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THE STATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND HUMAN CAPACITY AS INSTRUMENTS FOR PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Since independence, African governments have adopted numerous policy initiatives to promote socioeconomic development, employment generation and poverty alleviation. Although some gains have been realized, the consensus is that compared to other developing regions Africa still lags behind in the development process and that the stated goals for socioeconomic development have hardly been achieved. This article therefore examines the appropriate policy choices to be formulated and implemented by African countries to facilitate social and economic transformation. In particular, it focuses on the role of the state and the importance of promoting human capacity, as well as addressing the infrastructure deficit as an important precondition for socioeconomic transformation in African countries.

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1. Introduction

When governments take over the reins of office, it is normally expected that they would formulate and implement policies to improve social and economic development. It is expected that significant advances towards socioeconomic development will result in rising living standards, efficient utilization of resources, and reduction in income inequality and poverty (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, p. 2011: xiv). It is therefore a welcome development that recent discussions on African political economy have centered on the high levels of socioeconomic growth experienced by a number of countries. As Shaw (2012, p. 837) points out, the continent's 'economic resurgence' features more than half of the top 10 global economies from 2001 to 2010 — Angola, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Chad, Mozambique and Rwanda — in contrast to the last two decades of the previous century when only Uganda achieved a high ranking. Similarly, Radelet (2010) notes that the economies of 17 African countries — Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, São Tomé and Principe, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia — have been growing fast since the mid-1990s due to the rise and spread of democracy brought on by the end of the Cold War and apartheid, stronger economic management, improved policy-making, the introduction of new technologies, especially mobile phones and the Internet, and the emergence of a new generation of political leaders who increasingly work hand-in-hand with donors.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, the general consensus is that with the exception of a few countries, economic and social development policies have not addressed the overwhelming economic challenges, food insecurity, high unemployment, inequality, and poverty that has bedeviled many African countries (UNECA, 2011; Ninsin, 2012; Ayee, 2013; UNCTAD, 2014). As Shaw (2012, p. 841) states, not all African countries or communities will enjoy a renaissance this decade; the continent has more failed states than others and is the least likely region to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by mid-decade. Moreover, while growth is expected to be inclusive in terms of increasing average access to economic and social opportunities (health and education services) available to the population and improving their distribution (Adedeji, Du, and Opoku-Afari, 2013), this has not been the case in many African countries. According to UNECA (2011, p. 39), poverty rates have remained high in sub-Saharan Africa and the recent positive growth spells have not been translated into solid employment creation, one of the most important means to reduce poverty, especially among the youth and vulnerable groups. In fact, the continent is still over-represented in the United Nations Development Program Low Human Development category (35/41) (Zimbabwe (bottom at 169), Congo, Niger, Burundi, among others), the World Bank's listing of Lower Income Countries, and the annual *Foreign Policy* index of failed states (Somalia, Chad, Sudan, Congo, Zimbabwe) (Shaw, 2012, p. 841). Moreover, Africa has low investment rates relative to the average for developing countries. On an annual average basis, the investment rate for Africa was about 18 percent over the period 1990–1999 compared to 24 percent for developing economies (UNCTAD, 2014, pp. 13-15). Investment levels were 18.7 percent in the period 2000–2011. Furthermore, while over the past three decades African economies have achieved some economic transition from agriculture with a very high share of output to the service sector, particularly where low-productivity activities within the service sector dominates output, this transition has occurred without any significant manufacturing development, which is critical to employment generation (UNCTAD, 2014, p. 76). Available data indicate that the share of manufacturing in total value added has declined over the past two decades. It fell from an average of 14 percent in the period 1990–1999 to 11 percent in the period 2000–2011 (UNCTAD, 2014, p. 78). These current and emerging challenges are influencing the search for an appropriate political economy strategy to address Africa's development predicament (Ayee, 2013).

This article therefore focuses on the best approaches and lessons learned in Africa and other regions to promote socioeconomic development on the African continent. Specific questions and issues examined are as follows: What are the major challenges that have hindered the efforts of African governments to realize viable socioeconomic economic development? What should be the best policy approach to be adopted by African countries to improve and consolidate some of the socioeconomic gains made and deepen the process of achieving overall development? What lessons can be learned from other developing countries that have been able to improve their socioeconomic conditions? What is the role of the state, capacity development, and infrastructure in promoting development in African countries? In addressing these questions, the article provides an in-depth review of the literature, analyzing the existing theoretical paradigms of political economy as well as articulating the implications of these approaches to economic transition and development in Africa. It also helps draw attention to the good practices and policies that can be learned from other regions. In particular, it focuses on and reviews the policies of countries in Latin America and among the "Asian Tigers" (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) that have been able to establish the institutional and policy framework to promote successfully economic transition and socioeconomic development.

The discussions proceed with an analysis of the literature relating to the factors contributing to the underdevelopment of African countries. Section two details some of the various measures and policies implemented in the post-colonial era by African governments to address problems associated with socioeconomic underdevelopment. It examines the role of structuralist and neo-liberal policies that have been at the heart of much of the attempts to promote development on the African continent. The challenges with these policies are also analyzed. The final section examines the role of the state, human capacity development, and physical infrastructure as instruments to promote socioeconomic development in African.

2. Understanding Africa's Underdevelopment: Theoretical Discussions and Literature Review

2. 1. Colonial Rule & Unfair Global Economic System

While there is consensus on the nature of underdevelopment in Africa, the problem relates to the policies and strategies utilized to address these challenges and the factors responsible for the region's underdevelopment. One of the perspectives often advanced to explain underdevelopment among African countries relates to the period of colonial rule (Schraeder, 2004; Simensen, 2007). For Simensen (2007), colonial rule involved imposing the European system of competing nation-states on the continent through a process of conquest that was largely motivated by European strategic interests. The result was a political map that is economically irrational and dysfunctional. The colonial powers developed modern export systems, infrastructures, and education facilities that were necessary to make the whole colonization venture profitable for the colonizers (Schraeder, 2004; Simensen, 2007). More importantly, colonial rule prevented the socioeconomic development of African countries in the interest of the local population. This was due to the exploitation of African economies and the enhancement of European profits, power and prestige. Indeed, not only did European colonial rule destroy pre-colonial African economies, but also the physical and institutional infrastructure needed to promote economic growth in Africa was completely ignored in favor of a perverse form of infrastructural development (Schraeder, 2004).

The negative impact of European colonial rule wa**s** also very much evident on the agricultural sector. According to Daily & Ehrlich (1996), colonial rule led to foreign businesses acquiring the arable and fertile lands of Africans, and then displacing them to areas that were less fertile. With many of the big foreign businesses using the land to produce primary products such as cocoa, tea, coffee and cotton for exports, the less fertile lands used by Africans to produce food was simply unstable to sustain the needs of the local population. Thus, many of the colonized African states imported food to meet the needs of the population. This restructuring of the economies of many African countries undermined the agricultural self-reliance that many of them hitherto enjoyed. Finally, colonialism delegitimized African history and threw into Africa what Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) called a "cultural bomb" that "annihilates a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage, in their unity, in their capacities, and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples' languages rather than their own."

Related to the negative impact of European colonial rule is the school of thought contending that the nature of Africa's integration into the global economic system is at the heart of the problems confronting the continent. This perspective, mostly advanced by neo-Marxist scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank (1969), argued that underdevelopment was a creation of Western imperialism because Africa, Latin America, and other non-Western societies were incorporated into the world capitalist economy as subordinate partners. The center-periphery relationship existing among nations perpetuated the exploitation of the periphery since existing market and trade relations favored the West. While demand for manufactured goods increased, the prices and demand for primary products produced by the periphery countries declined. From this perspective, the underdevelopment of the developing world was possible because of the corresponding industrialization of the developed world.

2. 2. Conflict, Civil Wars and Poor Leadership

Although at a lower general level of development at the time of independence due to the negative impact of colonial rule on the economic growth of African countries, it would be disingenuous to attribute all the economic challenges and underdevelopment of African countries to colonialism. Indeed, post-colonial policy choices and factors such as conflicts and civil wars have also contributed to a complete destruction of the very essence of the African economy. For Bodea and Elbadawi (2008), organized political violence, especially civil war, significantly lowers long-term economic growth. In particular, they find that Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been disproportionately affected by civil wars, which explains a substantial share of its economic decline. For example, in Sudan, a typical large African country experiencing a long-duration conflict, war cost amounts to $46 billion (in 2000 fixed prices), which is roughly double the country's current external debt.

Another prominent theory to emerge recently to explain the economic problems of African countries relates to the issue of poor leadership. A recurring frustration in the efforts to promote overall socioeconomic development has been the lack of good leadership, proper governance structures, and the capacity to formulate and implement public policies. The travails and failure of the continent to translate the optimism that attended the immediate post-independence period into concrete socioeconomic development has been attributed to the crisis in African leadership, 2007; Rotberg, 2004) have argued that the failure of African leadership in the post-colonial period has contributed to economic underdevelopment and the continuous conflict, poverty and other forms of social maladies that have bedevilled the continent. They note that the predatory kleptocrats, military-installed autocrats, comprador leadership styles of African political elites have impeded Africa's quest for sustainable growth and development. African leaders' proclivity for self-glorification, inefficiency, vindictiveness, and lack of foresight eventually leads the entire society towards self-destruction. The culture of plunder, power politics and chronic corruption runs through economic and political systems. For example, Tettey (2012, p. 30) argues that events in Cote d'Ivoire following the run-off of the 2010 presidential elections "echo a characteristic of African leadership that is premised on a sense of entitlement to political office by incumbents; an unbridled desire for power at all costs; a perversion of the will of the people to achieve that; disregard for the negative repercussions of that perversion; and obviously, a feeling of superior intellect in determining what is good for the people." With African leaders bent on hanging to power at all cost for the purpose of private and corrupt economic accumulation, it becomes very difficult to facilitate and promote economic growth. Moreover, intolerance for dissent and diverse viewpoints by many African leaders robs the continent of alternatives, and probably efficacious, options for improving the conditions of its people. As Tettey

(2012, p. 31) notes, "efforts, sometime overtly repressive, to homogenize thought and action in ways that dove-tail with the position of leaders only creates sycophancy and uncritical adulation on the part of those who shamelessly seek to benefit from being lackeys, or compels citizens to self-censor and be silent as the culture of fear generates coerced reverence for leaders instead of genuinely inspired admiration and respect."

2. 3. Deficient Infrastructure

Physical infrastructure is seen as a vital and critical element to promote socioeconomic development. Despite its capacity to help improve economic performance, Africa's infrastructure deficit has limited the capacity of many African countries to exploit their economic potential (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, UNECA, 2011, p. 82). According to UNCTAD (2014, p. 4), while it is estimated that countries in sub-Saharan Africa would need to invest $93 billion annually in infrastructure to meet their development goals, actual investment on the subcontinent is $45 billion, implying a funding gap of approximately $50 billion per year. For the World Bank (2013), the lack of adequate infrastructure results in increased production and transaction costs, reduced competitiveness of businesses, and the adverse impact on foreign direct investment flows constraints the capacity of many lower-income African economies from doing business and depresses the productivity of firms by about 40 percent. Similarly, in the agricultural sector, which is the mainstay of most African economies, a large part of the continent's inability to feed itself and stimulate rural entrepreneurship, according to Juma (2012), can be explained by poor infrastructure (transportation, energy, irrigation, and telecommunication). African farmers without adequate road networks are condemned to grow not what they can eat, but what they can carry on their heads and eat quickly before pests destroy the products.

Moreover, Africa's road density, as the World Bank (2013) notes, is sparse when seen in terms of vastness of the continent. Specifically, only one-third of Africans living in rural areas are within two kilometers of an all-season road, compared with two-thirds of the population in other developing countries. In Kenya, for example, only about 32 percent of the rural people live within two kilometers of an all-weather road. The figure is 31 percent for Angola, 26 percent for Malawi, 24 percent for Tanzania, 18 percent for Mali and a mere 10.5 percent for Ethiopia. Indeed, Africa's inventory of roads, the continent's dominant mode of transportation, is estimated at 6.84 kilometers/100 square kilometers, compared to Latin America's 12 kilometers/100 square kilometers, and Asia's 18 kilometers/100 square kilometers. Traveling from one African country to another often entails transiting through a European city. The cost of a flight from New York to Amsterdam was estimated at $164 compared to the airfare of $395 from Abuja in Nigeria to Bamako, Mali (Njoh, 2008, p. 154).

According to the World Bank (2013), Africa's power infrastructure delivers only a fraction of the service found elsewhere in the developing world. The 48 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (with a combined population of 800 million) generate roughly the same amount of power as Spain (with a population of 45 million). Power consumption, at 124 kilowatt hours per capita per year and falling, is only a tenth of that found elsewhere in the developing world, barely enough to power one 100-watt light bulb per person for three hours a day. In addition, electric power transmission and distribution losses in Africa were about 12 percent of output in 2010. There is also direct loss of time and productivity due to traffic congestion, which by one estimate is as high as $8 billion per year in Cairo, $19 billion in Lagos, $0.89 billion in Dar es Salaam and $0.57 billion in Nairobi (UNCTAD, 2014, p. 57). These infrastructural challenges certainly affect the efforts by African countries to improve their economic development efforts.

3. Addressing Economic Development Challenges: Policies and Outcomes

3. 1. Structuralist and State-led Development Paradigm

The above discussions have highlighted some of the main factors accounting for Africa's lack of development and economic transition. The discussion noted that although the impact of colonial rule was a principal factor, other structural factors including the absence of meaningful economic diversification and transformation, the lack of a facilitative environment for private sector growth and vulnerabilities such as ineffective leadership, weak institutions and corruption have played a critical role in impeding economic and political progress in Africa (Ayee, 2013). Given the discussions on Africa's underdevelopment relative to other developing regions, various policies have been formulated and implemented to address the challenges of underdevelopment.

Since the beginning of large-scale public policy efforts to assist the development of African societies, the structuralist approach, with its emphasis on a central role for the state, was considered the most effective and efficient way and the key to promoting industrialization and socio-economic growth. For Johnson (1967), the main elements of structuralist economic policies in newly-independent states was reflected in the desire for greater self-sufficiency and early industrialization, a preference for economic planning and public control, and hostility towards foreign investment.

Perceiving the international regimes (game) as stacked against them, and with multiple external shocks repeatedly destabilizing African economies, Franko (2007) points out that policy makers in developing countries turned inward to promote internal sources of growth and protected environment through import-substituting industries (ISIs). Industrial policies were anchored in the formation of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Under the assumption that the state was the only actor with the resources to enhance the domestic productive capacity in relatively underdeveloped markets, state firms were established in a wide range of industries. The emphasis on state intervention reflected a prevailing trend in development thinking that saw the state as the principal actor responsible for fostering economic growth in the drive towards self-sufficiency (Healey & Robinson, 1992). Influenced by this theoretical argument, many African countries on gaining independence in the 1960s established ISIs and SOES to spearhead the process of industrialization and promote socioeconomic development. African governments formulated detailed five-year development plans and enacted regulations to control prices and restrict trade and foreign exchange (Owusu, 2003). The SOEs and ISIs were also necessary in view of the protectionist policies of the industrial countries and the challenges of achieving a successful export trade without first establishing a domestic capacity. The state-led strategy of economic development in African countries was expected to ameliorate poverty, create investment, save foreign exchange, increase wage employment, improve labor productivity, and enhance welfare benefits. Notwithstanding some initial achievements, by the middle of the 1970s most African economies and especially the ISIs and SOEs began to perform badly and became a source of worry to successive African governments. With only a few exceptions, the ISIs and SOEs exhibited pervasive patterns of inefficiency and became fiscal drains on African economies.

3. 2. Neo-liberalism and Globalization Process

Although successive African governments influenced by structuralist ideals formulated and implemented economic and industrial policies with the intention of improving the lot of their citizens, the results were very limited in achieving social and economic transformation. There was a change from a reliance on the state to 'market-forces' as the main agent of development in the late 1970s and early 1980s because there was increasing evidence that the centralized state in Africa had failed to achieve the principal development goals. According to neo-liberal theorists, a market-friendly approach is the best means of ensuring industrial growth and development since market forces are superior to the state as an agent of economic growth and transformation (Yaro, 2013). As Munck (2005) suggests, at the core of neoliberalism is a self-regulating market. Since the efficient allocation of economic resources is the very essence of an economic system, market forces are the most efficient mechanism to achieve this objective. In this regard, interventions by the government create an undesirable outcome because they create unnecessary distortions with adverse effects on economic efficiency. Under pressure from the donor community and also influenced by the globalization process, there was a shift in policy in African countries from the early 1980s towards the implementation of neo-liberal structural adjustment policies (SAPs) as embodied in privatization, deregulation, trade liberalization, export promotion, and rolling back the state in the promotion of socioeconomic development in Africa (Owusu, 2003). The SAPs were designed to address mounting internal and external economic imbalances arising from a confluence of factors such as the 1974 global oil crisis; the subsequent global debt crisis which provoked a financial distress in Africa; a decline in export earnings due to falling commodity prices; and rising interest rates in OECD countries, particularly the US, which increased the debt burden of poorer countries (Lopes, 2013).

Neo-liberal policies, according to the main advocates, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), would result in greater economic benefits such as improved per capita income, poverty alleviation, as well as major improvements in productivity, innovation and creativity (Kutor, 2014). As Shantayanan Devarajan, quoted in Bond (2010), "There's no question that the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and early 1990s received a lot of criticisms. Then ask the question, what changed? As I was saying, the growth has accelerated since the 1990s. We can't hide from that fact. And you look at what changed. And it's that these countries adopted exactly the Washington Consensus policies in the mid-1990s." In sum, for its proponents, neo-liberalism and the globalization process facilitate economic growth due to increased trade relations, gains in productivity, technological advances, broader access to consumer products at lower cost, as well as the widespread dissemination of information and knowledge (Mittelman, 2000, p. 5).[1]

Undoubtedly, there is some evidence that neo-liberal globalization would result in some positive impact in developing economies. For example, the increasing use in major African cities of Internet cafes to gain access to information on the worldwide web, coupled with the widespread use of satellite televisions, computer technologies, various forms of new social media (twitter, and face-book among others), and cellphones to communicate is a clear demonstration of the positive impact of the information and communication revolution (Cheru, 2002). However, as O'Grady (2001, p. 132) observes, "For all the benefits the Internet provides, it also has its drawbacks, especially providing a ve-

[1] Although there is no single definition of globalization (Kutor, 2014; Jahan, 2014), Mittelman (1997, p. 3) sees it as involving a coalescence of varied transnational processes and domestic structures, allowing the economy, politics, culture, and ideology of one country to penetrate another.

hicle to spread child pornography quickly. ... Increasing ties among nations provides the pedophile with the opportunity to hide from the immediate community, to operate within residence, to encounter a global network of like-minded individuals and worst of all, to discover an endless supply of victims." He adds that "two of the key contributors to globalization — tourism and the Internet — have provided an unexpected bonus to child abusers, making the opportunity for child abuse more accessible. One could draw a partial causal relationship between the rapid expansion of globalization and the growth of child sex trade. Tourism has become the world's largest industry and its long arms reach out into ever more obscure parts of the planet" (O'Grady, 2001, p. 124). It therefore comes as no surprise that in a study on Ghana, Tettey (2008) found that in the face of the shrinking economic opportunities for the youth that had accompanied the implementation of the SAP, coupled with the electronic communication that forms part of the globalization process, sexual consumption was being heavily facilitated in the country. In the words of Tettey (2008), "the interaction of Ghanaian youth with the global, as an avenue for economic redress, has been facilitated in unprecedented ways by the new information technologies. In the new transnational social space made possible by these technologies' capacity for time-space compression, one does not have to cross physical boundaries in order to engage directly with the center or periphery of the world capitalist system. Processes of globalization intricately intertwine with developments in internet-enabled sexual commerce to introduce a sophistication to transnational sexual engagement that has created moral panic in Ghana."

In addition to these problems, Lopes (2013) also pointed out that in 2011, the Economic Commission for Africa noted that in the SAPs era Africa recorded the lowest growth rates in its post-independence history. A recent World Bank data also noted that the continent's average annual growth rate declined from 4.7 percent in the period 1961-1970 to 2.7 percent in the period 1980-2000 before rising to 4.6 percent in the period 2001-2012. Additionally, during the period 1973-2000, economic growth in Africa faltered and then declined. Only thirteen countries saw average annual per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates in excess of two percent, and the number of countries recording negative growth rates was 18. Moreover, 22 countries recorded growth rates of less than two percent, and 16 countries with less than one percent (UNECA, 2011, p. 78). Furthermore, under SAPs, the effects on income and welfare were magnified by an increased debt burden, deteriorating terms of trade, declining flows of private capital, and accelerating capital flight. While Asia was investing, African governments were slashing expenditures on basic infrastructure. Problems of unemployment and poverty across the continent were accentuated and with skewed redistribution effects in favor of the rich (Lopes, 2013). Coupled with these policy prescriptions, the absence of social safety nets for vulnerable people in a period of slow economic growth and high population pressure resulted in rising social and political unrest (UNECA, 2011, p. 118; Yaro, 2013). In sum, the inability and in some circumstances complete failure of SAPs to promote growth and help address the high incidence of poverty resulted in the continuous search for alternative approaches to address the socioeconomic challenges that has bedeviled much of the African continent.

4. Promoting Economic Development in Africa: Recommendations and the Way Forward

4. 1. Central Role for the State

The foregoing discussions have shown the challenges that have bedeviled the various efforts to promote socioeconomic development in Africa in the post-colonial period. It was noted that while a number of policy measures and initiatives have been adopted, the general outcome has been one of limited success. It is in this vein that the ensuing discussions focus on some of the policies that would ensure the successful economic development and transition of African economies. First, although the neoliberal paradigm offers valuable insights, it ignores the role of the state in the development process. The state in Africa has a crucial role to play in addressing various current and emerging challenges (UNECA, 2011). Thus, an argument in this article is that a means and approach to improve economic development in African economies is to have the state playing a dominant role in the process. Indeed, the UNECA has recently called for African governments to be actively involved in developing their industrial base and transforming their economies rather than adopting a narrow focus on macroeconomic fundamentals (Lopes, 2013). The importance of having the state play a role in the development process is very much evident in the success of the newly developed Asian economies. The case of these newly developed Asian economies is particularly pertinent because the levels of development of many of these countries were about the same as those of African countries in the immediate post-independence period. However, these countries have done extremely well relative to African countries.

Conceptually, the performance of the newly developed Asian economies should be seen in the context of the logic and requirements of globalization, including the processes through which these economies were incorporated in the global economy. They benefited from global industrial restructuring and relocation—particularly from the Western industrial economies. The empirical evidence is clear in terms of the unprecedented level of foreign direct investment (FDI) to the region in addition to technology transfer. In the last 30 years, FDI flows to China surpassed the combined investments in all emerging and developing economies. Moreover, China's dominant position has significantly altered the "development trajectories" of the Asian region, making the region the most integrated developing region in the global economy. The composition of China's imports and terms of trade with Asian economies are indications of the vertical integration and forms of specialization within the region. Between 2000 and 2004, Japan and the newly industrializing economies of Asia accounted for approximately 69 percent of the total FDI flows to China. The emergence of China as the major importer of electronic, consumer, and manufacturing components from Asia, and the major center for the processing and assembling of manufacturing goods destined for Europe and the U.S., has given China a strategic role in the global supply chain and intra-industry trade. The global supply chain shows the relationship between China, Japan and other newly developed economies in the region. With FDI from Japan and Singapore, China has emerged as a leader in the production and export of wide categories of consumer and industrial products and the dominant economy in the processing and assembling of manufactured products for exports. In addition, the development of the region — particularly in China — has strengthened its competitive advantage relative to both cost and location economies and the development of firm specific competitive advantages in the global economy.

Despite the importance of the globalization process in the economic performance of the newly developed Asian economies, the role of state intervention cannot be discounted. As Amsden (1989) and Wade (2004) argued, economic growth in the newly developed Asian economies were not due primarily or solely to the adoption of *laissez-faire* policies, but by the strategic intervention of the state in the economy. In the Asian economies, their governments, with the expectation of strong economic performance, adopted policies that involved providing resources and incentives to serve as a guide to the private sector. There was the general expectation that over a specific period, firms and businesses receiving support from the state would experience a gradual reduction in the level of support and they would be exposed to greater competition in the international market (Johnson, 1982; Amsden, 1989; Wade, 2004; UNCTAD, 2009, p. 34). In a country like Malaysia, its successful economic transformation, as the UNECA (2011) noted, was achieved by deliberate state intervention based on a disciplined planning process. This included the formulation of relevant development policies, provision of the required investment and creation of appropriate institutions. Similarly, Lall (1997, pp. 18-21) points out that "Asian Tigers" such as South Korea and Taiwan had a clear preference for intervening, promoting and supporting indigenous enterprises, and for deepening local technological capabilities. Moreover, in South Korea, for example, the state provided capital, which was subsidized through foreign loans and low interest rates to businesses (Wade, 2004). Indeed, Johnson (1982) points out that publicly controlled financial sector provided firms of strategic importance to economic development, preferential treatment on issues related to trade and investment, and various kinds of subsidies. Not only did government intervention in the form of tariff and non-tariff protection give "infant industries" in the newly developed Asian economies the 'space' to develop their capabilities, but also the deleterious effects of government protection were offset by strong incentives to export. The governments of Asian economies were engaged in direct investment in strategic industries, regulation of exchange rates, business licencing, import duties and trade restrictions. While carrots of subsidies were offered to private enterprises as a way of boosting export outputs and import substitutes, sticks of withdrawing subsidies for those industries whose performance were below government expectations were also used. Moreover, governments of the newly developed Asian economies assumed a leadership role even when their economies were liberalized. Apart from enforcing labour standards, wage policies were also determined by their governments. In sum, the economic success in Malaysia and among the Asian Tigers forces us to re-examine the idea that effective participation in a globalized economy is best achieved by restricting state involvement in economic affairs, but also it suggests that successful participation in global markets may be best achieved through more intense state involvement (Evans, 1997, pp. 69-70).

In this regard, African governments need to assume a central role in the development process. It is certainly the case that in some African countries, the failed intervention of the state left them in an irreversible position with little prospects of recovering from the "lost opportunities" resulting from the misallocation/waste of precious natural resources. In addition, a major historical challenge and costly mistake in the 1960s and 1970s relate to the selection of infrastructure projects that became "white elephants" and the inability of most African states to provide budget resources for the recurrent (maintenance) costs for infrastructure projects. Moreover, in countries where the state has been "privatized," and has engendered endemic corruption, the informal sector thrives. When accompanied by remittances from the African diaspora in the industrial economies, the role of the state is not crucial in providing the basic means of subsistence for most residents. In addition, unlike the Asian region, Africa's current patterns of trade are reinforcing its traditional role in the global economy—including its vulnerability to external shocks. In addition, unlike the role of Japan and China in Asia, Africa lacks a dynamic economy to facilitate vertical and horizontal integration and the advantages of location economies. Finally, the recent Ebola epidemic in some West African countries is a reminder that macroeconomic growth performance is inadequate to achieve economic transition and socioeconomic development. The fragile health infrastructures show the continued vulnerability of the region to tropical diseases and numerous preventable diseases resulting in high mortality rates. It is also a demonstration that the macroeconomic impact of health remains a formidable challenge for the region.

Be that as it may, the lessons from these is that African governments can play a key role in the process of economic development, although not through state ownership, but by providing the right environment for the group of dynamic enterprises with the potential to create well-paid jobs with prospects of greatly increased productivity (Brautigam, 1994, 157). African governments can play this role by assisting particular industries and groups of local entrepreneurs who have the potential to succeed in the business environment. It could for instance, have various support schemes, which would become the central focus of the process of assisting local entrepreneurs and businesses to enable them to thrive. The importance of a central role in development policies is epitomized for example, in the decision of the Malawi government in 2005 to provide subsidies for fertilizer and high yielding seeds to smallholders. As UNECA (2011, p. 88) points out, as a result of this policy, Malawi's maize harvest more than doubled the following year to 2.7 million tonnes. It rose again in 2007 to 3.4 million tons — enough to feed the nation and sell 400, 000 tons to the United Nations World Food Program and hundreds of thousands of tons to neighboring countries, generating $120 million in sales. Similarly, in Senegal, to boost the country's self-sufficiency in food production as well as address the food insecurity of 2007 that stemmed from poor harvest and rising food prices, the government in 2008 introduced the Grande Offensive Agricole pour la Nourriture et l'Abondance (GOANA) policy that significantly increased its agricultural investment. In particular, the government increased funding to the agriculture sector from the 2007 level of US $58.8 million to US$106 million in 2008. The increased funding was used to purchase and distribute seeds, strengthen rural credit schemes, modernize irrigation and water conservation, as well as subsidize fertilizers and pesticides (Vandenbosch, 2006).

4. 2. Building Adequate Infrastructures

At the heart of any efforts towards economic development and transition in African economies should be concerted efforts to address the physical infrastructure deficit on the continent. According to Njoh (2008), while the relationship between physical infrastructure in the form of transportation, communication, energy, water and economic development has always been contentious, the consensus is that investments in physical infrastructure lead invariably to economic diversification and economic transition. As the Commonwealth Business Council (2013) notes, while transport allows for the conveyance of goods and movement of people by road, railway or air, telecommunication enables people to initiate and execute business contracts and transfer data and other products, while energy is critical in the production, processing and transporting, as well as distribution segments of the economy. This explains the preoccupation of various governments throughout the world with building and undertaking infrastructure projects. Thus, to compete effectively in international markets and promote socioeconomic development, African countries need to invest in good and efficient infrastructure. Access to good roads, bridges, railways, airline service, public transit and other infrastructure would not only boost tourism and foster job creation but is also vital to the economic success and the quality of life for Africans. As Del Bo & Florio (2012, p. 1394) note, Aschauer's (1989) pioneering article, in which he considered a broad set of infrastructure types, found evidence of a significant and consistent output elasticity of public capital, suggesting a relevant growth-promoting potential of infrastructure.

It is thus a welcome development that in 2007, the European Commission, together with nine European Union (EU) Member States and the European Investment Bank, launched the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund (ITF) as an innovative blending instrument aimed at stimulating investment in regional infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa in the four key sectors of energy, transport, water and sanitation and information and communications technology (ICT). As the European Commission and European Investment Bank (2013) note, the Trust Fund encourages the financing of infrastructure programs that will facilitate interconnectivity and regional integration on the African continent. It aims to support synergies between European development agencies for the benefit of Africa, leveraging additional funds by blending grants from the European Commission and EU Member-States with long-term loan finance made available by eligible financiers. The Trust Fund also aims to increase investment in regional infrastructure in Africa by blending long-term loan financing with grant resources from the European Commission and EU Member States. Financial support can be provided in four different forms: interest rate subsidies (IRS), technical assistance (TA), and direct grants (DG) for the financing of environmental or social components of a project and insurance premiums (IP) as a risk mitigation mechanism. Between 2007 and 2012, 74 grant operations and EUR 380 million had been approved (European Union and European Investment Bank, 2013, p. 4). For example, in 2012, one of the projects financed from the ITF concerned the rehabilitation of approximately 300 kilometers of sections of the Togo-Burkina-Faso Road Corridor and the improvement of transport facilities along the corridor. The corridor, which runs from Lomé to Ouagadougou, connecting land-locked Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger with the port of Lomé, would not improve the condition of the road and facilitate regional integration between Togo and Burkina Faso and more broadly within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (European Commission and European Investment Bank, 2013, p. 18). Another project undertaken in 2012 consists of the upgrading and extension of water and sanitation facilities in the cities of Mwanza, Musoma and Bukoba and the satellite town of Mwanza, located on the shores of Lake Victoria, which is regarded as one of the most important trans-boundary national resources on the African Continent. As the European Commission and EU Investment Bank (2013, p. 21) note, it is a shared water resource for several countries (Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda) with multiple economic uses and the sole source of water supply for many communities. Since it has been subject historically to multiple pollutants, the need to manage this resource and the activities which impinge on its environmental sustainability has emerged as one of the key challenges in East and Northern Africa. A particularly pressing issue is the population growth in the lake zone of the East Africa Community (EAC), which has risen exponentially at seven times the African average, as the lake itself attracts people because of the economic opportunities it offers.

In addition to the ITF, the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) was adopted in Addis Ababa in 2012 by African leaders through the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), the African Union Commission, and the African Development Bank in collaboration with several other African stakeholders, including the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States (MS). With an overall goal of promoting socio-economic development and reducing poverty in Africa through improved access to integrated regional and continental infrastructure networks and services, PIDA aims to develop a supply-side web of 37,200 kilometers of highways, 30,200 kilometers of railways and 16,500 kilometers of interconnected power lines by 2040. It also plans to add 54,150 megawatt of hydroelectric power generation capacity and an extra 1.3 billion tons throughput capacity at the ports, which would boost economic activities in the region (Commonwealth Business Council, 2013). In a similar vein, the African Development Bank (AfDB) has proposed to issue a $40 billion bond to support infrastructure development in Africa (Juma, 2012). Within the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), a regional group of 19 member states, priority infrastructure projects have been identified through the COMESA Priority Investment Plan (PIP). Similarly, within the West African sub-region efforts to improve the Trans-Coastal Highway road corridor as well as the Trans-West African Sahelian Highway (Dakar-N'djamena-Djibouti Corridor) form part of the region's strategic plan to develop their infrastructure (Commonwealth Business Council, 2013).

Finally, African states have made strides to promote regional electricity integration and cooperation through grid interconnections and power pooling in order to deal with the unevenly distributed energy resources, to lower electricity prices and scale out access by encouraging trade and investment in electricity (ACBF, 2013, p 11). Additionally, to boost access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy in Africa, the World Bank's projects during the fiscal year (FY2014) focused on developing hydropower potential and providing new forms of sustainable power to increase energy production and benefit millions of

Africans. For example, under a joint Energy Business Plan for Nigeria, the World Bank plans to support the country's energy reform program and help increase installed generation capacity by about 1,000 megawatts while mobilizing nearly $1.7 billion of private sector financing. Similarly, in FY2014, the World Bank is supporting the 80-megawatt Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric Project in Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania, and providing a $100-million grant to Burundi for the Jiji-Mulembwe hydropower project, which would increase electricity generation and capacity to benefit millions of citizens (World Bank, 2014).

5. Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) in Africa

It is in the area of infrastructural development, trade and FDI in Africa that the BRICS have recently become heavily involved. The involvement of the BRICS in Africa and particularly China's 'non-political,' 'no-strings attached,' and supposed 'win-win" approach to the provision of investment, resources, aid, and credit to African countries has certainly altered the dynamics of the relations between the global North and South. The critical physical infrastructure being developed by BRICs, especially China, when completed as part of an integrated system of national development can reshape societies, expand economic opportunities, and change the patterns of development (Gumede, 2013). There is no doubt Africa's over-abundance of a range of primary and other forms of natural resources is a prime driver of the interest of BRICs (as it is for relations with the developed world) (Schoeman, 2011). With their desire to be heavily involved in the exploitation of natural resources in places like Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, and Sudan, the involvement of BRICS has resulted in huge upsurge in infrastructure investments. It also means that BRICS can help in the financing and construction of huge infrastructure projects such as roads, dams, and football stadia in exchange for African countries' natural resources. Although China's infrastructural development support goes mainly to a small number of African oil-exporting countries — Angola, Sudan, Nigeria — it is increasing the geographical scope of such assistance and by 2008 at least 35 African countries were benefiting from Chinese assistance in the power and transport (particularly railways) sectors (Schoeman, 2011).

However, there are problems and concerns with the nature of the relationship between BRICS and African countries. Shaw, Cooper & Chen (2009) note that the fact that much of the new BRICS attention on Africa is related to securing natural resources has generated a debate over just how much this new interest is rooted in the self-interest of the BRIC countries rather than more noble international motivations. For example, while in May 2008 India announced the creation of a new $500 million grant for African development, accompanied by $5 billion in financial credit to Africa, and a formal agreement for 131 projects estimated at $10 billion, these agreements have a highly resource-supply oriented nature either directly or through infrastructure development (Shaw et al., 2009). Critics suggest that BRICS' involvement in Africa, and especially China's investment-for-resources swaps, represent a new scramble and form of colonialism and that the supposed 'win-win partnership' does not stand up to scrutiny. Moreover, not only is there concern that contracts and agreements between African countries and BRICS in the area of natural resource exploitation often lack transparency, but also as Shaw et al. (2009) point out, some new tensions have emerged, and protests have occurred in Zambia and Namibia about poor working conditions and poor pay in the Chinese operations. Concerns have also been expressed by local NGOs about the environmental impact of the scramble for resources brought on by the Asian drivers. As Bräutigam (2011, p. 753) states, critics generally believe that China's aid program is enormous and focused primarily on propping up pariah regimes or smoothing the way for Chinese companies to gain access to resources. They worry that Chinese practices challenge hard-won reforms in the area of aid and official finance. There is also the fear that the structure of trade relations will reinforce Africa's role as a provider of primary products and leave it on the margins of the global economy. While vital to the growth of its economy, that alone would not allow African economies to benefit from the advantages relating to the growing sophistication of industrializing economies such as economic diversification and transition, added value, and growing skilled labor (Schoeman, 2011).

For Bates (2012), while the BRIC economies, and China in particular, have fuelled a commodities boom that has benefitted state coffers across the continent, questions remain over the actual extent (and the equities) of this boom. Bond (2013, p. 261) adds that the invasion by Chinese firms — specializing in neocolonial infrastructure construction, extractive industries and the import of cheap, de-industrializing manufactured goods — and the West's preparations for military interventions from the oil-filled Gulf of Guinea in the west to the Horn of Africa in the east has resulted in African countries being squeezed even harder in the global political economy. Moreover, Beijing often offers 'tied aid' in its investment-for-resources swaps, which requires the procurement of goods and services from Chinese companies, thus dampening the local employment benefit of foreign investment (Chan-Fishel & Lawson, 2007). Finally, South Africa, the one African country to recently accede to the BRIC cooperation mechanism is seen, according to Carmody (2012), as serving a 'sub-imperial' role in Africa, as a gateway for Western interests, or that it is attempting to be a regional hegemon in its own right. Essentially, the South African state uses the region as a springboard to the global economy in part by facilitating global forces' access to the region. South Africa's global presence then, in turn, increases its regional influence.

Nevertheless, since the infrastructure sector overlaps with almost all other sectors of the economy, any improvement in that sector invariably contributes toward the functioning of other sectors of the economy and ultimately the national or regional economy (Njoh, 2008, p. 156). The availability of infrastructure is likely to enhance the productivity of human and physical capital. Resulting from this is, among other things, lower cost for logistical support and production, and ultimately an increase in the demand for the region's goods and services (Njoh, 2008, p. 157). An important step in the direction of ensuring that African countries take advantage of the globalization process and promote development will entail broadening the transport sector's scope in both geographic and institutional terms. In this regard, African countries must seek to link their transport networks. In other words, policymakers in these countries must view their transportation systems in an international, rather than simply in a national context (Njoh, 2008, p. 160). Enhanced efficiency in transport networks (such as highway systems) through technology adoption is likely to reduce degradation of the infrastructure as well as increase consumer surplus by reducing transport costs for travelers. In this scenario, the stock of infrastructure will depreciate at a slower rate and private vehicles using the infrastructure will incur lower maintenance costs. Thus, public capital augmenting technical change increases both output and productivity growth (Lall, 2007, p. 584). Closing Africa's infrastructure financing gap will not only involve raising additional funds, but also improving the efficiency with which existing resources are used. Lack of timely maintenance activities, inefficient distribution networks, weak revenue collection performance, underpricing of services, and low capital budget execution all lead to substantial wastage of resources currently available for infrastructure development (World Bank, 2013).

6. Human Capacity Development

As the ACBF (2012, p. 1) points out, capacity comprises the ability of people, organizations and society to manage their affairs successfully; and that is the process by which people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time. Indeed, to sustain higher economic growth momentum and ensure that economic growth generates jobs and poverty reduction, African economies should continue to develop the required capabilities to transform their economies (ACBF, 2012, p. 1). Firms are unlikely to invest if they do not have ready access to a reliable source of workers with relevant skills (UNCTAD, 2014, p. 49). Thus, developing capacity and skills through training and incentives will ensure that local economies are able to realize economic growth and diversification. However, adequate capacity remains one of the missing factors hampering progress toward achieving development goals, implementing poverty reduction strategies, and optimizing aid effectiveness (ACBF, 2011, p. 27). This is very evident in the number of students involved in science and technology training. Currently, Africa's stock of graduates is still highly skewed towards the humanities and social sciences while the share of students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) averages less than 25 percent. Furthermore, women are under-represented in science and technology-related courses and professions on the continent (Diop, 2014).

Therefore, doubling the share of African university graduates in science and technology fields by 2025 would be key to transforming Africa into a knowledge-driven continent within a generation. As Diop (2014) argues, partnerships between academic institutions in Africa and abroad, between universities and the private sector, and systemic reforms are necessary particularly to improve the quality across all levels of the education system, and to make higher education more relevant to the needs of employers. African universities have much to gain from collaborating with universities abroad, such as through the University of Michigan's STEM-Africa initiative which has nurtured young scientists and advanced research networks with institutions in Africa, and also their work in training mathematicians and doctors on the continent. In fact, the African Diaspora can play a very critical role in advancing science and technology in their countries of origin by helping to generate new interest in supporting the STEM fields in Africa. Diop (2014) further argues that African countries must mobilize a wide alliance of supporters including policymakers, international financial institutions such as the World Bank Group, and academics, both in Africa and abroad. At the same time, universities in Africa now need to achieve the next level of homegrown excellence. A number of United States and European universities have campuses and programs overseas, notably in Asia and the Middle East, and the next frontier is Africa. By building campuses in Africa, such programs bring quality education that is adapted to local cultural norms and requirements. Universities that move quickly will be at a significant advantage in a growing market that will only become larger as Africa continues its robust economic growth. Students must also be able to apply what they learn once they graduate and look to cross the threshold of the jobs market. This requires innovative partnerships and coalitions, as well as targeted reforms. Following the example of countries like Kenya and Senegal, ministries responsible for higher education should aim to boost private representation on their university boards and engage with the private sector to strengthen links with employers, including curriculum design. Private sector partners in Africa can also offer apprenticeships, internships, and certification programs to help bridge the gap between what is being taught in universities and the realities of the job market, and to invest in the next generation of technicians and corporate recruits (Diop, 2014).

Furthermore, given that the capacity challenges faced by many African countries impede their competitiveness (African Union Commission et al., 2011, 28), providing training and other capacity development programs would be very useful. Capacity development measures for both state and non-state actors should complement the good governance process and thus be a key part of efforts to promote socioeconomic development in African countries (UNECA, 2011). Through capacity development and continuous knowledge and learning processes, African countries would enhance individual skills and improve the performance of institutions. Building capacity is important to the extent that it leads to economic transition as well as engaging in economic activities with higher propensity to create jobs for the young and unemployed (ACBF, 2011, p. 99).

In this context, efforts to achieve the objectives of socioeconomic development cannot underestimate the important role of universities and other tertiary institutions. Increasing funding to universities and research institutions, coupled with the provision of training and capacity building programs in negotiations, agreements and dispute settlement, among others, would allow African countries to develop the practical knowledge and skills that could ultimately facilitate natural resource management (Arthur, 2014). There is thus the need for African countries to develop initiatives and policies that would address the lack of local capacity, and thereby offer opportunities for local expertise to actively participate in and manage the natural resource sector. Weak capacity, according to the African Development Bank Group (2010), remains a perennial challenge that continually constraints the sustainability of growth, development and integration into the global economy and the achievement of the MDGs. The experience of the "Asian Tigers" shows that despite limited natural resource endowments, they have achieved rapid economic growth and economic transition due to massive investment in skills and institutional development, which is a clear testimony that capacity building is critical to development. Without stronger capacities, low and middle-income countries cannot absorb mobilized resources to accelerate economic growth and competitiveness. Capacity development is therefore an imperative for development in Africa and needs to be included at the core of activities of development stakeholders, including governments, development partners, the private sector, as well as civil society. Indeed, other African countries can learn from the approach of Ghana, Kenya and Burkina Faso that have consistently been in the top three capacity performers over the past three years (ACBF, 2013, p. 27). In Burkina Faso, the government focused on leadership training and development, and especially skills building through attention to short-term training-workshops, seminars, and timely short courses on topics of relevance to the country's development. In Kenya, its capacity development success was due to support for critical government institutions through the provision of technical assistance in priority areas. Finally, Ghana paid attention to revising existing curricula rather than developing new ones, and maintaining gains made in civil society involvement in capacity development and policy issues in the country (ACBF 2013, pp. 27-30). To this end, it is important to increase the number of graduates with training in various sectors of the economy, as well as an institutional and supporting environment to facilitate improved efficiency, productivity and performance management.

Moreover, capacity development programs could take the form of building the capacity of research institutions and the establishment of a positive relationship between the research institutions and workers in the various sectors of the economy through a process where trained technical extension specialists serve the sectors. Support for management training at the tertiary level would help provide the necessary expertise and professionals working in various sectors of the economy (African Union Commission et al. 2011). As Diop (2014) points out, challenges also bring opportunities for joint research that would benefit scientists across the world as well as in Africa. There is scope for similar research collaboration between African and foreign scientists in medicine and biodiversity, irrigation, engineering, mining and other fields We will only achieve these exciting research coalitions in Africa if we correct a longstanding imbalance in our education systems. Due to Africa's recent progress in school enrolment, more and more students are completing primary and secondary school. This new generation of young Africans must be equipped with the modern skills and knowledge they need to find African solutions to Africa's challenges (Diop, 2014).

It is a welcome development that The World Bank is working with eight African governments and the Association of African Universities on the Africa Centers of Excellence initiative, which will strengthen 19 centers of excellence in West and Central Africa. According to Diop (2014), this initiative aims to build and sustain excellence in higher education in Africa, particularly in science and technology, by fostering regional specialization, concentrating limited top-level faculty and generating knowledge 'spillovers.' This type of cooperative action is vital to maximize the impact of limited resources and achieve greater regional integration. Africa's new partners such as Brazil, China, India and South Korea can play an important role in building human capital. These countries have rich experience in developing higher education programs that serve the needs of modernizing economies, and have much to offer by way of lessons learned and active partnerships. Diop (2014) adds that The World Bank is working towards building a Partnership for Skills in the Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET) that brings together new partners and African policymakers, to catalyze this process especially in high-potential sectors. Partnership among all of these networks will lead to a coordinated, faster approach to advancing science and technology in Africa and helping young people achieve their aspirations. It will also help companies to find young Africans with advanced skills and knowledge locally, allowing them to compete and thrive in international markets. As more than 11 million young Africans try to enter the job market every year over the next decade, there is the need to make strategic investments in their education and other development prospects in order to drive and sustain Africa's economic transformation (Diop, 2014).

6. Conclusion

The focus of this article was to examine the various efforts and policies of African countries to promote socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation. It was noted that for the first time in almost three decades, ordinary Africans have some disposable income, however small, and they spend their money on low-cost manufactures from emerging economies. The relative ease with which emerging economic powers, such as India and China, have managed to navigate the rocky seas of the global financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath, and their continuing high levels of growth (in contrast to the sluggish performance of most developed economies), point to the possibility that the demand for Africa's natural resources will remain high and contribute to increasing development among African countries (Schoeman, 2011). Despite the substantive progress made by some African countries, there is still the case that not everyone has benefited from the improvements in living standards. The efforts by African countries to improve the socioeconomic situation of their citizens has taken on a sense of urgency given the higher levels of poverty that has characterized much of the continent compared with other developing regions. As Nnadozie (2014) points out, Africa's high growth rates since the turn of the 21st Century have not translated into high levels of employment and reduction in poverty due to the lack of meaningful economic transition. A greater number of African countries still face a number of challenges and constraints in their quest to promote development.

While there are arguments relating to the adverse effects of colonial rule, poor leadership, continued vulnerability to external shocks and limited capacity to adjust and benefit from the unprecedented changes in the global economy have accentuated the challenges relating to economic transition and poverty alleviation. While many countries have made progress in improving their macroeconomic policy framework, there is still a major gap in the policy and strategy framework to facilitate socioeconomic development and economic transition. In particular, the article noted that promoting socioeconomic development in Africa requires policies to address both the physical and institutional infrastructural deficits and the enhancement of human capacity.

Moreover, African countries should express urgency in their policy-process (Brown & Harman 2013; Vickers 2013) through a central and developmental role for the state. As the Commission for Africa (2005) points out, African countries need to improve transport infrastructure to make goods cheaper to move. It must make it easier to set up businesses, reduce and simplify the tariff systems between one African country and another, as well as reform excessive bureaucracy, cumbersome customs procedures, and corruption by public servants, wherever these exist. Despite previous costly mistakes and the problems associated with state intervention in the economy by African governments in the 1970s, the success of newly developed Asian economies shows that by creating the enabling environment and with proper government support, African countries can achieve their goals of promoting socioeconomic development. Through institutional infrastructural reforms, access to global markets and domestic capital accumulation, economic diversification, as well as facilitating vertical and horizontal economic integration, African countries would have the opportunity to improve their socioeconomic situation.

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