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Resolving the African Development Sclerosis: Two Strategies, No Future *(Pp.133-147)*

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Abstract

At independence, African countries adopted various development strategies. Unable to generate the desired development, African countries embraced regional and economic integration as the alternative approach and adopted the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980. Due to its inherent contradictions and Western opposition it was abandoned. In 2001, Afrocrats crafted the New Partnership for African Development in tune with the predominant neo-liberal ideology. This discourse critically compares the Lagos Plan and NEPAD. It argues that the adoption of NEPAD is revisionist, an abandonment of the Lagos Plan crafted in the womb of the dependency paradigm for the prescriptions of the initially rejected Bretton Woods Institutions' sponsored Berg Report wrapped in the garment of the modernization ideology. The discourse concludes that in the NEPAD framework exist fundamental contradictions similar to those that frustrated the Lagos Plan.

Introduction

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s witnessed so much theorizing about the causes of African countries' underdevelopment and the possibilities for

development. While proposed alternative development strategies provided some form of initial direction for research, by the mid-1970s they became profoundly inadequate to explain Africa's continued underdevelopment or create a pathway for her development (Rodney, 1972; Ake, 1980; Asante, 1991: xiii). African leaders considered the option of a collective action for the continent. Consequently, the collaborative work of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) produced the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Final Act of Lagos (FAL) with its concept of collective self-reliance and self-sustainment. Though with huge and flamboyant promises, the LPA, like other strategies, failed to achieve development for Africa. In its place is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001 with concomitant grandeur acceptance and international support.

There has been an intensification of the debate over the appropriate future development strategy for Africa (Naanen, 1985; Shaw, 1986; Ravenhill, 1986; Asante, 1991; Gambari, 2004; Ukeje, 2005). As observed by Adedeji (2002: 3-6), every attempt by Africans to forge their future and craft their own indigenous development strategies and policies has been pooh-poohed by the international financial institutions (IFIs) with the support, or at least the connivance, of the donor community. The received neo-classical development paradigm was inappropriate warranting the earnest search for an African development paradigm that was not imitative of the dominant economics of the industrialised market economies. Between 1980 and 2001, African leaders have crafted six landmark strategies, viz:

- 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, 1986-1990, (APPER), which was later converted into the United Nations Programme for Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD) (1986)*
- 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)*
- v. *The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) (1991)*

vi. *The New Partnership for African Development (2001).*

Given Africa's excessive dependence on the West, their narrow political base and their perennial failure to show commitment to national and continental development agenda, the implementation of development plans has suffered from benign neglect by African leaders and opposition by the Bretton Woods institutions. Lacking the resources and will to carry on self-reliantly, they abandoned their own strategies for the implementation of exogenous agenda, which firmly tied the African canoe to the North's neo-liberal ship on the waters of globalization (Adedeji, 2002: 4).

The Lagos Plan Revisited

Very few Africans today would remember the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), the culmination of a four-year long effort, initiated and led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA), to undertake an agonising review of Africa's development strategies since the 1960s. By trying to march towards its future hand-in-hand with its colonial, mono-cultural, low-productivity and excessively dependent and open economy, Africa has ensured no dignified future for itself. In 1976, the ECA produced the *Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Order in Africa*, the intellectual and theoretical foundation upon which the *Monrovia Strategy* (1979) and the *Lagos Plan of Action* and the *Final Act of Lagos* (1980) were built (Shaw, 1986: 114; Asante, 1991: 59; Adedeji, 2002: 6).

The *Revised Framework* prescribed that any credible development strategy for Africa must encapsulate the principles of self-reliance, self-sustainment, the democratisation of the development process and a fair and just distribution of the fruit of development through the progressive eradication of unemployment and mass poverty. African leaders observed that the continued incorporation of the continent into the orbit of the world capitalist system and the rationalization of its excessive external orientation has profoundly rendered the African economies extremely open while exposing them to the vicissitudes of the unfriendly international economic changes that intensify their vulnerability to external shocks and dislocations.

While advocating a radical delinking approach from the draconian capitalist system and a complete break with the old externally-oriented theories of development (Anikpo, 1987: 9), the Lagos Plan emphasized the domestic natural resource base for determining profiles of development and economic

growth, for designing and implementing appropriate strategies for manpower development, industrialization and the promotion of domestic production of goods and services based on intra- and inter-sectoral linkages, and the expansion of national and regional markets (Naanen, 1985: 44-5; Asante, 1991: 45).

The Plan reveals African leaders' recognition of the need to coordinate economic policies and actions at various supranational levels to optimize the use of resources and to benefit from economies of scale (Naanen, 1985:43-4; Asante, 1991: 60). The Plan denounced the transplanting of conventional development paradigms in Africa, and emphasizes the role of the public sector as the pivot of development. Explicitly, as far as imperialism is concerned, self-reliance threatens the fundamental law of capitalist development.

Consequently, no sooner the Lagos Plan was adopted on 29th April, 1980 by the Organization of African Unity Heads of State and Government Summit than the World Bank presented a draft of the popular *Berg Report* entitled "*Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*" to the OAU leadership in 1981. The Berg Report epitomizes the subtle form of opposition to and the violation of Africa's right to self-reliant development and represented the official mind of the industrial states. Its opposition to the Plan is so subtle that it may be lost in the sophisticated academic garb that conceals its human rights violation and demonstrated the superiority complex that characterized Euro-African relations (Naanen, 1985: 44; Anikpo, 1987: 10).

Like the modernization paradigm that propagated its fruition, the *Berg Report* sees Africa's problems as being caused almost entirely by internal structural constraints. While the *Report* advocated the elimination of protectionist measures (liberalization) for efficiency, the Plan emphasizes industrialization, agricultural development and protection of local industries; while the *Report* recommended the reduction of the size of the public sector, the Plan argued that manpower was in short supply in every sector and recommended the intensification of training and manpower development (Naanen, 1985: 45). However, the plan was idealistic and smacks of a political document conceived at a diplomatic cocktail of chiefs of government than a realistic grass-root economic programme, which fails to elaborate, in fine technical detail, how the various goals could be accomplished. The Plan fails to specify practical policy measures that would

have made realistic contribution towards the attainment of its long-term objectives (Naanen, 1985: 45; Asante, 1991: 61).

The Plan lacks realistic appraisal of potential costs and possible sources of finance so that the implications for a self-reliant strategy were not considered; rather than representing a plan of action, a blue-print for Africa's development, the Plan resembles a mammoth shopping list with no ranking of desired objectives. Considering the relative state of underdevelopment of Africa, the constraints of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme, and the contemporary international division of labour, the feasibility of several short-to-medium term projects to be implemented within the twenty-year period from 1980-2000 became problematic (Naanen, 1985: 45-6). Specifically, there was no explicit mobilization call for economic nationalism *vis-a-vis* its delinking thrust (Asante, 1991: 61).

The Plan did not address the issue of popular participation and human rights, which are so critical to development, and did not also raise questions about inequalities in the distribution of incomes and services. Although the Plan belatedly recognized the issue of women in development, it was silent on class distinctions. The Plan failed to admit the need for a dramatic policy change and committed itself to an essential continuation of the *status quo* in terms of policies and priorities (Ravenhill, 1986: 3-4; Asante, 1991: 62). Therefore, the Plan could not achieve the establishment of an African Economic Community by 2000. Worst still, African countries could not restructure and transform their social and economic structures and policies to create the conditions for the realization of self-reliant and self-sustaining development (Asante, 1991: 63).

One fundamental contradiction, between objectives and means, was the issue of foreign aid or international assistance for the implementation of a development strategy that seeks to delink from the world-capitalist system. Its challenge to the economic interests of the industrial capitalist countries was central. Yet it was from these dominant powers who find self-reliance so offensive that the Plan sought cooperation for its implementation. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) through the International Development Assistance (IDA), a lending affiliate of the World Bank, which produced the *Berg Report*, was expected to provide a part of the huge fund required. The prerequisite technology needed for the implementation was expected to come from the industrial North (Lagos Plan, 1980: 14-15).

It becomes paradoxical for external resources to finance a self-reliant development strategy making the Plan a part of an unfulfilled promise of global development strategies. Explicitly, the Plan diverted the attention of African governments away from the need for radical domestic economic reforms. Though self-reliance did not preclude Africa from international intercourse, from accepting foreign aid, from absorbing useful foreign experience, or from making maximum use of exploitable external factors, relying mainly on the African efforts than the external conditions can be fully utilized to further strengthen their self-reliant capabilities. Consequently, the internal and external contradictions in the Plan document ambushed its successful implementation. The funeral obsequies of the Plan was read when the external financing needed for its implementation did not come and African governments could not restructure the social and economic structures of African states.

The NEPAD Alternative

The most recent alternative strategy is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) adopted in 2001. New is the extent of African ownership of the development agenda anchored on the recognition that African countries have the primary responsibility for improving economic and social conditions in the continent; new is the wide acceptance of the role of good governance in fostering growth and reducing poverty; and, new is the extent of international appreciation and support for NEPAD (Funke and Nsouli, 2003: 3).

NEPAD resulted ultimately from a merger of the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) initiated by Presidents Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo, and the Omega Plan put forward by President Abdoulaye Wade. The merger culminated in the New African Initiative (NAI) approved by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit of Heads of State and Government and endorsed by the Group of Eight (G-8) countries in July 2001. The Heads of State Implementation Committee (HSIC) finalized the policy framework in October 2001 and renamed NAI as NEPAD. NEPAD is a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and a Programme of Action for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century (NEPAD, 2001; AU, 2002; www.nepad.com).

Contrary to Herbert's (2002) interpretation that NEPAD represent some kind of a "Marshall Plan for Africa", to Funke and Nsouli (2003), NEPAD is not a

Marshall Plan because it is not foreign-led but an African-owned initiative; it is not reconstructing what had existed previously. According to Adedeji (2002: 9), “unlike NEPAD, which has been initiated and prepared by the African countries, the Marshall Plan was a joint endeavour of the war-devastated European countries (the recipients) and the United States (the donor) for a period of four to five years” to facilitate the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Europe after World War II.

While Kanbur (2001) presented NEPAD as a regional institution, which typically focuses on narrowly defined goals and initiatives, dedicates resources, and has some mechanisms to enforce contracts, Funke and Nsouli (2003: 11) and Ukeje (2005: 10) observe that NEPAD is very broad-based, comprehensive, and has little enforcement power; NEPAD is not a blueprint for African development because implementation details are still being developed and will ultimately be formulated largely in the context of the national development strategies of individual African countries; that though poverty reduction is an overarching objective in the framework document, it is listed under the human resource development initiative; that NEPAD is “to develop Africa into a net exporter of agricultural products”, as an objective and not a goal in itself.

While NEPAD must be understood in the context of the demands of globalization, it is possible to contemplate just how NEPAD may turn out to be another hoax in Africa’s search for an appropriate development paradigm. Given the character of globalization, particularly what the phenomenon is doing to Africa, the way the NEPAD initiative is conceived and currently implemented may not serve Africa’s development problems well now or into the future. The initiative must have to contend with a variety of concomitant challenges relating to its underlying *raison d’etre* and its operational (domestic and external) environments within which it is expected to carry out its mandates. Meeting its priorities would depend so much on how NEPAD is able to engage with the new security problems (Ukeje, 2005: 10).

The end of the cold war heralded a shift from geo-politics to globalisation and ushered in a renewed interest in governance issues pertaining to democracy and reforms. However, as Cawthra (2004: 30-31) has argued, these multi-faceted governance issues are mostly donor-driven with limited local content and sense of ownership. The capacity of African states under the framework of NEPAD to grapple with and respond to pressing social issues touching on the welfare and survival of the vast majority of the

African population would define the quality of human, social and national development in the near future (Ukeje, 2005: 14).

NEPAD acknowledges good governance as a basic requirement for peace, security and sustainable political and socio-economic development, and broad participation of all sectors of the society. It anchors Africa's development on its own resources and resourcefulness of its people; in creating partnerships between and among African peoples; accelerating regional and continental integration, building the competitiveness of African countries; forging a new international partnership that will change the unequal relationship between Africa and the developed countries (Ukeje, 2005: 16; NEPAD Document, para. 20: pp.7-8; Thisday, Tuesday, July 9, 2002: 30; Gberevbie, 2004: 224; West Africa, July 15-21, 2002: 10; Gambari, 2004: 6).

However, NEPAD's obsession with neo-liberalism and its deepening integration of African vulnerable economies into the asymmetrically unjust global trading system without a concomitant restructuring of the African political economy becomes the first fault-line. Neo-liberalism can only accentuate the already deep-seated crises facing the African continent as it draws more and more people into the loop of poverty rather than alleviate it. It will sacrifice the human rights of the African peoples to the whims and caprices of a volatile and untrustworthy global capital while offering the West a renewed opportunity to accelerate the exploitation of Africa. NEPAD offers no insight about how the unfair global trade regime would structurally redefine changes to favour Africa (Mbaku, 2004: 394-6; Matthews, 2004: 503; Ukeje, 2005: 18).

A significant sinister ambiguity that exists in the NEPAD framework is the nature of the partnership envisaged between Africa and the developed economies since it claims a development rhetoric that retains the political and economic governance processes in the West as a convenient model for Africa. Explicitly, the operators of NEPAD could not find any alternative paths to the Western model. NEPAD is still being manipulated by its development partners (Matthews, 2004: 497-500). Therefore, the Western actors have achieved in NEPAD what they could not achieve in the *Berg Report*.

It is this kind of partnership that drives the Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSP) implemented since 1999 by the World Bank and the

International Monetary Fund after the colossal failure of the Structural Adjustment Programme of the 1980s (Hope, 2002: 400). Abrahamsen (2004: 1454) refers to NEPAD as a “Western wolf in an African sheepskin” to underscore the continent’s persistence subservience to Western power and values. Rhetoric and reality are not the same, while Africa is claiming ownership of NEPAD, the West continues to see it as a donor-recipient relationship (Adedeji, 2002: 11).

The peculiar types of partnership under NEPAD are a little more than conditionality by another name: a form of advanced liberal rule that increasingly govern through the explicit commitment to the agency of the recipient states. This partnership, though not working primarily as direct domination and imposition, promises of incorporation and inclusion in the neo-liberal rubrics of the international system. The illusion about partnerships manifests concurrently by the fact that through contemporary donor practices, certain sections of the African elite and bureaucracy come to internalize the neo-liberal values of governance and even develop toolkits not radically different from those developed in the West (Ukeje, 2005: 10). The Monterrey UN Conference on Financing for Development had warned that there are no radical changes in policy and attitude in the offing (Adedeji, 2002: 11).

To Adedeji (2002: 12), while co-operation is no longer adequate, compact is too strong because it implies making binding commitments. The concept of partnership conveys a relationship stronger than cooperation but weaker than a compact. It involves joint effort, joint responsibility but does not always result in binding commitments. Interdependence no doubt captures the essence of partnership and international cooperation. However, as long as the developed countries will maintain their economic progress along the lines of contemporary international division of labour, the relations between the North and the South will continue to be characterised by a domination of the West over Africa, as was the case between the European Economic Community (EEC) and the African Caribbean Pacific Association (ACP) under the Lome Conventions.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as mutually agreed and voluntary instrument for self-monitoring ensures that policies and practices of participating states conform to the agreed values, codes and standards contained in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. Chabal (2002: 462) informs that NEPAD is a

commitment on the current (but not so new) elites in Africa to the present democratic orthodoxy in order to guarantee a transfer of resources to Africa: a continuation with, rather than a break from, the type of relations that has guided the continent's engagement with the international community since independence. If the standards of the donors will be imposed on Africa without which aid will be withheld, then where is the claim to African ownership of NEPAD?

The affection and obedience of NEPAD to the central tenets of neo-liberalism raises questions as to its foundation for a new optimism about Africa's future (Olukoshi, 2003: 20-7). The high hopes generated by the NEPAD document would be seriously undermined by the essentially neo-liberal pitch of its economic objectives and the limited scope of its political agenda, which is cast in the governance managerialism. NEPAD did not realize that Africa's problem did not derive so much from the marginalization of Africa but from the problematic manner in which it was integrated into the contemporary capitalist world system. When an African country's or group of countries' performance is adjudged unsatisfactory a cloud hangs over the entire Africa and will be collectively vilified. More so, the chronic tendencies of 'the begging bowl and broken promises' existed in the Lagos Plan and NEPAD, and traditionally ambushed the latest strategy (Gambari, 2004: 9). At present, what is given as aid to Africa tends to be cancelled out by subsidies to industrialized countries' agricultural farmers.

The LPA and NEPAD: What a Future for Africa?

Contrary to the claim of the Lagos Plan and NEPAD as indigenous development strategies that all stakeholders share in their ownership, they are top-down rather than bottom-up initiatives. The political leaders were unable to carry the people, the stakeholders of Africa's development, along with them. No public discourse was held in majority of African countries, national parliaments were not constructively engaged, yet both claim the promotion of democratic principles and instituting popular participation and good governance. The African ownership they claim is no more than ownership of the Heads of Governments and their immediate advisers. Melber (2004: 1, 7) qualifies NEPAD as a "pact among elites", which seek to gain the power of definition over Africa's future development discourse. Like previous top-down policy formulations, NEPAD reeks of technicism, a scent which could dissipate if exposed to the fires of popular debate, protest and participation.

Furthermore, no one can expect monopoly capitalism to commit suicide. In 1981, the US refused to pay its share of the IDA fund for the period of 1981-83 thereby reducing IDA's commitment authority by more than \$500 million and refused to rally other donor countries to the plight of LDC. As Adedeji (2002: 11) observes, "even the US \$50 billion per year, as the additional resources required for achieving the 2015 Millennium goals world-wide, is a non-binding and best endeavour commitment". Meanwhile, the environment of falling official development assistance (ODA) is projected to persist and even fall further in the foreseeable future. Yet Africa alone is hoping under NEPAD to attract \$64.0 billion every year. Therefore, the creditor nations would continue to keep the debtor countries on a short leash with the powers of the Paris and London Clubs of creditor nations remaining intact.

The G8 interests and those of the NEPAD architects would be served to reflect the prescription of the *Berg Report* via the modernisation paradigm and neo-liberalism. To Funke and Nsouli (2003: 23), the availability of adequate resources, particularly of external financing, will put a natural limit on the speed of implementation. The willingness of the international community to actively contribute to NEPAD will to a large extent depend on Africa's ability to cope with the challenges of an unfriendly international neo-liberal economy. Though potentially a forceful mechanism, short-term improvements as a result of the APRM, are less likely. In the meantime, it remains in the hands of each country's leadership to improve the economic and governance environment, using as a basis the internationally accepted guidelines and codes of good practices. To make action plans more credible and verifiable, detailed time-tables must be set up.

Melber (2004: 12) clearly demonstrated that NEPAD will not be able to replace demands for a fair share in the world's resources by the victims of domination and exploitation. At best, it will facilitate an increase in the share of the African clients and stakeholders from the global cake. Instead of a meaningful radical alternative, NEPAD is closer to capitalism as a new form of apartheid. Taylor (2003: 312) reminds us of the active role elites in the South have played in the recent process of capitalist expansion misleadingly termed globalisation by supporting the new Washington Consensus, resulting in the promotion of the liberalisation of trade and capital movements. It remains to be seen if there is any pragmatism in the argument: better this capitalism than no capitalism at all. Even still, in this age of industrialisation when African value in the international market is less than 2%, under its

market access initiative, NEPAD insisted “to develop Africa into a net exporter of agricultural products” without a concomitant industrial drive (NEPAD, 2001: 40).

Relatively affluent African countries whose ruling classes benefit from close association with Western capitalists would find it harder to delink from monopoly capitalism than poor countries (Brown and Cummings, 1984: 124). As Naanen (1984: 23) notes, Africa’s very position of dependency militates against efforts to break it. African countries could not restructure and transform their social and economic structures. The prevailing structure of politics within African states would not be conducive for the successful pursuits of NEPAD objectives; the interests and orientations of the African ruling classes are antithetical to social transformations.

While Chabal (2002: 448) sees “very little reason to believe that the nature of politics in Africa will change simply because of the (admittedly admirable) ambition displayed by NEPAD”, Olukoshi (2005: 14) observes that NEPAD “seems designed more to pander to a donor audience than responding to or representing the concerns of the domestic socio-political forces”. The search for new paradigms for African development must have as its focal point on mechanisms for unleashing the resources, creativity and talent of the peoples and communities all over Africa (Ukeje, 2005).

Conclusion

If the determination of *Afrocrats* to for Africa’s development at the dawn of the 21st century must succeed, then structural transformation and socio-economic diversification must not elude Africa. In conclusion, we re-affirm Adedeji’s (1991: 49) position, *inter alia*, that:

New African transformation ethic based on a human-centred development paradigm which puts the people at the centre of the development process, on the driving seat as it were and is predicated, above all, on the rational proposition that development has to be engineered and sustained by the people themselves through their full and active participation. In other words, the new African transformation ethic rests on the firm belief that development should not be undertaken on behalf of a people; rather, that it should

be the organic outcome of a society's value system, its perceptions, its concerns and its endeavours.

African-oriented development paradigm or strategy should not be a top-down initiative but bottom-up to enable every stratum of the society participate in its evolution.

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