

NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT: Why NEPAD must Succeed

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Introduction

The idea of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) like its forerunner *African Renaissance* has for the moment captured the imagination of the African elite, the political class, and of course, the continent's political centre-stage. It has been touted as the panacea for Africa's woes, a programme for the rebirth and renewal of the continent, the establishment of democratic political systems, the achievement of sustainable economic development and the reconfiguration of Africa's place in world economy. At the core of NEPAD's concern is the position of Africa within the global economy- to the fact that half the continent's population live on less than one dollar a day; a child mortality rate of 140 per thousand, a life expectancy of less than 54 years, etc.

Taking cognizance of the poverty and backwardness of the continent and the continued marginalisation of Africa from the globalisation processes and the social exclusion of the vast majority of its people, NEPAD calls for the reversal of this situation by changing the relationship, which underpins it. It sees itself as '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'.

The NEPAD calls for mobilisation of resources to launch a global war to end the scourge of underdevelopment. It appeals to a bold and imaginative leadership, genuinely committed to a sustained human development effort and the eradication of poverty, and to a new global partnership based on responsibility and mutual interest.

This paper constitutes an attempt to provide a critical review of the NEPAD idea, particularly in the current climate of euphoria about it. It raises two main questions: first, to what extent is NEPAD as presently structured capable of achieving the goal of political and economic regeneration of the continent? Second, which social forces are capable of championing such policies? The paper is in four parts: the first part provides a background to NEPAD; the second, an overview of the NEPAD programme; a third a critique of the programme and implementation strategy; a fourth and final section attempts to provide a tentative way forward.

Why NEPAD?

The answer to the above question is to be found in President Mbeki's idea of an African Renaissance. In the manner in which President Mbeki articulated his ideas on African renaissance from 1996, it can be argued that he finally succeeded in steering the continent in the direction of a debate around a rebirth of the continent, a political renewal and economic regeneration. African renaissance, according to President Mbeki, would seem to have been anchored on three pillars:

- *The mobilisation of the African people to take their destiny in their own hands and contribute a bulwark against kleptocratic regimes.*
- *The establishment of political democracy on the continent, respect for human rights, and good governance.*
- *A clear programme of economic regeneration, which can facilitate the emergence of African countries from the depths of economic disaster.*

The idea of an African rebirth is however not new. What is new is the context in which this debate had been revived; a context in which the continent's position in the global system has declined remarkably over the last thirty years; in which Africa has been enmeshed in a conjunctural crisis, political instability, and eternally embraced in conflict.

It is generally acknowledged that the continent's economic and political decline over the last century can be traced to three broad developments.

First, is the fact of the continent's incorporation into the global economy towards the end of 19th century as a junior partner, and predominantly as a producer of primary products. This meant that Africa was largely destined to be a marginal player in the world market, precisely because for the three or four centuries preceding the formal colonization of the continent, the predatory activities which passed as trade during the mercantile period had disoriented production and trading patterns throughout the continent (Baran, 1967; Rodney, 1972). Formal colonisation of the continent towards the end of the 19th century only served to reinforce the unequal exchange that had been established during the mercantile period.

Thereafter the colonies were structured predominantly as producers of primary products and not manufacturers, and with the exception of mineral rich South Africa, a basis for industrialisation was never established. But even in South Africa, industrialisation was predominantly one of import substitution type, and international trade continued to be based largely on primary products. Thus lack of development of productive forces, and of industrialisation, consigned Africa to the margins of global economy even before formal political independence was achieved.

This, however, is not to ignore massive economic transformation, and the pace of modernization, which took place in the majority of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in the period between 1900 and 1960. In fact, for a brief period in the 1960s and early 70s, there were signs of sustained economic growth, buoyed by positive terms of trade, increasing Official Development Aid (ODA), positive FDI and generally, positive growth rates. In the period from 1965 to 1973, the bulk of SSA experienced an average annual growth rate of 5% from 1965 to 1973. Over the same period, industrial production experienced an average annual increase of 10.4% (Tarp, 1993).

The point, however remains, and that is that, these economies were structured as unequal participants in the global economy and the slightest recession on the world market was bound to have devastating consequences on their economies. The collapse of real commodity prices, and the beginning of the oil crisis in the mid -1970s is generally recognized as the beginning of the current crisis. The failure to diversify the export base, continued reliance on one or two

commodities, deteriorating terms of trade and finally, sharply reduced access to international finance ensured that throughout the 1980s the economic situation took a downturn. Any hopes of sustainable economic growth were finally dashed by the onset of the debt crisis from 1982 when Mexico first declared a moratorium on its international debt repayments.

Second, and intricately linked to the first point, is the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) on the continent. SAPs is used here in its generic term to refer to the set of conditionalities and measures imposed on developing countries by the Bretton Woods institutions and individual donor countries, as a condition for further institutional funding. The SAPs philosophy has been characterized by reduction of state spending on social services - health and education particularly, devaluation of currencies, removal of subsidies from the important sectors of the economy, retrenchment of workers in the state sector. In short, the opening up of these economies to market forces, was seen as the solution to the crisis of underdevelopment in Africa.

It is now generally acknowledged these attempts to reintroduce the 'old utopia' - the self-regulating market - as the dominant power over society have neither succeeded in organizing society nor fostering any economic growth. On the contrary, over the last 20 years, the IMF/WB intervention in SSA has led to economic stagnation, widespread poverty and the disintegration of Africa's social fabric on an unmitigated scale. This is now very widely documented (Ghai, 1991; Onimode, 1992; Gibbon, et al, 1992; Mkandawire & Olukoshi, 1996; Olukoshi, 1998). As a result African economies have remained small, fragile, and characterized by extreme poverty. In fact, by the UN's own socio-economic indicators, Sub-Saharan Africa today is worse than it was at the time of political independence in the early 1960s. 33 of the 41 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) are to be found in Africa. The debt burden of this group alone had climbed to \$245 billion by 1996 (UN, HDR, 1999). The combined GDP of the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa - SSA (excluding South Africa), remains a paltry US \$300 billion. In fact, the real GDP has fallen by 42.5% between 1980-1990 (HDR, 1999)

Of the less developing countries, SSA has the lowest GDP per capita growth rate, lowest average life expectancy (52 years), highest

percentage of people living under international poverty line (Sparks, 1999) and the highest rate of infant mortality (92 per thousand). HIV/AIDS remain the most threatening health problem in the continent. 21 million people in SSA have the HIV virus. This constitutes 70 % of all known HIV worldwide. 87% of world's AIDS infected children are to be found in Africa, and the continent accounts for 21 highest rates of HIV infection among the 15-49 years age group. The result is that in some countries, life expectancy has fallen well below 40 years.

The third development is of course, the unfolding nature of the processes of globalization. Globalization has become a catchword, associated with all kinds of meanings depending on the ideological trenches occupied by respective scholars. Some see it purely in economics terms, a revolution in the process of global production, particularly, the technology revolution, which has changed production system and global financial flows, thus creating the so-called global village. Others of course emphasize its socio-cultural aspects, the homogenization of cultures (McGrew, 1992; Robertson, 1992), and the Americanization of global tastes (Shaw, 1999).

For the purposes of this paper, we will however adopt Claude Ake's political economy based definition of globalisation - 'the march of capital all over the world in search of consumers and markets' (Ake, cit. in Tandon, 2000). In other words, it is the process of opening up the world market to the powerful global players, a project inevitably driven by the most powerful multinational corporations. To this extent therefore, it is correct to argue that there is nothing particularly new about globalisation, accumulation on a global scale ever since the industrial revolution in Britain, has been characterized by the march of capital all over the world in search of resources and markets.

But contemporary globalisation is more than that. It is also about growing structural differentiation globally (Nabudere, 2000). In other words, contemporary globalisation is propelled by contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, economic globalisation has unleashed productive forces throughout the world leading to expansion of markets, insertion of technology in the processes of production, and hence improvement of productive capacities, and massive increases in of profits for multinational corporations. On the other hand, it has tended to fragment, differentiate, and marginalize social forces and

countries incapable of catching with its processes. Uneven development long associated with capitalist expansion is probably the most visible trademark of globalisation in its contemporary form.

This of course has had a negative impact particularly on African states. While the global restructuring associated with globalisation has no doubt had some positive spin-offs, the predominant tendency however, has been the increasing marginalisation of the continent, declining resource base and the continued peripheralization of its economy. This marginalization and declining access to resources have in turn triggered off new struggles and intensified old contest over resources, engendering conflicts and wars of annihilation throughout the continent. Not surprisingly, globalisation has been marked by fratricidal wars in all corners of the continent- Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, and more recently, the ongoing conflict in the Great Lakes Region of Central and Eastern Africa.

The picture has been exacerbated by the crisis of governance in Sub-Saharan Africa. From about the mid 1970s, the continent has witnessed a proliferation of kleptocratic and predatory ruling elites that `have robbed and pillaged and broken all laws and all ethical norms with great abandon to acquire wealth... who seek access to power or those who have access to power so that they can corrupt the political order for personal gain at all costs...' (Mbeki, 1998b: 2). Acceleration of globalization and deregulation of markets have led to intense competition over dwindling resources, ultimately sharpening the predatory instincts of the continent's ruling elite. In a majority of countries in SSA, the predatory conversion of political power into economic wealth has been the norm rather than the exception.

To summarize therefore, as a consequence of the developments we have identified above, at the beginning of the 21st Century, Africa is the poorest region of the world, accounting for 1% of global GDP, 1.7% of world trade and 2% of world export, the largest population of HIV/AIDS, the most indebted and aid dependent continent, and with half the population living on less than a dollar a day. These developments have no doubt entrenched the marginalisation of the continent.

To return to NEPAD therefore, African Renaissance and now NEPAD are seen as Africa's programmatic response to the crisis we have outlined above. Thus to the extent that NEPAD is seen as a programme of confronting the question of underdevelopment and economic decay of the continent, then it is indeed a very revolutionary idea. For in this sense, it does introduce a new agenda for Africa. It is a statement of commitment and determination to address the continent's underdevelopment and marginalisation.

The NEPAD: Structure and Programme

NEPAD is a product of two initiatives: the one, the Millennium Africa Recovery Programme (MAP) initiated by Presidents Mbeki (South Africa); Obasanjo (Nigeria) and Bouteflika (Algeria), at the request of the OAU in the aftermath of the Okinawa G8 meeting in July 2000. The other, the Omega Plan, initiated by president Wade of Senegal and presented to the Francophone Summit in Cameroon in January 2001. In July, MAP and Omega Plan were consolidated as a single initiative and presented to 37th Ordinary Session in Lusaka where it was formally adopted as Africa's strategy for achieving sustainable development under the title of New African Initiative (NAI). In October 2001, at the Implementation Committee of the Heads of State in Abuja, a revised NAI document was presented as the new framework for sustainable development and renamed the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). NEPAD was thus presented as Africa's own and owned initiative

It must be pointed out from the outset that there is nothing fundamentally new or original about NEPAD. These questions have preoccupied African minds over the last 25 years. NEPAD is in this sense a successor to three main initiatives starting with the UN Economic Commission for Africa's (ECA) *Revised Framework of principles for the Implementation of the new International Order* in 1976. The Framework proposed a development agenda based on the following principles – self-reliance, self-sustainment, democratization and equity. The ECA's *Revised Framework* gave birth to the *Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980 –2000*, and in 1989, ECA once again published the *African Alternative framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes For Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP)*. A reading of AAF-SAP

reveals striking parallels with NEPAD's strategic framework. AAF-SAP, like NEPAD called for human centered development, democratization, accountability, and transformation of Africa's production structure, regional integration and domestic resource mobilisation. What NEPAD appears to have added to this list is its 'New Partnership' with the North. I will come back to this later in the paper.

NEPAD's programme is based on a three-pronged strategy as follows:

Preconditions for development

- 1. Peace, Security, Democracy and Political Governance*
- 2. Economic and Corporate Governance, Focusing on Public Finance Management.*
- 3. Regional Cooperation and Integration.*

Priority Sectors

- 1. Infrastructure*
- 2. Information and Communications Technology*
- 3. Human Development and poverty reduction, focusing on health and education*
- 4. Agriculture*
- 5. Promoting diversification of production and exports, focusing on market access for African exports to industrialized countries*

Mobilising resources

- 1. Increasing domestic private savings*
- 2. Improved management of public revenue and expenditure to raise public savings*
- 3. Enhancing inflows of external resources via expanded debt relief, increased ODA flows as well as private flows (including from expatriates)*

Stephen Gelb, coordinator of the original South Africa's contribution to the MAP document argues that improved governance will strengthen weak African states, while regional cooperation and integration will increase cross-border trade and investments within Africa as well as

improving competitiveness. He further asserts that developments in 'priority areas' will reverse African marginalisation and lay the basis for sustainable long-term development. It is acknowledged that success in the first two areas will require 'mobilisation of resources' from within the continent as well as abroad. To the best of my knowledge, nobody disputes the idea that Africa needs improved governance. In fact it is about time our people enjoyed such basic rights such as human rights, political space, rule of law, etc. How good governance automatically translates into growth, economic regeneration and global competitiveness is not quite clear from Gelb's contribution. Moreover, the assumption that governance improvement is essential to increasing resource flows from the industrialized world should not just be appropriated uncritically.

Be that as it may, how these objectives are to be achieved have recently been fleshed out in two documents - *Towards the Implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development* issued in June 2002; and *Summary of the NEPAD Actions and Plans* issued in July 2002. These documents, however, remain rather vague on specificities. For example, the NEPAD framework for achieving good economic and corporate governance recommends the following course of action plans:

- *Establish the identified good economic and corporate practices in each member country*
- *Assess each country's level of compliance with minimally acceptable codes and standard with a view to documenting the nature, extent and causes of any gaps.*
- *Identify and satisfy the capacity building requirements of the public service and private sector with a view to addressing the gaps.*
- *Undertake the appraisal of corporate governance practices in each country.*
- *Review economic laws and regulations etc, and streamline those prone to encourage corrupt practices.*
- *Characterize through national opinion survey and other practices the nature, extent, and causes of corruption in each country, etc.*
- *Establish peer review mechanisms to promote adherence to sound and generally accepted codes and standards of good economic and corporate governance.*

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On agriculture, the following strategies have been recommended to address the problems of access to markets:

- *Adoption of macroeconomic policies aimed at expanding trade through liberalized exchange rate policies, price stability and promotion of investments*
- *Making sound legislation and establishing regulatory framework for government trade and export promotion.*
- *Applying reform related to trade liberalization to boost efficiency and competitiveness for domestic producers, privatization and promoting viable and vibrant private sector.*
- *Providing sound policies, incentives and enabling environment for promoting private sector sale.*
- *Promoting regional integration by removing obstacles to cross border trade investment.*
- *Harmonizing activities of relevant government agencies in Africa.*
- *Industrial countries should allow African exports free access to their markets through adopting more broad based preference geared to the region's need.*
- *Promoting cooperation between African countries and developed countries benefiting from current conventional frames between the two sides.*

And the proposed action plans include among others, the following

- *Review of current investment and export codes*
- *Fostering measures to increase openness to trade (average tariff rates, eliminating hidden barriers, flexible exchange rate)*
- *Establishing road and railway networks, etc*
- *Undertaking activities to promote the private sector including enterprise of the informal sector*
- *Developing an African network among trade focal points, etc.*

Furthermore, the documents identify the following projects for fast tracking:

- ***Africa Exporters and Importers Directory:** To develop a detailed African directory of importers especially from the*

- private sector classified by country and commodity, and establishing new techniques to deliver proper marketing strategies. (Source of Finance: EU, United States and Japan)*
- ***Trade Points Network:*** *To connect trade points established on national levels and to provide information necessary to support regional and external trade policies. (Source of Finance: ODA through Donors)*
 - ***Enhancing Africa's Aid capacity project:*** *The Project to Assist African countries to participate as effectively as possible in future multi-lateral discussion on trade facilitation and evaluating the potential benefits of closer multilateral cooperation especially with WTO. (Source of Finance: WTO and UNCTAD through JITAP – Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme).*
 - ***Capacity Building:*** *The project to be developed with the involvement of RECs, the AU Policy Analysis Support Unit (PASU) and Africa Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the African Development Bank (ADB). (Source of Funding: African Governments to be committing USD340 million from 2002 to 2006).*
 - ***Harmonization of African Rules of Origin:*** *This project to harmonize rules of origin at the continental level with the goal of producing 'made in Africa' products. The project is supposed to produce regional harmonized rules of origin agreements and enhancing the understanding of African government officials to the European rules of origin. (Source of Funding: EU, WTO, UNCTAD, WCO)*
 - ***Africa e-Commerce Project:*** *It aims to provide a detailed information on the commodities being traded through creating a website by chosen country. (Source of Funding: WTO, EU, OECD, G8 that can provide technical assistance).*

Similar Action Plans and fast tracked projects are identified for all the strategic sectors outlined in the NEPAD programme document. Thus in each sector, NEPAD provides a list of *issues and problems; strategies to address the problems and action plans.*

Management Structure of the NEPAD Process

NEPAD's management structure is organized around three tiers, the Implementation Committee, the Steering Committee and the Secretariat. These are composed as follows:

- ***The Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee:*** chaired by President Obasanjo (Nigeria) with presidents Bouteflika (Algeria) and Wade (Senegal) as vice-chairs. It comprises 15 states, three states per OAU region including the three initiating states – South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Senegal and Egypt. Its role is to set policies, priorities and the programme of Action. It also acts as the marketing and fundraising arm of NEPAD.
- ***The Steering Committee:*** Consists of 20 members, two personal representatives of the initiating members and one representative of non-initiating members. Its function is to develop terms of reference for the projects and programmes.
- ***The Secretariat:*** Consists of a small core of full-term staff, Steering Committee Chairperson (not full-term); General Manager Communications; Chief Operating Officers, and a supporting staff. The function of the Secretariat is mainly coordination and administration.
- ***Task Forces:*** A number of Task Forces have also been set up which are responsible for specific issues within the NEPAD programme. These are Economic and Corporate Governance; Capacity Building for Peace and Security; Central Bank and Finance Standards; Agriculture and Market Access.

Quite apart from the institutional ambiguity that centers on the relationship of NEPAD to the African Union, similar ambiguities are discernible between the three tiers of the organizational structure. It is not quite clear how authority is distributed between the two bodies responsible for implementation of the programme. Furthermore, it is obvious that there is relatively limited capacity both at the Steering Committee and at the Secretariat.

Given this scenario, it is therefore quite legitimate to pose the question of who is responsible for leadership, coordination and implementation of the projects? This is not quite obvious from the NEPAD document. As we have indicated above, the projects are wide ranging – covering areas as diverse as research, analysis, project planning, implementation and administration of the projects, etc. The document is deliberately vague on these questions. At times the impression is created that NEPAD will be merely supervising the work of bureaucrats in member states, such is the case with the Peer Review Mechanism. At other times, it is assumed that task team coordinators who will be appointed for each project will be responsible for driving the project. And as if this is not serious enough, there appears to be lack of clarity between the respective roles of NEPAD steering Committee and the AU secretariat. NEPAD appears cast in the role of a parallel organization to the African Union.

NEPAD: A Tentative Critique

It is generally acknowledged that the NEPAD process remains broadly embryonic. The NEPAD document remains rather broad and the programme rather general. Admittedly there is still a vast amount of detail to be worked into the programme. This section therefore offers a tentative critique of the structure and programme as outlined above.

First, it would seem that the NEPAD programme lacks a coherent strategy of prioritizing what is doable and what is not possible within the short and medium-term. The NEPAD programme lends credence to the criticism that it is a highly ambitious project without a clear focus. The programme of action is full of generalities, deliberate vagueness, and at times, long-winded statements, which sound more, like a wish list rather than concrete strategies around clearly thought out programmes. It would seem that the authors of the project have certainly bitten too much and it is not just quite clear how they propose to chew it successfully.

Second, at the ideological level, the programme appears very much the pure world of technocrats. The programmes and project design have so far been driven by technocrats (drawn predominantly from bureaucrats from participating countries and `experts' from institutions of global financial governance). While the politicians are pointing in the direction

of something new, the technocrats remain deeply embedded in the language of international institutions of economic governance and largely underpinned by the vision that no world beyond the 'market' is possible.

A more substantive criticism relates to the question of resource mobilisation. NEPAD acknowledges, quite correctly, I suppose, that one of the conditions for sustainable development is the whole question of resource allocation. It is conceded that in order to meet the projected 7% annual growth rate, the bulk of the resource gap of \$64billion will have to come from external sources. As we have shown above, of the six fast tracked projects on market access, five will depend on external funding, mostly from ODA and EU.

- *22% of the funding for the land management and water control project is expected to come from ODA.*
- *8% of the funding for the Rural Infrastructure and Market Access project is expected from ODA.*
- *43% of funding for the agricultural productivity and sustainability project is expected from ODA.*
- *20% of the funding for the Food Supply and Hunger Reduction Project is similarly expected to come from ODA.*

Why does NEPAD place so much faith on external funding against a historical background of declining ODA over the last decade. According to WB figures, ODA to SSA have fallen from 5.7% of the GNP in 1993 to 4.1 of the GNP in 1998. Nor has private capital flows demonstrated any real interest in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, over the last eight years improved governance and appropriate macro-economic policies so often demanded by Bretton Woods institutions does not seem to have attracted requisite amounts of ODA and FDI's to South Africa.

So why then should Africa's recovery plan be predicated on the assumption that those who control foreign capital are just about to experience a change of heart? Yes, NEPAD is certainly correct in the assertion that Africa on its own cannot generate enough resources to implement the NEPAD project. The question, however, is; under what political conditions does NEPAD leverage external funding? This brings me to the question of 'new' partnership with the North.

This question goes to the very heart of a critique of the idea of a New Partnership in NEPAD. What kind of partnership with the North is being proposed? NEPAD envisages various partnerships between Africa and the industrialized countries as well as multilateral institutions – United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa; The Africa-Euro Summit’s Cairo Plan of Action, the World Bank Strategic Partnership; IMF led Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, etc. These partnerships have always existed between the South and the North, and the relationship has historically been that of dependence on the North. What is likely to be new is not quite spelt out. Just what kind of partnership are we talking about? These are indeed very political questions. Yet political considerations, the balance of forces, globally and in the continent, do not appear to have been brought into the equation here.

Yes, it is important that we engage the institutions of globalization, and graft our developmental agenda onto the possibilities offered by the world system. But this needs to be given much more serious thought. We have to, for example, rethink the kinds of relations we propose with our northern partners. Debt reduction, access to markets, trade and environment are indeed seriously contested political issues. Self-imposed conditionalities along the lines suggested by NEPAD (Gelb, 2002) cannot be the basis of a viable long-term partnership. The current uncritical preoccupations with IFIs are unlikely to alter the age-old relationship of dependency between the South and the North.

The Political in NEPAD

One of the significant areas of consensus reached by African leaders was the agreement to take responsibility for:

- *Strengthening mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution*
- *Promoting and protecting democracy and human rights*
- *Restoring and maintaining macroeconomic stability*
- *Instituting transparent legal regulatory framework for financial markets*

- *Revitalizing and extending education, technical training and health services, with high priority to HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases.*
- *Building the capacity of African states to set and enforce the legal framework and maintain law and order*
- *Promoting the development of infrastructure and its diversification into agro-industries and manufacturing.*

Much of what is proposed here is predicated on a substantial degree of political will by respective political classes in the participating countries. The assumption that there is a sufficient degree of political will among African leaders is not being adequately interrogated. It is one thing to sign a declaration of intent, it is quite another to follow these laudable intentions through to their logical conclusions. The experience of the last forty years casts enough doubt that there is indeed sufficient political will to carry through these objectives. NEPAD is surprisingly silent on the ability of African leaders to meet these commitments, nor is there anything said about the nature of the Africa states.

Part of the problem of political will is directly linked to the character of our ruling classes. Over the last three decades, the majority of African states have been ruled by a horde of parasitic non-hegemonic classes, who have consistently lacked the capacity to establish some semblance of legitimacy. Thus they have increasingly relied on repressive apparatuses rather than representative institutions as instruments of governance.

Patrimonial authoritarianism associated with this kind of rule has gradually fostered a kleptocratic and predatory ruling elite whose most distinctive trademark has been the systematic deployment of the state for predatory activities. At the beginning of the 1990s, there was some degree of optimism that we were indeed witnessing the birth of a different generation of African leadership. After the DRC debacle, the recent Uganda presidential elections, and most recently, Ethiopia/Eritrea clashes; all that is left of this 'new' leadership is South Africa.

Can NEPAD rely on this class, to borrow an old phrase, to commit class suicide and subordinate their narrow interests to the broader common

good? Or is this class capable of reinventing itself? If not, how does NEPAD propose to tame this predatory character of the majority of our ruling elite? Or put differently, can NEPAD tame the African State? This assumption that the nature of the Africa state, and what it has historically been deployed to perform, can change overnight remains largely unchallenged.

The assumption that the African state, majority of them economically weak, and firmly in the hands of predatory classes is capable of carrying through the NEPAD mission is probably the biggest flaw in the current thinking.

Bringing the State Back In

This brings me to the central question underpinning the NEPAD project, and this is, the kind of state capable of achieving some of these objectives and what kind of forces have the capacity and vision to occupy the frontline in this struggle. Ideally the idea confronting the NEPAD project is about bringing back the state in a very creative way

The idea of a developmental state straddles the intellectual traditions and practices of the last two centuries. At the centre of its theoretical elaboration is the idea that late starters needed the intervention of the state to achieve industrialisation and competitive penetration of the global market. The much heralded NICs success in deploying the state to tame domestic and international forces and harness them to national economic interests according to Hoogvelt (1996), was just but one in a long chain of what has been called 'governing the market' to achieve rapid industrialisation.

Developmental regionalism is simply an extension of a developmental state at a regional level. It is based on the recognition that successful participation on the global economy may be achieved through membership of regional trading blocks. It is argued that individual African economies lack the capacity to cope with the challenges of globalization and therefore, need to come together to enhance their bargaining power vis a vis, MNCs, IFIs, developed nations, and of course, the international institutions of governance. Through regional blocks, it is hoped that states can control that which they are not capable of achieving nationally.

The state has to provide the political leadership and economic incentives, and bureaucratic regulation to prioritize those specific interests or sectors capable of achieving global competitive advantage. So given the fact that Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are likely to constitute the building blocks of the African Economic Community, a regional developmentalist approach does indeed offer a probable way forward.

The crucial question, however, is what political class is capable of driving the NEPAD project? In a speech at Gallagher Estate a couple of years ago, President Mbeki appeared to be concerned with the same question:

'...Surely, there must be politicians and business people, youth and women activists, religious leaders artists and professional from Cape to Cairo, from Madagascar to Cape Verde, who are sufficiently enraged by Africa's condition in the world to want to join the mass crusade for Africa's renewal?'

It would seem to be that this is the gist of the question: How do we assemble this renaissance brigade? Ironically, Mbeki's renaissance brigade was conspicuous by its absence at the African Union launch last July in Durban.

I think this is the weakness of NEPAD. It might fail precisely because it has ignored the fundamental question that economic renewal and the integration of Africa into a global process on equitable terms is fundamentally a political question. How we engage the IFIs and the whole question of bringing the state back in remains intricately intertwined. It simply is not a question of *improving governance* and attracting requisite levels of FDIs and multilateral commitments from the northern partners. I think the critical question is one of engaging the institutions of globalization, and subordinating them to our developmental agenda. But this is a question of political clout and political will. Do we have the clout? If we don't, how do we go about creating the conditions for it?

I think what would need to be done is for the Africa Union to open up political space for these debates, and to establish appropriate

institutions to provide intellectual leadership on these issues. To provide a political environment which will enable ordinary people to enter these terrains contestations with their independent political demands.

Let me conclude on a rather optimistic note. The birth of NEPAD offers new opportunities. However, there should be no doubt that this will be a seriously contested terrain. I do not imagine for a moment that the North is likely to fold its hands like Pontius Pilate and let the South succeed without a spirited battle. Therefore we might as well say goodbye to the idea of partnership with the North.

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