Globalization, New Regionalism and the Challenge of Development in Africa

J. Shola Omotola

Abstract
This paper is a contribution to the debate on Africa’s regional integration and the challenge of development in the context of globalization. It situates Africa’s development paradox, as manifestly shown by its ‘poverty of plenty’ within the framework of globalization. It also examines Africa’s new regionalism, epitomized by the transition from the OAU to AU, and argues that while the effort has enabled Africa to respond to the challenge of globalization and development in a way, the instrumentality of NEPAD through which it sought to do so is in a state of vacillation. It is argued that the use of the word ‘partnership’ in that context negates the basic requirement of partnership. Not only does NEPAD proceed from a faulty theoretical premise but also, most African states lack the political will, internal legitimacy and capability to cope with the responsibility bestowed on them by the new initiative. By and large, the activism of the civil society and the global acceptance of the initiative, no matter how pretentious it may be, offer new hopes. To make it realistic, African leaders must revisit the concept of partnership to reflect its

3 Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Redeemer’s University, Redemption City, Ogun State, Nigeria. E-mail: sholaomotola@yahoo.com
necessary conditions for success. It is only then that they can 'struggle' to bridge the ever widening gap of inequality between the rich north and poor south through a democratically designed development pact. This requires the institutionalization of good governance and the strengthening of the current wave of democratization in Africa.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War no doubt marks a significant watershed in the annals of world history. The post-Cold War order brought with it a new phase in the globalization phenomenon, with a renewed faith in global capitalism as the ultimate solution to world poverty and related predicaments. Informed by this rationalization in some quarters (the developed world), and the helplessness of some other parts (reference to Africa), various parts of the world have ever since begun to respond to the challenges of globalization.

Specifically, African countries have been urged to adjust to the rapid globalization of international trade and the financial system by increasing their exports and pushing much harder to integrate markets within Africa, lest they suffer the risk of marginalization (Candessus, cf GCA, 1992). The World Bank (2001:1) was of the view that Africa could claim the new century if crucial progress is made in four fronts: improving governance and resolving conflicts, investing in people, increasing competitiveness and diversifying economies, reducing aid dependency and strengthening partnership. The point must however be made that it is not the failure to respond to this challenge that brought about the
marginalization of Africa in the world capitalist system, as insinuated in the above statement. Throughout its history, Africa has always oscillated between exclusion and marginalization (Onimode, 2000:2-7, 30-34, 84-92; 1989; Ake 1992, 1981; Adedeji, 1993). More fundamentally, and perhaps due to the aforementioned information, Africa lacks the basic ingredients to respond effectively to the challenge of globalization (See Kiikpoye, 2001:19-35).

Nevertheless, the African continent, perhaps following the European model, has been responding in its own unique way. This was best exemplified by the current wave of new regionalism, epitomized by the 'successful' transition from the OAU to African Union (AU) in the year 2000. Indeed, the transition has elicited high optimism from across the continent in the belief that a new dawn has finally arrived. Surely, such hopes and expectations are not misplaced, giving the fact that all previous efforts (Lagos Plan of Action, for example) have all together failed woefully (Ake, 1996:23; Onimode, 2000:87; Bach, 1999:43).

The question therefore arises regarding how adequately equipped the new integrative effort is to avert falling into the pitfalls of its predecessors? What challenges does the new phase of globalization pose for the AU and, by extension, for the development in Africa? What are its prospects and limitations in the new global order? The major thrust of this paper will be to provide insight into these and other related questions.

The expedition is necessitated by the fact that despite the mounting interest and discourses which the transition (OAU to AU) has generated, there is still little understanding of the dynamics and complexities of this movement whose
foundation is precariously laid and to that extent, weak. Yet, the abiding faith of African leaders, and perhaps neo-liberal scholars in the project, even in the face of enduring but inimical forces (we shall elaborate more on this later) makes it more expedient to carry out more empirically grounded critical analysis. Granted that some progress has been made at the structural, formal and legal levels, a lot still need to be done at the implementation level. It is against this background that this paper calls for **circumspectum** in projecting the prospects of the new regionalism in Africa.

The paper is structured into six parts. Sequel to this introduction, part two attempts to clarify the major concepts used in the paper. While part three explicates Africa’s development paradox within the context of globalization, part four analyses the AU as new regionalism in Africa. Part five probes into the viability of the New Partnership for Africa (NEPAD) as an instrument of the AU in fulfilling its challenges. The last section forms the conclusion and recommendations.

**Conceptual Perspectives**

Three concepts are central to the understanding of this paper – **Globalization**, **New Regionalism** and **Development**. Here, attempts are made to clarify these concepts to avoid misrepresentation of thought and facilitate a discussion of inter – relationship among the major concepts.

**Globalization**

It is important to state from the outset that no universally acceptable definition of globalization exists. This may not be unconnected with the fact that the concept is not
only multidimensional, but is also value loaded. Encompassing as much as every facet of human endeavor, cultural, social, political, economic and environmental issues have been employed to rationalize the development of the advanced northern countries of North America, Western Europe, South East Asia as well as the underdevelopment of southern countries of Asia, Southern America, Latin America and Africa. The concept of globalization is therefore, like most other topical issues in the north – south dialogue, undoubtedly an essentially contested concept. It remains an “embattled concept,” yearning for more clarification and illumination to unravel the ambivalence surrounding it and its relationship with development.

The extensive literature on the subject is replete with different definitions and perspectives. For the underdeveloped countries, globalization means nothing more than a re-colonization process of the third world economies. Viewed from this perspective, globalization has been seen as a new phase of capitalist expansion and is still about exploitation, accumulation, inequality and polarization (Aina, 1996:24). It is therefore a seeming manifestation of the thesis of “imperialism without a major colonial empire” (See Osterhammel, 1997:22). This perhaps explains why Africa’s response has until recently been that of resistance and resignation (Kawonishe, 2002). It is therefore a major factor in the dependence of countries of the south on the north. But for the developed world, globalization lies at the very heart of all efforts to redress all imbalances in the world system. Situated within such a liberal perspective, globalization is considered as the driving force for the transformation of global economy, whose implication for development would be positive particularly for the third
world. However, Obadan (2003) has offered a window through which we can understand this complicated phenomenon. As he puts it, globalization refers to

the growing interdependence of the world’s people... it is about increasing inter-connectedness and inter-dependence among the world’s regions, nations, governments, business, institutions, communities, families and individuals... it fosters the advancement of “global mentality” and conjures the picture of a borderless world through the use of information technology to create partnerships to foster greater financial and economic integration (Obadan, 2003)

The foregoing definition reveals that irrespective of conflicting perspectives on globalization, particularly between the north and the south, a thoroughly globalized world would emphasize three inter-related issues: integration, inter-dependence and partnership through international trade, investment and finance, technological advancement and information technology. If properly managed, it harbors the possibility of a symbiotic pattern of relations between the developed and developing countries of the world. But when perverted, it becomes an admixture of blessing and curse: a weapon in the hand of the strong for the oppression and exploitation of the weak. The import of this for our analysis is that globalization could be a tool for development and underdevelopment, depending on the extent to which the
central concepts of integration, interdependence and partnership are respected.

New Regionalism

New Regionalism in the context of this paper derives in part from the immediate preceding perspective of integration, interdependence and partnership as integral parts of the globalization process. Essentially, it connotes Africa’s new effort towards fostering greater integration, interdependence and partnership among African peoples, governments and economies, with the aim of deriving additional leverage in its relations with the outside world, particularly on the economic front. The reasoning seems to be that a well-integrated Africa offers the possibility for better deals in the international economic system, and for an enhanced performance of the African economy.

Specifically, the recent transition from OAU to AU, as a response to the new phase of globalization, is what we have referred to as “new regionalism.” This is because “the African Union is the inevitable historical maturation of the ideas of Pan-Africanism and Pan-African Unity, which gave rise to the establishment of the OAU” (Agbubuzu 2002). This position is supported by the basic objective of the AU, which is to improve Pan-African welfare and provides Africans with a solid voice in international affairs (Steinberg, 2001). The AU, as a scholar puts it, has been tailored to fight the new realities of a globalized world. With the AU, it is hoped that Africa would attain meaningful living standards, peace, stability, economic growth and development in Africa. This steadfast belief in the regional effort may have been predicated on the fact that regional groupings, whether political or economic, are the
principal influential forces on the world scene (See Daouas 2001:5).

**Development**

Like the concept of globalization, the term development has not enjoyed a universally accepted definition. The problem is due not only to the fact that it is both a multidimensional and a value loaded concept, but it is also due to the current pluralism in the development literature (See So, 1990).

Todaro, (1985) however, conceptualizes development as: “a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty” (cf Lane and Ersson, 1997:19). In another work, the same scholar identifies three core values of development (Todaro, 1989:89-90). These include the ability to provide as many people as possible with their basic needs or the ability to acquire adequate food, shelter, health care and protection. It also entails the perception of individuals or groups of self-worth and esteem as a respected members of the society and freedom in the sense that individuals and society at large have an expanded range of choice, not only with respect to the material necessities for self reproduction, but also in their ability to have a say in, if not to determine, the method and process by which values are allocated in the society (cf Ogwu, 2002:12-13).

The widely cited political economist, Armati K. Sen, has offered more illuminating thoughts on the concept of development. For him, development connotes ‘capacity
expansion’ (Sen, 1990), and is synonymous with freedom (Sen, 1999). As a capacity expansion, development requires adequate empowerment of the state and the society such that they can adequately distil their complimentary responsibilities. It requires an enhanced state capacity, as well as institutional and governmental stability. It is only within such a framework that individual members of society can find fulfillment in terms of the basic necessities of life. As a freedom, development demands a great latitude of autonomy for the political community and its constituent parts, as well as for the individual members of such communities. In that case, the level of popular participation, measured in terms of the quality and quantity of participation is highly decisive.

The foregoing expedition reveals a close link among the three concepts of globalization, new regionalism and development. This is because one of the basic requisites of globalization is integration and interdependence. These were parts of the motivational ideals of the new regional effort in Africa. The ultimate goal of the effort is to transform the entire continent from its present status of underdevelopment to development. While the new phase of globalization offers some possibilities, much of it depends on the disposition and sincerity of the advanced countries of the world to respect the sanctity that interdependence and partnership are crucial elements of the globalization process that would mutually beneficial to all actors against dependency and exploitation.

Globalization and Africa’s Development Paradox

Historical records show beyond a reasonable doubt that Africa is the cradle of civilization (See Davidson, 1964; 1991, 1992; Mair, 1977; Fage, 1997). In fact, the earliest known
evidence of the existence of man and the emergence of human society comes from Africa (Fage, 1997:391-340). Besides, the continent is rich: it is well endowed with enormous human and material resources (Onimode, 1989, 1981; Ake 1992; Oyekanmi, 2002, Rodeney, 1972). In terms of technological and economic advancement, pre-colonial Africa was at par with other parts of the World (Rodney, 1972:112-115). Record has it that it was Africa that invented writing on papyrus in ancient Egypt and Mathematics at the University of Tinbuktu in West Africa (Diop, 1976 cf Onimode, 2000:70). In a sense, the continent couldn’t have been better endowed.

The rising profile of Africa in the world economy was however suddenly truncated through its contact with the outside world. This marks the beginning of the unmaking of Africa. In fact, Africa’s first contact with the outside world was through the export slave trade as the first phase in the globalization of the world. Unfortunately, as it later turned out, it was an adventure that was rather too fatal and lethargic for Africa to contain. For instance, between 1451-1867, a total of 11,641,000 Africans were taken from Africa as part of the Atlantic slave trade (Fage, 1997:254-255). From Black Africa alone, an estimated total of 14,015,000 slaves were exported between 1650 and 1870 (Fage, 1997:258). The impact of the slave trade on Africa is therefore mostly reflected in its massive depopulation of the African continent, with a heavy toll on development.

By implication, Africa was already prostrate by the time the next European onslaught in the form of ‘colonial invasion’ began. This was because it had almost lost the will to fight after some 425 years of continuous slave raids, physical destruction, depopulation, technological demobilization and
the most unimaginable destruction in human history (Onimode, 2000:72, 1989). But in terms of penetration and consequences, the colonial experience was in itself more devastating (Fage, 1997:391-459; Rodney, 1972; Davidson, 1992; Ake, 1996). Apart from the retroversion, and sometime outright denial of African history, the colonial state, being an illegitimate state, relied on the illegitimate use of force for its survival (Osaghae 1989:37; Ake, 1978; Mamdani, 2002). Amidst the ensuing deeply entrenched legitimacy crisis, the resort to violence became inevitable to accomplish its imperial objectives. "At every stage and at every level", as Onimode (2000:73) has argued, "colonialism was a massively violent encounter."

Granted that the decolonization process has been completed in Africa, the substantive legacies of colonialism still endure (Mamadani, 2002; Osterhammel, 1997; Ekeh, 1983, 1975). They are manifest in the form of imported and transformed social structures, which today remain largely unchanged. The failure of African States to adapt these structures into African realities or to dismantle them, even in the face of glaring opportunities at independence, has remained a potent force in the neo-colonial enterprise. Up until today, as shown by its attributes of dependence, legitimacy crisis, underdevelopment, Africa remains a continent of crisis and contradiction (Osaghae, 1999, Onimode, 1983). All efforts to address the situation by African leaders have so far been feckless because the neo-colonial environment has been ably accommodated and enhanced by the enduring legacies of colonialism. This explains why today, Africa remains at the very nadir of development.
Available statistics show that Africa is really in a deep crisis of development. As the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development’s "Least Developed Countries 2002" report has shown, the proportion of people in 29 countries living below $2 per day increased from 82% in the late 1960s to 87.5% in the 1990s. For those in extreme poverty (under $1 per day), the increase was from 55.8% to 64.9%. In absolute figure, the number of Africans living in extreme poverty rose from 89.6 million to 233.5 million over the same period. Also, of the 49 countries classified as least developed countries, 33 of them are in sub-Saharan Africa (cf Ogwu, 2002:18-19). Besides, about 186 million people are chronically undernourished, while one out of every three Africans suffers extreme poverty (Onitiri, 2001:5). Yet, Africa’s per-capital income is lower than it was in the 1960s. With the exception of South Africa, average per-capital income in 1997 was $315; making Africa the poorest part of the world. The total GDP of all 48 countries on the continent combined came to little more than the income of Belgium. The average GDP of sub-Saharan African Countries (excluding South Africa) is at about $2 billion, no more than the output of a town of 60,000 people in a rich country (Bush and Mohan, 2001:149-153).

The performance of African economy is also deplorable. For the period 1995-97, the investment to GDP ratio for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) was 17.8% compared to 34.8% for Asia, excluding Japan, and 20.9% for advanced economies. Africa’s share of world trade has declined steadily over recent decades and today stands at 1%. According to world bank estimates, Africa’s loss of market share in merchandise exports over the period 1970-93 amounts to an annual loss of about $68 billion, equivalent to about 21% of
GDP (Akagwu, 2002:25). In terms of global private capital flow, Africa has not fared better. For the period 1991-97, SSA’s share of some $570 billion in cumulative flows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to all developing countries amounted to a mere $23 billion, less than 5%, much of which was concentrated in a small number of oil mineral exporting countries (Akagwu, 2002:25). Out of this, Africa’s share amounted to only 0.06% (UNDP, 1997:191). Whereas, Africa’s foreign debt service payments were $31.1 billion in 1990, a minimum of $24.0 billion in 1994 and $33.4 billion by 1997 (Onimode, 2000:95). These were small proportions of the total African debt, which was $288.3 billion in 1990; $309.9 billion in 1994; and $325.5 billion in 1996 (Onimode, 2000:108).

In terms of distribution of world income, Africa has not fared any better. Out of the total world income of $23,892.0 billion in 1993, Africa’s share was $311.5 billion, a mere 1.3% and the lowest in comparative terms with other regions of the world (Onimode, 2000:164). Africa’s term of trade between 1991 and 1998 was at all time negative, leading to chronic current account deficit and balance of payments crisis for African countries (onimode, 2000:82-83).

The frequency and intensity of conflict in Africa are equally deplorable to the extent that all parts of the continent have engaged or are still engaged in one form of conflict or the other. Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Rwanda, Sudan and Ethiopia, Somalia, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote D’voire etc are prominent examples (Ntalaja, 2001:34). These conflicts have had catastrophic implications for the continent. Apart from the militarization of the society, military expenditure, though a social burden, has in almost all cases been greater than social expenditure (Rimmer, 1995:297).
Africa has now become a dumping ground for arms and ammunition. For instance, while Britain was reported to be exporting $600m (about N78bn) worth of arms to Africa every year, the US, the leading arms trader, exported more than $14b (N1,870bn) worth of military equipments to developing countries (Daily Trust, June 23, 2002:1). Consequently, social expenditures are now been sacrificed for military expenditure.

Moreover, the impact of conflict has been preponderantly manifested in other areas such as the productive sector, human lives, as well as refugees and displaced persons. It was such that by 1997, 1.06% of the total African population was either refugees or displaced persons (Annan, 1997:1). By 1998, Africa accounted for over 8 million of the 22 million refugees worldwide (Mills, 1999:3 cf Oche, 2000:79). The case of Rwanda and Burundi seems more dramatic. Between 1963-64, 3,000–10,000 Tutsi were killed; 150,000 Tutsi became refugees in a localized massacre. In 1972, 80,000–200,000 Hutu were killed; 150,000–300,000 Hutu became refugees. In 1988, 200,000 Hutu were killed in Marangara and Ntega; while about 50,000 became refugees. In 1994, 500,000-800,000 Tutsi were killed nationally and about 105,000 Tutsi turned refugees (See Victor, 2001:184-185).

These and other related issues such as poor governance and debt crisis, among others, depict the stark realities of Africa’s developmental crisis (Ogwu, 2002:20). But as it has been pointed out earlier, Africa is a continent with great potentials for development. The abundance of both human and material resources of high quality attests to this. In spite of these, Africa remains at the nadir of development, owing ostensibly to its forceful integration into the world capitalist
African Union as New Regionalism

By all standards, the recent transition from OAU to AU, as a response to the new phase of globalization, qualifies as new regionalism. This is because, "the challenge of globalization and the resurgence of ethnic particularization require a coordination of macroeconomic policies on a regional basis,… calling for a monitoring of adjustment and donor policies at a regional level, and for the strengthening of these broader bodies as a response to domestic pressure for autonomy" (Asiwaju, 1999; Bach, 1999). Agbubuzu (2002) also points out that "the African Union is the inevitable historical maturation of the ideas of pan-Africanism and pan-African unity, which gave rise to the establishment of the OAU."

Originally proposed by the Libyan Leader, Moammar Al Qaddafi, as a more effective institution for increasing prosperity in Africa, the AU was initiated on June 12, 2000 but was formally established in September 2001, in Sirte (Steinberg, 2001; Constitutive Act of the AU, 2000). Its fundamental objectives corroborate the fact that it is new regionalism. The AU’s objective is to improve pan-African welfare and to provide Africans with a solid voice in international affairs (Steinberg, 2001). More elaborately, the Constitutive Act provides in its Article 3 that the objectives of the Union shall be to:

(a) Achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa.
(b) Defend sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of member states.

(c) Accelerate political and social-economic integration of the continent.

(d) Promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its people.

(e) Encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

(f) Promote peace, Security and Stability on the continent.

(g) Promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance.

(h) Promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African charter on human and people's rights.

(i) Establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations.

(j) Promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies.

(k) Promote cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples.

(l) Coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for gradual attainment of objectives of the Union.

(m) Advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields, in particular in science and technology.

(n) Work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promoting of good health on the continent.

To this end, Article 4 of the Constitute Act spells out the guiding principles of the Union as:
(a) Sovereign equality and interdependence among Member States of the Union;
(b) Respect of borders existing on achievement of independence;
(c) Participation of African people in the activities of the Union;
(d) Establishment of common defense policies for the African continent;
(e) Peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States;
(f) Prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States;
(g) Non-interference by Member States in the internal affairs of another;
(h) The right of the Union to Intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: War Crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity;
(i) Peaceful co-existence of Member States and their rights to live in peace and security;
(j) The right of Member States to restore peace and security;
(k) Promotion of self-reliance within the framework of the Union.
(l) Promotion of gender equality;
(m) Respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance;
(n) Promotion of social justice to ensure balanced economic development;
(o) Respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impurity and political assassination, act of terrorism and subversive activities; and
(p) Condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional change of governments.

As provided for in Article 5 of the Act, the organs of the Union include:
1. (a) The Assembly of the Union;  
    (b) The Executive Council;  
    (c) The pan-African Parliament;  
    (d) The Court of Justice;  
    (e) The Commission;  
    (f) The Permanent Representatives Committee;  
    (g) The Specialized Technical Committees;  
    (h) The Economic, Social and Cultural Council;  
    (i) The Financial Institutions;  

2. Other organs that the Assembly may decide to establish.

The specific functions of each of these organs are well defined (See Articles 6-22 of the Constitutive Act).

Deriving from the foregoing, the AU is indeed a new regional effort designed to address Africa’s development paradox within the context of globalization. This has been the focus of the Africa Development Forum (ADF) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) as reflected in the themes of their chain of conferences (See Oyekanmi, 2002:30).

In terms of its objectives, principles and organs, the AU differs substantially from its predecessor: the OAU. With respect to its objectives, it excludes the OAU’s goal of eradicating colonialism but adds new objectives, particularly those in Article 3 (d,g,h,j and i). Concerning the principles, the AU excludes the OAU’s principle of emancipating African territories from colonial power. It however enlists new principles, as contained in Article 4 (c,d,k,l,m,n, and p). The organs of the AU also contain new innovations that were not part of the OAU’s, as seen in Article 5 (c,d, and I) (See the Constitutive Act, 2000; Steinberg, 2001; Soderbaum, 1996). However, the headquarters remains at Addis Ababa, in the Federal Republic of Ethiopia.
The pursuit of this renewed goal of pan-Africanism and development has been hinged on the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), as well as the emphasis it places on African Peer Review Mechanism. The basic question to ask therefore is that how adequately equipped is NEPAD to cope with the daunting challenges ahead of it?

**NEPAD as a Viable Mechanism?**

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) as a mechanism for achieving the lofty goals of AU came into being incrementally. Its emergence was due to the integration of the Millennium African Ranaissan Program, Compact for African Recovery and the Omega Plan (Melber, 2002:12). At the initial stage, it was called New African Initiative but it renamed NEPAD following a thorough revision of the document by the Committee of Heads of States and Governments.

The objectives of NEPAD are contained in its Article 68 and include:

(a) to achieve and sustain an average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of above 7% per annum for the next 15 years;

(b) to ensure that the continent achieves the agreed international development goals, which according to Ogwu (2002:13-14) are:

- (i) To reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015;
- (ii) To enroll all children of school age in primary schools by 2015;
- (iii) To make progress towards gender equality and empowering women by eliminating gender
disparities in the enrolment in primary and secondary education by 2005;

(iv) To reduce infant and child mortality ratio by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015;

(v) To reduce maternal mortality ratio by three quarters between 1990 and 2015;

(vi) To provide access for all who need reproductive health service by 2015; and

(vii) To implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005, so as to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015.

(viii) According to Ogwu (2002:14), the expected overall development outcomes of the agreement include:

i. Economic growth and development and increased employment.

ii. Reduction in poverty and inequality

iii. Diversification of productive activities, enhanced international competitiveness and increased exports; and

iv. Increased African integration.

Without a doubt, the foregoing reveals that NEPAD was born out of the desire to rescue Africa from the stronghold of underdevelopment which ravages the entire continent. It places high premiums on trade and investment through greater liberalization for enhanced Foreign Direct Investment.

The viability of NEPAD as an instrument of AU has elicited mixed reactions. While some see it in positive light, some have argued to the contrary (Animashaun, 2002; Melber, 2001). For this paper, we contend that while NEPAD harbors certain potentials for realizing the goals of AU, its prospects
are severely constrained by a number of factors. In others words, it is in a state of vacillation.

For one, the use of the word partnership is problematic. In the real sense of the term, partnership entails:

\[ A \text{ long-term commitment and reflects a condition of mutual dependency where both client and subcontractors are in a position to influence the other by their behavior… is a set of normative rules determining what behavior is permissible and what constitutes a violation of trust. The rules are designed to facilitate exchange in a situation otherwise open to exploitation} \ (\text{Lorenz, 1989:189 cf Harriss, 2000:228}) \]

What this suggests is that partnership requires sharing of generalized norms of reciprocity, trust and guiding principles. Partnership without these features may therefore be inimical to the very objective that necessitated it in the first instance. Trust as we understanding it, in agreement with Cambetta (1988:219), means “believing that when offered the chance, s/he is not likely to behave in a way which is damaging to us” (cf Harriss, 2000:236). The guiding principles include congruence of mission, values and operating principles; effectiveness; accountability; transparency; mutuality; no hidden agenda; sustainability; minimizing demands; maximizing distinctive competence; and realistic time-scales (Penrose, 2000:249-50).

In realistic terms however, it is doubtful whether these basic underpinnings of any successful partnership are present in the framework of NEPAD. What we have seen so far is the desperation of a continent to go on begging. Couched in a diplomatic language, the continent has intensified its search
for foreign aid in the forms of grants, debt cancellation and rescheduling etc. The experience of African leaders in their meeting with the G-8 best illustrates this fact. Of the $64 billion target, only $6 billion was granted in principle. Besides, the issue of joint funding contained in the document was de-emphasized at the meeting (Omoweh, 2003:38). Instead, emphasis was placed on trade, aid, and the development of infrastructure which Omoweh (2003:38) referred to as the usual position to Africa’s recovery. Whereas, nothing fundamental was done about the lopsidedness of international economic relations. As it stands today, the playing field in international trade is not leveled. The World Trade Organization’s disposition towards Africa oscillates between exclusion and marginalization.

The point must be made that international economic relations have no place for charity game. This explains why aid attracts some conditionality. The associated conditionality is obviously meant to ambush and neutralize the expected benefits for the recipient. Apart from the woes of the Bretton Wood Institutions’ Structural Adjustment Program; the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA), offers another illuminating but pathetic case. From its inception, the GCA has billed itself as an informal platform for policy dialogue, highlighting selected issues deemed to merit intensive or focused discussion among policy makers than they generally occurred in that forum (Harsh, 1996:67-68; Hoeven, 2001). Indeed, empirical studies have shown that the effects of aid on growth are not necessarily positive (Guillaumont and Ghauvet 2001:66-87).

The fact that NEPAD is built around the framework of neo-liberalism also calls for circumspection about its prospect. This is evident from its emphasis on liberalization for more
FDI. This is because, granted that the international economy is the framework in which the developmental process must occur, “there has not be a single case of successful development arising from the interplay of free forces” (Bremen, 1992:99). Available evidence points to the fact that liberalization lies at the heart of economic failings in less developed states, (LDS) (Ogwu, 2002). While it is true that trade liberalization could enhance the flow of FDI, as the experience of Africa in the year 2002 has revealed when its FDI reached an unprecedented rate of $17bn, nearly twice that of 2001 (Africa Recovery, (AR) Feb, 2003:8), caution must be exercised in projecting the increase. On the surface, the increase should be celebrated. But on a deeper reflection, it gives cause for worry. For one, the figure amounts to insignificant when compared to FDI flows worldwide. A more fundamental concern is that its spread is not evenly distributed, but is weighted in favor of a few countries which are either major oil producers like Angola and Nigeria or more industrialized nations such as South Africa and Morocco (Africa Recovery, Feb. 2003:8). Moreover, the ‘blanket’ wave of liberalization in Africa lacks any solid foundation to absorb its social, economic and political costs. Even at that, Africa’s share of world trade remains at a dismal 2% and foreign investment at 1 percent (see Siddiq, 2001:16; Daouas, 2001:4).

Moreover, the almost immediate endorsement of the project (NEPAD) by the outside world, in our own reasoning, suggests the presence of internal loopholes that could be exploited for their selfish interests. To be sure, NEPAD was accepted by the west at the June 2002 meeting of G – 8. Going by record of events, it is most unlikely that the developed world and its United Nations (UN) would support any
African initiative that would chart a genuine course of development and autonomy for the continent. The reality is that, as was the case with the Bretton wood Institutions (See Campbel, 2001:155), the involvement of extra-African interests in the new initiative would enable them to encroach on the political terrain beyond their mandate. Signs have already begun to manifest that the UN endorsement of NEPAD may after all be a façade. In this sense, one wonders why the establishment of a structure that would review and report on UN and International Support for NEPAD should be located in New York without creating a subsidiary of such structure in Africa.

The foregoing has cast a major doubt on its credentials as an African initiative. On the surface, such a claim may appear credulous. But upon deeper reflection, there seems to be more to it than meets the eye. Going by its neo-liberal framework and epitomized by its emphasis on liberalization, deregulation, and aid, it may be correct to argue that it is nothing more than the continuation of the Bretton Wood Institutions Imposed Structural Adjustment Program in Africa. Again, the claim that it was an African initiative reveals the hypocrisy inherent in previous claims, particularly the Lagos plan of Action as African initiative. This amounts to self indictment on the part of African leaders and the case of NEPAD may not be different. Only time will tell.

Most fundamentally, most African states do not have the political will, internal legitimacy and capacity to cope with the responsibility imposed on them by the new initiative. That some states lack the will has been apparently revealed by the attendant foot-dragging in signing the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The goal of APRM is to facilitate the
entrenchment of good governance. This was to be done by getting African leaders to subject their governments to ongoing examination by other Africans in such priority areas as peace and security, democracy, political governance, economic and corporate management. However, some feared that "it could threaten sovereignty by allowing outsiders to pass judgment on national prerogatives" (Sirleaf cf AR, Feb. 2003:10-11). For some other leaders, APRM "will be used by the (non-African development partners) to punish those who fail to participate by withdrawal of assistance" (AR, Feb 2003:11). This is a glaring manifestation of lack of trust, which is detrimental to the success of any partnership. Besides, recent events suggest that Africa has failed the first litmus test for NEPAD. In this regard, we have in mind the indifference or poor response of African leaders to the Zimbabwean crisis over the reelection of Robert Mugabe and Land Reforms Policy, even in the face of glaring abuse of power and violation of fundamental human rights (see Ndulo, 2002:35-36). This has cast doubt on whether African leaders have the political will to implement the objectives of NEPAD fervently.

The dimension of internal legitimacy is more daunting. Many African States had had to contend with the eruption of parallel forces competing with the State over its monopoly for the use of force. These were perhaps due to the economic softness of the state and the near-collapse of many states in Africa. The cumulative effect is that the state in Africa is massively incapacitated to cope with the challenges of modern day government. The problem of succession remains another potent source of legitimacy crisis in Africa.

Stemming from the foregoing, the ambitious role placed on the state by the NEPAD initiative becomes...
problematic. This is because most states in Africa lack the capability to cope with such responsibilities. For it is a well-known fact that sustainable development cannot be achieved in an environment of crippled states which, paradoxically, has been the reality of African states. The incident of poverty, unemployment, decayed infrastructures, corruption etc. have combined effectively to soften the economic strength of the states in Africa. Consequently, there have been massive explosion of violent conflicts across the continent, with negative tolls on development and state capacity. The inability to find a peaceful solution to the crisis has made the state to become ‘excessively hard’ in the deployment of force on the society. This has further widened the gap between the state and society in Africa. Rather than being partners in progress, there is a seeming antagonism between the two. The overarching implication of these for the success of NEPAD is that they serve as diversionary forces away from the set goals as emphasis would be shifted to conflict management at high cost.

Moreover, one must be skeptical about the actualization of the lofty goals of NEPAD in an environment devoid of technological advancement, particularly in industrial sector and information technology. This is more so in this age of information technology, as the engine room of globalization.

Again, the NEPAD initiative would appear not to have taken into consideration previous efforts, such as the Lagos Plans of Action, as a precursor to identifying why such initiative failed woefully. This is because like previous regional development strategies, the NEPAD initiative was unnecessarily too state-centric: state-centric in the sense that it
was at the instance and prerogative of the government with little or no consideration for the civil society. Even at the governmental level, some governments have alleged of their exclusion or marginalization to the initiative. Civil societies have protested vigorously as well. The import of these are that the NEPAD initiative might have not benefited from widespread consultation, deliberation and consensus and was to that extent a spontaneous response by the ‘powerful’ states in Africa to certain circumstantial incidents in the continent and beyond. This poses a threat to its success, particularly when one recalls the old line of division in Africa along Francophone and Anglophone bases.

Yet, the enduring legacies of colonialism pose a serious threat. Not only are the social structures that were either created or transformed by colonialism intact, the socialization process that African leaders were inducted into remains largely unchanged (Ekeh, 1975, 1983; Ake 1978, 1981; Mamdani, 2002). Moreover, the boundary lines inherited at independence, though with disastrous economic, social and human consequences (Bach, 1999:44), has not been altered. In fact, one of the objectives of AU is to preserve these boundary lines. As long as these alien structures constitute the platform upon which Africa’s development initiatives and strategies are anchored, all development efforts may prove unproductive.

Be that as it may, the gloomy picture presented above should not be interpreted to mean the end of the road for Africa. A number of factors obviously portend the possibility of a rejuvenated/renaissance Africa, through NEPAD. For one, the attention that NEPAD has generated from a wide specter of interests gives new hopes that all may not be lost after all. In sharp contrast to old logic and practices, after the initial
failure, discourses and debates about NEPAD now transcend the official level of the governments of various African States. Of particular significance is the massive activism of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Indeed, CSOs had never been this active and virile in Africa save for the period of anti-colonial struggles. This is a healthy development. Conferences, Seminars have constantly been organized by CSOs to assess the viability of NEPAD as a framework for the actualization of Africa’s goal of development. Outcomes of such gatherings have most often constituted policy agenda for African leaders.

The tendency for each African country to popularize the agenda (NEPAD) in its territory is also a healthy development. By doing so, opportunities are created for filling the observed gap that the scheme was too formalistic and devoid of popular participation. No matter how suspicious it maybe, the global acceptance which NEPAD has received strengthens its prospect. At least, it conforms to the goal of the global fight against poverty through the strengthening of good governance and partnership for development. This explains why its emphasis on good governance through APRM should be seen as a welcome relief, if faithfully implemented.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have attempted to show that the transition from OAU to AU was a response to the new phase of globalization, brought about by the post-cold war realities and the helplessness of the continent. The paper also attempts to explain Africa’s development paradox, exemplified by her poverty of plenty, a situation occasioned by the globalization phenomenon. It was the effort to tackle this paradox that necessitated the birth of NEPAD, as an instrument of AU. As
illustrated in the paper, the prospect of NEPAD is severely constrained by forces such as the problematic of the word ‘partnership’ in this context; its neo-liberal underpinnings; lack of state capacity, and political will on the part of some leaders as well as the colonial legacies. Nevertheless, it has some prospects for survival.

If indeed AU must succeed through NEPAD, African leaders would have to revisit the concept of ‘partnership’ to reflect its necessary conditions for success. Moreover, greater emphasis must be placed on bridging the ever widening gap between the rich north and poor south. This would require redistribution of goods from richer to poorer parts of the world on the basis of democratically developed/designed development pact (Hoeven, 2001:109-117; Grawforch, 2001:261-266).

There is also an urgent need to revisit its neo-liberal theoretical foundation. In this case, what is required is to ward off damaging competition from the developed world while exploiting knowledge available elsewhere to save cost. This must however be done with caution to avoid a deadly end. Thus, there is a need to strengthen protectionism with internal exertions towards development (Bremen, 1992:100). The rationale is that Africa is at a different developmental trajectory than the advance countries and to that extent, highly incapacitated to compete favorably with them in any entirely open market. Africa must be more inward looking, rather than the overbearinglly relying on externally induced development strategies. Effort must be made to develop the industrial sector and information technology. This requires the institutionalization of good governance and strengthening the current wave of democratization in Africa.
References
African Union (2001) *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, @http://www.sudmer.com/ce...
Ake, C. (1990) "Dimensions of African Crisis" *Keynote Address to the Conference on the Economic Crisis in Africa*


