

ASSESSMENT OF FUTURE TRENDS IN NIGERIAN BILATERAL AGREEMENTS LESSONS AND FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

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Abstract

This study focused on future trends in Nigerian bilateral agreements lessons and from other jurisdictions. The study carried out a comparative legal analysis to explore how other jurisdictions with similar multilateral and bilateral commitments have navigated the legal connections. The lessons learned from other jurisdictions are of great value, contributing to deeper understanding of the dynamics and difficulties associated with such agreements. The research findings highlight that, while AfCFTA presents opportunities for enhanced intra-African trade and regional economic integration, there are significant legal challenges for Nigeria. These include potential conflicts between AfCFTA's rules and existing bilateral treaties, the need for

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reform in Nigeria's trade dispute mechanisms, and the enforcement of intellectual property rights. The study concludes with legal recommendations for aligning Nigeria's bilateral agreements with AfCFTA, ensuring coherence, and fostering compliance with international trade laws to maximize Nigeria's economic benefits under the AfCFTA framework. The study suggested that there is a need to strengthen capacity and specialized expertise in international trade law, as well as continuous professional development will equip them to handle the complex legal challenges associated with multilateral and bilateral trade commitments, positioning them as key advisors for businesses and government bodies involved in trade policy.

Keywords: AfCFTA, Bilateral agreements, International law, Comparative law, Economic diplomacy, International trade

1.0 Introduction

Regional economic integration has emerged as a significant phenomenon in the global economic landscape, fostering cooperation and enhancing trade among neighboring countries. Among the various models of regional economic integration, the European Union (EU) and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) stand out for their distinct approaches and impacts on member states. This chapter aims to compare these two frameworks by examining their historical development, objectives, structural composition, and economic impacts. The lessons learned from the success and challenges of these models can be used to give valuable insight into potential paths and shortcomings for the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

2.0 The European Union (EU)

The origins of the European Union can be traced back to the aftermath of World War II when European countries sought to prevent future conflicts through economic cooperation. In 1951, six nations—Belgium, France,

Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany formed the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to regulate their coal and steel industries.¹ This initiative laid the groundwork for deeper economic integration.

In 1957, the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC), aimed at creating a common market and promoting economic cooperation. Over the years, the EU evolved through successive treaties, most notably the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which formally established the EU and introduced the concept of European citizenship.² The Lisbon Treaty, enacted in 2009, further streamlined the EU's institutional framework and enhanced its decision-making processes.³

The primary objectives of the EU include:

- i. **Economic Integration:** The EU aims to create a single market that allows for the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people across member states. This integration fosters competition and economic growth.⁴
- ii. **Political Stability and Security:** The EU seeks to promote peace and stability within Europe, serving as a platform for conflict resolution and diplomatic dialogue among member states.⁵
- iii. **Social Cohesion:** The EU is committed to enhancing social and economic cohesion among its members, reducing disparities in wealth and opportunity through regional development funds.⁶

¹ McCormick, J. (2011). *Understanding the European Union: A Concise Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

² Nugent, N. (2017). *The Government and Politics of the European Union*. New York: Palgrave.

³ Scharpf, F. W. (2018). *The Political Economy of Post-Socialist Transformation*. Berlin: Oxford University Press

⁴ Pinder, J., & Usherwood, S. (2013). *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Begg, I. (2013). *The European Economy: A European Perspective*. London: Routledge.

⁶ European Commission, 2020

- iv. Environmental Sustainability: The EU prioritizes sustainable development and environmental protection, implementing policies aimed at combating climate change and promoting renewable energy.⁷

The EU operates as a supranational entity with its own institutions, such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. These institutions possess legislative and judicial powers, enabling the EU to enact regulations that member states are obliged to implement. The EU has pursued a comprehensive approach to integration, extending beyond trade to encompass areas such as labour mobility, environmental policy, and social cohesion.⁸ The establishment of the Eurozone further deepened economic integration by adopting a common currency, the Euro, among many member states, facilitating seamless transactions and financial cooperation.⁹

The EU has fostered substantial economic growth and integration, with member states benefitting from increased trade and investment opportunities. The single market has allowed businesses to operate across borders with relative ease, contributing to the overall prosperity of the region.¹⁰ However, disparities in economic development among member states have raised concerns about social cohesion and equitable growth.

Furthermore, the EU operates within a framework of shared sovereignty, where member states collaborate on collective decision-making and policy formulation.¹¹ This shared governance model fosters a sense of European identity and collective responsibility, although it has also led to tensions,

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Supra, no 137

⁹ Supra, no 137

¹⁰ Bown, C. P. (2020). *The WTO and the USMCA: A New Trade Agreement for North America*. Peterson Institute for International Economics

¹¹ Treaty of Maastricht. "European Union." *Official Journal C* 191 (1992): 29

particularly during crises such as the Eurozone debt crisis and the migration crisis.

3.0 The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)

The USMCA was officially signed on November 30, 2018, and came into effect on July 1, 2020. It was developed to replace NAFTA, which was implemented on January 1, 1994. NAFTA was established to eliminate trade barriers and increase economic cooperation among the United States, Canada, and Mexico.¹² Over its 26 years of existence, NAFTA significantly boosted trade and economic growth in North America. However, it also faced criticism for contributing to job losses in certain industries, particularly in the U.S. manufacturing sector, due to the relocation of production to Mexico.¹³

The renegotiation of NAFTA began in August 2017, driven by concerns from the U.S. government about trade imbalances, labour rights, and environmental protections. The outcome was the USMCA, which aimed to modernize trade relations among the three countries and address contemporary issues that had emerged since NAFTA's inception. The agreement introduced new provisions related to digital trade, labour standards, and environmental protections, aiming to create a more balanced and equitable trading environment.¹⁴

The USMCA has several key objectives, reflecting the need for a comprehensive approach to regional economic integration:

1. **Trade Liberalization:** The agreement seeks to eliminate tariffs on goods traded between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, facilitating smoother and more efficient trade flows. This objective aligns with

¹² Hufbauer, G. C., & Schott, J. J. (2005). *NAFTA Revisited: Achievements and Challenges*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics.

¹³ Hufbauer, G. C., & Schott, J. J. (2005). *NAFTA Revisited: Achievements and Challenges*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics.

¹⁴ *Supra*, no 144

the original goals of NAFTA while incorporating updates to address new economic realities.¹⁵

2. **Strengthening Labour Protections:** The USMCA places a strong emphasis on labour rights and protections. It includes provisions aimed at improving working conditions and labour standards in all three countries. For example, the agreement mandates that Mexico implement reforms to strengthen labour rights, including the ability of workers to form independent unions. This objective reflects a growing recognition of the importance of fair labour practices in trade agreements.¹⁶
3. **Environmental Protections:** The agreement includes commitments to uphold environmental standards and promote sustainable practices among member countries. This objective is essential in addressing environmental challenges that transcend national borders, such as climate change and biodiversity loss.¹⁷
4. **Digital Trade Facilitation:** The USMCA incorporates provisions to promote digital trade, recognizing the growing significance of technology in the global economy. It establishes guidelines for cross-border data flow and prohibits data localization requirements, allowing businesses to operate more efficiently in the digital space. This objective addresses the needs of modern economies and encourages innovation and competitiveness.¹⁸
5. **Agriculture and Dairy Sector Reforms:** The agreement introduces reforms in the agricultural sector, providing greater access for U.S. dairy, poultry, and egg products into the Canadian market. It also maintains tariff-free access for agricultural products traded among

¹⁵ U.S. Trade Representative. (2020). United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Retrieved from <https://ustr.gov> accessed 5 December 2024

¹⁶ Supra, no 144

¹⁷ Supra, no 148

¹⁸ Supra, no 144

the three countries, supporting farmers and promoting food security.¹⁹

The USMCA is primarily a trade agreement without a centralized governing body. Instead, it relied on the national governments of member states to enforce its provisions. The lack of a supranational authority limited USMCA 's ability to address trade disputes effectively, often resulting in lengthy negotiations between member countries. USMCA focused primarily on trade liberalization, leaving many areas, such as labour rights and environmental standards, to be addressed at the national level.²⁰ While NAFTA included provisions for labour and environmental cooperation, these were less binding and often subject to political considerations. The subsequent USMCA sought to address some of these shortcomings by introducing stricter labour and environmental standards, reflecting a shift toward a more holistic approach to regional integration.²¹

USMCA also contributed to economic growth, particularly in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Trade among the three countries increased significantly, resulting in job creation and higher GDP levels.²² However, the agreement faced criticism for contributing to job losses in certain industries, particularly in the United States, as companies relocated production to Mexico in search of lower labour costs.

NAFTA was characterized by a more transactional relationship among member states, with decisions often driven by national interests rather than collective governance. The lack of a strong institutional framework resulted in challenges when addressing trade disputes, as national governments were

¹⁹ Supra, no 148

²⁰ Supra, no 144

²¹ Hufbauer, G. C., & Schott, J. J. (2005). *NAFTA Revisited: Achievements and Challenges*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics.

²² <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/united-states-mexico-canada-agreement> accessed 5 December, 2024

reluctant to compromise their sovereignty in favor of a centralized authority. The transition to the USMCA reflects an acknowledgment of the need for a more cooperative approach, with enhanced mechanisms for resolving disputes and addressing contemporary trade issues.²³

As the global economic landscape continues to evolve, lessons from these two models can inform future efforts toward regional integration. The importance of a strong institutional framework, the need for a holistic approach to integration, and the balance between national interests and collective governance are critical considerations for any successful regional integration initiative.

4.0 Future Trends in Bilateral Agreements

This section anticipates future trends in bilateral agreements, providing a forward-looking perspective that considers emerging global dynamics and evolving economic priorities.

4.1 Digital Trade and E-Commerce

The European Union's Digital Single Market (DSM) initiative aims to create an integrated market where digital goods and services flow seamlessly across member states. By harmonizing regulations and establishing mechanisms for cross-border data flow, the EU has facilitated the growth of e-commerce and digital trade across Europe. This integration has eliminated barriers to trade, enhanced competition, and created new opportunities for businesses to reach a wider audience. The DSM also promotes trust in digital services by standardizing privacy protections and cybersecurity measures across borders.²⁴ This cohesive regulatory

²³ <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/united-states-mexico-canada-agreement> accessed 5 December, 2024

²⁴ Havu Katri. (2017) The EU Digital Single Market from a Consumer Standpoint: How Do Promises Meet Means? "Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice" 9, no. 2: 146-183.

environment has contributed to the rapid expansion of e-commerce across the EU, making it one of the most digitally integrated regions in the world.²⁵ Nigeria can draw significant lessons from the EU's DSM initiative, particularly in promoting digital trade within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). To create a favorable environment for digital trading between African countries, Nigeria should prioritize the harmonization of digital regulations with its trade partners.²⁶ This includes setting up a framework for cross-border data flows, ensuring data privacy, and establishing cybersecurity standards. By aligning with regional and international best practices, Nigeria can enhance digital commerce within Africa, boosting e-commerce opportunities and integrating with global digital supply chains. Furthermore, coordinated digital regulations will reduce transaction costs and increase confidence in Nigeria's digital economy, making it a more attractive destination for e-commerce investment.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) provides a comprehensive framework for digital trade, with a dedicated chapter on digital commerce. The agreement emphasizes the importance of cross-border data flows, explicitly prohibiting data localization requirements and other restrictive measures. By ensuring that businesses can transfer data freely across borders,²⁷ USMCA promotes digital innovation and growth in the region's e-commerce sector. The agreement also enhances the protection of personal data and intellectual property, creating a balanced

²⁵ Cardona Melisande, Nestor Duch-Brown, Joseph Francois, Bertin Martens and Fan Yang. (2015) The Macro-Economic Impact of E-Commerce in the EU Digital Single Market. No. 09. Institute for Prospective Technological Studies Digital Economy Working Paper,

²⁶ Azmeh Shamel, Christopher Foster and Jaime Echavarri. (2020) The International Trade Regime and The Quest for Free Digital Trade. "International Studies Review" 22, no. 3: 671-692

²⁷ Mitchell Andrew D. and Neha Mishra. (2019) Regulating Cross-Border Data Flows in a Data-Driven World: How WTO Law can Contribute. "Journal of International Economic Law" 22, no. 3: 389-416.

regulatory environment that facilitates the growth of digital commerce while safeguarding consumer rights. This focus on digital trade provisions has contributed to a thriving North American digital economy, where businesses operate with minimal regulatory friction.

Nigeria can adopt a similar approach to the USMCA by incorporating specific chapters on digital trade in its trade agreements, both within Africa and with international partners. Such provisions would ensure the free flow of data across borders and avoid unnecessarily restrictive measures like data localization, which could stifle digital innovation. By fostering an open environment for digital commerce, Nigeria can encourage businesses to expand their operations in the e-commerce space. This would also strengthen Nigeria's position in the global digital economy by creating a competitive, innovation-friendly landscape that supports digital entrepreneurs and investors. Clear provisions on data transfer, cybersecurity, and intellectual property will help build a solid legal foundation for digital commerce in Nigeria.

From the above, Nigeria can maximize her participation in the AfCFTA and other bilateral endeavours via the following which had been observed to have achieved successes upon implementation in other jurisdictions:

- a. **Incorporate Digital Governance Clauses:** The provisions on digital governance, data protection and privacy should be part of the bilateral agreements for creating a secure and reliable digital environment.
- b. **Foster Interoperability:** To facilitate seamless trade across borders, emphasize the importance of interoperability between digital systems and standards.
- c. **Promote Digital Skills Development:** Invest in initiatives to raise the level of digital literacy and skills, so as to ensure that workers are capable of taking advantage of this new economy.
- d. **Establish Cross-Border Data Flow Mechanisms:** Negotiate provisions allowing the free movement of information across

- borders and avoiding unnecessary localization requirements which may hamper digital trade.
- e. Encourage Innovation and Startups: Create frameworks that foster innovation, support the growth of start-ups and promote a thriving digital ecosystem.
 - f. Collaborate on Cybersecurity: In order to protect the security of business and consumers in cyberspace, bilateral agreements should include provisions for joint efforts on cybersecurity.
 - g. Facilitate Digital Payments: By introducing provisions allowing safe and effective transactions across borders, we can overcome the obstacles to digital payments.
 - h. Participate in Digital Trade Networks: To strengthen international cooperation and exchange of information, explore the opportunities for participation in or establishment of digital trade networks.
 - i. Regularly Update Agreements: Recognize the dynamic nature of these digital technologies and commit to regularly updating their bilateral agreements with a view to addressing new challenges and opportunities in this field.

In future agreements, Nigeria and its partner countries can deal with the complexities of digital trade and e-commerce by using lessons learned from successful jurisdictions. Countries will be able to succeed in the evolving digital economy through proactive measures that focus on digital governance, interoperability and collaboration on emerging issues.

4.2 Sustainable Development and Climate Considerations

The European Union (EU) has long been a global leader in incorporating sustainable development and climate considerations into its trade agreements. One of the primary features of EU trade deals is the inclusion of strict environmental standards, alongside social responsibility clauses,

that emphasize the need for sustainable practices.²⁸ These agreements require an assessment of the potential impact on the environment, ensuring that any trade relations do not compromise ecological integrity. For instance, the EU mandates compliance with the Paris Agreement and imposes restrictions on activities that contribute to deforestation or the degradation of biodiversity. Additionally, the EU emphasizes upholding labour rights, particularly in sectors vulnerable to exploitation due to liberalized trade. By embedding these provisions, the EU ensures that economic growth goes hand in hand with environmental sustainability and social justice.

Nigeria, in its trade negotiations with the EU, could greatly benefit from aligning its agreements with these principles. The incorporation of robust environmental impact assessments would help Nigeria protect its natural resources while expanding its trade relations. For example, explicit commitments to sustainable agricultural practices and renewable energy development could enhance Nigeria's appeal as a trade partner while addressing pressing issues like deforestation and carbon emissions. Moreover, promoting labour rights and corporate social responsibility (CSR) can mitigate concerns over social inequality and poor working conditions in industries with significant trade exposure. Aligning with EU standards would not only meet global expectations but also advance Nigeria's domestic sustainable development agenda.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), also underscores sustainable development through specific environmental and labour provisions. Unlike its predecessor, the USMCA introduced more comprehensive environmental commitments, including clauses aimed at reducing pollution, protecting marine environments, and promoting sustainable fisheries management. The agreement also includes

²⁸ Chen Ying and Benedict Sheehy. (2022) Exporting Corporate Social Responsibility through Free Trade Agreements: Improving Coherence in the EU's New-Generation Trade and Sustainable Development FTAs. "Tex. Int'l Law" 58: 173.

mechanisms for monitoring compliance with environmental laws, thus ensuring that trade liberalization does not come at the expense of the environment. Furthermore, the USMCA recognizes the importance of renewable energy and sustainable resource management, which aligns the agreement with global efforts to combat climate change.

Nigeria could draw lessons from the USMCA, particularly regarding its focus on enforcement mechanisms for environmental standards. Adopting similar compliance frameworks in Nigeria's trade agreements would ensure that parties are held accountable for breaches of environmental or labour provisions. This could be particularly relevant in industries such as oil and gas, where environmental degradation remains a persistent issue. By enforcing stringent environmental regulations through trade agreements, Nigeria can reduce pollution, conserve its natural ecosystems, and contribute to global climate goals. Additionally, adopting provisions on renewable energy and sustainable resource use would help Nigeria transition towards a greener economy, thus positioning itself as a key player in the global push for sustainable development.

Discussed below are lessons and possible recommendations for Nigeria in areas of sustainable development and climate considerations as it relates to considerations for both AfCTA and bilateral agreements:

- a. Incorporate Environmental Impact Assessments: Ensure that, taking into account potential impacts on the environment of commercial activities, all agreements are subject to a complete environmental impact assessment.
- b. Labour Rights and Social Responsibility Clauses: Emphasize the principle of fair working conditions and social inclusion by integrating provisions on labour rights and social responsibility.
- c. Indigenous Rights Protection: Consideration should be given to provisions protecting the rights of natives and recognizing the importance of preserving culture and community well-being.

- d. Sustainable Development Goals Integration: Integrate trade agreements with the Sustainable Development Goals which emphasize their contribution to poverty reduction, environmental protection and social justice.
- e. Environmental Cooperation Agreements: Consider partnerships with trade partners to sign cooperation agreements on environmental protection, which will foster a common effort in tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and the rest of our environment challenges.
- f. Regular Monitoring and Reporting: Set up mechanism to regularly monitor and report on the environment and social impact of trade activities. This would ensure accountability and allow adjustments to be made where necessary.
- g. Public Consultation and Transparency: Strengthen transparency of the negotiation process and include mechanisms for consultation with interested parties. Therefore, it is appropriate to take into account the views of all parties involved, inter alia civil society and communities at large, and
- h. Capacity Building: Develop capacity-building initiatives aimed at ensuring knowledge and resources for the adoption of sustainable practice in local communities and businesses.

Nigeria can develop a holistic approach to integrating environmental sustainability and social responsibility into bilateral agreements, based on experience gained from other jurisdictions. This approach is compatible with sustainable development efforts around the world, contributing to a long-term economic and societal well-being of the country.

4.3 Adaptability to Geopolitical Shifts

Adaptability in response to geopolitical changes has become a critical factor for economic and trade agreements globally. The European Union (EU) provides a prime example of how regional organizations can adapt to shifting political, economic, and security landscapes. Through policies like

the EU Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has demonstrated an ability to expand its influence and engage with neighboring countries despite evolving geopolitical challenges. This policy not only facilitates trade relations but also addresses changes in security and political alliances by fostering cooperation with non-EU countries.²⁹ Nigeria, in its efforts to boost economic integration and trade, can learn from this approach by incorporating flexibility into its trade agreements. Adjusting and expanding its existing agreements to reflect changing political and economic realities will be essential for Nigeria to remain relevant in the global market.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is another example of a nation's ability to renegotiate its trade framework in response to evolving geopolitical priorities. The transformation of NAFTA into USMCA reflects the United States' strategic interest in addressing emerging challenges, such as digital trade and labour rights.³⁰ By revising key provisions to maintain the agreement's relevance, the U.S. demonstrated that adaptability is crucial for sustaining long-term trade relations.³¹ For Nigeria, the lesson here is to ensure that trade agreements include review mechanisms and renegotiation clauses. Such provisions would allow for periodic assessments and revisions to align with shifting domestic and international priorities, ensuring the agreements remain effective and beneficial.

²⁹ Juncos Ana E. (2017) Resilience as the New EU Foreign Policy Paradigm: A Pragmatist Turn? "European Security" 26, no. 1: 1-18.

³⁰ García María. (2023) Beyond Trade—The Politics of Trade Agreements and Interstate Competition and Geo-economics as a Basis for EU and US Preferential Trade Agreements. in *The European Union and the Evolving Architectures of International Economic Agreements*. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. pp. 25-37

³¹ Gantz David A. (2020) USMCA Provisions on Intellectual Property, Services, and Digital Trade. "Arizona Legal Studies Discussion Paper" 20-03 Mexico Center, Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy.

In response to changing geopolitical relationships, the UK's post-Brexit trade agreements represent a strategic shift³². The aim of these agreements is to build new trade partnerships and adapt them to the changing global position of the United Kingdom. In order to maintain relevance for its agreements, in an age of geopolitical change, Nigeria can take lessons from the United Kingdom's proactive pursuit of new partnerships.

In addition to review mechanisms, adaptability also requires a forward-looking approach to emerging global challenges. The geopolitical landscape is constantly evolving, particularly with regard to issues like climate change, digitalization, and labour market changes. By taking cues from how the EU, UK and USMCA have proactively addressed these concerns, Nigeria could future-proof its trade agreements. This could include provisions for new industries such as the digital economy, while ensuring that labour standards and environmental concerns are addressed. Adaptability, in this context, means staying ahead of trends and incorporating legal and regulatory frameworks that can accommodate new sectors and challenges.

Moreover, as Nigeria seeks to expand its geopolitical influence, it must build strategic partnerships that allow for continuous engagement with changing international alliances. Just as the EU has forged relationships with neighboring countries through flexible policies, Nigeria can explore regional partnerships within Africa and beyond that allow for adjustments based on political and economic shifts. This could involve forming new alliances with countries or regions facing similar challenges or capitalizing on emerging markets in Africa through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). By aligning its trade policies with adaptable frameworks, Nigeria can enhance its capacity to respond to geopolitical shifts while fostering economic growth.

³² Whitman Richard G. (2019) The UK's European Diplomatic Strategy for Brexit and Beyond. "International Affairs" 95, no. 2: 383-404.

The lessons and strategies that can be adopted by Nigeria on its regional and bilateral agreements from the above will include the following:

- a. Diversify Trade Partnerships: To mitigate risks related to dependence on a single geopolitical power, set up a diversified portfolio of trade partnerships.
- b. Review Mechanisms: Establish review mechanisms in agreements that allow for regular assessments and updates to be carried out in line with evolving geopolitical priorities.
- c. Flexibility in Agreements: To deal with changes in geopolitical dynamics, such as the emergence of new world powers and a shift towards political alliances, priority should be given to flexibility within agreements.
- d. Adopt a Multilateral Approach: To enhance adaptability and to create a network of partnerships able to cope with geopolitical shocks, engage in multilateral agreements.
- e. Geopolitical Risk Assessments: To anticipate possible changes to international relations that could have a negative impact on trade agreements, conduct thorough geopolitical risk assessments.
- f. Invest in Diplomacy and Dialogue: In order to handle geopolitical challenges and establish constructive relations, strengthen diplomatic efforts and maintain open channels of dialogue.
- g. Monitor Global Trends: For a proactive adjustment of trade strategies and agreements, you need to be aware of world geopolitical trends and economic changes.

Nigeria can develop an adaptation strategy to ensure the resilience and importance of its bilateral and regional agreements in a fast-changing global environment, based on lessons learnt from jurisdictions which have been able to cope successfully with political change.

5.0 Conclusion

This paper provides a comparative legal analysis of bilateral agreements with future trends in and lessons from other jurisdictions. Through the

study, it becomes clear that while AfCFTA presents significant opportunities for Nigeria's economic growth, regional integration, and trade diversification, there are also substantial legal and policy challenges that must be addressed.

The study demonstrates that the AfCFTA legal framework is more cohesive and structured compared to Nigeria's existing bilateral agreements, particularly regarding tariff liberalization, dispute resolution, and market access provisions. Harmonizing these agreements to align with AfCFTA is critical for Nigeria to fully capitalize on the benefits of the single continental market. Foster public-private partnerships (PPP) to improve trade-related infrastructure and capacity building. By leveraging resources from both the public and private sectors, Nigeria can enhance its logistical networks, streamline customs processes, and implement digital solutions that facilitate cross-border trade. PPPs will also help in developing innovative solutions for trade facilitation, particularly in areas like transportation, storage, and e-commerce platforms. In addition, there is need to strengthen capacity and specialized expertise in international trade law. focusing on the legal dimensions of regional trade agreements like AfCFTA.