

18. The New Partnership for Africa's Development

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My name is David Malone, and I am a Canadian Foreign Service officer on leave currently serving as President of the International Peace Academy in New York. The International Peace Academy is a small think-tank that works closely with the United Nations, although we are independent of it, and with regional organizations. One of our major programs employing seven of my colleagues focuses on Africa; all seven of them are African. We've had a great deal to do in recent years with efforts by Africans to improve their own capacity to address conflicts within the African continent.

It is perfectly clear that the western world is not going to come to the aid of Africa in terms of peacekeeping and with other conflict resolution techniques automatically. Africans will increasingly have to rely on their own efforts in this area. This explains the intensive work we do in Africa and in New York to try to perfect these types of mechanisms and techniques with our African friends and colleagues.

Similarly, African leaders have concluded that the West has become disenchanted about aid efforts directed at Africa, that huge sums of money have been poured by the West into development programs in Africa — most of which have failed. They go on requiring development assistance from the West, but they recognize the responsibility to do more themselves to make these programs succeed. That is why President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria developed, in parallel to another initiative by President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, a new African program for development on the continent. This program really is quite simple: it consists of a "grand bargain," so to speak, and is called the **New Plan for Africa's Development (NEPAD)**.

In exchange for much greater African attention to governance and much greater efforts

by African leaders to respect democratic processes and to practise sound economic management, to favour market approaches, the West would commit — or re-commit — to serious development efforts in Africa. The first attempt to engage the G8 in this African proposal occurred at the Genoa Summit in 2001. (Russia is a player in this, although because it no longer has a very significant aid program it is really the G7 that is relevant.) The initiative was received with a fair degree of suspicion by a number of the G7 leaders, who felt they had been there before. They felt that their publics increasingly did not want to support aid to Africa in light of some really spectacular instances of financial mismanagement in places, such as Mobutu's Congo — and there are plenty of others. However, there were several champions for the new program within the G7, notably Britain and Canada. The other countries paid lip service to the need to address African concerns, and the French do a great deal in Africa for francophone African countries. But there was a suspicion that this initiative would simply be new packaging in order to obtain more Western money without actually performing in return.

Nonetheless, there have been some interesting developments since Genoa. For example, Zimbabwe has been spinning rapidly off the democratic track in recent years. The situation came to a head with an election in Zimbabwe in the spring of 2002, which was widely thought — outside Africa — not to have been free and fair, although many Africans felt that the Western media and certain Western-dominated organizations were picking on Zimbabwe simply because it is an African country.

Be that as it may, the Commonwealth group that met to decide on Commonwealth action further to the Zimbabwe election included two

African leaders and the Prime Minister of Australia. Those two African leaders, not coincidentally, were President Mbeki and President Obasanjo, who sided with Australia in finding the election not free and fair and agreed to suspend Zimbabwe for a year.

Whatever the rights or wrongs of the Zimbabwe situation, this in turn signalled to the G7 that African leaders probably are more serious about governance, democratization and sound management than they might have been given credit for. This sets the stage rather hopefully for the Kananaskis discussions on NEPAD.

Some problems, however, lie ahead for NEPAD. The portfolio of funds available for development assistance is not elastic. Leaders talk a good game about increasing their aid efforts, but they rarely do. So, in a year in which reconstruction of Afghanistan is a very high priority for the international community, and in which the reconstruction of the West Bank following recent violence will probably be a very high priority for the Europeans, the Americans and the Japanese, will there actually be more money available for Africa?

In other words, if the Africans meet the G8 halfway, will the G8 be able to meet the Africans halfway? We do not yet know, and the discussions at Kananaskis will — if they are to be of any benefit at all — need to be quite frank about what can realistically be done by the major Western powers, by the international financial institutions, regional banks, and so on, to boost aid efforts to Africa. There is a belief in many circles in the United States — but not just the United States — that development assistance is wholly ineffective, that it simply props up bad regimes, that the money always goes to waste and simply fuels corruption.

However, there is a great deal of evidence that this is, in fact, not the case in many situations. There are African governments that provide a good framework for economic management, with a degree of transparency and honesty in public life, in politics, such as Ghana or Uganda, particularly some years ago. These examples illustrate that aid money can

be very effective. In fact, a recent **World Bank** study demonstrates just that.

Getting the policy framework just right will be absolutely essential, and President Mbeki and President Obasanjo may have a hard time convincing their colleagues in Africa to make the changes necessary to put in place the types of structures and policies that will encourage not only more aid, but also — even more importantly — more international private sector investment. Rome was not built in a day; a continent does not change its habits overnight, and the G8, which is fairly hidebound, will not change its habits overnight either. There is quite a lot of doublespeak at their level also. So NEPAD is the beginning of what could be a promising adventure.

However, NEPAD's success relies very heavily on two individuals, which is always worrying because either, or both, will eventually move from the scene. There are elections in Nigeria before too very long. Consequently, the ownership of NEPAD must be spread more broadly in Africa. Many of the often very impressive leaders who have recently been coming to the fore in Africa need to be engaged actively in these discussions. In particular, the francophone African community must be even more engaged than it is.

That said, I am very encouraged by the fact that the NEPAD initiative comes from Africa, because it is not something created by the international financial institutions — by the G7 capitals or the UN. It came directly from Africans and it recognizes mutual obligations. It does not demand aid as a right in the absolute, but requests it in exchange for changes in policy, which the Africans will freely undertake. This is extremely promising; I know my African colleagues are excited about it. Wherever I go in Africa, which I try to do quite a bit, I find that while the local populations are deeply, deeply cynical about the donors — their motives and their performance — so the fact that the Africans have come up with a program of their own fills other Africans with pride and optimism.

Bibliography

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Further Reading

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Discussion Questions

1. Is it reasonable for African leaders to request financial compensation in exchange for increased attention to governance and increased respect of democratic processes? What alternatives are there?
2. Why is an African-generated proposal considered progress over recommendations put forward by non-Africans? Is Africa in a strong enough position to develop such large-scale recommendations, considering it still relies on the developed world for their enactment?
3. Is it realistic for the G8 to be expected to provide finances for African development while dealing with the windfall of the September 11 attacks, and the exhaustive process of restoring peace in Afghanistan? Why or why not?
4. What do you anticipate will be the G8's response to the NEPAD proposal at the Kananaskis Summit?

Quiz

1. What is the name of the joint proposal by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria?
 - a. New Plan for Africa's Development (NEPAD)
 - b. Third World Economic Development (TWED)
 - c. African Initiative for Millennium Economic Development (AIMED)
 - d. African Commitment to Economic Development (ACED)
2. Representatives of which countries were in the Commonwealth group that met to decide action in wake of allegations the Zimbabwe election was neither free nor fair?
 - a. South Africa, Guyana, Congo
 - b. Canada, Nigeria, India
 - c. Australia, Canada, Congo
 - d. Nigeria, South Africa, Australia
3. The first attempt to engage the G8 in the proposal by presidents Obasanjo and Mbeki for African development occurred at which summit?
 - a. Kananaskis, 2002
 - b. Okinawa, 2000
 - c. Birmingham, 1998
 - d. Genoa, 2001
4. Which of the following countries is not a member of NEPAD's steering committee?
 - a. Nigeria
 - b. Egypt
 - c. Libya
 - d. Senegal