

The New Initiative for Africa's Development: A Study in Concept and Challenges

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Abstract

In light of the poverty, underdevelopment, and lack of progress that the African continent is experiencing, its leaders have attempted to find solutions to its economic problems by adopting development policies based on partnership and cooperation. This has led them to reorder their priorities and set developmental goals aimed at advancing Africa. The New Partnership for Africa's Development, known as NEPAD, was launched in October 2001 with the goal of eradicating the social and economic underdevelopment afflicting African countries. NEPAD sought to develop a comprehensive and consensual development project within Africa, and worked on establishing an African model of good governance rooted in moderate liberalism, combining the public and private sectors, and activating the role of civil society. Despite achieving some positive results since its inception, NEPAD has faced a number of challenges that have hindered the full realization of its goals. Additionally, its reliance on external direction and support has undermined its ability to depend on itself and its own resources to solve its problems.

Keywords: NEPAD, development, partnership, Africa, challenges.

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Introduction:

The consequences of the colonial wave that African countries faced, along with the Cold War following World War II, had a profound impact on these nations. This prompted them to seek solutions to their economic problems through the implementation of development policies, which in turn led to numerous social and political challenges. As a result, they were compelled to reorder their priorities and set developmental goals aimed at advancing the African continent. The New Partnership for Africa's Development, known as NEPAD, was launched in October 2001 with the aim of eliminating the social and economic underdevelopment experienced by African countries. Considering the history of its early foundations, the first launch of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) took place in 1963, with its final year of existence being 2001. That same year saw the introduction of a new initiative, which embodied a new vision for the future of the African continent, aiming to lift it out of the underdevelopment and marginalization that have marked the globalized world, characterized by economic and political blocs. This initiative was approved at the "Abuja Summit" on October 23, 2001, and it became the development plan of the African Union, which replaced the Organization of African Unity in the following year, 2002.

Most studies that have analyzed the role played by NEPAD in addressing the issue of underdevelopment in the African continent agree that the core reason behind the continent's poor development lies in the weakness of the state and its poor relationship with the private sector. In response, NEPAD sought to formulate a comprehensive and consensual development project within Africa. It worked on establishing an African model of good governance within its systems, centered on moderate liberalism, combining both the public and private sectors, and activating the role of civil society.

It also undertook several projects aimed at achieving sustainable and inclusive development, which came as a response to the poor distribution of wealth—something that deepened inequalities and gaps within African societies. These efforts aimed to improve the performance of the African economy in order to free the continent from its dependency on the West and international financial institutions, by adopting mechanisms of oversight and accountability to achieve comprehensive development.

Accordingly, in this presentation, we aim to address the following research question: "To what extent has the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) succeeded in achieving development in Africa through its developmental efforts and mechanisms?" To answer the research question posed, the following hypothesis was formulated: The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has not been able to advance the African continent, despite its developmental efforts in the region in the fields of comprehensive and sustainable development and good governance.

As for the methodology adopted in this study, the historical method was used to trace the stages of the emergence of NEPAD as the new development initiative in Africa. In addition, the descriptive method was employed to highlight the developmental efforts and the various challenges faced by the NEPAD initiative.

1- A Theoretical Study of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) 1-1 The Conceptual Framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

After gaining independence, African countries began seeking ways to overcome the political, economic, and social crises affecting the continent. However, the economic policies they implemented failed to achieve their goals or ensure the proper exploitation of the continent's wealth. The theoretical framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) addresses the following:

NEPAD is an initiative born out of the collective will of a group of African countries, led by Algeria, South Africa, and Nigeria, aiming to revive African values, modernize them, and promote development within their societies. The initial work began under the name "New African Initiative" in 2001, until the final version of the initiative was presented at the "Abuja Summit" in October 2001. This initiative became known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Ali, 2005, p. 220).

A. Linguistic Definition: The term is of English origin, referring to the *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)*, which means "the new partnership for the development of Africa." (Zouaouid & Mefteh, 2020, p. 21)

B. Terminological Definition: NEPAD is a *strategy aimed at restructuring Africa, lifting it out of underdevelopment, promoting development, enhancing economic governance, investing in African people, and confronting the current challenges facing the continent—namely increasing poverty, underdevelopment, and continued marginalization.*

This strategy emerged from the mandate granted to five heads of state—namely Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa—by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to develop and unify frameworks for social and economic development in Africa. This took place during the 37th meeting of the African Union in Zambia in July 2001, where the strategic framework document was officially adopted (Kheda & Azzouz, 2012, p. 426).

NEPAD *has also been defined as a call for a new type of partnership with developed countries, opening a new dialogue with its partners and offering an opportunity to establish new relationships based on the principle of collective responsibility to achieve development goals in the continent* (Funke & Nsouli, 2003).

It is also defined as *a pledge made by African leaders, based on a clear and firm vision that their primary duty is to eradicate poverty and to place their countries—individually and collectively—on a path that leads the continent toward sustainable growth and development.* (Obi, 2001).

Their shared vision is grounded in a strong conviction about the importance of active participation in the global economy and international political life. This program is built on the goal of enabling the peoples of the African continent to lift themselves out of the underdevelopment and marginalization they currently face in a world marked by globalization and constant change (Zouaouid & Mefteh, 2020, p. 31).

1-2- The Emergence of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD):

NEPAD is *a commitment among African nations based on a shared vision, through which they all acknowledge the necessity of accelerating the eradication of poverty and placing their countries on a path of sustainable growth and development, while also ensuring active participation in the global economy and political life.* (Union, 2001) The term "NEPAD" is an abbreviation for what is referred to as the "New Partnership for Africa's Development." (Kheda & Azzouz, 2012, p. 426).

The emergence of the NEPAD initiative occurred in stages, resulting from numerous proposals put forward by African leaders during various forums and meetings. The African Development Forum, held in 1999, saw African leaders reach a consensus on finding a solution to the continent's problems based on African integration. Then came the "First Sirte Summit" later that same year, where the issue of international aid was raised, which had been granted to newly independent countries in Europe and Asia but had been denied to African nations. As a result, the leaders of South Africa, Algeria, and Nigeria were tasked with negotiating with the continent's creditors in order to cancel its debts. (Khairy, 2007, p. 4)

In 2001, the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, the President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, and the President of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, presented a program called "African Renaissance for the Future," which was presented at the *Second Sirte Summit* on March 2, 2001. Meanwhile, the Senegalese President, Abdoulaye Wade, presented a project called "Project Omega," which was first announced during the French-African Summit. (NEPAD, 2002b, p. 3)

Subsequently, the two previous programs were merged into a single initiative called the "*Nouvelle Initiative Africaine.*" This coincided with the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into what is now known as the African Union. The initiative was then approved at the *Lusaka Summit* in Zambia in July 2001. The Senegalese President, Abdoulaye Wade, was nominated to join the three previously appointed presidents to discuss the issue of African debt, along with the President of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konaré, forming a five-member committee to discuss the debt issue. This committee was tasked with presenting the program at the *G8 summit*. During one of the sessions, the executive committee deemed it necessary to change the name of the initiative, (NEPAD, 2002a, p. 03) The name was changed from the "*New African Initiative*" to the "*New*

Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)." This change was formalized during the inaugural meeting of the Committee of Heads of State and Government for the implementation and monitoring of the initiative, held on October 23, 2001, in Abuja, Nigeria.

What can be concluded is that the integration provided by the *Millennium Program for the Renewal of Africa (MAP)*, which represents the true political will to sever ties with the colonial past, along with the "*Project Omega*" represented by Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, who has expertise in technical matters and specializes in economic affairs and embodies commitment and economic rigor, will give the initiative two essential dimensions: an intellectual dimension focused on restoring self-confidence in Africa, and an economic dimension aimed at moving forward and keeping pace with international developments. (Hamza, 2013, p. 222)

The New Partnership for Africa's Development is primarily based on the conviction and new political will of African leaders, centered around African ownership and determination. This initiative is envisioned as a long-term vision for a program owned and led by Africa itself.

The NEPAD strategy aims to achieve economic growth and development, increased employment, reduce poverty, minimize injustice, diversify productive activities, enhance international competitiveness, increase export volumes, and promote greater African integration (Ahmed, 2017).

1-3- Goals and Principles of NEPAD

The goals of NEPAD include the following:

- Eradication of poverty in Africa.
- Promotion and empowerment of women with broader rights to participate in public life.
- Setting a minimum threshold to improve domestic outputs, with NEPAD targeting a 7% growth.
 - Improving reproductive health.
 - Eradicating ignorance and illiteracy.
 - Increasing investment in human capital and working to reduce the brain drain to foreign markets.
- Reducing dependency on foreign systems and liberating African countries from the constraints of debt.

NEPAD outlines the essential conditions for realizing these goals, known as the conditions for sustainable development from a political perspective, which include:

- Security and peace
- Democracy
- Human rights
- Economic governance integrity (Yahyaoui, p. 315).

Principles of NEPAD: The NEPAD document outlines a set of principles, including:

- Good governance as an essential requirement for peace, security, political continuity, and economic and social development.
- Ownership and leadership, as well as broad and active participation from all sectors of society.
- Enhancing African development of resources and benefits for its people.
- Partnership with and among African peoples.
- Strengthening regional and continental cooperation.
- Building competitiveness for African countries and the continent.
- A new international partnership externally, which changes the unequal relationships between Africa and the world.
- Ensuring that all NEPAD partners are aligned with modern development goals and clear development objectives.

1-4- NEPAD Priorities and Structure: The priorities are as follows:

- Establishing conditions for sustainable development through emphasis on:

- Regional cooperation and integration
 - Peace and security
 - Democracy and good governance, both politically and economically
 - Capacity building and expertise
 - Political reforms and increasing investment in key sectors.
- Optimal use of resources through:
- Increasing capital returns by reducing debt
 - Increasing savings and domestic investment
 - Attracting foreign direct investment
 - Improving management of public revenues and expenditures
 - Enhancing Africa's share in global trade (Kheda & Azzouz, 2012, pp. 428-429).

The executive structure of NEPAD consists of the African Union Summit Conference, which is the highest authority, and the Executive Committee, made up of 15 Heads of State and Government, evenly distributed across African regions, along with five countries and governments from the founding nations of the initiative. Additionally, there is the Steering Committee, composed of personal representatives of the leaders from the Executive Committee, and the General Secretariat, or NEPAD Secretariat, which is based in Pretoria, South Africa (NEPAD, 2002b).

NEPAD has established several key bodies and committees, including:

- The Presidential Executive Committee: This committee includes the heads of the five founding countries, along with the heads of 15 other countries representing the five geographical

regions of the continent, with four countries from each region. The committee is responsible for promoting the initiative, gaining international support, defining policies and priorities for its programs, and monitoring their implementation. It also provides periodic reports on its activities to the African Union Summit.

- The Steering Committee: Composed of representatives of the Heads of State from the Executive Committee, this committee prepares detailed plans for the work program and coordinates efforts to implement the initiative. It also plays a role in managing dialogue with development partners at the personal representative level, seeking support from the G8 and developed countries for African efforts to achieve development on the continent.

- The Presidential Forum of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): This forum consists of the heads of state and government members of the mechanism. It was established based on the 2002 African Union Summit statement in Durban on democracy and good governance. The mechanism involves evaluating the performance of a state by other countries, with the ultimate goal being to help the reviewed state improve its developmental performance in decision-making processes and selecting the best methods while adhering to recognized standards.

- The Secretariat: Located in Pretoria, it serves as a technical body assisting the Executive and Steering Committees in fulfilling their duties (Zouaouid & Mefteh, 2020, p. 32).

1-5-NEPAD Work Program: It was divided into sub-programs, including the following:

A. Security and Peace Program:

- Establishing long-term plans to achieve development and security.
- Empowering African governments to resolve conflicts within their borders and eliminate all forms of violence within their societies.
- Ensuring coordination with the main principles of the NEPAD initiative.

B. Democracy and Good Governance Program: Its foundation lies in strengthening the political achievements of NEPAD countries by supporting frameworks for democracy, transparency, human rights, and the rule of law, within the context of calling for the establishment of institutional states and neutral administrative bodies.

C. Economic Governance Program: This program focuses on rationalizing public spending and setting rational policies for managing economic enterprises, while identifying specific sectors within the strategy that play a central role in the development process, including: infrastructure, human resources, health, communication, agriculture, and energy. (Yahyaoui, pp. 315-316)

2-Efforts and Challenges of NEPAD in Achieving Development in Africa
This section addresses NEPAD's role in achieving development and the obstacles standing in the way of regional integration in Africa.

2-1 NEPAD's Efforts in Achieving Comprehensive Development in Africa
The focus here is on NEPAD's role in promoting good governance and sustainable development.

A. NEPAD Initiative and Good Governance: NEPAD's plan for formulating an African model of good governance within its systems is based on an ideology centered around moderate liberalism, integrating both the public and private sectors through flexible cooperation and shared responsibility according to roles. Governments are tasked with preparing the public environment for work and production in order to attract private sector initiatives and integrate them into the system.

In the context of rebuilding the capacities of African states and their institutions, NEPAD's bodies have organized meetings and conferences to discuss ways to entrench good governance by activating participatory culture in decision-making, enhancing the work of African parliaments and their oversight, improving civil services, fighting corruption and bribery, and supporting the private sector. The 2002 annual report emphasized the establishment of a specific initiative for the private sector, underlining its role in achieving social governance. Furthermore, the 2003 conference of Ministers of Local Development and Public Administration adopted a program aimed at strengthening the state's capacity in improving its administrative services.

One of NEPAD's major achievements in promoting good governance was the declaration on political and economic democracy and corporate management during the third meeting of NEPAD Heads of State and Government in June 2002 in Rome. This declaration included the agreement on the following principles:

- Adopting Clear Codes and Standards for Good Governance
- Civil service should be accountable, efficient, and effective.
- Ensuring the effective performance of parliaments and institutional accountability.
- Establishing and strengthening parliamentary committees and anti-corruption bodies.
- Ensuring the independence of the judiciary and its ability to prevent abuse of power and corruption.

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B. NEPAD and Sustainable Development: The NEPAD initiative emerged during a period of severe economic decline in Africa, where the continent faced a deep-rooted issue of dependency on external powers due to excessive borrowing policies and a corrupt development environment, marked by an unequal distribution of wealth that widened social gaps (Yahyaoui, p. 320).

In order to establish sustainable development in all its dimensions and improve the performance of the African economy, NEPAD undertook a deep diagnosis of Africa's developmental situation and sought to improve it through various projects, the most notable of which were:

- Between 2001 and 2004, the NEPAD initiative focused on working to free Africa from its dependency on the West and global financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund, and aimed at achieving a degree of continental self-sufficiency.

- In 2005, the initiative worked to revive regional economic groups and integrate the African Union's institutions into efforts to eliminate sectarian wars on the continent. NEPAD also persuaded the African Development Bank to contribute to improving and renewing regional infrastructure. In fact, the bank funded over 40 projects in this area, with a total cost of 4.3 billion USD.

- In 2003, NEPAD launched the Comprehensive Agricultural Development Programme in Africa, with contributions from various institutional partners, such as the Agricultural Research Institution in Africa (Fellah, 2010–2011, pp. 2010-2011).

2-2- Motivations and Challenges of African Integration in Light of the NEPAD Initiative

A. Motivations for African Integration in Africa: There are several driving factors for African countries to strive for economic and developmental integration, including the following:

- Geographical Proximity: The vast majority, if not all, of the countries on the continent are not separated by natural borders, but mostly by artificial boundaries drawn during colonization.

- Public Support for the Integration Process: The African populations are eager for any step that unites or brings them closer together.

- Cultural Homogeneity: This is particularly evident after the widespread emergence of satellite culture and the Internet.

- Political System Similarities: After the end of the Cold War, Africa saw a wave of democracy, with mechanisms for democratic implementation emerging and a significant decline in one-party systems.

- Shared Historical and Social Development: All African countries have suffered from colonization and economic difficulties post-independence, as well as from mounting debts. They all share concerns about avoiding the negative impacts of globalization, focusing on human rights, the rule of law, transparency, and accountability.

- Similar Military and Economic Capacities: Most African countries have very limited military and economic capabilities, with exceptions being countries such as Egypt and Algeria in the north, Kenya in the east, Nigeria in the west, and South Africa in the south.

B. Economic Barriers to African Integration: These include the following:

- Incompatibility of the Integration Model: Many of the economic groups in the continent have been designed based on the European model, which follows the principle of "laissez-faire" and an unlimited focus on regional trade liberalization.

- **Few and Small Private Projects:** The limited number of private projects, their small size, and the lack of integration between them constitute a barrier to integration, especially when there is a competitive relationship between the products of African countries.

- **Weak and Fragile Infrastructure:** The lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads, communications, and electricity, represents additional economic obstacles that increase costs and weaken trade between African countries.

- **Corruption in its Various Forms:** Corruption, in its various forms, plays a crucial role in impacting regional integration efforts in Africa.

- **External Dependency of African Economies:** Africa still largely depends on Europe for most of its external economic transactions. One of the most prominent examples of this dependency is the relationship between France and the Francophone countries in West Africa, where France supported the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in including only the Francophone countries in the region, and assisted in setting up plans and integration programs to serve French interests.(Achour, 2017)

Conclusion:

The NEPAD initiative is considered a bold plan for development in Africa, as it has made significant efforts to provide solutions to the crises facing African countries and societies. However, there is another criticism of the initiative, which claims it is merely a new type of economic bloc similar to those Africa has known in the past. It is seen as a form of adaptation to globalization, aimed at extracting the continent from its crises.

What has prevented NEPAD from achieving its goals and objectives is its reliance on external support, which has weakened both the initiative and African societies' ability to depend on their own resources to solve their problems. This has been highlighted by the competition between the United States, Russia, and China within Africa, which threatens the failure of the initiative as it relies on foreign funding to implement African development projects.

Another factor confirming the failure of the initiative is the reluctance of the international community to provide assistance to Africa through NEPAD. There is also dissatisfaction within the initiative itself, as the aid seems to be directed towards powerful countries, while the weaker nations are neglected.

Furthermore, sustainable development cannot be achieved by relying on foreign funding; it demands self-sufficiency built on the continent's own resources and abundant natural wealth. Achieving this goal requires a foundation of transparency, political democracy, and the elimination of corruption. African countries must therefore work to democratize their political systems and expand freedoms, particularly in the realm of human rights, as an essential pillar of development. They also need to reassess the role of the state in relation to the private sector by involving it actively in the development process. Additionally, innovation and originality must guide policy

formulation and strategic planning in line with the objectives of the initiative. Ultimately, revitalizing the African economy and reinforcing regional integration are key steps toward sustainable and inclusive growth.

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