kenyan and Ugandan officials, as well as the Chinese lenders and contractors who contributed to the $3.8 billion scheme.[80] Despite obstacles and complications, Kenya continues to try and use rail infrastructure to reduce transportation costs and facilitate connections with regional trading partners.

In an attempt to contribute to this region-wide goal of reducing transport costs, Rwanda and Uganda have tried to construct a central rail line, but instead of contracting with the Chinese, they will competitively offer the project to firms in the region.[81] Thus, Rwanda and Uganda, also ratifying countries, have shown an interest in infrastructure development as a means of deepening integration.

Kenya has also augmented infrastructure development through TradeMark East Africa, an Aid for Trade organization that has outlined a program for infrastructure improvements in Kenya that are enabled by funding from both regional and external donors. These programs have included modernizing and upgrading the Mombasa port, decreasing the time spent at border posts, and constructing logistics facilities to store and manage cargo. In terms of modernizing the Mombasa port, the project was initially expected to reduce the time it took to import goods through the port from 11 to 3.8 days. To date, it takes 6.5 days to import and 6.8 days to export goods through the port. Although falling short of the target, these data do point to progress.[82]

Evidently, Kenya, as the regional hegemon, has attempted to remedy the gaps in infrastructure that impede trade facilitation. General trends in infrastructure improvements among the CFTA-ratifying countries Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda contribute to my second hypothesis that countries in high-performing RTAs will be more willing and able to connect economic activities across the continent if they have already begun putting the necessary infrastructure in place.

In the EAC, non-hegemons that have not historically gained from regional integration have shown limited interest in seeing the CFTA realized. Interestingly, Tanzania has the second-highest GDP in the region after Kenya and contributes to intra-regional exports but has not ratified the CFTA. Although it has exhibited growth in GDP, trade, and infrastructure and might be considered another hegemon in the region, it focuses on relationships with external trading partners (the EU, China, etc.) and has earned a low score for commitment to regionalism from the Africa Regional Integration Index. Thus, although Tanzania might be expected to ratify based purely on the growth it has experienced as an EAC member, other indicators suggest that the country is not as interested in fostering regional partnerships as the three countries that have ratified.

In fact, Tanzania continually imposes high nontariff barriers on its EAC trading partners. For example, the Tanzanian Food and Drug Authority requires that countries exporting to Tanzania must register, relabel, and retest even the products already certified by the EAC. Tanzania requires that cigarettes manufactured in Kenya and exported to Tanzania must contain 75 percent local tobacco, another example of the country using nontariff barriers and rules of origin to maintain certain walls of protectionism.[83] Although Tanzania has shown economic progress and might be expected to ratify, it is not entirely anomalous to my hypotheses due to its apparent disinterest in fulfilling economic commitments to fellow EAC members.

Burundi, another non-hegemon that has not ratified the CFTA, remains a small country that cannot gain any significant traction in intra-regional trade and relies on external partners as destinations for its exports. South Sudan continues to be affected by internal conflict, and data on its economic progress remain limited. But like Burundi, South Sudan evidently does not have much potential for economic traction in the EAC or a larger arrangement.

Thus, the case of the EAC underscores the way in which hegemonic members of a high-performing RTA will be more likely to participate in expanding integration if they have simultaneously reaped trade gains in the region, demonstrated commitment to fostering regional partnerships, and improved infrastructure. Non-hegemons are less likely to participate.

Ratification by Members of SADC, a High-Performing RTA. SADC provides another case for examining the conditions under which members of a high-performing RTA are willing to partake in continental integration. (See Figure 5.) South Africa is the hegemon in the region, dominating both intra- and extra-regional trade, exhibiting high connectivity with other African markets, and boasting more developed infrastructure. Eswatini and Namibia, two other SADC members that have ratified the CFTA, are countries whose economies have relied on South Africa in the past, which shapes their interest in expanding regional integration. Eswatini and Namibia have also scored highly in terms of trade integration and appear to benefit from RTA involvement. Thus, the historical experience of these SADC members and their existing regional partnerships have influenced their willingness to expand regional integration.

Note that Zimbabwe only recently ratified the CFTA. As it is less eager to institute continental integration than the other three SADC ratifying countries, Zimbabwe reflects certain conditions outlined in my hypotheses but not others.

While SADC appears to produce a hegemon eager to foster greater regional trade similar to Kenya in the

Figure 5. SADC Members and Ratification of CFTA

State Type	Members	Ratification Status (As of April 4, 2019)
Hegemon	South Africa	Ratified
Non-Hegemons	Angola	Not Ratified
	Botswana	Not Ratified
	Comoros	Not Ratified
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Not Ratified
	Lesotho	Not Ratified
	Madagascar	Not Ratified
	Malawi	Not Ratified
	Mauritius	Not Ratified
	Mozambique	Not Ratified
	Namibia	Ratified
	Seychelles	Not Ratified
	Swaziland/Eswatini	Ratified
	Tanzania	Not Ratified
	Zambia	Not Ratified
	Zimbabwe	Ratified

Source: Trade Law Centre.

EAC, careful examination of South Africa's motives and behaviors within SADC reveal that it brings a different approach to expanding regional integration. South Africa primarily views regional partners as tools that help attract greater foreign trade and investment from industrialized nations outside the continent, a practice often referred to as "donor signaling."[84] Although significant volumes of trade flow through SADC, it is a different kind of "high-performing" RTA than the EAC, and South Africa's view of integration has detracted from the region's efforts to move along the path to development.

The case of SADC contributes evidence to my hypotheses that the countries in high-performing RTAs most willing to expand integration are members that have experienced trade gains and infrastructure improvements. Yet, South Africa's underlying motives differ from those of Kenya, which suggests that although hegemons from high-performing RTAs want to expand regional integration, they may lack the convergence of interests and the collective political will needed to successfully implement the CFTA.

South Africa serves as the regional hegemon and leader of trade, which fuels its interest in propelling integration across Africa. It exceeds the rest of SADC members in terms of GDP, contributing 50 percent of the region's total wealth. South Africa's standing as a hegemon in a region with such economic asymmetry provides the baseline condition from which it decides to enter into expanded integration schemes. While the other three CFTA-ratifying countries, Eswatini, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, do not come close to reaching the income level of South Africa, the data in Table 5 show that trade and exports make up a relatively high share of their GDP, which increases their stake in expanded trade opportunities on the continent.

Further, South Africa has excelled in engaging in trade with its SADC regional partners. It partakes in the highest share of intra-regional trade, exporting over $20 billion worth of goods to SADC members, which represents almost 60 percent of all intra-regional exports. (See Table 6.) Eswatini, Namibia, and Zimbabwe have contributed small amounts of intra-regional exports in comparison but have still indicated a level of interest in trading in the region, and the exports they do contribute make up a high percentage of the total goods they export to the world—54 percent for Namibia, 92 percent for Zimbabwe, and 81 percent for Eswatini. Thus, their integration in the regional market and the trade flows that result from this integration make up a significant part of their total trade and overall GDP.

While the data begin to shed light on Eswatini, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe as SADC members with a stake in intra-regional trade flows, the Africa Regional Integration Index also indicates that these members stand apart in their willingness and ability to facilitate regional integration. Possessing a high share of intra-regional trade and serving as a hub for moving trade across the continent, South Africa earns a perfect score in trade integration and surpasses the other SADC members in its cumulative regional integration score (Figure 6). Eswatini and Namibia also rank among the high scorers, particularly in terms of trade and infrastructure integration. Zimbabwe, the more recent ratifying country, has not exhibited much strength in terms of trade integration but appears to be the regional leader in productive integration. Thus, Zimbabwe likely seeks access to expanded supply chains though participation in the CFTA. The rankings of South Africa, Namibia, and Eswatini, as well as Zimbabwe to some extent, continue to show that in high-performing RTAs, the countries that have been more willing to expand regional integration have been the countries with a positive historical track record of trying to fulfil regional commitments.

South Africa has shown interest in continental integration by fostering a significant number of trade relationships with other African countries, but, upon closer examination, its relationships with external partners also seem to motivate its commitment to regional integration. South Africa has appeared committed to partnerships with neighboring countries insofar as they fuel its own trade gains and make it more attractive to external investors and trading partners. Although South Africa's role as hegemon has bolstered regional linkages, these linkages remain primarily a means for South Africa to use more peripheral SADC countries as destinations for its

Table 5. Income and Exports in SADC, 2017

SADC Member Country	GDP (Million US Dollars)	Share of Regional GDP	Total Merchandise Exports	Export Share of GDP
South Africa	$348,872	50%	$88,837	25%
Angola	$122,123	18%	$34,614	28%
Tanzania	$52,090	8%	$4,343	8%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	$37,642	5%	$7,765	21%
Zambia	$25,868	4%	$8,151	32%
Zimbabwe	$22,041	3%	$4,060	18%
Botswana	$17,407	3%	$5,899	34%
Mauritius	$13,266	2%	$2,361	18%
Namibia	$13,254	2%	$3,994	30%
Mozambique	$12,646	2%	$4,725	37%
Madagascar	$11,500	2%	$2,796	24%
Malawi	$6,303	1%	$941	15%
Swaziland/Eswatini	$4,434	1%	$2,016	45%
Lesotho	$2,578	0%	$1,033	40%
Seychelles	$1,498	0%	$568	38%
Comoros	$1,068	0%	$40	4%

Source: World Bank, "World Development Indicators," https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators.

manufactured exports that would not sell otherwise in the global market.[85] South Africa also uses SADC to vie for resources from large external trading partners. The phenomenon of South Africa holding together regional partnerships and using regional integration as leverage to gain more attention from external partners has become referred to as a hub-and-spoke model of trade.[86] Out of self-interest, South Africa drives integration persistence in SADC.

But apparently this is a two-way street. Not only does South Africa think the RTA will help it gain more external resources, but international partners such as the EU have specifically requested that South Africa put these resources toward propelling development in the region. South Africa's Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU reveals that, recently, many donors and external partners to South Africa insist that the funds they provide be channeled toward improving regional integration. They want to contribute to the African development agenda, and because studies have shown that South African growth has spill-over effects in SADC that are larger than global average spillovers, they encourage the hegemon to advance African development by fortifying regional partnerships.[87]

As a result, South Africa has been used as a middleman through which external partners channel funds for projects in other SADC countries. The EU has "made portions (up to 10%) of its aid programme with South Africa available for regional purposes and activities in third countries."[88] A joint country strategy paper prepared between the EU and South Africa for 2007–13 devoted more EU aid to regional and pan-African projects than to exclusively South African development projects.[89] South Africa encounters push factors from foreign entities to improve regional integration.

Table 6. SADC Intra-Regional Trade, 2015

SADC Member Country	Intra-Regional Export Volume (Million US Dollars)	Share of Total Regional Exports	Percentage of Country's Exports
South Africa	$20,439	59%	25%
Namibia	$2,519	7%	54%
Zimbabwe	$2,477	7%	92%
Botswana	$1,847	5%	29%
Zambia	$1,607	5%	23%
Swaziland/Eswatini	$1,414	4%	81%
Angola	$1,352	4%	4%
Tanzania	$1,031	3%	18%
Mozambique	$784	2%	25%
Mauritius	$420	1%	17%
Malawi	$325	1%	30%
Lesotho	$170	0%	29%
Madagascar	$130	0%	6%
Seychelles	$3	0%	1%

Note: No data are available for Comoros or the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 2015.
Source: International Trade Centre, "International Trade Statistics 2001–2019," http://www.intracen.org/itc/market-info-tools/trade-statistics/.

Considering the way in which South Africa has used regional integration as a means to satisfy donors, Sebastian Kraphol and Simon Fink go as far as calling South Africa a "Rambo" member of SADC that only fuels the regional arrangement to ensure continued investment and trade inflows from developed countries and trading blocs outside Africa. They assume that SADC's development path will stagnate as a result.[90]

Although the EAC and SADC both produce hegemons interested in furthering regional integration, South Africa's motives appear distinctly oriented toward maintaining and expanding its external partnerships. While in line with my hypothesis that the hegemon would want to expand regional integration due to its positive experience in its existing RTA and desire to continue reaping benefits from regional partnerships, South Africa's underlying motives have proved different from a hegemon like Kenya in the EAC and potentially harmful to the pan-African development agenda associated with the CFTA.

In addition to showing a record of commitment to regional trade integration, Eswatini, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (to a lesser extent) have improved their infrastructure, which has also placed them in a favorable position to expand continental integration. In terms of infrastructure quality measured by the African Infrastructure Development Index, South Africa ranks fourth among all African countries and second in SADC with a score of 78.5 (Figure 7). Advances in infrastructure only bolster South Africa's ability to partake in expanded regional integration.

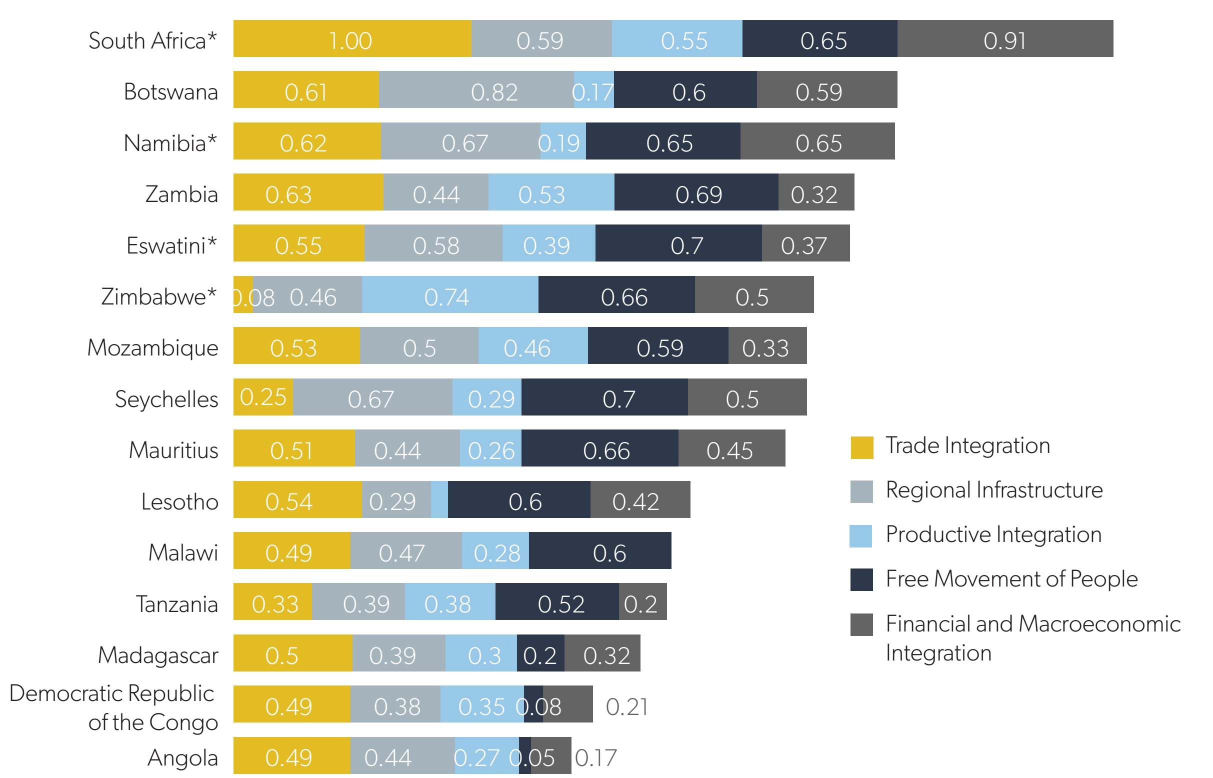
Zimbabwe, which ratified the CFTA later than the others, ranks seventh in the SADC in infrastructure development and has not improved infrastructure much over the 2004–18 period. Zimbabwe's lower performance represents an anomaly to my infrastructure hypothesis, which highlights that my hypotheses apply to states that are *most* willing and eager to participate in expanded regional integration.

Although Eswatini and Namibia also have exhibited comparatively weaker indicators for infrastructure, they still rank among the top scorers in SADC. Further, their economic activities and infrastructure projects have been closely tied to those of South Africa, which influences their decision to ratify the CFTA.

In the past, the so-called BLNS countries of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland (now Eswatini) delegated most authority and bargaining power to South Africa for regional trade decisions.[91] With CFTA ratification, the situation is more nuanced than these countries simply following South Africa's lead. Eswatini actually emerged as a ratifying country before South Africa, indicating that some SADC countries, even those in the BLNS bloc, may be starting to foster relationships outside the SADC region that do not rely so heavily on a donor-signaling hegemon. Botswana's and Lesotho's reluctance to join the CFTA contributes evidence that the BLNS countries are indeed moving away from their past reliance on South Africa.

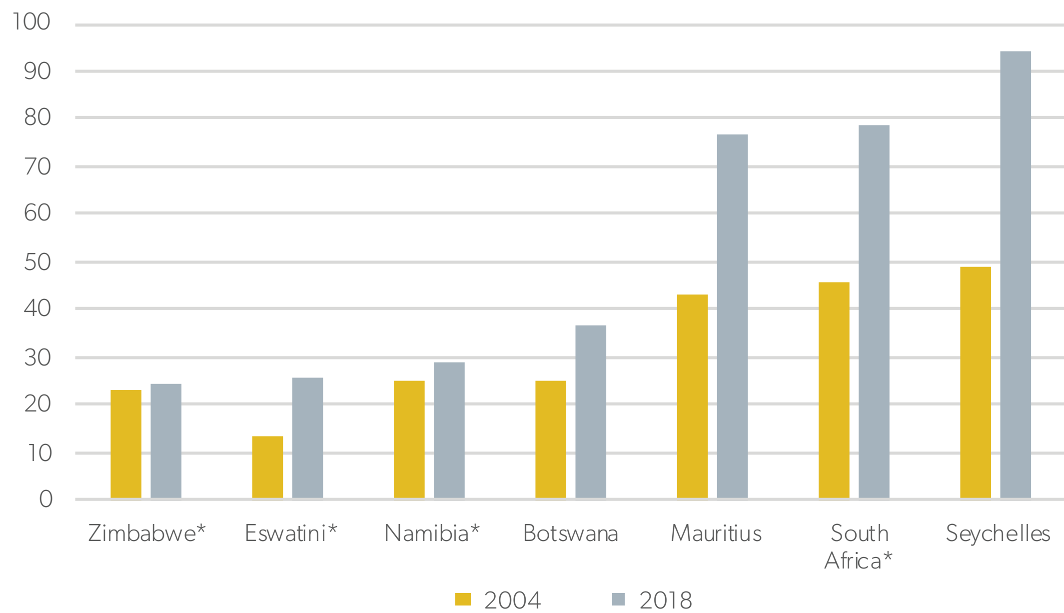
Botswana in particular appears to be on the cusp of qualifying as a leader of SADC but has not yet ratified the CFTA. It has indicated notable performance in regional integration and infrastructure development, as seen in Figures 6 and 7; thus, my theory would predict that Botswana would be eager to ratify. It has not been. While my hypotheses do not explain Botswana's lack of willingness to partake in the CFTA, it draws attention to the way

Figure 6. Regional Integration Index SADC, by Dimension Scores



Note: Comoros is not ranked. Membership in the West African Economic and Monetary Union gives countries a higher score.
*These states ratified the CFTA.
Source: Africa Regional Integration Index.

Figure 7. Africa Infrastructure Development Index, SADC Top Scores



Note: Infrastructure is scored on a scale of 0 to 100. *These states ratified the CFTA.
Source: Africa Infrastructure Development Index.

in which BLNS countries have moved away from blindly following South Africa's policy decisions and suggests growing skepticism of South Africa's regional leadership.

While my hypotheses generally explain the conditions under which certain SADC members have been motivated to ratify the CFTA, my analysis exposes tensions in SADC that will undermine the implementation of a continental trading bloc. Overall, South Africa is evidently the SADC hegemon. Its historical experience in SADC has allowed it to take advantage of intra-regional trade opportunities and foster crucial partnerships with neighboring countries. The more peripheral countries of Eswatini, Namibia, and Zimbabwe that have also ratified the CFTA have participated in intra-regional trade and shown integration progress based on the African Regional Integration Index. These indicators prop up my hypothesis that those that expand regional integration are the countries that display a strong integration track record and interest in forging regional partnerships in their preexisting RTA.

In the case of Zimbabwe, my infrastructure hypothesis does not hold as it does for South Africa, Eswatini, and Namibia. Also, although South Africa has continued to commit to its trading partners, it appears to be driven by its desire to attract and maintain outside trade and investment. It has led regional integration in SADC thus far, but its underlying motivations rooted primarily in self-interest must cause policymakers to question the extent to which South Africa and other SADC countries will actually merge their trade policies with the rest of the continent.

Ratification by Members of ECOWAS, a Low-Performing RTA. In ECOWAS, a relatively low-performing RTA, the countries most interested in ratifying the CFTA differ from the ratifying countries in the high-performing EAC and SADC. Most notably, ECOWAS's regional hegemon, Nigeria, has refused to ratify and remains engaged in heated negotiations. (See Figure 8.) On the other hand, the majority of non-hegemons in ECOWAS have

Figure 8. ECOWAS Members and Ratification of CFTA

State Type	Members	Ratification Status (As of April 4, 2019)
Hegemon	Nigeria	Not Ratified
Non-Hegemons	Benin	Not Ratified
	Burkina Faso	Not Ratified
	Cabo Verde	Not Ratified
	Côte d'Ivoire	Ratified
	The Gambia	Ratified
	Ghana	Ratified
	Guinea	Ratified
	Guinea Bissau	Not Ratified
	Liberia	Not Ratified
	Mali	Ratified
	Niger	Ratified
	Senegal	Ratified
	Sierra Leone	Ratified
	Togo	Ratified

Source: Trade Law Centre.

exhibited strong interest in implementing the larger integration scheme.

Historical experience in ECOWAS has profoundly affected members' perceptions of regionalism and their willingness to expand integration efforts. Sectors of the domestic political economy in Nigeria have played a significant role in shaping all ECOWAS members' view of the proposed CFTA plan. The fact that non-hegemons from the low-performing ECOWAS are the most interested in pursuing continental integration makes the CFTA's trajectory appear even more tenuous.

In ECOWAS, the countries that have moved to ratify the CFTA have been the less-developed, more peripheral countries, or the countries that I have categorized as non-hegemons. As seen in Table 7, these ratifying countries are indeed non-hegemons that fall in the low- to mid-range of incomes. Nigeria is the clear hegemon and most significant contributor to wealth, holding 66 percent of the region's total GDP. (See Table 7.) Despite Nigeria's hegemonic status, its exports make up a smaller percentage of its GDP, and it remains extremely reluctant to ratify the CFTA. Evidently, in a low-performing RTA, having the highest level of income is not a condition for expanding integration.

Members' experience in ECOWAS and past willingness to engage in intra-regional cooperation provide stronger explanations for why the regional non-hegemons have been eager to participate but Nigeria has been reluctant. Table 8 shows that the non-hegemons that have ratified the CFTA do not have the highest share of regional trade, but a number of them send a significant amount of their exports to regional partners. Additionally, although Nigeria is the regional hegemon in terms of GDP, it sends most

Table 7. Income and Exports of ECOWAS, 2017

ECOWAS Member Country	GDP (US Million Dollars)	Share of Regional GDP	Total Merchandise Exports	Export Share of GDP
Nigeria	$375,745	66%	$40,722	11%
Ghana	$58,997	10%	$14,359	24%
Côte d'Ivoire	$37,353	7%	$12,561	34%
Senegal	$21,070	4%	$2,989	14%
Mali	$15,334	3%	$1,903	12%
Burkina Faso	$12,323	2%	$2,810	23%
Guinea	$10,473	2%	$5,968	57%
Benin	$9,247	2%	$732	8%
Niger	$8,120	1%	$1,992	25%
Togo	$4,758	1%	$749	16%
Sierra Leone	$3,775	1%	$103	3%
Liberia	$3,285	1%	$195	6%
Cabo Verde	$1,773	0%	$50	3%
The Gambia	$1,489	0%	$22	2%
Guinea Bissau	$1,347	0%	$189	14%

Source: World Bank, "World Development Indicators," https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators; and International Trade Centre, "International Trade Statistics 2001–2019," http://www.intracen.org/itc/market-info-tools/trade-statistics/.

of its exports to extra-regional partners in the form of oil and minerals and does not dominate intra-regional trade to the extent that Kenya or South Africa do in the EAC and SADC, respectively. Nigeria accounts for only 24 percent of exports within its trading bloc, while Kenya accounts for 48 percent and South Africa 50 percent.

Nigeria's participation in regional trade flows has been lackluster compared to other RTA hegemons, but ECOWAS non-hegemons have tried to uphold the integration scheme regardless. They have indicated some interest in fortifying regional integration, as many of them rank highly across the five dimensions of the African Regional Integration Index seen in Figure 9. Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Senegal, Niger, and Ghana are all non-hegemons that have nonetheless ranked as the top-five countries committed to integration in ECOWAS and have been willing to ratify the CFTA. It appears that, although these countries remain at a disadvantage in terms of GDP, they have sought to move along the path to development by upholding regional integration standards. Nigeria earned a perfect score in the dimension of trade integration simply because it holds the highest share of intra-regional exports, but it has earned lower scores along other dimensions, particularly that of productive integration. Nigeria's low implementation of ECOWAS initiatives has shaped both its own approach to expanding regional integration and that of the non-hegemons.

Given its hegemonic role in ECOWAS, Nigeria's decision not to ratify the CFTA and its effect on the actions of non-hegemons warrants further exploration. Nigeria continues to refuse to ratify even though models have projected it to reap some of the largest gains from the agreement. According to the UN Commission on Trade and Development, complete intra-continental liberalization would

Table 8. ECOWAS Intra-Regional Trade, 2017

ECOWAS Member Country	Intra-Regional Export Volume (Million US Dollars)	Share of Total Regional Exports	Percentage of Country's Exports
Nigeria	$2,400	24%	6%
Côte d'Ivoire	$2,234	22%	18%
Niger	$1,596	16%	80%
Senegal	$1,181	12%	40%
Ghana	$1,082	11%	8%
Togo	$490	5%	65%
Mali	$337	3%	18%
Burkina Faso	$335	3%	12%
Liberia	$172	2%	88%
Benin	$146	1%	20%
Sierra Leone	$32	0%	31%
The Gambia	$9	0%	40%
Cabo Verde	$0.04	0%	0%

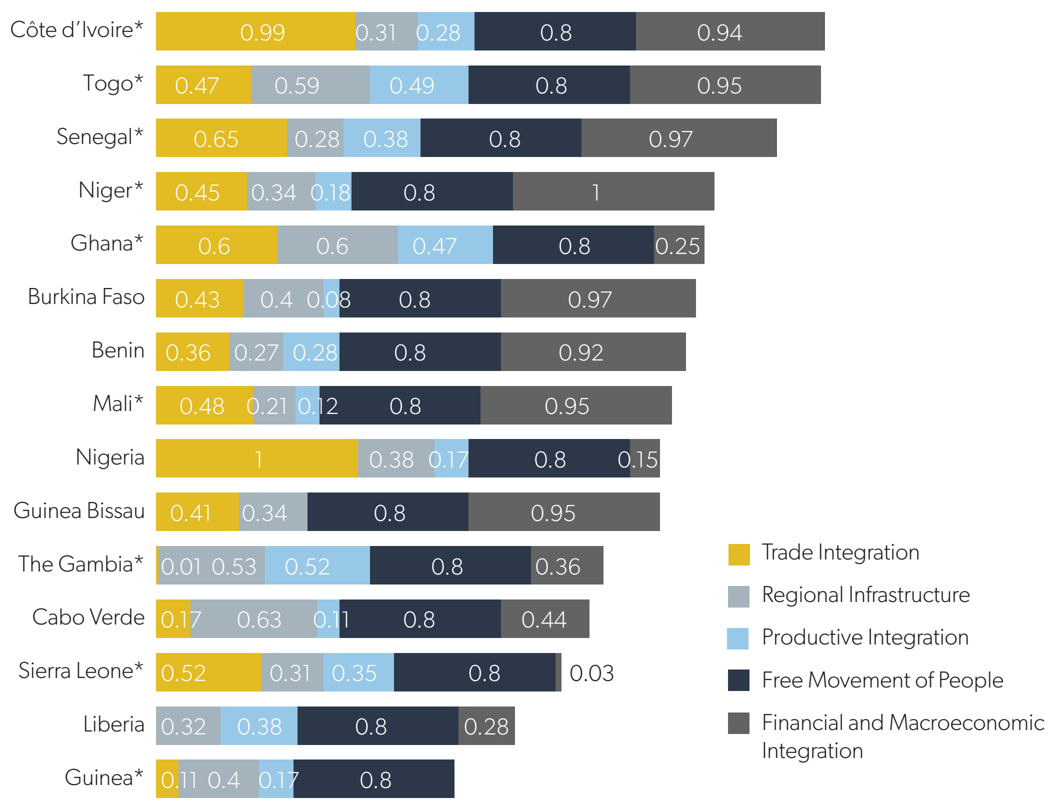
Note: No data are available for Guinea intra-regional trade share.
Source: International Trade Centre, "International Trade Statistics 2001–2019," http://www.intracen.org/itc/market-info-tools/trade-statistics/.

generate a one-off increase in global welfare of $7.3 billion in 2025, and the largest gains are expected from South Africa ($5.7 billion), followed by Nigeria ($2 billion) and Kenya ($1.3 billion).[92] Nigeria's hesitation to ratify reveals that participation in expanding regional integration does not simply rely on the gross anticipated gains; a country's historical experience in an existing RTA, infrastructure readiness, and support from the domestic political economy all prove to be crucial foundations for expanding integration.

Nigeria remains firm in its decision to reject continental integration efforts because historically it has been suspicious of supranational institutions and has displayed a record of implementing protectionist measures. ECOWAS procedures and trade relationships have largely been shaped by members' collective memory of colonialism, and Nigeria in particular places a strong emphasis on noninterference with national sovereignty. A hallmark of ECOWAS membership is that state power can be transferred or exercised by a supranational entity only if allowed by clear constitutional law.[93] As ECOWAS hegemon, Nigeria has sought to maintain policies that preserve the distinct economic and political identities of member states and continually promotes the principle of "collective self-reliance."[94] Concerned that supranational institutions and expanded trade relationships will threaten the integrity of its borders or interfere with its sovereignty, Nigeria prioritizes its domestic agenda over that of the RTA and often uses tools of protectionism to ensure that external forces will not harm the integrity of its economy.

Nigeria does not closely align with its weak regional partners because it has always approached development from the perspective that African countries compete against each other for trade and investment. In early discussions of the tariff liberalization strategy in ECOWAS, at a conference in 1992, Nigerian policymakers described development as "a battle that favours only the strong and innovative. Capital will always move toward places where

Figure 9. Regional Integration Index ECOWAS, by Dimension Scores



Note: Membership in the West African Economic and Monetary Union gives countries a higher score. *These states ratified the CFTA.
Source: Africa Regional Integration Index.

returns are attractive and opportunities for growth and expansion good."[95]

Taking this approach, Nigeria has often put up barriers of protectionism to further its domestic development agenda. "Last April, Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari signaled a protectionist stance on trade matters while defending his country's refusal to sign the ECOWAS-EU Economic Partnership Agreement."[96] Since 1992, Nigeria has been a reluctant participant in regional partnerships and tended toward protectionism, even when these policies conflict with the standards set forth in ECOWAS, which provides evidence that state identities are not as quick to change or as malleable as policymakers have suggested during CFTA negotiations.

Problems in key sectors of Nigeria's domestic economy have only contributed to its tendency toward protectionism and its unwillingness to fortify regional partnerships. As early as the 1992 Conference on the Trade Liberalization Scheme of ECOWAS, Nigerian policymakers exhibited lack of coordination with domestic firms and industries. At this conference, policymakers began to recognize that a sharp disconnect existed between the trade opportunities available to Nigerian exporters and their actual knowledge and practice of these policies that could be used to their advantage. At the conference, the Nigerian minister of commerce and tourism remarked:

> It is, however, lamentable that despite the fact that Nigeria is one of the only three countries that have fully paid their assessment contributions into the compensation fund, none of our qualified products has, so far, been exported under the scheme. This is probably because exporters are either yet to be sure of the profitability of the sub-regional market or they are not aware that the necessary export documents like the "certificate of origin" etc. are already available with the NEPC, or simply, they are not yet familiar with the modalities of the programme.[97]

Although Nigerian exporters today may be more aware of the trade opportunities available under the regional liberalization scheme, they remain reluctant to take advantage of them for fear that any sort of liberalization will harm domestic industry. The CFTA's proposal for greater liberalization has only magnified this fear. The Nigeria Labour Congress has been particularly concerned about working conditions and how continental liberalization might affect domestic wages.[98] Presented with the opportunity to join the CFTA and participate in continent-wide liberalization, "Nigerian unions have warned that free trade may open a floodgate for cheap imported goods that could atrophy Nigeria's nascent industrial base."[99] The Labour Congress has referred to the CFTA as a "radioactive neo-liberal policy initiative" and is currently engaged in a heated debate with other Nigerian policymakers who support ratification and view the CFTA as a viable opportunity for growth.[100] Pushback from unions has influenced Nigeria's unwillingness to lead within ECOWAS and its rejection of the CFTA proposal. This phenomenon fuels my hypothesis that the hegemon in a low-performing RTA will allow its domestic political economy to drive its decision to refrain from expanded regional integration schemes.

Nigeria's lack of commitment to regional integration and historical use of protectionist measures have affected the non-hegemonic members of the trading bloc. Smaller, more peripheral countries are still looking for a strategy of economic emancipation because Nigeria's protectionism has stifled the potential of intra-ECOWAS trade and has not brought the development trends they have been seeking. According to Nigerian policymakers themselves, "The situation of the countries in the ECOWAS sub-region is more precarious because most of them are today on the verge of economic extinction."[101] These non-hegemons are desperate for any opportunity to become more active and dynamic players in African and global markets. They desire to use regional integration as a tool for development, which has been seen in their already high integration index scores, but they hope to transcend the constraints in ECOWAS by participating in an integration scheme that spans the entire continent.

Further, these non-hegemons anticipate that the CFTA will propel the infrastructure advancement that ECOWAS could not spur and increase demand for their raw materials from the larger, more developed African countries that do not keep up as many protectionist barriers as the ECOWAS members' closest manufacturing hub, Nigeria. As seen in Table 9, the ratifying non-hegemons in ECOWAS span the spectrum of infrastructure development, but their scores remain low and indicate the need for much improvement to facilitate cross-border trade.

The ECOWAS non-hegemons support my hypotheses that in a low-performing RTA, non-hegemons will participate out of desire to expand their opportunities for trade and investment flows outside the region, especially when growth potential has been stifled by the trade decisions of a protectionist hegemon such as Nigeria. These non-hegemons have already demonstrated interest in fulfilling RTA standards, as seen in the concentration of non-hegemons in the top rankings of the African Regional Integration Index for ECOWAS. They have shown the need for infrastructure enhancement but intend to find investment and financial support for these projects through an extended integration scheme such as the CFTA. Hopeful that the CFTA represents a new opportunity for development, most non-hegemons have ratified.

On the other hand, the hegemon Nigeria and sectors of its domestic economy have been deeply critical of the CFTA proposal. Even if Nigeria were to ratify, its profile still makes it a reluctant member of integration schemes. While it may be convinced to agree

Table 9. Infrastructure Development Index, ECOWAS

ECOWAS Member	Infrastructure Score, 2018
Cabo Verde	47.96
Ghana	28.84
The Gambia	28.61
Senegal	25.97
Nigeria	22.37
Côte d'Ivoire	21.96
Burkina Faso	17.05
Benin	16.23
Mali	15.95
Guinea	14.79
Liberia	14.48
Guinea Bissau	13.54
Togo	12.97
Sierra Leone	9.94
Niger	5.51

Source: African Infrastructure Development Index.

to the CFTA for the sake of indicating surface-level progress toward the goals of the Abuja Treaty, its perception of regional integration will not be malleable enough to seamlessly transition to implementing the CFTA. Even under the ECOWAS trade regime, Nigeria has been reluctant to reduce import duties and has retreated from fostering partnerships across the continent.

Thus, when implementing the CFTA, Nigeria would not respond well to a bottom-up approach that involves it having to reform and merge policy with other states and RTAs. A top-down approach in which the CFTA constructs a supranational institution that legally imposes integration standards will not be plausible or well received by Nigeria either. Nigeria remains protective of its borders, its trade, and its developing industry, indicating that even if it does ratify, it will not agree to concede any sovereignty to such a supranational institution. The profiles of the ECOWAS states that have been willing and unwilling to ratify pose significant challenges to the implementation success of the continental agreement.

Alternative Arguments and Areas for Further Research

This report has explored patterns in state willingness to expand regional integration in Africa, a continent that continues to face various economic, political, and security-related obstacles to development. Through my research, I found that historic experience in existing RTAs and trends in infrastructure development serve as strong predictive variables. Yet, considering the immense complexity of trade relationships, ongoing development efforts, and political dynamics throughout Africa, historic experience and infrastructure do not provide the only explanations for CFTA participation.

In terms of contributing economic factors, it is worth conducting further research on how manufacturing sectors influence state participation and the agreement's trajectory. The CFTA is projected to bolster manufacturing more than any other sector, so some of the states with emerging industrial bases have ratified. Yet, manufacturing in many of these states remains in its early stages of development, and African countries tend to uphold protectionist measures for infant industry. For this reason, CFTA-ratifying countries, especially non-hegemons, are not likely to remove all tariffs on industrial goods. Thus, further research must be conducted on whether the ratifying countries actually anticipate the CFTA to boost their manufacturing sectors or if they intend to negotiate exceptions and exemptions for manufactured products. The relationship between manufacturing and protectionism will significantly influence the chances of achieving a legitimate, functional CFTA.

While I look primarily at economic indicators, political factors such as regime type, political leadership, public opinion, and ethnic conflict also contribute to or detract from a state's perception of the value of an agreement like the CFTA. My own exploration thus far has revealed the continued relevance of the colonial legacy in preventing African states from being willing and able to converge policy in the way necessary for a continental scheme to work. Additionally, persisting conflicts and violence in certain African regions have caused policy delays and made RTA implementation a lesser priority, which further reduces the likelihood of successful CFTA enforcement. While I have included only high-level observations about African politics and security dynamics, the salience of these motives provides ample opportunity for continued research as the CFTA moves forward.

Additionally, China often enters conversations about development in Africa. Not only has China contributed to infrastructure projects in the EAC, but its influence reaches across the continent. China ostensibly offers win-win opportunities for development that have shifted African countries' focus away from internal strategies and made RTA efforts largely defunct. Existing RTAs appear to have become "mere acronyms" in part because African countries prioritize the loans and aid made available by China. Most recently, African countries have begun to realize that Chinese aid is not as "win-win" as they initially thought and now recognize a conflict between relying on the Chinese and trying to strengthen independent, internal development strategies.[102]

In the looming presence of China, the creation of the African CFTA could mean a number of things. On the one hand, African countries may be forming the CFTA to satisfy Western donors who want to see movement away from reliance on China. In this case, the CFTA itself could be a form of donor signaling, and African countries could still intend to lean on Chinese loans and aid programs. On the other hand, it could be that African countries, realizing the drawbacks of accepting Chinese assistance, are now crafting a more serious inward-looking development plan.

It could be that African countries, realizing the drawbacks of accepting Chinese assistance, are now crafting a more serious inward-looking development plan.

Whether the CFTA has resulted from the first or second narrative, ties to China influence the decision-making of African states and present another significant roadblock to the plan's actual implementation. Issues ranging from industry protection to political instability to Chinese influence persist across Africa and must also be considered relevant to the trajectory and feasibility of continental integration. Further research in these areas will contribute to filling the gaps that remain in the hypotheses explored in this research project.

Conclusion

Although African trade and development are extremely complex topics that require consideration from multiple angles, my research uncovers distinct patterns in the types of states most willing to participate in continental integration and renounces the feasibility of an agreement like the CFTA. Existing African RTAs have indeed met varying levels of success, some emerging as higher performing than others. The willingness of certain states to pursue continental integration has largely been shaped by their historic experiences in these smaller RTAs.

My hypotheses predicted that in a high-performing RTA, the states most willing to ratify would be hegemons with a track record of commitment to integration efforts and infrastructure improvements. The empirics from both the EAC and SADC show that their respective regional hegemons, Kenya and South Africa, have been two of the countries most motivated to ratify the CFTA. While a few more peripheral members of these two trading blocs have also ratified, their interest in expanding regional integration also appears to be influenced by a preference for intra-regional trade and strides in infrastructure development.

ECOWAS provides an example of a low-performing RTA in which the non-hegemons are the countries that have chosen to ratify the CFTA. Most notably, Nigeria, the ECOWAS hegemon, has been disinterested in furthering continental integration due to resistance from key domestic industries and its reliance on protectionism as a means of appeasement. Sharp differences exist among the countries that have begun to push for further integration, signaling unavoidable challenges for the CFTA ahead.

The two distinct groups most willing to expand integration—the hegemons of high-performing RTAs and the non-hegemons of low-performing RTAs—show disparities in their particular motivations that cannot easily be reconciled. To date, 22 counties have ratified the CFTA, and only 22 are needed to put the plan into force, meaning that regardless of these disparities, policymakers will soon move ahead with trying to merge policies across the continent. Even more countries will likely bandwagon and ratify, viewing the CFTA as the logical next step in the African development agenda. But, just as the quotation at the beginning of this report points out, getting these countries to agree to the integration scheme on paper is not the difficult part; subsequent implementation is. Given my analysis of the countries most interested in participating, the CFTA's implementation trajectory is even more tenuous than policymakers are willing to acknowledge.

As of right now, policymakers foresee the execution of the CFTA taking one of two routes: bottom-up or top-down. Considering my review of the existing literature and my own evaluation of the profiles of ratifying states, these two routes will inevitably involve roadblocks. Currently, the CFTA proposes a more bottom-up strategy of harmonizing existing RTA policies and bridging gaps that have prevented smooth transactions in the continent in the past. Although the UN calls this a win-win solution for all countries involved, the range of state profiles at the negotiating table shows that consensus on implementation will be difficult to accomplish, and the non-hegemons of low-performing RTAs are the most likely to find themselves and their economic interests sidelined in this process.

The alternative option, a top-down approach, would in theory streamline the implementation process, but in practice it is untenable. To elicit strong commitment and expedient policy action from members, the CFTA needs a strong supranational entity with monitoring and enforcement power. Without this common authority, incentives to coordinate will be limited. But instituting such a supranational entity with real enforcement power remains near impossible. Most African countries protect national sovereignty above all else due to their perception of the fragility of political independence following a long history of colonialism and more recent instances of extractive, neocolonial activities. Thus, a top-down approach that would require individual member states to delegate sovereignty to a supranational institution also lacks feasibility.

Although the CFTA will soon move into the enforcement phase, progress in coordinating policy will move slowly or break down altogether due to the mixed profiles of ratifying states and the apparent obstacles to both bottom-up and top-down approaches. With low chances of implementation efficacy or success, the CFTA does not provide a viable development strategy for Africa.

While African development targets set forth in the Abuja Treaty and the AU's more recent Agenda 2063 provide a timeline and vision for what African nations should strive for in terms of economic integration and growth, moving toward a cross-continental arrangement appears to only further complicate Africa's development path. An agreement as extensive as the CFTA, which will establish the second-largest free trade area after the WTO, only reintroduces the multilateral collective action problems that African countries sought to avoid at the global level in the first place.

By highlighting the mixed profiles of African countries most willing to participate in the CFTA and the way in which they multiply implementation challenges, my research suggests the need for an alternative tool for achieving ambitious African development goals than mega-regionalism. Although the economic statuses of African countries have become even more dire and mega-regionalism has emerged as the trade regime of choice across the globe, African policymakers must seriously consider the feasibility and benefit of continuing to rely on complex RTAs as development policies.

This report intends to highlight the urgent need to reevaluate the regional integration approach to development in Africa. While scholars have always acknowledged that RTAs bring both opportunities and challenges, in the case of the CFTA, the challenges are steep if not insurmountable. The mixed profiles of the states involved only exacerbate coordination difficulties. Although imitating global trends in mega-regionalism has been appealing to individual African countries and the AU, problems in the EU and other RTAs around the world have revealed that fault lines exist in large regional arrangements. My research suggests that it is time to craft more innovative solutions to Africa's continuing trade and development challenges.

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2. World Trade Organization, Regional Trade Agreements Database, http://rtais.wto.org/UI/Charts.aspx. These statistics reflect the "Cumulative Number of Physical RTAs in Force" acknowledged by the WTO in each year.

3. Kerry A. Chase, *Trading Blocs: States, Firms, and Regions in the World Economy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 1. In this report, I use the terms "RTA" and "regional trading bloc" to refer to a trade agreement among countries located in a specific geographic area that, at minimum, includes stipulations about tariffs but often includes other prescriptions that members of the agreement must follow. An RTA can take several forms: It can be a customs union in which members eliminate tariffs among themselves and establish a common external tariff, a preferential trade agreement in which members show tariff preference toward other members but do not agree on a common external tariff, or a free trade area in which members eliminate tariffs among themselves but maintain autonomy in setting external tariffs.

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8. Jagdish Bhagwati, *Termites in the Trading System: How Preferential Agreements Undermine Free Trade* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 54. Bhagwati takes a negative view of RTAs and sparks the debate on whether they actually serve as "building blocks" or "stumbling blocks" to free trade.

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14. Yang and Gupta, "Regional Trade Arrangements in Africa," 4.

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18. The CFTA falls under the category of RTA but more specifically intends to establish a free trade area, meaning "members eliminate all restrictions on their mutual trade but retain separate, autonomous external trade policies." Chase, *Trading Blocs*, 1.

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