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*Human  
Security,  
Poverty and  
Conflict in  
SADC*

SEMINAR PAPER

Contemporary International Economic Relations - Enhancing Human  
Security through a Civil Society Response

by  
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SEMINAR

**Introduction**

Contemporary international economic relations are marked by a long history of unequal power relations and exchange. This very uneven relationship between the colonizers and the colonized persists today causing Africa to continue finding itself in very abysmal conditions. Africa is a continent which still has to grapple with the legacies of slavery, colonialism and now new forms of imperialism accentuated by a very inequitable world market.. The enrichment of one side of the world out of the exploitation of the other has left the African economy without the means to industrialise and grow adequately. The lack of industrialization and value added to its products meant that the African human condition has been and in many ways is still in distress. Decolonisation in some people's minds was tantamount to the end of oppression but in reality, decolonisation did not bring the end of the exploitative relationship. In the 70s and 80s, new forms of economic colonialism were in place as a consequence of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). More recently, we note the rapidly changing face of globalisation. The recent changes on the global scene do not necessarily mean an improvement in the lives of the people of Africa. The changing face of globalisation- with China and India emerging as giant players in an economic field which has for very long been dominated by the North poses a new world economic configuration in which the future of many countries including the South are increasingly threatened. North-South and South-South Cooperation takes new significance but this does not necessarily mean that poverty will be easily addressed and human security enhanced.

31<sup>st</sup> August  
2005

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Efforts are expanding and multiplying to 'make poverty history' but without acknowledging and understanding the history of poverty and the very roots of the problem as well as the way in which the world economic system is organized to the advantage of the superpowers, poverty will persist and human security increasingly threatened. This does not mean that globalisation is equivalent to a 'powerless state' and that there is no room for manoeuvre. Internal governance is at the core of all development efforts. The state should work towards the democratization of development. This paper points to the importance of developmental states as well as the urgency of opening up markets to the developing world. Exports will help developing countries to trade themselves out of poverty. It is a necessary condition but not sufficient. Trade without aid will not work. The continent needs both and much more to heal its various wounds and to restore its dignity. The paper also points to the important role that civil society across the globe can play to challenge the dominant logic of the market and more importantly to push for an equitable and human faced world economic system.

There is perhaps not much newness in the human security debate since in many ways it is inspired by the Human Development debates of the UN and the Capability approach of Amartya Sen. The newness perhaps lies in the fact that the 'Human Security' concept helps to highlight the difference between the security of states and the security of persons/citizens, and not interpreting the latter as merely the physical safety of individuals during violent conflict but their ability to access resources and satisfy their basic needs. The right to food, the right to health, the right to safe and sound environment, the right to education, the right to housing/shelter constitute the human security architecture but the question that should be posed is to what extent can this architecture be translated into reality as we step further into a world economic order which perpetuates an exploitation of the South and continues to be skewed towards the North. Within the South itself, we have in certain cases, a local elite which exploits the people. Both internal and external dynamics are responsible for the plight of the people and unless both these dynamics are revisited and reviewed, appropriate policies are formulated both at the local and international level, Africa runs the risk of being marginalized even further.

The first part of the paper discusses the human security architecture. It argues that neoliberalism poses a major threat to human security since the former often brings in its wake a deepening of poverty. When growth is jobless, the very joblessness can exacerbate poverty. The right to work is a fundamental human right but when there is no work or work is only concentrated in the informal sector with all the risks that the latter entails, new challenges to governance are posed. This section argues that gender inclusive developmental states are necessary if socio economic rights of all the people are to be respected and human security enhanced.

Part two of the paper discusses some of the latest initiatives to bring back development to the people of Africa and in so doing it draws attention to some of the criticisms that have been made about NEPAD and why the people of Africa should be cautious in espousing it. It argues that the ahistorical nature of the NEPAD framework of action and the neoliberal ideology with which the document is infused may cause serious problems for large segments of the continent's population. The lack of civil society consultations go to show that NEPAD has not been driven by the people and that it will be therefore very difficult for such a document to be pro-people and pro-

poor. The leader-centric nature of NEPAD poses questions as to whether such a document/plan of action can really benefit the masses and improve the social content of citizenship.

The third part of the paper discusses governance - both local and international. It argues that civil society constitutes an important core element within the governance debate and unless civil society is redefined and reconceptualised, the 'Politics of Resistance' being developed by certain groups will have limited meaning. Protests across the world are becoming more visible but knowledge regarding these protests remains thin and unless there is more of a collective approach, we run the risk of seeing the globalisation of poverty taking the upper hand. Movements such as the World Social Forum have emerged to counteract the World Economic Forum but very little is usually heard about the former in contrast to the publicity made about the latter.

### **Part one- The human security architecture and neoliberalism**

For those who view security as related to states, state security is perhaps the central element in international relations and states struggle and often invest large amounts of resources in order to remain secure from perceived external especially military threat. But Buzan (1983) has challenged this perception of security and argues instead that security must be linked to real life experiences and survival strategies of people themselves. Buzan (1983:19) draws our attention to social threats namely 'those arising from the fact that people find themselves embedded in a human environment with unavoidable social, economic, and political consequences.'

The genesis of the term 'Human Development' as popularized by the UNDP can be found in the writings of Mahbub Ul Haq and Amartya Sen. The process of economic development should according to Sen, be seen as a 'process of expanding the capabilities of people.' Capabilities refer to the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve, and from which a person can choose. The notion of freedom is embodied in the term 'capabilities'- the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead. The introduction of ethical considerations has been the hallmark of this approach. As we step further into this globalised and neoliberal age and different new forms of inequities and insecurity arise, the scope for ethical development and full respect of people's socio economic rights remains rather limited. Whilst the issue of citizenship and rights are central to emerging identity politics across many parts of the globe, some thinkers such as Huntington for instance seems to sideline the economic argument. Huntington's emphasis is on the potential of divisiveness that exists within the cultural forces.

In his seminal work, "The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order" (1996), Samuel Huntington argues that the post cold war era may not result in the 'End of history' as Francis Fukuyama wants us to believe, rather new social forces which will be mainly identity driven will be emerging." Samuel Huntington notes:

'In this new world the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups but between people belonging to different cultural identities. Tribal wars and ethnic conflicts will occur within civilisations''.

The position I adopt in this paper is rather different from Huntington's. The central missing point in Huntington's thesis, it seems to me, is the issue of citizenship and rights and hence the potential role of developmental states and civil society in guaranteeing these. Group identities and identity politics have been increasingly linked to the question of resources, rights and privileges. The claims of marginalisation, domination, and social injustice by groups and individuals often derive from this reality. In other words, inter group or identity based conflicts and civil wars are often manifestations of the citizenship problematique. The latter can be extended beyond state boundaries when we address international governance and the responsibility of different stakeholders in promoting 'ethical development' therefore becomes even more relevant. Ethical development implies that more attention should be paid to how to address existing asymmetry in the distribution of entitlements and promote the social rights of each citizen. But whether neoliberalism provides room for ethical development and whether developmental states can emerge and what is the potential of civil society towards the restructuring of the world financial and trade architecture are key questions.

### **Neoliberalism- A threat to human security**

Neoliberalism has become a more or less catch-all term accommodating a range of market oriented ideas and interests that have evolved over the past three decades. Yet the World bank (1993), Williamson(1990) and Wade, 1992) have noted that the neo liberal project has some core elements that can be identified within a panoply of social, economic, and related political policies. The latter have emphasized fiscal prudence and discipline, the market, trade, investment and financial liberalization, deregulation, decentralization, privatization and a reduced role for the state.

Inequality declined in many countries between 1945 and 1970s, but since the tenets of the 'Washington consensus' became mainstream there has been a reversal of this trend in many parts of the world and instead of having a deepening of democracy, many countries experienced an exacerbation of poverty. There is enough evidence to show that the structural adjustment policies of the 70s and 80s have contributed to reversing the gains made by some of the post colonial states in Africa. The conditionalities imposed by the IMF/the World Bank, particularly the rolling back of the state have had direct implications on human development and human security. Perhaps, the most notorious relatively recent example was in Mozambique during the late 1990s, when the country's single largest industry, cashew nut processing, was destroyed by World Bank dictates, via debt-relief conditionality (privatisation plus liberalisation plus retractions of a 10 % export tax as raw cashews).

Contrary to many countries in Africa, the East Asian countries did not follow the Washington Consensus blindly and allowed for such significant state interventions that the World Bank itself had in the end to recognize the important role that the state played in East Asia's development.

### **The Asian Miracle - A word of caution**

The economic success of East Asia during the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was spectacular, seen in its booming growth rate rates, burgeoning exports and

income gains in the region. But East Asia did not fit the 'neoliberal' development model. This was clearly indicated in the World Bank's East Asian Miracle Report (1993). By then it had become difficult for the Bank to ignore the reality that Asian industrialisation had often been accompanied by often significant state interventions. No longer able to deny the state's role in the remarkable economic success stories in Asia, this role was assessed and justified as 'market facilitating'.

Africa can learn a lot from the Asian model and in particular its strategy of development. Ouattara (1999) argues that open and liberal trade regimes have allowed these countries to develop their comparative advantages and gain access to newer, more appropriate technology, financial liberalization has increased their access to international private capital, permitting them to realize much higher rates of investment and growth.

Africa can derive lessons from the growth experiences and the turbulence of Asian countries. These include the management of capital inflows and the composition of debt. In the processes of liberalisation, Africa must bear in mind the necessity for sequencing and liberalising trade as well as capital flows with utmost care and diligence. Growth is not based on integration into the global economy alone. Rather growth is also based on other factors, including the maintenance of macroeconomic stability and high investment/GDP ratios. In addition to this, Africa must anchor her growth prospects on the development of human capital, infrastructures and institutions. Rodrik (1999) argues that claims by the advocates of untrammelled international economic integration are often exaggerated or incorrect. Rodrik argues that openness in the sense of low barriers to trade and free capital flows does not always lead to growth, reduction of poverty and improvement in the quality of life for the majority of citizens of developing nations. While Rodrik admits that openness may have some indirect benefits for the poor countries in the form of transfer of ideas and technology, or access to foreign savings, these are however, potential benefits which will further a country's economic development only if it can put into place the right domestic institutions and policies. The latter may be crucial to promote economic development but the latter will be meaningless if it were to operate in the absence of a social contract.

### **The need for developmental states**

The success of the East Asian countries in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has attracted the attention of many people. Countries such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan have during the post world war period enjoyed impressive rates of growth and rapid industrialisation. Growth models that rely on individual entrepreneurs reacting to market signals could not predict or explain the kind of transformation that occurred in East Asia. Ha Joon Chang (1999) argues that the state played a critical role in this unprecedented process of economic and social transformation and this explains the reason why such states were described as developmental. More precisely, Chang (1999) defines the developmental state as one which considers the objectives of long term growth and structural change seriously and which at the same time has the potential of creating and regulating the political and economic relationships that are necessary for sustained industrialisation. According to Chang, conflicts are bound to happen during the process of change but political management of the economy helps

to mitigate these and that an engagement with institutional adaptation and innovation are also required to achieve the overall objectives of growth and structural change.

Leftwich's (1995:401) definition of developmental states echoes that of Chang in some ways. Leftwich argues:

*"...developmental states may be defined as states whose politics have concentrated sufficient power, autonomy and capacity at the centre to shape, pursue and encourage the achievement of explicit developmental objectives, whether by establishing and promoting the conditions and direction of economic growth, or by organising it directly, or a varying combination of both."*

Woo Cummings (1999:1) explains that the developmental state is a 'shorthand for the seamless web of political, bureaucratic, and moneyed influences that structures economic life in capitalist North East Asia'. According to Skocpol (1995), a state's means of raising and deploying financial resources tells us more than could any other single factor about its existing and immediately potential capacities to create or strengthen state organisations, to employ personnel, to co-opt political support, to subsidise economic enterprises, and to fund social programs. More importantly, a developmental state must be socially anchored. According to Evans, developmental states combine:

*"...Weberian bureaucratic insulation with intense immersion in the surrounding social structure. How this contradictory combination is achieved depends of course, on both the historically determined character of the state apparatus and the nature of the social structure in which it is embedded"*

State sovereignty and autonomy, the state's capacity to steer the country's development, a home grown and a nationalistic industrial strategy represent three core elements to the understanding of the developmental states. Whether 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa features some of these characteristics and more importantly whether NEPAD the latest development initiative by some of the Africa leaders makes room for human development and human security is a question that is of concern to us. The next section details some of the criticisms of NEPAD and highlights the continued position of marginality of the African continent in world trade. Does NEPAD provide the possibility for developmental states to take the drivers seat?

## **Part two - NEPAD and Human Security**

For many, NEPAD simply represents old wines in new bottles. In very many ways, NEPAD echoes the SAPS of the World Bank and IMF dictates which included demands that African countries cut budgets, increase user fees for state services, privatise state enterprises, lift price controls, subsidies and any other distortions of market forces, remove currency controls, devalue the currency, impose higher interest rates, deregulate local finance; remove import barriers such as trade tariffs and quotas, lower the social wage and funding for education/ skills training programmes and promote the export of raw materials to increasingly-glutted world markets.

The criticisms made of NEPAD revolve mostly around the excessive reliance on market logic, the nature of partnerships that Africa has with the rest of the world and the invisibility of civil society in the process of developing NEPAD.

### Partnerships- an unlevelled playing field

NEPAD is premised in a neo-liberal framework, which pushes for further privatisation, liberalization and deregulation. Partnerships to the minds of many can only make sense and be acceptable when the playing field is leveled and where human dignity prevails. But NEPAD seems not to be bothered about the idea of an 'equal' international partnership which requires first and foremost, an analysis of power relations and how to change them. Instead of challenging the existing skewed global financial architecture and demanding redress, President Mbeki wants Africa to integrate the existing inequitable world order. The "Global Apartheid"- the chains represented by international economic processes and institutions do not seem to worry some of our leaders. Nabudere notes:

*" Mbeki in fact puts the responsibility for the improvement in global governance first and foremost on the shoulders of the victims of marginalisation instead of the other way round. Those who were in fact responsible for running institutions of global governance were excused and the poor were blamed for not putting their houses in order. Because only when Africa put its political and economic house in order would 'sound global governance' be complete and improved. It is no wonder that the rich countries, which manipulates the global institutions of governance for their own good and which are reluctant to reform them, have welcomed this "African Initiative' with a lot of praise of the NEPAD.*

*Whilst some of our leaders and their close collaborators seem to see nothing wrong in the terribly inequitable world order, we are lucky that there still exists a breed of people both on the continent and overseas that relentlessly challenge the system. In a series of articles and more particularly in his article of 21<sup>st</sup> June 2005, Monbiot writing for the Guardian, asks: 'Is exploitation something that just happens? Does it have no perpetrators?' And in response to the very question he notes: "this, of course, is how Bush and Blair would like us to see it. Blair speaks about Africa as if its problems are the result of some inscrutable force of nature, compounded only by the corruption of its dictators. He laments that 'it is the only continent in the world over the past few decades that has moved backwards'. But he has never acknowledged that - as ever the World Bank's studies show- it has moved backwards partly because of the neo- liberal policies it has forced to follow by the powerful nations: policies that have just been extended by the debt- relief package..... Anyone with a grasp of development economics and politics who had read and understood the G8 finance ministers' statement could see that conditions it contains- enforced liberalisation and privatisation- are as onerous as the debts it relieves...."*

The NEPAD Document writes:

*" The New Partnership for Africa's Development seeks to build on and celebrate the achievement of the past as well as reflect on the lessons learned through painful experience, so as to establish a partnership that is both credible and capable of implementation. In doing so, the challenge is for the peoples and governments of*

*Africa to understand that development is a process of empowerment and self-reliance. Accordingly Africans must not be wards of benevolent guardians, rather they must be the architects of their own sustained upliftment."*

There is no doubt that such beautiful paragraphs within the NEPAD document can attract a lot of sympathy but the reality is that it is tantamount to 'inspiring rhetoric'.

No mention is made in NEPAD of the constructive suggestions made by an earlier generation of African nationalists in the Lagos plan of Actions, let alone any attempt to take these forward- on the contrary we find NEPAD celebrating the WTO, IMF, World Bank and the Transnational Corporations. More importantly, NEPAD shuns 'self-reliance' and upliftment of the mass of Africans, as witnessed by the total lack of civil society consultation in the drafting of the document.

### **The poor visibility of civil society in the NEPAD process**

Who are the people in Africa and who should 'own' NEPAD. We often hear NEPAD being described as 'unique' since it is 'owned' by the Africans but as we speak to the vendors in the streets of Lusaka, those selling their bodies in the streets of Nairobi and elsewhere, the sweepers and cleaners of airports both at home and abroad, the women struggling for some proper ventilation in the Export Processing Zones of Madagascar, those sweating in the cotton fields of Burkina Faso and Mali, waiting patiently for the dismantling of the double-standards relating to subsidies that the cotton producers of the North receive at their detriment, the beautiful women garlanding and welcoming the white tourist on some of our most beautiful beaches, the people dying of AIDS in different corners of the continent, we realise that these people- the people of Africa, know nothing about NEPAD. They are the missing link in the NEPAD process. How can we expect human development and human security to grow in a context where the people themselves have no mastery or knowledge of the decisions being taken and policies being made on their behalf by their leaders.

### **Eradicating poverty and improving human security- a challenge for governance**

Like globalisation, governance can be conceived broadly or narrowly. The commission on global governance (1995:2) defines its subject as "the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken." Similarly, Keohane and Nye (2000) define governance as 'the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group.'

Governance can, according to Scheppele and Soltan (1987) also be understood more narrowly as that subset of restraints that rests on authority, where authority itself is a social relationship in which 'A (A person or occupant of an office) wills B to follow A and B voluntarily complies' (Scheppele and Soltan). In other words, governance is characterized by decisions issued by one actor that a second is expected to obey.

It is therefore clear that governance is not government. (Young, 1999). Many social and political units- among them families and clans, firms, labour unions, alliances, and empires- govern social interactions and possess authority, at least in regard to their



members. Nation states assert sovereign authority and claim a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, but they represent only one type of governance structure. Corporations, NGOs, international standard-setting bodies, and many other entities all act authoritatively within the global system. In other words, all can contribute to international governance. The question that is of concern here is to what extent can NGOs and civil society really be brought to prominence in fighting poverty and making the world more just. Can the plight of Africa really improve?

### **Part three - A civil society response - Globalisation from below.**

The question is the concept of civil society relevant to Africa is a complex one but deserves some thinking. According to Lewis (2002), there are some four ways of responding to this question. The first response suggests that it is relevant in that it is based on the idea of a positive, universalist view of the desirability of civil society as part of the political project of building and strengthening democracy around the world. The second response according to Lewis can be in the negative and this response is based on the argument that a concept which emerged at a distinctive moment in European history can have little meaning within African cultural and political settings. The third response is more in line with some kind of adaptation. The concept has to be adapted to the local contexts for it to be meaningful. In other words, it should not be used rigidly but should be flexible enough to make room for indigenous knowledge and home grown policy solutions. Fourth there are those who imply that the 'relevance question' is probably not appropriate, arguing that the idea of civil society - whether explicitly recognized as such or not- has long been implicated in Africa's colonial histories of both domination and resistance. (Lewis, 2002) Resistance by civil society groups across the world is increasingly taking the form of important protests. And when civil society actors join hands with state actors to defend issues of global economic justice such as in Cancun, there is hope that the globalisation of solidarity may become stronger. At Cancun, the G-22 group of developing countries, which comprises well over 50 per cent of the world's population and includes Brazil, China, India and South Africa, was in 2003, able to present a coherent stand on issues that are of importance to the Third World in trade negotiations. Of particular concern were cross border investment, competition policies, trade facilitation and government procurement. Cancun also marked a new solidarity between G22 states and a coalition of civil society organizations from around the world.

Other protests such as in Seattle, Genoa and more recently in Glenagles also show that that for many activists and commentators alike, what is all too apparent and needs to be resisted on the world scale are the increasingly asymmetrical interconnectedness and diminished authority of most states, especially their limited capacity to redistribute income and wealth downwards and the inability to control the movements of capital, the increasing inequality between people, and the acute disparities between the North and the South. The globalisation of solidarity that is beginning to emerge needs to be consolidated and Africa should plug its way inside this system. The African Social Forum which is becoming a regular feature should galvanise around common cause and make their voices heard more systematically at both the World Social Forum and the World Economic Forum. Whilst the ethical and normative functions of civil society are important, the empirical reality that subsists calls for a

more profound and realistic explanation of the role and nature of the engagement between the state and society.

### **Conclusion - The need for an enlightened globalization**

In his book, 'The end of poverty', Sachs argues that mass public movements should persist. Many of the problems of distributional justice that confront human beings within nation states now require worldwide efforts for their solution. Thus while it is important to be aware that the search for global justice is naïve, the theoretical discourse that focuses on local and contextual problems must evolve some broad understanding of universal notions of injustice. We perhaps need to borrow from President Museveni's idea of how we need "to conspire on how to run the world" - to restore the dignity of the African and not to merely attract sympathy. By so doing, the people of Africa may be taken much more seriously by the North which as Bayart (2000) states: 'certainly gives insufficient attention to a part of the world whose difficulties concern them in the first instance.' (Bayart, 2000) Whilst it is true that the North should pay more attention to the developing world and seek to remedy the inequities, states in the developing world should reinforce their own roles towards a more equitable citizenship.

Globalisation is here to stay and different stakeholders should see to it that the neoliberalism that goes with it becomes more human faced . States together with other relevant partners should constantly revisit their social engineering and develop new social contracts so that a more inclusive citizenship be obtained. Citizenship is destructive of the social and political processes of any polity if conceptualized in group or clannish terms. . There is a risk that loyalty to the state be weakened and national identity projects be threatened. To obtain and maintain peace, security and stability in Africa, we therefore need to promote the normative dimension of citizenship and ethical development and allow for this notion of citizenship and development to become the core elements of all development planning and policy making. In other words, protection and promoting human rights, the rule of law, democratic governance and democratic structures , a culture of peace and the peaceful resolutions of conflicts are the necessary conditions for human security to evolve and be sustained over time. A global social contract cannot be established in the absence of effective social democracy at the national level.

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