

Article

International Economic Order and Developing Nations: A study of African Nations

Akietuwopiribie Opuene Hart, PhD

1. Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

*Correspondence: akiehart@yahoo.com

Abstract: This study explores the impact of emerging global powers, particularly China and India, on Africa's economic landscape, focusing on whether these partnerships present opportunities for economic sovereignty or contribute to continued dependency. The study aims to assess the role of these powers in shaping Africa's position in the global economic system and the implications for Africa's development. The research is anchored in Dependency Theory, which posits that Africa's underdevelopment is due to its historical and ongoing economic reliance on external powers. A qualitative approach was adopted, with data sourced from secondary literature, including academic articles, books, and official reports. The findings revealed that while China and India's investments in infrastructure, trade, and social development provide significant opportunities for Africa, they also reinforce dependency. China's extensive infrastructure projects have addressed critical gaps but often come with concerns over the control of local resources and the influx of foreign labour. India's soft power approach, focusing on health and education, has enhanced social capital but has limited economic transformation. Furthermore, both countries have contributed to Africa's economic growth, yet the partnerships have not fully liberated the continent from dependency. The study concludes that while emerging powers offer Africa valuable opportunities, these relationships must be managed strategically to avoid reinforcing dependency. African nations should leverage these partnerships to build capacity, diversify economic relations, and develop local industries. Recommendations include: 1) Diversifying economic partnerships to reduce over-reliance on China and India. 2) Enhancing local capacity building to ensure that African workers benefit from foreign investments. 3) Strengthening regional integration through initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to foster sustainable economic growth and improve collective bargaining power.

Keywords: International economy order, African nations, dependency, developing countries, global economic system

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1. Introduction

The international economic order refers to the system of global economic governance shaped by institutions, laws, trade agreements, and the distribution of power among nations. This order has over the years been influenced by both the leading economic countries and multilateral institutions. Poor countries especially in Africa have been left behind in the world economic system severally with low bargaining power and constant economic crises. With the changing nature of the international order, African states are currently being offered with an important chance in terms of reclaimed their roles in the global economic fabric, primarily by means of regional integration, economic diversification, and strategic alliances with the rising world powers like China and India [1], [2].

The processes of Africa being pulled into the global economy have been historically hindered by the colonial heritage, economic dependency process, and the global trade

regime biased towards the developed countries. However, the continent, especially, has come a long way in the twenty-first century, as it is reflected in the considerable economic gains through a wide range of trade, a substantial inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI), and the introduction of regional economic blocs like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These changes are indicative of a change in the international system where Africa will demand a more autonomous economy and to have a more favourable place in the international system [3], [4]. African countries have become more industrialised and competitive players in international trade and are no longer exporters of raw materials as they diversify their economies, which makes them an important player in changing the global economic order [5].

In addition, the emergence of a multipolar world order is a challenge and an opportunity to the African states. Old world giants like the United States and Europe are no longer the people to reckon with in the international arena and new players like China, Russia and the new economies have taken their positions. Africa has the ability to be able to tap into its resources, emerging markets and geopolitical significance in this changing order. As an example, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has provided Africa with new investment opportunities in infrastructure and trade; nonetheless, the relationships also come with such issues as growing debt and political reliance [4]. It follows that the position of the African states in the global economy is dynamic, and their ability to overcome these new geopolitical changes will significantly define their further prosperity.

Therefore, this paper will aim at exploring how much African countries can redefine the global economic order by adopting strategic economic policies and international relations. The research will help to better understand how Africa can overcome its economic predicaments and establish itself in a more equal place in the shifting international system, by analysing the interactions between the international institutions, regional integration, and global economic trends. By doing this, the research will look into the possible effect of global trade agreements, the emerging economies, and political alliances in driving economic development in Africa and how they will contribute to the future of world economic governance.

Statement of the Problem

The international economic order has long been a topic of significant concern for developing nations, particularly those in Africa. The current world economic structure, which has been mostly defined by the western hegemonies, has continued to push the African developmental course to the periphery, thus remaining in the dependency trap of depending on foreign aid and imports without creating a fair playing field of the African states. These asymmetries in this system manifest themselves in the form of trade imbalances, unsustainable indebtedness, and the domination of transnational corporations that exploit the African endowments without making similar investments in local development [6], [7]. Regardless of the concerted efforts of consolidation of the region via regional bodies like the African Union (AU) and initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) efforts to consolidate the region have been undermined by the lack of infrastructure, political instability, and the legacy influence of former colonial powers. African countries are therefore trapped in an economic system, which often places them in a subordinate position of limited choices with respect to substantive development and progress.

This predicament is further enhanced by the complex reciprocity between the world financial bodies, namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and the African economies. Historically, they have subjected these institutions to structural adjustment programmes (SAPS) and other forms of conditionality which focus on economic liberalisation and austerity which in most cases have reduced African states to abject poverty. These policies, though they are supposed to stabilise economies, have been systematic in ignoring the social needs of the people such as availability of health services, education and infrastructure. Having high debt volumes, many African countries find

themselves in an endless loop of borrowing, and thus, they smother their economic freedom and limit their ability to invest in key sectors [8], [9]. So, how can African states get out of this dependency and have a fairer share of the world economic order?

The geopolitical realignments which have seen the emergence of multipolarity in international relations are another challenge to the future of Africa in the international system of the economy. With the emergence of China, India and other rising economies gaining power, the African states find themselves in the simultaneous challenge of balancing both between alliances with these emerging powers and how to deal with the remnants of Western dominance. The dilemma of seeking more profound economic connections with the Global South and maintaining mutually beneficial relations with conventional Western partners creates the central questions: Can Africa take the opportunities presented by the emergence of the new world powers, or is it going back to a new variant of economic colonialism? Is it possible to have economic sovereignty in Africa through a system that continuously leans towards the strong? It is on this context that this study was undertaken to analyze the international economic order and developing nations: A Study of African Nations.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of international economy order and developing nations: A study of African nations. Specifically, the study seeks to: Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the impact of the international economic order on the economic development of African nations,.
2. Analyze the role of regional integration initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), in reshaping Africa's position within the global economic system,
3. Investigate the influence of emerging global powers, such as China and India, on Africa's economic landscape, exploring how these new partnerships might offer alternative pathways for economic growth and development, and whether they present opportunities for economic sovereignty or perpetuate dependency.

Research Questions

The following research questions were stated to guide the study:

1. How does the international economic order affect the economic development of African nations?
2. What is the impact of regional integration initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), on Africa's position in the global economic system?
3. How do emerging global powers, such as China and India, influence Africa's economic landscape, and do these partnerships present opportunities for economic sovereignty or contribute to continued dependency?

Literature Review

International Economic Order

The international economic order refers to the constellation of regulations, agreements and institutions that guide the dealings between sovereign states in the economic world. It is made up of the control mechanisms involved in trade, the regulation of financial flows, the investment streams and the management of the global resources. The lines of this system are traced mostly by the fiscal orientation of the leading powers and by the large international organizations like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. This global economic structure has over the decades experienced opposition particularly by the developing states in Africa who challenge its unfairness and seek reforms that reflect their own unique developmental needs. The understanding of international economic order is hence essential in the analysis of how states transact economic activities in the global arena, especially in the context of trade relations, sharing of resources and regulation of finance.

As Aiyub Kadir says, the international economic order is a legally binding set of structures and institutions designed to manage the economic relations between countries. Kadir argues that it is essentially carved by the international law, and by the institutional actors who have the responsibility of defining in which way international interactions ought to take place. Whether through trade agreements or the laws regulating financial markets, it is under its watch over all the aspects of international economic activity. The institutions like the IMF and the WTO, according to him, are there to provide structures of governance that would enable cooperation, adjudicate in a dispute, and ensure access to market. However, critics have on several occasions criticized the order as being biased towards richer countries, thus depriving the developing states of their economic sovereignty. The implication has been, in the case of African actors, dependency on the capital and trade of foreign countries as well as the exploitation of natural resources by the multinational conglomerates.

The other school of thought focuses on allocation of economic power in the international system. According to Svetlic, the global economic order is a reflection of the global economic hierarchy of influence. In the given system, the main parameters of global trade and finance are established by powerful economies, primarily the United States, China, and the European Union. These players exercise the power to shape the international economic policies to their benefits, thus, securing the further dominance of industrialised states. The order is in this context just another device which protects their dominance and developing countries often find themselves caught in the market forces and the regulatory framework that is intent on holding them at a disadvantage. However, Svetlic sees that the rise of the emerging economies has created possibilities in questioning this construct, which has triggered calls to build a more just global economic structure.

Brawley understands the international economic order as a liberal form of market structure that is favorable to free trade, capital flows and government restraint. The perspectives are informed by liberal economic principles that promote open market and international competition. Based on this, the liberal international order has been praised on its notion that markets, free of national borders, bring more efficient and prosperous world economy. International economic relations have been based on this system since the end of the Second World War. On the one hand, it has led to development of many areas, but on the other hand it has also increased inequalities especially in Africa, where globalisation dividends have not been distributed equally. Therefore, according to the judgment of Brawley, the international economic order not only promotes the advancement of the economy but also contributes to the global inequalities.

According to Allayarov, dominant states are engineered in the international economic order with the aim of achieving geopolitical supremacy. He argues that the system is an expression of the post-war geopolitical negotiations, in which the United States and its Western counterparts fine-tuned the world economy in order to maintain their hegemony both at the economic and political arenas. The Bretton Woods institutions including IMF and the world bank were thus established to make sure that the United States and its allies could still maintain influence on global economic choices. This criticism notes that the structure makes the developed countries continue to exercise the hegemony and restrains the independence of the developing countries. Specifically, African countries have been facing the challenge of renegotiating the terms of this order in an attempt to meet their increasing populations and growth demands.

Lastly, Khomanets approaches the international economic order as the danger to the economic sovereignty of the developing countries, particularly, African ones. He stresses that the order often stands in the way of the ability of such countries to act independently in economic decisions. It makes these states open up their markets to foreign goods and capital by emphasizing on free trade and investment and as a result, it weakens domestic industries and economies. The question remains, will African countries be able to take over their economies or will they continue being controlled by the external forces of the

economy? Khomanets, therefore, considers the order as an expression of neo-imperialism which limits the economic freedom of the developing countries.

Although the above definitions provide an insight into the economic, political, and legal aspects of the international economic order, there is a research need to have a more comprehensive definition of the international economic order that portrays its dynamic and changing nature, particularly in relation to developing economies and global disasters like the COVID-19 pandemic. The changing balance of power as triggered by the emergence of new actors on the global stage and the problems of climate change, digitalisation, and inequality requires a new intellectualisation of the concept.

Personally, I would describe the international economic order as a dynamic system of global governance that is made up of multilateral institutions, accords, and power relations, which influence trade, finance, and development. It represents the interests of both the leading economic forces and the rising economies and aims at the compensation of the inequalities and their promotion of the global stability. However, the system is flawed by nature, and tends to further marginalize the developing countries especially African countries and hence significant reforms are required to make sure the system is suited to the interests of all states and is not biased in development

Developing Nations

Developing nations refer to the countries, which are yet to attain the level of industrialization and social development; they are typically characterized by a lower level of incomes, limited access to healthcare and education, and a high level of poverty. Such states strive to increase their living standard and develop more sustainable economies. Lusha notes that despite these countries showing indications of development, there are serious challenges facing them, including poverty, lack of jobs, and the observable glaring absence of infrastructure, which hamper their path to sustainable development. The development status of a nation is often based on such aspects as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the Human Development Index (HDI), and income inequality indicators, hence the classification of developing and developed countries [10], [11]. Furthermore, such countries usually rely on outside help and investment, the help that can continue their financial weaknesses.

Economic path of developing countries is determined by a multiplicity of factors that include international economic trends, national politics, and regionalism. These are the nations that are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of globalization that on the one hand provide them with the opportunity to develop, and, on the other hand, promote inequality. Several developing states are facing challenges of exploitation of natural resources, political instability and poor infrastructure in their quest to grow economically. They also fail to come up with competitive industries as Lusha notes since these states heavily depend on raw materials internationalization, instead of exporting finished goods. However, some emerging economies like China, Brazil and India have showed remarkable success in their economies due to the diversification and industrialization such that they are emerging in the international scene.

The other issue of concern facing the developing countries is the technological difference compared to their developed counterparts. Subramaniam notes that technological innovation is the key to economic development but most developing nations do not have the necessary infrastructure and human resources to effectively exploit the potential of technology. This handicap reduces their competitiveness in high-technological industries of the world market. Lack of a sound research and development (R&D) policy together with excessive dependence on imported technologies also deepens their dependence on the more advanced economies. In order to overcome these hurdles, developing nations must invest holistically in education, infrastructure and technology thus creating self-sustaining growth typologies that will minimize the externalities [12], [13].

Besides financial problems, the developing countries also have to face serious social and political barriers. According to Guttermann, social inequality, corruption, and poor governance are some of the pervasive problems that hinder development in most countries. An example is that although some countries such as India and Brazil have been growing economically, there are vast wealth inequalities which have a negative impact on the general life of most citizens. These issues are worsened by political instability because weak institutions and governance frameworks find it hard to execute good policies that enhance inclusive development. The participation of international bodies, especially the United Nations and the World Bank is also central in giving support but the effectiveness of the bodies is often doubted as per their ability to tackle the causes of poverty and inequality in developing countries [14].

Theoretical Underpinning

The paper is rooted in the Dependency Theory, a theoretical model that postulates that nations, especially those in Africa are the reason why they were and still are, to this day, underdeveloped because they have and continue to be dependent on the developed countries. Dependency Theory was created by various academics including Raul Prebisch, Andre Gunder Frank, and was a critique of the modernisation theories that proposed development would occur in a series of linear steps. On the issue of underdevelopment, dependency theorists believe that it is a process rather than a condition that has been systemically created by the global economic system which favors the developed countries and exploits the developing ones [15] [16]. This theory is based on the assumption that it is the economic and political dependence that continues to keep such nations underdeveloped, by incorporating the developing nations into the global economy as peripheral states, feeding the raw material and the low cost labour to the core industrialised nations. This framework is essential in the realization of the economic dilemmas that African countries experience against the international economic order.

The main suppositions of the Dependency Theory are the conception that the economic development of the core countries is premised on the exploitation of the peripheral ones. This relationship can be seen through the periphery resources which are extracted and the wealth is gained by the developed countries hence the continued imbalance in the economy [17]. In addition, Dependency Theory questions the existence of the same development route that the industrialised countries are taking. It claims that the economic framework of the world is aggressive in undermining the periphery by trapping these countries into a situation that does not enable them to grow themselves. This is especially true in the case of the African countries that remain dependent on the export of natural resources and get little returns out of it, but still have to deal with such issues as poor infrastructure, political instability, and dependency on debts [18].

The dependency theory in reference to the study provides a critical perspective in which to analyze the position of the continent to the global economy. The theory highlights historical and systematic factors that have determined the economic weaknesses of African and reduced its development. This theoretical perspective enables a more profound insight into the problems African countries have to resolve in order to escape the economic dependency and attain sustainable development by paying attention to the structural inequalities in the international economic order. This is an unequal relationship with the rest of the global economic powers as Nkala and Kim opine, with external actors continually setting conditions favoring them at the cost of African economies.

This theoretical approach is especially applicable to the study because it offers some explanations about the economic issues that African countries are subjected to in the contemporary international system. Dependency Theory brings the issue of how the world trade set up, debt systems and modes of investment are being skewed to the detriment of the developing world. By utilizing this theory, the paper will discuss how African countries can redefine their economic destinies in the world order, paying attention to the

policies that can help them lessen their reliance on the world North and build more independent and diversified economies.

2. Methodology

The paper was qualitative in that it used the international economic order and its impact on African countries. The secondary sources were used as sources of data, such as textbooks, journal publications, government reports, newspapers, and international news sources. These sources were able to give a holistic picture of the factors that defined the economic status of Africa in the global system. The content analysis of the data was thoroughly conducted, which allowed having a subtle feel of the structural imbalance and predicaments of African countries. This approach made it possible to identify the major tendencies, opportunities, and strategies that are applicable to the economic development of Africa and integration into the global economy.

3. Results and Discussion

How does the international economic order affect the economic development of African nations, and what role do global trade policies and financial institutions play in shaping the growth and stability of African economies?

The International Economic Order and Africa's Economic Development

The international economic order is a major factor in influencing the economic growth of the African countries usually in a manner that curtails their economic growth. The existing international order, which is characterised by developed economies and international financial institutions, has systematically been used to favour the Global North at the expense of the South particularly Africa. Amin describes the global economic system as having been structured in the colonial era and continued to exist in a manner that further enforced economic dependency in the developing countries, especially in Africa. The rich countries full of natural resources have been historically transformed into the dump of raw materials and therefore, have left a one sided trade relationship where the value added benefits of their resources are taken elsewhere. This is a form of economic dependence which still lingers in the African economies as they are unable to grow into diversified and competitive industries and their growth opportunities are curtailed [19], [20]. In addition, the African states tend to be disadvantaged whenever the international economic order is integrated and they have to adapt to the trade and financial systems that fail to meet their particular needs and problems.

Economic Stability of Africa and Global Trade Policies.

The African countries have always been largely influenced by global trade policies in determining their economic stability. Trade agreements and policies that are adopted by multilateral institutions including the World Trade Organization (WTO) are often designed in a way that benefits the developed economies and mirror the trade barriers and subsidies that weaken African export and manufacturing industries and agriculture. According to Mohan, global trading regulations often recklessly hinder African countries to maximise their exports as they are subject to tariffs and non-tariff restrictions of their products. As an example, the African farm goods like cocoa and coffee are mostly faced with barriers in the Western markets and are unable to diversify and grow their economies. Trade policies of leading powers, such as the European and the United States, have historically placed such countries in a situation in which they have very little bargaining power, which has increased their economic weakness. Moreover, Titus states that trade agreements often have African countries to open their markets without any equivalent access of their goods, which only strengthens economic inequalities. The vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment continues because African countries cannot compete in the same level as the other developed nations.

The contribution of the Global financial institutions to the Economic development in Africa.

International financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank are the key players in the economic environment of African countries. Nevertheless, there have been numerous instances in which they have been problematic, their policies and programmes playing a role in the economic instability of Africa. Momoh mentions the historical situation on the imposition of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) by the IMF and the World Bank on African countries, which forces them to adopt neoliberal economic policies, including market liberalisation, privatisation, and austerity measures. Although the policies were meant to stabilise the economies and promote growth, they often had social repercussions, such as reductions in basic services, such as medical care and education. The resulting loss of the social safety net and increased levels of poverty is an example of the unanswered effects of such programmes. Furthermore, Prabhakar states that such financial institutions usually come with strict strings of conditions that destabilize the sovereignty of African nations and thus force them down further into the debt cycles. With the African states still living off loans taken by the World Bank and IMF, these countries are constantly stuck in the world of debts and therefore, cannot invest in the much needed infrastructure and development projects. Such reliance on foreign financial institutions also restricts their economic independence, which prevents the growth and development.

What is the impact of regional integration initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), on Africa's position in the global economic system, and what are the key challenges and opportunities for economic cooperation among African countries?

The African Continental Free Trade Area is a key attempt in the economic path of Africa, which seeks to correct the historical shortfalls of performance in spite of the rich natural endowments in the continent, as well as a demographic dividend of youth [21]. The initiative aims at strengthening the intra-African trade flows and enhancing the bargaining power of the continent as a single continent by attempting to integrate a heterogeneous set of African markets into a single and cohesive economic bloc [22]. However, the project is faced by significant substantive challenges, in particular, the estimated loss of tariff revenue and unequal allocation of costs and gains among member states, thus requiring the implementation of compensatory measures to guarantee the balanced sharing of benefits [23]. Additionally, the AfCFTA is expected to overcome the lack of economic diversification and severe infrastructure shortages in Africa which have traditionally limited trade and integration [24]. However, despite the hopes, weaknesses in trade regimes in Africa persist, mostly due to the poor performance of the current sub-regional economically communal settings [25], [26].

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its Implications to the African Placement in the Global Economy.

The African Continental Free Trade Area is the beginning of a paradigm shift in the economic integration and self-sufficiency of the continent. As the creation of the world-leading free trade area, AfCFTA aims at supporting intra-African trade, reducing tariffs, promoting trade facilitation, and harmonizing the policies on the continent. Madichie argues that the agreement will not only have a profound impact on the position of Africa in the global economic system due to the prompt growth and industrialisation, but also enhance its position to a higher level. The accord will help Africa to achieve better competitiveness on the global scene by creating a single market with 1.3 billion people, which will spur cross-border investments. This single market has the potential to multiply intra-African trade and, therefore, eliminate reliance on external markets and enhance the overall resilience and bargaining power of the continent in international trade [27]. Moreover, an increased regional cooperation and economic integration is expected to improve the standards of living in the continent, curb poverty, and ensure sustainable development [28]. The AfCFTA assumed the form of the integration process that will have a significant impact on the development patterns across Africa [29]. This full integration aims at overcoming historical barriers to trade in Africa, including fragmented markets

and under-developed infrastructure, that have suppressed the economic potential of Africa decades before [30], [31]. Previous integration efforts have been stunted by such issues as physical infrastructure limitations, inefficient trade policies, and lack of political commitment [32]. The AfCFTA, however, aims to expand on the current regional economic communities, but it is focused on handling the issues of possible overlaps and inconsistencies between the regimes [33].

This would give Africa an upper hand in terms of its bargaining power in relation to the external trading partners as well as multinationals because of the pooled resources that Africa will have as a result of this regional integration. The real effect of AfCFTA will however be subject to the effectiveness of how member states adopt the necessary infrastructure, policies and regulatory frameworks that will support the agreement. Specifically, the AfCFTA is projected to remove trade barriers and foster a reduction in level of economic integration by projecting an increase in intra-African trade to 24.07 per cent and 25.26 per cent in the short and long term respectively [34], [35]. These projections emphasize how the agreement will put African trade flows back in line particularly within the continent, reduce dependence on traditional foreign markets, and enhance economic interdependence between member states [36].

The ability of AfCFTA to open up intra-African trade is one of its biggest benefits since at a historical level, intra-African trade was not feasible due to disjointed markets and trade barriers. According to Nagu and Nkannebe, AfCFTA is an opportunity that will see tariff and non-tariff barriers that hinder the access of African businesses to broader continental markets reduced. In turn, it can trigger job creation, the optimal allocation of resources, and increased productivity as it will help firms access a wider customer base and resource pool. Through the free flow of goods, services, and labor between countries, AfCFTA is likely to result in economic diversification, which will move the African economies off the exporting raw material and toward higher value-added sectors. This change would go a long way to strengthen the African continent in the international trade by incorporating the continent deeper into the international value chain. In this way, the establishment of AfCFTA will reduce the cost of trade, spur intra-African trade and efficiency and competitiveness, and hence attract foreign direct investment [37], [38].

However, the obstacles to the maximization of the AfCFTA are still significant. As Mustapha and Adetoye point out, insufficient infrastructure, political unrest, and poor institutional structures might hinder the successful implementation of the agreement in spite of the noble goals. Furthermore, unequal economic growth and industrial potential between African nations is also a major challenge towards an equal distribution of benefits. The difference in infrastructure, technological abilities as well as human capital can lead to disproportionate rewards with very developed countries enjoying a higher benefit than the less developed counterparts. Such failure to harmonise economic policies and trade regulations may also bring about friction and delays and inefficiencies in trade facilitation may occur.

However, the fact that AfCFTA is the largest free trade area in the world since the introduction of the WHO speaks of an immense potential in the matter even present with certain problems [39]. The agreement is expected to increase intra-African exports by more than 20 percent in the next decade, in part because trading barriers will be minimized and a single market will be established [40]. It will remove 50 million individuals out of abject poverty, and boost regional incomes by 9 per cent by 2035 with the diversification of exports and faster economic growth [41]. In addition to these direct economic impacts, AfCFTA is expected to give rise to regional value chains, whereby intermediate products are manufactured in one or more countries of Africa, where additional integration of economies and structural change takes place [42]. This massive integration is expected to reach a market size of 1.3 billion individuals, which is set to increase to 1.68 billion by 2030 and 2.48 billion by 2050, hence improving the trading position of Africa in the whole world and appealing to foreign direct investment [43]. This kind of growth entrenches the economic position of Africa leaving behind disjointed markets to a powerhouse economic block that is integrated and is present and felt in the world market.

The Economic Cooperation among African Countries: The Opportunities and Challenges.

The AfCFTA creation is something Africa never had before in terms of economic cooperation. One of its strengths is that it might lead to industrialisation and diversification of the economies in the continent. Ezugwu and Duruji highlight that the African economy has traditionally relied on the export of raw materials, but the AfCFTA will provide a channel of diversification of the economy through manufacturing and services. The agreement is also able to enhance cooperation in the agricultural, technological, and infrastructural sectors through sectoral specialization, which is achieved due to the minimization of trade barriers. This type of cooperation would make the continent more competitive in the entire global economic system through value-addition to the goods exported.

In addition, there would be increased collaboration, which would result in economies of scale, thereby reducing the cost of production and raising the efficiency of African businesses. In addition to these direct economic gains, there is also the likelihood of knowledge sharing or technology transfer between member states as a result of AfCFTA, whereby a stronger and more innovative continental economy is formed [44]. The framework facilitates a conducive environment to the growth of regional supply chains, as was seen in other integrated economic blocs like ASEAN which had seen a tremendous growth and diversification due to a lowering barriers [45]. The agreement will establish a market that exceeds 1.43 billion individuals and has an overall GDP that has an aggregate of over US 3.4 trillion in order to increase intra-African trade and enhance increased market accessibility [46]. It is a bold project, which will help to increase the economic status of Africa in the world by making it a unified, strong trading bloc, which will bring a lot of foreign direct investment in the area and help establish sustainable development throughout the continent [47]. In particular, because of the liberalisation of service trade in the context of the AfCFTA, both the manufacturing and service industries are expected to receive significant amounts of benefits, which in turn will promote further development and integration [48].

Although these prospects exist, the way to successful economic cooperation is hindered by a lot of challenges. The existing problem is that there is no proper infrastructure and transportation capacity to facilitate trade. According to Cofelice, a significant infrastructure gap, such as the lack of good transportation systems, ineffective customs processes, and the absence of modern technologies to facilitate the trade process is a problem in many African countries. Unless these underlining issues are dealt with, then AfCFTA will not be able to achieve its full potential. In addition, Magwape argues, overlapping membership in different regional economic communities is a challenge to integration since the countries are limited by different trade agreements with divergent rules and regulations. Such incompleteness would undermine the gains of AfCFTA and postpone the realization of an African market that is fully integrated. The challenges thus require strong governance systems and a lot of policy harmonisation to reduce the conflicts and the trade processes in the continent [49].

The other challenge of effective cooperation is in the political environment of African nations. Adamu, Jazbhay, and Benyera indicate that political instability and regular changes in government policies are threats to effectiveness and stability of regional integration. Additionally, individual interests of each country might be concerned more with national development rather than the continental interest, and it is likely to have conflict regarding the trade policies and regulations. Moreover, the African states will be faced with a challenge of ensuring that the gains of the AfCFTA are not centralized on a limited number of economies.

The legacy of colonial trading patterns through physical infrastructures that are present in place (especially roads and railways) has continued to hinder the development of a unified African market [50], [51]. It is through this legacy that trade has been directed to the previous colonialists instead of promoting trade among Africans themselves, which has made it difficult to establish new and effective trade routes in the continent. Also,

regional trade is complicated by other factors like currency devaluation and inflation in some economies of West Africa that negatively affect competitiveness in exports and increase border transaction costs [52], [53]. In curbing these financial volatilities, it is important to reinforce regional currency blocs like West African Monetary Zone to stabilise the exchange rates and facilitate easier flows of trade [54].

Lastly, the national economic policies over-prioritization over regional integration and the issue of slower domestication of the regional obligations remain the significant barriers to making the progress, as seen in the delays in the AfCFTA ratification [55], [56]. This kind of nationalistic behavior might result in the form of non-tariff barriers and inconsistent enforcement of trade agreements, which confirms the necessity of improved supranational control and enforcement practices [57]. There are an additional complexity of multiple trade agreements, regional economic communities, and free trade zones, among which are Economic Community of West African States, which sometimes cause conflicting rules and impedes the integration strategy [58]. Such disintegration of the different regional blocs only serves to make the task of having a single continental trade policy more difficult, and there is a need to see more harmonisation and co-ordination between the different bodies to realise the overall objectives of the AfCFTA [59]. In the end, ensuring the successful implementation of the AfCFTA, in turn, depends on these multifaceted challenges being addressed using interdisciplinary policy frameworks, sustainable development of infrastructure, and political will [60].

How do emerging global powers, such as China and India, influence Africa's economic landscape, and do these partnerships present opportunities for economic sovereignty or contribute to continued dependency?

The Influence of Emerging Global Powers on Africa's Economic Landscape

Over the past several decades, a growing prominence of the emerging global powers, mostly China and India, has become the defining features of the African economic course. Its growing impact can be greatly explained by a combination of targeted investments, diplomatic interaction, and trade relationships aimed to connect Africa better to world supply chains, solve the long-standing shortage of infrastructure, and expand the market to their exports. Mohan highlights that China has been active especially under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) which has provided such important infrastructure investment in roads, railways, and energy projects. These financially motivated interventions have been critical in bringing about economic development in many states in Africa because one of the biggest demands in the continent is better infrastructure. As a result, the African countries have new opportunities to become more connected, promote trade, and draw foreign investments. However, Aly warns that the dependence created by China having dominated the strategic sectors like mining and energy creates a danger that Africa might become nothing more than a supplier of raw materials instead of developing its value-added industries.

On the contrary, India is involved in Africa due to mutual economic and geopolitical interests. Mol believe that the modus operandi of the implementation of the soft power approach in India, specifically through the use of health diplomacy and educational interchange, can serve as an example of a diversified partnership. The Indian contribution of humanitarian aid and educational cooperation supports the human capital and enhances health systems in African states, which is particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to the overload of resources in countries. Although these alliances contribute to the growth of humanity and societal improvement, Visentini notes that the economic influence of India is relatively low, which can be explained by the fact that its investments are relatively small, and the country focuses on non-infrastructure sectors, which do not necessarily lead to industrialisation and economic independence as the Chinese projects do.

The Economic Sovereignty, Prospects with Partnership with Emerging Powers: The partnerships with China and India offer some opportunities that African states can use to gain better economic autonomy. By utilizing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and by being more connected to these emerging powers, the African countries would have a chance to obtain a stronger regional integration and the bargaining power

in international markets. According to Ruppel and Krs, the more China and India establish a role of influence in Africa, the stronger the African states will be able to negotiate more advantageous terms of trade, and more access to capital, and transfer of technologies-mechanisms that allow African states to leave the past basis of dependence on the former colonial powers behind. Through such interactions, the African states can therefore enjoy greater independence in the development agenda as well as help in the diversification of economic affiliate and reduce dependence on Western financial institutions and multinational companies that have traditionally controlled the terms of engagement.

In addition, the infrastructural orientation of China is in line with that of the Agenda 2063 of the African Union that aims at industrialisation, trade growth and sustainable development of the continent. According to Mohan, the Chinese infrastructure investment has made African states have the much-needed capital to build important areas, thus creating the base of future economic independence. Simultaneously, India is becoming more technologically and educationally focused, which increases the ability of the continent to develop a knowledge economy. However, Zengeni cautions that African countries should be cautious about the potential long-term effects of these relationships because state-led capitalism and export-driven economic models of China would contribute to uneven development, moving towards the dependency on Chinese markets and technological frameworks that would compromise self-sustaining economic growth. **Risk of Further Dependency:** Although the prospects of partnership with China and India seem obvious, the question remains whether the relations will strengthen Africa in its further dependence or will become the foundation of real economic independence. Ahmad argue that these alliances may be necessary sources of capital and infrastructure, but they frequently reproduce a resource extraction and asymmetrical trade relationship pattern. As an example, Chinese investment is often associated with exporting raw materials; oil, minerals, agricultural products, to make sure the African economies are tied to the exploitation of natural resources but not manufacturing industries of their own to the production of the final product, something that strengthens the existing globalized economy where Africa is placed on the lower end of the value chain.

In addition, Mamokhere also mentions that the Chinese investments in African economies like mining and construction usually imply the importation of Chinese labour and technology, thus limiting the employment opportunities of the local labour force. This habit will destroy the long-term goal of developing a skilled labor force and economic self-sufficiency. Likewise, the soft-power policy of India, even though it has advantages in terms of health and education, might not be enough to trigger the industrialisation that Africa needs to climb up the global value chain. As Usman and Lyu note, the investments made by India do not significantly diversify the economy of Africa or even increase its independent management capacity, despite the fact that they aim to solve the social issues faced by it.

Lastly, although China and India are promising growth opportunities, the partnership has the threat of breeding dependency as well. In order to prevent this cycle, African states have to plan ahead to involve these new powers in a mutually beneficial relationship and attainment of long-term developmental results. The key is to ensure the continent becomes technologically transferred, industrialised and to ensure that the benefits of partnership get distributed equitably.

4. Conclusion

Drawing on the assessment, the analysis of comparative perspectives footnotes that Africa's relations with some emerging powers of the global South, above all China and India, can be seen as opportunities to engage within a new and more amenable global environment but also contains the lingering threats of dependency. Although infrastructure investments and social development programs have generated some economic growth, and high hopes for more robust bargaining power will come from recent regional economic integration initiatives like AfCFTA, the same partnerships reflect the asymmetrical trade patterns and resource extraction models that over the past few decades

have undermined the sovereignty of African economies. The results highlight the importance for African countries to apply policies that enhance diversification of economic relations, local capacities and regional integration to reduce dependency risks. For policymakers, this has important consequences, as unresolved structural imbalances may reproduce neo-colonial dynamics based on new actors. Future studies should identify equitable and fair pathways for technology transfer; examine the economic, social, and political sustainability of AfCFTA in the medium to long-run; or develop comparative analyses of Africa's interaction with other emerging economies to assess steps towards sustainable independence in the global economic landscape.

5. Recommendations

Going on the findings made in the above, the research makes the following recommendations:

- 1) Diversify Economic Relations: The African states ought to actively seek to diversify their economic relations to avoid dependence on the individual outside force.
- 2) Enhance Local Capacity Building: African states need to focus on capacity building of the infrastructural investments that China and India are implementing.
- 3) Cosmic deepening Regional Integration: A successful implementation of the AfCFTA should be preempted in a way that fosters an even more integrated African market.
- 4) The Developing countries should maintain cordial relationships and Strategic partnership with its traditional western partners and in addition, to broaden their economic activities to embrace the emerging powers as compliments, not as substitute as they stand to gain from optimum maximization from the two.

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