

The AfCFTA in the Context of Africa–EU Relations: A Regulation Analysis of Some Stylized Facts

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Abstract: The inception of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2018, an event which redefined the institutional dimensions of Africa–European relations, is at the centre of historic normative debates between two dominant contending schools on the imperatives of African unity. While Pan-Africanists advocate for African unity as a strategy to rupture trade relations between the two continents in question, Afro-European integrationists assert that the quest for African unity should not be divorced from deeper exchanges between Africa and Europe. The AfCFTA is embedded in an ensemble of Africa-EU free trade institutions and therefore is bound to be perceived by Pan-Africanists as Africa yielding to European domination and mobilized by Afro-European integrationists as a vindication of the validity of their assertions. With the aid of Bob Jessop’s regulation analysis, Radhika Desai’s concept of combined development, and my notion of syndic neo-corporatism as well as the method of sequence analysis, this paper makes a case beyond the normative perspectives of the two schools. It does so in order to demonstrate that while Pan-Africanists miss the point that African elites instrumentally value the AfCFTA as a rent extraction scheme, Afro-European integrationists fail to recognize that the AfCFTA fits the strategic quest of the EU to prevail over its global competitors.

Keywords: AfCFTA, Africa, European Union, integration, regulation analysis.

Introduction: the AfCFTA in the context of Africa–EU relations

In March 2018, African heads of state convened in Kigali, Rwanda to sign the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement. Out of the 55 member states of the African Union (AU), 44 signed it on March 21 2018. At the time of this writing, 35 members have gone on to ratify the agreement, which led to a secretariat being set up in Accra, Ghana, and to the commencement of trade relations (African Union 2018). As it was, this episode of Africa’s process of unification is historically significant for several reasons. The first is that the AfCFTA is the world’s largest free-trade bloc in terms of participating

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states since the establishment of the WTO (World Bank 2020). The second reason is that it represents the boldest attempt in recent African memory toward comprehensive unity. In addition, it represents a novel effort to reach out to civil society with a continent-wide social contract, the Agenda 2063, adopted by the AU as Africa's blueprint and master plan to transform the continent 'into a global powerhouse in the future' as well as

the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. (African Union 2019)

During the launch of the AfCFTA Secretariat, its Secretary General is reported to have said that 'Africa continues to be trapped in a colonial economic model, which requires that we aggressively implement the AfCFTA as one of the tools for effecting a fundamental structural transformation of Africa's economy. We have to take action now to dismantle this colonial economic model' (Ighobor 2020). This comment and the event which occasioned it may be symbolically understood as being of the same importance as the fact of the AfCFTA's establishment. Thus, it also (re)ignites pertinent questions on Africa's long-term initiatives to address the structural legacies of European colonialism which, given the particularities of the post-cold war era, require some rethinking.

Conventionally, debates about Africa-Europe relations have been broadly dominated by two perspectives. Firstly, aiming at a better description, is the conservative Pan-African school, inspired by Marcus Garvey's ideas (Christian 2008; Williams 2008) about Africa's interaction with Europe. This school of thought perceives this interaction as set in a zero-sum logic which inhibits an improvement in African human conditions. Secondly, again aiming at a better description, is the Afro-European integrationists, united by the consensus that the geopolitical fates of Africa and Europe are inextricably linked and that despite past injustices and present frictions, the future has positive-sum prospects which can be worked out for the mutual benefit of both continents (Shopov 2020). While the first school vouches for African initiatives (e.g. self-reliance) which are antithetical to existing patterns and thus can lead to a rupture, the second supports deeper intercontinental engagement.

To be sure, both perspectives are cogent and empirically grounded, but the insights they propose hardly capture political nuances beyond normative preferences. There is a case to be made, for example, against the position of the Pan-African school for overlooking the (likely) instrumental value of enduring European colonial legacies to Africa's ruling class. Also, the 'inter-continental mutual benefit' argument put forth by Afro-European integrationists needs to be adjusted in light of the fact that Africa matters to the EU because of the threats that Asia and the USA pose to Europe's global interests. Against this background and the dominance of the aforementioned perspective discourses on African-EU relations, the inception of the AfCFTA is bound to trigger a re-run of debates along the old axis of contention and the loss of fresh analytical insights, which can be gained from

opportunities offered by the agreement's phase of continentalism in Africa. Given that over the *longue durée*, the nuances of the patterns of interaction between the two continents from the 15th to the 21st century suggest a complexity beyond the binary perspectives suggested by the two schools of thought, this paper resets the debates around the axis of the two contending perspectives on Africa-European relations. With the AfCFTA in context, this paper advances the position that the current phase of economic integration in Africa ought to be understood as the latest stage of Africa's governing elites to leverage external opportunities in a long-standing quest for political stability through efforts. This endeavour is facilitated with the aid of Bob Jessop's *regulation approach*, Radhika Desai's concept of *combined development* and *syndic neo-corporatism*, an epistemic device I have engineered. The rest of this paper is set out as follows: firstly, an outline of the method employed will be made, followed by an overview of Africa-EU relations, then the way the identified patterns have been interpreted by conservative Pan-Africanists and Afro-European integrationists will be reviewed. Next, a sketch of the regulation analysis and combined development approaches will be presented and followed by the conclusion.

Method: sequence assembly and analysis of historical events

Sequence assembly and analysis are an ordered, systematic examination of sets of events to illustrate the inherent logic of evolutionary processes (Abbott 1983). It is guided by the strategy of time-series analysis with events serving as data points, earmarked with notations such as (hypothetical) dates or the use of proxy indicators to establish the contextual relevance of events. Sequence assembly and analysis tend to be useful in tracking a system's evolution usually with the aid of a deductive logical linking of seemingly discrete events, and the sketching of the trajectories mapped by occasions and taking into account both structural influences as well as one-off pressures. That said, sequence analysis and assembly can be understood as an effort to map the broad contours of history over the *longue durée*. In that sense, I consider the AfCFTA to be an institutional sediment of the structured political economy initiated at the time Africa and Europe made formal contact with the inception of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (TAST).

Africa-EU relations: two perspectives and an axis of contention

The 15th century marked a structural change in African-European relations. Africa, from 1400 to 1900, witnessed four distinct waves of systematic human extraction with the TAST having the highest volumes (Nunn 2008). At the risk of oversimplifying the complex dynamics of the TAST economy, two macro-level structural effects are worthy of being noted. The first is that it shifted a northward trans-Saharan slave trade south-westwards (Prange 2005). This shift, in effect, made Europe a geopolitical hub between Africa and the Americas. Secondly, it transformed African institutions into externally oriented human extraction systems. Unlike earlier episodes of the slave economy, the TAST disrupted African communal solidarity as a result of ethnic groups staging raids for captives to meet

external demand (Rodney 1972). Indeed, Africa's status as the most ethnically fragmented continent is accounted for by the disruptive effects of the said raids. Political instability and corrupt orders resulting from the pervasive violence attending the human extraction process undermined African civilizations like the Kingdoms of Kongo and Oyo (Whatley and Gillezeau 2011; Green 2011; Alonso 2014; Heywood 2009). Pan-Africanist scholars take the debilitating legacies of the TAST as given and as currently sustained through the zero-sum net benefits which accrue to Europe at the expense of African states in contemporary economic relations (Mizuno and Okazawa 2009; Kwemo 2017; Mhango 2017). African underdevelopment, in that sense, is therefore said to be directly linked to the European structures which govern economic interactions with Africa (Mhango 2018). Pan-Africanists therefore call for the implementation of policies to disrupt the Europe-centred status quo.

Contrary to the Pan-Africanist perspective, Afro-European integrationists contend that even though the earlier patterns of Africa's interaction with Europe may have undermined the continent's viability to develop, a rupture in relations is not the best option. Rather, they sustain that Europe's stature in the world economy can be leveraged by Africans to enhance development (Bond/ECDFM 2020; Draper 2007; European Union/African Development Bank 2018). Here, emphasis is placed on the need for African states to embark on public sector reforms to attract foreign investment and amplify the benefits of the current suboptimal relations between the two continents (Morisset 2001; Farole & Winkler 2014). It is with these proposals in mind that Germany launched the 2017 Marshall Plan for Africa to promote institutional renewal on the continent (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2017).

Stretched to a logical conclusion the two perspectives can be said to be analytically antagonistic toward each other, primarily due to their inherent normative biases from opposite sides of a spectrum whose logic nonetheless neglects equally significant dimensions of Africa-Europe relations. The gap resulting from this feature will be the focus of analysis in the subsequent sections of this paper. But first, the immediate section is a sketch of the broad patterns of Africa-Europe relations since the 1960s.

Africa-EU relations: contours, tensions, and political settlement

Nineteen days after Ghana (the Gold Coast) became independent on 6 March 1957, Europe took the first step to transcend its war-prone traditional state system with the signing of the Treaty of Rome (the Treaty, hereafter) which led to the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Commission (Hansen & Jonsson 2018). Further, in 1958, the First Conference of Independent African States (CIAS) and the All-African People's Conference (AAPC) were convened in Ghana to map out strategies for the full liberation of Africa from European domination. Although vestiges of European imperialism, such as the CFA monetary system, remained in place, the CIAS and the AAPC contributed to the granting of general independence to Francophone Africa in 1960 (the Year of Africa), and to the subsequent establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1963 (Grilli 2013).

As it turned out, the dawn of independence in Africa raised concerns in Europe even as Brussels negotiated its terms for unity. Cold War pressures led to the anxiety that Africa would either drift eastwards or westwards toward the USA and, either way, undermine Europe's global standing. As noted by Hansen and Jonsson:

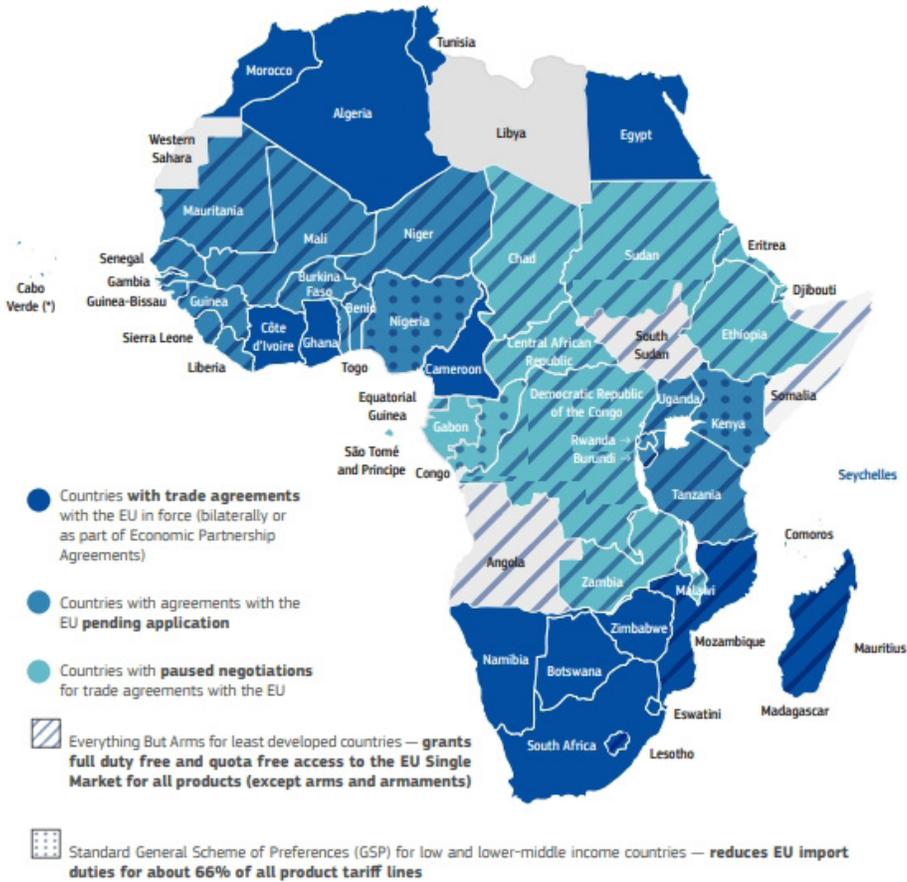
One of the outstanding French apostles of 'Eurafrica,' Pierre-Henri Teitgen, said in a speech at the Congress of Europe in Rome...that for Africa, the alternatives were to choose 'the American bloc, the Soviet world, the Bandung coalition, the Asian-African group or free Europe.' He added that this choice would involve much more than merely an economic link, such as is provided in the common market treaty. (Hansen & Jonsson 2018:267)

In the course of negotiations, France insisted and was granted its wish to participate in the integration process with its former African colonies. Brussels acceded to the demands of Paris with part four of the Treaty and concretely with the Yaoundé I and II Conventions (1963 and 1969) meant to guide the setting up of a free trade area (FTA) between Africa and the EEC (Warlouzet 2011). When the UK began negotiations to join Brussels in 1972, it also made similar demands just like France, and was granted a waiver in the Treaty of Accession which offered African Commonwealth States, the Pacific, and Caribbean (ACP) regions an opportunity to negotiate the terms of association with the EEC (Young 1973).

Unlike the Yaoundé Conventions, the Treaty of Accession triggered African resistance. Britain's decision to join Brussels in 1962 annoyed Commonwealth Africa (ComAf), which felt betrayed and a sense of strategic loss for two main reasons. The first was because its members had endorsed a decision, made by Britain in 1958, to join the European Free Trade Area rather than the EEC. The second was due to the fact that they foresaw the loss of bilateral trade privileges in Britain should it switch to the camp of the EEC. ComAf thus began a campaign against London by tagging it as a neo-colonial power bent on obstructing African gains from international trade (Stockwell 2015). Britain yielded to the pressure from ComAf and toned down the Yaoundé Convention proposal of trade reciprocity to non-reciprocity (Bangura 1983). The resulting trade regime was encoded in the Deniau Memorandum which, among others, granted African Associates of the EEC the right to maintain or introduce customs duties to promote regional integration projects (Gruhn 1976). This paved the way for the Yaoundé II provisions to be replaced by the 1975 Lomé I Convention, which subsequently evolved through four stages until it was eventually phased out and replaced with the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) (2000-2020).

The CPA marked a unique phase in Africa-European relations for it unveiled, for the first time, good governance conditionalities as well as the inception of region-to-region reciprocal free-trade negotiations between Brussels and separately with all African regional blocs (Hangen-Riad 2004). The region-based bilateral free trade ambition (indicated in figure 1) was designated as the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) (Holland 2003).

Figure 1. Status of the Africa-EU economic partnership agreements



Source: European Commission, 2020: 8

Be that as it may, the EPAs were not completed within the two decades envisaged by the CPA. For instance, while the 2016 EU-Southern African Development Community (SADC) EPA is the only agreement concluded so far, the ECOWAS version has stalled primarily due to the resistance of Nigeria. In 2007, when Brussels detected that the timelines of the EPAs were not feasible with the regions, it changed tracks and negotiated bilateral interim EPAs with individual countries as a stepping stone to regional level EPAs (Akinyooye 2020/21). At the time of the writing, the CPA that was due to expire in February had been extended by the EU to December 2020 with the unveiling of a new proposal to negotiate a comprehensive engagement strategy with Africa in March 2020 (European Council 2020).

Clapham (1996: 99-100) notes that the Lomé I Convention was a rare historic opportunity during which African states engaged Brussels on equal footing and gained concessions exceeding what had originally been on the table. However, this peculiarity resulted from the embargo imposed on developed countries by the Organization of Petroleum

Exporting Countries (OPEC) leading to the 1970s oil price shocks (Hamilton 2013). The OPEC's successful action exposed the vulnerability of developed economies to concerted pressure from commodity-exporting states, emboldening the latter to exploit their newly found power by making revisionist demands. For example, the UN 1974 Declaration and Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and the UN Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States resolved, among others, that developed countries ought to give developing economies non-reciprocal trading rights. This was in addition to the resolve of developing countries to pool economic advantages in pursuit of self-reliance (Rahman 2002).

The establishment of the 1975 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) foreshadowed NIEO inspired, state-driven anti-market initiatives in Africa (Asante 1984). In 1979, the OAU adopted the Monrovia Declaration in pursuit of collective self-reliance aimed at a new international economic order (OAU Council of Ministers 1979). Consequently, the OAU formulated the 1980-2000 Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) to set up the African Economic Community (AEC) as its subsidiary in 1991 (Nald and Maglivera 1999).

Meanwhile, the collapse of global commodity prices and unsustainable debt profiles in the mid-1970s slumped African economies into recession in the early 1980s (Ezenwe, 1993). The ensuing economic crisis and the lack of support from the USSR, which at the time was trapped in a crisis induced by the perestroika (economic restructuring) and the glasnost (political openness and transparency), give the Western bloc an opportunity to initiate a neoliberal restructuring of African economies under the aegis of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) (Gooding 1992; Sakwa 2013). The OPEC activism, NIEO demands, and the exposed vulnerability of the West to Global South pressure motivated the BWIs to use neoliberal reengineering to avert developing country activism in the future. This entailed the displacement of the state as an economic actor (Basosi et al. 2018) through the use of conditionality induced Structural Adjustment and Economic Recovery Programs (SA/ERP). And in order to lock in SA/ERP reforms, compliance was rewarded with foreign aid, which was withheld in the event of non-compliance (Akonor 2006).

The BWI neoliberal engineering was complimented with macro level schemes of ideological containment to weaken Pan-African solidarity initiatives. These took the form of macro-level policies formulated to contrast African initiatives and published in close temporal sequence with those of the OAU (Keet 2002). See table 1.

The *Intra-Regional Trade in Sub-Saharan Africa* (World Bank 1991) report, the CPA's philosophical foundation, was structured based on the concept of *open regionalism*: a paradigm to guide the framing of compatible regimes between regional integration projects and the WTO (Bergsten 1997). As such, it served several strategic purposes. First, it provided a pragmatic framework which the EU leveraged to reduce tensions with the US arising from Washington's long-standing resistance to the Lomé Conventions. This quest seems to have been successful given the launch of the free-trade African Growth and Opportunity Act by the US in 2000 – in the same year of the CPA's inception (Joselow 2013). Secondly, while preserving the strategic direction of the Lomé Convention, the EU

promoted the necessity of the CPA by emphasising its compliance with WTO protocols and, in the process, isolated African states from the ranks of developing countries who were bent on resisting the WTO Doha Development agenda (Akyüz, Milberg and Wade 2006; Gallagher 2008; Hopewell 2012). The motivation behind this strategy was that since the essence of the CPA was the same as the Doha proposals, its successful conclusion with the EU would pave the way for African governments to accept similar terms at the WTO. In line with this, Brussels incentivised African governments to align their interests with the EU on the Doha agenda with aid offers from the European Development Fund conditionally disbursed based on ‘performance’ assessments, a clear shift from a previous unconditional aid regime (Migani 2020).

Table 1. Initiatives in opposition: the BWI and the OAU

OAU (led) policy initiative/year	BWI counter-policy initiative/year
Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa /1980	Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Plan for Action (Berg Report)/1981
African Priority Program for Economic Reconstruction (APPER)/1986	Sub-Saharan Africa: from Crisis to Sustainable Development, A Long Term Perspectives Study/November 1989
UN Program for Accelerated African Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD)/July 1989	
Charter for Popular Participation in Development/1990	The Challenges of Development/1991
UN New Agenda for Development in Africa/1991	
Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community/1991	Intra-Regional Trade in Sub-Saharan Africa/1991 (classified at the time it was published)

Source: Adapted by the author; originally from Keet 2002: 14.

In 1999, Libya encouraged the OAU to adopt the Sirte Declaration, which led to the consummation of a 2000 Constitutive Act at a Summit in Lomé to set up the African Union (AU). This was followed by the first OAU-EU Summit that same year in Egypt, and to the adoption of the Cairo Declaration which commended African governments for

adopting...plans and...treaties which constitute an appropriate framework for the collective promotion of the development of their countries, which include the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos of 1980, and the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community of 1991 (the Abuja Treaty),..., and the Sirte Declaration.... (European Commission 2000)

The Declaration also articulated EU’s commitment ‘to trade liberalization within the framework of a rules-based multilateral trading system’, the economic integration of the EU and Africa, and that a new round of multilateral negotiations should smoothly and gradually integrate Africa into the world economy.

A 2001 Summit in Lusaka to plan the institutional set up of the AU, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted as a framework of democracy and a paradigm to accelerate African economic integration. The NEPAD resulted from the merger of two pre-existing plans: Presidents Mbeki (South Africa), Obasanjo (Nigeria) and Bouteflika's (Algeria) Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Program, as well as Wade's (Senegal) OMEGA Plan for Africa. Further, the NEPAD's monitoring agency, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), was established in 2003 (Agboluaje 2005). Once that was done, the AU successfully promoted the NEPAD at the EU and got Brussels's commitment with the declaration that

the European Union fully supports NEPAD as an overarching and integrated policy framework for African efforts that will no doubt contribute towards the realisation of...internationally agreed development goals....[T]here are...encouraging signs of development. The commitment to good governance by African leaders as embodied in NEPAD and also in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, ..., and the recent positive prospects of ending some of Africa's protracted conflicts in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia/Eritrea and Sierra Leone....The European Union finds that Africa development efforts are best served by a greatly sharpened focus on NEPAD as the basis for partnership between Africa and the international community. (Taylor 2010:52-53)

Beyond the statement of commitment, however, the EU saw the NEPAD as a strategic asset: it philosophically converged with the good governance neoliberal paradigms of its Maastricht Treaty and the CPA, both tactical planks in the EU's external cooperation principles (Lorca, 2007).

Nevertheless, the NEPAD drew criticisms from African civil society groups who saw it as an anti-democratic, elitist program (Matthews 2011) and questioned the basis for its obsession with a neoliberal integration of Africa into the world economy at all costs (Keet 2002). This led to resistance campaigns and mobilization to formulate a popular alternative which eventually became the 'Aspirations of the African People' or 'The Africa We Want' proposals.

At the 2013 AU Summit to celebrate the OAU's 50th anniversary, 'The Africa We Want' was adopted as a Pan-African Renaissance social contract christened 'Agenda 2063', made up of a seven-point aspirational blueprint to be realised by the OAU's centenary anniversary (African Union, n.d.). The EU committed to support Agenda 2063 with the African Marshall Plan by linking it with similar European plans in consultations with African civil society groups (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2017).

The institution of the AfCFTA, the third flagship project of Agenda 2063, was in 2018 celebrated as marking Africa's coming of age and thus becoming worthy of being an equal

partner of the EU. In statements made to that effect, Juncker, the President of the European Commission at the time, stated that

What happens in Africa matters for Europe, and what happens in Europe matters for Africa. Our partnership is an investment in our shared future. It is a partnership of equals in which we support each other, help each other to prosper and make the world a safer, more stable and more sustainable place to live. (European Commission 2019)

Further, in his State of the Union Address in 2018, he noted that the AfCFTA fits into the Africa-Europe Strategic Partnership as part of a long-term intention to establish a complete continent-to-continent free trade agreement based on the EPAs (Bilal and Stevens 2009). As to whether the partnership will blossom as anticipated is yet to be known. However, the alignment of aspirations as evidenced by the use of 'strategic partnerships' (for the first time) to describe existing relations signals an EU-Africa political settlement.

Without doubt, while Pan-Africanists see this political settlement as Africa yielding to European pressures, Afro-European integrationists will cite it as vindicating the historical validity of their perspective. Stretched to a logical conclusion, the epistemic and ontological conflict between the two schools of thought is bound to run into an analytical cul-de-sac by being trapped in a confirmation bias with the consequence of little to instruct beyond egoistic normative predispositions. In order to avert this outcome, which risks burying theoretical insights that may attend the establishment of the AfCFTA, the next section deploys regulation analysis (RA) to highlight a new epistemic front which critically avoids the historic conflicts between the two aforementioned schools of thought.

The politics of governance in Africa-EU relations: the AfCFTA in perspective

Governance is used in this paper to mean the system through which entities direct, are directed and controlled (Zurn 2018). It has to do with structures and processes of control, calibration of interests, the setting of objectives, risk monitoring and the framing of mitigation strategies (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006). In this respect, governance can be understood as systemic transactions based on strategic thinking. Governance also has to do with the emergence of (de facto) authority structures which alter actor's payoffs and hence dictate the articulation of domestic and international transactions (Martinelli 2003). Further, the link between domestic and international level transactions concretely manifest as FTAs, that, within the context of geopolitical economy, count as settlements resulting from international power struggles over specific geographic areas (Desai 2013).

Regulation analysis (RA), an extension of governance, examines the links between economic and extra-economic institutions and how they affect the stability (or otherwise) of international regimes with or without the manipulation of states (Jessop 1997).

RA highlights the importance of the complementarity of distinct governance mechanisms (such as institutional enactments and procedural networks) in the regulation of capitalism (Boyer and Yves 1995). RA is often divided into four sub-concepts: the first, an industrial paradigm framed at the micro-level; the second, modes of regulation framed at the meso-level; the third, accumulation regimes often framed at the macro-level; and the fourth, a model of development framed at the systemic level. The cited analytical devices are outlined as follows: the industrial paradigm seeks to explain how mass production is managed by systems of technical and social division of labour. The meso-level framing of the mode of regulation takes the form of an ensemble of rules, enterprise and organizational models, state management models and supporting regimes of international exchange. Last, the systemic level mode of development examines the synergy between the first three tendencies and how they fuse to create stable transboundary systems to augment capital accumulation. The analytical process of RA, along the lines indicated, takes into account conflict management strategies.

That said, the state is central in RA for two main reasons: it is both an initiator and a subordinate subject of contextual imperatives. The balance of forces that may result from this (mostly contradictory) dual status of the state defines the character of politics and political. In particular, the extent to which political constituencies (e.g. state elites, bureaucrats) and disparate social actors are enmeshed in complementary or contradictory relations is reducible to the nature of contradictions arising from the state's dual status as a regulator and a regulated domain.

Complimentary or contradictory relations between constituencies plays out in public and/or private networks, strategic alliances and relational contracting (Delorme 1995). Further, the resolution of contradictions also constitutes the search for new patterns of coherence which may stabilize or destabilize capital accumulation. In this respect, the international dimension of policy comes in handy because it is a source of new ideas and design systems which may lend legitimacy, a political asset when it comes to the resolution of contradictions. Being so, the external search for coherence is similar to Desai's concept of combined development: the inbuilt tendency of capitalism to generate contradictions which requires constant coordination efforts as part of crisis management, a role that can only be performed by the state. Given this imperative, governments seek conducive positions in the world economy through schemes of combined development: state-directed and accelerated development of the forces of production, under the tutelage of developed external centres of capitalist production. This leads to less endowed actors cloning the governance structures of relatively developed ones (Heldt and Schmidtke 2019; Jessop 2004; Desai 2013).

The AfCFTA within the context of Africa-EU relations is defined by the governance structure of the initial contact between Africa and Europe at the inception of the TAST, which in itself was a context of free trade. It was so in the sense that there were no formalized mediating governance regimes to dictate exchanges between the two continents; it was straight forward economic exchange at the point of transaction. Nevertheless, the incentives of the transacting parties were different: while Europeans were motivated by

the quest for economically reproducible dividends, Africans aimed at acquiring inputs to enhance their human extractive capacity. The mode of governing the different motivations led to different institutional and demographic consequences. For example, Europeans set up institutions and logistics frameworks to serve as support systems for an emergent capitalist class. Africans, on the other hand, adjusted their institutional orders to disrupt bonds of social cohesion: a tendency that guaranteed human supply to meet European demand with the consequences of ethnic friction and fractionalization (Thomas and Bean 1974).

A similar logic is currently at work with the AfCFTA within the context of the Africa-EU strategic partnership: while the EU's interactions with Africa is aimed at setting up a network of institutional support systems which can be leveraged by Brussels to prevail in competition with its global rivals, African elites seek to utilize the AfCFTA in conjunction with European institutions to extract natural resource rent.

As mentioned above, the current incentive of African elites is rooted in the political economy of instability which resulted from the TAST. The process of African extraction of human beings for export led to a shift from a politics of centrifugal communal engagements (which enabled the setting up of civilizations) to patterns of economic exchange that intensified centripetal pressures. To be sure, before the TAST, despite the trans-Saharan and trans-Indian ocean exchanges, Africa was a context of civilizational atrophy and revival. At the risk of failing a causality litmus test, one will suggest that the TAST system of exchange terminated the setting up of civilizational states on the continent and set off four broad demographic patterns from the ensuing ferment. These were firstly, the emergence of Chieftain led ethnic group-security complexes; secondly, anarcho intra ethnic group insecurity complexes took root; thirdly, mid-level entrepreneurs (Chiefs or private individuals) who were either freelance raiders, brokers or arms merchants emerged; and fourthly, internally displaced persons forced to migrate from raids (Glover 2017; Nunn and Wantchekon 2011; Kaplan 1994).

Various reasons (including guilt and Christian activism) have been adduced to account for the abolition of the TAST in 1807. However, technical developments (e.g., the piston steam engine) underpinning the industrial revolutions is a greater terminal factor of the TAST since increased productivity attending technological advancements required external markets of scale and guaranteed supply of new raw materials (Arnold 2005; Frankema 2015). Western knowledge of the market potential and natural resources of Africa indicated that the continent can viably support European manufacturing systems for capital generation and accumulation. Given this, human raids and their attendant communal disruptions had to be terminated (Law 1995). That Europe was capable of unilaterally enforcing its imperatives in Africa, disrupt the international slave economy and also elicit reluctant African compliance evidenced the positive net geopolitical economic gains which the West had accrued from the TAST.

Meanwhile, the industrial revolutions also marked the beginning of abrasive European mercantilism which spilt into Africa as confrontational, chaotic territorial grabs. To forestall the outbreak of war due to economic rivalry, King Leopold II persuaded France and Germany to negotiate a common European African governance strategy. Consequently,

the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck invited European governments and the USA (an observer) in 1884 to a Berlin Conference to negotiate the terms of what came to be known as the 1885 General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa (the Berlin Act, hereafter). Without contesting pre-existing (informal) zones of control, the conferees agreed to a territorial division formula that firstly included the abolition of African and Islamic slave systems and secondly, the declaration of a free trade zone around the Congo Basin and Lake Malawi in central Africa. Further, it established a provision for the Principle of Effective Occupation to set conditions for uncontested resource exploitation, stipulating that signatories can lay territorial claims with proof of 'effective occupation' evidenced by treaties with African chieftains, and established administrative structures, a police force, and mounted flags. The commitment of the signatories to the Berlin Act withstood the test of the 1898 Fashoda Incident, which nearly resulted in a war between Britain and France. In order to avert any such danger in the future, both states ironed out their differences with the 1898 Anglo-French Peace Convention (Craven 2015).

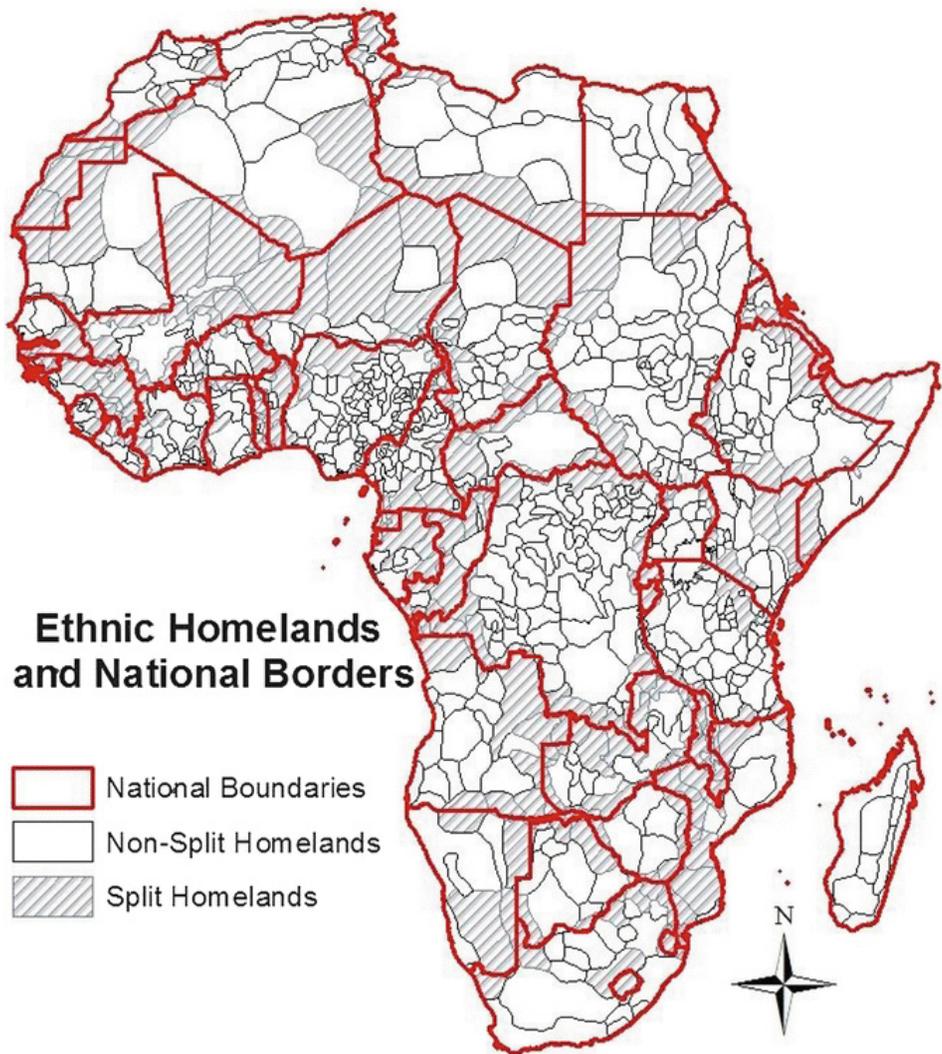
All said the Berlin Conference cartographic partitioning of Africa (which largely survives to this day) paved the way for a regulated occupation frenzy in a subsequent scramble for Africa (Press 2017). A combination of (protection) treaties with African chieftains (which technically meant governing elites signing away their sovereign rights) and European military expeditions made up of African rank and file (the Askari, later to become colonial garrisons) led to the complete occupation and forced pacification of the continent and subsequently, to the era of colonial rule. It is worth noticing that colonial boundaries which were not coterminous with either contested or settled ethnic group spatial concentrations pressed antagonist groups together under force of arms (see figure 2). The ensuing administrative compartments were therefore latent violent systems, disrupted ethnic group security complexes and disturbed indigenous spheres of influence.

European colonialism of Africa represented a first-time formal insertion of exotic rudimentary administrative structures and the fusion of Weberian cultures of officialdom (e.g. legal education, training in book keeping and auditing skills) which were organically out of sync with those of pre-existing indigenous polities. In that sense, colonial administration staked out pockets of contradictory, unstable systems which were both horizontally and vertically unhinged although stable under force of arms.

In a bid by European states to contain the disruptive effects of contradictions and also keep the cost of administration to a minimum, a governance strategy known as indirect rule was formulated. It entailed the employment of African chieftains (stripped of indigenous trappings of sovereignty) as agents of colonial governments who were commissioned to mobilize tax revenue and arbitrate domestic disputes. This system of governance accentuated the very contradictions they were meant to resolve, since it upended indigenous systems of accountability and legitimacy by making chiefs and their assigns more prone to colonial fidelity and protection rather than the ethnic constituencies they led. This tendency generated local resentment and antipathy particularly in acephalous polities (societies without overarching leadership systems), where Europeans appointed warrant chiefs and set up hierarchical systems of public administration (Cooper, 2002).

Localized antipathy contained seeds of the proto-nationalism, the call for reforms without the clamour for freedom advanced through cross-ethnic agitation against colonial governments with Chiefs as direct targets. By and large, pragmatic Chiefs when it was prudent to do so, often backed popular calls for reforms. However, since their continued hold on residual power was ultimately decided by colonial governors, backing calls for reforms was often a slim exception, rather than a general tendency. The lethargic posture of Chiefs in this respect energized proto nationalists to mature into radical non-governmental organizations and political parties (Oloruntimehin 1985).

Figure 2. Cartographic partitioning of Africa imposed over spatial concentrations of ethnic groups after the 1884/85 Berlin Conference



Source: Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2016: 6.

The end of WWII in 1945 led to real nationalism defined as demands for independence from colonial rule. The change in the structure of agitation from proto to real nationalism resulted from a confluence of several factors. For instance, the victory of the Allied Powers implied that European states had to give up their colonial possessions as required by the terms of the 1941 Atlantic Charter and UN General Assembly resolutions 1540 and 1541 (1960) (Clapham 1996:17; Sherwood 1996). In addition, the radical tone of the 1945 Manchester Pan-African Conference Declaration, which expressed the readiness of Africans to resort to armed resistance to gain freedom (Sherwood 2019), pent up popular resentment against Chiefs and the appetite for freedom by ex-service African army conscripts who fought for European freedom but returned home to colonial domination energised real nationalism. These factors, in addition to Western-educated African returnees versed in European history, philosophy, and organizational strategies, enhanced the formation of nationalist movements for independence which paved the way for the establishment of the European model of the state in Africa for the first time in history (Jackson 1961).

The process leading to the emergence of the state was nonetheless polarizing. Chiefs, for example, opposed independence and mobilized their kin against emergent states because they anticipated (and correctly so) the loss of privileges, protection and the suffering of persecution given their close collaboration with colonial governors. Besides, until the eve of independence, Chiefs thought they would be the eventual inheritors of the power with the departure of Europeans. They therefore saw the development of the contrary as a loss. Given that nationalist parties, even before inheriting the power to govern, exhibited authoritarian tendencies, anxious Africans insulated themselves in ethnic groups and sub-national constituencies like religious associations.

Due to these tensions, the African state at independence existed only as a legal entity; it lacked the critical requirements for empirical viability of the kind necessary for the stability of systems modelled along the lines of European states (Clapham 1996: 44-74). For example, governments had power but lacked broad-based legitimacy and authority (Ofuho 2000). Also, even though state boundaries were externally demarcated, they were internally contested (Herbst 2000). Further, the state's population was hardly composed of citizens of government: there was little positive emotional affinity between various ethnic nations constituting the state and government (Ekeh 1975; Englebert 2002). Consequently, the mobilization of state resources such as patriotic values and taxes was hampered. Given that African states lacked an industrial middle class to attenuate antagonism, as was the case in West in the early periods of state formation, there was direct confrontation between governing elites and sub-national constituencies. Indeed, as evidenced by the spectre of military coup d'états within a decade of independence, the African state at the time was trapped in a Gramscian crisis manifesting as an old regime (colonialism) fading without being replaced by a new order (stable African systems) that led to an interregnum characterised by morbid symptoms (coup d'états and uncivil wars) (Bauman 2012).

Against this background, the quest for hegemonic stability became the number one priority of African governments who in this quest experimented with several regulatory

strategies. At first, they sought to acquire a Pan-African identity without recourse to primordial African identities and institutions. The quest was framed as the nationalist freedom fighter's fidelity to the African masses. This approach was intended to portray Chiefs as public enemies by highlighting their past history of colonial collaboration. This identity-construction initiative was complemented with the propagation of the myth that Western democracy was un-African because it bred disunity, hence the need for single-party systems and centrally planned economies to ostensibly foster state cohesion. The myth was selectively operationalized at the micro-level: while Chiefs who were hostile to government were banned from engaging in party politics, those on friendly terms with government were given an informal leave to do so. Further, as part of the myth propagation strategy, local government institutions were converted into central government monitoring outposts.

The quest for hegemonic stability had an industrial component in the form of the setting up of parastatal regulated mono-crop and natural resource extraction enclaves on land coercively expropriated from Chiefs who were allodial owners. This scheme guaranteed rent extraction through the mass production of cash crops and generation of mineral wealth, which were invested in neo-patrimonial schemes meant to reward loyalty and punish opposition. The previously cited BWI neoliberal interventions in Africa partially interfered with micro level regulatory principles of the sketched hegemonic stability system. While the SAP/ERP programs liberalised the restrictive dimensions of political power, the enclave economic systems of rent extraction were exempted from neoliberal transformation and still remained state monopolies.

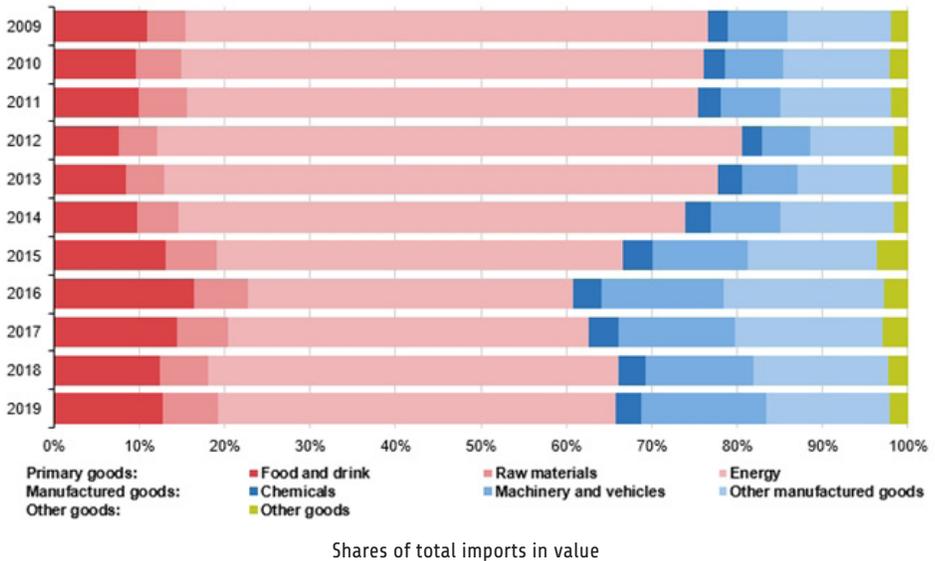
The meso-level dimension of the quest for hegemonic stability took the form of parastatal networks governed by vertical accountability regimes anchored on loyal elite coalitions and plugged into the wealth generation circuits of micro-level enclave economies. This tendency is what accounts for the stark absence of a paradigm in the AfCFTA agreement to guide industrial/value chain upgrades. The regulatory imperative here is to maintain a governance logic akin to that of rentier states, where the exploitation of natural resources does not require heavy investment in diversified specialist skills and the acquisition of sophisticated technology for value addition.

The systemic dimension of the hegemonic quest fuses the micro and meso-level governance structures to preserve the historic pattern of trade relations between Africa and the EU to support the strategic objectives of the political elites of both continents. The pattern of trade indicated in figure 3, dominated by the export raw commodities, is a sketch of the structural essence of trade between the two continents since contact began with the TAST. The current architecture of the AfCFTA is not designed to interfere with the said pattern. Indeed, through what I call *syndic neo-corporatism*, the AfCFTA enacts a regulatory apparatus to simultaneously meet the hegemonic stability needs of Africa elites and the global aspirations of Brussels.

I define *syndic neo-corporatism* as a systemic level network of African rent income-dependent political and technocratic elites (excluding plebeians) who act as the EU's commodity brokers. African *syndic neo-corporatists* ideologically profess what I

refer to as *Neoliberal Pan-Africanism*: Pan-Africanism shorn of the classic Garveyian and Nkrumahist ideals of African self-reliance, political and economic independence/autonomy and global non-alignment. Further, Neoliberal Pan-Africanists are animated by a posture of elitist entitlement, the marginalisation of African masses, a belief in extraversion and the notion of comparative cost advantage in international trade.

Figure 3. EU-27 imports from Africa by product group, 2019



Source: Eurostat, 2020.

As instructed by Desai's combined development, African syndic neo-corporatists, under the tutelage of Brussels and through initiatives like the Neighbourhood Development Cooperation and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) (Jones et al. 2018), have structured the AfCFTA to philosophically align with the CPA/EPAs by adopting an open region trading regime at the systemic level. Consequently, this initiative will eventually lead to institutional uniformity across the African continent in matters of trade with the EU, reduce Brussels's cost of engagement and minimise the drudgery of negotiating with several dissimilarly structured institutions of Africa. This will give the EU a strategic edge over its global competitors through a structural coherence of African and European economic governance institutions.

Drawing on RA, it is noteworthy that the open systemic EU-Africa regional trade regime as regulated by African syndic neo-corporatists will be at variance with the closed rent extraction resource enclaves and governance regimes of parastatals at the micro and meso levels of the state. The micro and meso regulatory structure is meant to preserve wealth generation and distribution circuits. Africa's regulators are therefore strategically Janus-faced in governance. Further, since rent generation and distribution is class constitutive and a state monopolistic venture, the micro and meso level governance system will,

by and large, yield the hegemonic stability goals of Africa's elites. This will most likely be the case since the risk of losing out on 'good governance' indexed NDICI performance assessments for aid will motivate African governments to at least maintain or initiate cohesive political settlements.

Given the forgoing, one can assert that the likely Pan-Africanist conclusion of Africa having capitulated under EU pressure will be difficult to sustain, since the commodity broker syndic neo-corporatist role of African elites has instrumental value in terms of rent generation in the quest for hegemonic stability. Further, the assertion of the Afro-European integrationists that Africa stands a good chance of development by integrating the AfCFTA with the EU will also be hard to uphold because the structure of commodity dominated exports, which the current architecture of the AfCFTA will preserve, has historically been a source of sporadic growth without development in Africa. It has also made the continent's economies vulnerable to external shocks, as well as exposed it to the disruptions of erratic world market prices, rendering long term development planning impossible. All of these factors, in tandem with EPA structured open regionalism, will undermine any form of structural transformation that the AfCFTA may enable. Besides, these will not enhance Africa's standing in the larger global economy.

Conclusion

This article leveraged the opportunity presented by the establishment of AfCFTA in 2018 to revisit the two dominant contending perspectives in the study of the relations between Africa and Europe: the Pan-African and Afro-European integration schools of thought. While the former approach calls for the need for Africa to terminate the existing pattern of its relations with Europe, the latter calls for continued engagement between the two continents. Given that the AfCFTA positively reflects the position of the Afro-European integrationists and goes against the theoretical preference of the Pan-Africanists, a rehash of analysis along the same old normative lines of argument at the cost of new theoretical insights is expected to occur. Guided by Jessop's regulation analysis, Desai's concept of combined development and my notion of syndic neo-corporatism and using the method of sequence analysis, this paper made a case beyond the normative borders of the contending schools and demonstrated how the AfCFTA fits into both the rent-extraction scheme of African governments and the global level strategy of the EU in its quest to hedge against its rivals in the world order.

Notes

- 1 'Syndic.' From the Latin word, *syndicus* meaning court assistant or advocate. See Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster [online]. At <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/syndic> [Accessed on 3 August 2021].

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O AfCFTA no Contexto das Relações África-UE: Uma Análise Regulamentar de Alguns Fatos Estilizados

Resumo: A criação da Zona de Comércio Livre Continental Africana (AfCFTA) em 2018, evento que redefiniu as dimensões institucionais das relações África-Europa, está no centro de debates normativos históricos entre duas escolas dominantes sobre os imperativos da unidade africana. Enquanto os pan-africanistas defendem a unidade africana como estratégia para romper as relações comerciais entre os dois continentes, os integracionistas afro-europeus afirmam que a busca da unidade africana não deve ser divorciada de trocas mais profundas entre a África e a Europa. A AfCFTA está inserida em um conjunto de instituições de livre comércio entre África e União Europeia (EU) e, portanto, deve ser percebida pelos pan-africanistas como a África cedendo ao domínio europeu e aclamada pelos integracionistas afro-europeus como uma reivindicação da validade de suas afirmações. Com a ajuda da análise regulatória da [insert first name] Jessop, do conceito de desenvolvimento combinado da [insert first name] Desai e da minha noção de neocorporativismo sindical, bem como do método de análise de sequências, este artigo apresenta um caso além das perspectivas normativas das duas escolas e demonstra que, enquanto os pan-africanistas não percebem que as elites africanas valorizam instrumentalmente a AfCFTA como um esquema de extração de aluguel, os integracionistas afro-europeus não reconhecem que a AfCFTA se encaixa na busca estratégica da UE para prevalecer sobre seus concorrentes globais.

Palavras-chave: AfCFTA, África, União Europeia, integração, análise de regulamentação.

Received on 12 March 2021 and approved for publication on 24 November 2021.



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