

Desperate African Presidents Court Self-Destruction in Nepad Plan

by David Cherry

Discussion at the dinner table in the ramshackle mansion revolves around how to bring the household to prosperity. The family bookkeeper, known to all as an accomplished loan shark, embezzler, and murderer, is quietly present. Everyone knows what he has done to bring them down, but no one dares mention him, except occasionally to acknowledge his substantial contributions to the household's management. In fact, it is agreed that the way to achieve prosperity is to bring in the bookkeeper's dying patron and mentor, dissolute and penniless, who still operates like a mafia don. Yet, this family's fatal discussion is being led by its most energetic and seemingly brightest member.

The household is Africa; its Presidents sit at the table. South African President Thabo Mbeki leads the discussion. The bookkeeper is the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, acknowledged favorably in the basic document of the new, comprehensive plan for Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad), which proposes a policy of privatization and free trade, to attract private foreign investment from the current, expiring financial system—the patron of the IMF and World Bank. Why is this happening?

The Group of Eight meeting scheduled for June 26-27 in the Canadian town of Kananaskis, Alberta, is expected to be dominated by discussion and almost certain approval of Nepad. This "new partnership" is a bold and sweeping plan conceived entirely by African leaders as a holistic, comprehensive, integrated strategic framework for the socio-economic development of Africa. It is a call to the rest of the world to provide private investment, and in this way to become a partner with Africa in her own development on the basis of her own agenda and program of action. *It will be African led and managed.* African leaders will not allow any strings to be attached by their partners in the West. Nepad foresees the spending of hundreds of billions of dollars in the next few years on roads, clean water systems, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure, health, and schools. The agricultural plan will enable the reduction of poverty levels by half by the year 2015.

Such, at least, are the claims made by leading African Presidents and by their Nepad documentation. The five initiating Presidents are Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Abdelaziz

Bouteflika of Algeria, and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. Unfortunately, the plan is a fantasy.

It is not difficult for African leaders to succumb to such a mirage: Nearly half of the African population lives on less than \$1 a day. Only 16% of African roads are paved. Less than one in five Africans uses electricity. Yet Africans constitute 10% of the world's people. And now, after two disastrous harvests because of drought and floods in southern Africa, 10 to 19 million Africans face starvation, according to UN estimates.

The Boundary Conditions

What are the *motives* of the Anglo-American powers who are meant to be Africa's partners? In the 1970s, the Club of Rome declared that the world—and Africa—were severely overpopulated. When *EIR* showed the computer modellers that with industrialization, Africa could support a vastly larger population, they responded that their calculations were based on the assumption that there would be no industrialization in Africa! The Club of Rome's conclusions became dogma in Europe and America. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's National Security Study Memorandum 200 (December 1974) identified population growth in the developing sector as a security threat to the United States.

The depopulation policy is still in effect, as the recent case of Malawi shows. In 2000, the IMF forced Malawi to sell its 167,000 metric tons of grain reserves to service its debt, a clear case of premeditated genocide. Now, after the two disastrous harvests, Malawi, with no reserves, is suffering from famine.

This genocidal intention represents a complete reversal of the plans of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to force the British and French out of their colonial holdings after World War II. Even into the 1960s, some of the Rooseveltian impulses were still manifest. With the assassination of President John Kennedy, the financial elite accomplished a coup that snuffed out these impulses: It began to channel investment flows into speculative and purely "extractive" activity, and away from productive uses, a shift which has become increasingly severe ever since. The devastating consequences have included the adoption of the Malthusian policy just described.

Another consequence is that the productive and creative *capabilities* of Africa's would-be partners have been, and

are being, systematically destroyed, as *EIR* has documented. They can now finance anything (except production of real goods); they can now produce nothing (except mountains of worthless financial paper, including unpayable Third World debt). They verge upon a militarized world system of “perpetual war,” modelled on the Roman Empire. Any plans of the Anglo-American powers for Africa will have, as a major motivation, the increased exploitation of Africa as a base of operations, a source of oil and gas, and a source of mineral wealth, especially those metals—platinum, chromium, manganese—needed for advanced military technology that are not widely dispersed in the Earth’s crust, but are found in southern Africa.

A State of Denial

Do the authors of the Nepad plan take account of these boundary conditions? Do they recognize the combined process of economic looting and political-military recolonization? The African Presidents show a remarkable state of denial, although African legislators, trade union leaders, and intellectuals are up in arms over the depredations of the IMF and World Bank.

In referencing Africa’s history, the Presidents refer to the legacy of colonialism, but, instead of telling the truth about the current state of IMF/World Bank debt slavery, Nepad’s Article 24 states, “The structural adjustment programs of the 1980s provided only a partial solution. . . . Consequently, only a few countries managed to achieve sustainable higher growth under these programs.”

They do not (and could not) name any that achieved higher growth thus. They politely note that “credit has led to the debt deadlock. . . . The limits of this option have been reached” (Article 3). Nevertheless, they intend to continue cooperating with these deadly institutions.

What is worse, the broad pattern of Nepad is that participating African governments will take collective responsibility for *imposing on themselves* the kinds of destructive, monetarist burdens and controls the IMF and World Bank have so far been solely responsible for. Nepad will “adopt standards and targets for fiscal and monetary policies” (Article 49). A task force of ministries of finance and central banks is to “recommend standards, including of public financial management, and targets” (Article 89). Without a different economic theory and a rejection of the IMF and World Bank, the inexorable logic of the existing system will govern them.



Attempting the impossible—a “new partnership” with the fatal IMF. The five sponsoring Presidents of the New Partnership for African Development (clockwise): Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria; Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria; Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal.

Instead of opposing globalization, Nepad considers that Africa has suffered from being left out, “marginalization . . . from the globalization process” (Article 2). It is no surprise that privatization and the elimination of government subsidies for agriculture are on the Nepad agenda.

Nepad also has provisions committing African governments to “good governance” as a way of providing an environment in which investments will bear fruit. The idea is popular with many Africans, who thirst for good governance. These provisions include “allowing for the existence of several political parties and workers’ unions, and fair, open and democratic elections periodically organized to enable people to choose their leaders freely” (Article 79). Economic sanctions may be used to enforce these requirements.

Nothing is said, however, to limit the freedom of the Anglo-American powers to fund and steer opposition parties as a way of controlling African governments, despite the case of Zimbabwe this year, in which British Prime Minister Tony Blair made clear that if the British-sponsored opposition party lost, Britain would not consider it a fair election. Britain and the Netherlands are still broadcasting propaganda into Zimbabwe by shortwave, intended to overturn the elected government.

The Discovery of Africa

The Nepad plan is sometimes called the “brainchild” of South African President Mbeki, its most energetic exponent;

or, it is sometimes said, it was “conceived entirely by African leaders.” Here is a plan hostile to the most fundamental interests of Africans; it coincides, however, with the thinking of the now-desperate Anglo-American financial interests. It is safe to conclude that one thing the African Presidents cannot be blamed for, is the conceptual authorship of Nepad. At least one of the initiators, Nigerian President Obasanjo, has let slip that he smells a rat, even while he plunges ahead. In his address to the March UN Conference on Financing Development, in Monterrey, Mexico, he said, “We must guard that Nepad is not being turned against us as a tool for new conditionality.” Only the desperate can suffer from such delusion.

The intense energy of European and North American governments in working toward Nepad suggests that there is more to Nepad than meets the eye. Africa had been officially and publicly written off by the Anglo-American powers for the past two decades—until now. Consider just some of the diplomacy carried out from February through May: On Feb. 6-10, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and International Development Minister Clare Short visited Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Senegal. On Feb. 8, Several African Presidents met French President Jacques Chirac in Paris; then on Feb. 11, Blair and a high-level representative of Chirac met President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal in Dakar. A week later, the G-8

contact group for Nepad—including representatives of Blair, Chirac, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, and the U.S. State Department—met with the Nepad secretariat (one of six such meetings altogether). Chirac’s representative on the contact group is former IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus.

On Feb. 18-25, IMF Managing Director Horst Köhler and World Bank President James Wolfensohn toured Africa together, held regional summits in Mali and Tanzania, and visited Nigeria and Kenya. On Feb. 26, the Presidents of Angola, Mozambique, and Botswana met President George Bush in Washington. On April 2-13, Canadian Prime Minister Chrétien made a seven-nation tour of Africa that included the four original sponsors of Nepad—South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, and Algeria.

And finally, with great worldwide fanfare, in late May U.S. Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill and Irish rock star Bono made their celebrated tour of Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda, and South Africa.

Widespread Opposition

There is extensive opposition to Nepad, at least in Southern Africa, but because of the respect still accorded President Mbeki and the strong pressures exerted by his office and his allies in the Nepad undertaking, this opposition is not yet

Nepad History and Organization at a Glance

Nepad is the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, the end result of the merging and revising of previous proposals. The immediately preceding version was called the New Africa Initiative (NAI). NAI was approved by the Organization for African Unity (OAU) summit in July 2001, and approved in principle the same month by the G-8 meeting in Genoa. Its policy framework was finalized on Oct. 23, 2001, in Abuja, Nigeria, when it was renamed Nepad. (NAI was too close to the Afrikaans *naai*, which, when used as slang, means “to screw.”)

The “partnership” in the Nepad name is between the Nepad organization and its member governments, on the one hand, and principally the G-8 group of advanced sector countries, with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and European Union (EU) taking a strong cooperating interest. At a meeting in Maputo, Mozambique on May 14-17, G-8 representatives presented to the Nepad Steering Committee their “Africa Action Plan,” which is not expected to be made public until

the G-8 meeting in Kananaskis, Alberta, in late June.

Nepad is a project of the OAU and of its successor, the African Union (AU). It is “the socio-economic development blueprint for the AU to implement its objectives.” The AU, loosely modelled on the EU, is intended to be more successful than the OAU in curtailing national sovereignty, and seeks to unify the continent politically, socially, and economically. The AU founding summit is scheduled for July 2002 in Durban, South Africa. The first head of the African Union is to be South African President Thabo Mbeki.

The Nepad Steering Committee consists of the personal representatives of the five initiating Presidents—those of South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria, and Egypt. Its chairman is Prof. Wiseman Nkuhlu, Mbeki’s representative.

The Nepad Secretariat, headed by Steering Committee Chairman Nkuhlu, is located at the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) at Midrand, near Johannesburg, South Africa. Nkuhlu is chairman of DBSA.

The plan, in 205 points, entitled *The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (Nepad)*, dated Abuja, Nigeria, October 2001, may be found at this web page: www.africaninitiative.org/Documents/AA0010101.pdf The Nepad website is www.nepad.org.

willing to oppose it by name.

One sign of widespread opposition is the announcement by John Nkomo, the national chairman of the Zimbabwe ruling party ZANU-PF, on May 21, that the national liberation parties now in power in Southern Africa plan to hold a summit in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in a few months, to address orchestrated interference in African countries by foreign imperial forces, including globalization. According to the *Herald* in Harare, "Comrade Nkomo said preliminary meetings to examine the threat of a new wave of neo-colonialism" had already been held with several of the parties. The ruling parties of Mozambique, Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe, and South Africa—all with fresh memories of armed struggle against colonial rule—are to attend. The Botswana Democratic Party and the ruling party of Zambia have also been invited.

President Mugabe knows Nepad is aimed at his government, but does not say so publicly. The Zambian government of President Levy Mwanawasa, which has a good idea of what physical-economic policy should be (see *EIR*, March 22, 2002), is also facing an attempt—by the European Union—to overturn the election that brought it to power in December 2001. So the Zambian government can see through Nepad also. President Mwanawasa has emphatically defended Mugabe's reelection on the grounds of national sovereignty.

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Indeed, the only major African newspaper so far to oppose Nepad in an editorial, is Zambia's *Post* published in the capital, Lusaka. But it, too, does not name Nepad. The May 24 editorial, entitled "Western Interests," says in part: "No matter how attractively these so-called solutions to Africa's vast problems are being packaged or what they are being named, the Western policies are conveniently put in place not for our benefit, but to continue undermining us. . . . Through this package being called globalization and liberalization, transnational corporations and institutions are fast taking over nearly all sectors."

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has criticized Nepad by name, but it has only managed to damn it with faint praise. After a meeting of its Executive Committee on May 29-30, General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi characterized Cosatu's conclusions in these terms: "Cosatu welcomes Nepad, but it has been developed without the participation of the masses and popularly elected African ministers. . . . Nepad needs the participation of African trade unions." But he also pointed out that "democracy is not protected" by Nepad.

Most public opposition attacks Nepad indirectly by treating Zimbabwe as a test case. That is, by attacking the ongoing Anglo-American attempt to impose a government of its own choice on Zimbabwe, the opponents implicitly attack Nepad. Mbeki, Obasanjo, and Nepad Steering Committee Chairman Wiseman Nkuhlu have covered themselves by loudly joining in the defense of the Mugabe government.

But this is where push comes to shove. The Anglo-American powers have kept the theme in the press since Mugabe's reelection, that the credibility of the Africans in the new partnership depends on their arranging a new election in Zimbabwe. The *Washington Post* lead editorial of May 6 declared, "If Africa's new partnership means anything, it is that the continent's leaders must tell Mr. Mugabe to stop terrorizing his country and call fresh elections. But Africa's leaders have equivocated. Mr. Obasanjo and Mr. Mbeki played their part in expelling [suspending] Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth, much to their credit. But, they have not used their partnership as a tool to squeeze him."

Since the opposition to Nepad has united around the principle that Mugabe not be thrown to the lions, Mbeki, Obasanjo, and Nkuhlu are caught in between. The vise tightened in the last week of May, when the ruling parties of Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe—not waiting for the planned Victoria Falls conference—met in Windhoek, the Namibian capital, to pass a resolution congratulating Mugabe on his victory and condemning "attempts to install puppet regimes that guarantee the exploitation of our resources." They acknowledged that the intense international focus on Zimbabwe was a reflection of British and Western interests in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. Namibian President Sam Nujoma had the courage to warn of Nepad's dangers.