'I am an African': A Critical Examination of the Politics of Transnational Identity within the Context of African Integration

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Abstract

When an African asserts that 'I am an African', at what point can it be established that such a statement is directly influenced by his or her identification with integration initiatives at either the regional and/or continental levels? This article explores the identity-regional integration interface by situating the variables that inform or shape such a nexus. The article argues that such identity rests on certain structural contingencies, which are either inchoate or non-existent in the African context. The dearth of empirical data to capture the trend of transnational identification, limited civil society participation, and stunted development of regional integration process are diminishing factors. Ensuring the structural contingencies of transnational identification require more than the emotive appeal of pan-Africanism. It is in this context that this article offers the specific measures that can help enhance and strengthen the strategic nexus between regional integration and transnational identification in Africa.

Keywords: Transnational identity, regional integration, Africa, civil society, structural contingencies

Résumé

Lorsqu'un Africain déclare : « Je suis Africain », à quel moment peut-on établir qu'une telle déclaration est directement influencée par son identification aux initiatives d'intégration aux niveaux régional et/ou continental ? Cet article explore l'interface entre l'identité et l'intégration régionales en situant les variables qui informent ou forment un tel lien. Le présent article soutient que cette identité repose sur certaines contingences structurelles, qui sont soit inexactes, soit inexistantes dans le contexte africain. La pénurie de données empiriques pour saisir la tendance de l'identification transnationale, la participation limitée de la société civile et le ralentissement du développement du processus

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d'intégration régionale sont des facteurs décroissants. L'assurance des contingences structurelles de l'identification transnationale nécessite plus que l'attrait émotif du panafricanisme. C'est dans ce contexte que le présent article propose des mesures spécifiques qui peuvent contribuer à renforcer et consolider le lien stratégique entre l'intégration régionale et l'identification transnationale en Afrique.

> Only those within you who know
> Their circumscribed plot,
> And till it well with steady plough
> Can from that harvest then
> Look up
> To the vast blue inside
> Of the enamelled bowl of sky
> Which covers you and say
> 'This is my Africa'...
>
> ('The Meaning of Africa' – Abioseh Nicol)[1]

Introduction

The oft-stated assertion 'I am an African' is one that largely denotes the existence of a continental consciousness. While a number of ideologies can be read into such consciousness, it chiefly connotes the affirmation of an identity which transcends national configurations. As analysts have observed, this identity was largely shaped by the experiences of colonialism. In other words, the consciousness of being an 'African', as distinct from being an Ashanti or Yoruba or Zulu, was a reaction to external subjugation either in the form of colonialism or racial prejudice (Nyerere 1963; Mazrui 1963; Akinyemi 2008). As Julius Nyerere pointedly puts it, 'the Africans looked at themselves and knew that vis-à-vis the Europeans, they were one'.[2] In addition to this racial consciousness is the geographic element of the African identity. In this respect, the contiguity of African boundaries, from Cape Town to Cairo, is used as a yardstick for defining the African identity (Mazrui 1963:89-90).

The creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, and subsequently its transformation into the African Union (AU) in 2001, represented the institutionalisation of the dual components of African identity, as its membership was composed of countries in both North and sub-Saharan Africa. Asante (1997:32) refers to this as the integrative element of pan-Africanism. The existence of an African identity thus provides a fitting basis for the pursuance of an integrative agenda at both the regional and continental levels. This is based on two mutually inclusive reasonings: if the consciousness of an African identity can contribute to the deepening of regional integration, then the success of regional integration should in turn impact on

the consolidation of an African identity. The connection between transnational identification and regional integration is the underlining context of this article.

If African integration is seen as an essential catalyst for concretising a transnational identity, the question to ask is to what extent has this objective been achieved? In specific terms, to what extent can we measure the impact of the integration process on African identification? When an African asserts that 'I am an African', at what point can it be established that such a statement is directly influenced by his or her identification with integration initiatives at either the sub-regional and/or continental levels? Embedded in these questions are issues that hinder or promote such identification, and the importance of investing more effort in measures that enhances the sustainability of transnational identity.

To set the stage for discussion, the article begins with the conceptual understanding of transnational identity. The second step explores the nuances of the relationship between African integration and transnational identity. The last stage of the analysis provides recommendations on strengthening the structural contingencies that are capable of firming transnational identity.

Transnational Identity: Some Conceptual Issues

Human existence is characterised by identification with and loyalty to entities or a group (Massey 2002; Hooghes and Marks 2005). Tafjel (1978:63) defines social identity as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership'. As Massey (2002:15) argues, emotional attachment to a group or entity preceded the development of rational thoughts and approaches.[3] Rational cognition, according to Massey (2002:15), 'necessarily rests on a pre-existing emotional foundation'.

The contextual basis of this article is thus to situate the extent to which the knowledge of and attachment to an African identity is impacted by the existence of regional integration measures and processes. In other words, to what extent does the regional integration process stimulate what Haas (1958:16) refers to as the 'shift of loyalties…to a new centre'? In doing this, it is important to understand the variables that shape transnational identity. This requires two kinds of interrelated engagement. The first is the nature of the relationship between national and transnational identities. The second deals with the theories underlining transnational identity, particularly based on the trends of identification.

It should be highlighted that the reference to Europe here is based on the established surveys and opinion polls[4] to capture the variables and trends that shape and inform transnational identity, particularly within the context

of regional integration. In Africa, such a process only exists at the sub-regional level, especially in East Africa.[5] The reference to Europe should thus not be seen as the definitive guideline on understanding transnational identity but rather as indicative pointers, which are subject to the context of each region or continent.

The relationship between national and transnational identities is not always an easy one, as it could both be conflictive and/or complementary (Duchesne 2012:54-56; Frykman 2001:15; Hooghes and Marks 2005). At the conflictive level, theorists note that the existence of exclusive national identity is antithetical to transnational identity (Duchesne 2012; Hooghes and Marks 2005). Writing in the context of the European Union (EU), Hooghes and Marks (2005:423-424) and Duchesne (2012:55) show how factors such as national history,[6] elite division,[7] feeling of superiority of national group (xenophobia), and a low socio-economic status shape the negative approach to transnational identity. Conversely, inclusive national identity allows for a multiple and/or overlapping sense of belonging. As Duchesne (2012:55) observes, factors such as age, political orientation, and social belonging inform inclusive national identity. With regard to social belonging, Duchesne (2012:60-66) and Kennedy (2012:19) highlight that a high socio-economic status increases the likelihood of transnational identification.

In order to make sense of the trends and variables that underline transnational identity, a number of deductive pointers or broad classifications have been developed. Writing on the theory of European identity and identification, Roose (2012:282-285) identifies four main lines of reasoning. The first is 'identification by personal experience' (Roose 2012:282-283). He observes that the extent to which EU institutions affect or are central to the personal lives of individuals determines the level of identification. In addition to this are the personal experiences while meeting other Europeans. Such experiences come from the ease of mobility across the EU. As Gaggio (2012:171-172) notes, travelling and tourism are important aspects of transnational identity construction, as they underline the notions of opportunity and freedom.

The second is 'identification by personal gain' (Roose 2012:283). This approach draws a link between advantages and mutual loyalty, particularly the positive identification among the upper social strata. In a survey conducted in the East African Community (EAC), Karega (2009:18-19) observes that the most frequently stated reason for sense of belonging in the EAC was the free movement of persons. The majority of respondents highlighted how the relaxation of rigid travel documentation has impacted positively on the price of goods and business, and the opportunity to engage in transnational

interactions (Karega 2009:31). The third is 'identification by elite construction', which is based on the spread of collective narrations and symbols linked to Europe by national elites (Roose 2012:284). The copying of national symbols by the EU, such as national anthem, flags, and commemoration days, are seen as examples of this approach.[8] This aspect of elite construction of transnational identity is not peculiar to Europe. Writing about the African context, Nye (1966:9) opines:

> The choice between them – between tribalism and Pan-Africanism – was not made by any popular plebiscite, but by the educated elite, who have generally opted for Pan-Africanism because of their views about size and power in world politics. They believe that tribal nations would be divided and ruled from outside, whereas a Pan-African nation would mean world power and dignity.

The last is 'European identification as a special continental identification', which cumulates the three preceding approaches but more importantly, highlights the specificity of these approaches to EU countries.

Friedman and Thiel (2012:2-3) make two broad classifications: *performative–discursive* and *processural* dimensions of transnational identity. The *performative–discursive* aspect of transnational identity implies the 'cultural expressions and attitudes that transcend borders [and] have the potential to create a sense of transnational belonging' (Friedman and Thiel 2012:2). Gaggio (2012) argues that actors may even be unaware of their identity performance in this case, as it has become part of their routine. Examples include wearing of certain clothes, listening to certain kinds of music or drinking similar beverages (Gaggio 2012:163). This pattern of identity formation can also be found in Africa, especially within the youth culture (Fagbayibo 2011). The *processural* aspect is temporal and relational, dependent on shifting and changing variables (Friedman and Thiel 2012:3). In this respect, transnational identity is neither static or given; it adapts to socio-political and economic realities. Kennedy (2012:19) notes how the citizens of EU countries that are facing a debt crisis exhibit a complex disposition towards the EU.

The identity-regional integration interface is one that responds to a variety of factors. As shown above, the empirical approach to understanding this nexus in Europe point to the complex variables that inform transnational identity. Although transnational identity is essentially contextual, there are a number of parallels to be drawn and lessons to learn from the identified processes and trends. The key challenge is to capture the context of transnational identification, and the extent to which these trends can better inform the design of policies and measures on regional integration in Africa.

African Integration and the Politics of Transnational Identity: An Overview

The chronological events in Africa's history - the existence of pre-colonial empires, slavery and the arbitrary balkanisation of its territories by European superpowers - proved to be an effective emotive tool for rallying 'Africans' both in the Diaspora and on the continent towards a common purpose (Thompson 1969:33).[9] As Legum (1962:14) points out, pan-Africanism is essentially 'a movement of ideas and emotions' which lends itself to various manifestations. Similarly, Murithi (2005:35) and Akinyemi (2008) respectively refer to it as 'an invented idea' and 'an experiential phenomenon'. For Africans in the Diaspora, it represented a bond to a disconnected past, a search for common identity and the restoration of freedom and dignity in an oppressed society (Legum 1962:14-23; Thompson 1969:3-19). Within the continent, Asante (1997:32) observes that pan-Africanism was 'viewed both as an integrative force and as a movement of liberation'.

The integrative element or force of pan-Africanism is expressed through the institutionalisation of the regional integration process. The establishment of the OAU in 1963, its subsequent transformation into the AU in 2001, and regional economic communities across the continent are emblems of such institutionalisation. A critical contribution of these institutions, especially the OAU, was the incorporation of both the geographic and racial components of pan-Africanism (Mazrui 1963).[10] Towards the creation of the OAU, the debate against the inclusion of countries from North Africa in the organisation was raised in some quarters. According to Legum, Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent Nigerian nationalist, had this to say:

> The Sahara Desert is a natural line of demarcation between the Northern and Southern parts of Africa. It is my considered view that the countries of North Africa should, as a first step, constitute a Zone…other territories south of the Sahara…should constitute another Zone (Legum 1962:270).

In a similar vein, ex-president Mobutu SeseSeko of Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) advocated the establishment of an exclusive sub-Saharan (black) African organisation (Mazrui 2002:39).[11] Akinyemi (2008), however, notes that the potency of these arguments was diminished by factors such as the strong cooperation and friendship between Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, the need to build a united front against a Cold-War-ridden world, and the commitment to ending Apartheid in South Africa. In addition, Mazrui (2002:39) posits that the age-long cultural ties between North and sub-Saharan Africa cannot be discounted. This, he notes, is evident in the vocabulary of some of the most widely spoken languages on the continent (Mazrui 2002:39).

Continental institutions were thus seen as the vehicle for entrenching the structural contingencies for deepening integration efforts, and consequently, promoting a transnational identity. Such structural contingencies include free movement, free trade and the development and management of physical infrastructure for promoting regional integration.[12] With the existence of these regional organisations, the question to ask is to what extent do they contribute to the development of a transnational identity? Implicit in the dissection of such interface are two interrelated variables. These are issues of awareness of these institutions, and the impact of the programmes of these institutions.

The first step in situating the politics of transnational identity in Africa is to understand the level of awareness of the works and presence of these regional institutions. This is based on the simple logic that emotional attachment rests on awareness. Citizens can only demonstrate loyalty to a structure or symbol when they are aware of its existence. The paucity of survey and opinion polls is a major impediment in this respect. From a continental perspective, in one of the few polls conducted on the point of awareness, from 2002–2003, only 49 per cent of respondents[13] had heard of continental institutions such as the AU or regional bodies like the EAC, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Afrobarometer 2003). Respondents evaluated international institutions like the United Nations (UN) better than the AU (Afrobarometer 2003).

In another recent poll conducted by *Afrobarometer*, only three out of 10 respondents noted that they know enough about the AU to be able to make any comment on its relevance to their countries (Olapade et al 2016: 14).

East Africa provides the most comprehensive data on transnational identification. The EAC recently launched a baseline survey on the perception of the organisation by citizens from partner states; the results are yet to be released.[14] However, some surveys have been previously conducted. In a survey conducted in Kenya in 2008 (Afrobarometer 2010), about 56 per cent of respondents indicated that they had heard either nothing or very little about the activities of the EAC. Only 11 per cent of respondents in Kenya indicated that they had heard a great deal about the EAC (Afrobarometer 2010). In a similar survey, also conducted in 2008, in Tanzania, 31 per cent of respondents had not heard about the major processes of the EAC, about 46 per cent had only heard very little about it and only 20 per cent indicated that they had heard a great deal about it (Afrobarometer 2008).

The second variable is the impact of the programmes of these institutions on ordinary citizens. As shown above, theorists have highlighted how personal gains and experiences shape transnational identification (Roose 2012;

Duchesne 2012; Karega 2009). Unlike Europe, there is no comprehensive and sustained survey at the continental level to measure how the AU impacts the lives of ordinary Africans. In a recent poll aimed at gauging the perception of African citizens on the position of the AU not to support the International Criminal Court (ICC), Afrobarometer had also asked respondents to indicate the relevance of the AU to their countries. According to the finding, 'only four in 10 Africans (38%) feel that the AU contributes "somewhat" or "a lot", while 32 per cent believe that it does "little" or "nothing" to help their country, and 30 per cent say "they don't know"' (Buchanan-Clarke and Lekalake 2015:10). This result is not surprising especially considering the inability of the AU to effectively drive the integration process, which is largely a consequence of the unwillingness of political elites to grant it effective powers (Fagbayibo 2013b). This lack of assertive, supranational powers curtails the effectiveness of the AU to design and implement the structural contingencies for transnational identification.

Except for few sub-regional organisations, there is no continental implementation of free movement, free trade or social welfare arrangements. Only two regional organisations in Africa, ECOWAS and EAC, have implemented free movement programmes, with both having regional passports (ECA et al. 2012:68). As Ncube (2013) observes, African citizens require visas to visit 60 per cent of African countries, the highest of any continent. In terms of free trade, only the EAC, out of the eight AU recognised regional communities,[15] has a fully functional customs union (ECA et al. 2012:14).[16] The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) has initiated a customs union but it is yet to become functional (ECA et al. 2012:14). EAC, COMESA, Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS), ECOWAS and SADC have set up free-trade areas, albeit with varying degrees of implementation (ECA et al. 2012:14).

It could be argued that the strongest indication of continental identification is a form of what Friedman and Thiel (2012) refer to as *Performative – discursive*. What this means is that the 'I am an African' identification does not necessarily indicate an awareness or achievements of the AU, but is a product of performative activities that speak to the essence of unity. These include pan-African cultural activities such as music, social media engagement, sports and movies. In the context of music and youth culture, Fagbayibo indicated:

> The narrative of music as an essential catalyst for unity is better understood within the context of the proliferation of satellite music television channels in recent years. These music channels serve as a platform for showcasing African talents to millions of viewers across the continent, a factor which has a number

of implications. The first is that it has created a new generation of pan-African stars who, in the mould of American and European superstars, generate considerable influence among their fans across the continent. Capitalising on the star-power of these artistes, these music channels give them the opportunity – through individual interviews, documentaries and award shows – to articulate their opinions on the essence of unity The second is the increasing number of collaborations amongst these musicians, a measure which often highlights the idea of unity. The third relates to the primary audience of these music channels – youth. Africa has the largest global youthful population, a reality which makes their inclusion in the process of unity crucial (Fagbayibo 2011).

At the sub-regional level, polls conducted in the EAC provide an indication of how citizens perceive the impact of institutions. As Karega (2009) point out, the strongest source of transnational identification (or sense of belonging) in the EAC stems from the ease of mobility across member states. Out of the eight reasons stated for identifying with the EAC, 39.5 per cent of respondents indicated 'freedom of movement' (Karega 2009:19). This was followed by the ease of interaction with people from different communities (13.9%) (Karega 2009:19). Conversely, about 31 per cent of the respondents indicated that their reason for having a weak sense of belonging in the EAC was due to the poorly implemented free trade agreement (Karega 2009:20). The lack of information about the EAC was mentioned as a reason by 27.7 per cent of respondents (Karega 2009:20).

There are a number of underlining issues raised by the foregoing outline. The first is the dearth of data, a result of the lack of established surveys and polls on transnational identification in Africa. With the exception of East Africa, there is no serious approach to capture the reflections on and trends of transnational identification. Second is the high level of unawareness of regional integration measures and issues in Africa. This is a reflection of little or no civil society participation in the regional integration process. As some critics have indicated, African integration essentially remains an elite-driven project that often excludes broader civil society (Ochwada 2004; Fagbayibo 2013a; Soderbaum 2007; AFRODAD et al. 2007). The third is the importance of successfully implemented integrative programmes. As shown in the East African survey, citizens respond positively to benefits accruing from regional integration measures. The ease of mobility, removal or relaxation of rigid travel formalities, free trade across borders, and the ease of communication with citizens from other member states are measures that solidify the connection between integration and transnational identity. These issues form the basis of the discussion below.

'Seek Ye First the Qualitatively Integrated Kingdom': Fixing the Broken Link(s)

What the foregoing outline shows is the importance of finding nuanced and innovative means of strengthening the strategic integration-identification interface. This particular aspect of African integration has not enjoyed ample research over the years. The lack of any national referenda on regional integration, weak regional institutions, and the lack of civil society participation in integrative programmes have all ensured the little attention paid to this critical part of regionalisation. Therefore, this part of the article attempts to provide some specific measures for firming the nexus between regional integration and transnational identity. This is premised on the position that once such an interface is firmly established, it can impact positively on the development of regional integration. In this respect, three broad measures are considered:

- Capturing empirical data on transnational identification;

- Civil society participation in the integration process; and

- Provision of key integrative benefits.

A critical starting point is the need to put in place measures for capturing empirical data on transnational identification. There is an urgent need for coordination of efforts in this respect. East Africa's relative experience in this respect is an advantage that could be channelled into developing a structural agency for data capturing. At the core of this is the extent to which the AU Commission is able to lead the process. In this respect, the Commission should, in conjunction with civil society, development partners and sub-regional bodies, develop a template for a baseline survey on transnational identification. The existing EAC baseline survey could be used as a model framework, but adapted to reflect the context of each sub-region and other continental trends. In essence, the varying levels of development of integrative mechanisms in the sub-regional organisations will impact on the kind of questions asked or issues interrogated. Such a template should further reflect the relationship between sub-regional and continental identifications, and the extent to which this enhances or diminishes the idea of unity.

Other critical issues that require empirical clarification include the expectations from the AU, the interaction/dissonance between the levels of identification (national/sub-regional/continental), impact of traditional values on identification, and the different national variables that informs the construction of transnational identity (particularly the manner in which the

national political economy shapes the response to transnational identity). Another option is to encourage governments and civil society organisations to carry out national surveys on transnational identification, albeit on the condition that the relevant regional institutions are partnered in this process.

The extent to which organised and wider civil society is part of the integration process is another fundamental factor. Bringing civil society into the mainstream of regional integration processes requires nuanced and more open-minded measures. Beyond the establishment of organs dedicated to the participation of civil society organisations in regional institutions, there is the need to 'sell' the integration agenda to broader civil society. The fact that the participation of organised civil society through these structures remains a nominal activity makes this point imperative (Soderbaum 2007; AFRODAD et al. 2007). The key test here is the extent to which ordinary citizens become aware of the meaningfulness of the integration process. These should range from low to medium to high activities.

In this regard, low activities will include measures that require minimal cost but are highly symbolic. These include:

- Placing of the AU, and relevant sub-regional institutions, flag next to national flags;

- Affixing the AU, and relevant sub-regional institutions, symbol to national identity cards and/or passports;

- Nation-wide campaigns that explains the link between national and regional priorities;

- Involving traditional authorities and local groupings in placing the imperative of integration within the context of local codes and conduct (e.g. how do concepts such as *Harambee* and *Ubuntu* speak to the idea of transnational unity?);

- Incorporating regional integration studies into national education curricula (secondary and tertiary education) (Asante 1997:175).

Medium activities are formal measures that involve cooperation between regional institutions, national institutions and the private sector. In this respect, regional institutions should engage in the following actions:

- Partnering with the private sector on issues such as sponsorship of scholarships and study exchange programmes for young Africans, and other youth empowerment projects;

- Engaging with stakeholders on the provision of loans and grants to individuals and groups involved in projects that promote unity. These could include skill development and entrepreneurship programmes;

- Making internship programmes at national and regional institutions a top priority;

- Establishing national liaison offices to coordinate efforts on civil society participation through grassroot initiatives such as workshops, sensitisation drives, and capacity-building programmes;

- Enhancing the powers of the Pan African Parliament (PAP), and other sub-regional parliaments, by making it a platform through which civil society can actively engage and discuss issues of transnational importance. These could include measures such as the direct election of PAP members, outreach programmes, and the involvement of civil society in the legislative processes.

In the context of this article, high activities relate to putting in place integrative programmes through which citizens can derive qualitative benefits. This is discussed below.

The quality of African integration ultimately rests on the real benefits that citizens can derive from the integration process. The tangible benefits derived from freedom of movement, trade and services and economic development, as encapsulated in many of the constitutive documents of regional integration in Africa, are necessary ingredients for concretising transnational identity. Similar to free trade in goods and services, the free movement of persons is an important tool for stimulating economic development and increasing socialisation across regional boundaries. As the Economic Commission for Africa et al. (2012:61) rightly noted:

> Any society that creates an enabling environment for the free movement of people invariably paves the way for the free movement of labour. Migration is accepted as a legitimate tool for adjusting the skills, age and sectoral composition of national and regional labour markets. Migrant labour has become an essential feature in meeting economic and labour market challenges – when people move from one region to another, they carry with them their skills and know-how (ECA 2012).

The extent to which political elites are prepared to actualise these ideals will go a long way in removing regional integration in Africa from an abstract plane. As shown in the foregoing, there is no continental implementation of both free movement of persons, goods and services, but varying levels of implementation exist at the sub-regional level. The task lies in designing measures that bring together the best practises, as a model for the eventual actualisation of a continental plan. In terms of free movement of persons, there is a need for a more pragmatic approach that considers different thresholds of implementation. This includes the national, sub-regional and continental spheres.

At the national sphere, member states should be encouraged to relax rigid immigration rules for travel, tourism and skill mobility. Currently, fourteen African countries offer visa-free entry or visas on arrival to citizens from other African countries.[17] At the sub-regional level, regional institutions that are already implementing free movement frameworks could be encouraged to cooperate and harmonise their standards. Similarly, countries within the same region, or even belonging to different regions, could also be encouraged to explore ways of implementing 'visa at the point of entry' or 'no visa' policies between and/or amongst them. From a continental perspective, the AU could be involved in these processes either at symbolic[18] and/or practical[19] levels. Central to these implementation initiatives is the importance of training and capacity building for immigration and customs officials, and consular agents (Koser 2014). These individuals are the face and first line of implementation, and could shape perceptions on transnational identity. The extent to which such programmes or training expand the knowledge on substantive and procedural aspects of transnational migration, limit the incidences of corruption and abuse, enhance security measures, and imbue professionalism, is key.

The impact of talent or skill mobility on economic development and regional integration is another critical issue that also requires a nuanced approach. Koser (2014) identifies four major barriers to talent mobility in Africa. They are rigid visa requirements, stringent quota systems on the number of foreign workers, procedural obstacles to processing or renewing a visa, and lack of capacity to implement mobility frameworks. Due to these constraining measures, he notes that, 'for many businesses in Africa, it is easier to employ a skilled non-African expatriate than a skilled African expatriate' (Koser 2014). This kind of situation can only contribute negatively to transnational identification, as it highlights alienation and lack of respect for the skills of other Africans. Simplification of visa rules, training of immigration officials, effective bilateral agreements on skills mobility, and measures on skill transfer and development are some of the factors that can help counteract the current state of affairs.

Conclusion

The interface between regional integration and transnational identity remains an important subject in the discourse on regional integration. The imperative of understanding such a connection lies in the fact that it not only legitimises the integration process but also provides an indication of the policy paths to pursue in strengthening the integration process. While the trends may differ from region to region, an underlying point to consider is the strong link between a successful regional integration project and positive identification. This is not to underestimate

the complex relationship that exists between identity and regional integration, an issue informed by a number of national and sub-national variables. As Moravcsik (1993:481) rightly conceptualised, regional integration essentially provides the platform through which demands and preferences formed at the national level are bargained and addressed. The temporal and shifting nature of transnational identification have been explained as the result of factors ranging from national history, elite division to the socio-economic status of citizens.

This article has attempted to capture the context of transnational identification in Africa by situating the curtailing structural issues. The dearth of empirical data, limited civil society participation, and stunted development of regional integration process and measures are factors needing critical and urgent engagement. As noted in the foregoing, only the EAC has developed a mechanism for capturing the views of citizens from member states on East African integration. Data capturing is essential, as it provides policy makers with a clear picture and the kind of steps to make in addressing gaps and concerns. In essence, it removes policy-making, and other research engagements, from the realm of conjecture.

Directing more commitment and energy towards the actualisation of the critical elements of regional integration is a key step. This requires the ease of mobility, free trade, social programmes that promote connectedness, and the sustained inclusion of organised and broader civil society in regional integration measures. Thomas Sankara's remark about the OAU is as relevant today as it was in the 1980s:

> The peoples of Africa are increasingly hard to please today. And because they are, they're saying no to meetings and conferences whose function is to adopt resolutions that are never acted on, or whose function is to not adopt long-awaited resolutions that could be acted on (Sankara in Prairie 2007:124).

With a focussed, quality-driven approach, the African integration process will have better chances of achieving the dreams of unity. This will, in turn, ensure that the 'I am an African' assertion is not only an emotive concept but the result of an impactful regional integration drive. Being an African should be more than abstract ideas, it should rather be defined by the socio-political and economic upliftment of the African populace.

Notes

1. Weaver & Bruchac (1977) 76.
2. Cited in Akinyemi (2008).
3. Massey (2002:15) posits: 'Emotionality clearly preceded rationality in evolutionary sequence, and as rationality developed it did not replace emotionality as a basis for human interaction. Rather, rational abilities were

gradually added to pre-existing and simultaneously developing emotional capacities'.

4. The Eurobarometer is an example. It is a survey regularly carried out by the European Commission in member states to determine issues underlining European identification.

5. Karega (2009). It should be noted that while no continental survey on identification exists, in 2013 the East African Community (EAC) launched a baseline survey on the perception of the organisation by citizens from partner states. http://eananews.org/1307192.htm (Accessed 18 July 2014).

6. It is argued that the English 'Euro-scepticism' is rooted in Britain's special history of Empire while West German pro-Europeanism reflects Second World War guilt (Marks and Hooghes 2005: 424).

7. As Marks and Hooghes (2005:426-427) posit: 'In Europe, the most important political organizations connecting elites to the public are political parties, and we hypothesize that individuals who say that they support a particular party will tend to follow that party's position on European integration (*party cue*)…Cues are likely to be strongest when elites conflict over an issue… Elite conflict punctures passive support for European integration – transforming the 'permissive consensus' that predominated during the EU's first three decades into a 'constraining dissensus'. We hypothesize that the greater the divisions among political parties and national elites on European integration, the more citizens are likely to oppose the process (*elite division*)'.

8. Frykman (2001: 16) opines that the concept of 'shared European cultural heritage' is essentially an elitist-driven project ('a great amplifier for bourgeois culture').

9. Julius Nyerere once remarked that Africa's pre-colonial history demanded that 'African unity must have priority over all other associations' (cited in Mazrui 1963:93).

10. As Akinyemi (1982:243) opined: 'Is Africa a racial term? – as Ali Mazrui argued. If so, perhaps the continent should be known as Africa-Arabia. Or, would Africas be more suitable? – a name suggested by Alfred Silbert.'

11. Thomas Sankara, in an interview granted in 1984, dismissed this idea by famously asserting that 'there is only one colour - that of African unity' (Prairie 2007:128).

12. See for example Article 4 of the African Economic Treaty (1991); articles 3 and 4 of the African Union Constitutive Act (2001).

13. The survey was conducted in seven African states: Cape Verde, Mozambique, Uganda, South Africa, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal.

14. http://eananews.org/1307192.htm (Accessed 18 July 2014).

15. Although the AU only recognises eight regional bodies, there are 15 regional bodies in total: These include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of Central African

States (ECCAS), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD), Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Mano River Union (MRU), Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Southern African Customs Union (SACU), West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA).

16. Customs union arrangements exist in other sub-regional bodies that are not recognised by the AU. These include SACU, WAEMU, and CEMAC.

17. These are: Seychelles, Mali, Uganda, Cape Verde, Togo, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Mauritania, Rwanda, Burundi, Comoros, Madagascar, Somalia and Senegal. See http://thenationonlineng.net/path-to-economic-integration-in-africa-by-dangote

18. t a symbolic level, the AU insignia could be affixed to the promotional documents of the programme. In addition, the AU emblem could be placed at the points of entry to indicate its crucial position as a driver of the eventual process of deeper integration and cooperation.

19. This involves the actual inclusion of the AU technocracy in the institutional processes responsible for implementing the policies on free movement. This could include the AU giving policy directions on implementation and/or the secondment of AU officials to national or regional organs responsible for implementation.

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