

# NEPAD and the Challenge of Africa's Development: towards the political economy of a discourse

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## Abstract

The critical challenge of development for Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an issue around which there is considerable consensus. There is, however, little consensus on the nature of the crisis, the required development framework and trajectory or the 'desired state'. In the context of the debate, the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) has been promoted by its authors and sponsors as Africa's development blueprint for meeting its development challenges.

Much of the criticism of NEPAD has focused, procedurally, on the lack of consultation in its drafting, and, paradigmatically, on its neoliberal content. The same set of policy instruments that have damaged Africa over the last 20 years. The latter underscores the sense of betrayal that comes through civil society resistance to NEPAD. The question though is this: Why would a group of African leaders, who seem genuine in their concerns, take responsibility for such policy framework? The paper seeks an explanation in the complex interaction between a set of developments since 1980: the neoliberal hegemony at the level of State policymaking, internal policy atrophy, coercive power of compliance, but equally the new constituencies (class forces) that have been thrown up in the last two decades—within the state, economy, and importantly the civil society in sub-Saharan Africa. Much of the latter is premised on the "death of the emancipatory project" and the dominant politics of the petty bourgeois class in Africa. It is in this sense that we understand NEPAD as a class project, hence, its import.

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# NEPAD and the challenge of Africa's Development: towards the political economy of a discourse

## 1. Introduction

The development challenges that face Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, are enormous and varied. The crisis of poverty, genocidal conflict and civil wars, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the crisis of economic and social policy outcomes are often presented as emblematic of the region. Understanding the nature of the crisis and dynamics that feed it has been the object of considerable contention. The analyses are to a considerable extent driven by ideological locations and paradigms. As I have argued elsewhere (Adesina 2002b), the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) is best understood as having specific ideological location and driven by specific development paradigm. This paper is a follow-up to this earlier one. While the earlier paper was concerned with specifying the epistemic basis of NEPAD as a policy framework, the present paper is concerned with the nature of the social forces that undergird the document as a development paradigm.

Often, reactions to NEPAD and the mode of its deployment have been driven by a sense of betrayal. Similar feeling of astonishment and betrayal is documented in the reaction of community-based organisation (CBOs) activists to the contents and policy thrusts of country Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (Nyamugasira and Rowden 2002:15). While we can argue about the specific manner in which NEPAD involves the extension of the policy orthodoxy that has governed South Africa's macroeconomic policy making and economic relations, it does not explain why the African leaders at the 2001 Lusaka conference of the OAU Heads of State signed up to the document. The explanation, I will argue, lies elsewhere. The organising framework for this paper therefore is to understand NEPAD as a class project, and to tease out the emergence of this class configuration, which while bourgeois is distinctly different from its primogenitors of the pre-1980s. The defining shift in the African terrain of class relations is around the dominant project of the petty bourgeois class. While in the 1970s, the dominant pattern was of the African petty-bourgeoisie taking up Amilcar Cabral's (1979: 136) injunction of the necessity to commit class suicide (in order to be one with the people), the dominant shift in Africa's class topography since the late 1980s is that of a petty bourgeois class least intent on committing class suicide. In other words, the shift is from the 1970s of a petty bourgeois class with proletarian/peasant aspirations to one that since the 1980s is set on realising its bourgeois aspirations. This is the importance of what I call Africa's silent revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The objective of the neoliberal project since the 1980s, has not only been to restructure Africa's economy (to meet the expansionary needs of global capitalism) but create an enabling environment—the class basis of making such project sustainable. In other words, create a class whose interest is inexorably linked to preserving the neoliberal project. That, I argue in Section 4 of this paper, is the full import of NEPAD as a project. It is within this framework—rather than a sense of betrayal—that constructing an alternative project and *rethinking Africa's development* must begin. It is within this framework that I very briefly explore some antinomies and blind spots of NEPAD. I conclude with a prolegomenon to what must be the focus of the agenda for an alternative development framework.

To set the stage for the core discussions in this paper, I outline in Section 2, the analytical framework that I employ. Much of the debate around NEPAD—both from its sponsors and several of the opponents—has been driven by a binary logic. I suggest a different logic. Much of the criticism and defence of NEPAD has been driven by this posing of binary opposites: “if it is neoliberal, it cannot be concerned with poverty”. In a specifically South African context: “if it is bourgeois/neoliberal, it cannot be concerned with poor black issues.” This posing of binary opposites, I argue, obscures the fundamental nature of identity as it is played out in the content and deployment

of NEPAD. It is possible to be bourgeois and be concerned with poverty; to genuinely raise the issue of the need to end global apartheid but deploy policy frameworks that actually reinforce it; to deeply affirm one's Africaness and yet have a prosaic understanding of its history; to be black and bourgeois! That, obviously, is axiomatic, but it is often lost when we get into the arena of political contestation. It is in understanding the mutual self embeddedness of opposites, which we can fully come to grips with the *discourse* of NEPAD. In essence, this is the key to a political economy of the discourse. Crucial to this is re-visiting the essence of *neoliberalism*. In the earlier paper, I have sought to demonstrate the extent to which NEPAD is driven by the neoliberal logic of the *post-Washington consensus*. Untangling the 'rational kernel' of neoliberalism is essential to overcoming the binary logic of the political debate around the idea. In the current atmosphere (especially in South Africa), there is a sense in which most activists deploy the label and those implementing neoliberal project vehemently reject the label.<sup>1</sup> Again, we confront the crisis of binary discourse. It is in understanding the policy terrain not as a pristine and ideal-type proposition of Normative Economics, but as the contested terrain of actors that are multi-layered and multi-dimensional, in the identities they bear. It is in understanding how biographies (individual and collective) impact on the policy arena that we can grapple with multidimensional nature and outcomes of policymaking. It is in this context that we understand the concrete forms that neoliberalism assumes in the broad daylight of active human agencies' contestations.

A bridge between the analytical framework and the discussion of the understanding of NEPAD as a class project is the understanding of the development and evolution of NEPAD. This allows for a better understanding of the technocratic mode of its formulation, and the distinctly South African reading of Africa's development past and future at the heart of NEPAD. This is outlined in Section 3.

## 2. Analytical Framework: beyond binary logic

The debate around policymaking and content, especially when interlaced with social location (gender, class, religious, ethnic, and so on), is always fraught with considerable danger. Much of this finds its expression in the clashes between activists and those designing policies. Very often the debate descends into ascribing immutable, essentialist, properties to human agencies on both sides of the divide. On the other hand more subtle analytical attempts to grapple with complex reality easily give way in the heat of political conflict. As indicated in the introductory section, the result is that the multiple interpolation of social positions and the ways in which these shift and change in the light of contested terrains of social existence, are lost. Often the retreat into Aristotelian binary logic (in which something is either/or, but hardly ever both) hinders both political practice and the understanding of social processes. As discussed in greater detail elsewhere (Adesina 2001/2002d), I will suggest that "the displacement of Aristotelian binary logic and the affirmation of contingent co-existence of opposites... provides the basis for a distinctly sociological" insight.

*This is one in which the coexistence of opposites and the open-ended outcome of social interaction or contending social forces provide an analytical framework devoid of teleological discourse... Outcome is not fixed before hand. When we confront class, ethnic, religious, gender (etc.) manifestations of mutually exclusive identities; it will not be that we take them as alternative identities... Rather it is in their interpenetration and mutual embeddedness that we understand real, lived existence as multilayered, contradictory and context-situated (rather than the postmodern imagined identities). We are not 'either'/'or'; we are often many things embedded in one. (Adesina 2002d:106)*

The analysis of the NEPAD is within this analytical framework, especially the core thesis that the policy framework is better understood as a class project, within a particular interpellation of a network of identities: even when they seem contradictory at first. Identities here, to reiterate the point, are not some disembodied or imagined social practice; they are rooted in real material contexts, aspirations and interests. It is within this context that we will examine what I refer to as the silent revolution of the past two decades.

## **2.1. Neoliberalism: specification and analytical framework**

Central to the project of this paper is the concept of *neoliberalism*. Earlier I have argued that NEPAD is profound neoliberal in mindset, especially its understanding of Africa and the prognosis on the way out of Africa's development dilemma (Adesina 2002b). Within the wider policy debate in South Africa for instance, and the global social justice movement, neoliberalism has assumed the status of a catch all labelling of policy opponents and a shorthand for privatisation. The most cited definition, as Paul Treanor (n.d.) reminds us, involves 'usual definitions' that are so vague as to be of no heuristic value. It points to the consequences of neoliberalism as increased gap between the rich and the poor, and the fact that it has been imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. Often, it is in the dramatic analogy that its essence is conveyed: Bond (2001:4) used the metaphor of "knots in the economic rope tied around the necks of ordinary people getting ever tighter and digging ever deeper."<sup>2</sup> On the other side of the table are policymakers who increasingly resent the labelling of their ideas as neoliberal. An interesting case was when President Thabo Mbeki, (in response to a comment by a participant at the "Continental Experts' Meeting on NEPAD" held in Pretoria in June 2002, about the neoliberal content of NEPAD), said he would like to be further informed on what "this thing called neoliberalism is", because he has heard it used frequently but could not seem to understand what it means. The debate with the Congress Alliance in South Africa, demonstrates the extent to which the word is considered a byword for "right-wing" and wielded as a political weapon (cf. Endnote 1).

At the heart of the apparent confusion is a deficit of understanding concerning the relationship between conceptual discussions about neoliberalism and actual policy implementation. For the opponents, 'privatisation' has become mobilizational rather than analytical. For proponents, the charge of neoliberalism unfairly groups them with advocates of traditional economic liberalism, fails to recognise that privatisation (i.e. divestment of State assets or equity holding) is only a limited aspect of their programme of "the restructuring of state assets", and that their social policy is concerned with poverty reduction, equity of access (opportunity) for historically disadvantaged segments of the population. In a sense, both sides are correct, but only because of a limited and circumscribed understanding of neoliberalism and what it actually entails.

Neoliberalism, as Treanor (nd) notes is best understood by focusing on "the historical development of [economic] liberalism". Central to this is the "belief in the moral necessity of market forces in the economy" and "entrepreneurs... as a good and necessary social group." Economic liberalism revolves around these two fundamentals and the propagation of the culture, norms and social framework of power and relations that sustain both ideas. In this regard, market forces are not only morally necessary but inherently good and are the most appropriate ways to allocate resources and create incentives in society. The entrepreneurs are the primary social force for deploying and implementing this virtuous mode of managing society. The extent of penetration of society—what Marx would call the "commodification of social life"—is itself a result of contestation of the social terrain.

What is significant about neoliberalism, deriving from this basis in orthodox market liberalism is "the desire to intensify and expand the market, by increasing the number, frequency, repeatability, and formalisation of transactions" (Treanor nd: 5). It is in this propagation of the principle of market transaction to as much areas of social and economic existence and interaction as possible that defines the core value and principle of neoliberalism. This could be spatial or temporal, or terrains of social relationship that would be considered unsuitable to the logic of market transaction. Bond (2001:4-10) appropriately identifies the basis of contemporary neoliberal globalisation as an attempt to address the crisis of over-accumulation by displacing the crisis. It is in pushing the frontiers of market, as a normative position, that we understand the attempt to resolve that crisis. In its specific manifestation, however, neoliberalism is under-girded by two other core ideas: Monetarism (as the normative framework for regulating macroeconomic affairs), and Supply-side Economics (as the framework for addressing firm level production activities).

The specific configuration of the expansion and intensification of market logic and norms, monetarism and supply-side management, and manifestation in actual policy practice and implementation, will, however, depend on the configuration of social forces and agencies that contest

the policy terrain. Capacity to move from theory to policy practice is therefore a critical function of balance of social forces contesting the policy terrain. The outcome, to go back to the analytical framework, is not fixed before hand. Furthermore, the nature of the policy contestation is itself not binary, as in State versus Civil Society (even if one could assume that there is one civil society). The State itself is a terrain of active human agencies contesting the policymaking process and at various levels the human agencies are subject to multi-dimensional constellation of interest and aspirations. The same applies to the civil society, which one would see as even more multi-dimensional in this constellation of interest and aspirations.

What is crucial for our understanding of neoliberalism, therefore, is not privatisation, *per se*. That is only one of several options available in the extension of the market logic and the deification of the entrepreneurial spirit. In the specific case of “restructuring” of State assets, it is not so much the privatisation that underlines the neoliberal project, ***but the falling away of the welfare functions of public enterprises and utilities***. The aspiration to extend the market logic to every arena of social and economic relations (realised or not) would manifest itself in attempts at inserting ‘commercial principle’ into the heart of traditional terrains of social policy: health, sanitation, education, social security, and so on. Added to this is the increased definition of every terrain of service delivery as a business concern, driven by business logic: from municipal services to running of health and educational institutions. The entrepreneur becomes the high-priest of this new brave-world of life driven by market logic. ***I will argue that it is in this reading of NEPAD, as a development framework, that we understand its true import.***

To the extent that these are principles that have for the last twenty years been associated with the Bretton Woods institutions’ (BWIs) social vivisection (Adesina 1994) in Africa, NEPAD’s significance is in accepting the call by the BWIs and the ‘donor community’ for African countries to take ownership of these policies. The intensification and expansion of the market principle and practice and the deification of the entrepreneurial ‘class’ are themselves not a disembodied social process. They represent a distinct class project at the global level. The failure of the sponsors of NEPAD to pay attention to the debilitating consequences of twenty years of carnage of the neoliberal project is more than coincidental. I will argue that it is illustrative of the fundamental shift in the nature of the class forces on the continent itself.

It is in understanding the core values of neoliberalism that we appreciate its enduring logic in the policy “weaving and diving” by the BWIs and the handlers in Washington and Europe over the last two decades. While there has been significant shift in the ***language*** of deploying the neoliberal policy instruments, from the early days of orthodox stabilisation and liberalisation agenda (or Washington Consensus) and the current so-called post-Washington Consensus, the core values remain the same (cf. Adesina 1994: vi-viii). It is in following the distinction that Imre Lakatos made between the ***core*** and the ***protective belt*** of a research programme or paradigm that we understand the shift in the language of the neoliberal discourse. I have argued (Adesina 2002b) that NEPAD is rooted in the post-Washington Consensus of the Wolfensohn Comprehensive Development Framework type, not Joseph Stiglitz’s. The rediscovery of poverty, concession to basic education, and “good governance”, etc., are not simply driven by deception. Protests from street-level activism, the global social justice movement, multilateral organisations, and those having to assume responsibility of the policy instruments in the recipient countries had their tolls on the proponents of the Washington Consensus. Beyond the usual suspects one must add protests against orthodox neoliberalism have come from countries like Japan and conventional economists like Joseph Stiglitz (1998a, 1998b) and Paul Krugman (1998) over the IMF’s bungling of the Asian Crisis of the mid-1990s. The limit of the concessions was, however, set by the core values of neoliberalism. So while there has been a lot of an effort to massage the protective belt of neoliberalism, the core values have remained largely the same. While not everyone has remained as dogmatic as Deepak Lal (1994), Bhagwati’s (1988) excellent documentation of the basis of this concession—something in which he is himself a high priest—shows the extent to which the neo-Walrasian trade-off (between growth and equity) is rooted in sustained adherence to the core values of market liberalism.

*Many of us have been surprised, though pleasantly his time, by the realization that we had exaggerated our early fears about the trade-off between “consumption”*

*expenditure (such as financing education and health) and investment expenditures aimed at growth... More is known now, therefore, to wean us away from the fear that such educational and health expenditure are necessarily at the expense of growth.* (Bhagwati 1988:549-550)

Mkandawire (2001a) provides an excellent overview of these issues. Concession to social policy spending is, however, without prejudice to sustained adherence to the core values of neoliberalism. Indeed, the core proposition of neoliberalism is that addressing equity issues—to a lesser or greater extent—follow fundamental transactional principles. Public Private Partnership (PPP) often involves the application of market principles to traditional areas of social policy. User-fees involve the application of quasi-market logic to areas traditionally considered as requiring universal entitlements. That this might be wholly inappropriate in most contexts, and that the fundamental assumptions of neoclassical economics (and specifically market liberalism) have little validity in broad-day light of social existence, remain fundamental sources of the damage and instability that neoliberalism continue to wreck, and its link with heightening inequality and worsening poverty. The issue is not whether neoliberal adherents and fellow-travellers cannot (or are incapable of) empathy with the poor: that will be to essentialise the more vociferous expressions of market liberalism and assume that all neoliberal think the same way. It is that sustaining the core principles of neoliberalism sets the limit on empathy with the poor. Particular manifestations of neoliberalism will reflect the highly contextual nature and diversity of social experiences, biographies, aspirations, and interests of particular adherents, as well as the capacity of other social forces to contest the terrain of policymaking with the neoliberal adherents.

It is in this highly contextual understanding of particular deployment and engagement with the core values of neoliberalism that we can better understand NEPAD as a policy document: in all its antinomies, misconceptions, and high-minded aspirations. It is in this context that we move from the anger and despair concerning NEPAD as a betrayal to a social reading of the project. To facilitate this, I believe it is important to understand the origin and evolution of the document itself.

### 3. NEPAD: origin and evolution

The emergence of NEPAD has become the subject of considerable “urban legend”. Much of this has been in the context of response to the blistering attacks on it by civil society organisations (cf. Bond 2002 for a compilation). At other times, it is driven by the considerable acrimony going on within the African diplomatic circles itself that prompts its sponsors to find legitimacy for it. For instance, the statement by Aziz Pahad (2002), South Africa’s Deputy Foreign Minister, that the troika, of Presidents Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Thabo Mbeki, and Olusegun Obasanjo, was authorized by the OAU Heads of State in 1999 *to develop the plan* is such an urban legend.<sup>3</sup> The outcome of the OAU Heads of State’s 35<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session and 3<sup>d</sup> Ordinary Session on the African Economic Community in Algiers made no reference to such mandate. While President Thabo Mbeki, attending his first OAU meeting as Head of State of South Africa, delivered a statement on the challenge of globalisation, his concerns about the need to “put in place the mechanisms and procedures which would enable us to determine whether what we are doing at the national, bilateral and regional levels is consistent with the objectives in the Abuja Treaty”<sup>4</sup>, did not translate into the idea of such mechanism being taken up or outside normal OAU structures. If anything, the speech which took a very magisterial tone, rubbed the other Heads of State on the wrong side.<sup>5</sup>

The outcome of the OAU session focused more on (a) commitment to exclude those who come to power by *coup d’etat* from attending OAU sessions, (b) adoption of a proposal submitted by President Obasanjo on peace and security issues: the *Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Co-operation in Africa* (CSSDCA) initiative, which was formally adopted at the 36<sup>th</sup> Session in Lome. Indeed, President Mbeki strongly objected to a proposal by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to put in place a mechanism on the challenge of globalisation and information age for Africa, because it was outside the framework of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Further, there was nothing in the two major international speeches that President Mbeki gave three months later to suggest such mandate or plan.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, *no authorisation or mandate to develop a new development framework* is found in the Lome Declarations of the OAU 36<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session/4<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the AEC, in July 2000 (OAU 2000) or that from the March 2001 Extra-ordinary session of OAU Heads of State at Sirte, Libya. Further, it is curious that such major project as the Millennium Plan was never mentioned in the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the April 2000 G-77 Summit in Havana, Cuba. President Obasanjo was chair of the G-77, while President Mbeki was the chair of the NAM, and President Bouteflika was still chair of the OAU. Both Presidents Obasanjo and Mbeki played pivotal roles at the Havana Summit. The only reference of a mandate to Presidents Bouteflika and Mbeki is in the *Sirte Declaration* of the “4<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government” of 9 September 1999 (OAU 1999b)—and it was quite specific:

*Mandate our Current Chairman, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa in consultation with the OAU Contact Group on Africa’s External Debt to engage with African creditors on our behalf on the issue of Africa’s external indebtedness, with a view to securing the total cancellation of Africa’s debt, as a matter of urgency. (Para 8 (iv)).*

Africa had in twenty years of structural adjustment faced the massive escalation in external debt: from US\$60.6 billion in 1980 to US\$206.1 billion in 2000 (Adesina 2002b). At both Algiers and Lome, the OAU Heads of State argued that the debt burden has become a primary obstacle to development and poverty reduction. Clearly, there is a world of difference between a mandate to “engage with creditors” and presuming that such mandate allows one to craft a policy framework of immense proportion such as MAP or NEPAD—that in fact blames the African countries for the debt crisis, and takes the side of the creditors in fundamental macroeconomic policy instruments and debt management strategy! Further, the reference to the “mandate” in the declarations from the OAU Assembly in Lome was in the context of the CSSDCA and that the debt burden remains a major impediment to development and poverty reduction in Africa.<sup>7</sup> If there was any notion of a document for consolidating the development aspirations of the OAU since the *Lagos Plan of Action* (1980), it was the CSSDCA. It’s “inter-linkage between peace, stability, development, integration and cooperation” (Para 7) was seen as providing “a policy development forum for the elaboration and advancement of common values within the main policy organs of the OAU” (Para 7)—and “an invaluable tool for the pursuit of the agenda of the OAU in the new millennium” (Para 8). A considerable part of the CSSDCA document is in fact about economic development issues and regional integration—as set out in the *Lagos Plan of Action* and its *Final Act*.

I have gone to this extent because understanding the origin of NEPAD lies elsewhere—outside the OAU mechanism and involves the troika taking ‘matters into their own hands.’ The need for a distinct document, outside existing structures of the OAU or the AEC, followed the 2000 meeting of the G8 in Okinawa, Japan in July 2000. Presidents Bouteflika, Obasanjo and Mbeki had met with the G8 leaders on the issue of debt relief for developing countries, generally, but African countries in particular.<sup>8</sup> The outcome of the Okinawa meeting was a demand *by the G8 for a “workable plan as the basis of the compact”* that the troika was demanding.<sup>9</sup> The G8 response is emblematic of the increasing demand for ‘reciprocity’ by the European and North American countries—either in the so-called Economic Partnership Agreements like Cotonou Agreement, or in multilateral contexts like the World Trade Organisation. South Africa’s Foreign Minister commented at the end of the meetings that: “We were pleasantly surprised at the convergence of views from both sides... There seems to be emerging a very clear agenda and consensus around issues that we can build a strategic partnership on.”<sup>10</sup>

Following the Okinawa meeting, President Mbeki was given the responsibility by the “troika” to develop the workable plan that the G8 demanded—there was no report-back to the OAU Heads of State or the OAU Contact Group on Africa’s External Debt! The task fell to a small team working from within the Presidency in Pretoria. This, I will argue, is important for understanding NEPAD as a document driven by a distinctly South African reading of the development challenges facing Africa and the prognosis for Africa “extricating itself” out of its development quagmire. It is distinctly South African, not in the sense of being general or typical but emblematic of a dominant reading. It also explains the multi-dimensionality of the identity concerns and aspirations that underscore the

document, both as an Africanist agenda and as a distinctly *neoliberal Africanist project*. It is neoliberalism of the structuralist variant, a la Wolfensohn's CDF. For the drafting team in South Africa, the organising framework was defined by two separate but interlinked projects.

First is the *African Renaissance* project of President Mbeki, as an intellectual and cultural project. While confusing for many people in the rest of the continent, the project is best understood as effort in an Africanist agenda of self-awareness within South Africa and 'defeating' the negative psychological, moral, and intellectual impact of 200 years of institutionalised racism of a settler colony and Apartheid. In Spring of 2000, Rev Frank Chikane, the Director General in the Presidency (Pretoria), had been to the United Nations to promote the idea of *African Renaissance*.<sup>11</sup> On 21 November 2000, President Mbeki signed into law the *African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund Act No.51* (Adesina 2002b).

The second is the economic worldview that defined the work of the drafting team. For Pretoria, the *Growth and Employment and Redistribution* (GEAR) macroeconomic framework, adopted in 1996, has remained the premise of any discussion or operation. It is fundamental to the notion of redistribution and how Pretoria engages with global capitalism and its governance institutions, such as the WTO. In spite of protestations to the contrary, GEAR is a profoundly neoliberal document—not in a pejorative sense, but in the sense that I discussed earlier.<sup>12</sup> It is this conception of contemporary global economy and how to survive in it, that undergirds NEPAD. While there were some contestations of the turf among the team members, it is the more neoliberal group that won the day.<sup>13</sup>

The first public mentioning of the "plan" was six months later, on 28 January 2001, at the World Economic Forum gathering in Davos. As Mbeki (2001) noted:

*It is significant that in a sense the first formal briefing on the progress in developing this programme is taking place at the World Economic Forum meeting. The success of its implementation would require the buy-in from members of this exciting and vibrant forum.* (p.1).

In WEF papers, the programme was appropriately named the *Millennium African Renaissance Program*. Mbeki's briefing clearly indicated that the programme was meant to be a club of "participating African leaders [who] would form a compact committing them to the programme and a Forum of Leaders who would make decisions about sub-programmes and initiatives and review progress on its implementation." While "participation [was] open to all African countries", there was an opt-in clause: those intent on participating must be "prepared and ready to commit to the underlying principles guiding the initiatives. *We intend to brief all African Heads of State over the next few months*" (Mbeki 2001a:2). Those who are not "ready will be welcome to join later." Clearly, this was not an initiative of the OAU or its Assembly of Heads of State and Government. This is an idea completely alien to the way the OAU operated. Earlier in 1999, at Algiers, President Mbeki had objected strongly to the UNECA project, precisely because it arose outside of the OAU institutional framework. President Mbeki's own account of the project, two days after he arrived in South Africa from Davos (Mbeki 2001b), suggests an active agenda in 2000 during which he interacted widely with the "political leadership of the developed world—the North" (Mbeki 2001b) discussing and seeking commitments to "the idea of a new and concerted effort to address, among others, the challenge of African poverty and underdevelopment" (Mbeki 2001b). But this was essentially a personal initiative, without and before "coming to any agreement with other African leaders and African civil society" (Nabudere 2002: 52).

In purporting to speak for African leaders, and that "the MAP programme is a declaration of a firm commitment by African leaders" (Mbeki 2001:1), Mbeki caused quite some angst among other African leaders, like Abdoulaye Wade, also present at the WEF gathering. Nothing in the comments of President Wade indicated that he had or was developing an alternative plan. The *Omega Plan* was developed *afterwards* as a counter-measure to MAP (cf. Adesina 2002b). Like MAP, the *Omega Plan* bears extensive evidence of the proponent President being a key author (cf. Wade 2001a, 2001b).<sup>14</sup> The May 2001 version of *Omega Plan* envisaged its being presented to the OAU Summit scheduled for Lusaka in July 2001. The international conference of experts was convened in Dakar in June 2001. This might explain the fast tracking of MAP document for the same OAU Summit.



The initial preference for MAP as a principle by ‘club of participating countries’ approach may reflect the suspicion within the OAU Assembly of Heads of State itself. Nigeria and South Africa virtually walked out of the Lome Summit over complaints about Libya’s domination of the issue of the African Union, and fast-tracking its establishment. The African Union project had been put on the front burner at the September 1999 extra ordinary session in Sirte, Libya. Muammar Ghaddafi’s capacity to rally the smaller African countries ahead of the 2000 Lome Summit and in securing sufficient signatories to the Constitutive Act to bring the Act into force, created considerable angst in Pretoria and Abuja. The *Omega Plan* was going to be the second time that the two major African countries (Nigeria and South Africa), which see themselves as natural leaders of the continent and its spokespersons, would find themselves to be generals without troops.

While different in origin, both MAP and Omega Plan share a common approach to overcoming Africa’s development challenge. As “Africa’s strategy for globalisation” (Wade 2001b:6), Omega Plan shares the same understanding of sources for financing and a private-sector led approach. While the Plan is considerably woollier than MAP in the coherence of its arguments, MAP and subsequently NEPAD suffer from related problems.<sup>15</sup>

The diplomatic efforts at the Lusaka summit led to the integration of the two plans, which was named the *New African Initiative* (NAI). In the new structure for implementation, Wade was brought onboard as a vice-chair of the Heads of State Implementation Committee (HSIC). The OAU Summit endorsed the new document. The first meeting of the HSIC meeting was held in Abuja, Nigeria in October 2001. A reworked version of the document was released. The document that emerged from the Abuja meeting involved extensive reworking of the NAI document. The substantial difference is editorial—making the document more coherent and focused than earlier versions. The team that did this redrafting drew on people from the Abuja and Pretoria presidencies and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

#### **4. Africa’s Silent Revolution: towards a political economy of NEPAD**

In spite of continuing tension within the OAU and among the Heads of State on the framework itself and mode of its implementation, NEPAD was endorsed by the Lusaka Summit. A cynic might wonder if the Heads of State read the document, but that would miss the point. Adedeji (2002) expressed anguish at the lack of political will and nerve by African leaders to implement their own agenda, especially the LPA. For a document that detracts in important areas from earlier OAU declarations on globalisation, the debt crisis, democratising the global governance system, trade regimes, and the superintending powers of BWIs on economic management on the continent, what needs explaining is the extent of the consent that it has received from so many State functionaries on the continent, and the “business community.” It is to this, that I now turn.

I will argue that the remarkable shift in Africa in the post-1980s was not only in the imposition of orthodox stabilization and liberalisation programme, but the manner in which this and the change from bipolarity to a unipolar world impacted on the ideological landscape in the continent. This was both at the material level of the constitution of class relations and the mindset. I will contrast this with the post-colonial nationalist project. The shift in the constitution, mindset, and aspiration of the African petty bourgeois class is the critical component.

The immediate post-independence political economy of Africa was dominated by an enthusiastic commitment to the nationalist project. At the heart of this commitment to the nation-building project was a development focus. This is regardless of whether we are dealing with Julius Nyerere’s Tanzania or Kamuzu Banda’s Malawi, Leopold Senghor’s Senegal or Jomo Kenyatta’s Kenya. While there were the Left and the Right ends of the political spectrum, there was broad concern for what Olukoshi (2002:6) referred to as the “post-colonial social contract”:

*The promise of independence nationalism lay not only in discarding colonial rule and the broad-ranging exclusion on the basis of which it thrived but also opening up access to economic, social and political opportunities... the anti-colonial nationalist coalition was held together by the promise of freedom, unity and development.*

It was underscored by different economic visions—from the “African socialism” of Nyerere and Kaunda to the commitment to capitalism in Kenya and Cote d’Ivoire. Even the “capitalist roaders” were driven by a Keynesian commitment to social policy outcome and growth. Commitment to nation-building was an overriding and common vision. As Mahmood Mamdani recently noted<sup>16</sup>, while it is commonplace to stigmatize Julius Nyerere for the failure of the Ujamaa project, history will remember him more as Africa’s foremost nation-builder. Tanzania is the only multi-ethnic country in which no ethnic group has been made a victim. Contrary to the narratives of the period that seems to underwrite much of the current reluctance to increase spending on social policy, the significant improvements in social policy outcomes (cf. Adesina 2002b, Ghai 1987) was not financed by borrowing or ‘printing of money.’ As Mkandawire (2001b) shows, inflation was generally low, and current account deficits quite limited. There are the obvious outliers (cf. Hutchful 2002). The development of an indigenous bourgeois class was equally driven by the nationalist project and dimensions of post-colonial social contract. Micro case studies of Western Nigeria (or Ghana), for instance, point to the development of a strong local consensus regarding the value of investment in universal entitlement to education, health care, and a strong orientation to full employment. This social compact survived into the late 1980s. In spite of the widespread perception, in the late 1970s, of development failure (because as the LPA argued, the average growth rate did not exceed 4.8% annually) there is increased consensus today that compared with the post-1980s, those first two decades have turned out to be the “golden age” (Adedeji 2002) of Africa’s economic and social development (cf. Mkandawire 2001b, Adesina 2002, Olukoshi 2002).

The disaffection with the elite closure of the political space and an increasingly authoritarian developmental state stimulated a *dominant* mode of alternative politics. This was defined by Amilcar Cabral’s injunction that for the African petty bourgeois class to become one with the people, it must *commit class suicide*. And the context of Cabral’s statement is quite poignant. In a speech delivered in January 1966, at the *First Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America* in Havana, Cuba, Cabral highlighted the critical role of the indigenous petty bourgeois class after the end of formal colonial rule. The petty bourgeois class has two possible options. One is “to give free rein to its natural tendencies to become ‘bourgeois’... and necessarily to subject itself to the imperialist capital” (1979:136). This situation, Cabral argues “corresponds to the neo-colonial situation... [a] betrayal of the objectives of national liberation” (1979:136). The other road is one that commits the petty bourgeois class to “committing *suicide* as a class, to be restored to life in the condition of a revolutionary worker completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which he/[she] belongs” (1979:136). It involves “repudiating the temptations to become ‘bourgeois’ and the natural pretensions of its class mentality” (*ibid*). This is the dilemma of the Africa petty bourgeoisie.<sup>17</sup>

The dominant alternative politics of the 1970s, I will argue, was dominated by Cabral’s injunction and inspired a generation of Africans: it inspired a *petty bourgeois class with proletarian/peasant aspirations*. The nationalist project took an increasing more radical orientation. The liberation movements that dominated the landscape in the 1970s were decidedly driven by Cabral injunction: from the Guinea-Bissau to Mozambique, the *emancipatory project* was not only conceivable, *it was feasible*. Unlike the old nationalist project, the national liberation agenda of these movements was enthused with proletarian and peasant aspirations. From the PAIGC to FRELIMO, the gender question was central to the liberation project itself—a deeper sense of social democracy was feasible and was being built in the liberated territories. These in turn animated politics on the continent—from the student uprising in South Africa to contending with military autocracy in Ghana. It was an *optimism of the will* that made building socialism feasible (even if profoundly dubious of the Soviet project) within the social movements across the continent. In South Africa, it made the South African Communist Party (SACP) a natural home for many who might have little awareness of what Marx, Mandel, Mao, or Machel actually said or wrote.

The significant shift, in the post-1980s, particularly in the 1990s, was in the dominant aspiration of the African petty bourgeois class. Unlike the 1970s, the dominant aspiration is increasingly one of a *petty bourgeoisie with bourgeois aspirations*. This shift has been both at the level of the State and the civil society (or societies); voluntary and compelled. The origin is equally diverse: the ascendancy of rightwing monetarism and conservative politics in Europe and North America, and the debt crisis

in Africa and Latin America. The intellectual cohesion for the rightwing project was provided initially by the Chicago brand of Monetarism, but assumed widespread force through the counter-revolution in/against Development Economics, specifically. Attempts to resolve the crisis of over-accumulation in the West, took the form of the displacement of the crisis and aggressive prising open of markets across the world—what Bond (2001) called the geographical displacement of the crisis.

The decline and the collapse of the Soviet bloc and China's turn from Maoism, as well as the intense hostility of the West to all instances of emancipatory politics would impact directly on the dominant alternative politics in Africa. The containment and subjection of liberation projects in Mozambique and Angola, for instance to intense carnage by proxy forces trained and financed by an alliance of the US, Britain, and Apartheid South Africa, was not only important for moderating the end game of Apartheid but the continent generally. It triggered the perception that the emancipatory project was dead! As with everything, politics is driven by success stories, affined relationship, and demonstration effect of epochal events. Pessimism of the intellect was matched by pessimism of the will.

The escalation of the debt crisis and the balance of payment problems provided the entry-points for the World Bank and the IMF in the illegal micromanagement of the economies of many African countries. The effect was, initially, most crucially within the State: State functionaries were confronted with ultimatums from the IMF and World Bank to implement aggressive stabilization and liberalization agenda or risk bankruptcy. In cases like Ghana, under Jerry Rawlings, the Finance officials complained that empty treasuries left them with no alternative than to accept the bitter pills of adjustment. The turn from left-wing politics to the neoliberal project, which saw many formal left-wing allies of Rawlings imprisoned, was taken reluctantly but taken nonetheless. However, the impact of adjustment policies deployed with an army of western market liberal economists, took the issue beyond compulsion. The sociological effect was to shift the balance of forces within the State itself in favour of neoliberal fellow-travellers by establishing neoliberalism as the undercurrent of policy discussions. In many cases this involved personnel changes (Hutchful 2002, Bond, 2001). In other cases, it was a matter of a dominant ideology becoming hegemonic. Government units with economic mandates—Ministries of Finance, central banks, bureaux with oversight mandate for privatisation and commercialisation—often became the first line infantry for the emergent neoliberal orthodoxy. “Capacity building” projects by BWIs and similarly oriented western agencies focused on reinforcing this ideological commitment. These processes were not uncontested. Tensions within the State, especially in the face of the failure of adjustment to produce the sustained growth or the prosperity for the population (by ‘trickle down) were rampant. Public revolts against the consequences of SAP fed into the scepticism and resistance of those within the State structures that were more averse to the neoliberal project. In certain cases, and at the early stages, the more aggressive neoliberals lost elections. Nevertheless, the continued exposure of the economies to external shocks and the debt peonage set the boundaries of resistance.

Intellectually, the crisis was posed by the new guardians of global capitalism as not merely short-term, or symptomatic of the crisis of neo-colonial capitalism. The crisis, they argued, was evidence of the failure and bankruptcy of the nationalist project, and the developmental state agenda. This was signalled early by the Berg Report. Neoliberalism—first in aggressive pricist terms, but later with more structuralist content—was presented as the only solution. Every instance of the failure of adjustment was presented as policy slippage and failure of political nerve, requiring exposure to more aggressive neoliberal policy instruments. Incremental additions of political and later ‘social’ conditionalities were imposed—again driven by the market logic. The aggressive production of reports (often with dubious methodological content) by the BWIs and their intellectual associates tightened the perception of the inevitability of neoliberal policy package.

At the level of civil society, there was a concerted effort to develop a new generation committed to the neoliberal vision. The *African Economic Research Consortium* is such an initiative. The neoliberal counter-revolution took to mind the Maoist principle on revolutionary insurgency—borough deep within the population. The collapse in public sector wages and the secular decline in formal sector employment stimulated the growth of the NGO sector and the drift into the ‘non-formal’ sector. The emergence of the governance argument, initiated the campaign to extend and deepen the “civil society” of a neoliberal hue. Elsewhere, (Adesina 2001b:i”) I have argued that:

*The rise in the hegemonic profile of neo-liberalism, with its focus on market-led growth... created an immanent bias towards the “private sector society.” NGOs were the private sector, at least not the public sector. The interesting switching of the argument about democratisation also created a perception of the need to reinforce the “civil society” [often] as the antithesis of the State.*

Funding from official and non-official western sources provided the basis for sustaining core actors and the diverse projects, which in many cases became increasingly hostile to the State. The political implication has been profound. Alternative politics in the 1990s lurched decidedly to the right, driven by liberal political theory and the extension of the market logic to the political space. In places like Zambia and Zimbabwe for instance, alternative politics (led by the trade union movement) commenced from the point of view of the inevitability of the neoliberal agenda. Indeed, in both the cases of Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively, the labour movement became the spring board for a conservative agenda, in the name of opening up the political space to competition. Even as the change to liberal democracy is celebrated, perhaps rightly so—the dominant form of politics took the neoliberal agenda as inevitable *and disconnected political rights from economic rights*, or at least circumscribed the latter.

The NGO sector and the pro-democracy terrain were increasingly dominated by a petty bourgeois class least intent on committing class suicide. The normative shift was underscored by the assumption that the emancipatory project was dead—at least in class terms, and there was no viable alternative to neoliberal growth trajectory. What was described as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independence movement of political reform (democratisation) is perhaps better understood as a bourgeois revolution of a kind—driven by a petty bourgeoisie with rampant bourgeois aspirations. The resentment against the one party-state and dictatorship was, in great part, driven by a petty bourgeois class straining at the leash of class aspiration, much more than the social consequences of autocracy. The tendency to acquiesce in the face of growing poverty and still insist on the deployment of market forces for rationing access to social services—health, education, sanitation, etc.—defines this orientation. True, much tears have been shed about poverty, but this is within the neo-liberal concession to the demands of equity. The neo-Walrasian equity/efficiency trade-off still drives even the concession to social policy (cf. Bhagwati 1988, Mkandawire 2001, Adesina 2002).

With limited historical memory, the new petty bourgeoisie often took the neo-liberal discourse of Africa as given—its discourse demonised the State, as the arena of all that was wrong, and the civil society and private entrepreneurship as the domain of all that is virtuous. The idea that imperialism and transnational capital are too strong to be argued with pervades much of the discourse within the civil society and state in most African countries, including South Africa. John Kufor’s article on the “limits of self-sufficiency” (*Project Syndicate*, April 2002) is emblematic: “Ghana” he says, “needs foreign donors to plug the gap in its finances and assist us in standing on our own two feet”.<sup>18</sup> It is a mind set that is seeing an increasing number of African countries dependent on donor finance for a substantial part of their *annual budgets*; especially the countries labelled as “successful adjusters”. At the height of its being proclaimed a success story of Structural Adjustment Programme, Ghana was dependent on external aid for between 72.15% and 98.61% of its central government expenditure. In 1999 and 2000, 54.41% and 76.83%, respectively of Uganda’s (the new star pupil) central government expenditure derived from aid (World Bank 2002c)

Those who would not give up their proletarian/peasant aspirations ploughed their energy into the social justice movement, often with considerable postmodern mindset. For many others the emancipatory project involves energetic engagement with ‘local narratives’ and politics of grassroots campaigns. Many civil society organs like the NGOs that are operationally ‘radical’ have become so dependent on donor resources that the imperial and national agenda of European and North American aid agencies are not questioned. Indeed, the assumption that such institutions as USAID are ‘development partners’ is not uncommon in the NGO sector. So far, I have spoken of the *dominant* tendencies.

The class implications have been profound. The new aspirant bourgeois class (in politics and society) is defined by its rejection and hostility of the nationalist project and the post-colonial social compact. Its discourse of the nationalist project and the policy trajectory for Africa is driven by the BWIs narratives and is predominantly hostile to the State as a domain of public good. It differs from the nationalist (petty/) bourgeois class in this significant respect. This, I will argue, is important for making sense of the *content* of NEPAD, rather than its public persona. There is, however, nothing uniform about this trend.

#### **4.1. Black, Bourgeois, and Proud of It**

The pattern in South Africa shares similar but also specific characteristics and this is quite significant for the NEPAD initiative. The coalition that developed in the struggle against Apartheid was a loose one. The common platform was race-based oppression. The dominant segment, while subscribing to the principle of non-racialism, was both Africanist and non-socialist. While the language of left parties might have dominated the discourse, the tension between the complex amalgams of forces persisted. The same process discussed above—especially the notion that class emancipatory project was dead, the demise of the Soviet bloc, and the ascendancy of neoliberal globalisation—would have profound effect on the post-Apartheid agenda of reconstruction and change. While the more radical segments of the liberation movement were in ascendancy in the late 1980s to early 1990s, a radical social reconstruction agenda was limited by the murderous violence that was unleashed by the Right wing in the lead up to the 1994 elections. The curtailment of the radical agenda, to accommodate disaffection in the formerly racially privileged groups, also strengthened the traditional Africanist segment that had little inhibition about its bourgeois aspirations. While the terrain has been vigorously contested, for the soul and direction of the dramatic changes that have happened in post-Apartheid South Africa, it is in the class agenda that we understand the import of NEPAD, as a development project.

The class force that drives the project combines passionate Africanist agenda (exemplified in the idea of *African Renaissance*) with class agenda to create and nurture a black bourgeoisie. In its experience of racism and social exclusion of the Apartheid era, this segment shares common history and concerns with ordinary black people. Its quest for race-based (and gender-based) justice creates common purpose with ordinary South Africans. But it is also trenchantly committed to the bourgeois agenda. In this context, it shares common purpose and concerns with the international, and predominantly white, capital-owning and directing forces. The shift from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)—a neo-Keynesian agenda—to the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic framework signalled a major shift in the class balance of forces within the ruling coalition (Congress Alliance) and deepened the commitment to active engagement with global capitalism. It is in the twinning of a race-based (and gender-based) social justice concern, and the class aspirations that we fully understand NEPAD as a class project. It is this twinning of race and class aspirations that the South African promoters and drafters of NEPAD share with their counterparts in other parts of Africa. As Africans they strain at the leash of global geopolitical and economic subordination (or subsumption). In their class aspirations, they share similar concerns with the bourgeois project, worldwide. It is this that makes Benjamin Mkapa, Frederick Chiluba, Abdoulaye Wade, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Thabo Mbeki fellow-travellers.

In its Africanist orientation, and concerns for race-based justice, the South African sponsors of NEPAD do have a track record of serious concerns and commitment to what happens on the continent. South Africa's involvements in the Comoros, Burundi and the DRC have been at considerable emotional, financial, material, and military expense. It is difficult not to take in the deep emotional feeling and pride with which President Thabo Mbeki approached the signing of the peace deal in Pretoria between the Presidents of the DRC and Rwanda or the final DRC accord in Sun City. His statement that it was a bright day for Africa is in the sense of Africans taking responsibility for resolving their own crisis. It is this Africanist dimension that is a motivating factor in trying to write a development agenda for Africa.

It is, however, the wider class and specifically neoliberal project that sets the Pretoria group apart and defined the instruments of development that was considered feasible. The size of the South African market, the extent of the commitment of its economic policy team (Treasury, Presidency, Reserve Bank, and Trade and Industry) to active engagement with global capitalism and being a

serve Bank, and Trade and Industry) to active engagement with global capitalism and being a major player, defines the more aggressive commitment to neoliberal policy direction. Part of this may be defined as national interest, but it will fail to fully appreciate the extent to which being “black and bourgeois” is not necessarily manipulative or a case of the deployment of alternate identities in different terrains. It is that of class aspirations and orientation which is distinctly ‘black’ and Africanist. Often in this context, it is not a question of the conflict between class and race—it is that of class aspiration within a racial locus.

The experiential basis of the self-embeddedness of race and class, however, also explains the extensive misreading of Africa’s development crisis and growth and social development achievement that is so inherent in NEPAD. In reproducing the reading of Africa that was so typical of the *Berg Report*, NEPAD failed to recognise the complexity of the paradoxes and puzzles of Africa’s development experience (Adesina 2002d). There is the lack of fit between macroeconomic indicators of performance and social development outcomes: the richest countries sometimes have social policy outcomes that are far worse than the poorer countries. Foreign investment flow has been highest in countries with pervasive social instability and/or rampant dictatorship. Further, the specific location of South Africa within the continent, and the extent to which its trade policies are driven by actors with strong commitment to existing mechanisms for governance of global capitalism, explains the enthusiasm of the NEPAD document for the World Trade Organisation, even as other African countries are sceptical, and often hostile to the power-based nature of the organisation (cf. Keet 2002). Class and neoliberal commitments would explain the extensive antinomies in the document, as well. Much of this has been dealt with elsewhere (Adedeji 2002, Adesina 2002a, Olukoshi 2002, Bond 2002, Tandom 2002), and therefore need not delay here. The extensive subordination to the BWIs’ perspectives raises its class project above its Africanist aspirations—but it predates the NEPAD project (Bond 2000, 2001).

The effect is that NEPAD proposes the same set of policy instruments that have extensively damaged the continent in the last two decades. Its proposition that Africa should strive to develop “into a net exporter of agricultural products” (par. 154), for instance, reveals considerable lack of understanding of the logic of the failure of a policy that African countries have pursued since the 1960s. Indeed, in making “market access” such an integral aspect of its mode of ‘partnership’ with global capital, NEPAD reinforces a false debate. Increased market access for agricultural products may assuage some conscience in the North, but nothing we know in theory or practice suggests that this is in fact the way to go (Adesina 2002c). The persistent argument in the NEPAD document about Africa’s economic marginalisation also misreads the basis of Africa’s “marginalisation”. It is not the extent of ‘integration’ of Africa into the global economy that is the problem but *the mode*. A good measure of ‘integration’ is the percentage of trade (export and import of goods and services) in a country or region’s gross domestic product. Figure 1 shows the comparative trend of this measure for the sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries and the High Income OECD countries. The SSA region shows a consistently higher degree of ‘openness’ than the later. It is in changing the *mode* of Africa’s integration into the global economy that we address its marginal voice in the global economy. In this regard, NEPAD offers little that is of promise.

Simply trying to encourage quantitative growth in macroeconomic indicators, as NEPAD seems so concerned with, is also only one side of the equation. Reduced inequity in wealth distribution is fundamental to sustainable economic growth (Mkandawire 2001b), and macro-economically poor countries do hide highly inequitable distribution of wealth. In countries such as Central African Republic, Nigeria, Zambia, Mali and Niger, more than 60% of the population are classified as living in absolute poverty. Yet in many of these countries income distribution remains highly skewed. The richest 10% in Nigeria, Zambia, Mali, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, and Burkina Faso, to name a few, control more than 40% of income or consumption. In the specific case of Nigeria, we are not dealing with a poor country. Indeed, stupendous wealth has been accumulated by a tiny fraction of the population during the same decade of mounting poverty, destitution, and structural adjustment. The return to ‘democratic polity’ in Nigeria, as in Zambia or Malawi has done little to tame rampant corruption in the economies—if anything Zambia, for instance, demonstrates the extent to which the opening of the political space also widens the space for corrupt enrichment of public officers *with* detrimental effect on social policy outcomes. Kuznet’s thesis that income inequality must first get

rimental effect on social policy outcomes. Kuznet's thesis that income inequality must first get worse before it gets better has been shown to be absolute nonsense. This pattern of inequity has been fostered by the same set of policy instruments that NEPAD proposes.

It is in recycling the neoliberal agenda of the BWIs and purporting to give it an African ownership that we understand the enthusiasm for the project by the same global forces that have dominated Africa for centuries.

## 5. Prolegomenon to an alternative development framework

In this paper, I have been concerned with a distinct aspect of what I consider the basis for rethinking Africa's development; beyond NEPAD. A critique of NEPAD, I argue, must go beyond expressions of despair or a sense of betrayal. It is in understanding NEPAD as a distinct class project and how this is tied to the significant shift in the African political landscape that we can begin to overcome it and develop an alternative framework—that genuinely empowers our people and gets beyond the neoliberal project. The drafting of an alternative framework, should itself become the project among progressive forces on the continent—where Cabral's injunction serves as the basis for development programming. It requires the return of the Developmental State, but in a context where state/society relations is inclusive, equity-focused, democratic, and a growing economy (UNRISD 2001). This is not to underestimate the extremely hostile environment in which such a project must operate. It is important that in attempting to take ownership for policies that are in the interest of global capital, the sponsors of NEPAD are not allowed to deflect the enormous pressure that has been put on the G8 and the Bretton Woods Institutions in the last two decades. Critical areas of the work of OAU/AU remain at variance with key propositions of NEPAD—and prefigure a different world, in which African countries are not held hostage by global capital and international financial institutions.

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### **End Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> In the South African context, this took a hugely acrimonious form that came to a head in late September and early October 2002, in the conflict over policy direction between the African National Congress and its partners in the ruling Congress Alliance, especially the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). On 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October, COSATU staged a series of “anti-privatization” strikes to press home its demands for fundamental policy review. The ANC, led by its President, Thabo Mbeki, lashed out at COSATU with claims of “ultra-Left” tendencies (cf. Mbeki's statement to the ANC Policy Conference: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/2002/sp0927.html> and SACP, <http://www.sacp.org.za/umsebenzi/-online/2002/uo1001.htm>).
- <sup>2</sup> This is not to take anything away from the collection of essays—which continue to show Patrick Bond's detailed, brilliant and poignant documentation and insightful analysis of South Africa's policy context.
- <sup>3</sup> Speech given by Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad at the conference on NEPAD sponsored jointly by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) in Cape Town, on 1 November 2001. This followed the Parliamentary debate on NEPAD at the South African parliament.
- <sup>4</sup> Thabo Mbeki, “The Challenge of Globalisation: the establishment of the African Economic Community,” *Statement by Thabo Mbeki at the 35<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government*. Office of the President, Pretoria (13 July 1999), <http://www.polity.org.za/>

ernment. Office of the President, Pretoria (13 July 1999), <http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/speeches-/1999/sp0713.html>.

- 5 President Mbeki pointedly objected, in his speech, (*vide supra*) to a section of the Draft Declaration that he said was “fundamentally flawed and should be changed”. This section, quoted in full in his speech concerns the fear, expressed in the draft declaration, that globalisation “poses serious threats to our sovereignty, cultural and historical identities as well as gravely undermining our development prospects. We believe that globalisation should be placed within the framework of a democratically conceived dynamics, and implemented collectively to make it... capable of fulfilling the hope for a concerted development of mankind and prosperity shared by all people” (cf. OAU 1999). President Mbeki went on to say:

*I am certain that in our discussions today we will help one another, among other things, to understand better the objective process of globalisation and its positive and negative features. Having gained this understanding I believe we would be better placed to respond to the urgent and important challenges it poses.*

If that was not off-putting, I am not sure what is! The Assembly went on to reject his objection and retained this segment of the draft Declaration, *in toto*. The recent argument about the nature of the Peer Review Mechanism, and South Africa’s approach to Zimbabwe would suggest that some lessons are being learnt.

- 6 Cf. Thabo Mbeki, *Speech of the President of the Republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, at the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly*. New York, 20 September 1999. <http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/speeches/1999/sp0920.html>. Thabo Mbeki, *Address by the Chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement, President Thabo Mbeki, to the NAM Ministerial Meeting at the United Nations*. New York, 23 September 1999. <http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/speeches/1999/sp0923.html>.
- 7 *CSSDCA Solemn Declaration AHG/Decl.4 (XXVI)*, Para. 12 (g).
- 8 Cf. SABC News *Mbeki and other African leaders ask G8 countries for debt relief*. <http://www.sabcnews.com>.
- 9 Interview, April 2002.
- 10 Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, SABC News (13 July 2000, 07:45), <http://www.sabcnews.com/world/-other/0,1009,1756,00.html>.
- 11 My appreciation to John Ohiorhenuan for this insight—telephonic interview, 28 October 2002.
- 12 For very insightful, frog-eye, view of the process, see Bond (2000, 2001).
- 13 It is safe to speculate that President Mbeki himself contributed to the drafting of the document. Draft 3A of the Millennium African Recovery Programme, bears the stylistic hallmarks of the President’s speeches, including the (signature) quote at the head of the document. The president has a well-earned reputation for working long hours and hard and writing most of his speeches. Obasanjo shares similar virtues, and only the self-deluded will deny that both are smart.
- 14 The folksy tone of the *Omega Plan* reflects Abdoulaye Wade’s personal style. The “Catch-up Theory” (which President Wade claims as his personal theory) is the ‘conceptual’ basis of the Plan. He was correct, though, in arguing that the idea of a Marshall Plan for Africa, which is the underlines MAP, is wholly inappropriate to the African situation: “it made me smile because this vision resulted from a total lack of understanding of the Marshall Plan and the context of its implementation. Reconstruction in a developed country like France... does not have anything to do with the construction of a factory or the development of an industrial sector in an African country” (Wade 2001a:4).
- 15 See Bond (2002) for a detailed textual critique, Adesina (2002b) for a critique of its epistemic basis, and misreading of Africa; Olukoshi (2002) for its understanding of political issues, and Adedeji (2002) for its historical weaknesses.
- 16 Mahmood Mamdani, Keynote Address to the 2002 South African Sociological Association Congress, East London. 30 June 2002.
- 17 My continuous appreciation to Omafume Onoge who introduced me to Cabral as an undergraduate at University of Ibadan.
- 18 John Kufor. “The Limits of Self-reliance”, *Project Syndicate*. April 2002. [http://www.project-syndicate.org/series/series\\_text.php4?id=851](http://www.project-syndicate.org/series/series_text.php4?id=851) (Accessed 26 September, 2002).



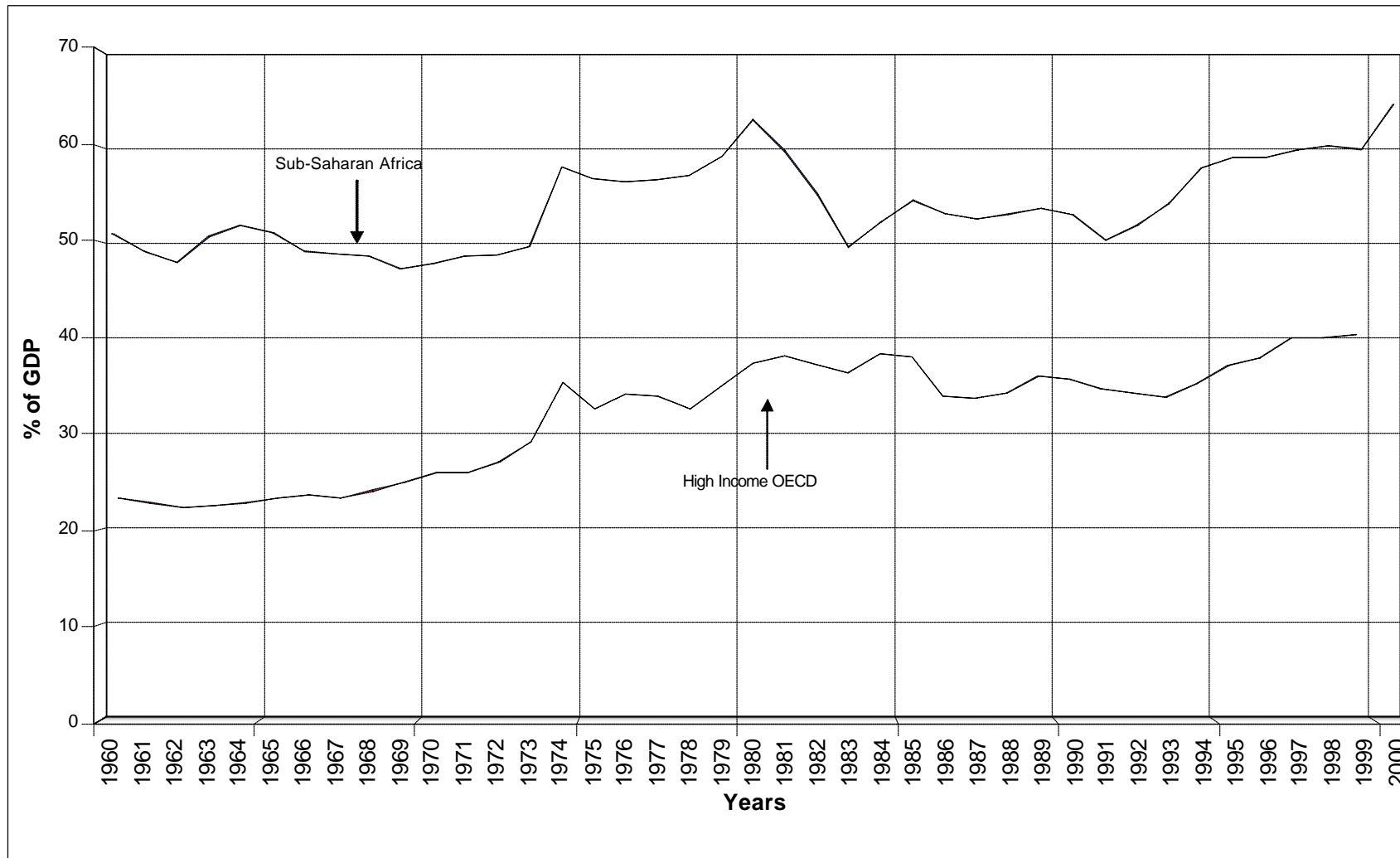
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Figure 1: Trade as % of GDP (comparative data on Sub-Saharan Africa and High Income OECD countries)



Source: World Bank *World Development Indicators*, 2002