



## Economic Integration in Africa: African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and Border Security in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Nigeria faces security challenges due to its porous border, which allows illegal materials, arms, and weapons to be smuggled into the country. However, border security in Nigeria could become complicated with the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), a free trade deal among African nations. This study aims to analyse the policy framework of AfCFTA and examine its implications for Nigeria's border security. Structural function theory was used as the theoretical framework for situating the study. The findings, based on secondary sources, indicate that the AfCFTA aims to enhance intra-African trade by providing Nigeria and its member states with a comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement that encompasses trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property, and competition policy. Despite these positive goals, the results also reveal that economic progress may be unrealistic given the Nigerian border's porousness, which has contributed to the growth of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), irregular migrant flows, drug trafficking, etc. For Nigeria to benefit from the AfCFTA, the study suggests that the country's porous border should be tightly secured to prevent the exacerbation of border problems.

**Keywords:** AfCFTA; Economic Integration; Border Security; Cross-Border Crime; Nigeria

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## 1. Statement of the Problem

Africa is a crucial region on the global map, being the continent with the second-highest population. Natural resources such as diamonds, sugar, salt, gold, iron, cobalt, uranium, copper, bauxite, silver, and petroleum are abundant in Africa (Mazrui, 1980; Kauffman, 2012; Irwin, 2015). Africa's oil reserves increased 150 percent between 1980 and 2012, and the continent possesses the most strategic nuclear ores, including copper, gold, and others (Irwin, 2015; Lebert, 2015). With less than 3% of global trade and GDP, Africa is among the poorest continents despite its economic potential (Lebert 2015; Kauffman, 2012). To provide countries on the African continent with the opportunity to economically integrate into the global economy, alleviate poverty, encourage inclusion, and take advantage of the development and trading of resources, the AfCFTA was launched on May 30, 2019 (African Union Commission, 2019; Nwafor, 2019).

As Africa's largest economy, Nigeria continues to play a significant role in the economics of the majority of African nations (Friedman, 2014; Terwase, Abdul-Talib, Zengeni, 2014). Nigeria's GDP in the first quarter of 2024 was N58.86 trillion, making it the 27th largest economy globally (Mkandawire, 2024). Nigeria also assumes a leadership role on the continent through its Afrocentric foreign policy (Anochiwa and Maduka, 2014; Ogunnubi, 2017). Nonetheless, irregular migrant entry from neighbouring countries and unofficial cross-border trade are made possible by Nigeria's inadequately unguarded borders (Kalu, 2010; Shalangwa, 2013). Due to the free trade agreement between states in Africa, Nigeria tends to suffer from greater insecurity problems because of its porous border through which illegal materials, SALW, irregular migration, human and child trafficking, etc., are being smuggled into the country, placing more threat to the nation's security (Murtala, 2018; Shalangwa, 2013).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Freedom of Movement Protocol has been the subject of related research on border security and economic integration in Africa (Opanike, Aduloju, Adenipekun, 2015). The findings of the study demonstrated that criminal networks' operations across the region were made possible by the porousness of West African borders. The implication of the AfCFTA on Nigeria's national security issues was the objective of another study (Asogwa and Nnamchi, 2019). The study revealed that the Nigerian government should be cautious with the AfCFTA agreement, especially with reference to the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, to avoid irregular movement of goods and persons. The causes and consequences of insecurity in Nigeria's border communities have also been studied by Shalangwa (2013), Mobolaji and Alabi (2017), and Murtala

(2018). The findings of these studies demonstrated that cross-border banditry in Nigeria was made easier by the migration of rebels from neighbouring nations in the Lake Chad region and the smuggling of weapons in border communities. Studies on the AfCFTA and Nigeria's border security are, nevertheless, scant or non-existent. Thus, the purpose of this study is to close this gap. The study's objectives are to analyse the policy framework of the AfCFTA and examine its implications for Nigeria's border security.

The study is divided into five sections. The statement of the problem is the first section of this study, which differs from earlier research. The literature review, which is the second section, reviews related studies and explains the meaning of the concepts employed in this study. The third section focuses on the theory used to situate the study. The fourth section is the methodology, which describes the research approach and the steps involved in gathering and analysing data. The findings of the study are discussed in the fifth section, while the last section is the conclusion of the study, which summarises the study's findings.

## **2. Conceptual Review**

### **2.1. Economic Integration**

To achieve and secure a set of economic objectives, two or more states within a broadly defined physical area reduce trade barriers through a process known as economic integration (El-Agraa, 1998; Nokaneng, 2009). Another way to describe economic integration is the merger of economic guidelines of different states through the broad or partial elimination of tariffs and non-tariff trade restrictions (Sapir, 2005; Kyambalesa and Houngnikpo, 2006). By removing trade barriers and coordinating fiscal and monetary policies, treaties between nations promote economic integration and a more integrated global economy (Balassa, 1976; Baldwin, 2005).

When a country liberalises and integrates its economy with other nations, it enables them to trade and specialise in one aspect of the economy without government interference (Rwegarissa, 1996; Kyambalesa and Houngnikpo, 2006). Through economic integration, the economy of a nation becomes more efficient as trade costs decline and commodities and services become more widely available (Nokaneng, 2009). Other benefits of economic integration include increased market expansion, free labour mobility, and technological exchange (Balassa, 1976; Nokaneng, 2009).

Economic integration can take several forms. Throughout the literature, the following forms are most commonly mentioned.

(a) Preferential Trade Agreements (FTAs): Under these agreements, member countries maintain their usual level of trade restrictions with third parties while receiving preferential treatment or tariff reductions under quantitative trade restrictions with other member countries (Karakaya and Cooke, 2002). These agreements typically only cover one product group and are unilateral.

(b) Free Trade Areas (FTAs): These are accords whereby participating nations eliminate trade restrictions among themselves while preserving their separate national trade restrictions with third parties (Balassa, 1976). Control of trade flows among the various partners in the free trade agreement is essential because of the various forms of discrimination against third parties (Karakaya and Cooke, 2002).

(c) Customs Unions (CUs): These agreements create a standard set of tariffs to be applied to third parties and remove all trade restrictions among participating countries (Healey, 1995). This eliminates the need for customs control and the application of intra-Community norms of origin (Thompson, 1993; Healey, 1995).

(d) Common Markets (CMs): These are arrangements that allow all the factors of production to move freely while combining all the traits that define a CU. For the same reason, members of a CM create standard guidelines for regulating factor transfers with third nations (Balassa, 1976; Thompson, 1993).

(e) Economic Unions (EUs): The most comprehensive type of economic integration is represented by Economic Unions (EUs). In addition to having all of the traits of a CM, EUs also entail the development of a common foreign policy pattern and the full harmonisation of monetary, fiscal, industrial, and welfare policies (Rwegarissa, 1996).

## **2.2. Border security**

Border security involves the practices governments use to control who can move, live, work, and cross into or out of a territory. It includes the laws, institutions, practices, technologies, and personnel that governments (and other actors) use to manage the cross-border movement of people, goods, and information. Recently, modern border security has shifted from focusing solely on territorial defence to addressing issues that affect migrants' lives, such as biometric identification, visa policy, trade regulation, public health, and humanitarian responses (Wang, Wu, Zhou, and Fu, 2024; Cayenne, 2025). Amelung and Galis (2023) also highlighted three key trends of modern border security: (a) increased digitalisation and

biometric surveillance of movement; (b) political securitisation and crisis framing that often lead to stricter enforcement; and (c) constant humanitarian and legal tensions when state security measures clash with human rights and lived experiences. Therefore, modern border security is multidimensional with economic, technological, legal, physical, and social layers operating simultaneously. Some types of border security include the following:

(a) **Physical measures:** Physical measures are to prevent irregular movement and create controlled entry points. Examples include walls, fences, checkpoints, naval patrols, and physical barriers (Zarhloule, 2025).

(b) **Legal-institutional measures:** Legal-institutional measures define who enters and stays in a country and under what conditions. e.g, visa policy, asylum procedure rules, detention laws, readmission agreements, bilateral migration pacts (Collrin and Bauder, 2025).

(c) **Technological measures:** Technological measures automate identity checks, process entries faster, and target interventions. Examples are biometrics, facial recognition, watchlists, drones, and predictive analytics (Humphris, Hudson, and Bazurli, 2025).

(d) **Surveillance and intelligence sharing:** The purpose is to coordinate interdiction, enforcement, and interdiction across authorities. Examples include Frontex/INTERPOL collaboration, cross-border databases, and maritime tracking (Cayenne, 2025).

(e) **Economic and administrative controls:** Economic and administrative controls ensure limited flows of goods and deter irregular migration simplification. e.g, tariffs, trade inspections, and sanctions on smuggling networks (Su, 2024).

(f) **Soft power and diplomacy:** Soft power and diplomacy externalise migration management and limit influxes at home borders. e.g, migration partnerships, readmission agreements with transit states, and funding border control abroad (Zarhloule, 2025).

### **2.3. Cross-Border Crime**

Cross-border crime is defined as organised crime that occurs at a country's border by ignoring or abusing border security information (Adetula, 2008; Abia, 2013). Aluko (2012) states that the activities of organised gangs of human traffickers who receive intermittent support from both local and organised sources across multiple countries can likewise be categorised as cross-border crime. Kalu (2010) asserts that

social peace, human security, democracy, sub-regional development, and integration are all seriously threatened by cross-border crime. The tensions that have characterised life on the boundary of the West African subregion are made worse by the activities of cultists, rebel groups, transnational criminals, kidnappers, smugglers, arms smugglers, and other social outcasts (Kalu, 2010; Abia, 2013).

Collaboration between law enforcement and authorities on both sides of the border is crucial in combating the threat posed by armed groups at the border. These collaborations can be achieved through initiatives such as consistent communication, information exchange, concurrent research, and the application of new technologies that enable even greater force linkage (Bequai, 1979; Markina and Saar, 2004). This is required since transnational crime has become more varied, intricate, and global due to the increasing role of technology in organised crime, which presents law enforcement with significant challenges (Bequai, 1979; Markina and Saar, 2004).

#### **2.4. Thematic Review: Economic Integration in Africa: Constraints and Challenges**

Africa's pursuit of economic integration through regional and continental trade agreements offers the promise of shared prosperity, including trade facilitation, lower transaction costs, and deeper value chains, which can raise incomes and create job opportunities. However, the continent's porous borders and security challenges remain a paradox, such that the same integration that promotes trade also exposes vulnerabilities when borders are weakly managed and security issues persist. Still, the World Bank (2020) estimates that a Pan-African trade framework like AfCFTA could reduce poverty in Africa and generate \$450 billion in income by 2035. The following are the established economic integrations in Africa:

- (a) The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional and economic union comprising fifteen West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Established in 1975, its primary goal is to promote economic integration and cooperation among its member states, to improve living standards, and to foster economic development in the region.
- (b) West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) operates as a customs and currency union among eight countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo) using the CFA franc, promoting economic competitiveness, macroeconomic convergence, and harmonized legal frameworks.

(c) Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) included 21 member states (Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). COMESA evolved from a preferential trade area to a free trade zone, and a common visa to facilitate the free movement of people, goods, and services among member states.

(d) Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) comprises 29 member states including, Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Somalia, South Sudan, and Central African Republic. The TFTA aims to boost economic integration and intra-African trade by reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

(e) The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a regional organization focused on promoting socio-economic cooperation and integration among 16 southern African states (Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). Established in 1980, SADC's key objectives are to facilitate cooperation and integration among member states.

(f) The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a Pan- African trade framework that aims to unify all 55 African Union member states into a single market for goods and services, supported by a Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and an eventual Africa-wide customs union

The constraints and challenges of economic integrations in Africa are highlighted as follows:

(a) **Border Insecurity:** Borders in Africa often lie at the confluence of crime, conflict, and politics. Porous borders facilitate human trafficking, smuggling, and irregular migration, particularly in fragile states, undermining both trade and security (Accord, 2023).

(b) **Kidnapping and Organized Crime:** Conflict in key corridors, particularly in the "triangle of death" of the Lake Chad region spanning among Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria borders, has fuelled kidnapping, arms trafficking, and cattle rustling, straining local economies and exacerbating instability (Accord, 2023).

(c) **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Inadequate infrastructure remains a barrier, accounting for about 60% of transport costs, particularly for landlocked states (Limão and Venables, 2001). Poor roads, rail, energy, and logistics raise transport and trade costs, especially for landlocked countries, including the Central African Republic, Chad, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, South Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, making international trade more challenging and costly due to their dependence on neighbours for port access (Faye, McArthur, Sachs and Snow, 2004).

(d) **Macroeconomic divergence:** African economies have diverse inflation rates, fiscal deficits, and debt levels. Olubiyi and Bolarinwa (2018) examine data from Egypt, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, and South Africa between 1994–2015 based on Autoregressive Distributed Lag. Results from the study indicate country and period-specific effects of fiscal deficits on inflation. While Nigeria and South Africa show positive short-run and long-run impacts, Kenya shows a negative short-run effect, and Egypt shows no effect. To this end, macroeconomic shocks affect African countries differently, making a one-size-fits-all plan difficult on the continent.

(e) **Irregular AfCFTA Implementation:** AfCFTA remains the biggest continental trade agreement in Africa, yet with a patchy implementation strategy. While most African member states have ratified the AfCFTA, fewer countries are actively trading under the preferences. For instance, the Guided Trade Initiative, which is the pilot phase of the AfCFTA allows some selected group of countries to start trading ahead of full-scale implementation, remains limited relative to the continent's size, creating uncertainty for suppliers planning regional investments (Pan Africa Parliament (2024)).

## **2.5. Empirical Review: Economic Integration in Africa and Nigerian Border Security**

The implication of the AfCFTA on Nigeria's national security issues was the objective of Asogwa and Nnamchi's (2019) study. The study utilised secondary data, including government publications, periodicals, textbooks, and newspapers. According to the study, although African leaders' admirable endeavour for establishing AfCFTA was commendable, it was not without difficulties and flaws, such as illegal arms and ammunition smuggling, irregular migrant flows, drug trafficking, etc. Despite the threats to national security posed by illegal arms and ammunition smuggling on the African continent, the study concluded that the adoption of the AfCFTA by African Union member states marks the beginning of a new era in utilising migration for development across the continent. In order to

avoid serious national security issues, the study advised the Nigerian government to be cautious when ratifying the agreement, especially with reference to the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons.

Another study on the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement and Cross-Border Security in West Africa was carried out by Opanike, Aduloju, and Adenipekun (2017). The study examines the ECOWAS Freedom of Movement Protocol in West African cross-border security. Thematic descriptive analysis was employed to analyse the data, and secondary data sources were used to collect the data. Despite the noble goals of the Freedom of Movement Protocol, the study's findings demonstrated that those engaged in clandestine activities have exploited its provisions and are continuing their operations throughout the subregion.

Gumede (2021) examines the possible achievement or failure of the AfCFTA within the setting of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It also analysed how the AfCFTA interfaced with other free trade agreements, including customs unions and the monetary communities that previously existed in Africa. Based on mixed methods involving key interviews with officials in the RECs, including Southern African Development Community (SADC), East African Community (EAC), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), with relevant literature on economic integration in Africa, the study found that order to provide adequate clarity regarding the implementation of the AfCFTA concerning the role of RECs, the future of RECs should be clarified to avoid ambiguity.

Shalangwa (2013) examined the origins, characteristics, and impact of banditry in the border communities of Adamawa State, Nigeria. The data was collected from police officers, bandit victims, and community leaders in the border communities of Adamawa State using both quantitative and qualitative sources. According to the study, cross-border banditry in Adamawa State was facilitated by the influx of rebels from neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, as well as youth unemployment and easy access to weapons. Research into the nature of banditry shows that bandits attack people from the mountains and forests along highways to escape after operations. Banditry negatively impacts the lives of people in border communities in many ways, including by disrupting business operations and providing inadequate social amenities. The study found that inadequate funding, training, equipment and inadequate intelligence gathering were among the difficulties faced by security personnel in preventing banditry at the border. The study's recommendations were based on a comprehensive policing strategy that

includes intergovernmental security cooperation to stop and combat banditry in border communities.

The nature of border insecurity and its impact on internal security in Nigeria were discussed by Osimen, Angrboda and Akande (2019) in another study. The study, which relied on both primary and secondary sources, identified several significant criminal activities along the Nigerian border, including drug trafficking, smuggling of illegal immigrants and contraband, money laundering, human trafficking, etc. The study claimed that this was a major factor in the spread of transnational crime, and its impact on internal security in Nigeria was the lack of border security and inadequate border management between Nigeria and its neighbours, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. The study recommended that security agencies share information and deploy sufficient personnel to resolve border security issues.

Ukwayi and Anam (2019) examined Nigeria's security challenges and transnational crime. Using secondary data sources, the study utilized qualitative research. According to the study's findings, Nigeria's porous border enables notorious and unlawful activities such as terrorism, money laundering, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and banditry. To stop new cross-border crime in Nigeria, the study called for modern equipment and training for border guard personnel.

### **3. Theoretical Framework: Almond Structural Functional Theory and Nigeria's Border Security in Perspective**

Talcott Parsons' work popularised structural functionalism, a significant sociological study that Gabriel Almond applied to political studies. The fundamental tenet of the structural functional theory is that all political systems are composed of social structures with interconnected components, each playing a distinct role in ensuring the existence of the political system while fostering stability and solidarity (Almond, 1956). Almond (1956) argued that, to grasp a political system, one must recognise not just the institutions (or structures) but also the roles that these institutions fulfil.

Structures are those elements of the political system that perform different tasks from each other (Almond, 1956). Examples of structures include institutions such as governments (legislative, executive, and judicial), security services, civil society organizations, electoral administration bodies, and media (Almond, 1956). However, functions are concerned with the outcomes of processes and behaviour patterns; when a structure fails to fulfil its function, the political system falls into disarray (Almond, 1956; Almond, Powell, and Strom, 2006). According to Almond

and Coleman (1960), functions are further divided into input and output functions. Non-governmental organisations undertake the input functions, which include interest articulation, interest aggregation, political socialisation, political recruitment, and political communication. The government is responsible for the output functions, which include setting rules, enforcing rules, and deciding on rules (Almond and Coleman, 1960).

The output function is crucial to this study as it shows how the government and security personnel have contributed to reducing insecurity in Nigeria. On the one hand, the National Assembly of Nigeria makes laws and exercises oversight functions to ensure the security, harmony, and peace of the country. This role must be performed as a first step in the process of developing security policies for the stability of the political system. On the other hand, the implementation of security policy in Nigeria is the responsibility of the executive branch, which includes the President, ministers, and security personnel. An important feature in ensuring the survival of the political system is the tactics, structure, and manner of implementation with which security policy is implemented. More so, the decision on rules governing dispute resolution, legal interpretation, and punishment for law violations is the responsibility of the Nigerian judiciary.

Since structural functional theory relies on a complex system where its elements collaborate to enhance stability and cohesion, government policies, actions, and inactions, along with the attitudes of security personnel, affect the safety of citizens' lives and property. Therefore, structural functional theory not only outlines conditions that could enhance the system's likelihood of survival but also highlights the roles involved in the structures that perform the political system's functions.

#### **4. Research Method**

To collect data for the study, the literature survey method was employed, through which relevant sources on AfCFTA and Nigerian border security were carefully selected. The literature survey method is the systematic gathering of existing research on a specific topic. It involves examining prior literature to understand the current state of knowledge on a topic (Ebidor and Ikhide, 2024).

Literature survey method is good for this study because it uses many databases, including Web of Science, Google Scholar, Scopus, and manual searches of citations, as well as relevant journals, documents, and grey literature on AfCFTA and Nigerian border security.

The data were presented through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique used to analyse, find, examine, and explain trends in data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is consistent with the literature survey of data gathering for this study because it is useful for analysing and examining the viewpoints of different scholars on the subject matter, pointing out parallels and discrepancies, and drawing conclusions from a wealth of qualitative data.

## **5. Findings and Discussion**

This section discusses the findings of this study based on the stated objectives

### **5.1 The Policy Framework of AfCFTA**

Historically, the plan for economic integration on the African continent started with the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action of the African Union (AU), the 1991 Abuja Treaty, which established the African Economic Community, and the 2000 Constitutive Act of the African Union, which established the legal basis for a pan-African trade pact (Kuhlmann and Agutu, 2020; Kwasi and Afua, 2023). Based on the 2000 legal basis for a pan-African trade pact, the creation of a continental free trade area was decided by the leaders at the 2012 AU summit, where they adopted the action plan to increase intra-African trade, which outlines seven areas of cooperation: trade policy, trade facilitation, productive capacity, trade-related infrastructure, trade finance, trade information, and factor market integration (African Union Commission, 2019; Erasmus, 2023). These seven areas of economic cooperation laid the foundation for the establishment of a Continental Customs Union.

On March 17, 2018, African leaders held an extraordinary summit in Kigali, Rwanda, where the AfCFTA was opened for signature (African Union Commission, 2019; Erasmus, 2022). The consolidated text of the AfCFTA was signed by AU members, except Eritrea, which has not signed it (Gumede, 2021; Erasmus, 2023). Nigeria signed the AfCFTA in July 2019 under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. Over the next fifty years, the AfCFTA aims to achieve sustainable and inclusive development across the continent. By providing a comprehensive and advantageous trade agreement among member states that addresses investment, intellectual property rights, competition policy, and trade in goods and services, the AfCFTA seeks to increase intra-African trade (Asogwa and Nnamchi, 2019; Gumede, 2021). According to the African Union Commission (2019), the implementation of the AfCFTA negotiations was divided into three stages, namely:

**Stage 1:** Trade in goods and services. The focus of this phase was to liberalise trade. It was ratified as a result of the negotiations on May 30, 2019, while trading officially commenced on **January 1, 2021**. Key economic areas of this phase are the gradual elimination of tariffs on 90% of goods, rules of origin on African-made goods qualified for preferential tariffs, and trade in services on five sectors, including tourism, financial business, communication, and transport.

**Stage 2:** Investment, competition policy, and intellectual property rights. This phase established a controlling agenda for fair competition, maintainable investment, and intellectual property safety in Africa. The implementation of this stage started in 2022, and the protocols have been approved by the AU Assembly. The main economic areas of this stage include averting anti-competitive practices such as cartels and monopolies, guarding and encouraging intra-African investment, and protecting African indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage.

**Stage 3:** Digital trade, women, and youth in trade. This is an ongoing negotiation stage, expected to be ratified in the years to come. This phase aims to harness Africa's digital economy and encourage inclusive participation in the digital economy. The main economic areas of this phase are cyber security, data protection, rules for cross-border e-commerce, and digital payments.

The African Union (2019) also espoused the following as the main objectives of the AfCFTA

1. Establishing a single market for goods and services that is made possible by human mobility in order to further the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with Agenda 2063's pan-African vision of an "integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa";
2. Establishing a liberalised market for goods and services through a series of rounds of negotiations;
3. Building on the efforts and advancements in States Parties and RECs, facilitating investments, and aiding in the flow of people and capital;
4. Establishing the framework for a future continental customs union;
5. Advancing gender equality, inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development, and structural change among States Parties;
6. Boosting the contracting states' economies' ability to compete both domestically and internationally;

7. Encouraging agricultural development, food security, and industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development; and
8. Accelerate regional and continental integration processes.

The following agencies make up the institutional structure of the AfCTA:

(a) The Assembly: As the AU's highest decision-making body, the Assembly is the only one with the power to accept interpretations of the AfCFTA agreement that are suggested by the Council of Ministers. Whether or not to accept an interpretation depends on consensus.

(b) The Council of Ministers: This body consists of the Commerce Ministers as well as other ministers, officials, or authorities who have been duly appointed by the States Parties. It makes decisions on all matters covered by the AfCFTA Agreement and reports to the Assembly through the AU Executive Board. The AfCFTA Council of Ministers is not the same as the AU Trade Ministers (AMOT). The Council of Ministers holds regular meetings twice a year, with the option to call extraordinary sessions if needed. The contracting states are bound by the Council of Ministers' decisions.

(c) The Committee of Senior Trade Officials: Permanent or principal secretaries, as well as other officials chosen by States Parties, make up the Committee of Senior Trade Officials. It is in charge of creating initiatives and plans of action to carry out the AfCFTA deal. In compliance with the terms of the agreement, the Committee will oversee, evaluate, and guarantee the appropriate operation and growth of the AfCFTA. Meeting at least twice a year and operating under the Council of Ministers' adopted rules of operation, the Committee of Senior Trade Officials is subject to directives from the Council of Ministers. The Committee reports back to the Council of Ministers after its meetings, possibly with recommendations.

(d) Technical Committees: To aid in the Agreement's implementation, the AfCFTA Agreement's protocols create some technical committees. Among them are the Committees on Trade in Services and Trade in Goods.

## **5.2. Implication of the AfCFTA for Nigeria's Border Security**

Nigeria's border security is characterised by permeability, weak coordination of security agencies, cross-border criminality, and interference from internal and external insurgencies (Shalangwa, 2013; Murtala, 2018; Ojewale, 2021). These flaws permit irregular migration, cattle rustling, militant and bandit activity, trafficking of weapons and drugs, all of which contribute to local violence, displacement of

people, and state fragility (Murtala, 2018; Ojewale, 2021). These issues may further pose problems to achieving the AfCFTA goals for Nigeria.

Nigeria's border is not only too wide but is also not adequately manned, contributing to insecurity in the country (Evans and Merrills, 2003; Shalangwa, 2013). Nigeria shares 773 kilometres of boundary with Benin Republic in the West, 85 Kilometres of boundary with Chad Republic, 1,690 Kilometres boundary with Cameroon in the East, 1,497 Kilometres of boundary with the Niger Republic in the North, and 85 kilometres of maritime borders with the Republic of Guinea in the South (Shalangwa, 2013; Mobolaji & Alabi, 2017). Nigeria has about 1,400 illegal routes aside the 84 approved borders where arms flow through from the Sahel, including Mali, Sudan, Niger Republic, Chad, and North African countries, particularly Libya (Ukwayi and Anam, 2019; Agbiboa, 2017). While Libya does not share border with Nigeria, it shares land borders with Chad and the Republic of Niger, both of which share large land borders with Nigeria in the North East and the North West regions (Shalangwa, 2013; Mobolaji and Alabi, 2017). For instance, Nigeria's borders with the Niger Republic extended through Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa and Zamfara states in the North West as well as Borno and Yobe states in the North East, while the borders with Chad stretched to Borno state along the Lake Chad region (Agbiboa, 2017; Ukwayi and Anam, 2019).

On the other hand, Nigeria's borders with Cameroon extend across Adamawa, Borno, and Taraba states in the North East as well as Calabar in the South South (Osimen, Angrboda, Akande, 2019; Mobolaji and Alabi, 2017). In reality, border separation with Nigeria and its neighbouring states occurs through the use of minor features, allowing illegal migrants and weapons to come into the country (Evans and Merrills, 2003; Ukwayi and Anam, 2019). Affirming the problem of porous borders as the major source of insecurity in Nigeria, Oginni, Opoku, and Alupo (2018) revealed that civil unrest in Libya, Mali, and other countries in the Sahel contributed to the movement of rebels and arms into Nigeria. Therefore, most border communities such as Baga, Mubi, Bama, and Gwoza in Borno state, Magamar-Jibia and Kongolam in Katsina state, and Kwashabawa in Zamfara state, among others, continue to suffer assault from the Boko Haram insurgents and bandits (Mobolaji & Alabi, 2017).

It has also been revealed that the lack of border security amenities (border fencing, electronic surveillance, biometric systems, and the near absence of civil authority) in most border communities has made them retreat spots for rebels, irregular migration, cattle rustling, drug, and arms trafficking (Agbiboa, 2017; Ukwayi and

Anam, 2019). Considering the poorly defined borders in the Lake Chad region, few natural frontiers exist among the countries, as clear delineation remains uncertain (Agbibo, 2017; Mobolaji and Alabi, 2017). Therefore, border demarcation in the Lake Chad region often relies on minor features and materials, such as withered trees and unused containers, which provide opportunities for irregular migration within and between the countries (Osimen, Angrboda, Akande, 2019; Mobolaji and Alabi, 2017). Moreover, cultural ties among the Fulani ethnic group in the Lake Chad region have facilitated recruitment by Boko Haram, ISWAP, and criminal gangs in Northern Nigeria from neighbouring nations (Onuoha, 2013; Shalangwa, 2013).

Murtala (2018) also found that organised crime festered at the borders in Nigeria through the assistance of immoral and dishonest security officials who sidestep the standard of legitimate security checks. The Nigerian security personnel in charge of the borders, such as the Nigeria Customs Service, the Nigeria Army, and the Nigerian Police Force, are guilty of collecting bribes from illegal migrants without proper checks of their belongings and luggage (Ogbonna, Lenshie and Nwangwu, 2023). In another response, it is revealed that Nigeria's security agencies still operate with crude instruments and weapons without digitalisation, Closed-Circuit Television cameras, and biometric surveillance of movement to automate identity checks of migrants, which allows for modern border security (Sowale, 2025). Therefore, the main factors weakening Nigeria's ability to regulate its borders are inadequate infrastructure, corrupt security officials at the border, and a lack of coordination among security agencies.

## **6. Conclusion**

AfCFTA is an initiative of the African Union agenda. Over the next fifty years, it will serve as a blueprint for sustainable and inclusive development across the continent. The goal is to boost intra-African trade by establishing a comprehensive and advantageous trade agreement among member states that addresses intellectual property rights, investment, competition policy, and trade in goods and services. However, Nigeria's poorly policed, porous borders allow illegal access to neighbouring states and facilitate informal cross-border trade. Therefore, despite the commendable goals of AfCFTA for Nigeria, achieving economic progress may remain elusive given the porous nature of Nigeria's borders, which have led to the proliferation of SALW and the irregular movement of migrants and other transnational crimes. To enable Nigeria to benefit from the AfCFTA, the study

recommends that the country's porous borders be secured more effectively to prevent the worsening of border issues for the country.

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