

■
**Nigeria's Foreign Policy in
the West African Sub-
Region: The Imperative of
Change in the Post-Cold
War Era**

Kayode Adeniran Omojuwa 177

■
**Contending Issues in
Nigeria - Liberia
Relations: An Appraisal**

C. Nna - Emeka Okereke 193

■
**National Security and
Foreign Policy: Towards A
Review of Nigeria's Afro -
Centric Policy**

Cletus Okodolor 203

■
**Viable Leadership and
the Goals of NEPAD**

Daniel Gberevbie 223

NIGERIAN FORUM

Adeniran. 518

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Viable Leadership and the Goals of NEPAD

By

*Daniel Gberevbie**

Introduction

Africa, a continent of great potentials and promises, is in dire need of rescue from the deprivation of the basic needs of life. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is the latest mechanism or initiative put in place by African leaders to rescue her from the yoke of hunger, poverty and underdevelopment. There is no doubt that the NEPAD initiative is a bold attempt by African leaders to take their destiny into their own hands in order to bring about development on the continent. However, NEPAD, though an African initiative, is based on the two principles of ownership by Africans, and partnership between Africa and the international community. This places enormous responsibility on African leaders to play their part and also to

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get the international community to fulfill its-part if the goals of NEPAD are to be realized.

This paper, which focuses on viable leadership and the goals of NEPAD shall not discuss in detail the goals of NEPAD, but will focus on viable leadership in Africa as the basis for the realization of the goals of NEPAD. And this study has become necessary because of the sorry state in which African nations are today, a situation that has been brought about largely by leadership, which is self-seeking instead of being focussed on the welfare of their citizens.

The paper is organized into seven sections as follows: section one talks about the goals and financing of NEPAD, section two talks about viable leadership in Africa, section three talks about debt relief, section four talks about debt forgiveness, section five talks about challenges to African leaders, section six talks about the way forward for African leaders and section seven concludes with some recommendations.

Goals and Financing of NEPAD

NEPAD can be seen as a catalyst for the achievement of the developmental goals of the African continent. These goals can be deduced from the G8 (the eight most industrialized nations of the world) Africa action plan which has two dimensions, the political and the economic.

On the political front, African leaders are committed to democracy and sustainable development through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The accountability of African leaders to their people and to each other as well as the determination of developed partners to match their commitment is emphasized. This means that the international community and indeed the G8, will be

committed to the goals of NEPAD only when African leaders show a high sense of transparent governance.

On the economic front the G8, committed itself to promoting peace, security and conflict prevention by supporting African efforts to resolve the principal armed conflicts on the continent so as to realize the goals of NEPAD. The realization here is that without peace and security on the African continent, there can be no meaningful development.

The following are the economic aspects for which the G8 has agreed to assist African nations towards the achievement of poverty eradication:

Economic Growth: In line with the economic growth initiative of NEPAD, the G8 commits to help African nations attract investment both within and outside Africa and implement policies conducive for economic growth.

Debt Relief: On the aspect of debt relief, the G8 commits to assist African nations through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative to reduce poverty. The HIPC initiative intends to reduce by US \$19 billion, the debt of some 22 African countries that are on the path of sound economic policies and good governance.

Education: Knowledge is power, so the G8 commits to support African nations in their effort to improve the quality of education at all levels irrespective of gender and religion.

Health: A healthy nation is a wealthy nation; hence the G8 commits to help African nations to combat the effects of HIV/AIDS and malaria. In this light, France promised to increase her share of contribution towards the health needs of African nations to the level of 150 million euros a year.

Agriculture: A hungry man is an angry man, hence the G8 commits to help African nations to work to improve food security through improved sustainable productivity and competitiveness by supporting African nations' agricultural efforts.

Improved Water Management: Because of the importance of water to man, the G-8 commits to help African nations' efforts to improve water resources development and management.

To realize the above noble goals, paragraph 44 of the NEPAD action plan puts the financial implications of NEPAD to be jointly financed by Africans and her partners i.e. the international community, at US \$64 billion yearly.

ViabLe Leadership in Africa:

In order to realize the goals of NEPAD, African nations have put in place a number of institutions to manage their affairs. The highest being the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee; the African Peer Review Mechanism and the African Peer Review Panel which is to make its recommendations to the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee. APRM provides the means to monitor the progress of African leaders in the area of economic, corporate and good governance in Africa.

There can be no meaningful development without viable leadership. The goals of NEPAD will be realized only to the extent that African leaders involve civil society and non-governmental organizations. For now, there seems to be less awareness and involvement of the civil society of African nations about NEPAD. The emphasis of NEPAD as

of today seems to be on the Heads of State and Government of African nations. What this means is that the success and failure of NEPAD rest squarely on the shoulders of the political leaders in Africa.

Most conflicts in African States today are brought about by the inability of its leaders to evolve sound policies and programs devoid of bitterness and self-gratification. The result is ethnic revolt and bitter civil wars. In quoting a French diplomat, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, Emeka Anyaoku said: "They have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing". He went further to state that democracy cannot survive in an environment where elected politicians do not always remain mindful of the impact of their actions, including the laws they pass on the people's faith in the democratic process.

In the area of foreign investments into Africa which is one of the areas in which the goals of NEPAD can be achieved, it will require leaders in Africa with the political will to put in place the framework needed to attract them. The framework may include goodwill on the part of the leaders in the international community, a proper security network to protect lives and properties, a good business climate devoid of corrupt tendencies and a proper frame of mind on the part of the citizens towards foreign investors. As pointed out by Mohidden the recurrent negative feelings about Africa as a continent of despots and deep in troubles portrays the people as unable to solve their own problems. No doubt this will further reduce the chances of Africa receiving the necessary external financial and technological support for the realization of the goals of NEPAD. He went further to state that Africa requires new leaders and styles of leadership that are competent, honest, visionary and committed, and that can steer Africa away from the vicious

circles of hunger, poverty, deprivation, underdevelopment, corruption and the scourge of HIV/AIDS and malaria.

For African leaders to have the full support of the international community towards realizing the goals of NEPAD, they have to develop the political will to fight the authoritarian tendencies and corrupt practices that have eaten deep into the African political environment. To Alhaji Masari, Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, it was of great concern to learn that Nigeria has over US \$170 billion dollars kept abroad in foreign banks, yet the nation is yearning daily for investable funds. To him, the figure represented about five times Nigeria's foreign debt, and this is associated with public sector corruption.

Debt Relief

According to World Bank estimates, sub-Saharan Africa's total debt stock was nearly US \$209 billion at the year's end in 2001. The debt burden is another issue that may prevent African states from contributing their part financially to the goals of NEPAD. We hope that the introduction of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative will help to take care of this.

Debt Forgiveness

The current wave of democratization in Africa no doubt is yielding dividends. According to the deputy foreign minister of Russia, from 1998 to 2002, Russia wrote off the debts of African nations to the tune of US \$11.2 billion including US \$3.4 billion in 2002. He went further to say that relieving African nations of their debt burden has become Russia's priority contribution to the development of the continent.

The Challenge to African Leaders

To what extent can the APRM go in making African leaders conform and be responsive to the norms of good governance in order to encourage the international community to wholeheartedly contribute their part financially towards the realization of the goals of NEPAD? In a lecture delivered by the President, Chief Obasanjo, he said thus:

In the pursuit of good governance, we have introduced a unique scheme called the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) whereby we can peer review ourselves. In other words, we can assist, we can pressurize one another, we can learn the best practices from the other, we will set standards that will govern the performance of each nation.

Sound as the above statement may seem, the challenge is on the extent to which African leaders are ready to go to pressurize the leader of an independent state to act in a particular way, considered to be the best in the view of the international community.

The Way Forward

African leaders can bring about good governance on the continent by isolating those recalcitrant leaders who, for reasons best known to them, will not want to conform to the dictates of the African peer review process. However, we must not underestimate the fact that the bad behaviour of one leader in Africa can affect the behaviour of foreign donors towards the financial goals of NEPAD.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper looked at the place of viable leadership in Africa in the realization of the goals of NEPAD. The study identified factors like corruption, authoritarian rule and despotic tendencies on the part of African leaders as possible set-backs that could hinder the goals of NEPAD. When we look at the ideals or initiatives of NEPAD, there is no doubt that the African continent is capable of moving forward. However, when one looks at the challenges of leadership in Africa, we may be tempted to take the position that the majority of African leaders, by their attitude, orientation and disposition, may not allow the goals of NEPAD to be achieved. Should we give up?

African leaders should, as a matter of importance involve the civil society in every area of NEPAD if its goals are to be realized. Leaders will go and other sets of leaders will come, but the people remain. African leaders should be more proactive in the area of putting their fellow leaders in check to avoid misrule and corrupt tendencies. The African populace should not stay aloof from the ideas of NEPAD because at the end of the day the people will actually be the beneficiaries of the goals of NEPAD.