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**L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle  
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century  
A África e os desafios do Século XXI  
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين**

**Regional Development Poles and Self-Sustaining  
Development in Africa**

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## **Abstract**

African unity and regional integration are strategies for achieving self-sustaining development in Africa. However, given the political difficulties of separate political entities pursuing a common development policy, successes in regional and eventual continental integration has lagged.

The strategy of “**Regional Development Poles (RDPs)**” places emphasis on economic transformation of the few large African countries that can industrialize on their own, given their huge natural and human resources as well as their large domestic markets. From the RDPs, faster economic development will diffuse to the surrounding smaller African countries. The diffusion will be accelerated by establishing inter-African infrastructural networks.

The nineteenth-century conditions that enabled small European countries to develop do not exist today. Consequently, small African countries cannot hope to develop as small European countries once did. Although small countries can industrialize, they cannot drive their own destiny for very long. The twenty-first century is being billed as the “Chinese Century” just as the twentieth century was labeled the “American Century”. Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan could not claim the twentieth century even though their economies underwent major transformations because none of these economies were as dominant as that of the United States.

China’s transformation is being determined by the Chinese themselves enabled by the country’s huge resources and large domestic market. Instead of large foreign companies telling China what to do, they do what China asks them to do. Hence, they readily make their technology available to China, overlook China’s pirating of their patents, and willingly undertake research and development in China.

**Key concepts or words:** Regional development poles, self-sustaining development, infrastructural networks, technology, research and development.