What's new in the 'New Partnership for Africa's Development'?

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Does the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) present Africa's best hope for achieving sustained growth alongside good governance? Or is it another grand plan that will be unravelled by the weakness of African governments and their tolerance for abuse of power—most recently and graphically demonstrated by African heads of states' readiness to approve the elections in Zimbabwe? Visitors to NEPAD's website will find its content disappointingly thin and will remain puzzled by the initiative.[1] Its leaders—the most prominent heads of state on the African continent—have direct access to the G8 summit, and leading G8 governments are themselves preparing an 'Action Plan' for Africa based on NEPAD. But few in either group have taken the trouble to explain to their citizens the basic principles of NEPAD, an omission that has led to much wild speculation about its purpose and content. Seen by some as a means of circumventing the unwieldy processes of Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its envisaged successor the African Union, NEPAD has recently been described both as a 'programme in support of the African Union'[2] and as a 'mandated initiative of the African Union'.[3]

This article provides a brief overview of NEPAD, focusing on the process whereby it has emerged and is developing, with particular attention to its governance components. The argument is that NEPAD does indeed hold out the promise of transforming Africa's development prospects, though more modestly than its headline claims might suggest. There are major constraints on NEPAD's prospects of success, but the process of constructing the initiative holds out the hope that these may be minimized. NEPAD is properly oriented but has become too ambitious. It needs to scale back and focus on the essential core activities

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1 www.nepad.org.

2 African Development Forum III, 'Defining priorities for regional integration: consensus statement and the way ahead', Addis Ababa, Economic Commission for Africa, 8 March 2002 (www.uneca.org/adfiii/consensus.htm), para. 80.

3 Communiqué issued at the end of the second meeting of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (HSIC), Abuja, 26 March 2002 (www.gov.za/issues/nepad/com2meet.htm), para. 20.

necessary to sustain development and governance in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, matching its aspirations to the financial and human resources and institutional capacities of Africa today. NEPAD is still work in progress, and the article concludes with some suggestions for how it may shape its agenda, particularly in the field of governance.

What is NEPAD?

NEPAD is both a 'big idea' and an umbrella for best practices. It is an opening for major resource flows, both aid- and trade-related, and an attempt to re-envision development partnership on the basis of good governance within Africa. The 'big idea' element is important for keeping NEPAD on the agenda of the G8 and OECD, where ideas and plans have to be presented with boldness and simplicity if they are to seize the attention of world leaders. NEPAD thus ties in to the promise of bold international action to resolve Africa's crisis, as laid out most notably by the British government. Meanwhile it is the upgrading of existing best practices that holds out the promise that NEPAD may actually work.

NEPAD's stated aim is to achieve the overall 7 per cent annual growth necessary for Africa to meet one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs[4]): halving poverty by 2015. Few honestly expect that this target can be met, as it involves more than doubling Africa's recent growth rates; only a few best-performing African countries have met this target, and then only intermittently. Economic growth during 1991–2000 averaged just 2.1 per cent a year, less than population growth of 2.8 per cent. Africa has an annual financing gap of approximately $10 billion: meeting this requires an unprecedented increase in domestic saving (from today's rate of approximately 19 per cent to about 33 per cent for the whole of Africa, and an even steeper task for sub-Saharan Africa) augmented by debt relief, foreign direct investment and overseas development assistance. Factoring in the costs of conflict, endemic disease and the low levels of capitalization, not to mention the economic impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic,[5] it seems probable that Africa is at least a generation away from achieving these development goals.[6] If present trends continue, by 2015 about 37 per cent of Africans—three times the average of all developing countries—will be struggling to live on $1 a day and the continent will have the dubious

4 MDGs were established by the UN General Assembly at its Millennium session as targets for the promotion of human development.

5 Paul Collier, 'On the economic consequences of civil war', *Oxford Economic Papers* 51, 1999, pp. 168–83; John Luke Gallup and Jeffrey D. Sachs, 'The economic burden of malaria', *Supplement to the American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 64: 1, 2001, pp. 85–96; Bureau of Economic Research, *The macro-economic impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa*, Economic Research Note no. 10, Sept. 2001; Malcolm McPherson, Deborah Hoover and Donald Snodgrass, *The impact on economic growth in Africa of rising costs and labor productivity losses associated with HIV/AIDS*, JFK School of Government, Harvard University, Aug. 2000.

6 Ali Abdel Gadir Ali, 'Africa's children and Africa's development: a duration of development framework', in Alex de Waal and Nicolas Argenti, eds, *Young Africa: realising the rights of children and youth* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002).

distinction of having more than half of the world's out-of-school children.[7] Not only does Africa have the lowest life expectancy, but longevity is actually falling, largely on account of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The picture can be painted in a way that makes it overwhelmingly depressing.

However, a leap of imagination suggests that some very significant goals may be achievable. Take health. The December 2001 report of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health concludes, with resolute, enumerated optimism, that an annual global investment of $66 billion in basic health spending by 2015 will save 8 million lives per year in poor countries and provide an economic return of $360 billion to global income.[8] About half of this stunning return will be direct, through the increased productivity of the world's poor, as they become healthier, live longer and have more confidence in their personal prospects; the other half will derive from indirect economic benefits. Of the $66 billion, the CMH proposes that $38 billion come from aid budgets; this is equivalent to no more than 82 cents per person per week for residents in the developed world, but none the less represents a fivefold increase in existing international health assistance, and a massive increase in today's $53 billion *total* official development assistance. Britain's Chancellor Gordon Brown, in a speech to the New York Federal Reserve on 16 November 2001, suggested that global international aid be doubled to $100 billion by 2015. Money is of course not the only factor in achieving health in poor countries; but if this level of international resources were to be provided, one of the major obstacles to development would fall away.

By framing its aims around the MDGs, NEPAD is challenging aid donors ('development partners') to take their commitment to global poverty reduction seriously. They too signed up to the MDGs at the UN's Millennium Summit. This framework opens the door for a common project among development partners towards fulfilling these goals. This is why NEPAD is a partnership as well as a 'New African Initiative'—a name briefly bestowed upon the plan last year.

What's new about NEPAD? In many respects, not much—and this is one of its strengths. Africa doesn't need grand new paradigms; what it needs is a proper application of lessons already learned, and a replication and broader application of existing best practices. NEPAD's leaders like to say that what's new is the 'political will' behind the initiative.[9] It might be more accurate to say that what's new is the political realism that is reflected in the emergent NEPAD implementation plan. NEPAD is founded on principles of good governance in African countries, especially the adoption of sound macroeconomic policy frameworks and improved economic and corporate governance. It is also based on a realistic recognition of the diverse performance of those countries: some meet the criteria for the 'new' or 'enhanced' partnership while others do not.

7 K. Y. Amoako, 'Fulfilling Africa's promise', Millennium Lecture, 10 Downing St, 10 Dec. 2001.

8 Jeffrey Sachs et al., *Macroeconomics and health: investing in health for economic development*, report of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health to the Director-General of the World Health Organization, 20 Dec. 2001.

9 NEPAD document, Oct. 2001 (www.dfa.gov.za/events/nepad.pdf), pp. 10–12.

The concept of 'enhanced partnership' lies at the core of NEPAD's implementation. Beneath this unremarkable term lies a concept that promises to have the potential for transforming the aid relationship. The 'enhanced partnership' is a common commitment by African countries and donors to a set of development outcomes (defined by African countries), whereby donors pool funds, guarantee them for an extended period and channel them through budgetary processes, which are then jointly monitored on the basis of outcomes. This should lower the transaction costs associated with receipt of aid, remove unnecessary and burdensome conditionalities, promote African ownership, enable aid to promote democracy and ensure the best development outcomes.

The concept and role of 'enhanced partnership' have been somewhat obscured in some of the packaging of NEPAD. Given its prominence, especially in South Africa, there has been a tendency to put everything worthwhile going on in Africa under the NEPAD umbrella. Thus, for example, peace and security initiatives launched by some heads of state have been given the label 'NEPAD'. This is a hazardous approach, as it implies that, for example, passing judgement on the Zimbabwean election is part of NEPAD's task and mandate. Vague promises of major infrastructural projects have been floated with the name 'NEPAD' attached, evoking memories of grand plans from the 1960s and 1970s. NEPAD may be conceived of as an initiative with a hard core of commitments and principles, and surrounding layers of varying softness—some of them very soft indeed.

It is easier to arrive at an understanding of the layers of NEPAD by briefly examining its history. NEPAD emerged from three parallel initiatives launched in 2000–1. The first of these was the Millennium Partnership for Africa's Recovery Programme (MAP), inspired especially by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. This began with a mandate given by the OAU to President Mbeki, along with President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, to investigate how Africa could overcome its debt crisis. Mbeki was meanwhile promoting his vision of the 'African Renaissance', which encompassed not just economic development, but cultural, social and political regeneration too. Hence the opening paragraphs of the MAP document—replicated almost word for word in the NEPAD document—stress Africa's artistic and cultural heritage.[10] The second component was the OMEGA Plan of Senegal's president, Abdoulaye Wade. This was a latecomer, initiated in the early months of 2001, focusing on regional infrastructural and educational projects. It received strong backing from countries in Africa's francophone bloc. The third contributor was the Compact for African Recovery initiated by the executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, K. Y. Amoako, in response to a mandate provided by African ministers of finance in late 2000.

At the joint conference of Africa's ministers of finance and economic planning in Algiers in May 2001, the decision was made to merge these initiatives

[10] Ibid., p. 4.

into one. This was named the 'New African Initiative', and the July 2001 OAU summit in Lusaka then mandated an implementation committee of 15 heads of state to manage it. In October, the committee renamed it the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and established its secretariat in South Africa.

NEPAD's substance reflects the compromises made to arrive at a single initiative. While the MAP focused heavily on new ways of doing business, the OMEGA Plan was essentially a blueprint for investment in various forms of infrastructure. The ECA's Compact, the most substantive of the initiatives, lacked the backing of a heavyweight state and its ideas have therefore been downplayed in the NEPAD documentation—although they are emerging as the key to the implementation of the initiative. The ideas of 'enhanced partnership', mutual accountability towards development outcomes and peer review were all developed within the Compact document.[11]

NEPAD and the African Union

NEPAD's relationship with the OAU/African Union is important and still unclear. Formally, NEPAD has been described as an 'instrument', 'programme' or 'mandated initiative' of the OAU. However, from the outset, the key leaders of the initiative, especially President Mbeki, were very keen that it should not become subject to the slow and cumbersome procedures of OAU decision-making. They were wary of the dangers of it being derailed by the interference of small, ill-governed countries wanting to ensure that their voices were heard and their rulers paid off.

The plan for an African Union also challenged NEPAD. Its Libyan dimension posed a particular concern. In 1999, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi proposed the political unification of Africa, and at the extraordinary summit of the OAU in Sirte, Libya, on 9 September 1999, he proposed the declaration of the 'United States of Africa', then and there. This was too dramatic for most African governments; but Gaddafi had laid a strong foundation for his move by developing personal ties with a number of heads of state. The OAU reached a compromise, which was to set up a committee of experts to design an African Union, whose Constitutive Act was presented to the July 2000 OAU summit and adopted a year later. The African Union differs from the OAU in its greater ambition: it proposes accelerated movement towards a single political and economic unit across the whole continent. It plans seventeen Union institutions including a Commission, a Pan African Parliament, an African Court, an African Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOC), and various unitary financial institutions. Given that the existing four institutions of the OAU are not very efficient and member states are more than $50 million in arrears with

[11] UN Economic Commission for Africa, *Compact for African recovery: operationalising the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme*, Addis Ababa, 20 April 2001 (www.uneca.org).

their dues, this might seem a hopelessly over-optimistic aim. However, the plan for the African Union meets a long-standing African impulse for unity, that has historically strong roots in the decades preceding and following independence. It also recognizes the reality that Africa's continental economy is about the same size of that of France (and more than half of this is accounted for by South Africa and the Mediterranean littoral states), and it simply makes no economic sense for this modest economic space to be divided into fifty different sovereign entities. Regional economic integration has been regarded as an imperative by African governments for some time, leading to the adoption in 1977 of the Lagos Plan of Action for economic integration and in 1991 of the Abuja Treaty, planning the establishment of an African Economic Community over a set of stages spanning 34 years. Subregional integration has also been proceeding, with moves towards monetary union in West Africa, the revitalization of the East African Community of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and other initiatives.

NEPAD, as an Africa-wide initiative, both contributes towards regional economic integration and can benefit from it. The African Union project may become a central component of this process; but its genesis has been fragile, rapid and marked by over-optimistic assumptions and little consultation. The Constitutive Act of Union was debated by neither national parliaments nor civil society prior to its adoption in July 2001 at the Lusaka summit. That summit also set a one-year schedule for establishing the Union—a timetable much too short for a small staff and a new and inexperienced secretary-general. In fact, the African Union may best be described as an 'aspirational union': the expression of an end-goal of a future process rather than the organic fruition of existing economic and political ties.[12]

As the African Union has moved into the mainstream of regional institutional politics, Libyan control over the process has diminished. Nonetheless, Presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo and Bouteflika were all concerned that tying NEPAD into the OAU/African Union would expose it to too much Libyan influence, with immediate adverse consequences for the receptivity of OECD and G8 donors, among other things. Hence, the linkage between the OAU/African Union and NEPAD has remained largely at the level of rhetoric. If we examine the structures of NEPAD and the OAU, we see that there is little convergence between the two. The NEPAD implementation committee has total discretion and merely reports to the African Union summit, while the AU secretariat is represented at the (lower-level) NEPAD steering committee.[13] There is no AU control, let alone veto, over NEPAD.

Even though NEPAD is now formally described as a 'mandated initiative' of the AU, the institutional interface between the two has yet to be established. Formalizing and managing this relationship will be a challenge for both,

[12] Alex de Waal and Abdul Mohammed, 'The architecture and capacity of the African Union', issues paper for the African Union Symposium, Addis Ababa, 3 March 2002 (www.uneca/adfiii/auissuepn2.htm).

[13] Wiseman Nkhulu, presentation at African Development Forum III, Addis Ababa, 7 March 2002 (www.gov.za/issues/nepad/nkhulupdf.pdf).

especially after July 2002 when President Mbeki becomes chairman of the AU. It will be tempting for Mbeki to use his personal prestige to short-cut bringing the AU and NEPAD together, thereby circumventing the need for developing institutional liaison.

The most notable divergence between the two regional initiatives is that while the OAU/African Union is a club with no criterion for membership other than existence upon African soil, participation in NEPAD's 'enhanced partnership' is subject to meeting certain standards of governance and economic management.[14] This element of discrimination among African countries is the most politically sensitive element of NEPAD.

NEPAD is a 'sovereign' process steered by heads of state. However, it owes much to the specialist input of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The ECA, which functions as the continent's premier expert community on economic issues, including economic and corporate governance, convenes key fora, including the African Development Forum (ADF), the biggest annual meeting of all African stakeholders to discuss development issues; the 'Big Table' that brings together African ministers of finance and their OECD counterparts; the Poverty Reduction Strategies Learning Group, and similar initiatives. The concept of 'enhanced partnership', which integrates the best practices of both recipients and donors in the aid relationship, was developed at the ECA, and provided the central plank of its Compact for African Recovery, the most intellectually substantive contribution to NEPAD. For political and institutional reasons, however, the NEPAD secretariat has not been located at the ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, but instead has been established in parallel in Pretoria, South Africa.

NEPAD and the OECD and G8

One of NEPAD's strengths is its timeliness with respect to key donors in the OECD and G8. The thinking that underpins NEPAD was strongly influenced by emergent best practices on the part of a number of like-minded donors, including Britain, Canada, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. There was also an appreciation by key African heads of state, notably Thabo Mbeki, that Tony Blair's second term was a major opportunity to launch an African development initiative with a guarantee of a sympathetic response. At the level of programme specifics, the ideas that underpin 'enhanced partnership' have been developed by the like-minded donors in their activities in countries such as Ghana, Mali, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. For example, Britain's

[14] There is also the question of Morocco, which walked out of the OAU when the organization recognized the sovereign status of Western Sahara and admitted the Polisario front. Morocco participates in the UNECA-organized meetings of African ministers of finance and thus had an input into the negotiations around the Compact for African Recovery and the merger of the three initiatives in May 2001. The ambiguity over the OAU–NEPAD relationship allows the role of Morocco to remain similarly ambiguous. It is likely that Morocco will apply to (re-)join the OAU/African Union in the coming few years.

Department for International Development (DfID) has been experimenting with guaranteeing long-term assistance flows through the budgetary process to Rwanda, and has been supporting participatory Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in a number of countries including Tanzania and Uganda. The 'partnership' component of NEPAD is one of its strengths. Currently, while the NEPAD secretariat, ECA, OAU and African Development Bank are drawing up the 'implementation plan' for NEPAD, members of the G8 are also drawing up their own action plan.

Donor engagement is also diverse: some like-minded donors appear ready to follow recognized best practices and submit their aid programming to joint monitoring, while others are more conservative and reluctant to do this. Donors have different objectives. This may prove to be one of the biggest obstacles to NEPAD's effectiveness. The world's three biggest aid donors—the European Union, Japan and the United States—are among the slowest to embrace the principles of 'enhanced partnership'. EU development aid is notorious for its inefficiency, and Japanese aid (less significant in Africa than in other developing countries) retains a traditional focus on infrastructural projects. Meanwhile, US aid programmes remain mired in hugely complex congressionally imposed conditionalities and sanctions, as well as perhaps the world's most cumbersome set of bureaucratic procedures for aid disbursement. Remarkably, even the political imperative of the US 'war on terrorism' has yet to rouse USAID from its institutional timidity, induced by decades of intimidation from the congressional right wing.

The most substantial sources of short-term financing of NEPAD will have to be increased development assistance, opening international markets to African products, and the reduction and write-off of debt. If Africa could achieve just a 1 per cent increase in its share of world exports, the net annual financial inflow to the continent would be $70 billion, or about seven times its current level of aid.[15] Most G8 countries have recognized this, and several are taking practical steps to open their markets to African products. Increased domestic savings and more and fairer trade are envisaged as the principal financial motors over the medium and long term. NEPAD is not an aid cash cow. It is a matter of principle and appropriate practice that development programmes should be African-owned, and that the first additional finance for them should be derived from domestic sources. Hence, both African countries and donors concur that the funds to kick-start NEPAD will come from both domestic and international sources. Meeting the targets for investment and growth will depend far more on the private sector than on official development assistance. For that reason, a major component of NEPAD is establishing the right investment-friendly economic environment.

[15] Oxfam, *Rigged rules and double standards: trade, globalisation and the fight against poverty* (Oxford: Oxfam, 2002; www.maketradefair.com).

NEPAD and African governance

At the heart of NEPAD lies a recognition that African governments must establish effective and democratic governance. Without institutional capacity and popular participation, additional resource flows to the continent will be futile. In this area, some of the rhetoric surrounding NEPAD raises expectations that the initiative cannot fulfil. For example, its peer review mechanisms, which focus on economic and corporate governance, cannot be expected to pass judgement on the validity of elections. But the reluctance of Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo to reject the legitimacy of the Zimbabwean presidential elections has created a widespread impression that NEPAD has somehow given its imprimatur to Robert Mugabe's regime.

NEPAD's challenges are elsewhere. The first challenge is simply one of capacity: Africa already has insufficient capacity, in terms of human capital and effective institutions, to implement existing development commitments, expand education and health, and deepen democratization. These constraints are further affected by the brain drain of African professionals and the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is shortening adult life expectancy, reducing returns to education and hollowing out institutions. One of the aims of the 'enhanced partnership' is to reduce the current high transaction costs of receiving international aid by simplifying and harmonizing the aid encounter. Pooling aid and channelling it through normal budgeting processes increases recipient capacity to achieve results. Hence, implementation of the 'enhanced partnership' should, in and of itself, make more efficient use of recipient capacity.

NEPAD is launched at a time when there is increasing expertise in the study of African governance. Three main dimensions of governance are emphasized within NEPAD: economic and corporate governance; political governance; and peace and security. Considerable progress has been made in defining the elements of economic and corporate governance, and a framework was adopted by both NEPAD's committee of experts and its heads of state implementing committee in March 2002.[16] The most innovative aspect of this is the African peer review (APR) mechanism, an instrument that holds the potential truly to set NEPAD apart from its predecessors.

The APR mechanism broadly echoes the OECD peer review mechanism, which is regarded as a successful means of identifying and promoting appropriate practices. The rationale for the APR is that Africa should move away from donor-imposed conditionalities, which have been found to be ineffective, inefficient and burdensome, towards mutual accountability among development partners towards desired outcomes (specifically poverty reduction). This should allow for the establishment of a common mechanism of assessment, focused on outcomes. Currently, NEPAD's envisaged APR mechanism focuses on economic

[16] Communiqué issued at the end of the second meeting of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (HSIC), Abuja, 26 March 2002 (www.gov.za/issues/nepad/com2meet.htm).

and corporate governance. The target is to set a standard for review sufficiently high that the donors can abandon their own monitoring processes and accept the outcomes of the APR. This implies starting with a select group of countries with the highest governance standards, which will volunteer to undergo and participate in the review. The toughest aspect of peer review —awarding 'pass' or 'fail' marks—is thus neatly dodged, because only those countries likely to make the grade will volunteer to undergo the APR. So far, the APR is confined to economic and corporate governance, which can be deemed 'technical', although some political questions, such as the capacity of legislatures and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures, will be included. The NEPAD implementation committee has in principle recognized that peer review should be undertaken by an independent mechanism, but the details have yet to be worked out.

The APR is emerging as the critical mechanism that will carry the burden of African ownership of the NEPAD initiative, alongside the need to distinguish among the diverse records of African countries. The high quality and credibility of the APR mechanism are therefore crucial to the success of NEPAD. Should it succeed, we can envisage a select group of 'enhanced partnership' countries—perhaps no more than half a dozen at first—receiving substantially more development assistance in line with the high-quality model proposed. These countries can then become models for others, the 'limited partnership' countries in which traditional aid mechanisms will continue. This ranking will be workable only if the 'limited partnership' countries (which will be the majority) do not lose out in terms of assistance: the extra funds going to the best performers will all need to be additional money to the aid system. Meanwhile, special mechanisms will need to be developed for countries in conflict and emerging from conflict.

Political governance peer review—a wholly new practice that has not been tried anywhere in the world—will be demanding. The case of Zimbabwe has shown just how difficult it is for African heads of state to pass judgement on the electoral (mal)practices of their peers. Political governance peer review requires resolution of major questions about how standards for electoral democracy, human rights, civil society, etc., can be set and monitored, and what institutions and mechanisms should be established for this. There are dilemmas here. One option is to restrict the political governance APR to the 'enhanced partnership' group of countries, in effect using self-selection to ensure high standards. Another option is to utilize the standards laid down in Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of Union, which stipulates that only governments that come to power through constitutional means should be admitted to the African Union. The definition of 'constitutional means' adopted is weaker than that originally proposed by the OAU committee of ambassadors tasked with studying the question, but is nonetheless an important step towards setting a basic governance standard that African governments must meet.[17] Once the bar has been set,

[17] Chidi Odinkalu, 'Constitutions in the work of the OAU/AU, ACHPR and other regional and sub-regional organizations: regional co-operation, the (O)AU and constitutionalism in Africa', paper 8 Declaration of the Focus Group of Parliamentarians, ADF III, 8 March 2002.

it can only be raised. Moreover, the criteria for participation in the envisaged Pan African Parliament and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council have yet to be established. The parliamentarians' caucus at the African Development Forum in March 2002 proposed that participation in the Pan African Parliament should be limited to countries with freely and directly elected parliaments.[18] African parliamentarians themselves may set and monitor these standards. Mechanisms for implementing these principles have not been established, and it is possible that such mechanisms may shift the burden of political governance peer review away from NEPAD itself on to the African Union.

Where is gender in NEPAD? The NEPAD document includes promoting gender equity as one of its two principal aims. However, in common with most high-level African initiatives, the involvement of women has been at best marginal, and commitments to gender equity such as those adopted in Beijing have not been accorded mainstream status within NEPAD. Correcting this defect will be one of the main demands made on the NEPAD leadership in the coming year.

NEPAD recognizes the centrality of peace and security to its project. To date, the NEPAD vision in this field has not moved beyond a commitment to addressing the continent's key conflicts and supporting existing initiatives. But there is an emergent debate about how Africa's peace and security architecture can be coordinated and strengthened, and how peace and security can be integrated into other development and governance concerns. A quick purview of peace and security institutions and initiatives reveals a multiplicity of overlapping mandates. These include the OAU's Central Organ and Conflict Management Centre, the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa,[19] subregional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community and the Economic Community of West African States (which have played the key role in intervention and enforcement, notably in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Lesotho), and cross-cutting initiatives such as the campaigns against small arms proliferation, child soldiers and 'conflict diamonds'. One proposal is for an African Peace and Security Council which would bring together all regional and subregional initiatives, to promote coordination, reduce duplication and prevent initiatives working at cross purposes. (It would not have comparable powers to the UN Security Council, to mandate interventions; the closest approach to this function in Africa rests with the OAU's Central Organ.)

A second proposal, which may link existing strategic defence reviews (as, for example, in Uganda), foreign policy white papers (such as in Ethiopia) and security sector reform into democratic processes is the idea of 'national security promotion strategies'. These are envisaged as participatory and inclusive processes in which all aspects of national security are considered, with the aim of

[18] Declaration of the Focus Group of Parliamentarians, ADF III, 8 March 2002.

[19] This was launched by Olusegun Obasanjo, in his days as an independent African 'elder statesman', in Kampala in 1991. It was initially broadly modelled on the OSCE but has since come to resemble a state-level conflict management initiative.

bringing the national security debate out of the exclusive ambit of senior ministers and security officers and into the public realm, and identifying the components of a comprehensive, transparent and monitorable approach to promoting national security. Undertaken in parallel by neighbouring countries, these exercises should improve mutual confidence and help build the foundations for a 'security community' in Africa.[20]

While the economic and corporate governance peer review mechanism is on 'track one' of NEPAD—reflecting its central role in defining 'enhanced partnership' and unlocking increased development finance—the other governance and peace and security components of the initiative are still in preliminary stages of discussion. They should emerge as concrete processes in the coming twelve months.

Democratizing NEPAD

The governance agenda also includes developing governance mechanisms for NEPAD itself. To date, NEPAD has been designed by experts and adopted by governments with little public consultation. There is some popular discontent over this, and the weakness of consultation means that opportunities are being missed for strengthening popular ownership and ensuring that NEPAD promotes democracy.

There are several key elements in the democratization of NEPAD. One of these is the APR mechanism itself, whether for economic and corporate governance or political governance. If this is to be credible and effective, it will need to be transparent and accessible. Run in a professional and transparent manner, the APR mechanism can be a major regional instrument for promoting democracy—a novel initiative in instilling democracy from above.

Another component of 'enhanced partnership' is mutual accountability of all development partners towards outcomes. In this regard, the partnership involves citizens, governments and donors. The involvement of parliamentarians, the private sector and civil society in such a joint monitoring process can become a means of democratizing both NEPAD itself and the countries concerned. Secretive government-to-government aid transactions have often proved an impediment to democratization: by contrast, a transparent joint monitoring system is an outstanding opportunity to utilize the aid process to promote democracy.

As mentioned above, linkages with the African Union in the political governance realm also hold out the potential for democratizing NEPAD. In addition, other consultative mechanisms will be useful for engaging international civil society organizations, which have been remarkably oblivious to the most significant African development initiative for at least a decade.[21] In this regard,

[20] Alex de Waal, *Demilitarising the mind: African agendas for peace and security* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002).

[21] It is interesting to note that the principles of 'enhanced partnership' were developed by the UNECA, African governments and select donors, with almost no input at all from development NGOs.

NEPAD's link to the G8 provides an opportunity for a parallel civil society forum, alongside the G8 summit, for information-sharing and discussion by both African and international stakeholders. The Canadian government, host of the June 2002 Kananaskis summit, is taking a lead in creating such a forum.

The next challenges for NEPAD

At this early but critical stage in NEPAD's development, the initiative can easily be read as either Africa's best hope or another futile grand plan. The institutions and processes are broadly encouraging, while the political and economic trends are at best mixed. Much depends on leadership over the next year. Already, internal political problems combined with poor management caused President Obasanjo to withdraw from a promising peace initiative in Sudan in November 2001. The Zimbabwe election debacle is widely seen in the West as damaging the credibility of NEPAD, although, as this article has sought to demonstrate, closer inspection of NEPAD indicates that it should not be expected to pass judgement on Zimbabwe. In this regard, NEPAD's leaders have not done a good job of explaining the key distinctions to either their constituents or the international community. Political events could similarly derail other important elements of NEPAD—though the post-11 September 'war on terrorism' has notably failed to do so.

NEPAD's biggest blind spot is the social, economic and governance impact of HIV/AIDS. Reflecting Thabo Mbeki's reluctance to face this problem, NEPAD accords HIV/AIDS no greater status than that of a problem of health —a conventional approach that has signally failed to treat the pandemic with the seriousness that it deserves. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is the number one survival threat both to Africans as individuals and to African countries and their prospects for development and governance. If, as seems probable, the economic and governance impact of HIV/AIDS will be far greater than has been anticipated hitherto,[22] it will be necessary to move HIV/AIDS to the head of the NEPAD agenda.

NEPAD is an outstanding opportunity. For all its political and substantive shortcomings—especially the weakness of its consultation process—it offers the best chance Africa has had for many years of ensuring that the continent's concerns are heard, and received sympathetically, at the highest level in the international community.

[22] Cf. Bureau of Economic Research, *The macro-economic impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa*, and World Bank, *Confronting AIDS: public priorities in a global epidemic* (Washington DC: World Bank, 1999), pp. 32ff, with McPherson et al., *The impact on economic growth in Africa of rising costs and labor productivity losses associated with HIV/AIDS*, and Sachs et al., *Macroeconomics and health*; see also Alex de Waal, *AIDS-related national crises* (www.justiceafrica.org, Sept. 2001).