This paper develops a model for by which regional integration in Africa makes priority emphasis on infrastructure development as a panacea to socioeconomic transformation of Africa. It stresses the structural bottlenecks that have retarded the success of the market-led approach to regional integration, which held that trade-investment motives would drive integration processes in Africa because regional economic blocs expand markets and investment opportunities for member economies, leading to Africa’s development. However, a systematic analytic link between economic regionalisation and Africa-wide development requires us to address the question: what structural bottlenecks retard regional integration from propelling Africa’s socioeconomic transformation? To address this question, I develop a policy-relevant regionalism-development model that merges economic and political motives behind regionalism. The shows that regionalisation can propel Africa’s development only when regional blocs address infrastructural bottlenecks preventing Africa’s transformation through regional infrastructure development that, according to cooperation theory, ensures joint infrastructural maximisation. Continental development, then, depends upon regional-level implementation of priority development programs, which address structural bottlenecks to Africa’s development.

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1 Acronyms: AfDB, African Development Bank Group; AEC, African Economic Community; UNECA, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; and UNDP, United Nations Development Program; OAU/AU, Organisation of African Unity/African Union; RO/REC, Regional Organisation/Regional Economic Community; EAC, East African Community; ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States; LPA, Lagos Plan of Action; UEMOA West African Economic and Monetary Union; WAMZ West African Monetary Zone; SADC, South African Development Cooperation; AMU, Arab Maghreb Union; ECAS, Economic Community of Central African States; CEMAC, Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa; SACU, South African Customs Union; COMESA, Common Market Eastern and Southern Africa; CEN-SAD, Community of Sahel-Saharan States; IGAD, Intergovernmental Authority on Development; NATO, North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation; ASEAN, Association of Southeast Asian Nations; EPAs, Economic Partnership Agreements; EEC/EU, European Economic Community/European Union; WTO, World Trade Organisation; NEPAD, New Partnership for African Development; SADCC, Southern African Development Coordination Conference; RISP, Regional Integrated Strategic Development Plan; ICGLR, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; DRC, Democratic Republic of the Congo; FDI, Foreign Direct Investment; CASSOA, Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency (of the EAC)
Introduction

The world is awash with analyses that link regionalism and development. Some stress structural (global and regional) levels of analysis (Bourenane et al. 1997). Others focus on agency (State and non-State actors) (Solingen 1998), while some stress the ideational dimension of these regionalisms (Acharya 1997 and 2009). Both structural and agency analyses are concerned with the development promise of regionalism especially in the developing world. According to these viewpoints, development is increasingly dependent upon the ability and willingness of major actors in the international system – States – to develop regional and transregional measures for development cooperation, and aggregately undertaking developments through Regional Organisations/Economic Communities (ROs/RECs). These analyses also raise questions regarding the level of analytical and practical intervention the development takes place, thereby creating endless top-down and bottom-up debates about the agency of development: should the African Union (AU), for instance, be the focus of analysis in understanding Africa’s development, or is it ROs/RECs, or States? If emphasis were put on States, how would we account for developments at national level engineered from continental or regional levels? The same challenge confronts analyses of regionalism and development in Africa: is it the unilateral, the regional, or the continental level of analysis that best informs our understanding of the regionalism-development nexus? In other word, which agency should do what as a priority intervention for Africa’s development renewal desirable for 21st century Africa? Aware of, but without being limited by, these methodological challenges, this paper develops a model for African development centring on ROs as key actors in the infrastructural necessity of African development. This is a key issue, which political scientists and students of regionalism rarely consider. These analysts tend to interweave infrastructure with broad programmatic concerns of State actors, thus not underlining its importance at both State and regional levels of analysis. I attempt to address this anomaly.

Cooperation theory, informed by neofunctionalist scholars like Ernst Haas (1964) and John Pinder (1965); and neoliberalists like Duncan Snidal (1991) and Arthur Stein (1993); liberalists like Etel Solingen (1998); and bargaining theorists like Litfin (1997), Mattli (2000), and Fearon (1998), seems to occupy an hegemonic position in contemporary analyses of international development cooperation. However, these scholars hardly develop policy-relevant models for the attainment of socioeconomic transformation for which cooperation endeavours are made. This paper highlights a key structural challenge to Africa’s socioeconomic transformation: while continental and regional cooperation and integration sought to address issues of socioeconomic development, I develop a model for addressing this structural bottleneck, which is one of the hindrances to the desired development destination. Structural challenges, I argue, can be addressed through priority-focused economic regionalisation. For Africa to address bottlenecks to regional and continental development, and to achieve socioeconomic transformation, it ought to address key structural challenges. This eludes most analysts of regional integration in Africa who attempt to link regional development pursuits with Africa’s development renewal. Faezeh Foroutan realises huge gaps between expected outcomes of regionalism and reality: markets have not integrated, economies remain isolated from one another, the integration of goods markets has not succeeded any better, uneven distribution of gains from regional integration prevails, and liberalisation of intra-African trade through market-led regionalisation has not met the promises made. His prescription that regionalist impulses “should shift from the integration of goods markets to
the regional coordination of macroeconomic and microeconomic policies, the harmonization of administrative rules and regulations, and the joint provision of public goods” (Foroutan 1992: 1) misses the lifeblood of these interventions - infrastructure. Foroutan argues that market-oriented, and balanced economic policies that break isolation of African economies from each other are important, yet infrastructure challenges exacerbate such isolation.

Existing analyses of regionalism have not addressed the aforementioned structural bottlenecks either. Maurice Schiff and Allan Winters (2003) stress that “new regionalism” involves a shift from a more closed to an open regionalism. It involves greater commitment to international commerce, through reduced quotas, tariffs and related market-led integration, and the embrace of North-South agreements, such as Lome Convention (1975) and Cotonou (2000) signatories now negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) (Khumalo and Mulule 2010; African Union 2007; EU 2007; Mbaye 2005). Schiff and Winters argue that changes facilitated by globalisation – global interconnectedness, information flows, new technologies, new investment flows – have incentivised developing countries to turn regionalism into a tool for development. Doubtless, regionalism as a global trend now affects developing countries (p. 4) which, according to some analysts, are copying from the European experience (a la Winters 1997; Page 2000). Schiff and Winters join analyses, which stress a market-led regional integration, with its assumed relevance across time and space. Infrastructural bottlenecks receive less-than-deserved attention, are mentioned in passing. Though Schiff and Winters are also concerned with “whether regionalism aids economic development” (p.12), they present regionalism as trade policy made and implemented through politico-economic interconnections. The supporting structures for these interconnections are taken as either natural or pre-existent. This is not the case in Africa. Beyond normal challenges of regionalisation - integration agreements to foster competition; the north-south domination of development agenda setting; limited explicitness and credibility; political concerns over the benefits of regionalisation; transaction costs of integration; the fiscal and WTO-related implications of regionalism - the enabling structures hardly receive sufficient analytical attention. Schiff and Winters conclude that “sound international trade policy is a fundamental requirement for economic development” (pp. 261-6), re-echoing for market-led regionalism. If international trade leads to development, how does trade occur among and between inaccessible partners? Foroutan (1992) tries to address the technical and administrative dimensions of this question. These studies hardly reflect critically on the infrastructural challenges of integrating African economies.

In this paper, I use RECs and ROs interchangeably in reference to Africa. I view “regionalism” (political integration) and “regionalisation” (socioeconomic integration) as tendencies and processes of regional integration (Mansfield and Solingen 2010) related to ROs/RECs within Africa, distinct from continental integration at the OAU/AU level. This study supplements Ndulu and Gibbs’ critique of analyses whose overemphasis on market-led integration sidesteps critical facilitators of market integration. However, it goes beyond their critique and builds upon Ndulu’s emphasis on infrastructure, as a panacea to regionalised development. This allows me to develop a model for the regional development as a means to the holistic revival of African economies. Revival here implies that African economies have not only pre-colonial civilisational sophistry necessary for continued progress but are both promising and capable of developing in the post-1945 world as some had started in 1960s. The development momentum, I argue, has been lost due to the failure of overly market-led approaches to address infrastructural and structural bottlenecks to meaningful economic regionalisation.
In this more prescriptive than theoretical analysis, I review relevant literature to identify key priority areas in which Africa’s regionalisation should focus. I advance a prescriptive understanding of Africa’s development challenges in a regional perspective. My argument is that while in Pan-Africanist viewpoint holistic socioeconomic transformation is important, continental development is an amalgamation of regional-level transformations. The realisation of these regional-level transformations necessitates meaningful structural transformation. This structural change RECs should pursue as their central objective. This development thesis, drawn from the discourse on regionalism and development, maintains a bias toward the view that regional development must attend to particular development bottlenecks afflicting Africa, such as infrastructure and management of shared resources. The model for regional development as a means to the holistic development of Africa suggests that economic motives behind Africa’s regionalisation can be utilised to revive Africa’s economies; and that this revival requires the implementation of priority development policies at regional level. Attaining this level of progress necessitates that regional bodies prioritise this objective – infrastructure development.

Doubtless, infrastructure is one of the structural bottlenecks. Others may include social and economic inequalities within and between regions and countries, rural-urban inequalities, geographical limitations, and ethnic differences (and other social structures), urban governance challenges, and techno-scientific and skills inadequacies. Likewise, infrastructure can be both physical (“hardware”) and institutional (“software”). Physical infrastructure, the focus of this analysis, includes such things as transport, border clearing, ports management, industrial establishments, import-export facilities, and other physical structures. Institutional infrastructure may include organisational hierarchies and rule-based procedures for making and implementing decisions. I emphasize that physical infrastructure creates powerful economic interactions and forces that push the institutional landscape, reducing Gibb’s patrimonial State concerns. Likewise, infrastructure-aided interactions and exchanges create powerful incentives for resistance against institutional frameworks that limit further integration and aid the political mobilisation of such resistance across regionally connected socioeconomic agents. In other word, while inter-State cooperation in the development of infrastructure requires a modicum of institutionalised cooperation, infrastructure facilitates institutional robustness and resilience against corrupt practices through its impact on the economies and lives of peoples in these polities, the coalition interests, opportunities within and between countries, and leaders’ self-representations within and without their domestic political space. Thus, infrastructure acquires a political vibrancy unbeknownst to simple emphases on the politics of institutionalised cooperation and repeated interactions.

The following section outlines regional integration in Africa, combining regionalism (political cooperation) and regionalisation (socioeconomic cooperation), after which “regionalism” is used interchangeably with “regional integration” because of the inseparability between economic and political cooperation (Mansfield and Solingen 2010). Then follows a brief analysis of regionalism as a development project in which economic impulses and the role of infrastructure are stressed. In the final model, attention is drawn to the link between effective regional integration and Africa-wide development. The conclusion sums up the main arguments. This paper is not a theoretical engagement with both the discourse on regionalism and the practical experiences of integration processes, but a deliberate prescriptive emphasis on the structural bottlenecks to effective regionalisation.
Understanding Regional Integration in Africa

Regionalism in Africa was analysed first as a historical consequence of Pan-African struggles for the emancipation of the black race (Welch 1966), later as a means to decolonisation of remaining colonies in Africa (Wild 1971), and later for African renewal and development (Karns and Mingst 2010) that feeds into the trajectory of postcolonial experience of southern regionalism. At a global level, scholars see Africa as one region, looking only at the African Union (AU) as the regional entity of analysis. Accordingly, ROs within Africa are merely “sub-regional integration initiatives” within the broader AU (Karns and Mingst 2010: 208-9). How are we to underscore the functional basis of these sub-regionalisms? Haas (1964), for instance, stresses the functional importance of integration. His theory informs today’s approaches to regionalism. Mitrany (1965) had argued that though integration is a political process – because every decision “must stay with the responsible governments” (p.122) – economic cooperation and integration aid both political and economic self-defence (ibid: 125), leading to politic-economic “common ends”. Aware of national self-interests, he argues that fears of national interest are erased by translating “political self-determination” into “functional co-determination”. For him, “we can neither ignore the deep roots of nationality in the search for material efficiency, nor deny the urgent cry for social betterment for the sake of a hollow independence ... Internationally speaking, political self-determination in this way is translated into functional co-determination” (Mitrany 1965: 139). For the market-led integration, then, economic integration leads to regional development, which translates into Africa’s continental transformation.

Thus, regional integration should follow Bella Balassa’s linear path: preferential trade area – free trade area – customs union – common market – economic union – political federation (Gibb 2009:706). Similarly, once Africa’s regional blocs have formed they constitute the African Economic Community (AEC) envisioned in the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the 1991 Abuja Treaty, both of whose Pan-Africanist promises envision a linear progression too (ibid: 704). Gibb calls this a euro-centric, market-liberal theory and discourse whose failure results from the imposition of western purviews of economic regionalism to a politically different landscape, and limited appreciation of the role of the patrimonial State policies, which sustain rhetoric without meaningfully pursuing regional integration.

It is plausible to talk of regional integration (hence of regional organisations) in each of Africa’s regions, thus separating continental integration from regional integration (Lavergne 1997; Oyejide et al 1997 and 1999). This paper mentions regional integration as understood not in the Kams-Mingst lumping of the continent as one region, but regional blocs within Africa. This is reflected in the 1964 OAU resolutions, the provisions of the LPA and Abuja Treaty, and which are upheld in New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) (Gibb 2009:704-11): regionalism, therefore, differs analytically from continentalism in Africa. Integration – whether continental or regional, however - informs Africa’s notion of continental development. This is the link between integration and development – at least in theory.

According to the pan-regionalist thesis, strategic considerations regarding African marginality in the global space and the need to emancipate Africa through integration drove African regionalism. This deviates from analyses, which treat regionalism as a consequence of UN-based globalist-regionalist debate, and thus treats below-UN organisations as lower levels of governance below the UN but above the State in addressing region-specific problems (Claude 1971). Regionalism, or for that matter continentalism according to the Pan-Africanist logic, was a unique struggle in Africa. While it reflected
some of the aspects in other continents, Pan-African integration was centred on addressing African problems. This struggle involved both “radical” and “moderate” pan-Africanists.

‘Radical’ pan-Africanists, such as Ghana’s Osajefo Kwame Nkrumah, believed continental unity would help constitute a strong Africa capable of securing a niche in a competitive world, and defend her dignity from potential future forces of domination. These thinkers called for continental unity aside from RECs/ROs within Africa’s geographically contiguous regions. This view, however, was challenged by ‘moderates’, like Tanzania’s Mwalimu Julius Kambarage-Nyerere, who called for the creation of RECs/ROs as building blocks for African unity. When the Organisation of African Unity (OAU; now African Union, AU) faced this continentalist-regionalist debate – similar to the globalist-regionalist debate that had confronted UN founders two decades before - the OAU resolved, in 1964, to create what were called Regional Economic Communities (RECs, herein ROs). Sometimes called “sub-regional organisations”, these RECs were born of the OAU/AU’s decision to establish ROs as building blocks to continental unity, and as an accommodative means of addressing this debate (Nye 1965; Povolny 1966; Wild 1971; Agyeman 1975; Nabudere 2009). The resolution of the debate was a diplomatic success never before witnessed anywhere to such a wide scale and on such a hot issue that had divided Africa’s top political and diplomatic landscape by 1964.

When compared to the 1917-19 World War I settlement, the 1964 resolution was a sophisticated indicator of consensus. During the 1918 meetings, US president, Woodrow Wilson, proposed eighteen points as the basis of resolving the ongoing crisis. These came to be called “The Woodrow Doctrine”, and later “Wilsonian idealism”. The British Prime Minister dismissed them “The Good Lord Himself had only Ten”. This is besides the fact that both actors at the time wanted peace. The failures of the 1918-19 settlement led to what Edward Carr has called “The Thirty Years Crisis” (Carr 1964, 2001) in which is rooted World War II. Thus, the 1964 OAU resolution and its respect become unique politico-diplomatic successes yet unappreciated in scholarly and [possibly] diplomatic circles of the post-1945 world. It neither gave triumph to idealists who fix their eyes on the future, thinking “in terms of creative spontaneity”; nor to realists who are “rooted in the past” and think “in terms of causality” (Carr 1964:12). Instead, it struck a balance between competing forces of “Unite Now” and “use a regional approach envisioning the future”, between radicals and gradualists who both – like the 1918-19 leaders’ shared interest in peace – agreed on a key issue of African Unity but differed on the methodology and timing. Within the context of this resolution is rooted a version of African regionalism inexistent anywhere else in the world. The resulting RECs/ROs have been addressing both socioeconomic and politico-security issues. The meeting-point between political and economic cooperation is that decisions regarding economic cooperation, ROs and institutions facilitating these policies, and their implementation depend on State actors. Political will becomes important; though need not cloud economic cooperation. Indeed, the ultimate objective of the African Economic Community for Africa (AEC) is to forge a united African community, derived from robust RECs as its building blocks.

Regionalism in Africa, aside from the above, has three peculiarities: first, some RECs, such as the East African Community - before Rwanda-Burundi joined in 2007 - reflected colonial legacy of Anglophone regionalism. Today, some are outliving this limitation. Likewise, West African integration remained problematic not only because of earlier competition between Nigeria and Ghana over the hegemonic implications of African Unity espoused by Nkrumah, but also because of colonial-linguistic intricacies resulting from colonial histories (Welch 1966; Wild 1971), with Spanish, French and English-speaking
countries uniting. Transcendence of these histo-colonial limitations was perhaps an indicator of early attempts at forging meaningful African unity, current challenges notwithstanding.

Second, Africa’s regionalisms reflect geographical location and neighbourliness, dividing the continent on this basis. For instance, the attempt to unite Ghana-Guinea-Mali; Senegal-Gambia; Nalubaale countries (Uganda-Kenya-Tanzania)\textsuperscript{2} hinged on the geopolitical and geo-economic imperatives of their neighbourliness (Welch 1966: 13-23 & 350-57). While again related to colonial legacy, the exploitation of advantages of neighbourliness and geographical proximity according to the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action (Oyejide et al 1997:160) was important. Geographical proximity guides Africa’s RECs today. It has since become the basis for transcending colonial divisions. This was witnessed in ECOWAS, as already highlighted, and the EAC since 2007 when Burundi-Rwanda joined the organisation.

Third, different regions experience different challenges and exploit different opportunities. For instance, the EAC was interrupted by dissolution in 1977, SADC and ECOWAS have never dissolved. Each REC evolved in its own way: SADC’s predecessor, South African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was initially a cooperative arrangement against apartheid South Africa, while the EAC is rooted in colonial-driven linkages between Britain’s East African colonies since 1890s. Francophone West Africa has had a [French-supported] currency, the CFA, which excludes ECOWAS Anglophone members. This partly led to a desire to form an Anglophone-based West African Monetary Zone (WMZ; whose idea was born in 1987). Anglophone countries - the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone – formed the WAMZ in 2000, hoping to “promote economic integration and trade in the zone” based on one currency or monetary union, by aiding the “creation of a single economic space in the Zone by December 2009”. Mostly [to be used in] English-speaking West Africa, the currency potentially competes with the CFA Franc in Francophone West Africa, creating a Francophone-Anglophone rift. The final stage of the WAMZ, expectedly, would see both currencies merged into a single regional currency.\textsuperscript{3} Arguably, ECOWAS need not develop a parallel currency later to merge with the CFA before a Regional Monetary Union is established. Monetary, currency-based fragmentation of ECOWAS would sub-divide the REC; limit its pursuit of a regional - not linguistic, colonial-historical - currency. Transcending colonial legacy would help outsmart neo-colonial divisions and unite Africa’s ROs and the continent. Only then can RECs function as springboards for continental socioeconomic transformation.

This in no way downplays the obvious political imperatives of regionalism, commonalities in intra-African regionalisms, or similarities between Africa’s and rest-of-the-world trends of regionalism. This is to appreciate the African experience of regionalism as it is. Thus, achieving the economic objectives of integration in Africa is a politico-economic, but Africa-specific issue. While dependant on political will, economic cooperation aids the realisation of political objectives, such as security regionalism (Kelly 2007), increased regional power and strengthening of sovereignty (Gibb 2009), through functional co-determination among integrating States (Mitrany 1965:139). Thus, economic motives behind Africa’s RECs should, ideally speaking, propel Africa’s development. The political importance of African unity hinges on strong economies. Hence: (i) economic imperatives and the resulting joint endeavours promise the revival of Africa’s economies; and (ii) this revival – instantiated by regional socioeconomic development – necessitates the implementation of priority development policies at regional level that attend to critical infrastructural and structural bottlenecks. Intellectual and policy attention ought to be drawn to this issue. Yet the discourse on regionalism hardly attends to these concerns.
Regional Integration as a Developmental Project: The African Experience

The discourse on regionalism is premised on essentialist, constructivist, and functional approaches. The essentialist approach considers the emergence of “sustained cooperation, formal or informal, amongst governments, non-governmental organisations, or the private sector in three or more countries for mutual gain” (Alagapa 1994 and 2003 in Karns and Mingst 2010:147). Accordingly, ROs are formed in response to natural, essential core of economic, security, religious or cultural links between States and peoples spanning States’ geographical boundaries. It is socio-culturally and economically essential that related countries work together, where possible, integrate. This highlights constructivist notions of regionalism. The constructivist approach holds that ROs are made of shared identity, norms, and meanings, which may change over time (Acharya 1997 and 2010) from shared identities to norms. These norms and meanings become politically acceptable and legitimised, and finally constitute written and unwritten rules of international cooperation game. The functionalist approach, however, highlights functional factors like welfare, the flow of capital, environmental concerns, human rights and other “common interest” issues. These issues give rise to issue-based, sometimes ad hoc, organisations (Vayrynen 2003). Examples include the European Economic Community (EEC), which, in Haas’s and Mitrany’s views would save European economies from American competition but evolved over time; the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as a collective regional defence measure; and in Africa, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) as a GLR security measure. Such organisations perform specific functions, whereby integrative lessons learned in one functional context will be applied to others...” (Haas 1964: 48), thereby fostering inter-State cooperation and learning.

From the foregoing, there is limited agreement on the definition of ROs owing to diverse characteristics, functions, issue-specificity and generality of ROs. Undisputable about Africa’s ROs, however, is the intergovernmental dimension of inter-State cooperation (Shivji 2010). They are mainly general-purpose and hybridised entities with overlapping functions, though with clear emphasis on socioeconomic development. This regionalism-development thesis is relevant to Africa: it presents regionalism as a means to addressing the continent’s challenge of socio-economic transformation. It sometimes draws from the experience of integrating European economies, and stresses the Haasian logic of “common concerns”, the Mitranian notion of “functional co-determination”, and the functional importance of regional blocs in addressing Africa’s development concerns. This logic informs the current trajectory in African regions, which have since formed customs unions and common markets and are working toward economic communities. Whether this reproduction of pre-1977 East African approach to regionalism - which some mistake to be a copy-paste transplantation of European integration - is a miscalculation in Africa’s regionalist agenda is an intellectual charge which need not prevent our attention to the missing foundation in our integration.

Such a foundation should guide the trajectory of African integration process by helping us answer the question of when our integration attempts are more or less likely to be successful. This would lead to the realisation that under conditions of limited structural bottlenecks to investment, trade and other economic enterprises; when it is infrastructurally and institutionally possible to attain the objectives of such an arrangement, integration attempts are likely to be successful. Thus, the analysis of regional integration, which uses a case-by-case uncovering of key foundational interventions, is important. The regionalism-development thesis advanced here argues that by addressing the development bottlenecks to full integration in Africa, regionalism may translate into continental development. From this viewpoint,
continental development reflects transformation at regional level, where targeted socio-economic interventions ought to be deliberately focused to address infrastructure bottlenecks.

Gibb argues that market-led approaches to regionalism assume an easy journey to integrating African economies and polities, downplaying the nature of the State and the inapplicability of western-defined conceptualisations of regionalism. He, however, does not contest the development promise of regional integration. He would, thus, agree that regionalism can be seen from a development perspective – a view shared by the pan-African perspective of the African Economic Community (2004), Asante (1997) and ROs in the continent which stress “inter-State co-operation, harmonisation of policies and integration of programmes” (AEC 2004: Article 4). While Nkrumah advised everyone to pursue the political kingdom and believed politics was central to integration in Africa (Welch 1966:19), he also knew the ultimate end-point to Africa’s political unity was a strong economic base. Needless to say, “Long before the establishment of the OAU, African leaders had recognised that cooperation and integration among African countries in the economic, social, and cultural fields are indispensable to the accelerated transformation and sustained development of the African continent” (AEC 2011: online).

This brings a great question of our time: what does Africa need, for instance, to turn regional integration into an engine of development? While capitalist interests may drive international cooperation - most ROs claim to have been formed to increase investment opportunities, trade and foster development (a la EAC 2004 and 2009) - the normative view is that the resulting development should benefit all. It ought to result in improved standards of living of regional citizens; avail more opportunities to peoples; and facilitate sustainable exploitation of available and new opportunities and resources. Accordingly, economic incentives that motivate politicians to pursue regional integration should transcend both their capitalist origins and narrow political interests. This is basis of integration as a development impulse.

Regional Economic Impulses in Africa

ROs – called “regional economic communities” in Africa - emphasize their regionalism-development dimension. This distinguishes them from politico-military formations - such as NATO – that may involve politico-military considerations and are therefore noneconomic blocs (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002). By stressing economic interests, African ROs are “economic” development-oriented. Their common features, such as Trade agreements, customs unions, free trade areas, and common markets (Gibbs 2009; AEC 2004) resound the highly pronounced economics of regionalism in Africa (Bourenane et al 1996; Dieter 2001; Sheila 2000). It may not be easy to quantify economic gains from each of Africa’s ROs, as they do face some challenges (Oyejide et al 1999; Kuofor 2006; Goldstein 2004; Asante 1997; Lavergne 1997; Gibb 2009) and opportunities. However, we discern development cooperation and shared development interests in: (i) increasing trade, commerce, and investment to widen markets and investment opportunities; (ii) developing regional economic infrastructure; (iii) management of shared resources; (iv) breaking bonds of landlockedness; and, thus (v) establishing self-sustaining, globally competitive economies. These are serious African aspirations since independence.

Self-sustaining regional economies and increased regional say in global economic affairs is critical to Africa’s ROs. Integration is believed to create strong economic blocs. These can compete against and also resist hegemonic impositions. Nkrumah had earlier warned that disunited Africans would be “used as a tool by those who profit from the balkanisation of Africa” (Welch 1966:13). The political motive of unity would be to resist, say, neo-colonial control. There are examples of regional attempts to counter
and resist global hegemony in Latin America and Asia (Brands 2008; Acharya 2009): during the Cold War, Latin American pursued regional integration partly to counter U.S. post-World War II domination (Develin and Ffrench-Davis 1999). The confrontations between the US and Soviet Union culminated into a “strategy of containment” which influenced East Asian integration, creating competitions within the region that hindered institutionalised regionalism. Consequently, States were divided among nationalist, ultra-nationalist, communist, liberal, and non-aligned States (Beeson 2008). This prevented deep integration in Asia. The US used ASEAN as an “Asian bulwark against soviet expansionism” (Schaller 1982; Beeson 2008), though economic motives resurfaced as security threats shifted from inter-State to intra-State conflicts resulting from underdevelopment: ASEAN recently embarked on a process of transforming itself into an ASEAN economic community (AEC) in 2015.6

From the foregoing, Africa was not alone in regionalising as a means to securing a niche in the global space and securing itself from foreign influence. Like Nkrumah had advised that “All Colonies must be free from foreign imperial control, whether political or economic”, it was imperative for the Asians, Americans and Africans alike, as “peoples of the Colonies”, to “fight for these ends by all means at their disposal”. Hence, Nkrumah prognosticated, “the struggle for political power by Colonial and Subject Peoples is the first step towards, and the necessary prelude to, complete social, economic and political emancipation ...Today there is only one road to effective action – the organisation of the masses ... Colonial subject peoples of the World – Unite!” (Welch 1966: 15-6). Nkrumah’s espoused continental political unity failed to materialise for various reasons beyond this analysis. Instead, today the language of regionalised socioeconomic development is benchmarked by contemporary emphases on Africa’s socioeconomic transformation. This requires joint efforts: unilaterally African countries cannot effectively engineer structural transformation given the linkages between countries’ economies and societies. Regional integration promises to allow countries to exploit these linkages. Though Gibbs (2009) is sceptical of the competitive capacity and size of an Africa-wide economy, I argue that were it not for limited infrastructural linkages among would-be-integrated economies such an economy is possible.

Ndulu et al (2006) find that “infrastructure and regional integration as two mechanisms that can help foster stronger economic growth in Africa” (p. 102), remain dismal in Africa. They suggest interventions to “mitigate the disadvantages of Africa’s ‘unfavourable’ endowments mainly through improved infrastructure and regional integration” (ibid). Their analysis is useful because: first, they appreciate the vitality of infrastructure, thereby exposing the major constraint to previous integration approaches that prevented them from achieving their development objectives. This includes difficulties of intra-Africa trade, investment, and movement of people and means of production because of transport and infrastructure deficiencies. Second, their argument that infrastructure helps alleviate poverty links with holistic development because infrastructure reverses adverse and natural/geographical barriers of landlocked economies. It complements public investment in social services. It also facilitates the establishment of “autonomous regulatory bodies, joint management with users of these services, and adoption of user pay principles to circumvent the externality problems associated with provision of public goods” (Ndulu 2006:212). This fuels public-private joint investments and partnerships that reduce financing difficulties for projects, thereby improving transparency and selectivity. With infrastructure, public and private sector investments reduce “additional problems related to poor integration in the region, fuelled by deep sovereign and ethno-linguistic fragmentation” (ibid). In a word, given sufficient infrastructure, the private sector’s partnership with the State helps reduce Gibb’s patrimonial State constraints to integration. Yet the private sector thrives under conditions of improved infrastructure.
The Critical Role of Infrastructure

The management of economic infrastructure presents a challenge in Africa. My emphasis on physical infrastructure in no way downplays the institutional infrastructure, but the two are interdependent: physical infrastructure speeds up the realisation of benefits from a good institutional framework of cooperation and service delivery. Institutional infrastructure affects the effectiveness of measures to establish physical infrastructure, such as through efficient contracts management, good quality works, and mobilisation of necessary resources. However, emphasis is placed on the “hardware” because it has received limited attention in existing analyses, which stress corruption (Gibb’s patrimonial State), political will (Nabudere 2009 and Shivji 2009), and other institutional factors.

It is easier to establish a region-wide institutional environment of cooperation than the physical one because of cost limitations. Ports, roads, railways, information technology and communication services, waterways, and border clearing services require joint efforts, as they are capital-intensive investments, which unilateral economies may not afford. With RECs, states pool necessary resources. Pooling of resources reduces resource constraints to infrastructure development. The resulting common economic infrastructure affects the quality, quantity and speed of goods and services produced, marketed and delivered to relevant centres. Increased production, marketing, and transportation of products require transnational infrastructure in interconnected economies, hence the value of infrastructure priorities in regional integration. Unless structural bottlenecks are addressed regional integration’s development promise cannot be kept under conditions of infrastructural deficiency (Ndulu et al 2006).

All ROs/RECs in Africa, at least on paper, hope to establish regional infrastructure to ease intra-regional trade, commerce, and transportation. ECOWAS, for instance, has several agencies targeted at regional social and physical infrastructure and service delivery. In SADC, the Regional Integrated Strategic Development Plan (RISP) seeks to establish regional infrastructure to ease intra-regional movement of means of production (Goldstein 2004): “the development of infrastructure and services is critical for promoting and sustaining regional economic development, trade and investment. The potential for deepening integration through the sharing of the production, management and operations of infrastructure facilities, hubs, development corridors or poles is considerable” (SADC 2001:28, sic). The EAC has agreed to revitalise railways, jointly manage the Airspace (by establishing a regional Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency, CASSOA), develop railway- and road master-plans currently being implemented (EAC 2010): “The infrastructure and support services sub-sector covers roads, railways, civil aviation, maritime transport and ports, multi-modal transport, freight administration and management. A number of Tripartite Agreements have been reached in the field of infrastructure including Road Transport, and Inland Waterway Transport aimed at providing a facilitative instrument to regulate inland waterways transport, particularly across Lake Victoria.” (EAC 2010: online)

Improved management of economic and social infrastructure would quicken movement of factors of production, trade, clearing and investment. Improved intra-Africa trade reduces trade dependence on the north. African economic integration now appreciates the value of infrastructure. I believe the basic “software” for cooperation is steadily growing with limited growth of the “hardware”. In the EAC, for instance, socioeconomic forms of integration, like the EAC Business Forum, collaborations between professional and educational institutions and bodies (e.g. Inter-University Council for East Africa, East African Law Society), and regional institutions for addressing issues of concern to State and non-State actors have been formed. These would be stronger and able to resist some forms of institutional
deficiencies if the infrastructure were supportive enough to foster robust business, investment, employment, and research and cross-border interactions. Some infrastructure systems, however, such as border clearing services, transport systems, inland dry ports, and more, are limited. This limits not only region-wide engagement of peoples but also the exploitation of new opportunities.

Exploitation of new investment opportunities follows infrastructure development. An example: geo-economically, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) provide potential markets for the EAC products. Recent increases in exports from Uganda and Kenya to Southern Sudan; the planned construction of the Kenya-Sudan, and Kenya-Ethiopia railway and road networks; and plans to construct rail, road, internet, infrastructures that link East Africa and Sudan/Juba, illustrate this importance (Business Vision, Thursday, May 7, 2009). This geopolitically expanding market exposes our infrastructure development challenges. It calls for joint infrastructure development interventions. Infrastructure furthers the exploitation of new investment opportunities. Employment creation arises from new business and investment opportunities, such as during reconstruction of Southern Sudan, and from infrastructure development. Analysts who blame the failure of African integration on eurocentrism, on patrimonial politics (Gibb 2009) seem to ignore this structural bottleneck. The regionalism-development nexus follows from an infrastructure network, which facilitates the flow of resources and means of production across borders, and allows the emergence and exploitation of new productive opportunities. Thus, missing in Africa’s regional integration is consistent and effective infrastructure development. This hampers intra-Africa trade, retards the tourism industry, discourages FDI, and leaves available human resources un-deployable and natural resources unexploited.

New potentially transformative resources continue to be uncovered: Oil in Uganda and Kenya, natural gas in Tanzania, for instance. Uganda needs regional infrastructure and financial support to exploit oil, such as through fractional distillation and other refining processes. The Ugandan leadership observes, that “East African region needs to cooperate in the proposed oil refinery in Uganda”, agreeing to a joint venture with Kenya⁹, and opening share-holding into the refinery to the EAC Partner States. Being landlocked, Uganda depends on Kenya and Tanzania for her imports and exports, and benefits from such a regional arrangement. Landlocked countries are internationally neighbour-dependent countries. Landlockedness affects their importation and exportation. They depend on Africa’s underdeveloped road sector, the almost-inexistent railway system, on underdeveloped - if deficient - infrastructure. This increases costs and complicates importation and exportation.

Burundi and Rwanda, for instance - formerly francophone countries - are geographically located in East Africa. They are nearer the coasts of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam than the coast of Kinshasha in DRC. It made sense, economically stating, that they integrated in East Africa: the geostrategic imperative of their joining the EAC transcends security, for their access to a nearer coast is a question of strategic economic survival. The same challenge afflicts eastern DRC. Landlockedness, therefore, limits the development of other sectors, such as cyber/virtual businesses, international networking, and tourism. Faye, et al (2004) have outlined landlocked developing countries’ “structural challenges to accessing world markets”: transit neighbours’ infrastructure; cross-border political relations; neighbours’ peace and stability; and dependence on neighbours’ administrative practices. The authors realise that “landlocked countries do worse than their maritime neighbours in each component of the HDI” and only 57% average GDP per capita (2004: 33). The UN’s observation on the difficulties facing landlocked developing countries paints even a more appalling picture (UN, 2009: 8 & 127).¹⁰
From the foregoing, breaking bonds of landlockedness requires that such countries join fully integrated regional blocs with access to the sea. Landlocked African countries are breaking these bonds through regional integration. This facilitates their socioeconomic transformation. The infrastructural vitality of regionalist approach to development is the lifeblood of Africa’s development – a vital priority.

Regional Development Policies and Priorities: A Model for Africa

I have stressed the importance of regional cooperation in infrastructure development. Africa – aside from human resources, techno-scientific interventions, and public services systems - must develop its infrastructure. Europe thrived on infrastructure, with the EU integrating to increase the competitiveness of its economies when America threatened to dominate the continent (Mitrany 1965; Pinder 1965). Europe was only successful because of the shared realisation that there were common interests, which could not be attained unilaterally: “participation in the [European] Community [would] increase members’ prosperity and economic power”, and membership in the EC entailed cooperation in various sectors (Pinder 1965: 254). The EU’s economic integration was quickened by infrastructure. Integration has delayed in Africa in large part because of infrastructural deficiencies. This in no way makes my argument Eurocentric - infrastructure is a universal component of contemporary development.

Figure 1: A Model for the Regionalism-Development Nexus in Africa
The centrality of politics in cooperation in no way implies that particular domestic regimes are required to secure international cooperation, though the nature of the regime may determine the longevity and effectiveness in the long-run as internationalist coalitions are believed to be more supportive of international cooperation than statist-nationalist and confessionalist coalitions (Solingen 1998). What is required is sufficient political support to facilitate the establishment of the necessary infrastructure for cooperation. At each level, politics affects the decisions and choices made. These in turn affect politics for they create a momentum of cooperation, which affects further supportive decisions. The reverse may happen following opposing political developments, such as the political victory and predominance of more Solingenist statist-nationalist and confessionalist ruling coalitions in the region.

However, under normal regionalism-supportive political conditions, this is envisioned to be the process. This cycle ensures the interpenetrability of political will and the resulting forms and stages of cooperation. As the arrows indicate, the further we go in the stages of cooperation the thicker the cooperation – from the highlight at “A” to “D”. While at “A” we need emphasis on infrastructure backed by political will, from “D” further on the cycle is more robust as integration has become thicker and possibly self-perpetuating. Since infrastructure affects cooperation, it is the foundational component (point “A”). While it has both the institutional and the physical (which includes the technological), there is a general tendency among analysts to emphasize its institutional component and wish off the physical one. This tendency leaves out a key component of integration and development. At point “C”, there may be sufficient infrastructure to facilitate interregional cooperation and interdependence. Here, RECs depend on one another for transregional flows of capital, human and natural resources, services and goods. This leads to the AEC’s envisioned process of continental economic integration and ultimately African Unity. At this point ROs/RECs may transform into lower levels of governance within a united Africa. The continental momentum already set may further deepen and broaden cooperation and the process continues. This model is therefore both pragmatic and futuristic.

The regional integration-development model for reviving African economies is now clear. It is assumed that: a) economic imperatives of Africa’s regionalisation can be harnessed to revive Africa’s economies – hence the Haasian functional cooperation in the development and implementation of important infrastructure master plans; and b) this revival consists in stressing the implementation of meaningful and priority development policies at regional level to realise development. From this view, continental development is the total sum of socioeconomic transformation at regional level (point “D”). Achieving the desired level of development is a function of institutions, infrastructure, and human resources development, though I place emphasis on infrastructure as a component of focused cooperation. Integration, thus, becomes a “regional approach to problem solving” (Lavergne 1997:2), to solving infrastructure bottlenecks. This leads to what cooperation theorists consider “joint maximisation” of the benefits of infrastructure development cooperation across Africa.

ROs like ECOWAS have undertaken significant institutional reforms (Kuofor 2006); others like the EAC are following steadily from long histories of institutional robustness: the 1 July 2010 declaration of the Common Market and previous institutional developments are examples. This implies that integration results from “joint institutional mechanisms for socio-economic development, a degree of shared sovereignty” (Close 2010:3) that transcends ‘inter-governmental’ cooperation to include supranational obligations at regional level. In this model, development integration encompasses joint/regional development projects and/or programs the objective of which is socio-economic transformation. The
measures of transformation are not econometric numericals, but general improvements in people’s wellbeing and standards of living used in ordinary language. This implies the shift from peasant economies to developed, self-sustaining regional economies, the totality of which implies African development. Such development, I argue, depends on a well-developed infrastructure system.

From Regional to Continental Development in Africa

The consequent regional economies will be robust, progressive, resilient, and self-sustaining. They will serve the needs of regional peoples and the global market, and withstand local and global economic shocks, for politically constituted strong institutions back them. This ideal implies that developmental regionalisms - politically propelled, legitimate, and infrastructure-aided – can attract local and foreign investment; and bargain in the international economy as united economic entities, not as single States. This gives them better bargaining advantage (e.g. EU since 1960s: Karns and Mingst 2010; Pinder 1965; Mitrany 1965). These ROs, once fully constituted, may combine to form a single continental economy and bargaining bloc, or actually form a continental political entity, the “United States of Africa”. The AEC’s targeted economic, social and cultural development, and the integration of African economies to increase economic self-reliance and promote an endogenous and self-sustained development, will become a step in continental unity.

By establishing a continental development framework, the AEC encourages effective mobilisation and utilisation of human and material resources to achieve self-reliant development. By seeking to raise standards of living, and by maintaining and enhancing economic stability, it fosters close and peaceful relations among Member States and RECs. Close interdependence among RECs - through shared resources, transnational capital, technological innovations, and infrastructural networks - generate socioeconomic forces for African Unity. Economically robust, these forces can become strong enough to unify Africa. This process’s possible reversal through regional inward looking and alliance formations may be prevented by geographical contiguity, economic interdependence, continental epistemic interactions, and the resilient Pan-Africanism. This contributes to the progress, development, and integration of the Continent, to the ideal of African Unity. For the AEC to coordinate and harmonise policies among existing RECs to speed up the establishment of the Community (AEC 2004: Article 4(1)) it will require ROs’ infrastructure development success. The survival of Pan-African institutions, or a continental political entity, will then depend upon the economic capacity to sustain and continually improve the institutional and physical structures upon which it is anchored.

Conclusion

The politics of regionalised development – whether reflected at national, regional, or continental levels – is a politics of strategic, priority-focused development decision-making. These priority choices must be harmonised among cooperating States and organisations in an increasing interdependent world. Development motives influence these political choices, merging the political and the economic in the resulting development cooperation framework. Once the cooperation framework is in place, as is the case in Africa considering the objective of the AEC and RECs, development has the basic institutional infrastructure and political will for cooperative undertakings. If realised, then, the amalgam of developed regions translates into continental development and may generate incentives for continental unity. The development kingdom creates the political empire, thereby reversing Nkrumah’s vision of empire first and development next. How is Africa to tread the path to regional-continental development?
Our challenge now consists in turning the economic motives behind regionalist impulses in Africa into realistic and achievable development objectives, and using regional development pursuits as a joint mechanism for reviving African economies. I have shown that these economic considerations constitute the springboard for the propulsion of Africa’s development. They provide incentives for regional development. They act as measuring yardsticks for the pursuit of regional development objectives. By realising regional development objectives, through the implementation of priority-development policies, African development is reflected. The possibility of reflecting African development from region-level development is more than an idealistic vision of a future. It is an ongoing development approach instantiated by regional development programs in Africa’s various ROs. It underscores the relevance of RECs as development agenda setters. The resilience of these ROs against potentially divisive divergences between and among States and ROs attests to their perceived and real development potential as agents of development. Hence, regional development can translate into continental transformation that reflects at both national and continental levels in Africa.

My model of regional development as a means to the revival of African economies is a restatement of ongoing development efforts in Africa suffused with an emphasis on the vitality of addressing structural bottlenecks to regionalisation for African development. Continental development reflects socioeconomic transformation of regional economies. Achieving the desired level of development – Africa-wide socioeconomic transformation - necessitates meaningful interventions at regional level in each of the AU’s RECs. Regional bodies should, as their central and crosscutting objective, undertake priority interventions in infrastructure development. Infrastructure is a key structural bottleneck to speedy socioeconomic transformation of Africa’s economies. It aids the prolongation and entrenchment of the institutional and political structures. When infrastructure is well developed, it may spark off development to a level never before expected. Because infrastructure development requires - and facilitates - the pooling together of resources for costly ventures, it remains unilaterally problematic and requires pooling of efforts to develop. Provide the physical, economic, and institutional infrastructure and investors will come. Economies will, consequently, be structurally transformed. Africa will develop.

Notes

1 Examples include: EAC; ECOWAS (with West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ); SADC; AMU; Economic Community of Central African States (ECAS, with Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, CEMAC); South African Customs Union (SACU, which also straddles SADC but goes beyond by including Swaziland which is a member of COMESA); COMESA (which includes members of SADC, SACU and EAC and others not part of any of these ROs); Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

2 In Uganda, Lake Victoria is called Enyanja (lake) Nalubaale. River Nile is called Kiira (Kiyiira). This may not be the name given to it in Tanzania and Kenya. However, calling it its local name to the north of the Lake, not Victoria (the name John Speke gave it in 1856 after England’s queen Victoria), should guide one to seeing both the British interests in uniting their East African colonies and the post-colonial Nyerere-led attempts at integration.


4 For example, Article 4 of the AEC Treaty outlines the Community’s principles. These includes: equality and inter-dependence of member States; solidarity and collective self reliance; inter-State co-operation; and harmonisation of policies and integration of programmes. It stresses the promotion of harmonious development of economic activities among member States; observance of the legal system of the Community; peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States; and active cooperation between neighbouring countries. It also includes promotion of a peaceful environment as a pre-requisite for economic development; recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples’ rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights; and accountability, economic justice and popular participation in development. It is, therefore, a development-oriented organisation.
The Economic Community of ASEAN countries will be one of the largest Economic Communities in the World. Though not as developed as North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) and the European Union (EU), the AEC will be constituted by 12 countries. These include high-GNP countries like Singapore and Brunei; middle-income countries like Malaysia; and resource-rich, fast-developing and highly-populated Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Specialised sectoral Agencies of ECOWAS include: West African Health Organisation (WAHO); West African Monetary Agency (WAMA); West African Monetary Institute (WAMI); ECOWAS Youth & Sports Development Centre (EYSDC); ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC); Water Resources Coordination Unit (WRCU); ECOWAS BROWN CARD; The West African Power Pool (WAPP); The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing in West Africa (GIABA); and West African Regional Health Programme (PRSAO).

EAC, Online (http://www.eac.int/infrastructure/, accessed 26 September 2010): “The East Africa Region operates five modes of transport systems consisting of road, rail, maritime, air transport and oil pipeline. The EAC Development Strategy recognised that regional infrastructure interventions are key to attracting investment into the region, improving competitiveness, and promoting trade”. The EAC Development Strategy is based on five priority projects: the establishment of the East African Airline; the establishment of the East African Railways and Transport Corporation; the establishment of the East African Transport and Power Pool; the establishment of the East African Oil Pipeline; and the establishment of the East African Transport and Infrastructure Commission.

The UN defines “Landlocked country” in this document as “a territory that does not have direct access to the sea. In order to trade with the rest of the world, it must transship goods through one or more transit countries to reach the sea”. The 31 landlocked developing countries are Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Moldova, Republic of Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Paraguay, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tajikistan, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe (UN 2009: 8 – notes 1 and 2).

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