Africa from the OAU to the AU.
and from the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) to NEPAD

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Introduction

I want to start with the a quotation from a perceptive observer who is well informed on the OAU and who attended the inaugural meeting of the AU in Durban:-

> 'The first Summit of the African Union was a historic occasion. The first Summit of the OAU 39 years ago had a very different atmosphere. 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, and the hypocrisies of the launching ceremony. For example, sub-Saharan Africa's first putchist, Gnassingbe Eyadema, who had been debarred from the founding OAU Summit because he had recently murdered Sylvanus Olympio, Togo's first president, addressed the launching ceremony on behalf of West Africa. But much of the Summit was businesslike and realistic. Africa has learned much.' (Abdul Mohammed)

Why is the inauguration of the AU businesslike, realistic, muted with no passion while the inauguration of the OAU was characterized by militancy and confident optimism? What lessons has Africa learnt? The brief answer to these questions are simple – (a) Africa is worse off economically today than it was at the time of the founding of the OAU, (b) most African countries are mired with internal conflicts of various intensity, and (c) most African leaders can hardly claim to have control of their economic and political policies and therefore of the destinies of their countries. Hence the absence of passion, confidence, optimism, and the muted and businesslike nature of the 2002 Durban inauguration of the AU.

As for the lessons learnt, it is clear that all Africans now understand the main source of their problem – namely Africa's position in the asymmetrical and powerful global system. Furthermore, 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

Why was the founding of the OAU surrounded by "militancy and confident optimism?" To answer this question requires a historical perspective – to look at the background to the formation of the OAU.

The OAU was not formed in a vacuum. Its founding was the culmination of a long struggle by Pan Africanist, a struggle which goes back to the 19th Century. The Pan African movement was essentially born outside the continent. It was driven by the black intellectuals of African descent in the Diaspora – in the US, the Caribbean and Europe. At first the movement was essentially a protest movement of black people against their exploitation, against racism and for the dignity and uplifting of the black people. The movement was led by the middle class intellectuals in the US and the Caribbean such as Du Bois (African

American) and Padmore (Caribbean). The first Pan African conference was held in London in 1900 and was followed by others in Paris and New York.

However the most important and significant meeting was the fifth Pan African Congress which took place in 1945 in Manchester, the UK. This Congress was the pinnacle of the movement. It was different from the previous meetings and congresses in three fundamental ways; (a) a large number of activists attended this congress – over 200 persons from the US, Europe and Africa; (b) for the fits time leading African nationalist (such as Kenyatta, Nkurumah, etc.) took active and prominent part in the Congress – Nkurumah was Secretary of the Congress (W.E.B. Du Bois was Chairman of the Congress); (c) The fifth Congress underscored, as Nkurumah puts it " for the first time the necessity for well-organised , firmly-knit movement as a primary condition for the success of the national liberation struggle in Africa was stressed" (Nkurumah). According to Lamelle, "Pan-Africanism was no longer simply a protest movement 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 its independence, and as an independent state, organised the All Africa Conference in Accra in 1959. This was at a time when most African countries were still struggling against colonial rule. The Accra Meeting, for the first time, brought together on African soil, nationalists from all over Africa where the issue of solidarity and unity in the struggle against colonialism was the central theme of the meeting. According to the late Abdul Rahman Babu, the Accra Meeting provided an important psychological, political and practical boost to the nationalist movements within the framework of Pan African unity which Nkurumah advocated strongly. It also became apparent to all the nationalist leaders who came to Accra that the role of an African state (as exemplified by the role the Ghana government played in organising the Conference) was key to the struggle against colonialism and towards economic development and political unity after independence. Thus in 1963, four years after Accra when many African countries (except Southern Africa) had achieved their independence, these independent governments which achieved their independence through nationalist struggles – struggles which were driven by Pan Africanism - formed the Organisation of African Unity in Addis Ababa. The struggle against the remaining colonialism in southern Africa and for continental unity, which until then was a mass movement of the people, was taken over by the independent states under the auspices of the Organisation of African Unity. The OAU thus became the instrument of the governments (on behalf of their people) to liberate the remaining African countries and to forge continental political unity. Pan Africanism thus ceased to be a mass movement. It transformed into an ideology driving a state based continental organisation.

Evaluating the OAU: From Addis Ababa 1963 to Sirte 2000

Africa from the OAU to the AU entails evaluating the OAU and this essentially means looking at the progress or otherwise Africa has made from the formation of the OAU in 1963 to the formation of the AU at Sirte (9/9/1999 and 2/3/2001) and its inauguration in Durban in 2002. And the inauguration of the AU also means looking at the future prospect of Africa as the AU makes its impact felt.

From the 1959 Accra All Africa Conference to the 1963 Addis Ababa founding summit of the OAU, there was a serious ideological struggle throughout the continent centred on (a) whether full continental political unity should be established immediately – at the founding of the OAU, or whether it should be achieved gradually through a building block approach, by first strengthening the new states and establishing sub-regional economic blocks; and (b)

whether development should be carried through social and economic planning driven by the state, or whether it should be based and driven by free and open market with foreign investment playing a major role. These two approaches to the future of the continent and to the development model of the new states, were hotly and passionately debated and discussed through Africa. Indeed two ideologically opposed blocks of countries the Monrovia and Casablanca blocks) emerged - one for development based on social planning and the other for market driven development. The two blocks also had different approach to external relations – delinking and relinking as opposed to strengthening inherited colonial links. Hence at the time the atmosphere throughout the continent was militantly and passionately discussing these issues. And the militancy and passion over these issues expressed themselves fully during the debates at the founding of the OAU.

Phase 1: OAU 1963 –1970

The founding OAU Summit adopted the gradual approach of strengthening the new states, but retaining the aspirations for continental unity as a driving ideology of the OAU. This resolved the first issue. And by resolving the first issue in this way, the OAU had denied itself any powers over the sovereignty of the new states and therefore could not impose on its member states as to what development approach they should adopt. The Monrovia and Casablanca blocks soon dissipated, but there were several countries which adopted the social planning development model. These countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Tanzania, Guinea faced great difficulties from the former colonial powers joined by the Americans. The Western powers worked hard – by various means of persuasion or by covert support of military takeover - to dissuade these countries from following the "socialist" model of development.

The Charter of the OAU was therefore essentially " designed to protect the fragile sovereignty recently achieved by African states, and to help those still under colonial or racist rule to achieve sovereign independence" (Abdul Mohammed). These were the two most important objectives that drove the OAU, from its inception in 1963 to 1975. During this period, the issue of economic development was not on the OAU agenda. The OAU was mainly concerned with (a) the few inter-state conflicts that took place at the time, and (b) with political support to the struggle for eradicating racist and colonial rule in southern Africa. While the first concern involved mediation and therefore some practical action by the OAU, the second concern was mainly conducted at the political and diplomatic level internationally. There was no actual involvement with the struggle on the ground e.g. through financial or military support etc. During this period, strengthening of the sovereignty of the new states was the paramount objective of the OAU. And this was done by stressing the sovereignty of these state and non-interference in activities of member states by the OAU. This principle and that of equality of all member states has made the OAU and all continental African institutions to be "driven by the lowest common denominators approach, to cater for the wishes of the weakest and most undemocratic states. Sovereignty has been fetishised". (Abdul Mohammed). In the famous words of the late President Nyerere, the OAU became essentially " a talking Club of Heads of States". And presumably based on this view of the OAU, Nyerere organised the 6th Pan African Congress in Dar es Salaam in 1976. The theme of the Congress was the liberation of southern Africa. This was an attempt to revive the Pan African Movement as a mass movement and perhaps to strengthen its link with the various liberation movements of southern Africa.

There are two main reasons for the OAU's lacklustre behaviour and being labelled a "talking Club". Firstly during the decade of the 1970s the fierce Cold War going on in the world seriously affected African countries, many of which were forced to take side in the ideological war of the Cold War. While in the 1970s African countries were not organised or associated into blocks such as Monrovia and Casablanca, they were nevertheless deeply

divided between those, which were Socialist, Marxist and "Capitalist". The Socialist countries such as Tanzania were heavily influenced by the Social Democratic vision of the Scandinavian countries, the Marxist and Capitalist countries were effectively influenced by the Soviets and American led Western visions of development respectively. 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. Secondly from 1960 to 1975 Africa, was, on the whole doing well economically during this period.

During the 1960-75 period, Africa's GDP rate was 4.5%;its export was 2.8% its agricultural growth was 1.6%; and its manufacturing grew at 6%.[1] According to Adedeji, "In retrospect, the period 1960-75 has, tragically, turned out to be Africa's golden era!"(Adedeji 2002, p.6).1

But this "golden era" did not last long.

By the end of the 1970s decade and despite this reasonable economic performance, there were clear signs that Africa was facing serious economic crises. "What is clear to most observers however is that the strong optimism of 60s concerning economic development, slowly gave way, first to hesitation, then to pessimism and by the end of the 70s to a consensus of gloom" (Bujra, A. 1982, p.II).[2]

Late in the 70s (1978) Adedeji had began to make his gloomy predictions and warnings on Africa's economic prospects – predictions which have proved to be very accurate. "Africa, more than the other Third World Regions, is thus faced with a development crises of great portent. If past trends were to persist, the African region as a whole will be worse off relatively to the rest of the world at the end of this century than it was in 1960".[3]

And three years later (1981), the World Bank was also making similar predictions. Africa, the World Bank states, 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 year) if you are not.[4]

It was under these circumstances that the OAU began to take up the economic crises seriously and to develop an agenda on economic development.

Phase 2 : OAU 1980 – 1990

The 1980 decade has been described as the "lost decade". Africa was going through very serious economic and political crises – negative growth, collapsing economies, civil wars, collapsing states and state structures etc. And, as we will see below, the so called "international community" became very concerned with the "unending crises". This led to a belief which came to be called "Afro-Pessimism". Implicit in Afro-Pessimism was the core idea that the African people – their societies, cultures, mindset and structures – are incapable of running their states and their economies and therefore they will remain in a permanent state of crises – stagnation and negative growth.

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[1] Adebayo Adedeji"From the Lagos Plan of Action to NEPAD and from the Final Act of Lagos to the Constitutive Act: Wither Africa?", Keynote Address at African Forum for Envisioning Africa Focus on NEPAD, Nairobi 26-29 April, 2002.
[2] Bujra, A. Editorial Note, Africa Development, Vol.VII, No.1/2, 1982, p.II.
[3] Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of ECA, "Africa and the Development Crises" in Africa Guide, 1978, p.25.
[4] World Bank, Development Report 1981(NY OUP 1981), Table I.I

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 disorganised for a long time.

Most Africans however generally had a different view of their crises – its causes, its continuation and the way out of the crises. Most Africans acknowledged that there were "internal" factors that had contributed to the continuation of the crises to the present. Nevertheless they place more emphases on the "external" origin of their crises and particularly their inability to get out of the crises.

The internal factors contributing to the African crises have been well articulated by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. He says :-

> 'African states have been given names such as neopatrimonial, prebendal, vampire and various other exotic names. The underlying fact is that African states are systems of patronage and are closely associated with rent-seeking activities. Their external relationship is designed to generate funds that oil this network of patronage. Their trading system is designed to collect revenue to oil the system. 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 and rent-seeking activity.'

A large part of the NGO community and civil society organizations constitutes a parallel network of patronage and rent-seeking activity that coincides and diverges from the state network depending on circumstances. Just as in the case of the state network the NGO and civil society organizations network is also oiled by funds and guidelines from abroad. Leadership positions in such organizations are used for personal enrichment and for the establishment of patronage networks.

It is this structure that is fundamentally inimical to the establishment of an effective and strong state and not the imposition of the Washington consensus from out- side. It is this structure which inhibits the establishment of developmental states in Africa that are able to adopt the rational elements of the Neo-liberal paradigm to their specific circumstances and design others to supplement it".

On the other hand, most Africans identify external causes of their crises as follows:-

(a) colonialism had created the basic conditions of the crises – dependant economies, distorted structures, artificial boundaries/countries, divided people, undeveloped human resource and weak undemocratic state structures.

(b) the international commodity market, financial system, the dominant role of the Western MNCs, and the "five monopolies" enjoyed by the West (Amin, 1995,p.47)[5], were, and still are extremely formidable barriers which weak African governments – individually or collectively – were and are unable to overcome.

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

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[5] Amin, Samir "Africa and the Global System" in Bujra, Abdalla (Guest Editor) of African Development Review (ADB), A Special Number on Africa and the Future; December 1995.

(d) the direct intervention by the Bretton Woods institutions and the Donor countries in African economies through SAPs, ostensibly to help Africans overcome their crises, simply perpetuated the unequal and exploitative relationship between Africa and the global system.

According to the ECA, African Governments had three options for facing "the anticipated crises". Firstly to increase "self reliance and self-sustainment" and more effective measures for intra-African cooperation and mutual help. These (measures) "would require vision and statesmanship quite out of the ordinary". "Another option would take the form of a surreptitious surrender of the economy in return for substantial foreign aid, a temptation which might be impossible to resist". "A third option would be to wait and see and hope whilst continuing with conventional measures which avoid creating antagonism" (ECA, 1979-1980, p.6).[6]

The OAU and in collaboration with the UNECA mobilised African intellectual and political resources to discuss the crises (above options) and come up with a vision and a plan of action for getting Africa out of the crises and towards a better future. This serious effort led to the now famous Monrovia Declaration (1979), the Lagos Plan of Action, and the Final Act of Lagos (1980). These three documents contained respectively (a) the most clearly articulated vision of Africa's future, (b) a practical plan of action on how to achieve faster development towards that vision, and (c) political decisions supporting the vision and the plan of action as well as achieving effective economic cooperation and integration.

Thus since 1980, all African initiatives (from the OAU and up to 1990 from the ECA), accepted the vision, framework, strategies and principles enshrined in the LPA.

The Monrovia Declaration (1979)

It provided the vision and scenario of Africa's future. The Africa of 2000/2020 will:
 (i) have a high degree of self sufficiency,
 (ii) a democratic national development,
(iii) will distribute wealth more equitably,
(iv) will have a strong African solidarity and will carry more weight in world affairs"
    (OAU,1979, p.30).[7]

The Lagos Plan of Action (LPA)

It provided the framework and strategies for implementing development programmes. The LPA based its strategies 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 the national, sub-regional and regional levels;
2. Equity in the distribution of wealth at the national level is a fundamental objective of development;
3. Public sector is essential for development and it should be expanded;
4. Outside capital is an unavoidable necessity and it should be directed to those 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.

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[6] ECA, Biannual Report of the Executive Secretary, 1979-1980.
[7] "What Kind of Africa in the Year 2002?", OAU, Addis Ababa, 1979

6. Change in the international economic order to favour Africa and Third World countries is essential and Africa should continue to fight for NIEO (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), Industrialisation (to satisfy basic needs), Mining Industries (to recover total and permanent sovereignty over national resources, establish mineral based industries), Human Resources, and Science and Technology.

These principles and the Plan of Action – the detailed Programme – were discussed extensively by Governments, as well as by African intellectuals. The latter were generally critical of the details in the Plan but strongly supported the basic principles behind the LPA.[8]

The Final Act of Lagos (1980) and The Abuja Treaty (1991)

The Heads of States and Governments of the OAU passed this special Final Act aimed at achieving an African Common Market by the year 2000. Clearly the issue of economic cooperation and integration was so important to the Governments that they felt the need to pass a special and separate Act.

Furthermore, this led them to transform, within ten years, the Final Act of Lagos to the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community in 1991. The treaty lays down in details the process for achieving the Economic Community in successive stages over a period of 34 years. It also affirmed adherence of the earlier principles enshrined in the LPA .

In addition to the above actions of the OAU in the area of economic development, it adopted, in1980s, three other important Programmes in this area. These are:-

1. OAU: Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, 1986-1990: Addis Ababa, July 1985.

2. The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Transformation (AAF-SAP) – UNECA, Addis Ababa,1989.

    The AAF-SAP was strongly opposed and often roundly condemned by experts of the WB/IMF as well as those of Donor community in general. A popular version of The AAF-SAP was produced – first printing was 20,000 copies. Despite this effort and the strong support the document received from both governments and African intellectuals, the AAF-SAP was marginalized and eventually followed the fate of previous African initiatives.

3. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, Arusha, 1990.

External Reaction to the OAU Programmes on Economic Development.

[8] Bujra, Abdalla (Editor) "Africa Development", A Quarterly Journal of CODESRIA, Vol.VII, No.1/2, 1982. A special number on The LPA. See Bujra's Editorial, p. I to VI.

The decade of the 1980s saw a very vigorous formal intervention by Western powers in the economic strategies and policies of African countries. This was in response to the OAU's vigorous Programme on economic development. The intervention was done mainly through the WB/IMF, through the use, by the Donors, of Aid and Debt as instruments of leverage. This intervention started immediately after the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action.

The World Bank's Berg Report: 1981

The Berg Report as it came to be known, was definitely a response to the LPA and its aim was to provide an intellectual basis for the intervention of the WB to initiate adjustment programmes to African economies ostensibly in order to take the countries out of the crises and to lead them to accelerated development. These programmes came to be known as "Structural Adjustment Programmes" or SAPs.

According to Bujra (1982), the Berg Report (a) does not address itself to most of the crucial issues spelt out in details in the LPA;(b) while the Report advocates increased investment (foreign and local) and a reduction in the public sector, the LPA advocates *expansion* in the public sector; (c) important areas of development (industrialisation, control and use of mineral resources, and economic cooperation and integration) are given scant and peripheral attention in the Report. Indeed the issue of economic cooperation is not mentioned at all in this Report. Yet these issues are of central concern in the LPA.

Despite the shortcoming of the Berg Report, in relation to the LPA, the WB/IMF began in earnest to implement their Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in African countries immediately after the Berg Report.

The World Bank and IMF have been informed, in no uncertain terms, by both government officials and African researchers of the inappropriate assumptions behind the SAPs and of the negative impact of SAPs on African countries. In 1987 and 1988, the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank organised five senior policy seminars on structural adjustment in Africa. Participants of the seminars were composed of ministers, governors, permanent secretaries, senior advisors and a significant 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. Twenty seven countries participated in the seminars. The strong and critical voice of the participants of the above seminar was expressed in a very polite and diplomatic language of the Bank in one of its Reports (EDI Policy Seminar Report No.18, Washington, 1989). The critique of African participants in these Seminars are couched as main observations and lessons emerging from the seminars. These are: -

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 (stabilisation) measures;
3. Basic Social services must be protected;
4. Current adjustment programs have yet to successfully reconcile demand management with supply-enhancing measures;
5. The promotion of sub-regional or regional trade and coordination of development plans and strategies – a main objective of the LPA –have not received the attention they deserve;
6. Significant social cost 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, has its 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[9].

In spite of 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 and the strong reactions of African officials and intellectuals against SAPs are also well known. The most important formal response to the SAPs was the ECA's African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme (AAF-SAPS) in 1989. And amongst the many sharp and serious critique of SAPs from African intellectuals (starting from its genesis with the Berg Report), is Thandika Mkandawire's edited book *"Our Continent our Future"* (1999).

By the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the external's perspective and strategy for development had become the dominant, if not the only one directing development policies and programmes in almost all African countries. Indeed the practical power of the WB/IMF and the Donor community (collectively often referred to as the international community) to intervene and direct detailed plans, programmes and actual decision making of African governments had become established and accepted in government circles.

In the meantime, in 1989, the WB came out with another report – the Long Term Perspective Studies (LTPS) in which it 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 organisation – an institution – which is still operating until today. However soon, in the 1990s, the international community began to intensify their coordination at many levels – without the participation of Africans. The WB/IMF, the EU, the DAC, individual Donor countries, the Paris and London Clubs etc. their strategies and policies with regards to loans, debt, aid, trade, technical assistance etc. became increasingly highly coordinated and standardized insisted on African governments to accept essentially the same conditionalities. These conditionalities now turned out to be those of SAPs (revised and elaborated) as well as political conditionality of Good Governance. The latter conditionality was also adopted by the UN System as a whole – but particularly the UNDP.

Thus, during the 1990s and the new millennium, African economic and political development was being diplomatically but firmly guided by the "international community". At the more formal level of treaties, the EU continued with its Lome now Cotonou Conventions (renewed/renegotiated every several years) which guided the unequal trade relations between African countries and the EU countries. More recently the Americans came with their own Programme – Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). And more interestingly, the British and French (the two largest and most powerful former colonial powers) recently decided to synchronise and coordinate in details their African policies to the extent that their African Ambassadors hold joint meetings annually/biannually?

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[9] Ibid, p. *vii and viii.*

And once again, in the year 2000, the WB in association with its partners (mainly from amongst the "international community") came up with yet another document – this time in the form of a book – "Can Africa Reclaim the 21st Century?"[10] This book essentially articulates the long term strategies of African development from the perspective of the WB and the rest of the Donor community. It is expected to provide the intellectual inspiration to African policy makers when they formulate their development strategies.

And indeed according to the CODESRIA-TWN Africa's recent Declaration,[11] NEPAD, the latest African vision and initiative for African Development, derives its intellectual inspiration and its strategies for African development from the above World Bank book "Can Africa Reclaim the 21st Century?" Similar arguments and statements were made in another conference of African scholars held in Nairobi at about the same time (26-29 April, 2002)[12].

Phase 3:OAU 1990 to 2002

It is clear that internal and external vision for African development have existed since the early years of independence. These visions differ fundamentally with regards to their development strategies. However the present dominance of the external vision on African development, simply reflects the reality – that of the weakness of Africa and the strength and power of the "externals". The externals are the Western powers which drive the asymmetrical global system.

But in spite of this dominance of the western powers on the African development, the OAU continued to protests and pass important resolutions. The resolutions and programmes of the 1980s, and those passed in the 1990s, had no effect in improving the economic situation of Africa. Indeed the OAU had to change direction and to focus more on political and humanitarian issues.

According to Salim A. Salim, the former Secretary General of the OAU (1989 –2001), the OAU had to change direction from 1990 onwards because of the changing African and international environment. "At the beginning of the 1990s, the agenda for action in realizing our vision had to assume a new orientation. The end of the liberation struggle compelled us to direct all efforts at tackling the task of socio-economic development particularly in the aftermath of the devastating crisis of what has been described as the Lost Decade of the 1980s. Compounding that, was 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 p.6 from Bulletin on Pan Africanism).

The strategies and policies for economic development of African countries, even the economic management of some countries, had been taken over by the WB/IMF institutions since the 1980s. And this continued in the 1990s. And as stated above, all the OAU Programmes to arrest the deteriorating economic situation of African countries, had no effect whatsoever. The economies of African countries continued to deteriorate under the auspices and management of the Western powers.

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[10] World Bank, Can Africa Reclaim the 21st Century?, Washington, 2000.
[11] CODESRIA-TWN Africa Declaration of a Conference on "Africa's Development Challenges", Accra, 26 April 2002.
[12] African Forum for Envisioning Africa Focus on NEPAD, Organised by Mazingira Institute, African Academy of Science and the Heinrich Boell Foundation, Nairobi, 26-29 April 2002, Nairobi, Kenya.

The OAU therefore had no option but to focus more on political and humanitarian issues. This can be seen from Dr. Salim's list of areas of OAU success (see below), they are almost entirely in the political arena.

Dr. Salim points out that during his tenure as SG of the OAU – 1990 to 2001, the OAU made important contribution to Africa's development by pursuing a new agenda. He lists six areas of success:-

1. The Abuja Treaty (1990);
   This is an important Treaty with a road map on how to achieve the African Economic Community (AEC) through the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Some progress has been made by the RECs, but serious problems still remain internally within the RECs and in their relations with the OAU – and now with the AU.

2. The Creation, within the OAU, of the Mechanism for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts (1990);
   This was an important move on the part of the OAU. But there are serious doubts as to the political ability and capacity of the Mechanism to resolve let alone prevent conflicts in the continent. The most horrendous event of the 1990s in Africa was the Rwanda genocide of 1994. Yet the OAU did not even discuss its own report on what needs to be done to stop such events, a report which was prepared by an international Panel of highly respected persons approved by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

3. Inculcation of a Culture of Democracy – non-recognition of undemocratic change of government, and monitoring of elections;
   The decision not to recognize undemocratic change of governments is an important step forward; Similarly the monitoring of elections. But the "international community" i.e. Western powers gives more value to the judgment of its own monitors than that of the OAU. And the Madagascar's example shows that the US and the EU can recognize governments which the OAU have refused to recognize because OAU considers such government illegitimate.

4. Enhancing the status of the OAU continentally and internationally;
   There is no doubt that compared with 1970s, and 1980s, the OAU's status has now been enhanced – both in Africa and internationally. However, it is not clear how this enhancement of status can bring about what practical benefits to African countries and people. Can the OAU bring resources to resolve conflicts? Can the OAU ask the WB to change its interventions policies in African countries?

5. Breaking the silence on HIV/AIDS and making governments develop programmes to cope with this pandemic;
   There is no doubt that this is an important and very positive initiative. But like the question of refugees, most of the work is done by external agencies independent of the OAU. .

6. Initiating the African Union Process – from Sirte 1999 to Durban in 2002;
   This by far is the most initiative taken by The Great Leader Brother Mu'ammar Al Gaddafi. And the OAU – both the Secretariat and the Heads of States – supported the important moves by Gaddafi to bring about the AU to a successful end. This has been most encouraging.

These are important achievements made by an organization which had to descended to the level of being called a "a talking Club". The OAU is famous for a modus operandi described as "a common denominator approach catering for the weakest and undemocratic members". It is not well known for having space which would allow its leadership to use creatively and to push for a robust political and economic agenda. Despite this systemic constraint in the OAU, and my simple reservations apart, Dr. Salim did achieve what to most people would think is impossible.

At the closing of the 1990 decade, and the third term of Dr.Salim as Secretary General, three major African initiatives occupied the OAU. These are :-

1. The process of establishing the AU – started in 1999. The AU has now been inaugurated and a brief discussion on it will follow below.

2. The Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) was incorporated into the OAU as a special Programme (2000)

3. The NEPAD initiative which was also taken up as a special Programme of the OAU/AU in Lusaka, 2001.

4. The OAU initiatives to involve and work with civil society organizations – two major conferences to develop methods of cooperation (2000 and 2001).

Dr. Salim was deeply involved in these creative initiatives and processes. The relationship between the AU and the two Inter-governmental organizations has yet to be clarified. This is an important issue facing the AU.

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

The OAU is now no more. This preliminary and brief evaluation is therefore appropriate, even though it is only two and a half months since the OAU legally stopped being an organisation.

The OAU Charter had noble objectives – of achieving political unity, of raising the standard of living of the African people, of having peace and security amongst African states, of raising the dignity and status of the African people internationally etc. Has any of these aspirations and objectives been achieved? The answer is clearly No, despite the achievements of Dr. Salim during the last decade of the twentieth Century. Economically, Africa is poorer than it was at the time when the OAU was founded. Politically, only a few countries have escaped the ravages of internal armed conflicts and serious political tension and confrontations. And the picture is depressingly the same in other areas such health, education etc. As concerning the all important economic co-operation and integration, some modest progress has been made, but the road ahead is still long and difficult. We must therefore ask a simple but important question. Why is Africa worse off now than when the OAU was founded despite all the resolutions and programme adopted by the OAU. The simple answer is that the resolutions and Programme of the OAU were not implemented at the country/national level. But this begs the question. Why do Heads of states sign up to radical development approaches at the OAU level but fail to implement these approaches at the national level? The answer to this question is complex but here are some brief explanations:

(i)   During the first 15 years of independence there was a strong presence of former colonials powers in African countries – technical personnel, aid and strong political links between the former colonial governments and the African political leadership. The influence of the Metropolitan governments on African countries and their economic policies in particular, was essentially direct.

(ii)   Secondly, in the 1960s the economies of African countries were doing well. They generally had healthy foreign currency reserve. The emerging class of African business men which was accumulating wealth through the use of state institutions, was very optimistic about the future and therefore favoured continuity of policies recommended by colonial advisors and continuity of same economic structure without radical change. Where some governments (eg. Tanzania) tried some form of radical approach to development and therefore tried to change the existing economic structure through nationalisation and diversifying its external economic links, there was immediate strong media attack, diplomatic isolation, and economic pressure to stop such "move to the left" – moves which essentially disrupted the economy. This happened in Tanzania, Guinea Conakry, Ghana (under Nkurumah), then Congo Kinshasa (under Lumumba), Benin, Somalia, Uganda (under Obote I) etc.

(iii)   The second half of the 1970s saw the economic crises intensifying all over the continent. There were serious rumblings amongst the populations and especially the military. In fact the military did take power in many countries which 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 soon initiated discussion on development issues. Similarly the UNECA began to be more active than before. All this took place in the context of a strong ideological debate of the 1970s regarding alternative paths to development and which was taking place in all African countries. Hence the OAU resolutions and Programmes on development absorbed some basic ideas from the ongoing international and national discussion, ideas which tended to reinforce the strong continental nationalism which is at the root of the OAU's very existence. Hence the OAU language and perspective of development contained strong nationalist language and easily leaned towards alternatives to the existing approaches.

(iv)   The political leaders themselves found it easier to accept such alternative approaches to development because they also saw on the ground in their countries the drawback of the approach inherited from the colonial powers.

(v)   Yet at the country level, most of the 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 power of the emerging indigenous economic elite within the political and administrative structure was very strong and favoured continuity of existing policies, including shortages and other economic difficulties from which some groups amongst the elite gained economically; and (c) the power and influence of the "externals" for continuity, was also very strong; the external's power derive from their threat of disrupting the economies of the countries and in their alliance with the local groups which wanted continuity. Hence it was easier for Heads of State to continue the inherited economic policies and strategies at the country level

while at the same time talking and approving radical and alternative economic strategies and policies at the OAU level. Schizophrenia became a standard political behaviour of political leaders – between their countries and the OAU.

(vi)   Given this situation, the more the crises deepened in African countries, the more the countries became indebted, the easier it was for the externals to ensure that the traditional economic strategies and policies inherited from the colonial period continued and expanded. Indeed as the crises deepened, and African countries became very week, the externals had a unique opportunity to intervene strongly at the country level. They essentially directed country economic strategies and policies and often literally managed and administered key institutions of the economies. This happened during the 1980s and some would say continues to the present – at least in many of the small countries.

(vii)   However this strong interventionist role of the "externals" had to have an ideological and intellectual basis. And this was essentially provided by the WB and IMF through their various strategic reports (at the country level) and intellectuals output in major publications on Africa – such as the *Berg Report (1981),* the *Long Term Perspective Studies (1989), Adjustment in Africa (1994)* and more recently, *Can Africa Reclaim the 21ˢᵗ Century (2000).*

(viii)   It is necessary at this point to state (even at the cost of repetition) that there is a fundamental difference between all the pre-NEPAD African Initiatives (especially since the Monrovia/LPA –1979/80) and the NEPAD of 2001/2002. The difference is that all pre-NEPAD African initiatives had, at the core of their Plans/Agendas the LPA principles, which are absent in NEPAD. These principles are:-
(a) self-reliance as an organising principle of economic and other forms of development,
(b) equality as a fundamental principle and goal of economic development,
(c) strong role for the public sector,
(d) the continuous interrogation of the present international economic order and the continuous fight by various methods for a NIEO,
(e) much stronger efforts towards economic cooperation and integration than in NEPAD.

From the perspectives of the WB/IMF and the Donor community, these principles obviously make African initiatives radical and "ideological" – i.e. leftist. More importantly, if African countries followed these principles in their economic policies, they would make African economies difficult to exploit and to bring under the hegemony of those countries driving globalisations. Hence the opposition of the "externals" to the African initiatives. And since NEPAD has dropped these principles, it is therefore not surprising that the G8 have welcomed NEPAD with open arms and have so far given it moral support.

(ix)   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.

It is envisaged that the AU will be different from the OAU. This because it is argued that (a) African leaders are now more committed to exploit the global system more effectively through concerted action – mainly through the AU's NEPAD Programme,

and (b) the AU will involve civil society in its decision making and operations, and therefore will be stronger thus enabling Africans to negotiate more effectively with the global institutions such as the WTO, Cotonou, AGOA etc. However to reduce the power of the "international community" at the country level and those driving globalisations at the global level, it will be necessary to have an effective a clean developmental state (as Meles has argued) and a strong and capable AU. While NEPAD might eventually lead to most African states having a clean developmental state, a strong AU needs the collective will of all member state to transcend the weaknesses of the OAU. This brings us to the AU.

The African Union: Prospects and constraints

The AU has been described as an "aspirational union". It does not have solid common factors or forces on which it can be built, unlike the EU or ASIEN. Elaborate briefly…

The creation of the African Union in Sirte (Libya) in 1999 and the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the African Union in Lome July 2000[13] was an important milestone in the process of creating political continental unity and the African Economic Community. It was a major achievement of the African leaders and a triumph for Pan-Africanism. The AU will be a much stronger organisation than the OAU.

Amongst the new principles of the Union are – the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State, respect for democratic principles, human rights and good governance, promotion of social justice and of gender equality. Will the development strategies of the AU be entirely based on NEPAD or will the AU re-incorporate in its development strategy, the principles of the LPA?

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[13] OAU, Constitutive Act of the African Union, Addis Ababa, July 2001.