Dialogue of Civilisations?
The Case of Nepad

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upi Working Papers

45 (2003)

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Introduction

This paper has two parallel aims. First of all, it seeks to present and critically discuss some central aspects of the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) initiative. A programme of the African Union and officially launched in October 2001, NEPAD is a comprehensive, ambitious framework for changing the negative course of development in Africa and for ending the increasing marginalisation of the continent in the global era.[1] In the words of its founding document, 'the Programme is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalising world' (§1).

NEPAD is not the first initiative of its kind in Africa. A number of development programmes have been designed for the continent since most of its countries gained independence in the 1950s and 1960s. However, and as will be seen in the course of this paper, NEPAD is in many respects different to its predecessors. These differences make it possibly the most promising development framework Africa has ever had; some have even seen NEPAD as the final step along the path to true African independence. No wonder then that NEPAD has gained a great deal of international attention during the past two years. Overall, NEPAD is, or rather has the potential to become, so important that even the wider public and especially people who are interested in international relations and development issues, should become better aware of it.

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[1] The issue of the marginalisation of Africa in the global era has been widely discussed in scholarly literature. One of the most interesting points has been raised by Frederick Cooper (2001, 206) who writes that "In fact, Africa's contribution to world trade and its intake of investment funds were *larger* in the days of national economic policy than in the days of economic openness. Shall we call the age of globalizing deglobalization in Africa, or of distorted globalization?"

NEPAD is also interesting from a broader perspective. It tells us a great deal about the nature of world politics today, about the way forces of globalisation influence or are believed to influence the conditions people are living in. Moreover, it reveals many aspects about the ways in which Africans (or African leaders) understand themselves and their political situation at the moment, and about their visions regarding the future. NEPAD can also be perceived as an interesting means to influence world opinion, a means the equivalents of which might be applicable elsewhere as well.

In order to analyse this kind of processes, the perspective applied in this paper can be called 'civilisational'. One important aspect of world politics over the past ten or twenty years has been that ever larger (geographical) political units have assumed an increasingly important role. Such actors as the EU, ASEAN, Mercosur, and NAFTA, to name but a few, have become central actors on international arenas. Often, and particularly in the 1990s, this process has been referred to as 'regionalisation' or 'new regionalisation' (see e.g. Mecham 2003). I believe, however, that these terms fail to understand an essential political aspect of many of these new regional integration processes; namely the fact that apart from the primary target of, say, trade promotion, the question is also of cultural projects – of projects that seek to create a sense of togetherness in the region. The concepts of civilisation and civilisation process will be used in the following pages to capture this element of new regionalism.[2]

For a scholar of international relations, the central issue is undoubtedly how these different regions or civilisations interact. The concept of civilisation is often connected to the name of Samuel Huntington and particularly to his notorious bestseller from the mid-1990s, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, but Huntington's primary mindset of inevitable civilisational clashes is certainly only one possibility for understanding the

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[2] It is noteworthy that this process can be seen both as a consequence and cause of globalisation; 'regionalisation' and globalisation produce and reproduce each other.

interaction.[3] In this report the starting point is not in the potential clashes between civilisations produced by the forces of globalisation, but in the fact that the present age *seems to produce new kinds of civilisational dialogues,* not only because these dialogues may yield unforeseen material benefits, especially for less prosperous regions, but also because they may help produce and reproduce these civilisations themselves. *NEPAD can be seen as one effort at such a dialogue.*[4] *Exploring what these civilisational dialogues might concretely* (i.e. in the light of NEPAD) *entail is thus the other main aim of the ensuing analysis.* Note, however, that the idea is not to see the emergence of civilisational dialogues as a truth or fact. Instead, it is primarily a perspective through which we can hopefully better comprehend the world at present.[5]

My main sources as well as objects of analysis have been the various documents produced in connection with NEPAD, particularly its founding document from October 2001, and the interviews that I conducted with a number of civil servants and academics in South Africa and Ethiopia in the autumn of 2002[6]. Of secondary literature, the articles by Henning Melber (2002), Adebayo O. Olukoshi (2002), Alex de Waal (2002), and the forthcoming Adelphi Paper by

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[3] Huntington himself is hesitant regarding Africa's nature as a civilisation – in his list of major civilisations, numbering seven or eight, African civilisation comes last, with an epithet 'possibly'. The reason for his hesitation is the ambivalence he observes in today's Africa: "Throughout Africa tribal identities are pervasive and intense, but Africans are also increasingly developing a sense of African identity, and conceivable sub-Saharan Africa could cohere into a distinct civilisation, with South Africa possibly being its core state." (Huntington 1998, 47)

[4] This idea is by no means unknown in scholarly literature. The best presentation of the theme known to this author is that of Marc Lynch (2000), who analyses the dialogue of civilisations particularly in the context of the ideas introduced by the Iranian president Mohammed Khatami in 1997 and the dialogue between Iran and the USA. Khatami's idea gained so much positive attention in multilateral diplomatic circles that the United Nations declared the year 2001 'The Year of Dialogue among Civilisations'.

[5] This aim is also important when we think about the 'lifespan' of this paper. Whatever the fate of NEPAD and however little the reader is interested in African politics, if we can through this initiative understand something general about the world we now live in, this report has fulfilled its primary task.

[6] The number of interviewees was 24 altogether. Most of the interviews were conducted with just one person, but some were group interviews.

Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills (manuscript from 2002) have been particularly helpful.

In the ensuing section I will introduce a number of central features of the NEPAD Programme. After this, I will briefly present the notions of civilisation, dialogue, world opinion and re-embedment – the notions that form the theoretical framework of the paper. One aspect of all these four concepts is worth noting: they are to various degrees determined by the interplay between internal and external factors, between an identity that is created in relation to others and between an identity that emerges from within the culture itself. The third section turns to NEPAD again, and particularly to how NEPAD attempts to influence the rest of the world or the views of the 'international community'. The fourth section, in turn, seeks to understand the ways in which NEPAD seeks to transform the Africans' understanding of themselves. The third and fourth sections thus explore the external and internal (potential) influences of NEPAD, respectively, and this way emphasise what this author sees as the Janus-faced nature of the initiative.

1. The New Partnership for Africa's Development

Origins

The origins of NEPAD can be traced both from a philosophical and a 'programmatic' perspective. The philosophical starting point is the idea of *African Renaissance*[7] that, after a speech given by the South African President Thabo Mbeki in 1998, became a widely used political slogan in Africa. It is, however, not easy to give a precise meaning to the notion (cf. Cliffe 2002, 40). Perhaps the most widely spread connotation is that of a counter-idea to the so-called Afro-pessimism that started to prevail in the 'developed' world in the 1980s because of the economic and political crises that continuously plagued many countries in Africa. African Renaissance has been, in other words, a means to oppose the negative images of Africa, and not only within the domestic African context but also elsewhere. Alternatively, the notion can be perceived as a war cry, as an appeal to ordinary Africans to actively start working for better living conditions for themselves. The idea also echoes such earlier ideologies as Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness. Some commentators have even seen it as the newest formulation of Pan-Africanism, the overarching, prevalent philosophy in Africa since the late 19th century.

The ideological vicinity to the philosophy of African Renaissance determines the nature of NEPAD in many respects. It is indeed very important to bear in mind that NEPAD is and will remain to a large extent 'only' an idea or a general point of reference. Interpreted positively, it is an idea to which such aspects of humanity as pride, self-consciousness, and belief in one's own possibilities are highly relevant matters. This means that it is and will be very difficult to assess the effects of NEPAD in practice. It is virtually impossible to measure the change of mood among ordinary people, or the extent to which a visible political change is the result of NEPAD or of totally separate factors. In

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[7] According to Lionel Cliffe (2002, 40), the term was first expressed publicly by Nelson Mandela in 1994 as he gave a speech in a meeting of the Organisation of African Unity. It is worth noting however that as early as 1937 one of the leading figures of African cultural nationalism, Nnamdi Azikiwe, published a book entitled *Renascent Africa*.

all, we should not understand NEPAD merely as a technical-bureaucratic effort to improve governance in Africa – it is planned to be much more; it aims to transform the very self-understanding of the continent. A remark by one of the interviewees illuminates this well: 'Don't put a price tag on the programme.'

It is also worth noting that the renaissance-nature of NEPAD means that the programme is clearly future-oriented. It is meant to represent a new beginning, and not to be concerned with the past with the questions such as who should be blamed for the misery of Africa and why. This can be seen as one of the great strengths of the programme, a strength also repeatedly emphasised by the interviewees.

Around the turn of the new millennium, Mbeki and his administration, supported by a number of African states[8], started turning the idea of African Renaissance into a policy programme. The result was the *Millennium Africa Renaissance Programme*, introduced to an international audience at the World Economic Forum Meeting in Davos in early 2001. This programme was further developed during the following five months. It also assumed a new name, the 'Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme', by the time it was tabled at a UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) conference in May that year. In the same conference, the Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade introduced his own development framework, entitled the 'Omega Plan for Africa', and UNECA itself introduced the programme 'Compact for African Recovery'. It was decided that all these programmes will be merged and then presented to the OAU Summit of July 2001; the name of this merger was the 'New African Initiative' (NAI). The NAI document was slightly modified in October 2001, and renamed once again, this time to NEPAD. (Melber 2002, 188-9.)

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[8] The core group of NEPAD states has been composed of South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria, and Egypt.

NEPAD also has a number of earlier predecessors in the African context. Since the first wave towards independence started in 1957, many comprehensive development programmes have been designed, both internally and externally, the latter mainly within the UN system and the former within the Organisation of African Unity (OAU; founded in 1963). These programmes usually proved unsuccessful and unrealistic, although they certainly played some sort of a role in shaping African politics in general. The most important of these programmes is undoubtedly the Lagos Plan of Action from 1980, drafted under the auspices of the OAU. As will be seen later, although the Lagos Plan included a great number of the same components as NEPAD, the ideology that underpinned it was very different.

It is also informative to try to find comparable efforts to transform a large region or even an entire continent through a political programme in other eras and other parts of the world, although suitable comparisons are rare. The programme that has most often been mentioned in this context is the post-Second World War Marshall Plan in Europe (Olukoshi 2002, 10). Unlike NEPAD, however, Marshall Plan was originally initiated from outside the continent it concerned, by way of a speech given by the US Secretary of State, George Marshall, in 1947. After the idea had been presented, the European countries did play a significant role in actually crafting the Plan and the use of the finances received from the United States. But Marshall Plan was essentially about aid and rebuilding, particularly rebuilding the European economies. NEPAD is about aid and rebuilding – and something more, something emerging from the idea of African Renaissance, something that we will later in this report call re-embedding.

Another historical point of comparison might be that of the Alliance for Progress (*Allianza para progresa*) that was initiated in the Americas by the United States' Kennedy administration in 1961. It was, according to its founding charter signed in Punta del Este, 'a vast effort to bring a better life to all people's of the Continent'. The Alliance was based on democratic principles

– 'free men working through the institutions of representative democracy can best satisfy man's aspirations' – and sought to create 'a more equitable distribution of national income', to eliminate illiteracy, expand public services, reform the agrarian production, to name but a few of the goals. (Rogers 1967.) In reality, however, the Alliance remained a pledge of the United States to increase and intensify its aid to Latin America, which had drifted into being a backwater in US foreign policy during the post-war years of rebuilding Europe. The impetus for this change of policy emerged from cold-war threat perceptions: Cuba, after its revolution of 1959, was perceived as a true danger to the United States, and in order not to let similar events take place in other Latin American countries, a programme for the development of the continent had to be devised. The initiative did not, however, meet the demands of Latin American societies. Due to the clear leadership of the US, the voice of Latin America was hardly audible; the crafters of the programme simply did not know the conditions there. There was very little by way of Latin American ownership. NEPAD, at least on the level of rhetoric, is completely different in this respect as it takes African ownership as one of its basic principles. The Organization of American States disbanded the Alliance for Progress in 1973.

The fact that NEPAD is so closely connected to the idea of African renaissance also seems to set the programme apart from other recent regional efforts. Take for example the case of Mercosur, the Common Market of the South, founded in 1994 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Idealistic and essentially identity-related features are virtually absent in Mercosur, as it was primarily created in order to increase and ease trade within this area. Drawing parallels from NEPAD and Mercosur to the European integration process might be illuminative, however. One can namely argue that NEPAD in some respect is reminiscent of the current European Union, a union that also seeks to create a European identity and thereby increase the self-confidence of the continent's citizens. One can, however, argue that this is a rather recent invention in the European context. The objectives of the European Economic Community were much more pragmatic, to increase economic growth and guarantee the peaceful

development of Europe. In this respect, Mercosur seems to be closer to the EEC whereas NEPAD (vaguely) brings to mind the EU.

Objectives and principles

The objectives of NEPAD are comprehensive, almost all-encompassing. The founding document (from here on referred to as 'the Document') covers a great number of fields – certainly all fields that tend to prevail in development discourses: from combating HIV/AIDS to issues of tourism, from debt relief to technology platforms. There are also a number of sub-initiatives within the NEPAD framework. The names of the most important ones give a good picture of the broad scope of the programme. There are the

- 'Peace and Security',
- 'Democracy, and Political Governance',
- 'Economic and Corporate Governance',
- 'Human Resource Development',
- 'The Environment',
- 'Capital Flows', and
- 'Market Access' initiatives.

In more general terms, the programme is geared to promote growth and sustainable development in Africa, alleviate poverty, and stop the (assumed) marginalisation of the continent in the globalisation process. Many of these goals are explicitly in line with the Millennium Development Goals signed by world leaders in 2000; the question is thus of a fairer deal globally. In the conclusion of the Document the main objectives are compressed as follows:

> 'to consolidate democracy and sound economic management on the continent. Through the programme, African leaders are making a commitment to the African people and the world to work together in rebuilding the continent. It is a pledge to promote peace and stability, democracy, sound economic management and people-centred development and to hold each other accountable in terms of the agreements outlined in the programme.' (§ 202)

The first noteworthy point in the quotation is the close connection between the economic and political objectives. NEPAD strongly pledges to be guided by the democratic, liberal values that have increasingly come to determine the nature of world politics and 'the international community' after the Cold War – democracy, the rule of law, good governance, and human rights. What is particularly important is that these values are perceived as prerequisites for sustainable economic and even social development; political and economic developments are deemed to be mutually interdependent. In most of the interviews that I conducted in South Africa and Ethiopia in the autumn of 2002, it appeared almost self-evident that the emphasis on democracy and democracy promotion is also in reality a, if not *the*, first priority of the initiative; the interviewees seemed to assume that only through functioning democracy can true development become possible.

NEPAD has been criticised and can be criticised for a number of reasons. One of the criticisms, perhaps the most widely spread – especially among African civic organisations – is related to the above-mentioned fact: the programme is accused of too full-heartedly supporting the current liberal or neo-liberal understanding of democracy. Indeed, it no doubt appears paradoxical to adhere to the very same values that can be perceived as elementary reasons for the current problematic situation of Africa in the world economy and politics. The values of liberal economic globalisation and those of liberal democracy have been closely interrelated over the past 20 years, and at least in relative terms the situation of Africa has not improved during these years, quite the opposite. It is, however, possible to see this issue from a more pragmatic perspective: the promoters of the Programme have realised that the ways of governing African societies must profoundly change if a new kind of development is to be achieved. Emphasising the values of liberal democracy may simply be the best available option in this respect, especially if the programme is to gain support from the industrialised countries.

Closely related to this one can also wonder, given that NEPAD has derived its notion of democracy from the 'West', whether there is any possibility for the Africans themselves to invent their own genuine forms of democracy? Is there is any space for their own interpretations? (Cf. Olukoshi 1998, 38.) In more theoretical language, it is questionable whether the 'universalist' notion of democracy that has been adopted in NEPAD offers any freedom for particular interpretations. If this were indeed the case, there would be an obvious risk that democracy becomes just an abstract notion, without any real connection to the lives of ordinary citizens. On the level of principles, this criticism is certainly relevant: democracy should be, in the final analysis, primarily a bottom-up, not a top-down, process. On the other hand, however, NEPAD is still so new a process that it is premature to say whether particularistic interpretations will be possible in real life. If the *emphasis on ownership*, on the idea that Africans themselves will determine their future – as noted above, this is one of NEPAD's basic principles – somehow becomes a reality there is no doubt that this will be the case.

It is also interesting to note that the liberal democratic idea, based on the concept of freedom, has become so predominant across the world that it now truly represents the worldview of the majority of people – and is thus democratic in the traditional sense of the word. Consequently, the what could be called *socialist* definitions of democracy, essentially based on social and economic security and dominant in many parts of the world before the demise of Eastern Europe's communist systems in 1989, play a secondary role today. Marcus et al. (2001, 114), for example, argue, on the basis of their public opinion surveys in Uganda, Madagascar, and Florida, that people understand democracy in very much the same way in all these states, irrespective of their economic level, cultural background, sex and age. Hence the definitions of democracy 'are grounded in personal freedoms, which implies that liberal democratic notions prevail in the countries under scrutiny (p. 129).' This means, among other things, that there is clearly a world-wide public space through which certain kinds of ideas are being disseminated – in this respect Africa is by

no means marginalized. The question here is, however, that if the majority of people adhere to certain kinds of values, to what extent can we criticise such political programmes that pay tribute to these very same values (given that these values are basically democratic)? We will return to the theme of democratic values in Chapter 3.

Another aspect that is worth noting in the quotation from the Document, and in fact in basically all NEPAD documents, is the elite-driven nature of the plan. NEPAD is indeed a pledge by the *African leaders* to start working towards an improvement in Africa's fate. As we will see later, the other side of the coin is that civil society and, for example, academia have only been involved in the NEPAD process to a limited degree so far. This elite-driven nature may naturally echo the tradition of African *patrimonialism*, strong-man rule, but one can also see it from a much more pragmatic perspective. When I inquired about this in my interviews, the standard answer were 'this is what political leadership is all about' or 'well, we have start from somewhere, don't we?'. In other words, the interviewees seemed to believe pragmatically that in the long run even civil society will become part of the process/programme – and true African ownership will materialise.

It is indeed crucial for the programme that it will be clearly anchored to the domestic political sphere, that Africans themselves would be the crafters of their own future – this is, after all, what the idea of African renaissance is all about. The African actors that I interviewed were also well aware of this (cf. Herbst and Mills forthcoming, 15).[9] Moreover, as for example a small review about attitudes towards NEPAD among Scandinavian policy makers showed, it is also

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[9] Adebayo O. Olukoshi (2002, 24) makes this point in a convincing manner: "No public policy can be considered legitimate only because it is described as being owned by Africa and the Africans. It follows that ownership cannot be the exclusive monopoly of the elite; it must necessarily have popular anchorage. In addition, it should have a strong degree of local value added that is linked to local specificities and circumstances and not just seen as a pro forma proclamation that is important in and of itself. The political democracy and governance initiative of the NEPAD document does not offer any such local value added or anchorage in domestic political processes/structures."

imperative if NEPAD wants to guarantee continuing support from the donor community (Vaahtoranta & Vogt 2003). We will return to the issue of ownership in Chapter 4.

Achievements so far

The list of the concrete achievements of NEPAD is not yet particularly long. This is only natural given the limited amount of the (human) resources that the programme has had – the daily activities are managed by a small secretariat in South Africa facilitated by the African Development Bank – and the short period of time that the programme has existed, some two years at the time of writing.[10] But a few successes deserve to be mentioned; some of them are indeed of major importance.

First, as already implied, NEPAD has raised a great deal of positive attention in the Western world, undoubtedly more than in many parts of Africa itself. The messages of adherence to democracy and ownership have in this respect proved effective. It now seems much easier for Africa to enter into a proper dialogue with representatives of the international community. The Nordic countries have been particularly enthusiastic, and they have also supported the NEPAD Secretariat financially.[11] NEPAD has also signed a Preparatory Assistance Document with the United Nations Development Programme. An even more concrete example of the positive mood with which NEPAD has been welcomed internationally is the fact that such an internationally binding document as the Plan of Implementation of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development explicitly supports the initiative by stating that NEPAD 'provides a framework for sustainable development on the continent to be shared by all Africa's people. The international community welcomes NEPAD and pledges its support to the implementation of [its] vision (§56).'

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[10] The human resources are increasing rapidly at the moment. Some African countries now have their own NEPAD ministers and their own NEPAD secretariats. In many countries NEPAD is widely discussed publicly.

Perhaps the most crucial positive reaction, however, has come from the G8 countries – a central target group for NEPAD in economic terms. In June 2002, these countries released the 'G8 Africa Action Plan' at their Summit in Kananaskis, Canada. The Plan did not promise any extra financial support for NEPAD and its projects, but it states, among other things, that

> 'we believe that in aggregate half or more of our new development assistance [promised in Monterrey in the spring of 2002] could be directed to African nations that govern justly, invest in their own people and promote economic freedom. In this way we will support the objectives of NEPAD (§9).'

In the latest G8 Summit in Evian, France, in June 2003, the French President Jacques Chirac reconfirmed the commitment of the G8 by remarking that 'the Africa/ G8 partnership is alive and working and deserves to be further strengthened' (NEPAD Dialogue Nr 5, 17 June 2003). It is noteworthy that globally delivered news of this kind of dialogues and other news related to NEPAD have somewhat counterbalanced the negative media image that Africa has traditionally had.

In all, the 'presence' of Africa in the international political arena over the past two years has been surprisingly strong. This has also been reflected in ordinary people's general attitude towards development aid. The available survey evidence clearly suggests that a change towards a positive direction has taken place at least in Northern Europe since the late 1990s.[12] However, this increased attention towards Africa only to a very limited degree has been a result of

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[11] Henning Melber even argues that 'In effect, NEPAD and its predecessors have certainly raised more attention outside Africa than in Africa itself. African leaders have been very welcome in the meetings of the world leaders, especially the G8.' (Melber 2002, 188)

[12] For example in Sweden, the overall popularity of development cooperation (*biståndsvilja*) has been steadily increasing in recent years. What is particularly remarkable, however, is the change that has taken place in what people think should be the primary object of ODA. In 1998, for over 45 percent of the Swedes the first choice was the Baltic Sea Area, whereas only 27 percent would have prioritised Africa. Only three years later, in 2001, 44 percent already thought that Africa is the most important target, whereas the percentage of those preferring the Baltic Sea Area had declined to 30. Liljeström 2001.

NEPAD. The tragedy of September 11 is the crucial factor in this respect. It made the rich world finally realise what poverty and relative deprivation may lead to; Africa became a global security concern to a greater extent than before. To give some random empirical evidence of how dramatic the change was even among the general public, the attitudes towards development cooperation in Finland changed quite considerably from the spring of 2001 to spring 2002. In 2001, 28 percent of the respondents in a poll were happy with the level of 0.3 percent of the GNP, but a year later only 15 percent thought so. Correspondingly, the percentage of those willing to give at least 0.7 percent to official development assistance (ODA) jumped from 34 to 49 during this one year. There may have been other factors, but without the new threat of terrorism the change would hardly have been this remarkable. (Taloustutkimus, Omnibus, May 2002.)

But to what degree this positive mood in the Western world will materialise in terms of increased economic assistance, it is still too early to speculate about – raising more development funding is, after all, one of the primary objectives of the programme. The Document states, for example, that NEPAD 'seeks increased ODA flows in the medium term' (§148). This leads us to two often presented criticisms against the programme. First, it has been argued that NEPAD is in fact only a new and innovative way of raising money from the Western donors. This is certainly true – and precisely the reason why NEPAD should be supported. The second and more relevant criticism is closely related to this. In the words of Herbst and Mills (forthcoming, 18), 'NEPAD assumes to a degree that aid works, though the historical evidence is over the past thirty years that it does not in the absence of capacity and good policy.' This author finds it difficult to agree with this criticism. It is certainly true that the overall results of ODA have been disappointing, but there are still a great number of individual projects across the African continent that have worked well. Moreover, it is usually impossible to know *in advance* which projects will have the capacity to meet their targets; only by setting up projects we can know whether they actually function. If NEPAD can contribute to an increase in the

number of potentially successful development assistance efforts, it has actually fulfilled one of its primary tasks.

As regards concrete NEPAD projects, they are still mostly in a planning stage. The 'Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme' and the 'Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan' are possibly the most promising projects at the moment – at least on paper. As regards academia, a number of centres of excellence are currently being planned, involving participants from Africa and the West (Koivusalo 2002). In the energy sector, possible targets for future power plant projects, to be funded by foreign investors, are currently being identified (Engineering News, July 18–24, 2003). It is worth bearing in mind, however, that the idea of NEPAD is not necessarily to establish new projects or new institutions, but to redirect existing resources in a more effective manner than before. For example in the field of science and technology, the task is to strengthen cooperation within Africa, between different African countries, not primarily to create new resources in these fields. In this particular field, for example, NEPAD is closely cooperating with African Commission on Science and Technology for this to happen. (Source: one of the interviews.) Indirectly NEPAD also seeks to act as a conflict prevention body. In one of his speeches, Thabo Mbeki has even argued that 'conflict prevention is a key area in which NEPAD is delivering'.

Perhaps the most interesting 'concrete' achievement so far is the so-called African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The peer review mechanism is a means to assess whether the participating states adhere to the agreed political and economic governance values; it is thus a "mutually agreed instrument for self-monitoring the [voluntarily] participating member governments" ('The African Peer Review Mechanism', www.nepad.org). The scope of these evaluations is very comprehensive, covering basically the entire political and administrative systems. The review exercises are based on rather specific guidelines – including for example such issues as "adequacy of legal framework for free association" and "effectiveness of independent media" – and will be led

by a panel of seven so-called 'eminent persons', who were nominated in the summer of 2003 (www.nepad.org). By June 2003, 15 African Union member states had signed the Memorandum of Understanding of the African Peer Review Mechanism: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, The Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda. (NEPAD Dialogue, Nr 3, 2 June 2003).

The APRM has a number of models elsewhere. The OECD has conducted peer reviews fairly successfully among its member states ever since the organisation was created in the early 1960s. The success of the OECD system can be attributed to four basic factors, namely shared values, commitment, mutual trust, and credibility (Pagani 2002). We can naturally be sceptical about the existence of this kind of factors among the APRM countries, but the obvious counter-argument is that one of the main ideas of the APRM is to help create these common values and mutual trust. It is also noteworthy that the OECD reviews are carried out in a number of fairly narrow policy sectors, including for example official development aid and environmental policies, and this also partly explains the success of the system. Given this, the comprehensive nature of the APRM may potentially lead to serious problems, and even undermine the whole process. In the worst case, taking another point of comparison from the European context, the APRM process may bring about as few results as the committee of the 'three wise men' who evaluated the state of Austrian democracy in 2000: the assessment of the committee was far too superficial to reveal anything substantial about the state of democracy in that country.

Finally, the main difficulty of any widely employed (state-level) peer review mechanism is that even though it is based on the same values and principles, it should still be sensitive to the differences between the individual countries. The Austria case is a good example of how the standards in the European context vary; it would have been impossible to do anything similar in relation to bigger member states, to France or Germany. Whether the APRM will overcome this and other problems remains to be seen.

In view of the crises that have emerged in Africa over the past few years – in Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe – it is obvious that the achievements listed in this section look fairly moderate indeed. But expecting considerable changes in a short period of time is simply not realistic: NEPAD is in the end meant to be a long-term process, lasting maybe 15 to 20 years. It is also worth noting that the best strategy for NEPAD might be to first concentrate on a very limited number of projects/topics and try to achieve some visible results in these. This might then convince both the currently sceptical parts of African civil society and the international donor community of the real potential of the programme. Alex de Waal (2002) has even argued that NEPAD should become more modest. 'It needs to scale back and focus on the essential core activities.' Here again, however, the essence of NEPAD as both an idea and a concrete project may lead to different conclusions: if the initiative is to remain a realisation of the idea of African renaissance, to be effective as an idea, it is almost bound to cover a great number of different fields.

Relationship with the African Union

The final theme that deserves to be discussed in this chapter is the relationship of NEPAD to the African Union (AU), previously known as the Organisation of African Unity. The AU was officially launched in 2002, with a number of far-reaching political and institutional objectives, in many respects reminiscent to those of the EU. In practice, however, the start of the AU has not been particularly promising. The level of the Union's ambitions is very high, but its resources very limited – not significantly greater than the OAU used to have – and the heterogeneity of the continent immense. It has thus even been argued that the launch of the Union was a mere change of name.

NEPAD is officially a programme of the AU; or, in the wording of the NEPAD Initial Action Plan (§ 63), the AU is 'the parent body of the NEPAD initiative'. In political rhetoric across the continent this is confirmed time and again:

NEPAD is considered the AU's 'main development and anti-poverty instrument'. The expected course of development is that more and more AU members – currently 53 – will become part of NEPAD and these two bodies will thus merge with time. In this respect *'l'Afrique à deux vitesses'* seems to exist already, very much in the same sense as the *debateurs* of European integration have sometimes envisaged, even though the level of integration in Africa cannot really be compared to that of Europe. So far, however, the relationship between the two organisations/processes is still essentially undefined and vague. In the words of Alex de Waal:

> "[..] linkage between the OAU/African Union and NEPAD has remained largely at the level of rhetoric. If we examine the structures of NEPAD and the OAU, we see that there is little convergence between the two. The NEPAD implementation committee has total discretion and merely reports to the African Union summit, the AU secretariat is represented at the (lower-level) NEPAD steering committee. There is no AU control, let alone veto, over NEPAD. (de Waal 2002, 468)

Several reasons can be given for why the relationship has remained this unclear – or, in fact, why NEPAD has been guaranteed such a significant degree of independence *vis-à-vis* the AU. First of all, the drafters of NEPAD, particularly Mbeki and his staff, no doubt realised that the OAU/AU does not have, and will not have in the near future either, the necessary resources to independently manage a project of such magnitude as NEPAD. Secondly, because the principles of democracy and good political and economic governance are so central to the international community at the moment and because of the historical encumbrances that the AU was bound to inherit from the OAU – accusing the West of neo-colonialism tended to be high on the OAU agenda – it was rightly assumed that the AU would not be able to impress the world outside of Africa. Particularly the fact that Libya and its leader Mohammed al-Gaddafi have played a central role in the OAU/AU was deemed to undermine the reputation and acting capacity of the organisation. Finally, South Africa is widely seen as the potential development engine of the continent. NEPAD must therefore have as close links with it as possible. Addis Ababa, where the

headquarters of the AU are located, appeared a far too distant location for the founding fathers NEPAD.

The unclear division of labour between NEPAD and the AU is one the most crucial challenges NEPAD faces. It is not far-fetched to assume that the relationship is a potential source of conflict: some African leaders may be willing to support the AU instead of NEPAD, and some others may be willing to invest all their energy on NEPAD to the extent that the functioning capacity of the AU significantly diminishes. This is also a crucial question for the international donor community. There are two more or less separate bodies through which the donors could channel their ODA, and it may sometimes be difficult to know which of them to use. At the moment NEPAD certainly seems a more promising alternative, but what is important is that, as NEPAD seems to become a club of more successful, better governed countries, support for the less well-off countries should **not** start to decline. NEPAD should not be supported at the expense of those who truly need help.

2. Central Notions

As mentioned at the outset, NEPAD can also be understood or analysed from a broader and somewhat more theoretical perspective, that is, as an example of one important aspect of current world politics. The question is, after all, of a new *Partnership*, a partnership that needs to be conceptualised somehow.

Four or five concepts – *region/civilisation, dialogue, world opinion,* and *re-embedment* – form the framework of our analysis. Table 1 below helps to clarify the relationship between these concepts. Regions/civilisations are political actors that increasingly seem to engage in different kinds of dialogues with other regions/civilisations. Dialogues are needed because there is hardly any ideology left that would set the guidelines for the interaction of different actors; solutions to problems must be found one by one. In the context of regional/civilisational interaction, we can say that dialogues have two main underlying aims, in addition to the formal objectives that they are conducted for. On the one hand, they influence 'the world' or world opinion, which is, to a great degree, determined by Western elites but also includes a number of other features. On the other hand, dialogues help to recreate the civilisation itself; they are always directed to the domestic audience as well. This latter process is here referred to with the notion of re-embedment. Re-embedment seems to have become particularly important in the era of globalisation, as the rapid changes in people's mental and physical environment seem to detach them from their 'natural' milieus.

The theme of identity is significant for all four concepts. Civilisation is essentially an identity-political project; dialogue is a means to come into contact with other actors – in theoretical jargon, the Other – and thereby it is an identity-building mechanism; world opinion and people's 'universal', global identity are closely interrelated; and re-embedment is almost synonymous with identity-building.

Table 1: The conceptual framework

Concept	Primary meaning	In the era of globalisation:.	In practice...
Region/ civilisation	Actor/ tendency towards actorness	Ever stronger regions emerge to counterbalance, advocate, or discipline the forces and values of globalisation. Regions do not follow a fixed civilisational logic, but to the extent they involve identity-based cultural values, the question may be of a civilisational project.	Africa (and the 'West')
Dialogue	Means	Increasingly a value in itself as moral and ideological norms no longer provide overarching guidelines for interaction.	NEPAD
World opinion	External target	A two-level concept: refers both to the Western elites or to people at large. Can also be seen as an actor in itself.	Increased aid; measures to halt marginalisation
Re-embedment	Internal target	Identities must be re-embedded, re-rooted, into traditional culture as globalisation seems to lead to increasing disembedment.	Internal capacity-building; creation of cultural pride

Civilisation/region

Let us begin with the notion of civilisation and the way Samuel Huntington understands it. Even though the definition he gives includes a number of components[13], one widely discussed feature seems to determine his understanding of civilisations: they have a tendency to drift into mutual conflicts. Huntington's worldview is thus true to the basic assumptions of the realist school. His world is essentially that of competition and conflict, not of cooperation and cooptation. The following passage from his *Clash of Civilizations* is probably the most illuminating example of this:

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[13] Huntington's definition includes five central features. First, there is no in-built idea of order in the notion of civilisation; the question is *not* of (Western) civilisation (in singular) as opposed to 'barbaric' other cultures. Second, civilisations are based on cultural factors, for example on religion, language, and historical experiences, and the common identity that these factors bring forth. The third point is closely related to this: civilisations are very comprehensive; they are the broadest cultural entities. Fourth, civilisations are mortal but still very permanent. And finally, civilisations do not command any political power over their territories; the coherence of a civilisation depends entirely on cultural aspects (Huntington 1998, Ch. 2.)

> 'It is human to hate. For self-definition and motivation people need enemies: competitors in business, rivals in achievement, opponents in politics. They naturally distrust and see as threats those who are different and have the capability to harm them. The resolution of one conflict and the disappearance of one enemy generate personal, social and political forces that give rise to new ones.' (Huntington 1998, 130.)

In a later passage, Huntington goes so far as to explicitly reject the possibility of positive interaction, at least when it comes to the relationship between members of different civilisations. He rejects the fact that human beings also need friends, associates in business, supporters in achievement, partners in politics:

> 'Relations between groups from different civilisations however will be almost never close, usually cool, and often hostile. Connections between states of different civilisations inherited from the past, such as Cold War military alliances, are likely to attenuate and evaporate. Hopes for close intercivilisational "partnership", such as were once articulated by their leaders for Russia and America, will not be realised.' (Huntington 1998, 207.)

As is well known, Huntington's views have been widely criticised. Three critical points, borrowed from Ilkka Heiskanen's meticulous article (2000), are worth mentioning here. Firstly, Heiskanen argues that instead of the idea of clashes, which emphasises individualistic and diplomatic-military calculations, we should be concerned with an analysis of intra-civilisational and trans-civilisational *relations of power*. Taking an example from African reality, the traditional close ties of African elites with Europe, especially in Francophone Africa, have in many respects determined the nature of politics on the continent over the past decades. These elites have existed between two worlds or civilisations, and this essentially determines the power relations between these countries.

Second, Huntington's definition of civilisation would require a systematic analysis of various cultural components within the civilisation. Huntington seems to assume that most civilisations in the end act in the same way, following the same universal logic, even though he mentions, for example, that a number of cultural factors may make Islam's propensity to conflict

specifically high. It is worth adding that the idea of the clash of civilisations does not take into consideration *the existence of multiple identities* either. People feel at home among very different kinds of cultural components and can easily acquire these components from basically any civilisation, in the age of globalisation more easily than ever before.

Closely related to this, Huntingtonian civilisations seem to emerge too much in relation to other civilisations, although historically civilisations have had a limited number of contacts with each other. It is certainly true that a group defines itself in relation to other groups and thereby actually becomes a group – to a certain extent this is applicable even in the case of civilisations – but this process of definition is a matter of *both* inclusion and exclusion of various cultural components, even in the case of civilisations. The boundaries between the logics of inclusion and exclusion are also constantly moving. Due to globalisation, due to the increased contacts between people, countries, regions, civilisations, the 'balance' between these logics may have become ever less pre-fixed.

Third, Heiskanen proposes that Huntington's view of a strong civilisational nucleus, of core states, be replaced by an idea of a web within the civilisation. Here, the present author would like to find a midway. It is certainly worth perceiving civilisations in terms of a web, with various and constantly varying constellations of power; even smaller states can have surprisingly large amounts of power when it comes to specific fields of life (e.g. Switzerland as a model of federal politics and democracy). Kai Eriksson (2003) has even argued that the web has become the primary metaphor for understanding the world today, a metaphor that has replaced such older metaphors as class and division of labour. Yet, it is obvious that this web also contains concentrations of power, where great powers dominate in most social fields.

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In light of these criticisms, 'civilisation' becomes a more blurred (or perhaps post-modern) concept than the one originally presented by Huntington; the message seems to be: 'it may make sense to speak about a civilisation but it may still be better to analyse only parts of it'. The notions of region and regionalisation may therefore offer a way to operationalise the logic of civilisations. Using these terms also seems to turn over one of Huntington's central starting points. He seems to believe in a predestined super-structure as the foundation of civilisations, but the notion of region reminds us that civilisations are always a sum of a number of different, smaller, changing, dynamic components.

In the past decades regional cooperation has rapidly increased worldwide, to the extent that regions have come to challenge the traditionally dominant position of the nation-state. Four main reasons, often interlinked, seem to have determined this regionalisation process. First, we can talk about *capacity-enforcement*: states have realised that through regional cooperation or integration their capacity to act in the world or their overall influence increases. To take a European example, it is possible to argue that such countries as France and Great Britain have in fact tried to reinforce their historical power and position in the world through the European Union. Especially during the heydays of the Cold War, the EU actually provided a neutral camouflage under which these countries could act, for example, in the Third World. On the other hand, staying outside any regional cooperation may sometimes provide a source of power for a country. Switzerland could be seen as a case in point.

Secondly, in many an analysis, the emergence of new regional blocs has been related to the so-called Washington consensus, simply to the fact that in the globalised world, the creation of ever bigger trading blocs is believed to be beneficial for economic growth, through, for example, lower tariff levels. In the words of Mecham, the new regionalism is 'geared to supporting structural reforms to make economies more open, market-based, competitive and democratic' and attractive for development (Mecham 2003, 375). Here we can

also make a distinction between the notions of *expansion* and *discipline*: a regional organisation can explicitly help to expand economic activity within that region, or it can help to discipline the economic practices of the region according to the dominant economic philosophy or ideology.

Third, there is the reverse point to the previous one, regions can offer *protection* from market forces or other real or potential problems. In economic terms the question is often of counterbalancing: the logic of globalisation seems to undermine people's social rights, but in a regional context these rights can be taken into consideration. Another example can be derived from the Baltic Sea region, where regional cooperation also has economic and cultural components, but the primary aspect still seems to be the environmental protection of the Baltic Sea.

Finally, sometimes the main purpose of a region may be to bridge borderlines, even civilisational ones. The next enlargement of the European Union is a good example of this, as it is deemed to finally end of the division of Europe. If Turkey one days is let into the Union as well, this 'bridging' becomes very evident. In this respect, a civilisation process and regionalisation may follow somewhat different logics – the nature of a civilisation as "civilisation" might be undermined, if it too explicitly constructed bridges with other civilisations – but a regionalisation process that crosses the borders between two civilisations can also aim at creating a new civilisation.

NEPAD includes elements of all these four points. The programme is an effort of capacity-building. It seeks both involvement in and protection from globalisation processes and it even endeavours to build a new bridge between Africa and the rest of the world. From a theoretical point of view the crucial question is, however, what the relationship between regions and civilisations is. Or rather, when does a regionalisation process turn into a civilisation process? The answer appears simple: *at the very moment 'regionalisation' enters the world of identity politics, we may be able to speak about a civilisation process.*

In other words, if a regionalisation process contains efforts of creating a common identity for the citizens of that region, and it can be presumed that the countries of that region share a significant number of similar cultural components, for example historical experiences, the logic of that process has become civilisational. We can, for example, perceive the European Union in its current state of development as both a regionalisation and a civilisation process. As we will see later, NEPAD does include a number civilisational elements.

Dialogue

Dialogue is an inherent part of global governance and development policy jargons at present, a metaphor that is expected to provide a solution to most problems of the world; partnerships cannot exist without dialogue. The uses of the notion thus vary from the interaction between individuals to that between continents, from an energy sector dialogue between Finland and Russia to a dialogue between the warlords in Afghanistan. As always, the more widely used a concept is, the more difficult it is to know what it actually means.

Possibly the most important analytical distinction of the concept concerns the *purpose* of dialogue. On the one hand, a dialogue can be an instrument or a means to achieve something concrete: a political goal, more financial aid, more educational cooperation. In the next chapter we will show that a primary justification and objective of NEPAD is to create such dialogue with the developed world – or to influence world opinion in such a way – that more aid would start to pour in and a more positive perception of the continent would begin to prevail as soon as possible.

The other possibility is to understand *dialogue as a goal in itself*. This kind of dialogue is often open-ended and partly undefined. It is not necessarily evident who the primary agents of the dialogue are, or when the dialogue started and when it is supposed to end. Moreover, the dialogue of this type tends to be fairly general and principled in nature; the question is of a *political* rather than a policy or project dialogue (cf. Olsson & Wohlgemuth 2003). It is also worth

noting that if we think of politics in terms of large civilisations, this kind of dialogue may be the only alternative; a civilisation is by definition so self-sufficient that it can only enter in a dialogue on a very general level. At the same time, though, political dialogues with other civilisations are incremental for the recreation of these civilisations. Hence, for Africa the very possibility of engaging in true political, undefined dialogues with the rest of the world appears invaluable, as this may actually help to create African culture in a new way. Especially if we emphasise the idea of 'African renaissance', instead of the NEPAD programme itself, the notion of dialogue-as-a-goal-in-itself appears relevant.

Another noteworthy way of operationalising dialogue, and specifically the *uses* of dialogue, can be derived from the theory of democracy. Democracy and dialogue have a close relationship, although they are by no means synonyms. Of the three basic variants of democracy often named – the liberal, republican and deliberative forms – especially the latter two are relevant as we seek to understand the notion of dialogue. (Cf. Habermas 1996; Goldmann 2001, 143.) In fact, dialogue can be seen as the most important common component of republican and deliberative forms of democracy.

For *deliberative democracy* dialogue is *the* central concept. Deliberative democracy is based on a free and rational discussion between all the relevant actors over the goals and means that are to be achieved. This requires a great deal of mutual understanding, mutual willingness to engage in the debate, in the dialogue. The popularity of this type of democracy has clearly increased in recent years. For example in the rhetoric of globalisation critics, one of the main demands is to increase the amount deliberation, i.e. to increase dialogue. Whether this dialogue actually brings forth the views of the majority of people does not seem to be the primary concern for these critics.

As regards *republican democracy*, dialogue does not appear quite as crucial. Yet, republican democracy is based on the idea of a political community, and

this community comes into being through a common praxis of politics (Habermas: *gemeinsamen Praxis*). This praxis is, or ought to be, essentially dialogical. NEPAD can also be seen as a republican project: it seeks to create a new African political community, very much in a Pan-African style.

The close connection between democracy and dialogue leads to two important points. First, dialogue should be based on equality, at least if it is to be somehow democratic. In the world of dialogue, there should be no donors and aid-receivers, no weak and strong partners. This is naturally seldom the case in practice, but just having this ideal in mind can be significant for the nature of the dialogue. What is also important is that the more general or political the level of dialogue is, the better chances there are that the partners of dialogue have an equal say. In this sense, what NEPAD should strive for is a dialogue concerning the general principles of, say, governance and democracy. This kind of political dialogue might truly transform the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world.

Second, dialogue demands a space where it can be pursued – a political space – but it also produces this space itself. This may have very concrete consequences. By forcing the international community to become part of a new 'public' sphere, NEPAD may make it to pledge to such policies and principles that it would otherwise resist.

World opinion

The notion of world opinion is regularly used by journalists, but it is surprisingly difficult to find references to it in scholarly literature. The term that academics seem to prefer is *public opinion*, but there are also a number of other possible almost-synonyms to 'world opinion', as Christopher Hill has convincingly shown (1996, 115). 'The international community', 'the world', 'humanity' and 'civilization' are all widely used, but even such terms as 'the common European home', the 'new world order', the 'end of history', or 'global governance' can sometimes refer to the same phenomenon. The most

interesting expression might be that of 'the judgement of history' which implies that world opinion may have a diachronic, future-oriented dimension as well. This may be particularly important as we think about the concrete uses of 'world opinion'.

'Public opinion' is a recent, modern innovation, closely related to the 18th and 19th century ideologies of enlightenment and nationalism; the 'nation' and the 'public' (and its 'opinion') are historically the two sides of the same coin. (Cf. Hill 1996, 113.) At the turn of the 20th century the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde emphasised that public opinion only emerges when a great number of people have access to the printed media. This point is certainly also relevant as we think of world opinion in the global age. People all over the world utilise, or are ruled by, the same information sources, such as BBC World, TV5, CNN, or the *International Herald Tribune, Financial Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. In this sense it might be possible to speak about *world* opinion. In reality, however, this opinion does not represent the world: the global media create a very West-centric and also elitist picture of the globe, by no means a representative one. It might be better to talk about an *'international information order'* where the existence of a 'world opinion' actually confirms the unequal distribution of power in the world. On the other hand, it is obvious that even the national public opinions are increasingly dependent on the 'views of the world'.

For our purposes, a useful conceptualisation of public opinion originates from the pen of Ferdinand Tönnies, a German classical sociologist of the late 19th century. He made a distinction between two types of public opinion. *Die öffentliche Meinung* alludes to a vague set of opinions in society, so vague that they do not contain any real political power. *Die Öffentliche Meinung*, with a capital Ö, instead refers to a public opinion that is concise enough and powerful enough so as to make a political difference. (Suhonen 1999, 5.) Similarly, we can make a distinction between two, mutually interdependent levels of world opinion. At one level, we have the individuals and institutions that possess the

power of making major political decisions or at least shaping them.[14] What is important is that the liberal democratic and economic values seem to determine the contents of this elite level in the era of globalisation, to the extent that we can talk about a *world political ideology.* Most elites across the world seem to be willing to accept such principles as free trade, macro-economic purity, human rights, the rule of law, and the need for accountability; and to the extent there are contradictory voices they only seem to confirm the main pattern.

As regards the other level, lay men and women across the globe constantly formulate views about international affairs and also express these views in various ways, but the extent to which these expressions influence political decisions is very hard to know. When we think about the worldwide reactions to the US policy in Iraq in the winter and spring of 2003, all the massive demonstrations against the war that took place, there is hardly any doubt that some sort of a world opinion existed – perhaps more clearly visible across civilisational boundaries than ever before in human history. To a certain extent, this opinion was formed independently from the world elites. The Twin Tower tragedy and the world's reactions to it provide another recent example. The whole world seemed to be in mourning: ordinary people on all continents participated in the sorrow, and this sorrow was by no means determined by the elites. This may also have led to a very concrete political consequence, although it is hard to tell how significant the impact of this factor was. The Bush administration deemed that the USA had 'the world on its side', which then made the ousting of the Taleban regime easier.

This leads to two interrelated questions: to what extent can world opinion be a political actor in itself; and to what extent 'world opinion' can be used instrumentally? First, it is obvious that as the level of global awareness has risen, the views of the world have become to play an increasingly actor-like

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[14] Christopher Hill (1996) wants to make a distinction between the state (and its institutions) and individuals. He specifically mentions five groups of non-state actors that essentially define world opinion: religion, secular moral leaders, business, the media, and cross-national organisations.

role, whenever major political decisions are taken. What is also important is that *it is increasingly in relation to world opinion that regions/civilisations must construct their distinctive features.* World opinion has thus become a kind of an extraterritorial Other; in that sense it also resembles an independent political actor.[15] Regarding the second question, as it is so difficult to delineate the world opinion exactly, it can far too easily be used for any kind of political purpose, for justifying questionable political deeds. Even Robert Mugabe can claim that the world opinion will in the end condemn the actions of the EU against his regime.[16] There is no simple way of dealing with this problem – the only solution is perhaps to be aware of the inherent complexity of the notion. It is also noteworthy that if a political project somehow seeking to utilise 'world opinion', wants to be successful, it must keep both (or all) levels of the notion in mind. For NEPAD, for example, it is not only important to convince the international community of the need to change its attitude to Africa, but the programme should eventually also change the general public perceptions towards Africa.

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[15] The notion of world opinion has often been used in the context of military conflicts. Wilcox et al. analyse 'world opinion' in the context of the Gulf War, and conclude that residents in many different countries shared similar kinds of views when it came to the interpretation of those events. They nevertheless conclude [...] "although we conclude that we can speak of world opinion in the case of the Kuwait crisis, some caveats are in order. First, it is unlikely that a world opinion with the level of consensus we have stipulated would have existed in earlier conflicts. Moreover, the existence of a world opinion does not imply that this consensus had an impact on the actions of any nation or international body." Wilcox et al. 1993, 88-89.

[16] The misuse of public opinion is of course not a new phenomenon. Mark Lilla (2002) writes: "Interestingly, the concept of tyranny did not disappear in the nineteenth century, it simply migrated from the realm of politics to that of culture: political optimism and cultural pessimism went hand in hand. Tocqueville set the tone when he spoke of the "soft despotism" of public opinion and the "tyranny of the majority" which modern mass forms of democracy made possible. For John Stuart Mill the real challenge to human liberty no longer came from wicked kings or corrupt institutions, it came from "the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling," while for Marx industrial capitalism maintained its tyranny over the working classes through the subtle working of bourgeois ideology..." Mark Lilla, The New York Review of Books, October 24, 2002, p. 28

Re-embedment

The final concept of our framework is re-embedment. In *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990, 79-80), Anthony Giddens defined the concept as 'the reappropriation or recasting of disembedded social relations so as to pin them down [...] to local conditions of time and place.' The idea is, in other words, that the modern or post-modern or globalised world has ever more clearly cut off people from their traditional meaning systems and traditional patterns of life. In Giddens' terminology there are two primary mechanisms that contribute to this disconnection or disembedment: symbolic tokens and 'expert systems'. Money is the most widely known example of symbolic tokens. As an artificial means of exchange, it destroys the 'natural' relationship between goods; a fur is not paid for with, say, mustard. Meteorology and meteorologists are an example of expert systems; we no longer read the signs of nature to forecast weather changes, but rely on the prognoses offered by meteorologists. Re-embedment could thus be seen as an emancipatory project: it seeks to challenge the power or domination that the symbolic tokens and expert systems have on our lives.

Giddens's way of using the notion re-embedment is primarily individualistic, pertaining to the micro-level, but we could see the notion in a civilisational context as well. Huntington talks about what he calls 'torn countries', countries that are placed between two (or more) civilisations and are currently inclined to make a civilisational shift or transformation. He names Turkey, Mexico, Russia and Australia as the principal torn countries. This kind of civilisational shift is highly demanding as it actually includes two separate processes: the old cultural patterns must be disconnected and new ones embedded and internalised. The point here is, however, that in the era of globalisation disembedment is not only a problem of torn countries, but most of the world is facing unforeseen pressures of a culture shift. How different cultures cope with this pressure varies widely, for example depending on the extent to which a culture relies on its own expert systems. On the face of it, it seems that Africa has not done particularly well in this respect; it has been dominated by external expert systems, and thus become disembedded and maybe even marginalised.

Another useful concept in this context is *Heimat* – a German term that basically means 'home' or 'home region', but is also something more. Maybe it could be defined through a negation: it is the home where nothing, no meaning system of the individual, has been disembedded. In his magnum opus *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Ernst Bloch, the German philosopher, sees *Heimat* as the final utopia. This is important here as well: a culture may have to be recreated and reconstructed so that it truly becomes a *Heimat* for its members, a place where the individual would not have to think continuously that there is somewhere a much better place. The notion of hope is also relevant here. Re-embedment, the creation of a *Heimat* for the individual, is based on the hope that there are alternative ways of leading one's life.

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind that the notion of re-embedment may include the seeds of a kind of colonial logic. For example, an outsider may talk about a disembedded culture as s/he analyses, say, an African country, but in reality s/he has simply failed to read the hidden codes of that country's culture. Indeed in all cultures there is a great deal of ability to mould external influences to fit the culture's own purposes. If we talk specifically about Africa and Africans again, there is little doubt that for example many technical devices have assumed an African form already. In the words of Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz (1999, 246) 'there is scarcely any evidence that the use of modern technological instruments has made Westernisation more likely. The reverse seems to be true – as though Western modernity was being Africanised.' To conclude, embedment and disembedment processes take place in all cultures all the time, but the external and internal conditions of them vary. To the extent embedment creates cultural self-sufficiency it can be judged as having been successful.

Let us now return to an explicit analysis of NEPAD.

3. Relationship to the International Community

As we have looked at earlier, NEPAD seeks to halt the (perceived) marginalisation of Africa, and therefore change the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world, particularly the 'West' or the 'international community'. This is repeatedly emphasised in the Document:

> [NEPAD is] a call for a new relationship of partnership between Africa and the international community, especially the highly industrialised countries, to overcome the development chasm that has widened over centuries of unequal relations." § 8

> "We [Africans] hold that it is within the capacity of the international community to create fair and just conditions in which Africa can participate effectively in the global economy and body politic." § 41

As we analyse the rhetorical tools that the actors working in the programme use for achieving this goal – the ways in which they seek to influence world opinion or create such dialogues with the donors that would eventually materialise in economic terms – two points seem particularly important. First, NEPAD tries to avoid blaming the 'developed' world, and the former colonial powers in particular, for Africa's misery. Second, as we have mentioned earlier NEPAD strongly adheres to the values of liberal democracy. The Lagos Plan of Action from 1980 provides an illuminating point of comparison with regard to both of these points.

Change of scapegoats

The first paragraphs of the NEPAD Document draw a gloomy picture of the state of development on the African continent. They refer, among other things, to the 'poverty and backwardness of Africa' and to the fact that 'half of the population live on less than US $1 per day'. What is important, however, is that in the rhetoric of NEPAD, the reasons for this misery are multifaceted; it is not simply a result of colonialism or post-colonialism. It is mentioned in a matter-of-fact manner that development has taken different paths in different parts of the world over the centuries, and the African path has not been the most

successful one. The attitude is that, true, the legacy of colonialism has been problematic for Africa, and the prevailing international division of labour are also difficult, but the Africans need to blame themselves as well, especially the fact that they have let themselves have leaders that have ruthlessly exploited their polities. The idea of ownership thus also includes the deeds of the past:

> 'The impoverishment of the African continent was accentuated primarily by the legacy of colonialism, the Cold War, the workings of the international economic system, and *the inadequacies of and shortcomings in the policies pursued by many countries in the post-independence era.*' (§18, emphasis added.)

Compared with earlier all-African development initiatives, the change of paradigm is very clear indeed. In the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980, for example, the Western world was still directly accused of creating the problems that prevailed in Africa. The end of colonialism and the formal independence that African countries had gained had hardly changed anything. The Plan argued, among other things, that

> 'Africa was directly exploited during the colonial period and for the past two decades; this exploitation has been carried out through neo-colonialist external forces which seek to influence the economic policies and directions of African states.' (§ 6)[17]

It is interesting to set this change in attitude in the framework of development theories, and particularly the two central ones of them, dependency and modernisation theories.[18] The Lagos Plan of Action was clearly informed by the ideas of dependency thinking, that is, the explanation for underdevelopment was

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[17] It is worth noting, though, that this rather resentful formulation actually represents a rhetorical radicalisation of the immediate post-independence period. In the 1963 founding Charter of the Organisation of African Unity one of the clauses of the preamble reads: Determined to safeguard and consolidate the hard-won independence as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our states, and to fight against neo-colonialism in all its forms."

[18] Here I agree with the view of Michael Mecham (2003, 371), who argues that "Both approaches were only partial explanations. While modernization theory was misplaced in applying the economic history of developed to developing countries, dependency theory overestimated the importance of external factors and ignored powerful domestic and historical obstacles in individual societies."

looked for in external factors, in the structural inequality of the world system. Conversely, it tended to ignore the influence of domestic factors. NEPAD is certainly much more influenced by modernisation theory; that is, it accepts and even promotes the adoption of models of economic development from the developed world. Yet, in many senses NEPAD seeks to find a compromise between these two paradigms: it seeks to create a balanced understanding between the domestic and the external factors. One could argue that this is part of NEPAD's inherent realism or pragmatism – pragmatism that should guarantee that the dialogue with the 'rich' world could be pursued on a more or less neutral basis, unlike during the earlier decades.

The attitude towards official development assistance (ODA) and to Western support in general also well illustrates the change of paradigms. The Lagos Plan of Action had a very clear view about ODA, as it stated, for example, that ODA 'to African least developed countries should immediately increase substantially' (§275a). In the case of industrial development, the Plan demanded 'a massive transfer of resources to finance industrial projects…' (§ 73a). NEPAD is much more careful in its wording, although it admits that resources are indeed needed from outside the continent, if African countries are to meet the poverty reduction goals. But the crafters of the programme have been well aware of the fact that ODA can also make the aid receivers dependent on the donors in a highly negative manner, and therefore actually become a hindrance to development; it cannot be the final solution from a long-term perspective. NEPAD thus seeks a balanced view in this respect as well, a number of different solutions are proposed:

> [Meeting the international development goals] will require increased domestic savings, as well as improvements in the public revenue collection systems. However, the bulk of the needed resources will have to be obtained from outside the continent. The New Partnership for Africa's Development focuses on debt reduction and ODA as complementary external resources required *in the short to medium term*, and addresses private capital as a longer-term concern. (§ 144, emphasis added.)

Closely related to this is another point that is also emphasised in the Document: African problems are not only African, but they have a great number of spill-over effects across the world. This is apparently a point that has become ever better understood in the aftermath of September 11 as the root causes of terrorism, poverty and relative deprivation, have been discussed. In spite of its relative decline, Africa cannot be a marginal continent. This is a message that NEPAD will have to emphasise time and again on international arenas.

Adherence to 'democratic' norms

As we mentioned earlier, NEPAD closely adheres to the values of (neo)liberal, democratic world order, especially good governance and the rule of law. The Document seems to be consciously formulated so as to echo the dominant philosophy of the donor community as closely as possible. Take, for example, the list of the EU's normative principles presented by Ian Manners in his 2002 article on 'Normative Power Europe'. Manners identifies five 'core' norms of the EU – peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights – and four what he calls 'minor' norms – social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance. The importance of all these principles is explicitly emphasised in the NEPAD Document; one might even suspect that those who wrote it have closely cooperated with EU officials. What is also important is that these values are deemed as imperative for economic development as well. In the words of the Document, 'it is now generally acknowledged that development is *impossible* in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance' (§79; emphasis added).

If this truly reflected changed perceptions among the African leaders, we could talk about a rather fundamental break with the past. For example Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills (forthcoming, 14) argue that 'the commitments to good governance that NEPAD embodies would have been unthinkable commitments on the part of African leaders even ten years ago.' Indeed, democracy has traditionally been perceived in a narrow institutional way in many a corner of Africa; organising democratic elections has been equalised with democracy. In

the extreme form, African leaders have thought that if they support and create basic democratic procedures, this guarantees that they will be regarded positively among the donor community. Hence, democracy until very recently remained a matter of the elites, often only nominally competing ones, in a large group of African countries. (Chabal 2003.)

Given this adherence to democratic norms, it seems obvious that NEPAD also accepts the principle of *conditionality* that has increasingly come to determine western development assistance, first in connection with the macro-economic structural adjustment programmes, but gradually also in terms of politics. In this respect NEPAD is well in line with what has happened in other development cooperation frameworks. For example in the treaties between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, the majority of which are African states, political conditions have gradually assumed an ever more central role. The present treaty, the Cotonou Convention, openly adheres to the democratic political principles and sees the respect for them as the foundation for cooperation. (Kauranen and Vogt 2003.) The attitude of the Lagos Plan of Action was totally different. It explicitly rejected the use of these kinds of political criteria as the foundation of cooperation and aid imbursement. The Plan even argued, regarding the least developed countries, that 'donors should refrain from using non-economic criteria in the allocation of aid' (§275iv).

This can be explained in the light of history. In 1980 the colonial period was still well remembered by African leaders. Political pressure from the side of the former colonialists was therefore still perceived as a very delicate issue. It was thus virtually impossible to use political principles as the basis for development assistance until the late 1980s, because many African countries would have seen this as interference in their domestic affairs. From this perspective, the fact that political conditionality now seems acceptable even for the Africans can be interpreted positively: there is a mutual understanding that the colonial legacy

should be moved to the yellowed pages of history. This is very important if a dialogue based on equality is to emerge.

The seemingly non-critical acceptance of the values of the West has been severely criticised by some civil society and academic circles on the African continent. For them, NEPAD simply embodies the Washington consensus, and it is, first and foremost, a project initiated and in reality led by South African business (this is not true; the involvement of business has been rather modest so far). The interviewees, generally very positive about the possibilities of NEPAD, were well aware of this criticism, but many of them presented plain counterarguments: 'Neo-liberal perhaps, but we in Africa have to be pragmatic, there is no alternative', or that 'you have to get your macroeconomics right'. A few critical remarks were also made. One interviewee simply said that 'NEPAD does not challenge the global rules.'

This points to what is indeed one of the great problems of any criticism of the basic principles of the present world order: *it is difficult to know where to draw the line between pragmatism and* [the neo-liberal] *ideology*. On the face of it, for example building a functioning, non-corrupt state administration is a perfectly commonsense goal, a goal that does not have to be understood in ideological terms. Accordingly, this author does not believe that we should write off such an ambitious programme as NEPAD simply because it includes elements that could be seen as ideologically neo-liberal. In reality, the concrete projects may be informed simply by common sense.

But what we can be critical about is whether the adherence to the values of the international community leads to a situation where domestic developments are no longer understood in their own terms – and therefore not understood at all. For example the role of the state in Africa is so different from that of the 'West' that it may not make any sense whatsoever to employ 'Western' standards as it is being developed. The problem is thus whether there is a stage where this external 'world dimension' actually undermines African ownership. In this

respect the African Peer Review Mechanism may prove crucially important: it needs to interpret the principles of democracy in inherently African ways.

In addition to these liberal democratic norms, the NEPAD Document also clearly conforms with the ideas and goals that have recently been presented within the United Nations system. The Millennium Development Goals, signed by world leaders at the Millennium Summit in 2000, are the primary reference point in this respect. This is certainly a clever policy for NEPAD, as these goals truly seem to represent world opinion. The donor community has approved these goals, which are so general that even the domestic African civil society will find it very difficult to criticise them. (Cf. de Waal 2002, 465.)

Finally, there is no doubt that during the time NEPAD has existed, the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe has deteriorated, and the fact that the leaders of NEPAD have not been willing to strongly condemn the policies of President Robert Mugabe has undermined the credibility of NEPAD in the eyes of the Western world; it has in fact become some sort of a threshold question. A gap has obviously existed between democratic reality and rhetoric. This is not the place to discuss this problem in detail, but let me just mention that most of the interviewees wanted to see this problem through the lenses of pragmatism; the argument being that Mugabe is, after all, so popular among large groups of people in Africa that reproaching him might cause more harm than it would bring about true benefits.

4. Regionalisation-from-within

As mentioned earlier, NEPAD is essentially an effort to create a region that could be competitive in the globalised world. In this sense, it is a matter of regionalisation-in-relation-to-the-others. But as we have already indicated in the discussion about African renaissance, NEPAD seems to have another side as well. It seeks to change the Africans' self-perception, increase their cultural pride, perhaps even create a new kind of common identity. When we pay attention to this side, the notions of civilisation and civilisationalisation may appear more appropriate than those of region and regionalisation. Or alternatively, we could possibly talk about regionalisation-from-within.

It is worth bearing in mind that we can hardly understand this search for a new African self-consciousness separately from the Afro-pessimism that has prevailed in the Western world at least since the latter half of the 1990s. In this respect the efforts to emphasise the uniqueness of African culture are closely related to the outside world. Indeed, the two themes we will take up in the following, 'the cradle of humankind' and 'ownership' also have features that are meant to influence the views of the 'world'.

Cradle of humankind

The NEPAD Document mentions a number of cultural factors that Africans should be proud of and that make the continent something worth cultivating in the future. By way of example, 'Africa's rich cultural legacy is reflected in its artefacts of the past, its literature, philosophies, art and music' (§179). Even the fact that in many an African country people still live closer to nature than in other parts of the world is mentioned. 'Africa has a major role to play in maintaining the strong link between human beings and the natural world' (§15). Perhaps the strongest formulation of this cultural pride is the one below, as it gives praise to Africa as the birthplace of humanity – this is naturally a formulation that is also meant to make an impact on the world opinion:

> Modern science recognises Africa as the cradle of humankind. As part of the process of reconstructing the identity and self-confidence of the peoples of Africa, it is necessary that this contribution to human existence be understood and valued by Africans themselves. Africa's status as the birthplace of humanity should be cherished by the whole world as the origin of all its peoples. § 14 (cf. §178)

Two points in this pattern of argumentation are specifically interesting. First, and as should be clear by now, it can be described as an effort at re-embedment. African culture is not only 'okay', but it is genuine and unique, and in many respects even 'more' so than other cultures. There is no need to look for models from elsewhere. The Africans should look for their *Heimat* where they are, not from elsewhere – the brain drain from Africa is one of the great problems of the continent.

Secondly, in this pattern of argumentation 'Africa' is treated as a single entity. Regional and state-level differences are mentioned here and there in the Document, but in general the question seems to be of Africa as one whole: one cultural unit, one civilisation. This has its pragmatic reasons: it may be that in order to survive in the global competition, all Africans should combine their forces – as one of the interviewees emphasised, the crafters of NEPAD have realised that 'Africa should move together'. The promoters of NEPAD seem to believe that this joining-of-forces becomes the more possible the more cultural affinity and togetherness there is.

It is worth bearing in mind that understanding Africa as one cultural unit is, historically and in terms of identity building, by no means a new phenomenon. Nation-state identities have generally remained vague in Africa, to a great degree because of the artificiality of state borders. On the other hand, most African countries have basically similar kinds of historical experiences of the eras of slave trade and colonialism and of the struggle for independence, and they have therefore been obedient listeners to those espousing the Pan-African ideology. As a consequence, a common African identity has 'traditionally' (or at least since the late 19th century) played a much more significant role in relative terms than for example 'the European identity' for Europeans

(nevertheless tribal identities have certainly been dominant in Africa). In this respect, NEPAD is only a continuation of an old pattern of understanding the African continent by many Africans themselves.

Ownership and involvement of civil society

Closely related to the focus on cultural self-sufficiency is the notion of ownership, that is, the idea that whatever projects there are, they must be planned, governed and evaluated by Africans themselves. The NEPAD Document emphasises this repeatedly; it is one of the main aspects and objectives of the programme:

> "Across the continent, Africans declare that we will no longer allow ourselves to be conditioned by circumstance. We will determine our own destiny and call on the rest of the world to complement our efforts." (§ 7)

The idea of ownership is by no means a new innovation in the African context but, rather, one of the age-old dreams on the continent – ever since the ideals of Pan-Africanism were formulated. The struggle for independence was also in many senses a matter of ownership. The precise term has, however, changed over time. In the Lagos Plan of Action, which, as we have seen, directly condemns the Western world, the term that was used was self-reliance:

> "Africa must cultivate the virtue of self-reliance. This is not to say that the continent should totally cut itself off from outside contributions. However, these outside contributions should only supplement our own effort: they should not be the mainstay of our development." (§ 14iii)

But the underlying spirit of NEPAD regarding ownership has changed considerably in comparison to earlier decades. First of all, ownership does not seem to imply an uncritical attitude towards the own achievements; both the negative and the positive aspects of the past are owned. This is also crucially important from the point of view of democracy. Democracy includes, by definition, a strong element of self-criticism, of self-reflection. Democracy and ownership are thus closely interlinked: only a broadly understood notion of

ownership, which includes responsibility for one's own mistakes, can lead to such self-criticism that is needed for democracy to flourish.

Secondly, ownership does not mean that the involvement of the outside world should be minimised. Instead, African ownership should be well compatible with partnership with the developed world; or maybe ownership is the prerequisite for such partnership that is based on equality. Ownership does not mean 'doing alone' but 'doing together – but on our own terms'. It is meant to be a guarantee that 'we will do our best, if you pledge to help us'. In this sense the idea of African ownership has been geared to raise positive reactions in the 'developed' world, even in its aid-critical circles. As mentioned earlier, there are already signs that this truly is a successful strategy.[19]

Whether the principle of ownership has actualised during the first two years of NEPAD's existence, is still questionable. As we mentioned earlier, perhaps the most widely spread critical argument towards NEPAD is that the views of civil society have not been taken into consideration in the planning of the programme. There has been hardly any role for African intelligentsia in the process either. It thus seems that Africanness and African ownership has not been appreciated to a sufficient degree in spite of the beautiful rhetoric; the question has been of a purely political and administrative process.

The interviewees were naturally well aware of this criticism, but their solution was usually simple: 'The idea is to gradually engage civil society'. They also repeatedly mentioned that it is the task of political leadership to come up with new ideas and programmes that then may eventually spread to wider circles of society. It is also worth noting that in principle the Document pays a great deal of attention to the fact that civil society, ordinary Africans, should be the

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[19] Henning Melber (2002) recounts one US comment: "Mbeki's characterisation of MAP [later transformed into NEPAD] as 'Africans taking their destiny in their own hands' is perfectly pitched and he must never change his message. Translating that to Western voters means keeping the begging bowl out of sight."

engines of the programme. It states among other things that 'the agenda is based on national and regional priorities and development plans that must be prepared through participatory process involving the people' (§47) and that NEPAD 'will be successful only if it is owned by the African peoples united in their diversity' (§51).

But be that as it may, the criticism is partly justified. Whether NEPAD will somehow change attitudes among ordinary men and women, and increase their willingness to get involved in various social projects and politics is, after all, *the* key question of NEPAD. As one of the interviewees remarked, at the moment 'NEPAD does not change anything on the ground.' Whether it will in the long run, remains to be seen.

Concluding Remarks

As the discussion above has shown, we can certainly find aspects in NEPAD that seem to follow some kind of civilisational logic. In other words, on surface the values of NEPAD are certainly neo-liberal, and it does not seek to challenge the premises of Washington consensus – which may be, as we have noted, only pragmatic. But as we change our perspective, as we think about the programme in terms of its underlying values, we can see it as an effort to somehow 're-embed' Africa's own cultural traditions. NEPAD certainly cannot be understood only as an effort to streamline Africa with the rest of the world, but it is also a genuine effort to create a competitive entity that would be self-sufficient in its own terms. *NEPAD can be seen as a civilisational project that seeks to pursue dialogues with other regions of the world – and thereby to influence the opinions that prevail in those regions – as well as to create new confidence on the African continent itself.*

What the balance between the external and internal targets is and will be is *the* crucial challenge for NEPAD. Or, more precisely, the success of the programme depends on whether it truly can improve the self-sufficiency of Africans – whether it can make the idea of African renaissance concrete. This self-sufficiency can also hinder the coercive and ungrounded imposition of external values on African continent. What is also important is that this distinction between external and internal targets can be understood in terms of the distinction between democracy and ownership – arguably the two most important premises of NEPAD (or between the universalism of democracy and the particularism of ownership). Hence, success of the programme demands that a functioning balance between democracy and ownership is found.

There are naturally other major challenges as well, in addition to the fact that the donors now wait to see if 'acts will follow words' (Vaahtoranta & Vogt 2003). Above all, toleration towards non-democratic behaviour must be very limited indeed. What I have previously argued about the need to include an element of particularity to the way we understood democracy does not, of

course, mean that any kind of rule would deserve the label 'democracy' – Zimbabwe is the true litmus test for the promoters of NEPAD. Positive examples of development are badly needed. Botswana is now the case that is usually referred to in Europe, but others should follow; crises still dominate people's impressions of Africa. The way Uganda has dealt with the HIV/AIDS problem is another example of positive development on the continent; this has been a success and the reasons why it has been deserve a very close scrutiny. The success of the APRM is also of crucial importance here.

As for the future strategy of NEPAD on multilateral arenas, two points appear particularly important. First, the fact that NEPAD is and will remain to a great extent 'only' an ideal – the embodiment of African Renaissance – will have to be repeated time and time again. Even though NEPAD needs to have well-defined *goals*, it ought to be remembered that the programme is also an overall *vision*, a vision for a more decent life for Africans. Hence, although most of the changes we will see taking place on the continent in the coming years cannot be directly attributed to NEPAD, its main messages – such as democracy and ownership – may still have played a role in bringing about the change.

Second, even though NEPAD is based on a vision, it also contains a great deal of pragmatism; it is certainly the most pragmatic development framework Africa has ever had. The argument that 'we do things like this, because it is the most pragmatic way in our African conditions', is an argument that is very difficult to resist, regardless how critical the dialogue partner is. Indeed, the less ideological the nature of politics is the better, especially in Africa where politics has been far too heavily burdened by competing ideologies – which also means that the 'pragmatism argument' should not be misused in an ideological manner. This is also important from the point of view of the close mutual dependency between democracy and ownership: at the end of the day, democracy and ownership are very pragmatic solutions, not the most effective ones perhaps, but pragmatic nevertheless.

In all, there is much that is new, positive and promising in NEPAD, in spite of the great problems it also has. *The western World should therefore support NEPAD as strongly as possible; the dialogue that many different governments and organisations are currently having with NEPAD should continue.* In many senses the programme does provide a unique opportunity to improve the level of living conditions in Africa, the best Africa has probably ever had. Indeed, as one of the interviewees said almost banally, 'it's now or never'.

One important question that needs to be asked in the light of this report is to what extent we will see the emergence of similar dialogues elsewhere in the future and what form will they assume. Africa is of course unique because of its great problems, because of its weakness in relation to basically any other international actor (civilisation). But we have already seen the emergence of a number of similar but still different dialogues in the world. The European Union's foreign policy is already now essentially based on various dialogues, but other regions will also increasingly make use of them. Perhaps these dialogues may contribute to the prevalence of a multilateral world order – and to the transformation of the now prevailing perceptions of the rank order between different civilisations.

Let us finish this paper with a historical parallel. Some 120 years ago, as European leaders gathered in Berlin to decide on the fate of Africa, the ideas of civilisationalisation and improved trade seemed to go hand in hand. In the words of Nadubere (2001, 10) 'The aim of the [Berlin] Conference of 1884 was to "promote the civilisation of the African natives by opening the interior of the continent to commerce" by encouraging "free trade", free navigation along the Niger river and rules which would be acceptable to all European countries who were interested in these resources.' Things change but they also remain the same.

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