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Some Reflections on African Development Strategies in the 21st Century: From the LPA to NEPAD

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Diagnosing the earlier African development frameworks in response to the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of neoliberal economic policy, this article begins by discussing the historical, political and economic backdrops of five landmark African development strategies emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s. Starting from the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), the article then pays attentions to the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community with a view to examining its compositions, modalities as well as its implications for the NEPAD framework. Lastly, this article delves into three key frameworks of NEPAD, including peace and security governance, economic and regional governance, and political and democratic governance. Exploring these frameworks of NEPAD within the diametrically opposing views held by its architects and those of its critics, this article concludes by rethinking African development paths as well as presenting the way forward.

Keywords: Korea, African Development Strategies, the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), the Abuja Treaty, the African Economic Community (AEC), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the continent's independence in the 1960s, development perspectives on Africa have been trapped by contending agendas characterized as a rift between African governments and the international community over approaches to African development (Ake 1996). By the late 1960s and early 1970s, in particular, when Keynesianism as the dominant developmental discourse at the global scale started facing opposition from what has come to be known as neoliberalism, the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) began to take the helm of policy perspectives on the development of Africa. Despite a number of alternative attempts by both within and outside the continent, yet, neoliberal economic policy regime had not disappeared but had instead expanded and deepened, displaying disturbing phenomena for continental leaders and policy makers in Africa in a Post-Cold War international system.

As Africa has entered the twenty-first century, moreover, the continent is faced with a multitude of development problems, including widespread poverty, malnutrition and disease, violent ethnic conflict, corruption, and a broad range of socio-economic quagmire. Against this background, Africa has been considered as the only continent in which living conditions have been deteriorating in the last thirty years (see, e.g., Castells 1997; World Bank 2000; Hoogvelt 2002; Guest 2004). [1] As Saitoti (2003: 13) notes, contrary to the theory of

[1] One of major causes for Africa to remain the poorest continent despite being one of the most richly endowed regions of the world, is that for centuries, Africa has been integrated into the world economy mainly as a supplier of cheap labor and raw materials. After independence, post-colonial African

convergence that postulates that poor countries can be expected to grow faster than developed countries, thereby resulting in global convergence in income levels, poor economic situations in Africa has brought forth to divergence. In this sense, he continues to argue that the quality of life enjoyed by the majority of Africans has deteriorated both in absolute and relative terms.

Following some initial progress during the first development decade in the 1960s, in fact, “the development of underdevelopment” has been actualized in many African countries. In this context, *The Economist* in its May 13-19, 2000 issue from the perspective of the so-called Afro-pessimism, called Africa the “hopeless” continent and further characterized the prospects for development in the new millennium as practically non-existent. In order to reverse this condition, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) was created by African leaders in July 2001. Significantly, NEPAD seeks to address Africa’s poverty and related structural constraints to place the continent firmly on the path to sustainable development. The advent of NEPAD could therefore not have come at a better time and Afro-optimism could not have been unexpected.

What is important to note is, in particular, that NEPAD seeks to develop its developmental strategy by “building up the achievements of the past, as well as reflecting on the lessons learned through painful experience, so as to establish a partnership that is both credible and capable of implementation” (NEPAD 2001: paragraph 27). Diagnosing the earlier African development frameworks in response to the SAPs of neoliberal economic policy, this article begins by discussing the historical, political and economic backdrops of five landmark African development strategies that emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s, which are as follows: the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000 and the Final Act of Lagos (1980); Africa’s Priority Program for Economic Recovery 1986-1990 (APPER) which was later converted into the United Nations Program of Action for Africa’s Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD) (1986); the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Program for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) (1989); the African Charter for Popular Participation for Development (1990); the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) (1991).

The article then pays attentions to the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community with a view to examining its compositions, modalities as well as its implications for the NEPAD framework. Lastly, this article delves into three key frameworks of NEPAD, including peace and security governance, economic and regional governance, and political and democratic governance. Exploring these frameworks of NEPAD within the diametrically opposing views held by its architects and those of its critics, this article concludes by rethinking African development paths as well as presenting the way forward.

2. ANTECEDENTS TO NEPAD: TOWARDS COLLECTIVE SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

The appreciable progress was made in improving the social welfare of the people in Africa in the first decade of independence. Pursuing industrial projects (namely, import

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countries inherited weak states and dysfunctional economies, which were further aggravated by poor leadership, corruption and bad governance in many countries (NEPAD 2001: paragraphs 19, 22).

substitution strategies), the newly independent governments made a great deal of expanding the social and physical infrastructure of their countries in a way that widened access to education, transportation, housing, skills development, health, and employment on a scale that exceeded what colonialism provided. For this purpose, and irrespective of the ideological leanings which they professed, all of the independent 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 (Olukoshi 2002: 6).

During the second decade of independence, however, the slow-down of the economic growth rate 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. In addition, SAPs led by the IMF and WB which 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 (Olukoshi 2002: 7).

2.1. The Advent of the LPA as a Response to the African Crisis

In April 1980, nevertheless, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the OAU devised the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) identifying actions that needed to be taken to implement the objectives of the Monrovia Declaration adopted by the OAU in 1979. With the LPA and the Final Act of Lagos (FAL), African countries attempted to initiate a development model based on the principle of individual autonomy and collective self-sufficiency. In its diagnoses, that is, the LPA focused on the exogenous factors that led to and sustained *dependent capitalism* which was supported by the theory of dependency in International Relations.[2] In the beginning of Preamble, the LPA asserted that “the effect of unfulfilled promises of global development strategies has been more sharply felt in Africa than in the other continents of the world” (OAU 1980: paragraph 1). In lieu of producing substantial development, the global development strategies had made Africa “more susceptible than other regions to the economic and social crises suffered by the industrialized countries” (*Ibid*.).

Within this context, the structural weaknesses of African economies as one of the main causes of the African economic crisis can be firstly pointed out. In agriculture, this is mainly a function of low production and productivity, and rudimentary agricultural techniques. In the area of trade, it manifests itself in over-dependence on the export of primary products (agricultural and minerals), which exacerbates openness to external shocks (OAU 1980: paragraphs 7, 9). The second important cause of the crisis is lack of adequate capacity (capital, skills and technology) for the development of the rich natural resource endowment. In this situation, a considerable dependence on foreign transnational corporations for the development of a narrow range of African natural resources selected by these corporations to supply new material needs of the developed countries (OAU 1980: paragraph 76). The third one is the developed countries’ negative and hostile attitude towards efforts being made by

[2] The LPA’s conclusions were “a classic dependency interpretation of the African condition. It exonerated African leaders and blamed the historical injustices suffered by the continent and the continued dependence on external forces for the crisis” (Owusu 2003: 1657).

African countries for accelerated industrialization in the region through import substitutions industrializations (ISIs) (OAU 1980: Chapter II).

In response to the crisis which can be identified as fundamentally structural and the external environment as hostile − at least in relation to the developed countries and the foreign transnational corporations, the LPA's strategy for orienting Africa toward a sustainable development path involved 'collective self-reliance and self-sustainable development' at the stages and modalities of its short, medium and long-term implementation framework.[3]

However, the focus of the LPA was overwhelmingly on economic factors such as inter-African trade and investment through regional cooperation and integration schemes. Due to the fact that, "by 1980 − when the LPA was adopted − almost all the economic cooperation schemes optimistically launched in the 1960s − the halcyon days of African integration − had become largely moribund" (Asante 1985: 82). In this sense, Herbst argues that "the tendency of the LPA was to list the problems that African countries were facing, suggest without even a vague hint of how these could be financed, and then recommend the creation of numerous international institutions to help African countries" (Herbst 1993: 139).

2.2. Searching for the Alternative Development Strategies in the era of SAPs

Meanwhile, a year later, in 1981, the World Bank responded to the LPA with a special report entitled *Accelerated Development in sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*, more commonly known as the Berg Report. In particular, the report stressed the interdependency of countries throughout the world and maintained that African countries should pursue their 'comparative advantage' by striving to improve production of their export products. But, this was criticized and rejected by African governments because they believed that implementation of such a policy would most certainly leave their countries in a permanent structure of dependent capitalism in which African countries should continue to export primary commodities like coffee and use their foreign exchange earnings to import essential manufactured goods and even their food requirements.

Although various adjustment packages had been implemented in Africa before the 1980s, the Berg Report was to usher in a new era in African political economy, that is the era of SAPs. In brief, the Report pursued a dual strategy of privatization and liberalization for African countries with a view to resolving the debt crisis within the context of SAPs. The debt crisis experienced by many African countries from the late 1970s up to the present forced most of them to turn to the IMF and WB for financial assistance under the conditionality of SAPs. But the evaluation of the SAPs experience across African countries has unfolded that as the dominant economic program foisted on Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, SAPs have been a catastrophic failure. It has contributed to increasing mass poverty and the collapse of the real economy of production in various sectors across the region, and promoted deindustrialization, rising inflation and the growing marginalization of Africa. This manifest failure of a dominant paradigm in Africa made the implementation of alternative development paradigms more imperative (Onimode 2004: 23). Thus the supposed 'one-size-fits-all' approach which characterized much of the SAPs produced a counter-reaction in the form of the Africa's Priority Program for Economic Recovery 1986-1990 (APPER), which

[3] For detailed discussion on the stages and modalities of its short, medium and long-term implementation framework, see Kouassi (2007: 5) and OAU (1980: Annex I-II).

was adopted by the OAU. This was later transformed and repackaged as the United Nations Program of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD). Yet the effect of both programs was no more than a failure.

The impact of SAPs on Africa reappeared in July 1989 with the UNECA's *African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Program* (AAF-SAP) which was adopted by the OAU and endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations as the most elaborate and most technically sophisticated alternative recovery-with-development paradigm for Africa (UNECA 1989). However, like almost all previous plans in Africa, the AAF-SAP never took off, mainly due to the lack of commitment by both those African leaders who had signed the Framework and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Western governments (Taylor 2006: 20). Rather, as soon as the AAF-SAP emerged, the World Bank, in its traditional parallelism of imposing alternative blueprints to those prepared by Africa, launched its laborious Long-Term Perspective Study (LTPS) in 1989 (World Bank 1989). Indeed, this has been a main cause of the avoidance of the AAF-SAP by African countries and their failure to implement it to date.

Just as the LPA had been followed by the Berg Report, the AAF-SAP was followed by a new World Bank report in 1989, *Sub Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*. The distinct argument of this new report is that "African governments and foreign financiers (commercial banks and export credit agencies as well as donor agencies) must share responsibility. Foreign financiers and suppliers promoted capital exports with attractive credits, and poor coordination among donors caused duplication and waste" (World Bank 1989: 27). Within the shifted context from its previous hard-nosed stance towards the role of the state, it can be pointed out that the report took into account of human resource development together with a social welfare issues which used to be belittled and even ignored by the World Bank. This report, however, does not mean that the World Bank was to abandon the normative principles of neoliberalism. Rather, while it is to encourage the policies of a social safety net that have positive effects on have-not groups, at the same time to share the blame between endogenous and exogenous factors: to varying degrees, indeed, this emerged as defining principles which has been maintained to date and which informs NEPAD's own formulas (Taylor 2006: 20).

Another attempt by African countries to address their own problems developed at the UNECA's Arusha conference on Popular Participation for Democracy in Africa, namely *The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* (1990) which was adopted by the African Heads of States and Government at the Addis Ababa Summit of the OAU in July 1990. Considering the main argument of Charter stating that "there must be an opening up of political processes to accommodate freedom of opinion, and tolerate differences" (Lone 1990: 1), it is possible to infer that "the blame for Africa's demise could be sourced to a large degree (but not, obviously, exclusively) from within Africa− or rather, from within the palaces of African presidents" (Taylor 2006: 21).

Within this context, the international community renewed the commitment to Africa it made five years earlier in the UN-PAAERD by projecting the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF 1991). Like a number of other previous initiatives, the UN-NADAF had not fully reached its objectives to be implemented. However, one important goal of the UN-NADAF that was evaluated as partly progressive, in particular, is pursuing regional and sub-regional economic cooperation and integration with the ultimate goal of establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). Although serious problems still remain internally within the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), [4] the treaty establishing the AEC should be considered as an important road map on how to achieve the pan-African economic community, in which the treaty needs to be reviewed.

2.3. The Abuja Treaty: Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC)

The formation of the AEC in 1991 heralds a new historical mark of African integration efforts. The AEC was established by the Abuja Treaty at an OAU summit in June 1991, but only entered into force on 12 May 1994 after the required numbers signed up for ratification. In 1980, in fact, when the OAU Extraordinary Summit adopted the Lagos Plan of Action, the LPA attempted to develop itself a major step towards the goal of African integration.

The AEC Treaty (known as the Abuja Treaty) provided for the African Economic Community to be set up through a gradual process, which would be achieved by coordination, harmonization and progressive integration of the activities of existing and future regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa. The RECs are regarded as the building blocks of the AEC. That is, the Abuja Treaty has accorded special recognition to the critical role of the RECs in the stages of establishing the African Economic Community. Accordingly, a Protocol has been concluded on relations between the AEC and RECs, which should serve as an effective instrument and framework for close cooperation, program harmonization and coordination as well as integration among the RECs on the one hand, and between the AEC and RECs on the other.[5]

The major characteristics of the AEC is that it is being established in six stages, according to the provision of the Abuja Treaty (Articles 6 and 88), mainly activities of the RECs. This makes the AEC different from other integration organizations established in Africa. In fact, the Abuja Treaty makes it clear that the establishment of the AEC is the final objectives towards which the activities of all the RECs (existing and future) shall be geared (Article 88). In recognition of this fact, the Abuja Treaty has set up the modalities for establishing the AEC; the implementation of the Abuja Treaty is a process that will be done in six stages over 34 years, i.e. by 2028. Each of the stages consists of specific activities to be implemented concurrently.[6]

Despite the six stages, the Abuja Treaty states that the cumulative transitional period shall not exceed forty years from the date of its entry into force. It also provides for measures to be taken concurrently, with regard to the formulation of multinational projects and programs for the promotion of a harmonious and balanced development among Member States. However, the stages are not inflexible; the process can be expedited with regular verification of

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[4] Currently there exist multiple regional blocs, namely the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa, many of which have overlapping memberships. Although most of these RECs form the 'pillars' of AEC, many of these also have an overlap in some of their member states. Due to the high rate of overlap it is likely that some states with several memberships will eventually drop out of one or more RECs.

[5] For the record of the AEC's progress to build up RECs, refer to Pan African Perspective: the African Economic Community 2008, accessed online at http://www.panafricanperspective.com/aec.htm on 10 November 2008.

[6] For the detailed modalities for establishing the AEC, see Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (1991: 10-12).

Table 1. Main Initiators, Characteristics and Outcomes of Pre-NEPAD Initiatives in Africa

Initiatives	Main Initiator(s)	Key Characteristics	Outcomes
LPA (1980)	UNECA/OAU	Economic Self-Reliance	Failed
APPER (1986-1990)	OAU	Economic Recovery	Failed
UN-PAAERD (1986-1990)	UN	Economic Recovery and Development	Failed
AAF-SAP (1989)	UNECA/OAU	Sustainable Development	Failed
UN-NADAF (1991)	UN	Regional Cooperation/Integration	Partly Progressive
AEC (1994)	OAU	Establishing African Economic Community	Partly Progressive

(Source: Author)

completion of the stages.[7] The main objectives of the AEC are to promote economic, social and cultural development as well as African economic integration in order to increase self-reliance and endogenous development and to create a framework for development, mobilization of human resources and material. The AEC further aims to promote co-operation and development in all aspects of human activity with a view to raising the standard of life of Africa's people, maintaining economic stability and establishing a close and peaceful relationship between member states (Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (Article 4) 1991: 8-9).

Many of these ideals are further advanced by and evolved into NEPAD in the new millennium. Indeed, the AEC Treaty argues that "Any Member State, which persistently fails to honor its general undertakings under this Treaty or fails to abide by the decisions or regulations of the Community, may be subjected to sanctions by the Assembly" (Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (Article 5) 1991: 9). Within the progressive and evolutionary context, such general undertakings that pay attentions to the recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights and good governance open up a good chance to understand and explain the genesis and *modus operandi* of NEPAD, constructed by Africans for Africans in order to provide Africa with the opportunity to extricate itself once and for all, from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world.

3. NEPAD AND AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

NEPAD was created out of a number of the past initiatives and extensive consultations among a group of African heads of state. It was previously called the New Africa Initiative (NAI), which was renamed NEPAD in October 2001 in Abuja, Nigeria following a merger

[7] Pan African Perspective: the African Economic Community 2008, accessed online at http://www.panafricanperspective.com/aec.htm on 10 November 2008.

of two processes, the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan (MAP) and the Omega Plan (that was produced by President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal). The MAP originated from the attendance at the G8 meeting in Okinawa, Japan in July 2000 when three key African leaders took the helm of international forums: the former Presidents Thabo Mbeki (South Africa), Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria) and Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria) served as chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the G77, and the OAU respectively (Gelb 2002: 1).

According to its own documents, NEPAD is a 'comprehensive and holistic integrated strategic framework for the socio-economic development of Africa'.[8] In fact, the architects of NEPAD recognized and accepted globalization as the new economic reality which requires Africa to utilize the different strategies from the introverted ones of the past. From the NEPAD's outset, African leaders admitted that the roots of Africa's crisis are internal and deeply connected to such African home-grown problems as insecurity, conflicts and bad governance. This idea stands in sharp contrast to earlier positions asserting Africa's problems as externally originated.

Although NEPAD was initially criticized from others who viewed it as an overwhelming neoliberal orientation (Bond 2004: 5-43), it has been acclaimed to be an opener of new chapter of history in Africa to achieve a common vision and a firm and shared conviction to eradicate poverty and to place Africa on a path of sustainable growth and development (NEPAD 2001). That is, NEPAD was constructed as Africa's organic political product designed to pull the continent out of its past developmental limbo by setting it on the path to peace, security, democracy, good political and economic regional governance, and respect for the rule of law in the new millennium (NEPAD 2001; Posthumus 2003; Nwonwu 2006).

3.1. Key Frameworks of NEPAD Revisited

3.1.1. Peace and Security Governance

NEPAD places emphasis on peace and security as prerequisites for development. The NEPAD Initial Action Plan presented to and endorsed by the inaugural summit of the African Union (AU) in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002, clearly underlined this. The Action Plan indicated that NEPAD is based on a three-pronged strategy, the first element of which is establishing conditions for sustainable development, including peace and security and improved governance. To reinforce this, it proposed a Peace and Security Initiative, designed to support the efforts and conflict management mechanisms of the AU and regional organizations. The AU Summit in 2002 underscored particular elements of the NEPAD Initial Action Plan by adopting a Protocol establishing a Peace and Security Council (PSC). The Council is envisaged as the collective security mechanism for the continent, and it is intended to ensure timely and effective response to conflict and crises.[9]

The PSC in conjunction with the chairperson of the commission, can institute sanctions whenever an unconstitutional change of government takes place in a member state. That is, it

[8] The NEPAD framework has the following segments: establishing the necessary conditions for sustainable development with ensuring that there is peace, security and good governance on the continent; identification of key priority sectors, including agriculture and food security, trade and market access, infrastructure development, human development; resource mobilization, including mobilizing domestic investment as well as seeking external technical and material support (NEPAD 2001; Mucavele 2006).

[9] For more detailed information on the PSC, refer to African Union (2002).

has the power and authority not only to undertake peace-making and peace-building functions, but also to recommend to the assembly intervention in situations where the national independence and sovereignty of a member state is threatened by acts of aggression. Although security was traditionally regarded in predominantly military terms as maintenance of territorial integrity or national sovereignty, it is now considered as a much broader, and as inextricably linked to development. Indeed, it is increasingly apparent that while insecurity threatens development, so too lack of development undermines security. In this sense, Cilliers argued that "where resources are scarce, as is the case across much of the continent, the object of political contestation is to secure economic consumption − which in turn is best guaranteed by capturing state power or replacing the state in a particular region, such as in the Kivu's in eastern DRC" (Cilliers 2004: 25).

Although NEPAD ties its ability to maintain peace to the availability of 'peace funds',[10] lack of funds has been pointed out as the main reason for the difficulties facing the AU peace-keeping force in Darfur. The mission is reported to face severe shortages of resources, making it difficult to reach out to the hungry and starving people in the region. In order to make it successful, the mission requires funds from the international community for motor vehicles, helicopters, and ambulances, and this is where NEPAD looks upon the foreign partners for assistance (Nwonwu 2006: 10).

As an evolving new security architecture in Africa, nevertheless, the AU/NEPAD security regime pursue strengthening the capacities of regional organizations in conflict management and resolution through maximizing the use of domestic but also external resources. In this context, NEPAD has already served to attract external resources from Africa's development partners towards peace and security. Although these various assistances have been limited to logistics, NEPAD has played its important role in providing opportunities for cooperation between Africa and West ern powers in strengthening the fragile security structures on the continent.[11]

3.1.2. Economic and Regional Governance

NEPAD is geared toward establishing an enabling environment for FDI in the continent. That is, the FDIs occupy the center stage in NEPAD's development strategy and resource mobilization. In this sense, NEPAD postulates that increased private capital flow to Africa is an essential component of a sustainable long-term approach to filling the resource gaps (NEPAD 2002: paragraph 153). Given that Africa's inability to deal with the process of globalization is an outcome of structural impediments in the form of resource outflows and unfavorable terms of trade (*Ibid*.: paragraph 34), nevertheless, it seems uncertain that FDIs help address these problems as long as globalization has "increased the ability of the strong

[10] The protocol on the PSC provides for the establishment of a 'peace fund' which is to be financed with appropriations from the AU's regular budget, as well as voluntary contributions from non-state sources inside and beyond Africa (African Union 2002).

[11] Having acknowledged NEPAD as Africa's main development framework, the EU and the US have assisted the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) logistically in the latter's peace-keeping operations in the sub-region. In addition, the UK assisted ECOWAS's peace operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, while France provided the first armed response to the Ivorian conflict when ECOWAS's diplomatic efforts failed to yield results. Moreover, Africa's western partners have given assistance to South Africa in its peace initiatives in Burundi and the DRC (Akokpari 2005: 4-5).

to advance their interests to the detriment of the weak, especially in the areas of trade, finance and technology" (*Ibid*.: paragraph 33).

Admittedly, NEPAD faced resistance from others who regarded it as an attempt by more powerful countries to entrench their domination. Within the context of the neoliberal programs embodied in NEPAD centered on the free market, informed by the logic of trickle-down economics and with a number of conditionalities, some critics pinpoint that NEPAD can at best worsen rather than reduce poverty (see Bond 2003; Onimode et al. 2004; Taylor 2006). The skeptics see that the local benefits from globalization are far outrun by the globalizers' activities that deplete local resources without generating development.[12]

Another important NEPAD's mission is to pursue debt reduction and cancellation. Over US$200 billion debt burden for Africa is the single biggest obstacle to the continent's development. Most of this debt is illegitimate in nature, having been incurred by despotic and unrepresentative regimes. African countries spend almost US$14 billion annually on debt service. In order to address the debt burden, thus, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program was initiated by the World Bank and IMF in 1996. Yet, Africa's recent disappointment came from the G8 met in Gleneagles, Scotland in July 2005. In fact, the G8 deal fell short of the promises of 100% debt cancellation made by G8 officials in 2004, and it did not take full effect up to now. The deal still leaves the majority of African countries on "debt row," required to meet harmful economic conditions as a condition for future debt relief or cancellation.[13]

Since the IMF has restructured HIPC in 1996,[14] nonetheless, the initiative has had notable success, both in terms of the levels of relief it has delivered, and in ensuring that this relief is channeled towards poverty reduction. To date, relief totaling more than US$60 billion has been agreed for 32 countries (23 (18 African countries) countries have received full cancellation), reducing their debts by around two-thirds, and freeing up resources for spending on poverty reduction. Poverty-reducing expenditures in countries that receive HIPC assistance are projected to have increased from 6.4% of GDP in 1999 to 8.4% of GDP in 2007.[15] Yet, the debt relief under HIPC, though necessary for some short-term economic growth, is certainly not sufficient for long-term sustainable development. And it has come to most of African countries under HIPC with serious socio-economic problems such as unemployment through donor dictated structural policies of privatization. Moreover, these countries are threatened to be stripped of many strategically important national assets through a reckless privatization program that was not adequately monitored for its economic and social effects on the people (Zulu 2004: 5). Thus, although HIPC attempted to tackle its shortcomings by expanding its definition of unsustainable debts, making greater relief

[12] The oil-rich Niger Delta region is a case in point. For decades, successive Nigerian governments have been beholden to the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) that possess the technology, technical expertise, and capital to exploit the country's oil. The exploitation has caused serious environmental damage, human-rights abuses, economic oppression, and inequitable resource allocation (Dare 2001: 14).

[13] Africa Action. 2006. *Campaign to cancel Africa's debt*, accessed online at http://www.africaaction.org/ campaign_new/debt.php on 5 September 2008.

[14] For a detailed discussion on the IMF's modification of HIPC, see Carrasco, McClellan, and Ro 2007, accessed online at http://www.uiowa.edu/ifdebook/ebook2/contents/part4 on 12 September 2008.

[15] DFID 2008, accessed online at http://www.dfid.gov.uk/mdg/debt-hipc-faqs.asp on 12 September 2008.

available to more countries, and by making relief available sooner, it still remains to be seen whether the money spent in debt repayment will be re-channeled toward just reducing poverty or ultimately eradicating it in Africa and seize the momentum of development.

For a long-term development strategy, indeed, NEPAD recognizes sub-regional and regional approaches as necessary for achieving economic growth and sustainable development through improving Africa's competitiveness, considering that as markets most African countries are small (NEPAD 2001).[16] The NEPAD document notes that "the five sub-regional economic groupings on the continent must be strengthened" (*Ibid*.: paragraph 94), and that sub-regional and regional approaches to development "will also go a long way in kick-starting the regeneration of the continent" (*Ibid*.: paragraph 191).

As noted earlier, regional governance approaches within the LPA and the Abuja treaty establishing the AEC employ the term 'region' or 'regional integration' to refer to geographically-based regional groupings within Africa. Since the NEPAD's inception, in fact, the NEPAD initiators intended to use the RECs as the building blocks of NEPAD and have the role of guiding and facilitating the implementation of projects and programs under the NEPAD framework. Common markets that connect member states and encourage interregional economic cooperation contribute to the realization of this goal.

In this context, it can be noted that the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is one of such formation that generate regional and interregional trade and economic cooperation; however, basing economic integration on geographic location often leads to the questioning of the rationale regarding the inclusion of members from outside the geographic vicinity.[17] Considering that NEPAD failed to go beyond referring to 'the goals of achieving a Common Market and an African Union', moreover, it needs to further strengthen regional integration mechanisms through developing and evolving the AEC plan.

Currently, more important and urgent task to address is that rationalization and capacity building must be undertaken before the RECs can fully discharge their responsibility for implementation. According to NEPAD (2008), in fact, no rigorous assessment of the capacity of national governments and the secretariats of the RECs was conducted before assigning them responsibility for leading the implementation of NEPAD programs. Thus, it is essentially required of strong political will to lead rapid rationalization of the RECs through strengthening capacity building which has been initiated with the support of the African Capacity Building Foundation, though the progress of capacity building remains slow.

3.1.3. Political and Democratic Governance

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)[18] is designed to monitor and assess the

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[16] The majority of African countries have small populations with gross domestic products of less than US$4 billion. Thus, individually they do not provide attractive markets nor the economies of scale to make major infrastructure investments viable (NEPAD 2008, accessed online at http://www.triomedia.co.za/work/nepad/newsletters/2008/issue209_2 on 25 October 2008).

[17] Egypt's membership in COMESA raises the question of the relevance of the membership of a North African state to an eastern and southern African organization. At the same time, the nonmembership of South Africa in the organization also raises questions among the proponents of regional economic integration on the propriety of such exclusion. For a more detailed discussion on this issue, see Nwonwu (2006: 10-11).

[18] The APRM was originally developed by UNECA responding to a request by the NEPAD's fifteen

progress made by African countries in meeting their commitment toward achieving good governance and sustainable development. A positive aspect of the APRM is that it notes that governance problems are central determinants of Africa's development challenges (Hope 2005: 289; Mathoho 2003: 1). Indeed, one of the most innovative features of NEPAD has been referred to the APRM. Given that the principle of non-intervention into the internal affairs was of paramount importance for African leaders to maintain their regime security, moreover, an introduction of the APRM can be highly acclaimed for opening a new history of establishing a governance instrument targeted at domestic issues.[19] In this regard, it is argued that "the APRM presents opportunities for strengthening democracy to ensure that the basis of governance transcends the narrow confines of personal rule, patron-client relations or ethno-religious politics" (Akokpari 2004: 253). The peer review is done by a seven-member Independent Panel of Eminent Persons (IPEP), which conducts countries through the various stages of the review process.[20]

Instead of policing the actions of the acceding governments, the ultimate goal of the APRM is to assist governments in their commitment to good governance through helping countries adopt optimal policies, standards, and practices that lead to political stability, economic growth, and sustainable development (NEPAD 2003). Thus, submission to the review process is 'voluntary' and there exist no sanctions placed upon wrongful governments. In this context, countries which signed up have possibilities to opt out if the process proves intrusive. Moreover, the AU lacks the power to compel countries to either sign up to the review process or comply with standards of good governance. This is a major limitation that has left the APRM under the aegis of the AU as a "lame leviathan" (Akokpari 2005: 6).

Within this context, another critical point for the APRM to overcome is the issue regarding its ranking system. The ranking system was recommended by the Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, in his speech delivered at the UN Summit in Monterrey, Mexico on March 21 2002. Under the system, African countries would be ranked from 1 to 53, in three

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member Heads of State and Government Implementing Committee (HSGIC). The APRM's mandate ensures that the policies and practices of participating states conform to the agreed political, economic, and corporate governance codes and standards contained in the *Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance* that was approved by the AU Summit in July 2002 (NEPAD 2002).

[19] Peer reviews were initiated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Since its creation as an institution four decades ago, the OECD has successfully used this method of assessment of the performance of its member states. The OECD conducts peer review among industrialized countries, but confines reviews to one narrow subject, such as foreign aid policy. APRM, in contrast, examines nearly the full range of national government endeavor. In addition, other international organizations, including the EU, the U.N. bodies, and the IMF, utilize peer review to monitor and assess national policies and performance in several sectors (Hope 2005:289-290; Ochieng 2006).

[20] The IPEP consists of between five and seven members with at least one member from the AU's major sub-regions. All members of the IPEP are appointed by the fifteen-member HSGIC. Independent institutions such as UNECA and ADB prepare reports of findings of the peer review and discuss a draft of each report with the government concerned before submitting to the IPEP. Afterwards, the IPEP will analyze a country report and submit it to the HSGIC. Thus, the HSGIC takes ownership of peer review reports submitted by the IPEP (UNECA 2002: 9-10; Mathoho 2003: 3).

areas: good governance, human rights and corporate governance. The idea of ranking countries is that top performers will be eligible for an enhanced package of aid and investment from the developed countries (Thompson 2002). However, African leaders tend to be reluctant to criticize others on human rights and on sensitive political issues. For this reason, even though the APRM requires African governments to agree on certain performance standards, and the criteria of evaluating their performances in terms of economic, corporate, and political governance, it is intrinsically limited to achieve good results.

Moreover, some critics have expressed fears that the Western powers could attempt to utilize the APRM to sanction African countries selectively, as has occurred over Zimbabwe.[21] That is, the review mechanism could become an instrument through which "donors impose collective penalties on African countries in cases where African leaders who are declared pariahs by external actors are not sanctioned by their African peers" (Bekoe and Landsberg 2002: 2).

The aforementioned critical perspectives on the APRM has opened up considerable room for African civil society organizations to seek out parallel processes to hold African governments and leaders accountable to their stated commitments and decisions (Nwonwu 2006: 15). Indeed, civil society participation in the APRM process is crucial to the credibility of the review process as it will help ensure that the review report represents a consensus of views on a country's quality of governance, rather than being limited to what the government in question would like to make public (Verwey 2005: 20). In this sense, civil society is seen to act as a watchdog over the credibility of the country reviews. However, civil society can and should be more than just a watchdog. It often has more information on local circumstances and specific issues than government – information which can add range and depth to the peer review. Most importantly perhaps, peer review represents a window of opportunity for civil society to influence policy and translate policy into credible commitment. Although it would be naive to think that the peer review process will induce massive governance improvements in no time at all, this does not mean that the process cannot lead to real changes within a meaningful time span (*cf* Verwey 2005).[22]

[21] The EU imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe in February 2002, and a month later Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth body, accessed online at http://www.zimfa.gov.zw/current/004.pdf on 15 September 2008.

[22] Indeed, lessons learnt from Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa where the peer review has been conducted show that civil society in these four countries expressed strong concern that government would either increasingly dominate the governing council with government officials or would fill it with civil society representatives considered to be government friendly. Civil society also expressed concern about whether government unilaterally named civil society representatives or allowed civil society to nominate its own participants. It is noteworthy that these issues have consistently sparked complaints yet they have not been adequately addressed by the written guidance from the APRM secretariat (Ochieng 2006).

Table 2. Key Frameworks, Drivers, Characteristics and Challenges of NEPAD

Key Frameworks	Drivers	Characteristics	Challenges
Peace and Security Governance	AU-PSC	Conflict Management/Resolution	Shortages of Resources/Funds
Economic and Regional Governance	IFIs/RECs	Sustainable Development	Slow Progress of Capacity Building
Political and Democratic Governance	AU-APRM	Voluntary Mechanisms	Lack of Compelling Power and Limited Role of Civil Society

(Source: Author)

4. CONCLUSION

Since the initiative was created, a number of scholars and civil society organizations have acutely criticized NEPAD as a top-down, elitist and state-centric approach bound to fail. In this context, Nwonwu (2006: 22) states that "NEPAD is widely considered to be a closed system that has shut its doors against *bona fide* stakeholders including ... civil society organizations. The organization is still undergoing an acceptability test from the African citizenry who were not consulted at the formative stage of the initiative". Hence the debate on how to engage the activities and further expand the reciprocal relationships between NEPAD and civil society organization should be upheld. It is encouraging, however, that the debate on the APRM has opened up space for African civil society organizations to establish "parallel processes" to hold African leaders accountable to their stated commitments. Indeed, the continent has witnessed a multitude of conferences involving civil society actors, NEPAD officials and African leaders, although this has not been diffused throughout the whole continent (see, e.g., Cilliers 2003; Mashele 2006).

From the perspective of Afro-pessimism, NEPAD has been severely attacked by the critics who argue that the initiative have undertaken *a priori* a commitment to uphold and strengthen the Development Merchant System (DMS) and its neoliberal economic policy, perpetuating economic dependence instead of promoting economic self-reliance and self-sustainment (Onimode et al. 2004: 233-255). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the problem with Africa is not a matter of greater openness and/or integration.[23] This implies that the real problem with Africa is not openness or a need for greater integration *per se*, but rather is the nature of its openness/integration: that is, dependence on primary commodities, lack of diversification in export, and the unfavorable terms of trade is a source of the vulnerability of African economies.[24] Hence these structural impediments to tackle will be key to the future direction and success of NEPAD in particular dimension of economic and regional governance.

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[23] While the pursuit of greater openness of the global economy has created opportunities for lifting millions of people out of poverty in some parts of the world (NEPAD 2001: paragraph 32), greater integration has also led to the further marginalization of some other countries that are unable to compete effectively (*Ibid*.: paragraph 33).

[24] For more detailed discussion on this issue, see Adesina et al. (2005).

Despite the aforementioned skeptical concerns, an important aspect of the NEPAD initiative is that, instead of donors and development institutions prescribing policies that they would assist, the NEPAD initiative calls for development partners to support policies and programs that are initiated and created by African themselves, though they are not yet fully inclusive of whole African peoples including the grassroots, civil society and a host of other stakeholders. That is, the initiative attempted to take Africa away from the era of conditionality to where Africans themselves can set priorities and impose conditions of good governance on themselves with a view to addressing the fellow states' problems of 'ownership' and 'partnership' (Saitoti 2003: 26-27).

Thus, NEPAD is distinct from previous African development strategies such as the LPA in that the former is defined as an Africa-owned program at least in theory with its own self-prescribed conditionalities in practice. Indeed, unlike the externally-imposed conditionality of the IMF and the World Bank which overshadowed the African continent for the last two decades, the NEPAD architects developed self-identified and self-imposed conditions for improving the prospects for reform sustainability in Africa.

Yet, the question of NEPAD's "ownership" remains controversial in that the African continent has depended (and is depending) so much on external actors for its financing. In fact, the unequal relationship between the West and Africa is intrinsically linked to the lack of "reciprocity, complementarity or symbiosis that characterize genuine partnerships" (Akokpari 2005: 5).

To some extent, nonetheless, the sense of optimism created with the advent of NEPAD in Africa can be compared to the euphoric mood of past development experiences. Just when the continent got deeply trapped into the state of darkness and despair, African leaders have succeeded in putting a new face on the international image of Africa by introducing an initiative that has managed to attract the attention of even the cynics inside and outside the continent.[25] Given that NEPAD seeks to build on the achievements of the past, as well as reflect on the lessons learned through painful experience, so as to establish a global, regional and local partnership that is both credible and capable of implementation, thus, NEPAD should be given a chance to evolve into its inclusive and balanced African development strategy in the 21st century.

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[25] Since 2001, no world leader could conclude a speech with relevance to Africa without reference to NEPAD. The G8 has been pressured to introduce the Africa Action Plan, partnership forums with regional clubs of the wealthy such as the EU have been established, and discussions within South-South cooperation forums on NEPAD have taken place (Mashele 2006: 9).

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