

**Industrialisation should come first**

Low intra-Africa trade is indeed an indication that African countries do not consume what they produce. But this is a problem of production (product focus), not trade. The export products of most African countries, which follow the colonial pattern, influence the trade strategies, trade agreements and trade-related infrastructure.

For example, it is cheaper for Côte d'Ivoire to export products to the Netherlands than to some other African countries. This is simply because Côte d'Ivoire's main export product is cocoa beans and the Netherlands (as well as France and other European countries) is the main destination for the product. Côte d'Ivoire has developed its trade strategy and infrastructure accordingly. If Côte d'Ivoire alters its production focus, its target market will be altered and it will build a trade strategy accordingly. African countries have to change their production focus to change their trade focus. For example, Nigeria recently started to export cement products. In my research I showed how this led the government of Nigeria to invest in alternative freight schemes, upgrade terminals and create a cross-border trade facilitation committee to aid the cement industry's export strategy. It also set up a senior trade committee to resolve the non-tariff barriers imposed by Nigeria's neighbours and countries of interest to the cement sector.

Trade-related infrastructure is spe-

cific to the products that countries have to sell. It's similar to traders renting their shops according to the products they sell. Developing free trade that is not product-based would be like a prospective trader renting a shop in the hope of developing a certain product in the future. The problem with such an approach is that the features of the shop confine the trader to certain lines of business. Likewise, negotiating and signing a free trade agreement could confine a country's efforts to industrialise. This is important because manufacturing plays a key role in the processes of economic transformation required for high quality growth, job creation and improving incomes. Yet the share of manufacturing in GDP has been falling in sub-Saharan Africa over the past three decades.

