Towards United African States:
the African Continental Free Trade Area and the African Economic Community in the Context of a Political Federation for Africa

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Abstract

The paper deals with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the African Economic Community (AEC) envisaged in the 1991 Abuja Treaty. The AfCFTA and the AEC are potential steps towards the political federation of African countries into a single African nation. I highlight critical issues pertaining to the AfCFTA and propose an effective implementation plan, including options for dealing with the Regional Economic Communities(RECs), the customs unions, the monetary communities and the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA). Overall, the AfCFTA does not have a good chance of success because – among other reasons – political commitment is not always firm in similar initiatives and also the TFTA has gained a lot more traction to a point that it is highly likely to be better implemented than the AfCFTA. The AfCFTA is, so is the TFTA, a critical step towards the AEC and in turn a potential stage towards a political federation of African countries into a single African nation. The paper makes a case for a United African States (UAS); a political federation of African and Caribbean countries into a single African nation. The UAS is the answer to the many problems that African (and Caribbean) countries face, largely because these countries were wrongly carved up into 'nations' when in fact there can only be one African nation than many so-called nations in Africa. Indeed, there can be many cultural groups as it has always been the case, prior to the Berlin Conference which created countries and micro-states that cannot advance development for their countries/peoples.

Key words: free trade area, regional economic communities, regional integration, African economic community, United African States, African nation

Introduction

The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a historic milestone in the economic integration agenda for Africa (UNECA 2018: 37). It is important to examine critical issues that need attention for the AfCFTA to be successful within the broader agenda of the creation of an African Economic Community (as was envisaged in the 1991 Abuja Treaty). Arguably, the AfCFTA also sets the stage for the political federation of African countries to United African States.

The paper starts with a background to the AfCFTA and relates pertinent issues such as Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) while also defining relevant terms. The TFTA includes the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Before discussing the critical issues surrounding the AfCFTA, I outline the main theories of regional integration and provide a brief history of integration efforts in Africa followed by an examination of the evolution of socio-economic development in Africa. After highlighting these critical issues, I argue for the political federation of African countries into a single African nation. In the main, the fundamental point that the paper makes is that a single African nation would ensure that Africa progresses – the AfCFTA and the African Economic Community (AEC) are potential steps towards the United African States.

Background

There are three main parts to the AfCFTA agreement. The first part defines key terms, presents the intentions of the agreement, and provides for the scope and principles governing the agreement. The institutional and procedural mechanisms are also covered in the first part of the AfCFTA agreement. The second part – perhaps the most important part, with negotiations underway for most of the protocols – presents the different protocols for trade-in goods, trade-in services, rules and procedures on the settlement of disputes, investment, competition policy and intellectual property rights. The final part of the agreement contains the annexes, guidelines, lists and schedules to the protocols.

It is important to also highlight that the AfCFTA is understood, as captured in the agreement, to "lay the foundation for the establishment of a Continental customs union at a later stage" and to "create a single market" (AU Commission 2019, 4). These are crucial parts of the Agreement in light of the work being spearheaded by the Pan-African Federalist Movement (PAFM) – an organisation recently established to "birth the United African States in less than a generation". There are unanswered questions on how the envisioned "One Africa" would look like in terms of governance institutions and processes. I propose oversight to be provided by a Governing Council, where countries then become states as in a federal system.

While the terms used in this paper are standard, I will briefly define them in this section for the sake of clarity. A common market adds the free movement of capital, labour and services and a single market subsequently removes all possible discordance. A customs union involves a group of countries who have entered into a free trade area agreement with a common external tariff for non-member countries as they trade. In an economic community, countries enter into an arrangement that involves duty-free trade and free movement of people, goods and capital. The European Union (EU) provides a framework for the European Economic Community as an example.

A monetary union is an agreement entered into by two or more states to create a single currency area. In this area a single monetary policy and central bank are established or existing central banks are integrated under a common central banking system (Puetter, 2019). The issue of a common currency and common language has arisen as a result of the aspiration towards an African Economic Community. While the proposed name for the common currency is Nilo, the debate about the African lingua franca remains unresolved (see Gumede 2019).

Ordinarily, a customs union then a common market then a monetary union (such as the EU) resulting in a complete economic integration proceed after countries enter into a free trade agreement. The establishment of an economic community entails the complete abolition of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, along with harmonisation of economic policies between the member states. A political federation will result in the coming together of all African and Caribbean countries into a single African nation: a United African States.

Regional integration is a process where countries agree to connect with other countries in a continent, region or sub-region in order to pursue cooperation and/or coordination. This integration is in relation to socio-economic, political, security and cultural issues. I critique this approach to continental integration within the African context of Africa. I, however, propose an alternative regional integration – a pan-African political agenda grounded in African nationalism. This approach is not an economic affair aimed at increasing market access and associated factors, but rather has a focus on the political unification of Africa (see Gumede 2019).

Drawing on the work by Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2007), people-to-people relations should be prioritised over economic pursuits such as building infrastructure, improving capacities and ensuring market access, which do not address fundamental challenges faced on the African continent. This is despite these pursuits being able to contribute towards tackling unemployment and poverty.

The proposed pan-African developmental regional integration is mainly a political initiative instead of an economic initiative that goes beyond the developmental integration approach that many have argued for and that many governments have embraced. The developmental integration approach has to with market integration, industrial development and the development of cross-border infrastructure linkages.

The Abuja Treaty envisioned the establishment of an AEC through its various stages in approximately 30 years. Africa is currently within the stipulated period to culminate into an AEC. The Treaty recommended that economic integration would happen through RECs as building blocks for the creation of a single or common market in Africa. It was envisaged that RECs would become customs unions by 2017. The last stage envisioned by the Treaty, after the establishment of an African common market, is an anticipated African monetary union that will be achieved through the creation of a single African central bank and a single African currency (i.e. graduating from a common market to a monetary union).

RECs have evolved in different ways and the pace of integration varies across regions. In other words, not all RECs are structured the same way and the levels of integration differ. Given the definition of a "region in the Abuja Treaty, Africa currently has many RECs that are arguably more than what was envisaged. The following is a list of RECs in Africa:

- the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD),
- the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa),
- the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas),
- the East African Community (EAC),
- the Southern African Development Community (SADC),
- the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (Igad),
- the Economic Community of Central African States (Ecca), and
- the Arab Mahgreb Union (Uma)

There are also the following customs unions or monetary communities in Africa:

- Southern African Customs Union (SACU),
- West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU),
- the Coopération Financière en Afrique (CFA) Centrale,
- West African CFA franc, and
- the Central African CFA franc.

It is important to highlight that none of the monetary unions is conterminous with any of the eight RECs – each customs union is a distinct island of deeper integration within or adjacent to an REC.

While some RECs have progressed towards a financial and monetary union, others have progressed even further towards political federation. A challenge faced by the RECs is that many countries belong to more than one REC. UNECA’s recent Regional Integration Report (UNECA, 2019: 49) indicates that “only 12 African countries belong to a single REC; 33 belong to two RECs, eight belong to three RECs and one to four RECs”. Below is a quick ‘assessment’ of selected RECs (see UNECA 2019 for details). EAC and Ecowas have customs unions with fully liberalised trade; Comesa and the FTA, established by the Agadir Agreement, have achieved a fully liberalised FTA, and SADC has achieved an FTA with some exclusions from liberalisation.

Five (5) of the eight (8) RECs have set macroeconomic and monetary convergence targets aimed at harmonising economic indicators. However, the member countries within these RECs have not converged enough. Coordinating the endorsed programmes to facilitate meeting targets set by the RECs and the AU has proven challenging, resulting in a mixed picture with some countries progressing more than others. In this paper SADC and ECOWAS are discussed slightly more than other RECs – as examples – as far as macroeconomic convergence is concerned. SADC, for instance, aimed for a common market by 2015, a monetary union by 2016 and a single currency by 2018. These targets proved overly ambitious.

Table1: SADC macroeconomic convergence targets, 2008-18

Indicators	2008	2012	2018
Inflation (% a year)	Single digits	5	3
Fiscal deficit (% of GDP)	5	3, with a range of 1%	3 as anchor, with a range of 1%
Public debt (% of GDP)	60		
Current account deficit (% of GDP)	9	9	3

Source: ECA (2019: 2)

Now policy makers face the challenge of determining whether the macroeconomic convergence framework formulated in the 2004 Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) can still be achieved at a later date – only one member had achieved the 2017-2018 convergence target of less than 3 per cent inflation (AfDB, 2018).

Regarding Ecowas, since 2014, it has been in pursuit of a West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) for member countries by the start of 2020. The new primary criteria require member countries' budget deficits not to exceed 3 per cent of GDP, average annual inflation not to be more than 5 per cent by 2019 and gross reserves not to be less than 3 months of imports. The secondary criteria require the public debt-to- GDP ratio not to exceed 70 per cent, central bank financing of budget deficits not to exceed 10 per cent of the previous year's tax revenue and nominal exchange rate variation to stay within +/− 10 per cent (UNECA, 2019b).

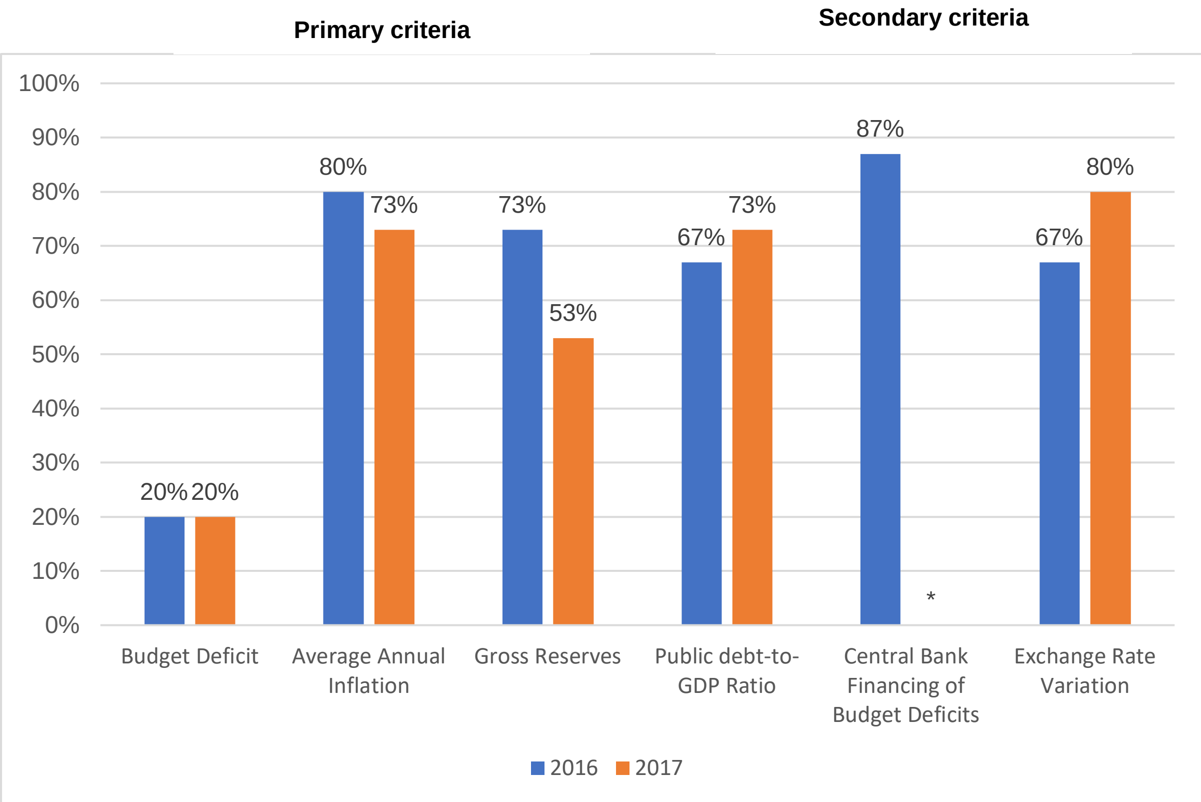

Figure 1: ECOWAS Macroeconomic Convergence Targets, 2016-17
Source: ECA (2019: 3)

The East African Community (EAC) is arguably the most advanced REC in Africa. The REC anticipates the introduction of a common currency to replace the national currencies of member countries by 2024. Progress to date includes: harmonising monetary policy frameworks and exchange rate operations, rules and practices governing bank supervision and integrating the payment systems, financial markets and financial reporting. The convergence criteria adopted by the EAC are: a headline inflation ceiling of 8 per cent, a reserve cover of 4.5 months of imports, a 3 per cent of GDP fiscal deficit ceiling, including grants and a 50 per cent of GDP (net present value) ceiling on gross public debt (AfDB, 2019). The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), on the other hand, has made little progress in macroeconomic convergence. Although the existing Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) was merged into the ECCAS configuration, efforts to expand the CEMAC monetary union to the rest of the ECCAS member states have been slow. This is partly because ECCAS has no formal mechanism for macroeconomic policy convergence and because ECCAS FTA is still not in force (Byiers, 2017).

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) pursues a cooperation programme adopted in 1992 that aims to establish a monetary union by 2025. COMESA's financial integration achievements include a regional payment and settlement system (REPSS). This system provides end-of-day settlement in a single currency and a single gateway for central banks within the region to effect payment in a multi-currency environment. Importers and exporters are, therefore, able to pay and receive payments for goods and services through an efficient and cost-effective platform. As of March 2017, nine countries had implemented REPSS. COMESA has become a largest REC with over 20 countries.

The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) members did not include an objective for financial and macroeconomic convergence or monetary integration in the 2013 revision of their underlying Treaty. Ten CEN-SAD member states are, however, party to either the WEAMU or CEMAC monetary union, whose West African CFA franc and Central African CFA franc, both pegged to the euro, have always been at parity and are effectively interchangeable. Six other CEN-SAD countries are members of COMESA and pursue its macroeconomic convergence goals.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is yet to establish a macroeconomic convergence process, though its founding Treaty aspires for "gradual harmonisation of fiscal and monetary policies" of member countries. It is tricky as seven IGAD countries are members of COMESA. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) aims to establish a Maghreb economic union, but financial and macroeconomic convergence and the creation of a single currency are not articulated in its founding Treaty. Of the five AMU countries, Libya and Tunisia are members of COMESA

Despite the proliferation of RECs, intra-African trade is still low compared to other regions. According to Songwe (2019), "the share of intra-African exports as a percentage of total African exports has increased from about 10 per cent in 1995 to around 17 per cent in 2017, but it remains low compared to levels in Europe (69 per cent), Asia (59 per cent), and North

America (31 per cent)". According to UNCTAD (2019), the African continent trades more with the outside world than within, with the European Union taking the largest share of Africa's exports—an average of more than 30 per cent – as Table 2 shows regarding exports.

Table 2: Export trade of the RECs by partner, 2010-17 (average per cent)

REC	INTRA-COMMUNITY	CHINA	UNITED STATES	EUROPEAN UNION	AFRICA	REST OF THE WORLD
ECCAS	2	34	15	20	4	25
SADC	19	20	8	20	3	30
UMA	3	5	8	63	2	19
ECOWAS	9	3	12	29	7	40
COMESA	9	12	4	37	8	30
IGAD	14	21	3	16	12	34
CEN-SAD	7	5	9	40	5	34
EAC	20	5	4	19	18	34
Africa Average	**10**	**13**	**8**	**31**	**7**	**30**

Source: ECA (2019: 5)

The low percentage of intra-African trade is attributed to infrastructure deficit, limited macroeconomic convergence, and peace and security threats (UNECA, 2019). A stable macroeconomic environment (i.e. low inflation, low budget deficit, reasonable government debt) would imply that there is macroeconomic convergence. Macroeconomic convergence refers to a reduction of disparities in economic indicators such as inflation, growth levels and per capita income. The reason to pursue macroeconomic convergence is to prompt members of economic groupings to react uniformly to such economic variables as price stability, budget deficits and debt-to-GDP ratios.

The negotiations for the COMESA–SADC–EAC Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) were launched in 2011 and culminated in the 2015 signing of the TFTA agreement on trade in goods. Although over 20 countries signing the agreement, only four have ratified (Egypt, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda). For the TFTA to come into force, 14 ratifications are needed. Various aspects of the TFTA are still being negotiated (e.g. tariff negotiations between SACU/Egypt and SACU/EAC are underway, and negotiations on the Tripartite Rules of Origin are said to be advanced).

The TFTA provides useful lessons for the AfCFTA regarding instruments such as the non-tariff barrier mechanism, guidelines on implementation of trade remedies, export and import declaration forms and an agreement on the movement of business persons. According to UNECA (2019a), "although the TFTA consolidates trade liberalisation across the COMESA, EAC and SADC RECs, much of that trade has already been liberalised by the multiple and overlapping membership of countries across the three RECs". Had the TFTA been in force in 2017, an additional 8 per cent of the intra-African imports that flowed into the 26 TFTA countries would have been covered" (UNECA 2019a: 13).

Africa is edging towards the free movement of people across borders. The milestone African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment was adopted by the 30th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 29 January 2018. Although the Protocol has been adopted, it has struggled to gather country ratifications. "The initiative promotes the free movement of persons across Africa through rights of entry, visa-free entry for short visits, rights of residence and rights of establishment, as well as the ability to establish a business" (UNECA 2019a: 16).

Lastly, some RECs have deepened integration (through financial and monetary instruments) significantly relative to what the AfCFTA envisages. The AfCFTA requires a threshold of liberalisation of 97 per cent of tariff lines representing no less than 90 per cent of trade volume. This has implications as the AfCFTA aspires for a lesser level of integration in the context of what some RECs have achieved.

Regional integration theories

There are four theories that are usually discussed when examining regional integration. The most common school of thought is the market integration approach. Regional integration is viewed as involving lowering and removing trade barriers among countries in a region or sub-region. This process enables increase in trade between those countries. This school of thought originates with Jacob Viner and falls within the linear integration models, starting with a Free Trade Area, the customs union, then common market and finally a monetary union (see Gumede 2019).

Open regionalism is a prominent theory from the neoliberal school of thought. The theory advocates for liberalising trade globally as a means of integrating the global economy. According to Garnaut (2004), the removal of barriers and ensuring that economic cooperation takes place freely informed the open regionalism theory.

Another school of thought is the new geography theory "which propounds that smaller or weaker countries should integrate with bigger or stronger countries in order to reap the benefits of international trade" (Gumede, 2019: 101). The theory discourages horizontal integration.

Lastly, the developmental cooperation approach encourages developmental cooperation between countries by protecting emerging industries, applying import substitution interventions and industrialisation (Tralac, 2013). UNCTAD (2011) calls this approach developmental regionalism. The aim of such regional integration is to secure "the traditional benefits of regional integration, ensuring that such benefits flow to all member countries while seeking to enhance the integration of member countries into world markets as a means of fostering sustainable development."

History of Integration in Africa

Integration in Africa has been a priority since attainment of political independence. An African Economic Community (AEC) was seen as the end goal to regional and economic integration (OAU, 1991). The 1980 Lagos Plan of Action placed more emphasis on the AEC as a long-term goal (UNECA, 1991). The 1991 Abuja Treaty made the AEC aspiration a legal requirement and the 2000 Constitutive Act of the African Union. The 2012 Boosting Intra-African Trade Action Plan and other initiatives made AEC a reference point. Agenda 2063 and now the AfCFTA are all aligned with seeing the establishment of the AEC.

Historically, there have been different schools of thought regarding approaches to uniting Africa. The Casablanca group (made up of Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, Mali and Morocco) was influenced by pan-Africanism as the "driving force" in building a "post-colonial" united African state in the early 1960s (Olaosebikan, 2011). Some of the prominent leaders were: Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré and King Mohammed V. The Brazzaville group was comprised mainly of former French colonies (i.e. Central African Republic, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, People's Republic of Congo, Dahomey, Mauritania, Gabon, Upper Volta, Senegal, Niger, Chad and Madagascar) and advocated for a gradualist approach starting with regional economic and cultural cooperation (Norman and Perkins, 1985).[i]

The Monrovia group comprised Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Senegal, Dahomey, Madagascar, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, People's Republic of Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Somalia and Tunisia. This group brought together the Casablanca and Brazzaville groups although it was closely aligned to the Brazzaville group. It also paved the way for the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 in the presence of statesmen such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana; Modibo Keita of Mali; Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt; Sékou Touré of Guinea; Julius Nyerere of Tanzania; Ben Bella of Algeria; Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia; William Tubman of Liberia; Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria; Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria; Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and others (Olaosebikan 2011).

There are other views. For instance, Joomaay Ndongo Faye of the Pan-African Federalist Movement (PAFM) has argued that the Brazzaville and Casablanca groups were not formed on matters concerning the political unification of Africa, but rather focused on independence from French rule particularly Algeria. In May 1963, Nkrumah attempted to add the acceleration of the political unification of Africa to the Agenda of the Casablanca meeting held in Addis Ababa but Nasser and other members of the Casablanca group only paid lip service to the proposal and voted against Nkrumah. In addition, Laos was one of the participants to the meeting.

Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria played significant roles in the transition from the OAU to the African Union (AU). However, the political federation, which has been the hope of many African political leaders and activists, remains a pipe dream. These leaders – Mbeki and Obasanjo – were also involved in the establishment of the New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Paul Kagame of Rwanda has been championing reforms in the AU. For instance, NEPAD is now a development agency of the AU dealing with coordination and implementing projects aimed at regional integration including strengthening capacities of AU member states and RECs. This new development agency is called the African Union Development Agency NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD).

Socio-Economic Development in Africa

Regardless of how it has been viewed, development in Africa has been elusive. Economic development has been particularly weak, which might explain the insufficient advancement in wellbeing in Africa. It is, therefore, important to examine development comprehensively in terms of economic and social development. Economic development here is viewed as good economic performance resulting in the betterment of livelihoods (i.e. social development).

Even in instances where economic performance has yielded good results, it has barely made significant strides on the wellbeing of Africans. Consequently, it is important to understand why economic development has been weak in Africa. This also requires an analysis of the character of the African economy and an examination of the various economies in Africa as it would assist the efforts aimed at economic transformation in order for the improvement and advancement of wellbeing. The following discussion summarises some of the author's contributions to the development discourse.

Hesphina Rukato (2019) concludes a book review on development in Africa by stating: "It is hoped that further work is undertaken to further unpack development – *what is development* – and propose comprehensively what should practically be done to advance effective development in Africa". *The Routledge Handbook of African Development,* edited by Binns, Lynch and Nel, contains insightful chapters on the notion of development within the African context. Another resource contributing to the development discourse is *Rethinking and Unthinking Development, Inequality and Poverty in South Africa and Zimbabwe* edited by Mpofu and Ndlovu-Gatsheni.

The question of what development entails has been an ongoing debate for many decades. I have written extensively on the topic with a specific focus on Africa. Seminal works asking "what is development" were written by Slim (1995) and Myrdal (1974). Slim (1995: 143) states that "development is essentially about change: not just any change, but a definite improvement – a change for the better. At the same time, development is also about continuity." On the other hand, Myrdal (1974: 735) argues that "development must be understood as the movement upward of the entire social system, where there is circular causation between conditions and changes with cumulative effects." Other important books on this complex subject are those of Sen (1999) and Ake (1996), which view development as involving those that must benefit from it; something Julius Nyerere had said uttered in 1968:

> For real development means growth of people. If real development is to take place the people have to be involved…

There are numerous blogs, opinion pieces, book chapters and journal articles that present various perspectives on what development entails. For instance, in a 2009 book edited by Perkiö, Swantz (2009: 35) concludes her chapter with a suggestion that "we need to broaden our concept of development to take human and social development as the basic concept even when studies of development deal with economic and technical advances." Rist (1997: 44). makes a point that "development is becoming universal, but not transcultural." In fact, Rist undertakes a respectable mission in tracing development thinking. Among other issues, Rist explains that it was Harry Truman's speech (20 January 1949) that inaugurated the "development age". Mkandawire (2011: 7) has characterised the Truman version of development as "development [involving] both geopolitical considerations and humanitarianism". Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) explains that this development (i.e. Truman version of development) relates to the Euro-American missionary task of developing the global south in general and Africa in particular.

Many seasoned scholars have wrestled with the question of “what is development?” in the context of Africa or global south broadly. All countries or regions in the world are concerned with development. Europe, as Prah (2006: 175) discusses, was concerned with the notion of development as “part of the philosophical assumptions of the European Enlightenment”. This Enlightenment – the age of reason – can be viewed as “a pedagogical movement led by the philosophers to build a new scientifically ordered discourse of nature, authority, social existence and of virtually everything in the universe” (Lushaba, 2006: 6). This is linked to the idea of modernity which has been critiqued by many on different grounds.

Lushaba (2006: 3), for instance, makes a point that “Africa cannot possibly develop by modernising or becoming like the modern west”. It is in this context that many argue that development cannot be equated to modernity – or rather modernity is not an appropriate form of development that Africa needs.

From the 1960s, Japan and the so-called Asian Tigers (Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea) grew rapidly in economic terms and in social development leading to the idea of a developmental state. A developmental state is one that is preoccupied with development and vigorously pursues development, working in tandem with other sectors of society. Post-independent Africa was understandably very preoccupied with development, and (Mkandawire 2001) argues that certain countries in Africa became developmental states in the 1980s before the Structural Adjustment Programmes decimated development in Africa.

However, as Kwesi Kwaa Prah, Horace Campbell and others have argued, it is not clear what development refers to and what has influenced conceptualisation of, and approaches to, development in Africa. For instance, Prah (2001) has argued that culture is the missing link in Africa’s development while Campbell (2011) critiques the notion of development associated with the World Bank and such institutions pursuing ‘development’ that tantamount to exploitation of Africa. Campbell (2011: 86) argues for the need to “crystallize development alternatives that steer clear of predatory forms of economics that are dominant.” Gumede (2019) has taken these arguments forward and proposes what could be done to ensure inclusive development in Africa; challenging ‘development’ that has been dictated to Africa by others.

The pursuit of development in Africa has been informed by conceptions and endeavours undertaken by other regions. Permutations of development and underdevelopment are often viewed through Eurocentric lenses. Furthermore, as Rodney (1973) explains, it is often forgotten that the so-called development of the West was based on the exploitation of the

Third World, and Africa in particular. Decolonial scholars argue that to deal with the Eurocentric conception of development, the hierarchies that characterise relations should be dismantled. In addition, Afrocentric scholars argue for African agency to be accentuated. African as it would assist in ensuring the "re-humanising process" alluded to by Ndlovu-Gatsheni.

This presents a more fundamental issue: is development similar to progress? Arguably, as Prah (2006) demonstrates, many countries and regions have been historically preoccupied with *progress*. Prah (2006: 178) explains that "in many African languages, the idea of progress is metaphorically interpreted as a notion of movement forward or backwards to denote stagnation or retrogression." Prah (2006) confirms that indeed in the various indigenous African languages, such as the Ga, the Akan, the Xhosa, the Luo and the Senufo, "the idea of progress translates easily as development".

The concept of development in Africa, which often hinges on and is determined by the notion of good governance and respect for human rights, has been exogenously imposed on African governments for years. As many others have argued, concepts such as civilisation, development, globalisation and democratisation are some of the buzz words that have been used and perverted by the West to make the 'other' aspire to be like them. Insightfully, Macamo (2017) deals with the issue of the correlation between development and democracy in the 2017 CODESRIA Bulletin (Numbers 1 & 2). As the works of Marimba Ani and others demonstrate, the West uses these words as a barometer to judge other societies using Western standards that are perceived as the norm and yardstick for all societies.

As many thinkers acknowledge, development is relative and it is subjective. Tandon (2015: 145) is of the view that "a major challenge for the theoreticians of not only the global south but also of the marginalised peoples and sub-nationalists of the north is to provide an alternative definition of development". Latouche (1993: 460) argues that "development has been and still is the Westernisation of the world" while Ziai (2009: 198) sees "development [as] an empty signifier that can be filled with almost any content."

Ziai has also argued that the concept of development has depoliticised Eurocentric and authoritarian implications and goes further to argue that development should be abandoned. This is linked to the notion of post-development which contends that development practice reflects Western hegemony and that projects and theories of development are not beneficial to the developing world. Post-development thinking has, like development (or development theory), been critiqued for being theoretically embryonic and uneven. Ziai (2013: 126), for instance, makes a point that "post-development has been widely criticised…for homogenising development and neglecting its positive aspects, for romanticising local communities and legitimising oppressive traditions, and for being just as paternalistic as the chastised development experts."

Escobar (1995: 53) makes a point that "development is thus a very real historical formation, albeit articulated around an artificial construct (underdevelopment) and upon a certain materiality (the conditions baptized as underdevelopment), which must be conceptualized in different ways if the power of the development discourse is to be challenged or displaced". Further, he (1995: 104) argues, "the discourse of development is not merely an ideology that has little to do with the real world nor is it an apparatus produced by those in power in order to hide another, more basic truth, namely, the crude reality of the dollar sign. The development discourse has crystallized in practices that contribute to regulating the everyday goings and comings of people in the Third World." Hence Escobar's argument that when development is properly conceptualised, it has been happening for a long time and driven by the people themselves.

Shivji (2006) periodises Africa's development discourse into the age of developmentalism (1960s and 1970s), the lost decade (1980s) and the "age of globalization" (which is ongoing). In the age of developmentalism, development was a process of class struggle. During Africa's lost decade, the "neo-liberal package" (i.e. SAPs) reigned supreme. Pan-Africanist resistance accompanied the "age of globalization" and the discourse sees no role for the (developmental) state. Mkandawire (2011: 7), on the other hand, breaks down development discourse since World War II into two parts:

> Almost from its very inception, the post-World War II development discourse has had two strands: the Truman version, for which development involved both geopolitical considerations and humanitarianism, and the 'Bandung Conference' version that saw development in terms of "catching up", emancipation and "the right to development".

Ziai, (2013: 124-125) explains that "development theory has two roots: nineteenth-century evolutionism and nineteenth-century social technology. Evolutionism assumes that social change in society proceeds according to a universal pattern while social technology claims that social interventions, based on expert knowledge possessed by a privileged group that acts as a trustee for the common good, are necessary to achieve positive social change. Both roots can be found in twentieth-century development theory…". Prah (2006: 185), on the other hand, makes a point that "Western post-2nd World War development theory can be historically identified and periodised as a three-phased phenomenology…the hegemony of modernisation theorists of the 1950s and 60s, the *Dependencia* and the Neo-Marxian paradigms of the 60s and 70s, to IMF adjustment packages of the late 70s and 80s. Today, neo-liberal paradigms hold sway." It is worth highlighting that modernisation theories were associated with functionalism, the “idea [which] saw societies as harmonized and integrated systems…” (Prah, 2006).

Another important issue relates to the so-called “Right to Development”. As Lumumba-Kasongo (2002: 85) puts it, “development should be guided and supported within the framework of rights as defined by the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights adopted by the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU) in 1981. They include: political and civil rights; economic and social rights; and the rights of peoples. Peoples’ rights include freedom from discrimination, oppression, and exploitation; and the right to self-determination, national and international peace and security, and a satisfactory environment for economic and social development.” A recent book by Kamga (2018) goes into detail on relevant history and debates regarding the notion of the “Right to Development”.

Essentially, as Kamga (2018) explains, soon after political independence in Africa, African countries acknowledged that development in Africa was affected by global inequities characterised by unfair trade rulesand global post-colonial arrangements through various global institutions. As a response, developing countries, and African countries in particular, gathered in the G77 and called for the establishment of the New International Order that would enable inclusive development. In 1967 in Algiers, Dudu Tiam, the then Minister of Foreign Affair of Senegal, made a statement that “development is human right”.

Kamga (2017) argues that the right to development concept is a legal concept in the fight against poverty. It is a composite right made of civil and political rights as well as socio-economic rights all put together in the interest of human dignity. Arguably, M’baye (1972) introduced the concept to academia in an inaugural lecture in Strasburg, France. In 1986, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development. The right to development is now a recognised human right, as Kamga (2013) indicates.

Although some argue that development is an entitlement (i.e. right to development), others reject the notion of “Right to Development”. Those who reject it argue that proponents of the “Right to Development” are making up a non-existent right. Largely, the controversy around “Right to Development” is largely because the international community is obliged under the discourse to provide development assistance and capacity to the developing world. It would indeed seem that the critical issue regarding the “Right to Development” has to do with the rationale of development as a right. Linked to this is the difference between this approach and the socio-economic rights approach. Fundamentally, should the concept of development not be viewed with a lens that seeks to understand what type of development is needed by Africa instead of declaring some amorphous development a right?

Mkandawire holds the view that we have not fully grasped what has constrained development, particularly economic development in Africa. For the record, Mkandawire (2015) argues that attributing the slow economic performance of African economies to neopatrimonialism as an example is problematic. As Mkandawire (2015: 2) puts it, “while neopatrimonialism can be used to describe different styles of exercising authority, idiosyncratic mannerisms of certain individual leaders, and social practices within states, the concept offers little analytical content and has no predictive value with respect to economic policy and performance.” Mkandawire (2015: 3) describes “neopatrimonialism [as] a marriage of tradition and modernity with an offspring whose hybridity generates a logic that has had devastating effects on African economies” and that it is factually incorrect that the African economy has not performed well as the neopatrimonialism logic suggests. Table 4 supports this view, to some extent:

Table 4: GDP growth (1961-1970)

	1961	**1962**	**1963**	**1964**	**1965**	**1966**	**1967**	**1968**	**1969**	**1970**
Botswana	6,3	6,7	5,9	6,8	5,8	6,3	5,9	10,6	15,1	17,1
Ghana	3,4	4,1	4,4	2,2	1,4	-4,2	3,0	0,4	6,0	9,7
Kenya	-7,7	9,4	8,8	5,0	2,0	14,7	3,4	8,0	7,9	-4,6
Malawi	7,6	0,7	-1,4	2,7	13,6	13,2	7,3	-1,9	5,9	0,5
Nigeria	0,2	4,1	8,6	4,9	4,9	-4,2	-15,7	-1,2	24,2	25,0
Rwanda	-4,3	11,3	-9,8	-12,5	7,0	7,0	6,9	7,0	11,0	6,0
South Africa	3,8	6,2	7,4	7,9	6,1	4,4	7,2	4,1	4,7	5,2
Zimbabwe	6,3	1,4	6,2	-1,1	4,9	1,5	8,3	2,0	12,4	22,6

Source: Own calculations using world bank data

For the selected countries[ii], calculations of GDP[iii] growth indicate that many countries actually performed relatively well in the 1960s. Ghana is interesting: having gained political independence in 1957, its GDP growth was relatively good in the1960s (barring 1966). Nigeria and are Kenya also noteworthy: gaining political independence in 1960 and 1963 respectively, Nigeria performed well for most of the 1960s while Kenya performed well throughout the same decade. Rwanda, having gained independence in 1962, however, did not perform well in the first half of the 1960s but performed relatively well latter half.

Malawi and Botswana gained independence around the mid-1960s and performed well for most of the 1960s – Botswana actually performed very well throughout the 1960s. Then there are countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe that remained under colonial rule until very late in the twentieth-century. These countries still had growth but not to the level of other countries. So, it is indeed inaccurate to say African economies have not performed well. I am deliberately discussing the 1960s because many African countries suffered from the oil crisis of the 1970s followed by the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s – there were other economic crises in the 1990s which preceded a major global economic crisis starting in 2007.

At issue should be the reasons behind the slow economic development. The related question is: why has economic development not resulted to effective human development. As argued and shown in Gumede (2016), human development in Africa remains very low. Looking at the period since 1980, as an example, Africa's Human Development Index (HDI) has remained comparatively too low, even compared to South Asia. Comparing Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa still lags behind other regions. As argued elsewhere, the crisis of development in Africa is underpinned by the ideological and epistemological confusion and imposition that define the pursuit of development, justice and freedom. The pursuit of development has generally followed a pattern defined by the West in which a unilinear process is deemed sacrosanct.

Before we deal with data on economic and social development in Africa, it is important to highlight Amin's (1990: 62) point that "underdevelopment is the observer of 'development', that is, the one and the other are two sides of the naturally unequal expansion of capital. […] development of the countries on the periphery of the world capitalist system must therefore come through an essential rupture with that system." In other words, regardless of how development is perceived, ultimately the end of the global capitalist order should be the main answer to bringing about development in so-called underdeveloped or less developed countries (i.e. countries in Africa).

One of the questions that arises is whether African countries are performing optimally in economic terms and whether wellbeing is advancing in Africa. This question becomes even more critical in the context of the envisaged African Continental Free Trade Area. To address such pertinent questions, I use data from the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank (WB). The selection of countries is informed by development debates: those countries that are perceived as advancing faster than other African economies, those facing major socio-economic challenges, and the countries that are omitted from discussions on social and economic development in Africa. As the largest economies in Africa Nigeria and South Africa form part of the analysis as the largest economies in Africa. The period examined is deliberately from 2010 to latest data available (at the time of finalizing this paper). Arguably, African economies are still recovering from the global economic crisis that started in 2007.

The AfDB estimates that real output growth to have increased from 3.6 percent in 2017 and to 4.1 percent in 2018 (and 2019).[iv] This economic performance, although respectable in the global context, is low. This low growth "trap" suggests the necessity to comprehensively restructure African economies – at least, for a robust economic transformation agenda for Africa. It is encouraging that countries that experienced good GDP growth had commendable regressions in poverty and inequality than countries that experienced no growth acceleration. Indeed, there has been a shift from of labour moving from low- to high-productivity sectors. However, employment growth in many African countries has been unable to parallel labour force growth, leaving large segments of the population unemployed and underemployed.

As Table 5 shows trends in GDP, a number of countries have achieved stellar performance in output growth in the period since the 2000s. Among the top performers were Ethiopia with GDP growth that is 937,4 per cent higher in 2017 compared to 2002. Nigeria's output was also 535,6 per cent higher in 2017 than 2002. The corresponding figures for rest of the countries are: Kenya (471,9 percent); Rwanda (429,9 per cent); Ghana (399,1 per cent); Zimbabwe (255,3 per cent); Liberia (255,2 per cent); South Africa (214 per cent); Malawi (137,8 per cent) and Botswana (115,2 per cent). Africa has seen its growth output rise by 293,2 per cent.

Table 5: GDP at current prices (2002-2017) (Millions US$)

	2002	**2007**	**2012**	**2017**
Botswana	8 086,8	10 939,0	14 420,3	17 406,5
Ethiopia	7 793,5	19 182,5	42 210,5	80 873,5
Ghana	9 482,1	24 757,6	40 647,3	47 329,7
Kenya	13 103,0	31 958,2	60 497,6	74 938,0
Liberia	535,7	949,0	1 374,6	1 903,0
Malawi	2 665,2	4 432,9	5 721,4	6 339,3
Nigeria	59 116,9	265 697,3	460 951,7	375 745,5
Rwanda	1 723,9	3 775,4	7 336,9	9 136,2
South Africa	111 101,4	299 417,2	396 329,4	348 872,1
Zimbabwe	6 202,5	5 646,0	17 115,0	22 041,0
Africa	**579 430,1**	**1 485 348,4**	**2 358 692,7**	**2 278 848,94**

Source: Based on AfDB data (various issues)

According to the AfDB, despite the reported stellar economic performance in some African countries, the pace of growth slowed due to global and domestic factors in 2016; however, signs of recovery were already visible in 2017. Output growth is estimated to have increased to 3,6 per cent in 2017, up from 2.2 percent in 2016, and was expected to accelerate to 4.1 per cent in 2018 and 2019. Overall, the recovery-in growth has been faster than predicted, especially among non-resource intensive countries, emphasising Africa's resilience in the past several years. Currently, many African economies are more resilient and better placed to cope with harsh external conditions than previous decades. Nevertheless, the end of the commodity price super-cycle has cut earnings from primary exports in resource-intensive economies, undermining exports and planned investments.

Since gaining independence from colonialism, Africa's economic growth momentum in the past couple decades has been remarkable by historical standards. According to the World Bank, approximately two-thirds of the African countries with data, per capita income rose at a rate of 3,5 per cent or more for eight consecutive years between 1950 and 2016.[v] This is not surprising as some of African countries have high-demand resources such as diamonds, sugar, gold, coal, uranium, platinum, silver, oil and petroleum. For instance, with oil being a highly sought-after commodity, its production places countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Gabon at the top in terms of GDP per capita. One would have actually expected even higher GDP per capita rates that should have translated to better living conditions for all the people in the countries with high GDP per capita.

Table 6: GDP per capita at 2018 prices (2002-2017) (thousand US$)

	2002	**2007**	**2012**	**2017**
Botswana	3 409	5 667	6 761	7 426
Ethiopia	111	237	458	775
Ghana	479	1 099	1 591	1 652
Kenya	401	858	1 422	1 546
Liberia	174	269	328	402
Malawi	226	328	364	346
Nigeria	457	1 806	2 740	1 959
Rwanda	202	398	678	751
South Africa	2 401	6 025	7 501	6 293

Zimbabwe	489	425	1 175	1 349
Africa	**679**	**1 538**	**2 149**	**1 831**

Source: Based on AfDB data (various issues)

As Table 6 shows, GDP per capita at 2018 US$ prices is quite high in Africa. Ethiopia made the highest percentage improvement of the selected countries; it achieved 598,2 per cent in the growth between the period 2002 and 2017. It is worth noting that Ethiopia It started from a very low base of US$ 111, which is a very low per capita income even within the African context. Nigeria also made spectacular gains by achieving 328,7 per cent during the same period. Since rebasing its GDP in 2013, it has surpassed South Africa as the largest economy in Africa. The oil industry has propelled the Nigerian economy to spectacular growths over the past two decades.

Other countries have also achieved significant growth in per capita income. The corresponding figures are: Kenya (285,5 per cent); Rwanda (271,7 per cent); Ghana (244,9 per cent); Zimbabwe (175,8 per cent); South Africa (162,1 per cent); Liberia (131 per cent); Botswana (117,8 per cent); and Malawi (53,1 per cent). However, ensuring that economic growth benefits the whole population is a major concern on the continent. Failure to evenly distribute the benefits of economic growth has led to a myriad of problems. Huge income inequalities have the potential to cause economic and social unrest and hinder further growth in Africa.

Looking at GDP growth, during the 2010-2017 period, many African countries (or rather the selected ones) have performed relatively well although arguably below par as Table 7 shows.

Table 7: GDP growth (%) (2010-2017)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Botswana	8,6	6,0	4,4	11,3	4,1	-1,7	4,3	2,4
Ethiopia	12,5	11,2	8,6	10,6	10,2	10,4	7,6	10,2
Ghana	7,9	14,0	9,3	7,3	2,9	2,2	3,4	8,1
Kenya	8,4	6,1	4,6	5,9	5,3	5,7	5,9	4,9
Liberia	6,1	8,2	8,0	8,7	0,7	0,0	-1,6	2,5
Malawi	6,9	4,8	1,9	5,2	5,7	2,8	2,5	4,0
Nigeria	8,0	5,3	4,2	6,7	6,3	2,6	-1,6	0,8
Rwanda	7,3	7,8	8,8	4,7	7,6	8,9	6,0	6,1
South Africa	3,0	3,3	2,2	2,5	1,8	1,3	0,7	1,3
Zimbabwe	19,7	14,2	16,7	2,0	2,4	1,8	0,7	4,7

Source: Own calculations using World Bank data

It is worth highlighting that growth in some of these economies happened because of the commodities super-cycle; however, many remain fragile. The period starting in 2014 to latest available data seems to suggest that many African economies are in decline.

Examining human development in Africa confirms that economic performance has actually been mediocre and in instances of good economic performance, social development has not improved. Africa's human development indicators have always been lagging behind other regions. However, over the past few decades, areas such as net primary school enrolment, gender parity in education, women representation in decision-making positions, reduction in poverty, immunisation coverage and curtailing the spread of HIV/AIDS have seen good progress. Notwithstanding and despite this progress, much still needs to be done: some areas such as malaria should have been prioritised. Malaria has been the foremost source of children's mortality in Africa for a long time. In addition, the recent Ebola crisis in certain parts of Africa serves as a reminder of speed at which new problems can emerge.

First introduced in 1990, the Human Development Index (HDI), a composite of indicators on life expectancy, education and access to resources needed for a decent living, is used to quantify wellbeing in Africa. Recently, the achievement of a “very high human development” ranking by Seychelles served as a breakthrough for Africa. Other African countries designed in the “high” group include Libya, Mauritius, Algeria and Tunisia, and ten countries in the “medium” group. The remaining 37 countries were in the “low” human development category, excluding South Sudan. However, many countries in the “low” category show rapid improvement. Notable among them are Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. They have a rapidly increasing life expectancy and incomes, but various factors are holding many African countries back.

Table 8: Human Development Index, 2000-2017 (selected countries)

	2000	**2010**	**2017**
Botswana	0,565	0,660	0,717
Ethiopia	0,283	0,417	0,463
Ghana	0,455	0,484	0,592
Kenya	0,451	0,543	0,590
Liberia	0,387	0,407	0,435
Malawi	0,399	0,441	0,477
Nigeria	–	0,484	0,532
Rwanda	0,335	0,485	0,524
South Africa	0,630	0,649	0,699
Zimbabwe	0,440	0,467	0,535

Source**:** Based on AfDB data (various issues)

Table 8 highlights HDI trends in selected African countries. Beginning in the year 2000, there has been an upward trend in all selected countries such as Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi and Rwanda that have made great strides. This clearly shows that the political and economic reforms made over the years are starting to bear fruits. However, future successes are vulnerable to many factors, some of which are not within Africa’s control, but can be remedied through collective effort and international development partnerships. Although some parts of the continent are still grappling with political instability, this is now an exception rather than the rule.

Of critical importance though is that, with the exception of Botswana perhaps, the GDP growth rates of these countries have not affected human development in a significantly positive manner. Since 2010, Ethiopia has experienced yearly GDP growth rates at a minimum of 10%, excluding the years 2012 and 2016. However, the HDI has remained below 0.50. Granted, there has been an improvement in Ethiopia's HDI from 0.28 in 2000 to 0.46 in 2017. Liberia and Rwanda are also insightful cases: GDP growth rates have generally been good but the HDI has not improved much. What is exactly going on with economies in Africa?

Samir Amin (1972) categorised the eastern and southern regions of Africa as the "Africa of labour reserves", western regions o as the "Africa of the colonial economy" and the Congo River Basin (i.e. Congo Kinshasa, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon and the Central African Republic) as the "Africa of the concession-owning companies". The Africa of labour reserves included Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Malawi, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa. The Africa of the colonial economy entailed former French West Africa, Togo, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Cameroon, Chad and the Sudan. In addition, from Samir Amin's works, understanding the evolution of social formations helps us have a better view of the character of the African economy or of many economies in Africa.

Samir Amin (1976: 18) explains that an "analysis of a concrete social formation must therefore be organized around an analysis of the way in which the surplus is generated in this formation, the transfers of surplus that may be effected from or to other formations, and the internal distribution of this surplus among the various recipients (classes and social groups) – a social formation is an organized complex involving several modes of production." It may be worth highlighting that in Marxism surplus value is what the owners of the means of production appropriate as profit – value derived from workers and is generated in excess of what is commensurate to labour cost. Among other things, Karl Marx (1976) views surplus value as:

> …value is the active factor in a process, in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it at the same time changes in magnitude, differentiates itself by throwing off surplus value from itself; the original value, in other words, expands spontaneously. For the movement, in the course of which it adds surplus value, is its own movement, its expansion, therefore, is automatic expansion.

Furthermore, Samir Amin (1976:51) attests, "African formations were integrated at an early stage (the mercantilist stage)[vi] in the nascent capitalist system…they were broken off at that stage and soon began to regress (and might not have been able to generate by themselves the capitalist mode of production because large-scale trade of pre-mercantilist Africa was linked with relatively poor formations of the communal or tribute-paying types)". The tribute-paying mode of production “is marked by the separation of society into two main classes: the peasantry organised in communities, and the ruling class, which monopolises the functions of a given society’s political organisation and extracts a tribute (not in commodity form) from the rural communities. […] The tribute-paying mode of production is the form that most normally succeeds the communal mode; it is the rule” (Samir Amin 1976: 15). It is important to note that Samir Amin describes the mercantilist period as the period from about the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century (and characterised by slave trade).

Mkandawire (2002) refers to rentier and merchant states. As he explains, a rentier state is an economy that relies on “substantial external rent” – “[a]n external rent can, if substantial, sustain the economy without a strong productive domestic sector” while the merchant state significantly relies on domestic taxes and export and import taxes. Guy Mhone (2000), on the other hand, argues that “even after some three or four decades of autonomous rule, [southern African] countries are still plagued by enclavity and pervasive open and hidden underemployment, particularly in the non-formal sectors of their economies”. He defines enclave development as “growth based on the exploitation of underemployed labour” (Mhone 2000). According to Mkandawire (2002), the enclave economy is characterised by an export sector with very weak linkages with other productive sectors of the economy. South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia (to some extent) are said to represent “the epitome of enclavity in which immigrant settlers formally institutionalized economic dualism…they are characterized by a number of features [such as] their enclavity evolved on the basis of institutionalizing the exploitation and marginalization of the majority of the labour force as a source of cheap labour.”

Understanding the character of the African economy (or parts thereof) and/or economies in Africa should assist in addressing the fundamental challenges that hinder economies in African from performing robustly as well as provide insight as to why wellbeing remains pedestrian. Samir Amin’s characterisation or categorization of the different parts of the economy still holds today, and as he demonstrated, some of the categories/characterizations overlap. Southern Africa is insightful in this regard: it remains a labour reserve economy and largely an enclave (as characterised by Mhone). Generally, economies in southern Africa perform poorly and have low levels of human development, with perhaps an exception of Botswana. In some way, many countries in the western parts of Africa are still under colonial rule (i.e. Africa of the colonial economy). Dembele and Cardoso (2015), for instance, explain that many countries in the Franc Zone are beholden to France still.

Clearly, weak structural transformation is the fundamental constraint to economies in Africa. The structure of the African economy as analysed by Samir Amin (1976) and Mhone (2000), among others, still holds. Therefore, the only solution would be to change the structure of the

African economy. In other words, addressing other constraints such as low savings and investments would inadequately assist the performance of economies in Africa as they are unlikely to advance wellbeing. Indeed, policies – particularly social policies – can help. However, to ensure a sustainable performance of economies in Africa and sufficient improvement in the levels of human development, the structure of the African economy must be reconfigured. In fact, a complete overhaul of the African economy is overdue. Similarly, it is important to get politics and institutions right.

In brief, as discussed in Gumede (2015: 34) a structure of an economy entails: the sectors and their contribution to economic growth; respective capital and labour intensity of the sectors; and the dominant sectors and their linkages. Another important issue relates to ownership in an economy because ownership shapes the structure of an economy. Amin deals with these issues more systematically within the context of a political economy. The ownership issue can also be examined using Marxist lenses: it is the ownership of the means of production and how surplus is generated that shapes the character of an economy. The characterisation of southern African economies as "Africa of labour reserves" or as enclave economies is informed by ownership patterns, as much as the characterisation of the Congo River Basin as Africa of the concession-owning companies is also informed by ownership patterns in countries such as Congo Kinshasa, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon and the Central African Republic. The ownership patterns that observed by Amin are still largely in place as much as the enclavity of southern African economies as observed by Mhone.

Therefore, it is important that there are practical interventions to bring about a reconfigured structure of the African economy or to structurally transform economies in Africa. Arguably, the various interventions that are being pursued regarding structural transformation in Africa are insufficient because these do not go deep enough in restructuring economies in Africa. An example of these are interventions aimed at improving industrialisation in Africa, including the prioritization of certain sectors by the AfDB. Data from the AfDB and the Commonwealth Handbook on Regional Integration in Africa shows that Africa's manufacturing share of GDP has been declining and has remained very low – it accounts for less than 2 per cent of global manufacturing. In addition, the structure of Africa's exports shows a rather low technological development.

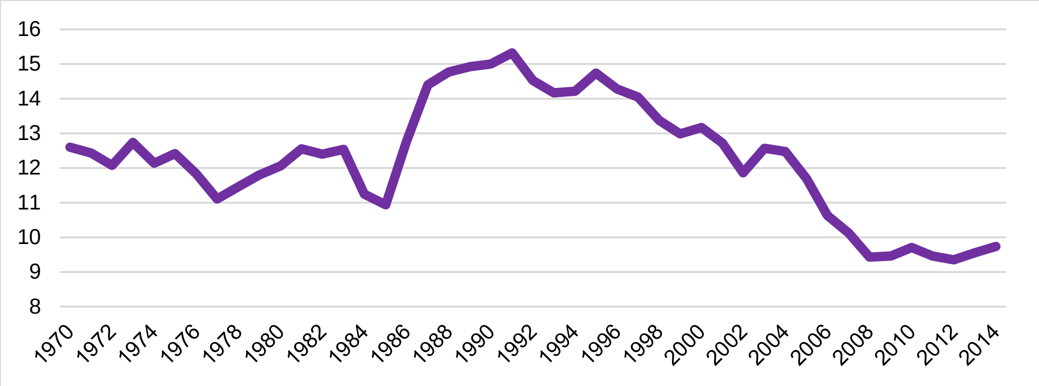

Figure 3: Africa's manufacturing share of GDP (%)

Africa's share of manufacturing in GDP, as Figure 3 shows, has been declining since the early 1990s. This implies that although some sectoral diversification is underway, manufacturing (and manufacturing value added) has not improved in a long time. Despite some improvements (i.e. sectoral diversification), it is clear that interventions have not yielded expected outcomes. Moreover, important interventions, such as beneficiation of minerals, are pursued with insufficient vigour.

Given the aforementioned, it would seem that more profound interventions are critical in order to address the structure of the African economy or economies in Africa. So far, the interventions have only scratched the surface. However, before delving into what fundamentally should be done about the African economy, and the mechanisms to temper with the character of the African economy, attention should be on value creation in Africa. In order to achieve this, industrial policies are critical. It may be important, given the demographic dividend to prioritise the production of goods and services that are in high demand. Industrial policies should also encourage patriotic entrepreneurship – perhaps pan-African enterprises. Lastly, it is important to increase research and development with special emphasis on the industrial sector.

Many intellectuals have proposed solutions to Africa's poor development: where Amin proposed delinking, Tandon suggested a single currency for Africa. Wa Thiong'o put forward Kiswahili as a lingua franca while Prah argues that all indigenous languages should be allowed to thrive. Many have argued for a return to pan-Africanist ideals and African nationalism. Mafeje and Ake emphasised the importance of agrarian revolution while Moyo stressed the land question as a critical component of the national question and insisted that contrary to Marx, the peasantry do not die. The final analysis will look at the fundamental question on how to ensure inclusive development in Africa, and whether developmental states are feasible.

Delinking refers to “the strict subjection of external relations in all fields to the logic of internal choices without regard to the criteria of the world capitalist rationality” (Amin 1990: 60). Additionally, delinking “is associated with a ‘transition’ – outside capitalism and over a long time – towards socialism” (Amin 1990: 55). To be clear, Amin (1990: 62) explains that delinking is not synonymous with “absolute or relative ‘autarky’, that is withdrawal from external, commercial, financial and technological exchanges.” Amin (1990: 62) is at pains to explain that delinking actually means “pursuit of a system of rational criteria for economic options founded on a law of value on a national basis with popular relevance, independent of such criteria of economic rationality as flow from the dominance of the capitalist law of value operating on a world scale.” An understanding of Marx’s conception of value, as highlighted earlier, helps in better understanding Amin’s.

On the question of developmental states, if Africa was able to produce some developmental states immediately at the post-independence period Africa can be developmental again. As argued above, gains were made in the first ten years of the independence period until the oil price shock of the early 1970s and the structural adjustment programmes. An early analysis of the concept of developmental state owes much to the work of Chalmers Johnson, who explored how countries such as Japan were able to transform their economic development (Johnson 1982). There are, however, others who argue that developmental states can be traced prior to Johnson’s writings on Japan (see Gumede, 2015). Woo-Cumings (1999) and other developmental state scholars view developmental states as informed by governments that intervene in the market by directing socio-economic goals. In this regard, the developmental state is said to drive economic development and industrialisation in the interest of the public good (Mhone 2004). Therefore, it is an institutional model that adopts a statist approach to account for the high patterns of economic growth of the lately industrialised nations.

However, there is no single definition of a “developmental state”. That said, a number of features or multiple dimensions characterise developmental states, namely: ideological (i.e. role of the state versus market force), institutional (i.e. state autonomy and capacity), cultural (collectivism versus individualism) and socio-economic attributes (i.e. economic growth and industrialisation). It would, however, be important that democratic principles are prioritised in the pursuit of developmental states in Africa – although democracy does not necessarily lead to development, peoples’ freedom is critical to be sacrificed in the name of development as some Asian countries have done. It is in this context that Gumede (2018: 191) views a democratic developmental state as a country that “pursues higher levels of socio-economic development in a participatory manner, guided by a robust long-term plan. […] the state has the requisite capacity, the elite is developmental in its approach influenced by a developmental ideology, and the state is appropriately organised for predetermined goals." This is feasible in Africa. African nationalism drove development and respectable economic performance in the 1960s and many African countries invested in education, health and other important wellbeing areas. Through social policy, working in tandem with economic policy, African economies can be developmental states again. Of course, there is a bigger agenda: to fight imperialism, unite all Africans, transform global relations among others. The bigger agenda implies that even with good policies and when African countries become developmental states, sustainable inclusive socio-economic development would remain a pipedream.

Thus, what could be the answer to Africa's development conundrum? Perhaps there is a more political argument to be made – to *disengage* more than just to delink. Amin argued for a rupture of the capitalist system (to birth socialism) but he essentially saw a solution within the system. This is not strange as many Marxists agitate for the maturing of a capitalist system to give way to socialism.

In an interview with Ray Bush, published in the *Review of African Political Economy* (2014, 41:1), Amin states:

> I understand delinking as compelling the dominant forces, imperialists, to adjust at least partly or to retreat, in two areas, political and economic. At the political level, delinking implies political solidarity between countries of the south to defeat the project of military control of the planet by the US, Europe and Japan. Second, at the economic level, there is an area where I think we could start moving ahead by dismantling the current global economic control. This is to move away from financialised globalisation – that is, not globalisation in all its dimensions, particularly trade, but controlling the flows of capital, including direct foreign investment, but also portfolio investments, speculatory investments and so on (Amin & Bush, 2014: 113).

Further, he sees "building a sovereign project, diversifying the economy, moving along towards its modern industrialisation, completed by growing food sovereignty" as "delinking, in the sense of compelling the global system to adjust to it" (Amin & Bush, 2014: 112). Therefore, it would seem that Amin was advocating for the transformation of global relations.

Indeed, the fight for a just world should continue and the transformation of global affairs is critical. Furthermore, capitalism should be dismantled since socialism could be the future. The industrialisation of African economies is also important. However, if the fundamental constraint to the growth of the African economy has to do with the structure or structures of African economies, which further limit advancements in wellbeing, it follows that something more profound should be pursued. Delinking as an economic phenomenon could be coupled with *disengaging* as a political project (see Gumede 2019 for a detailed argument regarding *disengaging*). Essentially, Samir Amin argues that in order for effective development to occur in the developing world, these countries should ‘delink’ from the global capitalist system. Samir Amin, in his many publications, indicates that underdeveloped countries need to adopt new market strategies and values that are different from those in the developed world. Arguably, the ‘delinking’ agenda is essentially a preparatory phase for the ‘socialist transition’ in the developing world.

In short, taking Samir Amin’s position forward, Africa can ‘disengage’ from the rest of the world rather than just ‘delinking’ together with the rest of the Third World largely because Africa was wrongly integrated into the rest of the world (i.e. through the slave trade). As argued in Gumede (2019), the process of ‘disengaging’ goes further than ‘delinking’: it is not about preparing for socialism, although it could result to socialism. Disengaging is viewed as a political process while delinking is more of an economic process (i.e. adopting market and production strategies that are different from the global capitalist system).

To transform the structures of African economies, it is important not only to delink but also to fully disengage (Gumede 2019), especially since most of Africa has actually become the Africa of concession companies despite many of the western parts of Africa remaining “Africa of the colonial economy” and southern Africa remaining “Africa of labour reserves”. At a political level, all African countries seem unable to advance wellbeing. Ironically, the so-called developed world (and China) need Africa more than Africa needs them.

Critical issues for the AfCFTA

There are many unresolved issues regarding the AfCFTA. Some argue that the Agreement does covers insufficient detail, particularly as it envisages a threshold of liberalisation of 97 per cent of tariff lines representing no less than 90 per cent of trade volume. There is also the issue of the so-called Group of 7 Countries (i.e. Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Madagascar, Zambia and Sudan) that have raised reservations and require the discussion to take place at the level of heads of states/governments. Another significant issue relates to the interface with RECs, FTAs, TFTA, customs unions and monetary communities.

The issue of inter-country and inter-regional dynamics prevails: inter-regional dynamics are at play in West Africa between Ghanaian and Nigerian traders, and inter-country dynamics in SACU for instance. The politics of the different countries in a region, customs union or relations between countries affect the AfCFTA with numerous implications. In addition, it may have been problematic to exclude RECs in the AfCFTA negotiations: while only member states negotiated the AfCFTA, they belong to RECs. Implementation is also of concern: addressing practical issues such as the harmonization of transportation regulations/guidelines would require that there is capacity and commitment.

Most importantly, the AfCFTA is facing both internal and external threats, and an overlap between internal and external challenges. These are similar challenges that frustrate efforts towards a political federation in Africa. Heads of states and governments do not want to surrender sovereignty, and they are the very same leaders who are conspiring with external players. It is a given that certain external players would prefer to thwart Africa's progress and unification towards the pursuit of a United African States. The success of the AfCFTA would reduce trade opportunities and exploitation of countries in western parts of Africa that countries such as France and other regions benefit from. Bilateral trade arrangements benefit countries in Europe and North America as well as China. It is in this context that Economic Partnership Agreements are considered a problem for the AfCFTA.

Although the various AU Summits of Heads of States and Governments cautioned against bilateral trade agreements, many countries, regions and customs unions continue entering into bilateral arrangements and trading blocs outside Africa. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA Act) will lapse in 2025 after it had extended for 10 years in 2015. The United States of America are most likely negotiate with individual countries, which would have a negative impact on the AfCFTA because it diverts attention from ensuring that African countries can fully trade with one another.

Another critical issue, as indicated earlier, is that many African countries belong to more than one REC. Overlapping memberships may not be a matter of legal concern as such but the implication is that different rules of origin, tariffs or standards could apply to the same product. The AfCFTA members are expected to identify and agree on eligible goods for preferential treatment through a list of clear and simplified Rules of Origin (RoO) that is easy to administer and promotes value add along the continental production chain. One of the issues that need to be taken into account is that there is a close relationship between tariff concessions and RoO. In addition, preventing trade deflection, protecting domestic industry and facilitating trade is critical in ensuring that smaller firms are unduly encumbered. In the meantime, it would also be important to resolve the challenge of REC members that are not party to that REC's trade regime. It is said, for instance, that Ethiopia is a COMESA member but not party to the COMESA FTA and Angola is a SADC member but it is not party to the SADC FTA.

The AfCFTA legal framework could draw inspiration from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) principle of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Treatment, which does not allow members to discriminate against each other. In the same manner "national treatment" will also ensure that products imported from other AfCFTA member states are not subjected to unfair national treatment by an importing member state. These two principles are often referred to as the cornerstones of the multilateral trading system.

In addition, most signatories of the AfCFTA are WTO members. Under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the formation of FTAs and Custom Unions can only be legal if the prescribed requirement of GATT Article XXIV has been followed. FTAs are an exception to the fundamental principle of non-discrimination set out in the MFN provision of Article 1 (Saurombe 2011). During the Uruguay Round, Article XXIV was clarified to some extent and updated by an understanding on its interpretation.

The variable geometry principle allows member states and RECs to have differentiated integration. This form of integration will only thrive in a loose cooperation mechanism as opposed to a strictly rules-based system. It might be an overstretch to allow variable geometry at RECs level and further extend it at the AfCFTA level. To be able to craft a rules-based system could prove more difficult.

Among other critical issues regarding a free trade area is economic convergence and policy coordination. Economic convergence implies that all economies in a free trade area would have more or less similar economic performance indicators. Further, per capita incomes of smaller or poorer economies grow faster than those of bigger or richer economies. As a result, economies should converge in terms of per capita income.

Coordination of policies is one very critical issue in the context of a free trade area. Policies need to be better coordinated in order to derive better implementation. As Gumede (2011) argues, Africa's socio-economic development rests on clear policies and their coordination; this is beyond a clear development agenda or socio-economic development approach. Policy clarity is even more important in the context of a free trade area.

The most important policies requiring coordination relate to managing inflation, exchange rates and money supply. It is important to draw lessons from similar experiences elsewhere. For instance, lessons can be drawn from Mercosur (Bienvenidos al Mercado Común del Sur), Caricom (Caribbean Community) and the European Union (EU).

Various options can be explored pertaining to the interface of the AfCFTA with FTAs of RECs and existing customs unions and monetary communities:

1. The roles of RECs could be reduced to coordination
2. The roles of RECs could be reduced to what Customs Authorities do
3. RECs can be absorbed into the AfCFTA
4. The Tripartite FTA can become a customs union of the AfCFTA
5. RECs could become regional sub-secretaries of the AfCFTA Secretariat

Towards United African States

Before I argue for a political federation of the countries in Africa and the Caribbean to form a single African country, a review of the argument made thus far is necessary. First, a customs union then a single/common market then a monetary union – resulting to complete economic integration (i.e. an economic community), follow a free trade area. This could be taken a step further to a political federation or to a United African States (UAS) similar to the endeavours being attempted by the EAC. A political federation is imminent for the African Economic Community. Effectively, the UAS would be an automatic outcome of the EAC, which is a major goal of integration processes as embodied by the Abuja Treaty. The UAS should not await the EAC however.

Second, the pursuit of "a pan-African developmental regional integration" as a political agenda grounded in African nationalism, not an economic affair aimed at increasing market access and associated factors, is an important endeavour towards a political federation in Africa. African nationalism [not narrow nationalism] and pan-Africanism, as works of Kwesi Kwaa Prah explain, are important initiatives that are/were aimed at improving the wellbeing of Africans (and not aimed at oppressing other nationalities or races, as Molefi Kete Asante has explained). At the core of the proposed pan-African developmental regional integration is people-to-people relations and an acknowledgement of the role that indigenous languages can play in the pursuit of the political federation.

Third, the Casablanca, Brazzaville and Monrovia groups differed in approach, which led to compromise. For instance, whereas Brazzaville preferred economic and cultural cooperation as a start, the Casablanca bloc opted for a political federation. The gradualist approach has not been to the benefit of Africa and Africans; a political federation of a single African nation would have been an ideal approach. In order to ensure a political federation is realised, more effort grounded in pan-African unity must be enacted. Political federation does not only resolve economies of scale but also ensures that a political argument is made when dealing with constraints imposed by agreements entered into by some African countries. This is necessary as international law cannot resolve certain issues. For instance, the AEC would be unable to resolve the Franc Zone challenge because of the legal limitations placed on countries in the Franc Zone. Only a political terrain can better address issues such as this.

Fourth, delinking as an economic phenomenon can be coupled with *disengaging* as a political project. As argued in Gumede (2019: 60), "taking Samir Amin's view forward, an argument is made that Africa can 'disengage' from the Global North because Africa connected with the rest of the world incorrectly – Africa can then re-engage at a later stage on its own terms." In other words, Africa can disengage from the Global North because it is unsuitably connected to the world; African can re-engage at a later stage on its own terms. Unlike delinking, disengaging is not about preparing for socialism although it could result in socialism. Disengaging would provide Africa with the necessary autonomy to define its own terms before reintegrating with the rest of the world. Therefore, disengaging is not an economic process like delinking; first, it would allow Africa to resolve its many pressing issues and secondly, to adopt market and production strategies that are different from the global capitalist system.

Lastly, as part of preparing for a political federation, Africa needs a better philosophical approach to socio-economic development in the context of a development paradigm/model. I propose a modified form of communalism as that philosophical approach, with the main aspects of a new model as robust social policies, effective industrial policies, entrepreneurship, state ownership and ultimately, intra-African trade.

These five points support a political federation agenda. Many have written about other issues as a case for the political federation of Africa into a single African nation. For instance, the Berlin Conference (15 November 1884-26 February 1885) effaced Africa by creating micro-states that have been unable to function properly. Essentially, no African country is functioning properly. Literature has explained constraints that the curse of Berlin impose on Africa, as some scholars have termed the ramifications of the Berlin Conference. Similarly, there is significant literature on the implications of colonialism and imperialism – Adu Boahen, Tiyambe Zeleza, Kwesi Kwaa Prah, Yash Tandon, Horace Campbell and Frantz Fanon are among those who have presented detailed analyses of colonialism and imperialism and their effects on Africa. There is also sufficient literature on neo-colonialism and coloniality.

Within the economic, political and ideological viewpoint, economies of scale are critical. A homogenous Africa country, comprising all countries in Africa and the Caribbean, would result in a much bigger population and a stronger, influential power in global affairs.

Indeed, the creation of a single African nation would require concerted effort in terms of strategy and tactics including activism. The successful implementation of the AfCFTA would be of great benefit as well. As discussed, external threats area major risk for the realisation of the AfCFTA and subsequently the UAS. I imagine that the mobilization currently underway would tackle internal threats. Overall, however, thought liberation, thought leadership and critical consciousness would play a immense role.

Conclusion

The paper argues for the political federation of African countries into a single African nation to ensure that Africa progresses – the AfCFTA and the African Economic Community (AEC) are potential steps towards the United African States. Before dealing with the AfCFTA and the AEC, the paper provided a historical account of regional integration efforts in Africa and discussed common theories of economic integration. The paper then examined the evolution of socio-economic development in Africa.

Many of the challenges that African (and Caribbean) countries face can better be resolved when Africa becomes a single nation. For instance, resources in Africa can be shared evenly among the peoples of the African continent and the United African States would have more muscle to tackle the various challenges confronting African countries or the African continent. The single African nation would also have better influence and power in global affairs. Of course there are many issues that would need to be clarified as the push towards a single African nation intensifies: how would a single African nation be structured, what sort of a governance system would be followed, which language/s would be used, etc. There have been many suggestions, some covered in this paper, regarding these issues. Work on these issues continues, both in terms of analytical endeavour and political activism.

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[i]Norman and Perkins, 1985, 584-585.

[ii] The selection of countries is informed by development debates: some of the selected countries are viewed as advancing faster than the rest of economies in Africa and some have major socio-economic challenges while others are not usually discussed in many studies that deal with social and economic development in Africa. Nigeria and South Africa have been included because these are two biggest economies in Africa.

[iii] GDP refers to Gross Domestic Product

[iv] African Development Bank. *2018. African Economic Outlook 2018*. [Online]. Available: https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African_Economic_Outlook_2018_-_EN.pdf. Accessed: 19 June 2019.

[v] World Bank. 2018. *World Development Indicators: DataBank*. [Online]. Available: https://databank.worldbank.org/data/source/world-development-indicators. Accessed: 18 June 2019.

[vi] As Samir Amin puts it, "the mercantilist period saw the emergence of the two poles of the capitalist mode of production: the creation of a proletariat and the accumulation of wealth in the form of money" (p319).