

# NEPAD: THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR TRANSFORMATION

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***"The hand that receives is always under the one that gives"***

***African Proverb***

## ***Abstract***

*The millennial turning point has been a time for concentrating attention to inject optimistic ambitions and project wishes for better possibilities and hope everywhere. Africa was no exception to this exuberant temper of wish, hope and possibility. In fact it has attracted a considerable constellation of actors who have been making a variety of good wishes for Africa to claim the 21<sup>st</sup> century reflecting largely their own particular views. For their part, African leaders marked the millennial transition by converting the Organization of African Unity into the African Union in 2000. A year later the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) came on the scene and it has been widely seen as being sponsored by the heads of states of South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Algeria. These two initiatives are on offer supposedly to bring about the much elusive political (via AU) and economic (via NEPAD) structural transformation of the continent. The AU aspires to build and strengthen political unification and solidarity amongst African states and peoples. Can we say for sure that the AU has made Africa, and that what remains is the task of making the people Africans? Can we say for sure that NEPAD provides the development agenda to make Africa and Africans? Or is NEPAD an old wine in new bottles hoping to emancipate, unify and develop Africa with a priority of building "partnership" with donors? What is new? the donors, the African leaders extending a welcoming hand to donors to participate in the overriding project of setting the African development agenda and providing the bulk of the finances, and the ideas to bring Africa's "self-reliant" economic transformation through market and business entrepreneurial activities?*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Like many contradictory processes, the demise of colonialism brought about mixed blessings to Africa. It led to the formation of multiple states while fragmenting the ex-colonial entities from their much wider territorial and trade extent into many mini- and micro-states. But for a few states (perhaps?), most of the African states can hardly sustain a credible national development strategy without major inputs from outside. Fragmentation has one overriding consequence: It leaves the existing states vulnerable to outside help. If they cannot access outside assistance, they come to believe that they may not undergo profound transformation. Unfortunately, outside help has not been given (or perhaps may not likely be given) on a scale to bring about fundamental change in Africa. Instead, it creates an unhealthy competition for limited donor funds, loans and grants amongst African states. Nearly every African State has suffered from a constraint akin to something like a prisoner's dilemma for his external assistance. As the foreign assistance in the form of ODA and foreign direct investment declined after the cold war<sup>1</sup>, the foreign policy of the heavily indebted states of Africa became largely an unimaginative posturing to solicit foreign aid. The African states reel under the heavy burden of debt under the guise of aid.

While donor involvement functioning within a nationally framed and specified strategy can be made probably productive, the current pattern leaves a lot to be desired. What States win in terms of cash and funds comes with a heavy price by sacrificing social capital that is needed to overcome the fragmentation of Africans. One of the key principles to advance African integration is to reduce such destructive competition through co-operation and trust. Independent industrial, technological and innovational strategies cannot be carried out without inviting the donors to drive the process. Most of the fragmented African states lack independent agency to carry out policies to transform their economic structure.

It is from this failure that the need for African integration has been proposed as a possible alternative. Even the re-grouping of African states into regional blocs has not diminished but intensified regional rivalry for external assistance. The prisoner's dilemma will not go away with the mere institution of a regional concept. It matters how regional arrangements are conceptualized, framed and activated. How stakeholders articulate their interests, aspirations and influences in shaping any regional economic reconfigurations has also a major influence on how a regional concept is articulated.

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<sup>1</sup> While credits by IFIs increased from \$20 billion to \$28 billion in 1991, the proportion earmarked to Africa declined from \$0.6 billion to \$0.4 billion (IMF 1992:77). ODA to Africa decreased from \$ 8 billion in 1983 to a mere \$ 1 billion. In 1991 bilateral and multilateral aid to Africa totaled \$25.2 billion; this declined to \$ 17.6 billion in 1998 and further down to \$17.5 billion in 2000 (Africa Recovery 16(2-3), 2002:31). Like ODA, FDI is on a decline from 48.6 billion in 1997 to 6.5 billion in 2000 (Africa Recovery 15(3) 2001:28). Africa's debt grew from \$294.3 billion in 1990 to \$345.2 billion in 1998 (Africa Recovery 14(1), 2000:7) Debt servicing takes the lion's share of Africa's export earnings prompting analysts the continent exports to pay and service debt. Despite HIPCs and PSRPs, the debt and its servicing disables African states from pursuing predictable and consistent social policies.

The rationale for African integration should emerge from the desire to activate and mobilize Africa's agency for undertaking and managing effectively the development process (understood as comprehensive structural transformation). Development must be anchored in the principle to remove ill being and promote and habituate well-being, development and human security. There is a need to identify how to counter the degradation of people, nature and knowledge by ventilating arrangements, structures, actors, activities and practices for their subtractive and additive qualities to human well-being and development. The subtractive or additive outcome to human wellbeing is the chief criterion by which to assess any regionalisation process. Thus, African integration can make sense if it is designed to respond to the needs and aspirations of ordinary people.

One of the main reasons for embarking on African integration is, thus, to expand the opportunities and identify the problems in orienting development from being elite-driven to one being driven by the people. It is part of the strategy to help undo the current mismanagement of African development. There is no merit in hankering for a wider African trade and economic regime, if the majority of the ordinary people (the workers and farmers) are made to lose in the process. The emancipatory underpinning to the regional integration project must not be lost. By the ordinary people, I mean the productive social classes such as the workers, farmers, innovators and producers. I do not mean external donors, foreign business interests and local ruling elites with aspirations to connect with external interests and create their own materially comfortable world with callous indifference and moral abandon in the midst of massive poverty in their own societies.

One of the reasons in arguing for regional integration is to undertake an internal mobilization of resources and finance through a combination of trade creation, diversification and diversion to connect the regions. Africans need resources that can be harnessed from regional integration. The latter will assist or deter the revitalization of development in Africa depending on whether the people and the localities enjoy much latitude within the regional framework on self-action by different communities and actors expressed with freedom and self-determination

## **2. NEPAD AND THE PROBLEM OF DEEPENING AND BROADENING AFRICAN INTEGRATION**

Africa has experienced a number of regional integration traditions. As a regional integration project, which tradition does NEPAD wish to build upon? This is an important issue for the elaboration of the concept, strategy and policy of African structural transformation through integration.

There are two main types of integration and five approaches to African integration. The two are voluntary and involuntary integration. An example of deliberative and

cooperative schemes that have been formed and undone is the East African Community. The states drove and broke the regional cooperation and are trying to re-make it. Market driven regional cooperations tend to be cross-border, mostly informal trade corridor linkages.

The approaches to African integration have come from:

- The Pan-African movement (whose source is the US and Caribbean-UK Diaspora)
- The colonial enlarged estates (UK, France and so on)
- The post-colonial state driven continental unity aspiration (e.g., OAU, AU, NEPAD)
- Actual sub- regional groupings based on the policies and laws of the existing states (e.g. ECOWAS, COMESA, SADAC and so on)
- Cross-border flows through refugees, pollution, wars and other disaster-induced migrations (as a result of conflict, violence, social and nature degradation.)

There is a need to evaluate the merit of the different models of integration. I shall do this in another paper. The movements, states, trade and trans-African migrations via war and refugees are creating novel re-arrangements of economic transaction and may create the new trans- state-national African citizen .New hybrid identities are being formed that may dissolve petty loyalties and narrow regional and ethnic ties. It is not true that Africans think through tribal and clan associations, units and entities. Tanzania provides a very good example of the fallacy of such casual and superficial observation. The most enduring legacy of the Nyerere era in Tanzania is the de-ethnicisation of that society. That augurs well to suggest that provided there is an enlightened political project that is pursued with integrity and sincerity an African national citizen can be created.

### **3. NEPAD AND AFRICAN INTEGRATION**

It will be useful to relate NEPAD to the different types of integrations described above. NEPAD is a state driven process. It came as an initiative of the leaders of South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria and Senegal. It shares in the optimism of the millennium to wish for a better African future. African leaders converted the Organization of African Unity into the African Union (AU) in 2000, claiming that the OAU had accomplished its mission by ending colonialism and apartheid. A year later, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) came on the scene. But there seem to be contradictions in the approaches taken by the two initiatives.

The European Union appears to serve as a model for the new AU, whose constitution act suggests that the AU aims to fight poverty and establish a regime of human rights

and government by law, citizen participation and accountability. There are plans for a single currency, a common African market and even a peace, security and cooperation council.

While the AU aspires to "pull fragmented sovereignties together" by building political unity and solidarity among African states and peoples, NEPAD aspires to capture and to define the continent's developmental agenda. It thus gives priority to the economic, technological and business strategy for the transformation of African economic structures. NEPAD is thus the latest proposal amongst a series of earlier plans such as the Lagos Plan of Action having a go at trying to dent the problem of structural transformation of African economies. The NEPAD document describes Africa's unacceptable marginalized position in today's world economy and puts forward a programme of action. The NEPAD document recognizes that the private sector and the partnership of the private and public sectors in forging the African public economic sphere forms one of the key strategies for transforming the structure of African economies. In addition, while NEPAD does not ignore the importance of mobilizing domestic finance, it expects the bulk of the finance to come from the outside. This formula of stressing the role of the private sector and donor funding to define the African development agenda has been questioned. Some analysts suggest that NEPAD represents a "class project." Some say that South Africa and Nigeria are using NEPAD to express their hegemonic aspirations in Africa. (Private communication from the Research Director, Nordic Africa Institute)

Although NEPAD is not mentioned in the AU constitutive Act, it was clearly stated at the Durban founding meeting of the AU that NEPAD is the economic programme of the AU and not a rival to it. It appears that NEPAD has been endorsed by the "trade union" of African heads of states. The charge that it has been smuggled by a few elite leaders has now been overcome by its endorsement by the assembly of heads of states. In terms of African integration, the AU is like a prefigurative imagined African national community while NEPAD becomes the economic arm in deepening and widening the integration process. The problem is whether the two processes can reinforce each other or create further obstacles to the prospect of African integration. This issue cannot be settled in the abstract.

#### **4. NEPAD' AS A DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND ITS PROBLEMS**

Forty years have gone by, since an externally imposed development model, based on grants, loans, scanty foreign investment and unequal trade involving extraction of African agricultural and mineral rights for foreign exchange to buy foreign manufactures replaced the direct colonial system. There is now recognition that far from this externally orientated development model denting growing poverty and inequality, it has produced debt (including debt servicing) in Africa, that has become

both the highest in the world, and, more importantly, has foreclosed Africa's right to independent development.<sup>2</sup>

How can Africa earn its right to develop and structurally transform? What future; what destiny for Africa: a free future or an externally manipulated future? That is the 'to be or not to be question- the so-called 'Hamletian dilemma'- that fiercely confronts as a challenge to anyone that cares about Africa. When one looks at Africa through the mirror of its history, one finds it is not Africa that has failed, but the external development model and the way it has been imposed on African politics, economics, society, governance and culture by others. It is their project of development, their specific remedies and strategies that have been unjust. Should Africa rectify or justify the unjust system and its ideas that have failed her or not? Given the current convergence or confluence of information technology and financial services that have together formed speculative or casino capital on a global scale, it is important to ask can Africa ever make it to the promised land by playing dice in the fast globalising casino world economy?

I shall start by according the benefit of doubt to African leadership. Let us assume their intention is good and let us give NEPAD a generous read.

The authors of NEPAD think that Africa can pursue a self-reliant strategy while integrating in the globalised world economy. To put the point across in the leaders' own language:

"The New Partnership for African Development is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic. The Programme is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of development and exclusion in a globalising world"(NEPAD Document, 2001:1)

No one can fault the sincerity with which the leaders made their pledge to "eradicate poverty", and/or defined NEPAD to occupy the center stage of Africa's "sustainable development" agenda. The problem lies at the same time in their assignment to NEPAD to provide the framework for Africa's participation and inclusion in the world economy. Given the bad record of Africa's participation and inclusion in the world economy since the time of slavery, what is new in "NEPAD" that will make a difference? Can the leaders' expressed deontological commitment to "eradicate poverty" and embark on "sustainable development" be attained while participating in a world economy whose *modus vivendi* has not changed, in the main, in relation to Africa since the fifteenth century?

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<sup>2</sup> The important issue is how free are Africans to set their own development agenda. Does their dependence on aid distort their policy making power as it did in the 1980s and 1990s?

One can also understand that autarchy for Africa is not an option. Engagement with the world economy is unavoidable. However, it is the terms of that engagement that has been fudged by the leaders' eagerness to pledge to the people of Africa to deliver on poverty eradication, while assuring the transnational actors that NEPAD is far from being a subversive pledge. The deontological commitment by the leaders to "eradicate poverty" suggests that NEPADs aspire to carry out an emancipatory project. However, the willingness to play with the rules of the game within the world economy subjects the emancipatory ambition to the vicissitudes and impersonal interplay of economic forces shaping the world economy. It depends on how much African social actors play the game and succeed. And that is the question! Is there no alternative to this uncertain custody of poverty eradication to the logic and working out of the games played by impersonal forces of the world economy? Does the world economy that operates with logic of the world law of value- where there have to be losers and gainers- tie or free African efforts to eradicate poverty rapidly? What is there to offset Africa from being a loser once more? How can it join the gainers in this game? We are dealing with an economic system that builds wealth through widening inequalities and poverty. And Africa becomes included or participates in the world economy without any affirmative action or equal opportunity provision to compete with well-established players. Where does Africa's support come from? How would the desire for a new partnership with the "international community" help precisely? What is the 'international community' any way? There is a world order under the unipolar management or mismanagement of the Anglo-Saxon Empire led by the USA. How does this world order treat Africa? As a partner or a region to be dealt with and to keep open its source of raw material and market provision at dirt- low prices dictated and driven by the buyer power in the global value chain?

To quote Karl Marx may not be in fashion now, but what he said about capitalist production and the institutions for enforcing its expansion is relevant:

"Capitalist production, by collecting the population in great centers, and causing an ever-increasing preponderance of population, destroys at the same time the health of the town labourer and the intellectual life of the rural labourer... Moreover, all progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of the fertility. The more a country starts its development on the foundation of modern industry, like the United States for example, the more rapid is this process of destruction. Capitalist production, therefore develops technology, and the combining of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth- the soil and the labourer."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> K. Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, FLPH, Moscow, 1959, pp. 506-507.

The importance of this debate is this: capital's economic expansion (the thing it can still do best) is said to be purchased by a dialectical co-relate of the expansion of massive social waste and destruction, radical inequalities and poverty (the thing it is not good at correcting in space and time). Capital embodies in its mode of existence and dynamics social waste and economic expansion. It is so ontologically insecure that it needs to control the social fallout from the rigours of accumulation by employing more and more prisons, more and more military organizations, employing more and more controlling personnel and technology against the possible crimes of the losers and their supporters.<sup>3</sup> The international institutions for capital expansion and social regulation on a planetary scale such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO are implicated in this dialectic of capital's economic growth and social waste. Their spokespersons bemoan through various international fora that the social inequities that keep growing as capitalist production is expanding is not inherent to the logic of capitalist production and keep proposing anti-poverty and anti-environmental degrading measures without touching the foundations of capital's systemic logic. This has prompted angry retorts by activists:

The IMF and the World Bank, far from bringing economic stability and reducing poverty, are destroying the environment and impoverishing people. Their calls for dialogue are just a public relations ploy and the announced reforms are cosmetic. The Bretton Woods institutions should be abolished and all the Third World debt cancelled. Moreover, the entire political and economic system of global capitalism needs to be overhauled. This is to be achieved by a global movement of solidarity opposed to the neoliberal model imposed by multinational companies, the rich countries, and their minions at the World Bank and the IMF.<sup>4</sup>

Can Africa eradicate poverty without some reform of the capitalist world economy? Is it an illusion to desire poverty eradication while wishing fully to participate in the system that is known to increase poverty and inequalities especially in the most vulnerable territories of Africa, Latin America and Asia? This is an important issue that NEPAD has not fully addressed. The terms of engagement with the capitalist global economy are too important to leave out. It is important to specify with what agency and options one engages and how Africans engage with such a system. Seeking partners is fine, but partners to reform the system or simply to sympathize and increase the aid budget? NEPAD should have clearly stated, like the proposal of the NIEO in the 70s, that what Africa requires are partners that will struggle to reform a system that has become synonymous with injustice itself in relation to the poor people of the world including workers and farmers.

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<sup>3</sup> In the USA, Americans of college age bracket are more in prison than in universities and it has been suggested most of them are innocent.

<sup>4</sup> K. Liskova African: One of the leaders of the movement against economic globalization: *Global Civil Society*, 2001.



Perhaps the leaders of Africa may have made a different appraisal of the world economy different from what is now conventional wisdom. Is there a window of opportunity in the post-cold war US dominated empire to include Africa on better terms than, say, what Africa had during the Cold War? Is today's unipolar moment/conjuncture favorable to Africa's inclusion and participation in the world economy on beneficial terms? Is that what the leaders have premised NEPAD upon?

The current debate on globalization has taken a variety of forms. At the core is whether there is fundamentally a new logic to the capitalist system different from that suggested by K. Marx (see quote above!) capable of self-generating economic advance by preventing regression into social decay and destruction including in certain circumstances war. Is globalization the latest version of "imperialism" in the classic way those socialist-radical thinkers such as Kautsky, Hilferding, Lenin, Stalin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, Bukharin and Mao Tse Tung and non-socialists such as Schumpeter and Hobson have described? Or is globalization an extra-capitalist phenomenon inaugurating a different political economy to capitalist development by resolving the bifurcation of simultaneous economic progress and social regress with new bridges and new spaces? Has globalization modified the workings of capital sufficiently to imagine and realize economic gains without sacrificing social and environmental security? Or, is globalization an expression of the facilitation owing to digital, molecular and advanced material technology and telecommunications, of the fast movement of capital in bewildering and proliferating varieties? Has the unstable features of capital been attenuated by the creation of global capital and global markets? Is the capital logic still there with its uneven territorial concentration of wealth and poverty? Is the capital logic given way to a new integrated and even development of the system? Following Max Weber's the Spirit of Capitalism, is there a NEW SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM characterized by even development territorially and socially?

I ask these questions because if Capitalism can expand economic activity while at the same time expanding social inequality, need Africa integrate into this economic structure without demanding changes in the first place? Does NEPAD have a neutralizing safety net to provide a beneficial integration of Africa into the world economy?

If, on the other hand, the capital logic bifurcates economic expansion with social waste, NEPAD may be spreading an illusion to pledge poverty eradication within a system known to exacerbate poverty and inequality by its systemic creation of winners and losers territorially and socially.

If the type of neo-liberal capitalism that dominated the last twenty years is anything to go by, according to the World Bank, some 80 percent of world income is known to be concentrated where 20 percent of the world population live. The same 20% of the world population occupy 80 % of the world environmental space. That does not

augur well for NEPAD's expressed desire to eradicate poverty while playing by the rules of the capitalist game or spirit. Territorial and social inequalities are still inherent features within the present day world economy. Unfortunately, much as one wishes to see it, Africa may not see the number of its poor people grow less. On the contrary, the number of the poor may likely grow unless there are robust social policies to make sure the number of poor people is reduced. A pro-poor social policy implies that one cannot let one's hands to be tied behind one's back by joining lock, stock and barrel within the capitalist global economy. Africa needs to evolve a selective intervention strategy where it retains the initiative for social policy making by pursuing strategies of defense and offence to eradicate poverty and to embark on sustainable development.

However, African leaders wish to play it, the larger context of the state of the dynamics of the capitalist system cannot be ignored to pursue any development strategy nations wish to follow to eradicate poverty. If they wish to develop policies to eradicate poverty, they may come up against the interests of powerful debtors who will insist that Africans produce minerals and primary commodities to pay and service debt. They will be coerced to abandon industrial, economic, technological, innovational and social policy. If they refuse, they will be denied budget substitution and other funds. If they go it alone, one by one, without a common strategy of defense or offence to deal with structural inequities of the world economy, they will be victimized one by one. It is this catch 22 situation that they must avoid by pooling their sovereignties together to plan the eradication of poverty across Africa.

The most interesting lesson for Africa about the Lagos Plan of Action is not whether its implementation would have been smooth sailing. It would not. There would have been problems had it been uptaken and implemented. But it was shunted aside due to the internal fact that African states were too fragmented to deal with the challenges from the Bretton Woods Institutions. The other important consideration was the fact that the structural adjustment policy adoption by each African Government was rewarded with loans whilst the Lagos Plan of Action was largely looking to self-finance Africa's development and long-term structural transformation.

NEPAD faces the same challenges as the Lagos Plan of Action: can it overcome internal fragmentation by promoting an African shared national project; and can it overcome the temptation to surrender the policy independence for cash?

To give credit to African leaders, they call for a "new partnership" with the industrialized world. Does it mean a call for systemic reform or is it a desire to prevent their conditionities from subverting any policy independence the leaders wish to pursue? This is how they put it in their own words:

... "[NEPAD] is a call for a new relationship of partnership between Africa and the international community, especially the highly industrialised countries to

overcome the development chasm that has widened over centuries of unequal relations.”(NEPAD, 2002; 2)

But what does it mean to say “a new partnership” with the industrialized world. Does it mean a call to reform the global economy? Does it mean to rescue policy independence and initiative in the face of expected demands from powerful external actors like the international financial institutions? How many are those who benefit from the world economy and who have helped themselves to Africa’s rich minerals and agricultural commodities at favorable terms of trade willing to negotiate a new deal for Africa? This confusion very much needs clarification.

If “new partnership” means that Africa can re-negotiate the rules of the game of the world economic system, then there is something “new” to and in NEPAD. If it means inserting Africa in the unequal world economic division of labour, it would mean back to the old scoreboards. Africa’s hands will be tied, and carrying out any meaningful anti-poverty eradication measures would become a long haul.

Who drives NEPAD? Here African leaders clearly state that they are in the hot seat and only desire for the rest of the world to “complement “ and not lead in setting Africa’s development agenda. In their words:

“We will determine our own destiny and call on the rest of the world to complement our efforts. There are already signs of progress and hope. Democratic regimes that are committed to the protection of human rights, people-centered development and market-orientated economies are on the increase. African peoples have begun to demonstrate their refusal to accept poor economic and political leadership.”(NEPAD Document, 2002:2)

I take the statement by the leaders “We will determine our destiny” to mean a striving to reveal African independent agency in international relations, foreign policy and diplomacy. There is at once a desire to form an African will to make African perspective to guide Africa’s interest in international relations and a willingness to deal with problems by mobilizing Africa’s combined energy. The making or claiming of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as Africa’s century means nothing else other than inscribing at the center Africa’s interest, aspiration and perspective in the emerging world arrangement or international social contract.

If putting Africa at the center is the new benchmark, this can certainly be taken as a positive aspect to the leaders’ intention. Putting together market -orientated economies with people-centered development appears to show another confusion. In a document like NEPAD, such conceptual confusion should have been clarified before release to the public.

While Africa's leaders' understanding of the political economy of the global economic system is contentious, on the whole NEPAD resonates a positive tone echoing very much the upbeat talk of the African renaissance. The development plan and agenda is supposed to have been owned by Africans, which means that African leaders will take responsibility for the failure or success of NEPAD. The leaders seek a new partnership that may or may not mean a diplomatically couched demand for reforming the existing structure of global power. The leaders pledge to democratize society and respect human rights and this is meant to be monitored through a peer-review mechanism. Poverty eradication is an essential foundation to protect human rights. They also pledge to ensure macro-economic stability, accountability and transparency of both leaders and institutions and the institutional and policy support to market relations. They pledge to pursue regional integration at both the regions and the level of the continent. They seem to take Pan-African integration more as a step-by-step, incremental, geographical, economic and political integration from the sub-regions to the continent. The danger of sub-regional incremental evolution in relation to the option of a big-bang burst into continental integration remains real. In addition, they have not addressed the issue of the historic African Diaspora and the recent Diaspora that migrated after the creation of the largely authoritarian post-colonial system of African Governments.

The leaders have put forth four initiatives to address the programmatic implementation of the NEPAD concept: a) the Peace and Security Initiative, b) Democracy and Governance Initiative, c) Economic and Corporate Governance Initiative and d) the Sub-regional Approaches to Development. It remains to be seen how effective these initiatives will be and whether they will be consistent and lead to overall synergy and social innovation.

## **5. THE CRITICS OF NEPAD: SELECTING THE SEED THAT WILL GROW FROM THAT, THAT WILL NOT**

There are, broadly speaking, two types of critical commentaries. The first is the ideological by-oriented critique.<sup>5</sup> It is understanding that NEPAD as a class project the import of which we can fully understand.<sup>6</sup> And the second is related to those who wish to identify positive and negative features in the NEPAD document.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> P. Bond, 2002, *Fanon's Warning: A civil Society Reader on the New Partnership for Africa's Development*: Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press

<sup>6</sup> J. O. Adesina, NEPAD and the Challenge of Africa's Development: Towards a Political Economy of a Discourse, CODESRIA 10<sup>th</sup> Conference, unpublished paper, p.1; Adesina claims that the petty bourgeois leaders of Africa have bourgeois aspirations. Far from committing class suicide à la Amílcar Cabral, they are working to enrich themselves to escape their petty-bourgeois status into a bourgeois status. Thus, NEPAD is a class project in this embourgeoisment of the African ruling classes.

<sup>7</sup> See Yash Tandon and the SEATIN Bulletin, where recognition of the positive content has been recognized along with the negative features of the NEPAD document.

The criticism of NEPAD that it is a neo-liberal document is too sweeping and simplistic. There is confusion in the document, but it does not merit an outright dismissal as a neo-liberal document. Critics that dismiss NEPAD outright have been primarily driven by ideological impulse. It is difficult to make contribution to the debate if the critique is so pitched at an immanent level. It is difficult to engage African leaders with such criticisms.

Some question the sincerity of the leaders that propose NEPAD. Betrayal and sell-out have been attributed to the leaders. There was also a peroration suggesting that NEPAD may have been influenced by the G8.

The main reason why so many criticisms were leveled against NEPAD is the confusion in the document that I pointed out above. It opens the floodgate for all sorts of criticism. Had the people of Africa and not some of the African leaders owned NEPAD, there would have been an opportunity to raise all these issues. That opportunity was not available and the document claims to define and own Africa's development agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hence, the interest and the sharp criticisms that ensued.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the scholarly criticism has come from within the civil society by pointing out the contradictions, especially in the NEPAD document. Critics take to task the authors of NEPAD for calling for self-reliance while relying on external finance and support. They accuse the 'new international partnership' initiative of ignoring past and existing efforts by Africans to resolve Africa's crises and move forward, describing NEPAD as 'a top-down programme driven by African elites and drawn up with the corporate forces and institutional instruments of globalization, rather than being based on African peoples' experiences, knowledge and demands'.

They even question who will benefit by NEPAD: they claim that the main beneficiaries of the new approach to African economic development would be largely foreign businesses and those local actors working with them. There are those who claim that African development should up lift the underdogs – whom Fanon called, in his book, 'the Wretched of the Earth'. They say that efforts to date to give prominence and voice to Africa's ordinary people have made little real difference. If we are to develop a strategy for African development where local, regional, national and continental combinations can take place, the starting point for evolving a shared purpose and

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<sup>8</sup> The Third World Network (Accra), CODESRIA (Dakar), African Civil Society Declaration on NEPAD, South Africa, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation financed a conference in Nairobi from which criticisms were leveled against NEPAD from every angle. Adebayo Adedeji defended the Lagos Plan of Action and showed how NEPAD has not been informed by its lessons. Dani Nabudre criticized NEPAD from a historical presentation of Pan-Africanism. Thandika Mkandawire criticized the economic governance and resource mobilization. Others criticized the democracy and governance aspect, the environment, gender, regional integration and partnerships. Since the conference the Foundation has published "the voices and critiques of the Forum on NEPAD" in a book edited by Peter Anyang' Nyong, Asghedech Ghimaths(z)ion & Davinder Lamba, NEPAD a New Path? English Press Ltd, 2002

action emanates from a commitment to change the prevailing ill-being state of the population into a well-being state for the large majority of ordinary people.

Thabo Mbeki appears to have heard or read some of the criticisms on NEPAD. His response which appeared as a South African Foreign Ministry release was picked up by the Harare based SEATIN and NEW African October 2002 tail-end piece. Mbeki took a broad swipe at all the critics declaring:

"It is important that we study both the NEPAD and Africa Action Plan closely, to understand and act on the possibilities they open up for African development, eschewing easy, routine, uninformed and cynical conclusions and the lazy and expensive option of disengagement."(Thabo Mbeki, Building Africa's Capacity Through NEPAD, reprinted in **New African** October 2002, p. 66)

Mbeki has picked up the weakness of much of the criticism on NEPAD that falls far short of offering practical alternative. He mentioned 120 specific actions that the G8 action plan and the EU have committed themselves to without specifying any of them. He advises against a counter-productive campaign against "Governments and institutions" of the North, while keeping the right and the duty "to protest against an unjust world order." The need to engage "our development partners in the true NEPAD partnership" must balance "the necessary exercise" to keep the right to protest against the unjust system open.

Mbeki said that NEPAD tries to break the unwholesome relationship between hapless African aid-seekers and benevolent Donors. Mbeki challenged criticism directed at the shortfall of aid that would flow to Africa from the June G8 meeting in Canada as broadly uninteresting because it reflects the "demeaning view of Africans."

Mbeki mentions that resource mobilization will ensue from "our own partnership" and affirms Africa's rejection (and the Donor's endorsement of such rejection) of Donor aid to fill Africa's "begging bowl". He mentioned specific areas where the G8 have promised in their action plan (to be reviewed in 2003 to assess implementation):

- Capacity building for peace support operations at regional and continental levels
- Generate larger inflows of foreign direct investment,
- Support to increase agricultural production and productivity
- Help in building infrastructure project proposals
- Open their markets to African products
- Increase funding to relieve debt
- Support in securing affordable drugs and medicine and in building a health infrastructure
- Clean water, sanitation and management of water resources.

Mbeki positively appraises the G8 Africa Action Plan issued from their June 2002

meeting in Canada.

Though Thabo Mbeki wishes Africa not to extend its begging bowl in the form grants, the suggestion that the G8 will generate foreign direct investment and warra Africans to raise funds from the private capital market; that they will increase funds f debt relief - all these continue the old relationship. There is nothing new in th relationship. The problem is that their promise may or may not be honoured. Mo likely, it will not. Whilst there is much to appreciate to reject the demeaning view Africans as beggars, there is still that old relationship in the way the G8 will relate Africa if they continue to donate and Africans also expect them to donate to them.

If the US and EU did not over-subsidize their farmers, African agriculture would have increased its productivity, and Africa could potentially build the capacity to fec Europe. But at the WTO the EU and the US always support their protectionist farmers while preaching trade liberalization on the weaker developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The expectation that the EU and US will support African farmers can be misguided. These powers seem to say: do as we preach, but not as we do! Even if the subsidies and tariffs were to be lifted, other non-tariff barriers would have to be surmounted. A concrete example is how cheese from camel milk from Mauritania was blocked from the German market. The German consumer loved the cheese and continued to purchase despite high tariff barriers, which reached up to 70 %. When customer preference beat the authorities, they brought in methods of production, quality, standard, health and safety barriers to block the cheese from being exported to Germany.

What this example shows is that there will be a lot of tariff and non-tariff barriers that will be imposed on the African farmer or agro-manufacturer. Thabo Mbeki may be too optimistic about the possibilities regarding G8 promises. Talking is one thing, delivering quite another?

Whilst Thabo Mbeki's rejoinder is very interesting, much of the concerns about NEPAD and the relationship with G8, private capital market, opening the markets of the North for African products, support for building Africa's physical, intellectual, social and financial infrastructure and so on still stand. There must be a practical way of changing the unjust world order in order to make the G8 and others recognize Africa's interest and aspirations.

## **6. NEPAD AND THE MISGUIDED SEARCH FOR BIG FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE WEST**

In constructing an African transformation agenda, it is necessary to identify two main issues that have attracted sharp rebuke to the NEPAD initiative. The first is funding African development, and the second is the commitment to overcome African

fragmentation with a shared approach and value to launch an African development strategy.

I shall deal with these two key problems first and offer a constructive outline of an alternative funding strategy and the basis for overcoming Africa's humiliating fragmentation.

Africa is already inside the loan-grant and debt regime. Asking for more of the same is to lack imagination, to surrender hope that there is no better way for Africa to constitute its own wellbeing. Aid, including foreign direct investment, comes with conditions that often contradict domestic social policy to eradicate poverty and spend for the wellbeing of ordinary people. The World Bank has recently decried that aid to Africa is falling. Not only does the aid become miss-directed by stringent conditions, but also it has been too scant and falling to matter. Our leaders' expectation expressed in NEPAD that this will change may be to nurse illusions, if not simply foolhardy. At any rate, unless the aid is under the strict control of domestic public policy, it will be difficult to direct it productively to meet basic human needs. The aid giver knows this and often the conditions of distancing and neutralizing the state by trumpeting the free market theology are stated before the amount is announced and the committed resources disbursed. This is precisely what transpired in Monterrey. The conditions were stated loud and clear. And the new pledge of 5 billion dollars from Bush no.2 and 7 billion dollars from EU fell far short of the UN target of raising an additional 50 billion dollars! Constant in the equation: Western Aid = conditions that divert policy to impact on development + scant pledges + maximum press self-advertisement. The IFIs enforce this equation holds using the stick of aid against African countries.

The hand that receives is always under the hand that gives. It is this African saying or proverb that should provide the logic for creating a new framework of interaction by Africa with the rest of the world. Aid, loans, trade and investment can all help, but they can also hurt. In this context, the Pan-African revival is not merely an option, it is a necessary alternative to get out of the trap of dependence and attain Africa's self-reliance and independent voice in the world.

## **7. CRYSTALLIZE AN AFRICAN NATIONAL PROJECT TO ANCHOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SELF-RELIANCE**

It is important to crystallize a new African synergy beyond the current de-colonized fragments. The Western world that feels it has much to lose including the local groups associated with external interest have often castigated the Pan-African vision as a daydream. But after 40 years of political independence, the case for constituting a Pan-African national project is more compelling now than in the 60s when it was unfurled by the first generation of some of the thinking leadership of Africa. There is a



clear need to forge an African nation going beyond the existing fragile, ineffective and fragmented state system. All nations are imagined communities. The Italian nation and the German nation that emerged as a consequence of national unification were also imagined Communities. Africa's unity has been aborted by the historical compromise of the national liberation movement in accommodating and retaining colonial interests in independence. The abandonment of Pan-African directions meant that the ex-colonial powers retained colonial like presence in partnership or alliance with the local ruling elites. They instituted a loan-grant and debt regime to rule Africa indirectly.

While unity has been an easy rhetoric on the lips of Africa's post-colonial leadership, it has been, nevertheless, elusive and difficult to forge for the last forty years. Unity is a rich concept in Africa as it is the necessary foundation for Africa's free future. It is thus more than a territorial agglomeration of the existing states. African unity is first and foremost the development of an African national consciousness to transform, build, guide and finally realize an African national project by thinking beyond the existing state frontiers. It represents above all the African conquest of a unity of purpose and unity of action to confront the many challenges Africans face in today's fragile and chaotic world. Unity will be the way for Africa to reclaim fairness in dealing with others in an unequal world. Such unity can be said to be made when Africans evolve a collective identity and platform and a common conception for collective action in relation to four major matters:

- A shared conceptual framework on how to bring an integrated and comprehensive structural transformation of Africa
- A common and united conception and approach in dealing with a system which continues to have a logic and modus operandi that is massively unjust and unfair to Africa
- A compelling moral clarity, intellectual confidence and political commitment to assist ordinary Africans to be the main beneficiaries of Africa' wealth, resources and environment.
- A united approach to bring to bear a co-ordinated political, executive, legislative, judicial and scientific authority to prevent nature degradation.

Together the above will assist Africa to define and set its own agenda and deal with hostile environments while learning to respond to the friendly in the world. At the moment, Africa is neither fully free nor fully self-reliant. It needs to reveal and build a collective independent agency to put African transformation and perspective at the center of international relations.

Why unity at a Pan-African level is selected to any other level is this. The reason is that unity on any other basis will not bring to birth emancipated or free Africa. Is there any other social Africa's unity in freedom? I can enumerate a number: the family, the clan, the tribe, the community, the church, the trade union, social movements,

political parties, the nationality, the institution that can serve as the organizing principle to bring the fullness or richness of ethnic group, the existing artificial states or the current neo-liberal inspired creations such as the growing and conflicting or competing number of NGOs, civil societies, the private sector (businesses), new regions and so on. While these institutions, entities and hybrids are important and may be necessary, none of them can become the institutional primitive for bringing about a broader conception of Africa's role and place in the wider and larger scheme of things. The reason is simple: they are too dispersed, discrete and difficult to transform their specific interests and aspirations into a general interest. Each of these social units or arrangements leave the door open for division and for others who do not mean well to Africa to get in and sow discord and distrust. We must wake up to the fact that Africa's long history from ancient Egypt to the present day provides a clarion call and a compelling case for its unity. It is easier to unite on the basis of an African identity than on any other. It is all-inclusive and does not exclude on the basis of territorial, religious, regional, ethnic, linguistic and other criteria. Since 1963, there has been official rhetorical lip service to Pan-African unity. What is absent is not the rhetoric for this need of Africa's unity. There is an inflation of rhetoric inversely proportional to the deflation in action. All the Governments of the OAU have signed to some notion of Pan-African ideal. But a large number of states have been named and shamed by NEW AFRICA for not having paid their dues. They thus pay lip service to the organization. Most now have ratified the AU. But judging by the way they treated the OAU, the future of the AU is uncertain. AU may be, as one analyst quipped- OAU without the "O."

What is disturbing is that there is massive hypocrisy played by the leaders: talking Pan-African and acting anti-Pan-African and, at the same time, excluding those with committed interest to realize the political and economic unification of the continent. There is a great need for a moral and intellectual resolution and clarity to make free or emancipated Africa. Africa as a civic nation based on the emancipated citizen must be forged. Free Africa needs a new kind of being- a citizen of the African world with a globalised African soul free from petty allegiances and labels, possessing a revitalized sense of a civic-African self and personality as a premier identity. We have Africa. It is high time to make the Africans.

## **NOTES**

1. NEPAD's priority areas are agriculture, the private business sector, infrastructure and regional integration.
2. The figure of US\$64 billion for the year 2002 was flaunted at the G8 meeting in Canada and expectation that seems unrealistic in view of the G8's greater interest in good governance than in dishing out the cash.
3. For example, the Lagos Plan of Action (1980), the Abuja Treaty (1991), the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programs (AAF-SAAP, 1989), the African Charter for Popular Participation and Development (Arusha Charter, 1990) and the Cairo Agenda (1994).

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