Africa:

FROM THE OAU TO THE AFRICAN UNION*

BY ABDALLA BUJRA

The pan-African movement and the search for continental unity has roots in the 1800s, and now has a new start with the inauguration of the African Union in July 2002. The struggles against racism and colonialism and then to protect the fragile sovereignty of new states were succeeded by the search for national development, regional cooperation and an African economic community. Can the new African Union, now working to get into operation, improve on this record despite the impacts of globalization and structural adjustment? The background and the prospects are assessed by Dr. Abdalla Bujra, who is the Executive Director of the Development Policy Management Forum in Addis Ababa.

INTRODUCTION

A perceptive observer who is well informed about the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and who attended the inaugural meeting of the African Union (AU) in Durban in July 2002 compared the launching of the two organizations as follows:

> "The OAU was founded in an era of militancy and confident optimism: Africans believed that having achieved sovereign independence, the world was at their feet. The leaders of that

era, including Nkrumah, Nasser, Nyerere, Sekou Toure and others, had acquired the status of giants and visionaries. By contrast, the launch of the AU was sober and muted, with little incendiary rhetoric or passion. Critics can point to the weakness of the AU institutions and their inherited arrears. But much of the Summit was businesslike and realistic. Africa has learned much"(Mohammed, 2002).

What accounted for the difference between the two events? The brief

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* This article is based on a lecture delivered by Dr. Abdalla Bujra at the African Centre for Research and Training in Social Development, Tripoli, Libya, on 23 September 2002.

answer is that African countries are worse off economically today than when OAU began in 1963 and are mired in internal conflicts of various intensity. Most African leaders can hardly claim to have control of their economic and political policies and therefore of the destinies of their countries. Africans now understand that the main source of their problem is Africa's position in the asymmetrical and powerful global system. However, many believe that if the AU succeeds, it may ameliorate the enormous difficulties Africa is facing. Hence the businesslike approach and the anxious but muted optimism.

FROM THE PAN-AFRICAN MOVEMENT TO THE OAU

The founding of the OAU was the culmination of a long struggle by the Pan-African movement, which goes back to the 19th century. The movement was essentially born outside the continent,

Du Bois (African-American) and Padmore (Caribbean).

The first Pan-African conference was held in London in 1900, followed by others in Paris and New York. The most significant meeting and the pinnacle of the movement was the fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945 in Manchester, England. It was different from previous meetings in three fundamental ways. A large number of activists attended — over 200 persons from the US, Europe and Africa. For the first time, leading African nationalists took active and prominent parts — such as Kenyatta, and Nkrumah, who was Secretary of the Congress (W.E.B. Du Bois was its Chairman). The Congress stressed "for the first time the necessity for a well-organized, firmly-knit movement as a primary condition for the success of the national liberation struggle in Africa" (Nkrumah). "Pan-Africanism was no longer simply a protest move-

Pan-Africanism became a weapon with which African nationalists could fight colonial rule.

driven by black intellectuals of African descent in the diaspora — in the US, the Caribbean and Europe. At first the movement was essentially a protest of black people against their exploitation, against racism, and for the dignity and uplifting of the black people. The leaders were middle-class intellectuals in the US and the Caribbean, such as W.E.B.

ment by people of African descent in the Caribbean and the United States; it was becoming a weapon with which African nationalists could fight colonial rule" (Lamelle).

The pan-African movement was strengthened when Ghana became the first black African country to gain independence and organized the All-Africa

Conference in Accra in 1959. At that time most African countries were still struggling against colonial rule. For the first time, the Accra meeting brought together on African soil nationalists from all over Africa, with the central theme of solidarity and unity in the struggle against colonialism. According to the late Abdul Rahman Babu, the Accra meeting provided an important psychological, political and practical boost to nationalist movements within the framework of pan-African unity which Nkrumah strongly advocated. It also became apparent to all the nationalist leaders who came to Accra that an African state (as exemplified by the Ghana government's role in organizing the Conference) was key to the struggle against colonialism and towards economic development and political unity after independence.

In 1963, four years after Accra, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was formed in Addis Ababa by African countries (except Southern Africa) which had achieved independence through nationalist struggles driven by Pan-Africanism. The struggle against the remaining colonialism in southern Africa and for continental unity, which until then was a mass movement of people, was taken over by independent states under the auspices of the OAU. Pan-Africanism thus ceased to be a mass movement and was transformed into an ideology driving a state-based continental organization.

EVALUATING THE OAU: FROM ADDIS ABABA 1963 TO SIRTE 2001

What progress, or otherwise, has Africa made since the formation of the OAU in 1963 up to the formation of the AU at Sirte, Libya, in 1999 and its inauguration in Durban, South Africa in 2002?

Prior to the 1963 Addis Ababa founding summit of the OAU, there were passionate debates throughout Africa on two main questions:

- Should full continental political unity be established immediately at OAU's founding, or be achieved gradually through a building-block approach by first strengthening the new states and then establishing sub-regional economic blocs?
- Should development be carried out through social and economic planning driven by the state, or be based on and driven by free and open markets with foreign investment playing a major role?

Around these questions there emerged two ideologically opposed groups of countries — the Casablanca bloc, which stood for development based on social planning, and the Monrovia bloc, favoring market-driven development. The two blocs also had a different approach to external relations — delinking and relinking, as opposed to strengthening inherited colonial links.

After its formation, the OAU went through three main phases of evolution, as follows.

Phase 1: 1963 –1980

The founding OAU Summit adopted the gradual approach of strengthening the new states, but retaining aspirations for continental unity as a driving ideology. By resolving the first issue this way, the OAU denied itself any powers over the sovereignty of the new states and therefore could not impose on its member states which development approach they should adopt. The Casablanca and Monrovia blocs soon dissipated, but several countries adopted the social planning development model — e.g. Egypt, Ghana, Tanzania, and Guinea. These countries soon faced great difficulties from the for-

few interstate conflicts that took place at the time, and with the struggle to eradicate racist and colonial rule in southern Africa. While the first concern involved mediation and some practical action by the OAU, the second concern was mainly conducted through the OAU Liberation Committee, which provided political, diplomatic and some financial support.

Another important principle for OAU during this period was the equality of all member states. This meant that the OAU and all continental African institutions were "driven by the lowest common denominator's approach, to cater for the wishes of the weakest and most undemo-

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The OAU was essentially "a talking club of Heads of State" in the 1970s, but pursued a new agenda after the 1980s and made important contributions to Africa's development.

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mer Western colonial powers and the Americans, who worked hard — by persuasion or covert support of military takeover — to dissuade them from following the "socialist" model of development.

The two most important Charter objectives that drove the OAU from its inception to 1975 were "to protect the fragile sovereignty recently achieved by African states, and to help those still under colonial or racist rule to achieve sovereign independence" (Mohammed, 2002). During this period, economic development was not on the OAU agenda. It was mainly concerned with the

cratic states. Sovereignty has been fetishized" (Mohammed, 2002). In the famous words of the late President Nyerere of Tanzania, the OAU became essentially "a talking club of Heads of State." By organizing the 6th Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam in 1976, with its theme being the liberation of southern Africa, Nyerere tried to revive the Pan-African mass movement and perhaps to strengthen its link with the liberation movements of southern Africa.

There are two main reasons for the OAU's lackluster behavior and being labeled a "talking Club". First, during

the 1970s the fierce Cold War seriously affected African countries. Many were forced to take sides ideologically. Their visions of development became deeply divided among socialist (influenced by the Scandinavian countries), Marxist (influenced by the Soviets), and capitalist (influenced by the American-led West) visions. The Cold War thus affected both their internal model of development and their external relations. In the face of this powerful external force, the OAU became powerless and inactive.

Second, from 1960 to 1975, Africa on the whole was doing well economically. African growth rates were 4.5 per cent in GDP, 2.8 per cent in exports, 1.6 per cent in agriculture, and 6 per cent in manufacturing. "In retrospect, the period 1960-75 has, tragically, turned out to be Africa's golden era!"(Adedeji 2002:.6).

But by the end of the 1970s, Africa was facing serious economic crises. "The strong optimism of 1960s concerning economic development slowly gave way, first to hesitation, then to pessimism, and by the end of the 1970s to a consensus of gloom" (Bujra, 1982: II).

Late in the 70s, Adedeji (1978:25) began making gloomy predictions about Africa's economic prospects — predictions which have proved to be accurate. "Africa, more than the other third world regions, is thus faced with a development crisis of great portent..... If past trends were to persist.........the African region as a whole will be worse off relative to the rest of the world at the end of

this century than it was in 1960". Three years later (1981), the World Bank *Development Report* was making similar predictions, that Africa was facing a "dim economic prospect" in the 1980s — virtually no growth in per capita income if you are an optimist, and a negative rate of growth (-1.0 per cent per year) if you are not. Under these circumstances OAU began taking the economic crisis seriously and generating an agenda on economic development.

Phase 2: OAU, 1980 –1990

The 1980s have been described as the "lost decade." Africa went through serious economic and political crises — negative growth, collapsing economies, civil wars, collapsing states and state structures etc. The international community became very concerned with the "unending crises," leading to what came to be called "Afro-pessimism". Implicit in this was the core idea that the African people — their societies, cultures, mindset and structures — are incapable of running their states and their economies and will therefore remain in a permanent state of crisis, stagnation and negative growth.

Afro-pessimism was born outside Africa and the idea was propagated both outside and inside Africa by those who had a vested interest in Africa remaining weak and disorganized for a long time. Most Africans, however, generally had a different view of these crises, their causes and continuation, and the way out of them.

Many Africans acknowledge that internal factors had contributed to the continuation of the crises, and such factors have been well articulated by Prime Minister Meles Zinawi of Ethiopia. He says:

"The underlying fact is that African states are systems of patronage... Their external relationship is designed to generate funds that oil this network of patronage...Much of the productive activity is mired in a system of irrational licenses and protection that is designed to augment the possibilities of rent collection. Much of the private sector in the continent is an active and central element of this network of patronage...

A large part of the NGO community and civil society organizations constitutes a parallel network of patronage that coincides and diverges from the state network depending on circumstances..... It is this structure which inhibits the establishment of developmental states in Africa that are able to adapt the rational elements of the neoliberal paradigm to their specific circumstances and design others to supplement it."[1]

On the other hand, most Africans identify and place more emphasis on external causes of their crises and the difficulty of overcoming them as follows:

- 1. Colonialism created the basic conditions of the crises — dependent economies, distorted structures, artificial boundaries/countries, divided people, undeveloped human resources and weak, undemocratic state structures.

- 2. The international commodity market and financial system and the dominant role of the Western transnational corporations were, and still are, extremely formidable barriers which weak African governments — individually or collectively — were and are unable to overcome.

- 3. Given these conditions, in which the international system continuously reinforced African countries' economic dependence to maintain their distorted structures and encourage the chaotic political systems inherited from the colonial states, African countries found it very difficult to economically develop, create nation states, and develop their human and natural resources.

- 4. The Bretton Woods institutions and donor countries intervened directly in African economies through structural adjustment programs, ostensibly to help Africans overcome their crises, but such interventions simply perpetuated the unequal and exploitative relationship between Africa and the global system.

According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African governments had three options for facing "the anticipated crises." First, increase "self-reliance and self-sustainment" and take more effective steps for intra-African cooperation and mutual help — steps

requiring "vision and statesmanship quite out of the ordinary". Second, make a "surreptitious surrender of the economy in return for substantial foreign aid, a temptation which might be impossible to resist". Third, "wait and see and hope whilst continuing with conventional measures which avoid creating antagonism" (ECA, 1979-1980:6).

The OAU, in collaboration with ECA, mobilized African intellectual and political discussions of the crises and the above options, and came up with a vision and plan of action for getting Africa out of the crises and towards a better future. This serious effort led to the adoption of three now famous documents, and from 1980 until 1990, all African initiatives from the OAU and ECA accepted the vision, framework, strategies and principles enshrined in these documents:

The Monrovia Declaration (1979) provided a clearly articulated vision and scenario for Africa's future. It saw that the Africa of 2000/2020 would have a high degree of self-sufficiency and a democratic national development, distribute wealth more equitably, have strong African solidarity, and carry more weight in world affairs (OAU, 1979:30).

The Lagos Plan of Action (1980) provided the practical framework and strategies for implementing development programs. Its strategies are based on some important principles, which it considered will lead to an alternative form of development and will take Africa out of its crises. These principles are:

- 1. Self reliance should be the basis of development — at national, sub-regional and regional levels
- 2. Equity in the distribution of wealth at the national level is a fundamental objective of development
- 3. The public sector is essential for development and should be expanded
- 4. Outside capital is an unavoidable necessity and should be directed to areas where African capital is lacking or inadequate — such as mining, energy and large-scale projects
- 5. Inter-African economic cooperation and integration is essential and should be effected as soon as possible
- 6. Change in the international economic order to favor Africa and third-world countries is essential, and Africa should continue to fight for a New International Economic Order.

On the basis of these principles, the LPA gave primacy to the development of agriculture, first for food and then for export; industrialization, to satisfy basic needs; mining industries, to recover total and permanent sovereignty over national resources; human resources; and science and technology.

The Final Act of Lagos (1980), containing political decisions to support the vision and the plan of action, including the aim of achieving an African Common Market by the year 2000. Ten years

later it was transformed into the **Abuja Treaty (1991)** establishing the African Economic Community. The Treaty affirmed the principles enshrined in the LPA and laid down a detailed process for achieving the Community in successive stages over 34 years.

In addition, during the 1980s, three other important African development programs were adopted: 1) Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, 1986-1990, adopted at Addis Ababa in1985; 2) the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Transformation (AAF-SAP), adopted at Addis Ababa in 1989; and 3) The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Trans-formation, adopted at Arusha, 1990. The AAF-SAP was strongly opposed and often roundly condemned by experts of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as well as in the donor community. Despite efforts to popularize AAF-SAP and strong support by African govern-ments and intellectuals, the AAF-SAP was marginalized and eventually followed the fate of previous African initiatives.

The 1980s saw vigorous formal inter-ventions by Western powers in the eco-nomic strategies and policies of African countries. These interventions took place through the World Bank and IMF, with donors using aid and debt as instruments of leverage. The keynote for these efforts was the World Bank's Berg Report (1981). It aimed to give an intellectual basis for World Bank intervention in the form of what became known as structural adjustment programs (SAPs), ostensibly in order to take African economies out of crises and lead them to accelerated devel-opment. There are several contradictions and shortcomings in the Berg Report compared to the Lagos Plan of Action (Bujra, 1982). The report does not address most of the crucial development issues which the LPA spelled out in detail. It gives scant and peripheral attention to industrialization and control and use of mineral resources, and never mentions economic cooperation and integration — all issues of central concern in the LPA. While the report advocates increased investment (foreign and local) and a reduction in the public sector, the LPA advocates *expansion* of the public sector.

Despite these shortcomings of the Berg Report, the World Bank/IMF began in earnest to implement their Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in African countries immediately after the Berg Report. Both government officials and African researchers have informed the World Bank and IMF in no uncertain terms of the inappropriate assumptions behind the SAPs and of the negative impact of SAPs on African countries. In 1987 and 1988, the Economic Develop-ment Institute of the World Bank orga-nized five senior policy seminars on struc-tural adjustment in Africa, which drew participants from 27 countries. Partici-pants were ministers, governors, perma-nent secretaries, senior advisors and a sig-nificant number of senior technical staff

of central banks and the core ministries of finance and planning, as well as spending ministries such as agriculture and industry. The strong and critical voice of the participants was expressed in very polite and diplomatic World Bank language in one of its reports (World Bank, 1989):

- 1. Most participants perceived adjustment programs as imposed from outside.

- 2. Adjustment must be seen in a broader context as involving medium and longer -term policies in addition to immediate (stabilization) measures.

- 3. Basic social services must be protected.

- 4. Current adjustment programs have yet to successfully reconcile demand management with supply-enhancing measures.

- 5. Promotion of sub-regional or regional trade and coordination of development plans — a main objective of the LPA — have not received the attention they deserve.

- 6. Significant social costs are associated with adjustment.

- 7. To be sustainable, an adjustment program must be nationally designed and /or designed to fit local conditions.

- 8. For many reasons — including the weak bargaining positions of African governments and their lack of indigenous capacity for policy formulation — international organizations currently set the agenda

for policy reforms. This had a number of unfortunate consequences.

- 9. A long-term strategy based on export-led growth and the liberalization of foreign trade has few adherents.

- 10. The current African crises, to a considerable degree, have their origins in the international economic environment.

- 11. Negotiations can be better handled to reduce the tension between conditionality and national sovereignty.

- 12. Multilateral institutions should accept greater responsibility for failed programs.

Despite the above critique, SAPs have continued to be implemented, with slight technical modifications here and there. The serious and negative impacts of the SAPs are now well known. The most important formal response to the SAPs was the ECA's African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme (AAF-SAP) in 1989. Among the many sharp and serious critiques of SAPs from African intellectuals is the book "*Our Continent, Our Future*", edited by Thandika Mkandawire (1999).

In 1989, a World Bank report, "Long-term Perspective Studies (LTPS)", proposed a global coalition of donors and Africans to effectively direct the intellectual framework and strategies of long-term development in Africa. The Global Coalition for Africa was thus established as an organization and is still operating

today. In the 1990s, the international community began to intensify its coordination at many levels — but without the participation of Africans. Its strategies and policies with regard to loans, debt, aid, trade, technical assistance, etc. became increasingly standardized. Its members individually all put forward the same conditionalities which they insisted

gotiated every several years, which guided the unequal trade relations between African and EU countries. More recently the Americans came with their own programme — the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). And the British and French (the two largest and most powerful former colonial powers) recently decided to synchronize and coor-

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African governments should accept — conditionalities which turned out to be those of SAPs (revised and elaborated), as well as the political conditionality of good governance. The latter conditionality was also adopted by the UN System as a whole, particularly by the UNDP.

By the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, perspectives and strategies coming from external sources had become the dominant, if not the only, director of development policies and programs in almost all African countries. Indeed, the practical power of the World Bank/IMF and the donor community (collectively often referred to as the international community) to intervene and direct detailed plans, programs and actual decision-making of African governments had become established and accepted in government circles.

At the more formal level of treaties, the EU continued with its Lome (now Cotonou) Conventions, renewed/rene-

dinate their African policies through annual/biannual joint meetings of their ambassadors in Africa.

In 2000, the World Bank, in association with its partners, came up with yet another document, titled *Can Africa Reclaim the 21st Century?* This book articulates long-term African development strategies from the perspective of the Bank and the rest of the donor community, aiming to provide intellectual inspiration to African policy-makers. The book also provided intellectual inspiration and development strategies for the latest African development initiative called the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), according to CODESRIA (2002).

Phase 3: OAU, 1990 to 2002

Fundamentally different internal and external visions for African development have existed since the early years of independence. The present dominance of the

external vision simply reflects the realities of the weakness of Africa and the strength of the externals — the Western powers who drive the asymmetrical global system. Despite this Western dominance, OAU continued to enact important plans and programs in the 1980s and 1990s, but these had no effect on improving the economic situation of Africa.

problems internally and in their relations with the OAU, and now with the African Union.

■ 2. The creation within OAU of the Mechanism for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts (1990) was an important move, though it may not have the capacity to resolve, let alone pre-

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The present dominance of the external vision for African development simply reflects the weakness of Africa and the strength of the Western powers which drive the asymmetrical global system.

Indeed, according to Dr. Salim A. Salim, the former OAU Secretary General (1989-2001), OAU had to change direction after the Lost Decade of the 1980s, and because of "the imperative necessity to cope with the fundamental changes taking place in the world and the end of the Cold War, as well as the emergence of the process of globalization with its various opportunities and threats" (Salim, 2001:6). By pursuing a new agenda, OAU is said to have made important contributions to Africa's development. There are six areas where OAU is said to have succeeded:

■ 1. The Abuja Treaty (1990) is a road map for achieving the African Economic Community (AEC) through the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Some progress has been made by RECs, but they still face serious

vent, conflicts in the continent. The most horrendous event of the 1990s in Africa was the Rwanda genocide of 1994, which OAU courageously tried but failed to deal with through the Arusha process of negotiations. After the genocide, OAU did not even discuss its own report on how to stop such events in future.

■ 3. Inculcation of a culture of democracy, by withholding recognition of undemocratic changes of government and by monitoring elections. Both are important steps, but Western powers value the judgment of their own monitors more than OAU's (for example, in Zimbabwe). In the Madagascar case, the US and the European Union recognized a government which OAU considered illegitimate and

refused to recognize.

- 4. Enhancing the status of OAU continentally and internationally, compared to the 1970s and 1980s. But it is not clear what practical benefits this enhanced status can bring to African countries and people. As a result, can OAU marshal resources to resolve conflicts, or ask the World Bank to change its intervention in African countries?

- 5. Breaking the silence on HIV/AIDS and making governments develop programs to cope with this pandemic. In this important and very positive initiative, as with the situation of African refugees, most of the work is done by external agencies independent of the OAU.

- 6. Initiating the African Union process, from Sirte in 1999 to Durban in 2002.

These are important achievements made by an organization which had descended to the level of being called a "a talking club." Despite systemic constraints in the OAU, it can be said to have made a reasonable contribution to Africa's development.

At the closing of the 1990s and Dr. Salim's third term as Secretary General, three major African initiatives occupied the OAU, in addition to the process of establishing the AU: 1) The Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) was incorporated into the OAU as a special

programme (2000); 2) the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was also taken up as a special programme of the OAU/AU in Lusaka, 2001; and 3) methods for OAU to cooperate and work with civil society organizations were developed by two major conferences in 2000 and 2001.

In a sense OAU left a full plate for the African Union — significant issues which, if positively and creatively handled, could propel the African Union into a powerful continental organization.

Why is Africa worse off now than when the OAU was founded? The simple answer is that the resolutions and programs adopted by the OAU were not implemented at the country level. But this begs the question: Why did heads of state sign up to radical development approaches at the OAU level, but fail to implement these approaches at the national level? Some brief explanations:

- 1. During the first 15 years of independence, former colonial powers had a strong presence and direct influence in African countries — technical personnel, aid, and strong political links between the former colonial governments and the African political leadership.

- 2. In the 1960s, African economies were doing well and generally had healthy foreign currency reserves. The emerging African business class was accumulating wealth by using state institutions and favored continuity of policies recom-

mended by colonial advisors and no radical change in the economic structure. When some governments (e.g. Tanzania) tried to change the existing economic structure through nationalization and diversifying external economic links, there was immediate strong media attack, diplomatic isolation, and economic pressure to stop such a "move to the left" — moves which disrupted the economy. This happened in Tanzania, Guinea-Conakry, Ghana (under Nkrumah), Congo-Kinshasa (under Lumumba), Benin, Somalia, Uganda (under Obote I) etc.

■ 3. The second half of the 1970s saw economic crises intensifying all over the continent. There were serious rumblings among the populations and especially the military, which took power in many countries and led to worsening of the economic and political crises in those countries. The OAU therefore began to take up economic development as part of its mandate, and UNECA began to be more active. All this took place in the context of a strong debate in all African countries regarding alternative paths to development. OAU resolutions and programs on development absorbed ideas from this debate, which tended to reinforce the strong continental nationalism at the root of the

OAU's very existence.

■ 4. Political leaders found it easier to accept such alternative approaches to development because they saw on the ground in their countries the drawback of the approach inherited from the colonial powers.

■ 5. Yet at country levels, most political leaders found it extremely difficult to debunk or reject existing economic policies. This is because (a) the cost of disruption would be too great; (b) the emerging indigenous economic elite within the political and administrative structure was very strong and favored continuity of existing policies, including shortages and other economic difficulties from which some groups among the elite gained economically; and (c) the power and influence of the "externals" for continuity was also very strong, because they could threaten to disrupt national economies and could ally themselves with the local groups which wanted continuity. Hence it was easier for heads of state to continue inherited economic policies and strategies at the country level, while at the same time approving radical and alternative economic strategies and policies at the OAU level. Schizophrenia between their countries and the OAU became a standard political behavior of political leaders.

■ 6. Given this situation, the more

crises deepened in African countries and the more countries became indebted, the easier it was for the externals to ensure that traditional economic strategies and policies continued and expanded. Indeed, as African countries weakened, the externals had a unique opportunity to intervene strongly at the country level, essentially to direct country economic strategies and policies and

are driving globalization. Since NEPAD has dropped these principles, it is not surprising that the G8 countries have welcomed NEPAD with open arms and given it moral support.

- 8. Finally, and needless to say, the African people, and indeed even the people of the so-called international community, are nowhere to be seen in this struggle for the development soul of the African continent.

Schizophrenia between their countries and the OAU became a standard political behavior of African political leaders.

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often literally to manage and administer key economic institutions. This happened during the 1980s, and some would say continues to the present — at least in many smaller countries.

- 7. There is a fundamental difference between all previous African initiatives (especially since Monrovia, 1979) and the NEPAD of 2001-2002. They all had at their core the LPA principles, which are absent in NEPAD. From the perspective of the WB/IMF and donor community, these principles obviously make African initiatives radical, ideological and leftist. Following these principles would make African economies difficult to exploit and bring under the hegemony of the countries which

It is argued that the AU will be different from OAU because African leaders are now more committed to exploit the global system through effective, concerted action — mainly through the AU's NEPAD Program. Also, because the AU will involve civil society in its decision-making and operations, it will be stronger and enable Africans to negotiate more effectively with external institutions such as the WTO, Cotonou, AGOA etc. However, to reduce the power of the "international community" at the country level and those driving globalization at the global level, it is necessary to have an effective and clean developmental slate, which might come about through NEPAD, and also to have a strong and capable AU that transcends OAU's weaknesses through the collective will of all member states.

THE AFRICAN UNION: PROSPECTS AND CONSTRAINTS

The creation of the African Union in Sirte (Libya) in 1999, the adoption of its Constitutive Act in Lome, July 2000, and its inauguration in Durban, July 2002, were important milestones in the process of creating political continental unity and the African Economic Community.

by like-minded strong states which felt threatened either by Communists or by secessionism. They therefore focused on security and stability in order to eliminate armed conflicts between member states and to promote economic policies based on capitalist economies. African countries are not being threatened from outside nor do they have industrial

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The creation of the African Union in 2002 was a major achievement of African leaders and a triumph for Pan-Africanism.

It was a major achievement of African leaders and a triumph for Pan-Africanism. The AU is expected to be a much stronger organization than the OAU. Among its new principles are the right of the Union to intervene in a member state, respect for democratic principles, human rights and good governance, and promotion of social justice and gender equality. Its development focus is similar to that of the LPA.

The AU has been described as an "aspirational union." Unlike the EU or ASEAN, it does not have solid common factors or forces on which to build. Both the EU and ASEAN were created during the cold war in the face of outside threats to their security. This is not the case with Africa. The EU members were highly industrialized and their industrialists wanted a larger and expanded market. Furthermore, the EU was driven by a few powerful core countries — France and Germany. The ASEAN was formed

economies which need larger markets. Their economies are essentially all similar — exporting raw material. Unlike the ASEAN countries, they do not have a strong entrepreneurial class capable of strong open competition. While the EU and ASEAN started with a small number of countries, with the possibility of others joining them, the African Union started with all African countries as members. Thus, the most important driving force of the AU is the aspiration of people and their leaders for a common identity and unification.

The AU process has been very fast. It was consummated within three short years — from Sirte in 1999 to Durban in July 2002. The OAU had one year to prepare for the "transition" from the OAU to the AU, and the AU Commission has a one-year "interim" period to set up the core organs of the AU and to develop its program. The AU faces very serious, immediate challenges to obtain appropri-

ate human resources for a solid, efficient Commission with the professional and intellectual capacity to prepare, manage and implement relevant programs, and to secure the financial resources required to establish and operationalize its various organs. It is not clear how and where these resources can urgently be obtained, so that AU can start on a better footing than the OAU.

The longer term issues are even more complex and numerous and include the following:

■ 1. Relationship between the AU and the RECs is key to any move in economic cooperation and eventual economic integration. The role of the RECs must be clarified, internal cohesion established, and the relationships among the RECs and between them and the AU must be thought through and properly established.

■ 3. Relationship between the different organs of the AU is not clear — especially between people's organs — Pan-African Parliament (PAP), Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ESCC), Court of Justice on the one hand, and the state-dominated organs — the Assembly, the Executive Council, and the Permanent Representative Committee.

■ 4. Relationship at the decision-making and operational level between the Commission, Executive Council and Permanent Representative Committee will be crucial and needs full clarification lest the Union become ineffective and often paralyzed.

■ 5. While all members of the Union have equal status and rights, it is obvious that they are not equal. The larger and more

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The most important driving force of the African Union is the aspiration of people and their leaders for a common identity and unification.

■ 2. Relationship between NEPAD and CSSDCA must be ironed out, especially over the issue of peace, stability and conflict resolution. The vital issue of how these two important intergovernmental organizations will work within the AU, since each has established its own Secretariat and organizational structure.

powerful countries would eventually want to establish some form of hegemony and play leading roles in various spheres. How will this work out in the Union?

■ 6. The NEPAD program, once it begins to be operational, will inevitably create hierarchy amongst countries — fast and slow-track countries — based on

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their performance in the Peer Review mechanism. What will be the implications of such hierarchy?

Much will depend on the speed, quality and operation of the organs established by the Interim Commission. Much will also depend on the reaction of the Union Assembly to the Commission's work and to the speed with which they establish functioning people's organs — the PAP, the ESCC, the Court of Justice — and how effective the people's role will be. At this point we are at the level of speculation and expectation. ☙

NOTES

[1] "Prime Minister Meles Zinawi's Speech at NePAD Symposium." 27 May 2002, Addis Ababa. Published in *The Ethiopian Herald*, Addis Ababa, 2nd June 2002.

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