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## Nigeria's Strategic Roles in the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)

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### Abstract

The phrase, "Nigeria as the giant of Africa", has been known by many nations because of the leading roles she plays in policy-makings and their implementations. Also, these leading roles are prevalent in her military prowess, landscape, natural and human resources and natural endowment. The larger world as well as other African nations have in contemporary time looked up to Nigeria as the "Saviour" of African race given the enormity of the resources that mother nature had endowed her with in comparison to other African states. Sequel to the above, Nigeria has also played significant roles in the establishment of some agencies such as Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU) among others. This same philosophy informed her strategic roles aimed at establishing and realizing the objectives of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). To this end, the thrust of this paper revolves around the enormous challenges, challenges and prospects of this African project called NEPAD.

### Introduction

The phrase, "Nigeria, the Giant of Africa", has been so used by Nigerians, especially our leaders, that people of critical mind sometimes wonder what has been the basis for this judgment. In other words, analysts and scholars from time to time have attempted to look at Nigeria's claim to leadership in Africa from various perspectives. The most popular and noticeable reasons for these include Nigeria's population, military strength, land mass, natural and mineral resources, etc within the African continent. What this paper seeks to do essentially, therefore, is an appraisal of what contributions Nigeria has made in realizing the aims and objectives articulated in the

Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

### Nigeria's Leadership Role in Perspective

Nigeria's leadership role in Africa became manifest early in her independent years. This was evident in the resolve of the government of Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first Prime Minister, to do all within her powers to ensure complete decolonisation of Africa. This determination was given expression and pursued under two principles articulated in the "Balewa Doctrine" as stated in Akindele and Ate (2000):

The promotion of unity as well as the total political, economic, social and culture liberation of our country and Africa. The promotion of the rights of black people and others under colonial domination.

Sule Lamido in Akindele and Ate (2000) had reasons to believe that:

These fundamental objectives of our foreign policy have remained largely unchanged since independence and have been pursued by successive administrations with varying degrees of emphasis and focus.

For this perspective, therefore, Nigeria's leadership role in Africa can be analyzed from three points of views: within the context of ECOWAS, O.A.U. and the U.N. or the multi-lateral sphere. Nigeria played a leading role in the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 and has remained consistent; a source of inspiration and a rallying point for countries within the community. Nigeria has played very predominant and fundamental roles in salvaging ECOWAS in the last decade especially in the resolution of the civil war that rocked Liberia and Sierra-Leone through the efforts of Nigeria's inspired establishment of a military monitoring group (ECOMOG). Nigeria also played leadership role in the series of consultations that eventually led to the formation of the Organisation of Africa Unity (O.A.U) in 1963 and has also remained consistent in this capacity over the years. Especially its enormous contributions to the successful de-



colonization of Africa and the eventual eradication of apartheid regimes in Southern Africa readily comes to mind. (Shinkaiye 2004).

Nigeria, along with other leading African states such as South Africa, Libya, Egypt, etc, launched the formal birth of the African Union in July, 2002. The African Union is a replacement of the thirty-nine years old O.A.U., which is thought to have become incapable of handling the desires and aspirations of African states in the 21st century. Since Nigeria joined the United Nations Organisation as its 99th member in 1960, she has continued to provide leadership role among African-group in the Organisation.

### **NEPAD: Origin and Evolution**

The New Partnership for Africa's Development, otherwise known as NEPAD, is a product of the series of initiatives of some African Heads of States. One of these initiatives was promoted by President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal under the auspices of Omega Plan for Africa. The main thrust of Wade's Omega plan was the need for massive infrastructural development of Africa, with funds to be sourced from the Western capitalist nations (Akinsanya, 2004). While The Millennium African Plan (MAP) of NEPAD was sponsored by President Bouteflika of Algeria and the former presidents of South African and Nigeria in the personalities of Thabo Mbeki, and Olusegun Obasanjo respectively. As a result of the similarity in objectives and the need to avoid duplication of efforts and resources, these initiatives were later harmonized by African leaders at the July 2001 Organisation of African Union (O.A.U.) summit in Lusaka-Zambia. This harmonized version became known as the New African Initiative (NAI) (Eyinla, 2004).

Finally, the New African Initiative evolved into an all embracing blue print for Africa's development known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and was launched on the 23rd October, 2001 in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja. Perhaps it may not be out of place to remind ourselves that other development initiatives, both at the national and continental levels such as Nigeria's Vision 2010 and Africa's Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), have

existed as preludes to the current plan (NEPAD) (Akinsanya, 2004).

One of the distinguishing features of NEPAD is the emphasis on African ownership, integrated development and partnership with developed countries in other parts of the globe. NEPAD is basically an African led strategy for sustainable development and poverty reduction in Africa. It recognizes Africa's responsibility to create conditions for development by ending conflict, improving economic and political governance and strengthening regional integration (Olaniyan, 2004). Understandably, most institutions, like the IMF, World Bank, European Union to mention a few, have placed a lot of emphasis on good governance, financial discipline, respect for human rights and provision for conducive atmosphere for living and learning. Olaniyan opines that NEPAD is premised on the principles of good governance as a basic requirement for peace, security and sustainable political and socio-economic development. The underlying truth here is that there can never be any meaningful development in the absence of peace or in the midst of anarchy and war.

This situation is best understood in Eyinla (2004) when he cited the Economist more than anything, Africa's people need to regain their self confidence. Only these can Africa engage as an equal with the rest of the world devising its own economic programmes and development policies. Its people also need the confidence to trust each other. One fundamental flaw in African development has been that of leadership. This part of the NEPAD agenda believes that:

The resources including capital, technology and human skills that are required to launch a global war on poverty and underdevelopment exist in abundance are within our grasp. What is required to mobilize these resources and to use them properly is bold, and imaginative leadership.

The African initiative is supported by the European Union because the initiative is based on the objectives of democracy, transform good governance and human rights. Eyinla argues that NEPAD should not be used as Africa's begging bowl by adopting

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various fashionably and political correct spin to appeal to a fatigued donor community. Although African leaders themselves seem to think otherwise because they believe that:

In this regard, we are not asking for favours, but for fairness and justice, a better life for Africans and secure future for humanity. This programme is premised on African ownership, African control of the projects and programmes, with African leaders accepting openly and unequivocally that they will play their part in ending poverty and bringing about sustainable development (Africa Forum 2003).

**Aims and Objectives of NEPAD**

As is traditional with programmes of this nature, statements articulating aims and objectives, both long-term and short-term, are always in abundant supply. Whether these aims and objectives are later realized however depends on availability of resources and the kind of determination of the promoters of such programmes. The aims and objectives drawn up by African leaders who are the main promoters of the programmes are all embracing, covering almost all areas of problems, needs and general aspirations of the African continent. However, the long term objectives of NEPAD as contained in public enlightenment series published by the Justice, Development and Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Ijebu Ode are:-

1. to eradicate poverty in Africa and to place African countries both individually and collectively on a path of sustainable growth and development, and thus halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process and
  2. promote the role of women in all activities.
- Specific goals of the programme, which are many, include the followings:
1. achieve and sustain an average percent (7%) per annum for the next 15 years.
  2. ensure the continent achieves the agreed International

Development Goals (I.D.G) as thus:-

- i. Reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.
- ii. Enrolment of all children of school age in primary school by 2015.
- iii. Making progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women.
- iv. Reducing infant mortality ratio by two third (2/3) by 2015.
- v. Reducing maternal mortality ratio by two third (2/3) in 2015.
- vi. Providing access for all who need reproductive health services by 2015.
- vii. Implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2015 so as to reverse the loss of environmental degradation and pollution (Okpeh Jnr, 2005).

Indeed, the lists of what Africa hopes to achieve on the platform of NEPAD are endless. Essentially, therefore, NEPAD is another expression of the spirit of the new African self-appreciation, a statement of African aspirations as well as objectives and needs. To prove their determination to make NEPAD work, African leaders have, therefore, pledged to work both individually and collectively to promote principles and causes of peace, security, democracy and good governance throughout Africa. By all standards, NEPAD, as a programme, has very laudable aims and objectives for Africa.

The new regime of globalized capitalism, in the view of Magbadelo, has compelled countries of the world, particularly African countries, to begin to deregulate and liberalise their economies. Thus, NEPAD is an attestation to the discovery of an institutional machinery which would give fillip to the development quest of Africa. It is against this backdrop that he also asserts that the NEPAD framework focuses on the need to bring about necessary social, economic and political changes in the continent, thereby emphasizing the need to build new partnership between African peoples and developed countries of the world especially the G8, as well as in the South (Mogbadelo, 2005).

### Nigeria's Strategies in Achieving NEPAD Objectives

Nigerian leaders over the years have not fundamentally deviated from Balewa's definitive criterion of determining Nigeria's leadership role in Africa. Sir Tafawa Balewa declared as quoted by Akindele and Ate (2000).

If we conduct ourselves well and if we appear well meaning to the countries of Africa, there is reason why they should not give us our recognized position by virtue of our size and population...

Given the position of Nigeria as the most populous black nation in the world with one in every ten blacks in the world, it becomes imperative not only from the point of view of Nigerians but also Africa and the entire world that Nigeria has important roles to play in actualizing African dreams. By and large, Nigeria could be said to have justified this confidence over the years, considering her leading role as already mentioned within the context of ECOWA, OAU and the United Nations Organisation (the U.N). It is, therefore, against this background that we are convinced that Nigeria can creditably play the following strategic roles in order that the aims and objectives of NEPAD be realized. They include:

#### a. Economic Role

The economy is the life wire of nations and this applies also to programmes such as NEPAD. In order to realize NEPAD objectives, Nigeria's economic resources can meaningfully contribute to the funding of NEPAD budget which even at this initial stage already stands at over sixty-four (\$64 ) billion United States Dollars. Nigeria can do this by financing development programmes or projects in African countries NEPAD.

To allay fears of the effect of this measure on Nigeria's domestic economy, funds for such development would have to be sourced from the Nigeria Trust Fund (NTF) presently managed by African Development Bank (ADB). In this wise, it is commendable that Nigeria has, according to Akindele and Ate (2000), "financed

development projects in 17 sub-Saharam African states with a total value of \$240.764 million Dollars as at December 1990". In other words, all that Nigeria needs to do now is to intensify her efforts in this direction having already made an appreciable beginning.

Closely related to the above is the need for Nigeria to impress it upon the newly formed African Union to establish African Development Endowment Fund where money can be drawn for specific development programmes in African States. Member countries can benefit from the fund which should be in phases and should be tied to specific projects in the benefiting countries in order to prevent diversion and misapplication of funds. According to Köhler, one major economic step Africa should take is to diversify its inputs in the global economy.

#### b. Psychological Motivation Role

Acting as a role model is perhaps the best and the most important single role that Nigeria has to play in order for Africa to achieve NEPAD objectives. This role will demand Nigeria sensitizing, encouraging, mobilizing and leading other African states in working and conducting state affairs in such a way that the realization of her objectives will be guaranteed. In other words, it has to be leadership by example for Nigeria as a role model for other African states. The necessity for this is underscored by the wave of military coup de tats that swept across Africa in the 1960s following the 1966 military coup in Nigeria. In this wise, Nigeria should openly demonstrate her value for principle of good governance, honesty and transparency in leadership, value for peace, justice, tolerance and security for the citizenry since absence of all these factors implies that meaningful development cannot take place.

#### Political Will

To realize the aims and objectives of NEPAD, Nigeria has to lead other African states in resolute demonstration of the political will to succeed. In other words, it is necessary that Nigeria shows her commitment to convince all other stake holders to be committed by

fulfilling their tasks and playing their individual and collective roles. In this wise; the present situation whereby African leaders, the main promoters of NEPAD, seem to be hanging on making promises to promote peace, security, democracy and good governance, instead of translating those pledges into action, African leaders have to demonstrate the political will to succeed in the objectives of NEPAD.

African states also need political incentives in order to foster regional cooperation. In the opinion of Kuhne, Africa is going through a dramatic shift of paradigms with regards to its internal politics as well as its international relations. Marginalisation, he argues, has been Africa's fear of having been economically and politically forgotten by the world. It has also been analysed that the current practice of democracy is inimical to the process of governance and expected economic gains that may be devoured therefrom. The numerous problems include elite conflict, lack of accountability among elected political elite, elite capture and corruption of democratic institutions, inadequate focus on the rejuvenation of economies and the prevalence of low intensity conflict (Oche 2005).

#### d. Diplomacy

By diplomacy, we imply the tact, skill and the shrewdness with which one is able to conduct negotiations for certain values or objectives with other parties. Diplomacy has become the main instrument with which the business of modern international relations is transacted. The success of NEPAD demands that Nigeria, both as a stakeholder and a leading nation in Africa has to be the vanguard of the diplomatic campaign to solicit the point of view or understanding and assistance of rich developed nations of the World. This is imperative because promoters of NEPAD have already hinged the success of the project on finances from donor nations.

Other groups that Nigeria's diplomatic showcase in NEPAD should aim at attracting are the powerful Black Caucus in America and the non-African members of the G77 such as India, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc. Nigeria should also articulate the NEPAD's case on

platform of United Nation Organisation (UNO) in soliciting for funds and other forms of assistance. All these will demand a lot of resources and efforts on the part of Nigeria.

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that the success of NEPAD, given Nigeria's envisaged strategic roles demands that Nigeria's foreign policy articulations ever than before have to go beyond Afrocentric sentiments to a dynamic global outlook. However, it should be understood that Nigeria alone cannot make the NEPAD project a success no matter the amount of her contributions in materials, ideas and otherwise. Rather its success depends largely on the determination of Africans, both leaders and followers to make it succeed.

#### Critics and Criticism of NEPAD

While the protagonists of NEPAD are hailing the brains behind the project, its critics are increasing daily. NEPAD has been roundly criticized by academics, diplomats and public policy commentators. In the opinion of a group of experts on African Development expressed in the July edition of *Africa Today*, NEPAD is simply "long on promises but short on specifics". In other words, it is implied that the NEPAD project has promised to do so many things without specifically articulating in realistic and objective sense how such things will be done in sequential order.

NEPAD is selling out the continent under the rubric of a plan drafted by the same technocrats who wrote Pretoria's Failed Growth Economic and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) under the guidance of Washington and the corporate leaders of Davos. NEPAD is Top-down, non-consultative and so prone to neo-liberal mistakes that it must be tossed out and a new programme started from the scratch.

Other critics in this category contend that, by being non-consultative, the NEPAD project has been denied veritable inputs and products of mental rigours of world class African scholars that abound in Africa and other parts of the world. Another failure in this regard, according to critics, is that by being non-consultative, the private sector which cannot be avoided if meaningful growth is to be



achieved has been completely by-passed and excluded from the development process of Africa. This flaw, they concluded, invariably reduced the NEPAD plan to nothing. In the opinion of Chris Simpson in BBC Focus on AFRICA of July 2002, "It is being sold as a Marshall Plan for Africa, aiming to attract foreign investment while emphasizing that this is an African solution to Africa's problem."

NEPAD's architects, according to Simpson, want to see a growth rate of seven percent across Africa but accepts that "about a billion dollars will be required to make that happen". The question that skeptics are asking however is, "where will the money come from"? Put the other way, while the initiators of the Marshall Plan in America, conceived and executed the programme as her recovery efforts for the battered economy of Western Europe after the Second World War; Africa, on the other hand, is depending on donor funds for NEPAD. Other groups of critics hold that the plan "does nothing to challenge the economic dominance of the Northern Hemisphere, nor accepts the prescriptions of the World Bank and IMF without questions".

These critics argued that while African leaders were in Abuja congratulating themselves on having finally come to terms with the problems of Africa, their pledge to enhance peace, security and good governance were already being put to test in Sierra-Leone, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and many other strife-ridden spots in Africa. Criticisms against NEPAD are innumerable. In the face of all these, NEPAD promoters believe that they will succeed in achieving their set objectives. In this regard, President Obasanjo has declared unequivocally, "within and outside Africa we must put the Afro-pessimists and other cynics to shame".

### NEPAD's Prospects: Views of this Paper

From all indications, those who put the NEPAD project together mean well for Africa and Africans, so also do their critics. All that needs to be done in the opinion of this paper, however, is to subject Africans to a little bit of mental exercise and historical antecedents as to be better placed to forecast a realistic prospect for NEPAD.

However, thought provoking questions should be asked. What has happened to other programmes similar to NEPAD such as the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) of the 80s and 90s? Does it not amount to a paradox for African leaders to depend on western donor nations to foot NEPAD bill and yet expressed the desire for self reliance?

The meaning of Democracy for African leaders should be understood as this would help facilitate development. Democracy is not an end but a means to an end. The end includes good governance, peace, security and general development. To these ends, including sound economic management, remain "scarce commodities" in Africa. This is precisely why Tony Blair, the British prime minister, declared in the "New-Africa" of March, 2002 that: "While the world overall has become more prosperous over the last 30 years, the average income per head in Africa has fallen. Nearly half of the 600 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than \$100 a day." Tony Blair went further to say that in every three seconds an African child dies while two hundred million Africans have no access to health services. It is also Blair's opinion that corruption is very rampant in Africa, while over 20 million souls were lost to the AIDS scourge in the last two decades, over eight million people have died as a result of civil wars.

### Inconsistency

African leaders appear to be running from pillar to post in their efforts to find solutions to problems of Africa. From structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s to globalization. Again, in all ramifications, African leaders do not seem to have grappled with the real meaning or the ulterior motive of globalization. In other words, if SAP had devastated the economy of many African states in the past, globalization will certainly exterminate not only some economies but even some states will be made extinct. Speaking in this vein, Sam Aluko opined that globalization: "seeks to encompass all countries into one economic unit, possibly without Governments or bodies. That is, while internationalization aims at improving relationship between and among nation states, globalization seeks to undermine

the very concept of nation states" (Aluko, 2001).

African leaders have failed to understand that joining the globalization process invariably means heading to the slaughter house of global capitalism. The prospect or the future of NEPAD therefore depends largely on whether or not its promoters and African leaders come to terms with all these factors already identified. Until then NEPAD may remain, like other programmes in the past, a good idea but badly executed. In the opinion of Ake in Asante (1991):

We are never going to understand the current crisis in Africa much less contain it as long as we continue to think of it as an economic crisis. What is before us now is primarily a political crisis, its economic consequences are serious as we all know too well but they are nonetheless incidental. Not only is the crisis essentially political in character, it is also political in its origin.

Against this background, this paper makes bold to suggest some certain measures which though are not an end to the problem but may however assist in solving some of the bottlenecks.

### **Corruption**

This is a serious social malaise that has ravaged Africa and robbed and still robs, it of development. Billions of dollars have been stolen and stashed away in foreign banks by some leaders. African leaders must be able to tackle the monster of corruption if the continent is to develop.

### **Good Governance**

It entails health for the people, employment, peace, security, justice etc and all those attributes without which development will become elusive. Therefore, African leaders should pay more attention in this regard.

### **Looking Inward and African Common Market**

The present situation where African leaders go cap in hand to donor nations to do almost everything for them should be discarded. African leaders must begin to look inward and begin to find African solutions to African problems. The need for African common market may help

boost the economy of member states.

### **Technology and Political Will:**

Without the relevant technology, the African quest for development will continue to remain a dream. Consequently, the continent should begin to harness indigenous technology from the rudimentary level. A sustainable system of electing government can give political leaders the confidence to introduce people centred initiatives that will embrace every strata of the society.

### **Conclusion**

The paper argued that, despite all criticisms against NEPAD, some good can still come out of it, depending on the level of commitment of African leaders who are the main promoters of the NEPAD initiatives. Finally, African leaders, our leaders, should bear it in mind that the presence of honesty, tolerance, transparency, determination and sustainable doggedness on their part may likely increase the chances of actualizing the primary objective of NEPAD-which is development.

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