



INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ

DOI: 10.22363/2313-0660-2023-23-1-157-167

EDN: THCCVS

Research article / Научная статья

African Continental Integration — A New Step towards a Multipolar World

Sergey N. Volkov  , Olga V. Konstantinova 

Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation

 snvolkov@list.ru

Abstract. The global economy continues to suffer the consequences of the 2020 global recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the dramatic shifts in international relations in 2022 triggered by severe sanctions imposed by Western nations against Russia. Many countries have been affected by the restrictions. African economies were no exception, experiencing a strong negative impact of these sanctions because of rising global prices on cereal crops, oil, natural gas, and mineral fertilizers, which caused a decrease in their imports felt primarily by the most vulnerable population groups. In addition, the region has seen a retreat from basic gains in living standards and social problems. This situation has once again made it clear to African countries that they should pool efforts in order to minimize damage and facilitate economic recovery. In this regard, the issues of developing economic integration, such as the transition from the subregional to regional (continental) level of economic integration, which is the subject of this paper, have become more relevant. The African Continental Free Trade Area, launched on January 1, 2021, is the largest in the world in terms of the number of participating countries with a total population of 1.3 billion USD and GDP of 3.4 trillion USD, and is expected to more than double by 2050. An important achievement of economic integration in Africa is the creation in 2018 of the African Single Market for Air Transport and plans for the introduction of a single passport, which are designed to ensure the free movement of Africans across the continent. Thus, continental integration is an extremely important and necessary tool for Africa to strengthen intra-regional ties, increase labor productivity and enhance the competitiveness of African goods. In addition, the promotion of integration helps to strengthen Africa's economic and political positions in the world, which objectively contributes to the movement towards a multipolar world.

Key words: Africa, integration, African Continental Free Trade Area, African Union

Conflicts of interest. The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution. The authors made an equal contribution to the design, research and preparation of the final article's text.



For citation: Volkov, S. N., & Konstantinova, O. V. (2023). African continental integration — a new step towards a multipolar world. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 23(1), 157—167. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2023-23-1-157-167>

Африканская континентальная интеграция — новый шаг на пути к многополярному миру

С.Н. Волков  , О.В. Константинова 

Институт Африки РАН, Москва, Российская Федерация

 snvolkov@list.ru

Аннотация. Мировая экономика продолжает испытывать последствия мировой рецессии 2020 г., спровоцированной пандемией коронавируса, а также резких сдвигов, произошедших в системе международных отношений в 2022 г. в результате жестких санкций, введенных коллективным Западом против России. Последствия этих ограничений затронули многие страны мира. Африканские государства не стали исключением, испытав на себе серьезное негативное воздействие этих санкций в результате роста мировых цен на зерновые культуры, а также нефть, газ, минеральные удобрения, что вызвало снижение объемов их импорта, которое ощутили на себе в первую очередь наиболее социально уязвимые группы населения. Кроме того, регионом были утрачены достигнутые ранее успехи в повышении уровня жизни и решении социальных проблем. Сложившаяся ситуация вновь продемонстрировала странам Африки, что только совместные усилия позволят минимизировать нанесенный ущерб и способствовать восстановлению экономик. В этой связи более актуальными стали вопросы развития экономической интеграции: перехода с субрегионального на региональный (континентальный) уровень экономической интеграции, рассмотрению которого посвящено исследование. Африканская континентальная зона свободной торговли, самая многочисленная в мире по числу стран-участниц, была запущена 1 января 2021 г. Совокупный ВВП государств этого объединения, население которых составляет 1,3 млрд чел., оценивается в 3,4 трлн долл. США. Ожидается, что к 2050 г. он увеличится более чем вдвое. Важным элементом экономической интеграции на континенте является создание в январе 2018 г. Единого африканского рынка воздушного транспорта, а также наличие планов по введению единого паспорта, который обеспечит свободное передвижение африканцев по континенту. Таким образом, развитие континентальной интеграции служит для Африки крайне важным и необходимым инструментом усиления внутрирегиональных связей, повышения производительности труда и конкурентоспособности африканских товаров. Кроме того, продвижение интеграции способствует укреплению экономических и политических позиций Африки в мире, что объективно содействует движению к многополярному миру.

Ключевые слова: Африка, интеграция, Африканская континентальная зона свободной торговли, Африканский союз

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов. Авторы внесли равнозначный вклад в разработку дизайна, проведение исследования и подготовку текста статьи.

Для цитирования: Волков С. Н., Константинова О. В. Африканская континентальная интеграция — новый шаг на пути к многополярному миру // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2023. Т. 23, № 1. С. 157—167. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2023-23-1-157-167>

Introduction

Integration is an important tool for increasing the pace and quality of Africa's development. The states of the continent strive for cooperation, understanding that their joint

positions on a particular issue will have more weight on the global stage, which is especially important now in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. Many works are devoted to this issue, for example, by I.O. Abramova, L.L. Fituni (Abramova & Fituni, 2018),

S.N. Volkov, T.L. Deych (Volkov & Deych, 2020), G.M. Kostyunina (2020a; 2020b), E.V. Morozenskaya (2019), L.L. Fituni (2019), B. Byiers and L. Miyandazi (Byiers & Miyandazi, 2021), V. Gammadigbe (2021), A. Gnanguênon,¹ K. Gottschalk (2020), Ph. Mthembu and F. Kornegay,² etc.

The *purpose* of this article is to identify the main vector of economic integration in Africa in the context of growing turbulence in the world economy. At the same time, due to the format of this study, other areas of African integration, such as political, military, social, cultural, etc., remain outside of its scope.

The main goals of the study are to analyze the development of African continental integration and the involvement of individual states in this process, to study the legal framework of African continental integration, to identify the advantages and threats for the participants of existing agreements, to assess the obstacles to pan-African unification and possible ways to overcome them.

The research methodology is based on the use of generalization and comparative methods. A systematic analytical approach was used, which made it possible to conduct a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of the studied phenomena. Scientific publications on the African continental integration, the economic consequences of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the African continent, and analytical materials from international organizations were analyzed. In particular, the reports of the African Development Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for

Africa on the African Regional Integration Index,³ the African Union on the African Single Market for Air Transport⁴ and on Continental Integration,⁵ as well as the World Bank study on the African Continental Free Trade Area (World Bank, 2020) were used.

Literature Review

Integration on the African continent is seen by politicians and scientists as a relevant strategy that will allow African countries to increase intra-regional trade, accelerate economic growth and achieve their inclusion in the global economic system (Gammadigbe, 2021, p. 4). It can also be a lever to accelerate the structural transformation of African countries through economies of scale, competitive growth, more effective resource mobilization, and the development of regional supply chains. Econometric analysis by V. Gammadigbe (2021, p. 21) shows that regional integration accelerates income growth in Africa and contributes to reducing inequality. In the meantime, the benefits of regional integration are unevenly distributed in favor of the continent's relatively developed economies.

B. Byiers and L. Miyandazi (Byiers & Miyandazi, 2021, p. 1) suggest that the African Union (AU), despite the growing interest of African countries in regional cooperation, is facing challenges in promoting integration, since sometimes national political interests negatively affect regional processes. In addition, the inconsistency of decision-making, the growth in the number of African subregional

¹ Gnanguênon A. Mapping African regional cooperation: How to navigate Africa's institutional landscape // European Council on Foreign Relations. 2020. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep27727.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_search_gsv2%252Fcontrol&efreqid=excelsior%3Ae8811ca82ef4235cb4b4546b851de8d2 (accessed: 02.12.2021).

² Mthembu Ph., Kornegay F. Africa and the world: Navigating shifting geopolitics // Institute for Global Dialogue Global Insight. 2020. No. 135. URL: <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/africa-and-world-navigating-shifting-geopolitics/> (accessed: 29.11.2021).

³ Africa. Regional Integration Index. Report 2019 // African Union, African Development Bank Group, Economic Commission for Africa United Nations. 2020. URL: https://arii.uneca.org/Reports/en_ARII-Report-2019.pdf (accessed: 29.11.2021).

⁴ The SAATM Handbook // IATA. URL: <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/44c1166a6e10411a982b2624047e118c/saatm-handbook.pdf> (accessed: 11.11.2021).

⁵ African Integration Report: Putting Free Movement of Persons at the Centre of Continental Integration 2021 // African Union. 2021. URL: <https://knowledge-uclga.org/IMG/pdf/africanintegrationreport.pdf> (accessed: 10.09.2022).

organizations with overlapping membership and the lack of coordination between them reflect the current level of competitiveness of the political and institutional environment.⁶

According to P. Shipalana and A. O’Riordan (Shipalana & O’Riordan, 2020, p. 2), macroeconomic stability, especially in Africa, requires stepping up monetary and fiscal policies of African governments in order to develop economic recovery plans as the pandemic is brought under control.

Undoubtedly, there are many obstacles to African integration, including, above all, the unstable political situation in some African countries, military conflicts and terrorist groups’ activities, poverty, hunger, lack of safe drinking water, as well as underdeveloped medicine, social sphere, etc. All these problems have become more acute during the coronavirus pandemic, which “undermined” the economy, exposed all the problems, especially in healthcare and social services (Volkov & Deych, 2021; Fituni & Abramova, 2020; Hamouda, 2021). However, it has become even more obvious that African countries can overcome the consequences of the pandemic only by joint efforts, which implies a shift in the focus of cooperation from the subregional level of integration to the continental one.

African Continental Free Trade Area

The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on January 1, 2021, has undoubtedly become the most important step towards strengthening African unity. Naturally, it will take a long time before the implementation of all the provisions of the protocols to the agreement on the establishment of the AfCFTA, many of which have yet to be developed, but the very fact that African states

⁶ Gnanguènon A. Mapping African regional cooperation: How to navigate Africa’s institutional landscape // European Council on Foreign Relations. 2020. P. 3. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep27727.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_search_gsv2%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3Ae8811ca82ef4235cb4b4546b851de8d2 (accessed: 02.12.2021).

have begun to implement this agreement speaks of a broad geopolitical vision of Africa. The importance of this event for Africa is stressed by many researchers: E.V. Drobot and A.L. Sapuntsov (Drobot & Sapuntsov, 2021), M.V. Ledeneva and T.A. Plaksunova (Ledeneva & Plaksunova, 2020), O.V. Konstantinova (2020), B. Byiers and L. Miyandazi (Byiers & Miyandazi, 2021), Ph. Mthembu and F. Kornegay,⁷ A. Van Nieuwkerk,⁸ etc.

For instance, Ph. Mthembu and F. Kornegay⁹ believe that increasing role and effectiveness of the AU and subregional economic communities should be more linked to the bilateral commitments of individual African countries, especially the major economies of the continent, which should assume greater responsibility in organizing Africa’s relations at the global level. In addition, the implementation of the AfCFTA as one of the priorities of the 2063 Agenda¹⁰ can give an impetus to deepening African integration.¹¹

Indeed, the AfCFTA is now attracting increased attention from African policymakers

⁷ Mthembu Ph., Kornegay F. Africa and the world: Navigating shifting geopolitics // Institute for Global Dialogue Global Insight. 2020. No. 135. URL: <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/africa-and-world-navigating-shifting-geopolitics/> (accessed: 29.11.2021).

⁸ Van Nieuwkerk A. COVID-19 and Regional integration in Southern Africa: South Africa’s moment of truth // South African Institute of International Affairs Policy Briefing. 2020. No. 202. P. 1—12. URL: <https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Policy-Briefing-202-van-Nieuwkerk.pdf> (accessed: 29.11.2021).

⁹ Mthembu Ph., Kornegay F. Africa and the world: Navigating shifting geopolitics // Institute for Global Dialogue Global Insight. 2020. No. 135. P. 2. URL: <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/africa-and-world-navigating-shifting-geopolitics/> (accessed: 29.11.2021).

¹⁰ Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want // African Union. URL: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview> (accessed: 15.09.2022).

¹¹ Mthembu Ph., Kornegay F. Africa and the world: Navigating shifting geopolitics // Institute for Global Dialogue Global Insight. 2020. No. 135. P. 4. URL: <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/africa-and-world-navigating-shifting-geopolitics/> (accessed: 29.11.2021).

and could be an incentive for closer regional cooperation and integration, according to a report of the African Center for Economic Transformation.¹² It emphasizes that the potential for regional integration can accelerate economic transformation in Africa. It also highlights the importance of the role of political leaders and their commitment to integration for the sake of which they should be ready to cede some of their negotiating powers to specialized regional bodies.¹³

There are currently 8 subregional integration associations officially recognized by the AU that operate in Africa with varying degrees of success.¹⁴ In the difficult year of 2021 and especially 2020, when many countries of the continent announced lockdowns and closed borders during the coronavirus pandemic, they significantly contributed to maintaining transparency for the movement of African goods while complying with established epidemiological requirements.

According to the African Multidimensional Regional Integration Index (AMRII), the continent's overall average integration score reached 0.62 according to the 2021 report (on a scale of 0 to 1).¹⁵ Integration results have exceeded the average level in trade, free movement of people, political and institutional spheres, as well as in the field of infrastructure.

¹² Integrating to Transform: African Transformation Report 2021 // African Center for Economic Transformation. 2021. URL: <https://acetforafrica.org/research-and-analysis/reports-studies/atr/african-transformation-report-2021/> (accessed: 29.11.2021).

¹³ Ibid. P. 168.

¹⁴ These include the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Organization for Development (IGAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (SEN-SAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS).

¹⁵ African Integration Report: Putting Free Movement of Persons at the Centre of Continental Integration 2021 // African Union. 2021. P. 18. URL: <https://knowledge-uclga.org/IMG/pdf/africanintegrationreport.pdf> (accessed: 10.09.2022).

The results of monetary, environmental, financial and social integration turned out to be below the average level (Figure 1).

With regard to the regional aspect of the integration process in Africa (Figure 2), an above-average result (0.62 points achieved in the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)) was observed in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) and below average in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (SEN-SAD), the Intergovernmental Organization for Development (IGAD) and the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA).¹⁶

In recent years, however, African countries have made increasing efforts to develop continental integration rather than regional. Such an ambitious goal — the creation of a single integration association for the continent — was set ten years ago in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), at the 18th session of the AU Assembly of the Heads of State and Government in January 2012. However, the first round of negotiations to develop an appropriate agreement took place only in February 2016, and eight more meetings were held after that over the course of two years, at which the parties agreed on the text of an agreement on the creation of the AfCFTA. As a result, on March 9, 2018, the AU trade ministers approved the draft agreement, and on March 21, 2018, the heads of states and governments decided to establish AfCFTA at the 10th Extraordinary AU Summit in Kigali (Rwanda). At that time, 44 out of 55 African states signed the agreement, which entered into force on May 30, 2019, following its ratification by 22 countries of the continent (World Bank, 2020, p. 11). Currently, for political reasons, only Eritrea has not signed the agreement; 11 other states have not yet ratified or filed it.

¹⁶ Ibid.

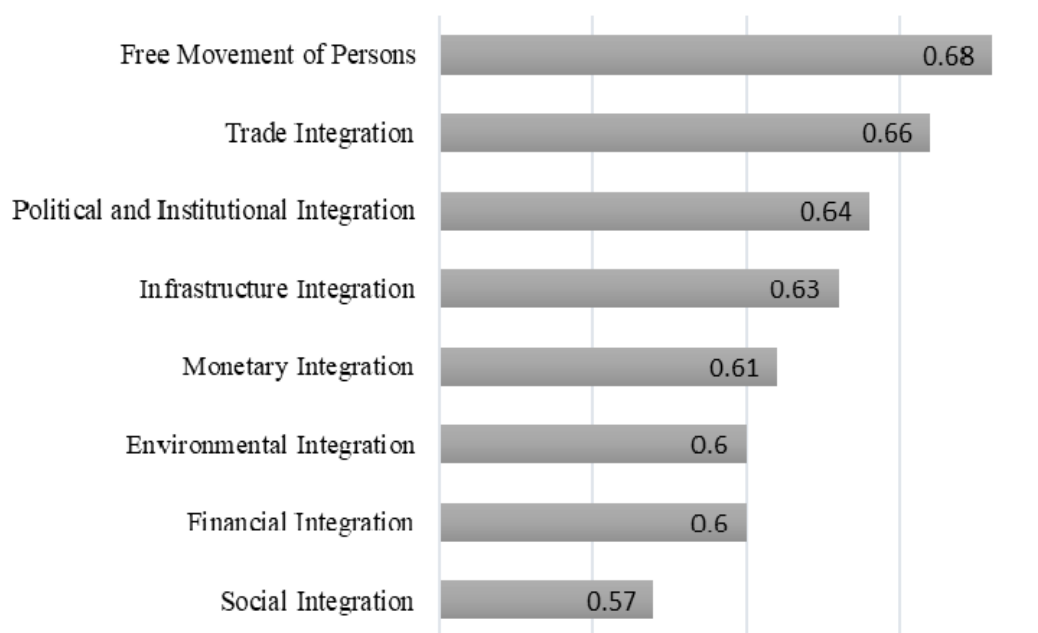


Figure 1. Continental Assessment of the Components of the African Multidimensional Regional Integration Index, 2021

Source: African Integration Report: Putting Free Movement of Persons at the Centre of Continental Integration 2021 // African Union. 2021. P. 19. URL: <https://knowledge-uclga.org/IMG/pdf/africanintegrationreport.pdf> (accessed: 10.09.2022).

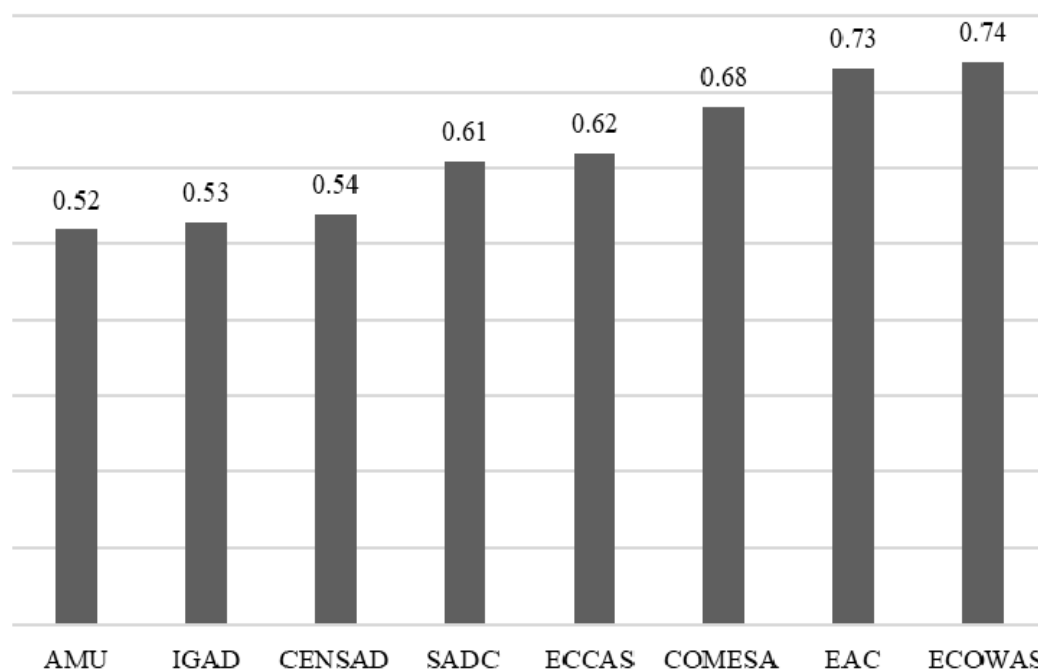


Figure 2. Distribution of the Average Score of the Regional Integration Index by the Main African Integration Associations, 2021

Source: African Integration Report: Putting Free Movement of Persons at the Centre of Continental Integration 2021 // African Union. 2021. P. 18. URL: <https://knowledge-uclga.org/IMG/pdf/africanintegrationreport.pdf> (accessed: 10.09.2022).

The institutional structure of the AfCFTA includes the Secretariat based in Accra (Ghana), responsible for convening meetings, monitoring and evaluating the integration process, technical committees, the Committee of Senior Officials, which develops programs and action plans, the Council of Ministers, which makes decisions on all issues of the association's activities, and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which is the highest consensus decision-making body within the AU.¹⁷

Roadmap for AfCFTA and Difficulties in Its Implementation

The implementation of this agreement was supposed to begin on July 1, 2020, however because of the pandemic it was postponed until January 1, 2021, when the AfCFTA rules started to regulate foreign trade operations on the continent. It should be noted, however, that 8 subregional integration associations, in accordance with the provisions of the Article 5 of the Agreement on the Establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area, were not dissolved, but integrated into it as its “building blocks.”¹⁸

The Pan-African Payment and Settlement System, PAPSS, serves foreign economic transactions within the framework of this association, which ensures efficient and secure cross-border movement of funds both in the sale of goods and services, and transfers, wages, transactions in shares or other financial instruments, thus minimizing risks and promoting financial integration on the continent. PAPSS acts in cooperation with the central banks of African countries, providing payment and

settlement services to all participants in foreign economic activity.¹⁹

Other active AfCFTA tools include the African Trade Observatory, a portal of trade information on exporters and importers in member countries, on export opportunities and import needs, on foreign trade statistics,²⁰ and an online platform launched on January 13, 2021, developed jointly with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to monitor, report and remove non-tariff barriers.²¹ According to UNCTAD experts, it is non-tariff barriers rather than tariffs that hinder the development of trade between African countries.

With regard to the removal of tariff restrictions, AfCFTA member-states that do not belong to the Least Developed Countries group (LDC) have committed to linear liberalization of 90% of tariff lines within 5 years (until the end of 2025), while LDCs are to do so in 10 years. The percentage of sensitive goods must not exceed 7% of the total number of tariff lines subject to harmonization, and their elimination will start in 2026. Non-LDC countries are to liberalize tariffs on their sensitive products within 10 years, and LDCs within 13 years. The list of exceptions, which is subject to agreement and revision every 5 years, should not exceed 3% of the total number of tariff lines, and these goods should not exceed 10% of all intra-African imports by value.²²

Thus, the process of creating a continental free trade zone, which is planned to be transformed into a customs union in the future,

¹⁹ Connecting Payments. Accelerating Africa's Trade // Pan-African Payment & Settlement System. URL: <https://papss.com/> (accessed: 10.11.2021).

²⁰ African Trade Observatory // African Union. URL: <https://ato.africa/en> (accessed: 10.11.2021).

²¹ Online tool to remove trade barriers in Africa goes live // UNCTAD. January 17, 2020. URL: <https://unctad.org/news/online-tool-remove-trade-barriers-africa-goes-live> (accessed: 10.11.2021).

²² Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area // African Union. URL: <https://au.int/en/treaties/agreement-establishing-african-continental-free-trade-area> (accessed: 10.11.2021).

¹⁷ The African Continental Free Trade Area // African Union. URL: <https://au.int/en/african-continental-free-trade-area> (accessed: 08.11.2021).

¹⁸ Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area // African Union. URL: <https://au.int/en/treaties/agreement-establishing-african-continental-free-trade-area> (accessed: 10.11.2021).

is still at an early stage. The roadmap for the development of its regulations was initially divided into 3 stages, but then it was decided to adopt them in 2 stages. At the first of these, the texts of 4 protocols were prepared: on trade in goods, on trade in services, on rules and procedures for settling disputes, and on customs and trade facilitation. The second phase of the negotiations would include the adoption of protocols on investment, on intellectual property rights, as well as on competition policy, discussions of which began in 2021, on electronic commerce (a special committee was created to prepare it in May 2021) and on women and youth in trade, the work on which has not yet begun.²³

Significant difficulties in the development of AfCFTA documents can be explained both by the pandemic restrictions and by a large number of member countries with diverging economic interests, as well as by the fact that the advantages and benefits of integration are distributed very unevenly across various economies and industries. Thus, according to the World Bank (WB) experts, Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe will receive the greatest integration benefits amounting to 14% of real income, while Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique (World Bank, 2020, p. 3) will receive the minimum gains of 2% of real income growth.

Overall, it is estimated that the AfCFTA will help 30 million people out of extreme poverty and another 68 million people out of relative poverty by 2035. The increase in real incomes, following the full implementation of the agreement, could reach 7%, which corresponds to 450 billion USD. AfCFTA will significantly increase the volume of trade in Africa, especially the intra-regional supply of manufactured goods. By 2035, total exports may increase by almost 29%. Inland exports will increase by more than 81%, while exports

outside the continent will increase by 19%, creating new opportunities for African producers (World Bank, 2020, p. ix).

All this will be possible by lowering tariffs, which are quite high in many African countries, reducing trade costs by removing non-tariff barriers and improving border infrastructure (using trade facilitation measures). This will reduce red tape, lower compliance costs, and make it easier for African businesses to integrate into global supply chains.

Intra-African trade will become more liberal, which will help to narrow the gender wage gap, increasing wages by almost 10% for women and unskilled workers, expanding decent job opportunities, while growing manufacturing sector will provide new employment opportunities, especially for women (World Bank, 2020, p. ix).

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that in terms of the level of development of the integration process, the African continent lags far behind other parts of the world. Thus, in accordance with the international trade statistics (Trade Map), in 2020, the share of imports of goods from African countries in general continental imports accounted for a mere 11.5%, while in the Americas for 37.0%, in Asia — for 62.9%, and in Europe — for 64.9%.²⁴

Free Movement of Africans across the Continent

The pan-African integration processes that have taken place on the continent in recent years are not limited to the AfCFTA establishment. The creation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is also one of the key projects of the AU 2063 Agenda. Africa, which covers more than 20% of Earth's land area, provides great opportunities for the development of air transport, especially taking into account the underdeveloped transport infrastructure: road, rail, sea and river. Aviation in Africa plays an

²³ Women and Youth in Trade // AfCFTA. URL: <https://au-afcfta.org/trade-areas/women-in-trade/> (accessed: 22.10.2022).

²⁴ Trade Map // International Trade Centre. URL: <https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx> (accessed: 09.11.2021).

important role in ensuring the continent's transport connectivity, contributes to its social, economic and political integration, stimulates intra-African trade, and attracts investments and tourists.

The foundations for the SAATM creation was laid back in 1988, when the Ministers of Civil Aviation of 40 African countries approved the Yamoussoukro Declaration on a new policy in the field of air transport in Africa, which provided for the gradual liberalization of air service. The Yamoussoukro Decision adopted 11 years later, in 1999, committed its 44 signatories to liberalize national air transport regulation and promote transcontinental competition. The decision eased restrictions on African air carriers' access to the markets of other countries on the continent.

SAATM was officially launched in January 2018.²⁵ In late 2021, it involved 34 countries, accounting for about 89% of the African aviation market.²⁶ A study conducted by the International Air Transport Association, which welcomed the creation of SAATM, concluded that even if only 12 key African countries liberalized their air transport markets; this would create an additional 155 thousand jobs in them and increase GDP by 1.3 billion USD.²⁷

It should also be noted that the number of African signatories to this agreement is increasing rather slowly, and a number of countries are expressing concerns about the monopolization of transportation by large airlines. In addition, key elements of SAATM, such as an independent dispute oversight function, uniform competition rules and

consumer protection, have not yet been implemented. There is also no harmonized regime for taxation and airport charges.²⁸

Along with the “open” skies, the single passport and free movement of Africans across the continent that were also included in the 2063 Agenda as its key items, were to become notable tools for pan-African integration.²⁹

The issues of free movement on the continent are considered in detail in an article by A. Hirsch (2021) in the context of the AfCFTA launch, since they are closely interconnected. According to the author, there are difficulties in ratifying the protocol due to concerns about the increased negative impact of migration on the economy and security conditions in the countries of the continent (Hirsch, 2021, p. 3).

On average, the African continent shows moderate rates of free movement of people compared to others. At the same time, these indicators differ significantly in individual sub-regional integration associations, reflecting their differences in relation to this issue.³⁰

It is obvious that the implementation of the single passport agreements, the SAATM and AfCFTA creation will require significant time and efforts of African leaders. At the same time, the very idea of building an “integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism,”³¹ as formulated by the AU 2063 Agenda, is shared by them, actively promoted in local media and reflected in the wide participation of African countries in

²⁸ Under African skies — The liberalization of civil aviation in Africa // JD Supra. August 12, 2019. URL: <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/under-african-skies-the-liberalisation-80298/> (accessed: 11.11.2021).

²⁹ Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want // African Union. URL: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview> (accessed: 15.09.2022).

³⁰ Africa. Regional Integration Index. Report 2019 // African Union, African Development Bank Group, Economic commission for Africa United Nations. 2020. P. 10. URL: https://arii.uneca.org/Reports/en_ARII-Report2019.pdf (accessed: 29.11.2021).

³¹ Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want // African Union. URL: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview> (accessed: 15.09.2022).

²⁵ The SAATM Handbook // IATA. P. 1. URL: <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/44c1166a6e10411a982b2624047e118c/saatm-handbook.pdf> (accessed: 11.11.2021).

²⁶ Taking Stock, Charting the Future. African Union Commission end of Term Report 2017—2021 // African Union. 2021. P. 16. URL: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/40232-doc-au_end_of_term_report_e.pdf (accessed: 12.11.2021).

²⁷ The SAATM Handbook // IATA. P. 10. URL: <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/44c1166a6e10411a982b2624047e118c/saatm-handbook.pdf> (accessed: 11.11.2021).

various common events: forums, exhibitions, fairs, festivals, conferences, competitions.

In 2019, the African Union Heads of State and Government designated 7th of July of each year as “The African Integration Day,”³² to celebrate its continent-wide achievements, as well as to discuss possible solutions to problems along the way. Its central event is the African Integration Forum, which annually brings together a wide range of participants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the new stage in the development of integration in Africa, the pan-African stage, is an extremely important and necessary instrument for creating an

³² African Integration Day 2021: “The Role of Continental Integration in Accelerating African Economic Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic” // African Union. July 7—9, 2021. URL: <https://au.int/en/africa-integration-day-2021> (accessed: 22.01.2022).

economically and politically stronger Africa. This understanding contributes to the implementation of many plans of the AU 2063 Agenda, such as continental and regional integration, inclusive economic and social development, democratic governance, peace and security, which will allow Africa to bolster its influence on the global stage.

At the same time, with the strengthening of Africa’s positions, the trend towards the multipolar world is objectively getting stronger, which runs counter to the hegemonic attempts of Western nations to preserve their dominance. The implementation of the AfCFTA will help 30 million people out of extreme poverty, raise household incomes, significantly increase trade in Africa, create new opportunities for African producers, help cope with the economic shocks of recent years, and strengthen the continent’s position as one of the most important actors in the world economy.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 14.02.2022

Revised / Доработана после рецензирования: 25.11.2022

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 19.12.2022

References

- Abramova, I. O., & Fituni, L. L. (2018). The African segment of multipolar world: Dynamics of geostrategic significance. *World Economy and International Relations*, 62(12), 5—14. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.20542/0131-2227-2018-62-12-5-14>
- Byiers, B., & Miyandazi, L. (2021). Balancing power and consensus: Opportunities and challenges for increased African integration. *Istituto Affari Internazionali Papers*, (09), 1—33. Retrieved from <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaip2109.pdf>
- Drobot, E. V., & Sapuntsov, A. L. (2021). African Continental Free Trade Area in “reflections” of international economic integration: Quo Vadis? *Ekonomicheskie Otnosheniya*, 11(2), 355—376. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.18334/eo.11.2.112139>
- Fituni, L. L. (2019). Towards a neo-bipolar model of the world order: Scouting game in Africa. *Outlines of Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, Law*, 12(3), 6—29. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.23932/2542-0240-2019-12-3-6-29>
- Fituni, L. L., & Abramova, I. O. (2020). Developing countries in the political economy of the post-coronavirus world. *World Economy and International Relations*, 64(9), 5—14. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.20542/0131-2227-2020-64-9-5-14>
- Gammadigbe, V. (2021). Is regional trade integration a growth and convergence engine in Africa? *IMF Working Paper*, (19), 1—39. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2021/01/29/Is-Regional-Trade-Integration-a-Growth-and-Convergence-Engine-in-Africa-50040>
- Gottschalk, K. (2020). African peacekeeping and African integration: Current challenges. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 20(4), 678—686. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2020-20-4-678-686>
- Hamouda, S. (2021). South — South and triangular cooperation in the face of COVID-19: A quest for resilience in Africa. *Institute for Global Dialogue Occasional Paper*, (85), 1—21. Retrieved from

<https://www.africaportal.org/publications/aprm-working-paper-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-face-covid-19-quest-resilience-africa/>

- Hirsch, A. (2021). A strategic consideration of the African Union Free Movement of Persons Protocol and other initiatives towards the freer movement of people in Africa. *South African Institute of International Affairs Working Paper*, 1—27. Retrieved from https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WP_A-Hirsch_Regularising-migration-in-Africa_20210122-002.pdf
- Konstantinova, O. V. (2020). Integration processes on the African continent. In S. N. Volkov, T. L. Deych & S. V. Nenashev (Eds.), *Africa in the conditions of the formation of a polycentric world* (pp. 282—288). Moscow: Institut Afriki RAN publ. (In Russian).
- Kostyunina, G. M. (2020a). Directions of formation and potential effect of African continental free zone trade. *Russian Foreign Economic Journal*, (4), 33—47. (In Russian).
- Kostyunina, G. M. (2020b). Regionalism in the modern world economy: Evolution and main trends. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 20(2), 303—317. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2020-20-2-303-317>
- Ledeneva, M. V., & Plaksunova, T. A. (2020). Economic growth and prospects for economic development of African countries southward Sahara. *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, (2), 129—139. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.25136/2409-8647.2020.2.32732>
- Morozenskaya, E. V. (2019). “New regionalism” in Africa: Form of the adaptation to globalization or the attempt of opposition to modern neocolonialism? *Outlines of Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, Law*, 12(4), 209—227. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.23932/2542-0240-2019-12-4-209-227>
- Shipalana, P., & O’Riordan, A. (2020). Impact of Covid-19 on financial stability in Africa. *South African Institute of International Affairs Occasional Paper*, (311), 1—33. Retrieved from <https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Occasional-Paper-311-oriordan-shipalana.pdf>
- Volkov, S. N., & Deych, T. L. (2020). Africa in the emerging model of the world order. *Asia and Africa Today*, (7), 73—77. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.31857/S032150750010106-8>
- Volkov, S. N., & Deych, T. L. (2021). The BRICS role in overcoming the COVID-19 crisis in Africa. *Vostok (Oriens)*, (3), 204—215. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.31857/S086919080014841-2>
- World Bank. (2020). *The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and distributional effects*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

About the authors: *Volkov Sergey Nikolaevich* — PhD (Economics), Head, Centre for the Study of the Russian-African Relations and African States’ Foreign Policy, Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences; ORCID: 0000-0002-6152-1091; e-mail: snvolkov@list.ru

Konstantinova Olga Vladimirovna — PhD (Economics), Research Fellow, Centre for the Study of the Russian-African Relations and African States’ Foreign Policy, Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences; ORCID: 0000-0002-3163-4925; e-mail: ryabina111@ya.ru