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Governing the African Developmental Process: The Challenge of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

Adebayo O. Olukoshi

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Adebayo O. Olukoshi

Executive Secretary
CODESRIA
(Council for the Development of Social
Science Research in Africa)
Dakar
Senegal

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Introduction

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been hailed as perhaps the boldest new initiative in recent times on the appropriate path which the African continent should be taking towards its long-term development. Coming as it does within the context of the barely disguised admission of the failure of some twenty years of IMF/World Bank structural adjustment and the donor regime of conditionality/cross-conditionality that was integral to the promotion of the neo-liberal agenda on the continent, it appears to offer a new basis for some hope that Africa may yet be able to rediscover the path to sustainable development. This is all the more so as the NEPAD programme is presented not only as an African initiative in origin but also an African-driven project in content and direction, an apparent departure from the experience of the adjustment years which is, therefore, for the very reason of its alleged African "ownership", expected to strengthen the prospects for the achievement of the goals of the initiative. And yet, unlike the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 which, as an African initiative too, stood in almost complete contrast to the Berg Report of 1981 and the IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programme that was built on it, the NEPAD document reflects many of the assumptions that underpinned the neo-liberal economic, social and political reform agenda for Africa during the 1980s and 1990s. The coincidence of diagnosis and prescription between NEPAD and the assumptions of neo-liberalism also sets it aside from the Lagos Plan of Action which, in economic content and direction, was clearly more structuralist and Keynesian. But perhaps more importantly, the coincidence between NEPAD and the central tenets of neo-liberalism raises the question of the extent to which the initiative can serve as the foundation for a new optimism about Africa's future and this is an issue that cannot be treated lightly given the highly limited record of the orthodox structural adjustment framework.

Although defined as an Africa-owned programme, NEPAD is not without its own self-prescribed "conditionalities". Described as "initiatives" in the various NEPAD documents, they are considered as prerequisites both for the successful implementation of the goals of the programme and for the long-term sustainability of the development process in Africa. And unlike the conditionality of the IMF and the World Bank, these prerequisites for the success of NEPAD are presented – in spite of their uncanny resemblance to the "political conditionalities" and governance

reforms which Western donors devised following the end of the Cold War - as self-identified and self-imposed by African leaders who, by the same token, commit themselves, their countries and peoples to the strict observation of the conditions both individually and jointly. Within the logic of NEPAD, African adherence to the pre-requisites for the successful implementation of the programme is expected to be rewarded with material support from the developed countries and international financial institutions. This reciprocal logic whereby self-subscription/self-adherence to "best" international economic and political practices is traded for international financial support is integral to the entire concept of partnership that underpins NEPAD. Some critics of the principle and/or practice of the externally-imposed conditionality/cross-conditionality clauses of the last two decades have welcomed the self-defined and self-imposed conditions spelt out in NEPAD as representing a new, more meaningful stage of policy ownership that would improve the prospects for reform sustainability in Africa. This is an issue to which we will return later in this paper.

Four broad areas are covered under the initiatives that are built into NEPAD and defined as prerequisites for the success of the programme. They are the Peace and Security Initiative; the Democracy and Political Governance Initiative; the Economic Governance Initiative; and the Sub-Regional and Regional Approaches to Development. The Democracy and Political Governance Initiative centres on the place of democracy and "good" political governance in the contemporary African quest for sustainable development. It incorporates a commitment by African leaders to create and consolidate basic processes and practices of governance that are in line with the principles of transparency, respect for human rights, promotion of the rule of law, accountability, and integrity; support initiatives that foster good governance; respect for "global" standards of democracy, including political pluralism, multiparty politics, the right of workers to form unions, and fair and open elections organised periodically; work through the leadership of African countries to institutionalise all the commitments that ensure adherence to the core political values enshrined in NEPAD; respect the basic standards of democratic behaviour; and identify existing institutional weaknesses and mobilise the resources and expertise necessary for redressing them. Sustainable development is considered inconceivable without the emplacement of an appropriate politico-governance frame within which the development project can be undertaken. African leaders, through

the NEPAD document have, therefore, perhaps for the first time, taken an open, collective commitment to promote and abide by the principles of "good" governance, complete with a "peer review" mechanism and a code of conduct. This commitment is seen as being inseparable from other related commitments to promote peace and security, carry out capacity-building and institutional reforms, and improve economic governance. It is, therefore, on the democracy and political governance component of NEPAD that this paper will primarily focus attention.

On the face of things, the ideas and ideals spelt out in the NEPAD document cover a whole host of issues and concerns in a manner that is still very general as to appear to offer as many interests as possible something to hold on to, however small. In this connection, the democracy and political governance component of the document would seem to address many of the concerns that have been at the core of the struggle for the reform of the management of political power, the political space and public life in Africa. In reality, however, the main thrust of the NEPAD ideas and ideals, as well as the economic governance framework within which they are defined, are lacking in the kind of basic social anchor that can ensure that the democracy and governance proposals that are made are moved from the realm of the *pro forma* and technocratic/managerial to the arena of the political as a living experience marked by contestations and negotiations among the bearers of competing interests. This paper suggests, therefore, that the democracy and governance initiative of NEPAD raises more questions than it answers and, on a more critical examination, seems designed more to pander to a donor audience than responding to or representing the concerns of the domestic socio-political forces in the vanguard of the struggle for the reform of the African political space and developmental agenda.

NEPAD: Origin, Context and Structure

The process leading to the formulation and adoption of NEPAD could, in its remote origins, be traced to the arrival of the post-Apartheid era in African politics and the widespread feeling that with the task of continental liberation from foreign and minority rule having been completed, the next challenge which Africans now needed to face frontally was that of promoting economic development. Yet, the challenge of

economic advancement was not one which could be realised effectively if the most basic conditions did not exist for it to be organised. For this reason, attention was focused on the rash of conflicts wracking different regions of the African continent in the aftermath of the end of the East-West Cold War. Some of these conflicts assumed genocidal dimensions while in other cases, they resulted in the collapse of central governmental authority as competing armed groups staked their claims for national-territorial control. Without exception, the conflicts also resulted in a massive, perhaps unprecedented displacement of the civilian population in the zones that were affected. Indeed, many of the attributes which came to be associated with the new wars in the contemporary international system were drawn from the post-Cold War African experience: the overwhelmingly intra-state origins and nature of the conflicts which also implicated large numbers of civilians as fighters as opposed to professional armies facing each other; the prosecution of the conflicts largely through the use of light weapons whose widespread proliferation had also become a significant, defining feature; the recruitment and deployment of large numbers of children and women as combatants; the conscious terrorisation of rural/civilian populations through the use of extreme violence against them; and the massive humanitarian emergencies accompanying the conflicts.

Any hope that post-Cold War Africa would emerge as a major or even significant beneficiary from the much-trumpeted peace dividend that was to be heralded by the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) came to nothing. On the contrary, the African continent seemed to become a vast field for the harvesting of all-manner of conflicts, some new, others carried over from the Cold War era. More than this, the appetite of the international community for intervening to assist African countries with the resolution of the conflicts seemed to have diminished considerably. Indeed, in a cynical display of selective indifference by powers that were themselves heavily implicated in the unfolding drama of violence engulfing the continent, Africans were increasingly called upon to take the responsibility for tackling their political problems themselves as Afro-pessimist perspectives gained the upper hand in most Western capitals and policy circles. Furthermore, and contrary to all expectations that the potential redeployment of resources away from the Cold War-induced arms race to other non-military purposes would result in a significant increase in the quantum of official development assistance (ODA) from which Africa could expect to benefit, the trend

with regard to official aid was not encouraging at all. In fact, ODA seemed set for a course of long-term decline as is evidenced by the decline in the foreign aid receipts flowing to the continent from some US$17.2 billion in 1990 to US$12.3 billion in 2001. Even at that, the assistance on offer was increasingly accompanied by a host of ever more stringent and complex conditionalities. Taken together with the continuing adverse terms of trade facing the African continent and the decline in the continent's share of foreign direct investment receipts and international trade, the outlook for economic development and political stability did not seem to be very bright. It was clear, if it had ever been in doubt in any quarters on the continent, that unless Africans were themselves ready to take on the task of developing their continent, nobody else would rise to the challenge. The post-Cold war distancing of some of the leading powers in the international system from Africa's problems, stated as clearly as it was in the communique issued at the end of the Denver, Colorado summit of the Group of Seven (G7) countries, became a direct source of challenge to the African political and policy elite.

It is against the background of the foregoing that attempts began to be made within Africa to promote initiatives aimed at addressing the plethora of post-Apartheid, post-liberation problems facing the continent. The first highly publicised effort in this direction was made by Thabo Mbeki, the South African President, when in 1998, he gave a major speech calling for an African Renaissance that would ensure that the 21st century is the African century. That speech stirred a considerable amount of discussion across the continent and it was followed in 2000 with the launching, almost simultaneously, of two new initiatives aimed, in their declared objectives, at turning the table of underdevelopment and conflict. The first, known as the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) was associated with President Mbeki of South Africa, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, and President Abdulaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt joining them later. The second initiative, known as the Plan Omega, was launched by President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal. Both initiatives were presented as African projects designed to tackle the problems of socio-economic development and political instability confronting the continent. Given the broadly similar goals that underpinned the two initiatives, an effort was made to consolidate them into one plan which was initially known as the New Africa Initiative (NAI). The NAI, packaged as Africa's strategy for achieving "sustainable development in the 21st century", was

formally presented to other African leaders and adopted by the Lusaka Summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which took place in July 2001. A mechanism for the implementation of the initiative was also set in motion.

On 23 October, 2001, at a meeting of the Implementation Committee of Heads of State that took place in Abuja, Nigeria, the NAI was re-named NEPAD on the basis of a revised document which, nevertheless, embodied the " … the philosophy, priorities, and implementation modalities of the (New Africa) Initiative". As the new framework for governing the developmental aspirations of the continent, it was also presented as a collective African response to the call for an African-driven effort transform the fortunes of the continent for the better. No opportunity has been lost since its announcement to market the programme outside the continent, especially in the leading donor circles in the West, as the basis on which African will be moved forward in the years ahead. The fact that the initiative was introduced at about the same time as the decision was made to transform the OAU into the African Union (AU) seemed to suggest the emergence of a new political will to forge ahead, through a revamped spirit of collective determination and responsibility, to address the problems militating against the development of the continent. To cite the notion which has been employed by some of the leaders most closely associated with the initiative, NEPAD is considered as the African equivalent of the Marshall Plan that enabled Europe, with American financing, to recover speedily from the devastating consequences of the Second World War.

For the purpose of the management of the NEPAD process, an Implementation Committee of Heads of state chaired by President Obasanjo, with Presidents Bouteflika and Wade as vice chairmen, has been established. The Committee draws representation from all the sub-regions of the continent and is expected to meet once every four months. Among other things, its main functions include the marketing of the initiative in order to garner support for it around the world and the mobilisation of financial resources for the realisation of its objectives. A Co-ordinating NEPAD Secretariat was also created with its offices located in Pretoria, South Africa. Given the central importance attached to the speedy resolution of the conflicts raging in different parts of the continent, the members of the Implementation Committee decided to set up a Sub-Committee on Peace and Security chaired by South Africa and with membership drawn from Algeria, Gabon, Mali and Mauritius. Several task

forces were also set up with responsibility for specific issues/areas within the NEPAD agenda. These are the task force on Capacity Building for Peace and Security for which the OAU/AU was identified as the lead agency; the task force on Economic and Corporate Governance which has the Economic Commission for Africa as the lead agency; the task force on Infrastructure which has the African Development Bank (AfDB) as lead agency; the task force on Central Bank and financial standards which also has the AfDB as lead agency; and the task force on agriculture and market access which has the OAU/AU as lead agency. One area of institutional ambiguity still remains however, and it centres on the relationship between the NEPAD Secretariat and the African Union project. The issues involved are too many and too complicated to be exhaustively explored here; I simply flag the problem here only for the purpose of drawing attention to it.

The Programme of Action set out within the NEPAD document itself is extensive and it covers numerous socio-economic aspirations with a target date of 2015 for the realisation of most of them. These include: a reduction by half of the proportion of Africans living in absolute poverty; an increase in the enrolment of children of school-going age; the reduction of infant mortality levels by two thirds; the improvement of access to reproductive health facilities and services; the elimination of all dimensions of gender inequality side by side with the empowerment of women; an improvement in the information technology profile of the continent; the reversal of the brain drain; increased investment in the human resources of the African continent; the achievement of debt relief for African economies; a frontal attack on the HIV/AIDS pandemic ravaging the continent; and the reversal of the loss of Africa's environmental resources. In order to enhance the prospects for the attainment of these and other concerns built into the NEPAD framework, all African countries which have developed other initiatives of one kind or the other were called upon to integrate these into the new pan-African initiative. For the realisation of the objectives of the initiative, it has been suggested by the authors of the NEPAD document that the continent will require a growth rate of at least 7 per cent annually and an injection of US$64 billion in financial resources per annum.

On the face of things, the NEPAD would seem to represent a major effort at opening a new era in Africa's post-independence economic and political governance. After some two decades of the loss of the policy initiative and terrain to the Bretton Woods

institutions which, with broad support from the donor community, assumed the status of offshore governments that determined the direction and parameters of policy through ever-intrusive conditionality clauses, it certainly was a welcome development that African governments were once again attempting to re-enter the arena of policy formulation. The fact that the NEPAD initiative was accompanied by an accent on some of the basic developmental issues that ought, under normal circumstances, to be at the heart of policy-making, meant that it was able to attract more than the fleeting attention of all those concerned at the diversion of Africa's efforts away from the long-term goals of savings, investment, growth and equity. Not a few commentators have argued that 20 years of orthodox structural adjustment and the unhealthy obsession with short-term macro-economic indicators that was integral to the neo-liberal reform agenda have resulted in a deep-seated maladjustment of economies that will require a considerable investment of energy and resources to correct. Furthermore, among those students of African development who have articulated the viewpoint that no socio-economic transformation of the continent would ever be possible without a determined effort to sort out the domestic political dysfunctionalities facing most countries, the willingness of the leaders who were championing the NEPAD cause to bring the issue of governance to the top of the agenda represented a step in the right direction. And yet, on closer examination, some of the high hopes generated by the NEPAD document would seem to be seriously undermined by the essentially neo-liberalist pitch of its economic blueprint and the limited scope of its political agenda which is cast in the kinds of governance managerialism that has become the hallmark of neo-liberal political economy. We shall return to this critique in greater detail later in the paper.

Myth and Reality in the Promotion of NEPAD

In the bid to market the NEPAD framework as a credible basis for tackling the myriad of problems facing contemporary Africa, numerous myths have been woven which, while they may serve short-term ends, represent a fundamental, sometimes even deliberate misreading of Africa's recent history. As they begin to gain the status of truths because they are repeated often, the myths also represent a lost opportunity to build on past achievements, as well as to learn from the mistakes that were made. For this reason, these myths cannot be left unchallenged. Perhaps the most

important of the myths, and one on which the entire tone and tenor of the NEPAD document rests, is the idea that 40 years of independence in Africa has been characterised by a universal and uniformly dismal socio-economic record which the initiative is now designed to correct once and for all. The approach whereby the developmental experience of the pre-adjustment independence years is caricatured as a justification for a new set of policy prescriptions, or a new policy direction is not unique to NEPAD. Indeed, the Berg Report which served as the basis for the launching of the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s was premised on a similar approach. Like Berg, the authors of the NEPAD document painted a tendentious picture of economic despondency which does not correspond to the actual performance of African countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, whether it be in the areas of economic growth rates, savings or investment, or with regard to the progress that was made in expanding access to the social and physical infrastructure integral to the goal of improving the life chances and opportunities of the citizenry, African countries recorded performances that were above the global average. Economic growth levels, for example, were, on average, around 6 per cent, a far cry from the experiences of the 1980s and 1990s where, within the framework of the adjustment programmes of the Bretton Woods institutions, episodic growth rates of 4 per cent were celebrated as a big success on account of their rarity and this in a context where population growth rates are well above 3 per cent and significant reversals are taking place daily in the health and educational status of Africans.

Rather than dismiss the first two decades of African independence out of hand or simply lumping that period in an undifferentiated manner with the adjustment decades of the 1980s and 1990s, the authors of the NEPAD document should have made an attempt to distil from the policy objectives, principles and instruments employed in the 1960s and 1970s to inform their prescriptions for the continent in the face of the challenges thrown up by the subsequent experience of prolonged socio-economic decline and heightened political instability. To be sure, the first two decades of independence were not without their own problems, not least with regard to the tendency towards policy rigidities which resulted in a gradual accumulation of distortions that finally brought the post-colonial model of development to its knee. Furthermore, the quest for a more stable foundation for economic development was undermined by a host of structural imbalances which the policy instruments that

were employed at the time did not fully succeed in tackling. In fact, even the ambitious growth and savings targets that were set at independence were not fully met. On top of these, social inequalities expanded in tandem with the onset of political authoritarianism. Yet, few will doubt that the thrust of policy during the 1960s and 1970s was clearly developmentalist. Failing to recognise this, and opting to denigrate that period in Africa's economic history for the partisan objective of securing the neo-liberal agenda for market reforms, the Berg Report and the adjustment policies which flowed from it ended up throwing out the baby with the bath water. It is this same approach which informs the formulation of the NEPAD document, only this time, the appropriate lessons from the failure of structural adjustment are not being learnt.

Clearly, it is not evident that the case for the necessity of NEPAD or its authenticity could be strengthened by the denigration of previous records of relatively successful governance of the developmental process. Yet, it is this one-sided interpretation of the recent history of Africa and a systematic amnesia in the deployment of facts that underpins other efforts at promoting the new initiative. In this connection, another myth that has been developed around the NEPAD initiative centres on the claim that it represents the first *comprehensive* programme to emerge from *within* Africa for resolving the developmental problems of the continent. We do not need, however, to look too far or deep into history to challenge the veracity of this claim. Throughout the decade of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, for example, African leaders themselves adopted or had brought to their attention, a number of initiatives developed *in* Africa and, like NEPAD, aimed at addressing all dimensions of the multifaceted developmental challenges confronting the continent. These initiatives include:

i) The Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980 – 2000 and the Final Act of Lagos, 1980;

ii) Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER), 1986 – 1990;

iii) The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP), 1989;

iv) The African Charter for Popular Participation for Development, 1990; and

v) The Compact for African Recovery, 2000.

If, indeed, it is the case, as we have argued, that NEPAD is not really the first comprehensive initiative emanating from within Africa designed to tackle the continent's problems, the claim that it is the first truly African-owned framework for redressing the socio-economic and political difficulties of African countries is also one which certainly needs seriously to be tempered. For it is not obvious how, in terms of African ownership, the NEPAD document could be said to better placed than the other initiatives described in the preceding paragraph and which, in terms of origin, are hardly different from NEPAD having been designed for adoption by African heads of state and government. Indeed, considering that in this instance, the process leading up to the adoption of the NEPAD document mainly involved only a small group of African leaders and their equally small circle of advisers, some commentators have suggested that it is less imbued with the kinds of formal ownership claims which could be attributed to the Lagos Plan of Action, for example. This is quite apart from the fact that the document and its promoters seem to content themselves with the rhetoric of ownership as though its mere assertion is tantamount to its actual realisation and practice. It is also not to take into account the challenges of grounding policy into the domestic policy and political processes so that all claims to African ownership can stand to critical and rigorous scrutiny. As will be argued later in this lecture, NEPAD does not really grapple with the challenges of ownership in a manner that can strengthen confidence that its inauguration signals the emergence of a new era in the relationship between African countries and the donor community.

NEPAD has also been presented as the first truly market-friendly initiative to have emanated from African leaders. According to this viewpoint, whereas previous initiatives were premised on the assumption that the project of national, regional and continental development could only be undertaken with the state as the main focal point, NEPAD offers a creative framework for public-private partnership within parameters that are market friendly and which are capable not only of attracting private capital but also enhancing the participation of Africa in the processes and structures of globalisation from which it remains largely marginalised. This claim, like the previous ones, needs to be tempered too in order for the records to be set more accurately. There was nothing in the plethora of all the previous initiatives adopted prior to the launching of NEPAD that suggests that those blueprints were hostile to the market and the private sector. Indeed, without exception, all the initiatives

espoused a public-private partnership as the basis for the governance of the African economic development process. What sets NEPAD apart from the other initiatives, however, is its decisively neo-liberal economic bent and this, when compared to the Lagos Plan of Action or the African Charter for Popular Participation for Development, to cite two examples, constitutes a unique attribute of the programme. In other words, the uniqueness of NEPAD lies less in its accommodation of the market and the private sector as such and more in its wholesale embrace of the kinds of orthodox, narrowly focused market economic policy framework that underpinned the adjustment programmes pursued by the Bretton Woods institutions across Africa during the 1980s and 1990s. These programmes have been carried over into the 21st century through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) that African countries have been encouraged, one after the other, to adopt in order to qualify for bilateral and multilateral aid. The economic core of the PRSPs consists of orthodox structural adjustment policies.

Arguably, the essentially neo-liberal framework that informs the economic principles and direction spelt out in the NEPAD document represents a set back in the African quest for a return to the path of sustained economic growth and development. This is because the opportunities which exist for the promotion of heterodox economic policies for the recovery of African economies were not grasped in spite of the fact that, both from the experience of two decades of structural adjustment across the continent and from within the highest academic counsels of the World Bank, sufficient doubt had been created as to the appropriateness and efficacy of the structural adjustment framework. So deep-seated have the doubts been that the World Bank itself was to admit to errors – without taking responsibility as appropriate - and Joseph Stiglitz, whilst he was still the Chief Economist, argued the case repeatedly for the so-called Washington Consensus that sustained the adjustment framework to be transcended given its failure to deliver growth and development. Furthermore, considering the progress that had been made in placing the question of outright debt cancellation high on the agenda of the multilateral institutions and leading Western donors, it seemed strange, even from a strategic bargaining point of view, that all that the NEPAD document could call for was debt reduction. It is as if the experience that has been accumulated regarding the ineffectiveness of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative has not been sufficient to show the limitations of cosmetic palliatives.

Also, such crucial matters as the terms of trade of African countries which, if successfully redressed would have far-reaching, beneficial implications for the continent were not addressed. And yet, for an initiative which hopes to raise US$64 billion annually to finance the development of the continent, a correction in the terms of trade bias that the continent suffers could have yielded roughly the same amount in resources and, at the same time, eliminated the uncertainty of aid and foreign investment flows at the level that is projected. It is not at all evident that simply expanding market access for African exports will be sufficient to correct the huge costs arising from the declining terms of trade facing the continent or compensating for it. As has been argued by many scholars, the critical issue that confronts Africa today and which the authors of the NEPAD document did not take on board, is not so much the marginalisation of Africa from globalisation but the problematic manner in which the continent has been integrated into the contemporary world system. In all, in spite of the variety of myths that have been woven around NEPAD, it would seem to be fraught with shortcomings which, if not addressed, might block the realisation of its most basic objectives even on the terms on which they are outlined. As a further illustration of the difficulties with the conceptual framework of the initiative as it is presently structured, let us now proceed to undertake a detailed examination of the governance agenda which it outlined and the prospects which it offers for improving the framework for socio-economic development. This task is being undertaken in the understanding that the governance question is considered as a central, conditional factor in the unleashing of the developmental potentials of Africa.

The Roots of Africa's Contemporary Governance and Political Crises

African countries entered the period after the Second World War on the basis of a gradually intensifying popular mobilisation against continued colonial domination. The sources of the popular discontent against colonial rule were many but, in summary, they included a strong desire to overturn the affront against human liberty and the dignity of the African which colonialism represented; a generalised rejection

of the continued, racially-based segregation of opportunities for social advancement and access to resources, amenities and services; the increasingly untenable politico-administrative framework that denied the colonised full, unfettered participation and representation in the structures of governance; and the intensive draining of the resources of the colonies without a corresponding/commensurate investment in the development of their physical and social infrastructure, as well as their human resources. All of these concerns crystallised into a concrete political agenda and momentum for the decolonisation of Africa; they were also the critical platforms on which popular support for the anti-colonial struggle was mobilised. Indeed, as has been pointed out by many students of the African anti-colonial movement, the unity between the nationalist politicians who spearheaded the independence struggle and the popular social movements, including mass organisations of workers, peasants, students, and the urban poor, that sustained the struggle was built around these concerns. The promise of independence nationalism lay not only in discarding colonial rule and the broad-ranging exclusion on the basis of which it thrived but also opening up access to economic, social and political opportunities. In other words, the anti-colonial nationalist coalition was held together by the promise of freedom, unity and development. In this sense, the promise was at the core of the post-colonial social contract that linked state and society in the post-independence period.

On the whole, much of the first decade of independence was marked by efforts to give meaning to the social bargain that underpinned the nationalist anti-colonial struggle. Irrespective of whether they declared themselves as being socialist, free market, or mixed-economy in orientation, the independence governments all invested, without exception, in the expansion of the social and physical infrastructure of their countries in a manner which widened access to education, modern health facilities, transportation, housing, skills development, and employment on a scale that exceeded what colonialism was able to offer. For this purpose, and again irrespective of the ideological leanings which they professed, all of the independence governments reserved an important role for the state in the development process; so too did they undertake varying degrees of planning designed not only to improve the foundations of the economy but also to continually increase access to opportunities in a context of huge, pent-up demand. They were aided in this regard by the reasonably high levels of economic growth which most countries recorded during the first decade of independence and which, in virtually all countries, was above the rate

of population growth. Indeed, as noted earlier, when the average growth rates recorded by African countries over the period from the 1960s to the early 1970s are compared with those that were experienced during the structural adjustment years of the 1980s and 1990s, the immediate post-independence years, for all their shortcomings, would seem to have been golden years of some sort in spite of the best efforts of the Berg Report to selectively falsify the history of that period.

To be sure, the effort to give content and meaning to the post-colonial social contract was not without its internal contradictions and limitations. Nowhere were these contradictions more evident than in the realm of the political framework within which the post-colonial development process was undertaken. Initially involving the gradual demobilisation of the social movements whose engagement and activism gave life and momentum to the anti-colonial struggle, the post-independence political framework was eventually to take the form of the narrowing of the national political space as political pluralism gave way to political monopoly symbolised by the rise of the one-party state and military dictatorship. The immediate context for this constriction of the political space and political participation was defined by the way in which the goal of national unity and integration was handled: the assumption that the objective of uniting the multi-ethnic and, in many cases, multi-religious countries of Africa after decades of colonial strategies of divide and rule was one which could only be constituted from above by the state. This top-down approach to the national unity project soon translated into a monopolisation of the political terrain by the state in a process which was accelerated first by dissolution of the anti-colonial nationalist coalition, then by the slow down of the rate of economic growth and, therefore, of the rate of expansion of opportunities for different categories of people, and, finally, the emergence in the course of the 1970s of a deep-seated crisis in the post-colonial model of accumulation that signalled the beginning of the end of the post-colonial social contract.

A rich literature already exists on the origins and dimensions of the African economic crisis to warrant an exclusion of their detailed discussion here. It is important, however, to underline two points. First, the management of the crisis was accompanied by increased levels of political repression and exclusion which further widened the gulf between state and society, popular social forces and the wielders of state power. Secondly, the IMF/World Bank structural adjustment framework that

triumphed in the quest for reversing the dwindling economic fortunes of Africa not only exacerbated the crisis of decline but also represented the final nail in the coffin of the post-colonial model of accumulation and the social contract that was built into it. In the face of the failure of structural adjustment to redress the crises of decline facing the continent, both increased political repression/authoritarianism and the worsening problems of livelihood combined, in the course of the 1980s, to raise serious questions about the representativeness and legitimacy of the state. The deepening social crisis across the African continent, including reversals in some of the health and educational gains of independence, also generated concerns about citizenship and citizenship rights which, in some instances, translated into concerted challenges to the entire post-independence nation-state project. In the worst cases, the combination of diminished state and governmental legitimacy, increased political authoritarianism, and the erosion of citizenship rights resulted in the efflorescence of competing ethno-regional and religious identities which expressed themselves violently and caused the collapse of central governmental authority.

Integral to the agenda of IMF/World Bank structural adjustment and, therefore, the irretrievable collapse of the post-colonial social contract was the promotion of a narrow, neo-liberal model of the market and its workings. In practice, this model of economic reform, strongly anti-state as it was in ideological orientation, resulted in the incapacitation of the African state as a socio-political and economic actor. This remained so in spite of the introduction, nearly a decade after structural adjustment first made its entry into the African economic crisis management approach, of a governance programme which was heralded as the framework for reforming the legal-administrative structures and processes of the African state. Defined in terms of the promotion of civil service reforms, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, the free flow of information, and policy predictability, the programme was closely associated with the post-Cold War political conditionality which the leading Western powers introduced into their dealings with African countries and under which the latter were required to carry out domestic political reforms. Beyond the façade of what they promised, both the governance programme of the IMF/World Bank and the political conditionality of the Western powers formed part of the strategic objective of securing the neo-liberal reform agenda in Africa. Indeed, the governance programme of the international financial institutions was presented as the missing link in the structural adjustment chain while the political conditionality of the Western powers

was built on the assumption, in part at least, that it could produce a more conducive framework for the pursuit of market reforms. For this reason, both interventions failed to address the roots of the crisis of governance of the political space and public life that was in evidence in different countries.

The huge social and political costs exacted by prolonged economic crisis and structural adjustment propelled popular agitation for political reforms during the course of the 1990s. These protests were to result in the end of single party and military rule in most of Africa; they also led to the outright overthrow of the *ancien regime* in several countries. But the full import of the rebirth of politico-electoral pluralism in Africa was severely limited by two factors: the failure, in spite of the investment of effort in constitutionalism and constitutional reform, to overhaul the foundations of the post-colonial state itself and the context of continued neo-liberal economic reform within which the transition from authoritarianism was attempted. The consequence was that power and its exercise were not brought under popular democratic control while what passed for the political reforms that were implemented were soon shown to be lacking in any meaningful socio-economic and ideological content that could constitute an enduring basis both for the reconstruction of the legitimacy of the state, a new vision of the future, and the negotiation of a new social contract. The widespread feeling of powerlessness and choicelessness that pervades the African political landscape in spite of the strong push made by popular forces for the reform and expansion of the political space explains why such commentators as Claude Ake have suggested that the 1990s in Africa were characterised by the democratisation of disempowerment in which people voted without choosing. Clearly then, the Political Question remained a key outstanding issue even as Africa was ushered into the new millennium.

NEPAD and the Challenges of Political and Governance Reform

Few will disagree that the effective management of the Political Question in Africa today is a pre-requisite for the sustainable development of the continent. Indeed, numerous African scholars, among them Claude Ake, Thandika Mkandawire, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, Mahmood Mamdani, and Abdul Raufu Mustapha, have suggested that the tackling of the Political Question is an important pre-condition for

the resolution of the governance and developmental crises of the continent. In this connection, attention has been drawn by Ake to the ways in which, according to him, the manner of conducting politics has tended to underdevelop Africa while Mamdani observes that the bifurcated nature of the state effectively disenfranchises a majority of the populace. Wamba dia Wamba, for his part, has suggested that the mode of organisation of politics on the basis of the activities of professional politicians not only limits the prospects for the harvesting by the populace of democratic potentialities but also reinforces the authoritarianism inherent in the developmental process. Mustapha, in his own writings, insists on the need for a restructuring of the foundations of the state so that consent can be generated and, therefore, legitimacy and development secured. This theme has been taken up by Mkandawire who has done some of the most profound thinking on the concept of developmental democracies in Africa in which the rehabilitation of the state and the project of development within a governance framework that is democratic is considered crucial. Scholars who have contributed to the expansion of the boundaries of gender research and advocacy in Africa have also pointed to the ways in which the organisation, structuring and exercise of power have abridged the rights of at least half of the African populace from full participation in the political process. Common to all of the reflections on the interface between the Political Question and development is the problematic of the state, the management of power, and the role of citizens/society in the developmental process.

Beyond the link which scholars have made between politics and its role in influencing the developmental process, it can be argued that the essence of the anti-colonial and post-independence political contestations that have wracked the African continent centre around the struggle, at all levels, for a more representative and accountable politico-constitutional order which can serve as the basis for the mobilisation of the populace behind a developmental agenda. Yet, what the democracy initiative of NEPAD offers is not so much the basis for a new social contract between the state and society, the rulers and those whom they govern but a repackaging, under purported African "ownership", of the governance programme which the international financial institutions developed within the framework of orthodox structural adjustment. This programme, into which the World Bank in particular invested a considerable amount of resources during the course of the 1990s, was built on assumptions which represent a particular reading of African

politics, society and culture and the ways in which they purportedly interact with the economy. When structural adjustment was introduced into the African economic crisis management framework in the early 1980s, overwhelming emphasis was initially placed on exclusively macro-economic issues, especially the question of getting prices right. However, as the 1980s progressed and criticisms of the initial "priciest" bias of the adjustment programme gathered pace, attention began to be focused on other important variables that might be crucial for the realisation of the market reform agenda which the World Bank was promoting. This became all the more crucial as structural adjustment implementation was accompanied by a lacklustre economic performance. It was in this context that the governance programme of the Bank was developed as a necessary component for the successful implementation of structural adjustment.

The central problematic which the World Bank's governance programme was designed to overcome was the observed policy implementation "slippage" exhibited by African governments in the process of adjustment implementation. Reflected, among other things, in the "stop-go-stop" approach to reform allegedly adopted by African countries, a glaring deficit of political will to initiate and sustain tough but necessary austerity, and the failure to build up a domestic constituency for the economic reform agenda, "slippage" was also attributed to the disproportionate influence exercised by powerful and well-connected vested interests with a stake in halting the market reforms of the adjusting governments. The key challenge that was defined consisted, therefore, of overcoming the problems that militated against successful adjustment implementation, problems which, in the final analysis, were said to be reflective of the essentially (neo-) patrimonial character of the state and/or society in Africa. In this reading of African politics, society and culture, corruption, cronyism, nepotism, patron-clientelism, rent-seeking and a lack of openness in the procurement of goods and services were central to the onset of the African economic crisis; they were also interpreted as constituting obstacles to the successful implementation of market reforms. A governance programme, together with a conscious effort to build up an independent technocratic elite, became a key preoccupation of the World Bank in its bid to secure structural adjustment. Indicators of "good governance" – which we spelt out earlier in this essay - were introduced and employed in assessing African countries; indeed, "good governance" became part and parcel of the conditionality/cross-conditionality clauses of the World Bank,

the IMF and other donors. It was this governance programme that was carried over hook, line and sinker into the NEPAD document; the only difference is that this time, the programme has been packaged under purported African ownership.

As pointed out earlier, much has been made of the fact that NEPAD is an Africa-owned document in all of the material details connected to its design and implementation. However, the real meaning and significance of local policy ownership rests less in its geographical origin and more in its local anchorage. In this connection, there is a need to pay attention to the policy process itself and the ways in which through contestation and negotiation, all concerned and interested social actors/actresses are able to relate to the policy choices that are made as broadly corresponding to their aspirations. Such broad association with policy choices that reflect a consensus among competing interests is crucial to the appropriation of policy by different groups both for the collective good and their own specific strategic interests. In other words, ownership, if it is to be really meaningful, should be organically linked to the generation and sustenance of consent – and, ultimately, legitimacy. No public policy can be considered as legitimate only because it is described as being owned by Africa and Africans. It follows that ownership cannot be the exclusive monopoly of the elite; it must necessarily have popular anchorage. In addition, it should have a strong degree of local value added that is linked to local specificities and circumstances and not just be seen as a *pro forma* proclamation that is important in and of itself. The political democracy and governance initiative of NEPAD does not offer any such local value added or anchorage in domestic political processes/structures. Indeed, even the entire process leading to the production of the NEPAD document has been bereft of systematic public debate and consultation within Africa, a serious deficit which is not mitigated by the strategy of also making the initiative an almost exclusively governmental and donor affair. It is little wonder that many have challenged the top-down approach that has underpinned the introduction of the initiative and the path that is being followed for the realisation of its goals.

The purported African ownership of NEPAD has also been presented as part of the self-commitment of African leaders to "universal" democratic practice. But democracy comes in many shapes and forms, adapted as it is to the specific historical context in which it has triumphed. The authors of the NEPAD document

seem to assume that there is one universal, ideal type model of democracy and governance against which African and other experiences can be measured. What is more, it is assumed that this universal model can be abstracted from the current practices of the Western countries, as though those practices themselves are not problematic and diverse. The consequence is that the kinds of creativity and originality that could have been brought to bear on the quest for a political framework that is at once liberating and empowering of the peoples of Africa are not explored. Instead emphasis is placed in the NEPAD document on "good" governance as opposed to democratic governance. And yet, the content of the governance framework which is espoused, borrowed as it is from the World Bank, seems too functionalist, managerial and technocratic. It is a framework whose origins consisted of an effort to subordinate politics to the dictates of neo-liberal economic policies and, in so doing, facilitate the demobilisation of political actors/actresses in the face of market orthodoxy. But, sustainable African development, if it is to be realised, must proceed from a premise which treats politics as a legitimate arena that is integral to the developmental process and development itself as an equally legitimate terrain of politics. Viewed in this way, it becomes evident that the key issues in the creation of a political-governance framework for the development process consist not only of the promotion of a social bargain that connects all key political actors/actresses to one another and the state but also guarantees popular participation in the political and policy processes.

Linked back to the question of ownership, it becomes clear that the latter is not something which is adopted simply because it is fashionable and politically correct in donor circles but, rather, becomes a live political process, the product of contestations, bargaining and compromises which, once adopted, makes it easier for policy to be sustained and the populace to be mobilised behind the national, sub-regional and/or regional development project. Accountability ceases to be a technocratic question and is, instead, integral to the politics of participation and democracy. Nor is it accountability simply a voluntaristic affair, to be left to the good intentions of leaders who proclaim their determination and commitment to adhere, henceforth, to "good" governance. Instead, it becomes part of the structural imperatives of the political order, with clearly identifiable actors/actresses working within processes and structures that, in combination, serve as its guarantor within the public arena and at all levels of public life. For this reason, the proposal that

African leaders would introduce a peer review system which might be backed by a code of conduct, while enticing, can not really address the fundamental questions of political accountability. The basic questions which have been asked by critics such as who is to call who to account, how, why and for what, and the issue of who determines the criteria for the peer review mechanism only underscore the point that a voluntaristic approach to accountability in the exercise of power and public office will not do. In any case, a peer-based approach is not, by definition, one which necessarily assures the integrity of the review process; all such review systems are subject to bias, abuse, problems of interpretation, and in the case of political leaders, strategic choices tied to definitions of the national interest. Zimbabwe is a live example of the difficulties and dilemmas that are posed.

In the end, therefore, the peer review proposal might not only fail to live up to its promise but may, in fact, become the route by which some of the conditionalities of the adjustment years are locked into the fabric of the African economy and politics. More than this, the manner of formulation of the principle of reciprocity between Africa and the developed countries that underpins the NEPAD conceptualisation and operationalisation of partnership makes it conceivable that NEPAD itself could become a new source of conditionality in the relations between the donor community and the continent. A hint of this was gained in the run-up to the Zimbabwean elections when the leading Western countries put pressure on African governments to take action against the Mugabe regime or support sanctions against it as an acid test of the NEPAD commitments that they were making. The British Prime Minister was probably the most direct in establishing this linkage but he was not alone and although his tactics of seeking African support for the isolation of Mugabe failed, it pointed to the danger that in the interaction between Africa and the leading donor countries, NEPAD and its political and governance section might well become an additional element in the diplomacy of conditionality with which the donors have grown accustomed to dealing with Africa. The notion of partnership, such as it is, does not preclude the continued pursuit by donor countries of their foreign policy and geo-political objectives, and the terms of the reciprocity between Africa and the West as spelt out in the NEPAD document offers ample room for this to happen. It also provides a basis for the exercise of selectivity by the donors in the allocation of whatever resources are made available to support the NEPAD initiative. A foretaste of this potentiality towards selectivity was offered by Robert Fowler, the Personal

Representative of the Canadian Prime Minister for the G8 Summit African Plan when he stated in November 2001 that NEPAD offers the Western powers the prospect of "… concentrating engagement on those countries that are prepared to take political and economic decisions necessary to make this new plan work". Given that the principle of selectivity is built on the preparedness of African governments to adhere to terms and standards set out by extra-continental powers, it certainly represents a cause for concern.

Concluding Remarks

That Africa is in need of a political and governance framework that is both democratic and conducive to the task of development is not in debate. The approach taken to address this need in the NEPAD document does not, however, seem to promise a viable path towards the desired framework. It has been suggested in this lecture that such a framework might be difficult to evolve in the absence of a new social bargain that helps individuals and groups to make sense of their membership of the political community to which they belong. Such a bargain also has implications for the state form, the vision of development, and the responsibilities and duties of citizenship. Scholars such as Thandika Mkandawire have suggested, rightly in my view, that what all of these call for is the rebirth of an African developmental state which is also by definition democratic and whose economic foundations are built on policy heterodoxy and domestic political consensus. It is such a broad political and policy framework that can assure sustained development on the continent. That framework also bears the greater possibility of ensuring that partnership between Africa and the rest of the world takes as its starting and end points, the aspirations of the citizenry as opposed to an uncritical, even opportunistic pandering to an external donor community that is as cynical as it is self-serving. That is the only path of self-respect that is open to us in Africa. The alternative is the continued underdevelopment and dependence of our continent which no amount of foreign charity, however altruistic, can redress. Indeed, the dangers posed by this alternative were spelt out graphically by no less a personality than President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania – a person who should know. Speaking on the platform of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation in April 2002 on the theme of the relationship between Africa and the international development community and the diplomacy of conditionality

that has come to underpin the practice of development assistance, he warned that " … The way things are going, we in Africa will soon have no image beyond geography, no identity besides colour and no decency except flags … worse, we will end up competing to do the master's urging in the neighbourhood". This definitely need not be so but the choice is also clearly ours.

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