



Book Review Symposium Introduction: The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement: Legal and Policy Frameworks (Routledge, 2024)

By:

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[*The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement: Legal and Policy Frameworks*](#)

provides a comprehensive assessment of the African economic integration through the prism and principles of international economic law. The analysis is contextualized within the prevailing regional economic integrations, the WTO and the peculiarity of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Similarly, the legal analysis is bolstered by the political economy of the AfCFTA, illustrating the complex interplay of diverse factors that shape the AfCFTA.

The book covers sixteen chapters pertaining to Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III of the AfCFTA Agreement. The topics covered are approached from legal, economic and political perspectives to create all-inclusive subject-matter consideration. Each chapter presents a separate element of the AfCFTA within the interwoven principle of African economic integration and international economic law.

The topics covered include: economic integration and multilateralism, market access and digital trade, exceptions, trade facilitation, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), rules of origin, non-tariff barriers, trade remedies, services, dispute settlement, investment, intellectual property, and competition policy.

Additionally, human rights, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development principles are incorporated into the structural and thematic exploration complemented by themes on women and youth in trade and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The book is reviewed by six scholars whose perspectives are organized in alphabetical order of their names. Given the analytical depth of their reviews, what follows here are mere summaries that do not embody holistically the content of their reviews (for a comprehensive appreciation/overview of the reviews and reviewers, please read the individual reviews after this author's introduction).

Following the aforementioned alphabetical ordering, [Dr. Gabriel Encinas](#), Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, assesses the theoretical contexts that underpin the general and specific themes explored in the book, coupled with the underlying practical fallout. Also, [Ikechukwu P. Ugwu](#) (PhD), University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, dwells mostly on the book's chapter on the protocol on investment, dissecting the complex dynamics that shape the protocol.

Dr. [Joycelin Chinwe Eze-Okubuiro](#), University of Leicester, United Kingdom, examines the book's exploration of the historical undercurrents and the interlinkage with contemporary issues that challenge as well as chart Africa's path to development. In the same vein, [Chidebe Matthew Nwankwo](#), Senior Lecturer, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus; Senior Research Fellow, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) National

Assembly, Nigeria, evaluates the book's espousal of the AfCFTA's institutional and non-institutional dynamics within the contexts of the Africa's regional economic integration. Moreover, [Dr Roberto Isibor](#), Università Bocconi, Italy, emphasizes that issues dealt in the book transcend the boundaries of a mere trade agreement; rather, they serve as a comprehensive blueprint for unifying Africa's economic landscape and fostering sustainable and inclusive growth.

Finally, [Dr. Yakubu Nagu](#), a post-doctoral researcher at the Centre for Comparative Law in Africa, the University of Cape Town, South Africa, situates the analysis within the book's account of efforts of various stakeholders to use Africa's regional integration to foster development.

This book is situated within the dynamics that stultify Africa's development. It argues that addressing low development dynamics is fundamental to the success of the AfCFTA. In essence, the book notes that efficient execution of the AfCFTA can result in substantial gains to (1) improve market efficiency; (2) share the costs of large infrastructure projects and public goods; (3) engage in cooperation and collective reforms; (4) protect non-economic interests such as peace and security; (5) provide a building block for multilateralism, and (6) foster Africa's development.

This comprehensive book offers critical insights into the necessary actions that need to be taken by the State Parties to ensure the success of the AfCFTA. Accordingly, painful reforms need to be implemented to ensure the alignment of national policies with the AfCFTA's policy objectives. Consequently, a raft of measures and reforms are required to make the AfCFTA a success. These include: trade facilitation measures to improve cross-border trade and investment flows as well as action plan to improve infrastructure. The building of transport infrastructure would enhance interconnectivity among the State Parties and facilitate their participation in regional and global value chains. Additionally, there is a need to develop the energy sector, ICT, and logistics, coupled with transparency and political accountability which are all necessary to create a conducive environment for trade and investment to flourish.

While these reviews highlight several aspects and dimensions of the book that are vital, the extensive issues, action plans and recommendations proffered by the book mean that the book is best appreciated upon its reading. Therefore, a call is made for investors and traders, stakeholders, practitioners and non-

practitioners to buy a copy of this rare book. The book constitutes an invaluable resource for business entities, investors and traders, policymakers, students, instructors, practitioners and non-practitioners in this area.

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