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The new partnership for Africa's development-25 years between objectives and challenges

Hebali Daho

University of Mascara 29000, DZ : dahohebali@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1043-7734>

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Abstract:

This intervention aims to introduce the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and evaluate its 24-year journey as a mechanism for improving the continent's economic, political, and social conditions through a set of programs that included agriculture and food security, education and health, good governance standards, integration, and cohesion.

NEPAD faced a series of challenges resulting from the remnants of colonialism, armed conflicts, as well as economic and social conditions and climate fluctuations, which hindered the effective implementation of the proposed programs. To overcome this situation, it is necessary to neutralize the obstacles as a prerequisite for any new step toward adopting developmental programs and a reformist approach that includes governance systems, economic management methods, and resource control. Without this, the set goals will not be achieved, and the planned outcomes will not materialize.

Keywords: NEPAD; development; Africa; goals; challenges.

Résumé :

Cette intervention vise à introduire le Nouveau Partenariat pour le Développement de l'Afrique (NEPAD) et à évaluer son parcours de 24 ans en tant que mécanisme d'amélioration des conditions économiques, politiques et sociales du continent à travers un ensemble de programmes incluant l'agriculture et la sécurité alimentaire, l'éducation et la santé, les normes de bonne gouvernance, l'intégration et la cohésion.

Le NEPAD a été confronté à une série de défis résultant des vestiges du colonialisme, des conflits armés, ainsi que des conditions économiques et sociales et des fluctuations climatiques, qui ont entravé la mise en œuvre efficace des programmes proposés. Pour surmonter cette situation, il est



nécessaire de neutraliser les obstacles comme condition préalable à toute nouvelle étape vers l'adoption de programmes de développement et une approche réformiste qui inclut les systèmes de gouvernance, les méthodes de gestion économique et le contrôle des ressources. Sans cela, les objectifs fixés ne seront pas atteints, et les résultats prévus ne se matérialiseront pas.

Mots-clés : NEPAD; développement; Afrique; objectifs; défis .

1. Introduction:

African countries are characterized by having all been subjected to European colonization for a long period. Although the colonized countries differed, they implemented a single plan based on exploiting human resources and natural resources for their benefit, without considering the rights of the indigenous populations who were deprived of education and healthcare. The situation did not stop there; they also contributed to creating centers of tension through tribal divisions within a single country and border issues that caused armed conflicts and hindered the establishment of strong economies.

After the independence of most African countries in the 1960s, they sought to catch up on the development indicators that colonialism had left behind. African governments made individual efforts to achieve the desired goals, but they did not succeed, especially in light of the strength of other countries and their ability to penetrate Africa to serve their interests by exploiting the available resources in this region of the world.

The Organization of African Unity, since its establishment, has contributed to targeting the development of African countries and addressing their inherited backwardness. It launched developmental initiatives, the most important of which were the Lagos Plan of Action 1980 and the Abuja Treaty, which established the African Economic Community in 1993. However, these efforts were met by global economic powers through their financial institutions with counter-plans such as World Bank loans, which appeared as aid but were, in reality, a continuation of dependency.

With the increasing economic and social challenges, the need for a comprehensive developmental vision emerged, one that would enhance the African continent's capabilities to implement its economic and social programs and confront the exploitation imposed on it by developed countries. In response, African leaders presented a series of developmental programs and plans.

In the late 1990s, the Senegalese president proposed a plan based on investing in infrastructure (roads, railroads, and ports), health, education, and agriculture in partnership with major countries and international funding to achieve self-sufficiency and reduce dependence on foreign countries. The Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo also proposed a development initiative called the Marshall Plan for Africa, drawing a parallel with the American Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe, working to attract investments, enhance African economic integration, reduce dependency, and implement good governance.

The two plans did not find their way to implementation, but they served as a foundation for

establishing a new joint African initiative, called the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This intervention aims to introduce the initiative, its inception, and its intended goals, then highlight the main challenges it faces and propose ways to ensure its effective continuity.

The problem of this research revolves around how challenges have affected the achievement of NEPAD's goals after 24 years of its establishment.

To address this issue, the study was divided into two main sections. The first section covered the inception and objectives of the initiative, while the second section included the challenges that hinder its implementation, relying on the descriptive method.

2. The inception of the NEPAD initiative and its objectives:

The establishment of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 marked the beginning of joint African efforts, during which a series of initiatives were launched, such as the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 and the African Emergency Program for the 1986 reforms. With the success of new economic blocs, especially in Europe, it became necessary to activate new initiatives to keep pace with this development.

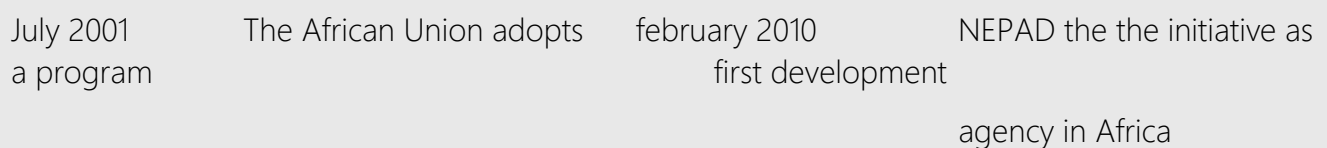
2.1 The emergence of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD):

In 2001, at the Conference of African Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted as a continental vision, representing a commitment by African leaders based on a shared vision and belief.

The content of the initiative includes the pursuit of poverty reduction, supporting economic growth and sustainable development by promoting regional and continental integration, accelerating the empowerment of marginalized social groups, and working to end the marginalization of the African continent and integrate it into the global economy. (developpement agence of african union, auda-nepad)

This endeavor was an inevitable path for African leaders to confront the growing role of regional blocs, especially the European Union, which has reached the integration of member states' economies to mutually benefit from the resources available in each country. In Africa, each country has its own resources, but their exploitation requires the integration of efforts, as some countries face difficulties in connecting with the outside world (lack of maritime outlets) and have weak technical capabilities, while others have natural communication channels with the outside world but lack resources.

Figure 1: The Path to Establishing the NEPAD Initiative:



African leaders . July 2002 Establishment of the Planning July 2018
adopt the initiative and Implementation Agency

Source .(african union agency of developpement auda-nepad)

The NEPAD initiative was formulated by the leaders of five African countries: Algeria, Egypt, Senegal, South Africa, and Nigeria, and then adopted by African countries. Each country had its own vision for the future of the initiative. Algeria believed that Africa should be viewed as a partner in development, not just as a recipient of foreign aid, while also working toward a joint representation of the continent. Nigeria's vision focused on solving the problems of underdevelopment, poverty, and diseases, establishing democratic governments, and achieving security.

While Senegal saw that Africa's development serves the global economy, Egypt stated that the NEPAD mechanism could create new financial resources (official aid, private sector contributions) along with increased aid from developed countries to Africa. (abderazak, 2014)

To manage this initiative, a set of structures has been established, namely (abderazak, 2014):

Presidential Steering Committee: The committee is composed of the heads of state of the five initiating countries and the heads of 15 other countries distributed across the geographical regions of the continent. The committee is responsible for mobilizing international support, promoting the initiative, formulating policies, and developing the work program, with periodic reports on its activities presented to the African Union summit.

Steering Committee: It includes representatives of the heads of state who are members of the Executive Committee, and they are tasked with developing detailed programs for implementing the initiative and managing dialog with partners.

The Presidential Forum of the African Peer Review Mechanism: Composed of the heads of state and government involved in the initiative.

The secretariat: A technical body to assist the committees, based in Pretoria, South Africa.

2.2 Initiative Goals.

The goals of the NEPAD initiative were divided into long-term objectives not tied to a specific timeframe, including eradicating poverty, placing African countries on the path to development, and ending the continent's marginalization. As for the time-bound objectives, they include achieving a GDP growth rate of at least 7% annually for 15 years, reducing poverty, and improving the quality of health and the environment. In general, the main objectives of the initiative were manifested in:

A. Embodiment of good governance.

The test of good governance is based on measuring the following indicators (SUNDARAM, 2012):

- The right of citizens to participate in and oversee the selection of their governments under freedom of expression, media, and assembly.
- Political stability and the absence of violence.

- Improving public services, their quality, and their independence from political pressures, as well as the quality of public policies and the extent to which governments are committed to implementing them.
- The government's perceptions regarding the establishment of sound policies for the development of the private sector.
- Combating corruption by governments.

The NEPAD initiative aims to achieve true good governance through (Nacir 2019)

- Preserving human rights in the economic, social, and political fields.
- Achieving the separation of powers by strengthening the authority and independence of the judiciary and the power and legitimacy of the legislative authority.
- Eradicating political corruption.
- Activating the principles of democracy, political competition, and the peaceful transfer of power.

Achieving good governance will positively reflect on the stability of political systems and avoid the phenomenon of military coups that the African continent has suffered from since its countries gained independence. This is because democratizing political life will allow for the expansion of popular participation and increase levels of public satisfaction, which is the vision targeted by the NEPAD initiative.

B. Reducing poverty.

Most of the world's low-growth and poorest countries are located in Africa. Out of 50 countries of this type, 34 are in Africa, including 15 countries experiencing rebellions, conflicts, or protests, where most of the population lives in poor social conditions, while a minority monopolizes power and wealth. (Leila., 2020)

Poverty is considered the main cause of other social phenomena such as illegal immigration, the escalation of crime, increased human trafficking, and the exploitation of children. Its high prevalence in African societies has hindered development plans and weakened the sense of belonging among people to their countries. Therefore, the NEPAD initiative has made the eradication of poverty, or at least its alleviation, one of its main objectives, especially in the southern countries of the continent and those suffering from wars and disturbances.

C. Regional integration.

European countries have achieved in the modern era, by uniting within the framework of the European Union, what they could not achieve individually before. From a unified currency to a unified foreign policy, Europe has become capable of facing other global powers such as the United States and China.

Based on that, the development of Africa will not be truly achieved except through the participation, integration, unification of policies, and coordination of efforts among its countries to be able to exploit and exchange their resources collectively. The realization of regional integration in the

NEPAD initiative is based on activating partial regional groupings within the framework of the continent's geographical division or the complete gathering of all the continent's countries within the African Union.

D. International Partnerships.

The Africa Development Initiative aims to achieve parity between African partners and their counterparts from other countries, meaning considering African countries as equal partners to other nations, not merely consumers who must submit to the international market rules set by developed countries, but as active participants and shapers of those rules.

E. Education and health.

Health and education are two key sectors worthy of attention due to their importance to African communities, considering their unsatisfactory state in the continent's region. The decline in the quality of education and access to it has contributed to increased illiteracy, and the poor quality of health services has led to higher mortality rates and the spread of serious diseases. Therefore, the goal of improving the quality of education and health has been prioritized within the NEPAD initiative.

F. Agriculture and food security.

The NEPAD initiative includes, according to the African Union Agenda 2063:

- Coordinating the African common position on food systems from production, processing, marketing to consumption.
- Increasing the use of innovative technology in genetic modifications and agricultural irrigation to create advanced food systems.
- Formulating mechanisms and services for financing and insurance for small and medium enterprises to strengthen their capacities as the frontline in serving the food system.
- Strengthening local and national food markets that operate randomly by integrating them into the African Free Trade Area, which would support the opportunities for intra-African marketing of products.
- Doubling local food production by improving agricultural productivity to raise the level of food self-sufficiency and independence from developed countries, which have come to use food as a weapon to manipulate African political systems for their own interests.
- Sustainable management of agricultural lands and water, especially since climate change has significantly impacted the continent, leading to the expansion of desertification of agricultural lands and the drying up of water sources due to low rainfall and weak agricultural planning, which resulted in the depletion of groundwater resources. For this reason, the NEPAD initiative has included the development and coordination of agricultural programs in African countries within its agenda.

3. Challenges of the initiative.

The new initiative for the development of Africa faces difficulties imposed by the volatile reality of African countries, which oscillate between political conflicts and armed movements, leading to instability. Additionally, there are economic and social challenges fueled by the mismanagement of resources and the steady increase in population.

3.1 Political and security challenges.

The African continent has witnessed 83 military coups since independence in the mid-20th century in more than 20 countries. Most African countries have failed to establish rational constitutions that consider the diversity of the African society in terms of religion, culture, and language. Most of them have retained the colonial style that does not respect individual rights and freedoms (Laid, 2023). The NEPAD initiative adopts governance mechanisms based on promoting democracy, human rights, and freedoms, but the political reality in most African countries shows the dominance of closed and unidirectional political systems over power, which do not realistically recognize these mechanisms, even though they include them in their constitutions.

Often, immediately after the success of military coups, constitutions are suspended, and a long transitional period is planned during which military leaders, supported by foreign countries different from those that supported the previous regimes, take power, as happened in Mali and Niger. Africa becomes a battleground for global power struggles, with privileges for the exploitation of natural resources granted to foreign companies at the expense of developing the economic programs adopted by the NEPAD initiative.

Even the countries that experience a certain degree of political stability face the challenge of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programs being hindered by the weak will of their political systems, which do not believe in the content of these programs or in the continent's ability to overcome its economic and social realities toward a better future. As a result, they refrain from allocating financial resources for this purpose and refuse to break free from the dependency on developed countries, which are often the former colonizers, in order to maintain the continuity of the political system and keep its individuals in power.

The operations of armed groups in the Sahelian countries of Africa doubled between 2016 and 2022, increasing from 194 operations to more than 800. This prompted 17 countries to sign agreements with Russia for armament worth .7 billion in 2020 (Arabi, 2023). Armed groups are spread across Mali, Niger, Chad, and Nigeria, but their threats extend to other countries and even reach North Africa. In addition to the role of armed groups in the prevailing instability in Africa, asymmetric threats exacerbate this situation, as the continent suffers from waves of illegal migration toward North Africa and Europe.

Table 1: Number of migrants by regions within Africa from 1990 to 2020.

	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Central Africa	1 461 155	1 775 284	1 961 951	2 436 802	3 479 911	3 861 568
North Africa	2 403 325	1 900 448	1 749 718	1 952 040	2 138 918	3 167 926
East Africa	5 959 183	4 847 119	4 788 649	4 743 657	6 696 922	7 682 801
West Africa	4 470 738	5 261 131	5 957 048	6 321 637	7 067 138	7 552 097
South Africa	1 395 265	1 267 695	1 582 721	2 352 541	3 477 903	3 125 07

Source : (Ibrahim., 2023)

It is noted in the table that the number of migrants in 2020 exceeded 23 million, a significant figure that reflects the continent's loss of some of its members whose potential could have been utilized in developmental programs. It also serves as a leverage for European countries to pressure political regimes in Africa by refusing to accept them, deporting them, or establishing detention centers in African transit countries.

These data indicate serious security threats that will directly disrupt the programs of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in terms of localizing economic projects, which means the failure of the economic aspect of the initiative. On the other hand, they provide a pretext for legitimizing foreign interventions, monopolizing power by political regimes, and restricting freedoms, which means the failure of the political aspect (good governance).

The political and security challenges of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) must be taken seriously by assessing their negative impact on the progress of the proposed programs and finding ways to overcome this impact, as well as reviewing the political systems' orientations toward greater openness to the principles of democracy and good governance.

3.2 Economic and social challenges.

African communities suffer from high poverty rates, which are matched by an annual increase in the number of people at risk of malnutrition. The following table shows the prevalence of food deficiency in Africa compared to other regions of the world.

Table No. 2: The percentage of food insecurity prevalence in Africa and the world.

Region	2005	2010	2015	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
The world	12,2	8,7	7,7	7,1	7,2	7,5	8,5	9	9,1	9,1
Africa	19,9	15,9	16	16,7	17,1	17,4	18,8	19,3	19,9	20,4
Asia	13,9	9,3	7,5	6, 3	6,3	6,6	7,8	8,2	8,2	8,1
Europe	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5

Source : (FAO, 2024)

The table shows that the percentage of the population suffering from malnutrition has been continuously increasing since 2005, despite the programs adopted by the NEPAD initiative and supported by the United Nations. In contrast, other regions of the world record lower rates of malnutrition, reflecting the success of their social programs.

The infrastructure in Africa is characterized by severe weakness, as only 38% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa has access to the electricity grid, and less than 10% have internet connectivity. Meanwhile, only 25% of the road network in Africa is paved. The financial gap to provide exceptional infrastructure is estimated at 130 to 170 billion dollars annually. (african union.2020 .)

The population of Africa has reached 1.4 billion people, and the United Nations expects it to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, which is 25% of the world's population. By the end of the century, Africa is expected to be the largest source of population growth, with its share reaching 40% of the world's (world bank, 2025) population. This continuous increase will inevitably lead to a higher demand for new financial resources to cover the costs of providing health, education, and infrastructure services for the cities that need to be built.

The increase in population leads to a rise in needs, and consequently, the need for funding to provide food as a priority, followed by health, education, transportation, and other essentials. Any shortfall in these areas threatens to expose countries to famines, epidemics, and diseases, as has happened in many African countries (Somalia, Niger, etc.).

The programs announced by NEPAD require financial allocations that are difficult to provide for many African countries, given the weakness of African financial institutions and the conditions imposed by global banks for providing loans to finance development, which hinders the achievement of the desired goals of the initiative's planning.

The African Development Bank mentioned that the losses incurred by the African continent annually due to the spread of corruption amount to approximately 300 billion dollars, which is about 25% of the continent's total GDP. It also indicated that these losses exceed the total value of aid and grants

that come to the continent from abroad (Abidine , 2019). The number of Africans who reached the poverty line was 30 million in 2021, while 22 million lost their jobs due to the "Corona" pandemic. It is expected that the economic disruptions caused by the crisis in Ukraine will add 4 million new Africans to the extreme poverty line. (african bank of development, 2025)

Estimates predict that Africa could lose between 5 to 15% of its gross domestic product due to the effects of climate change, and the climate financing gap for Africa is likely to widen to 1.2 trillion USD from now until 2030 (Fahmi, 2025). In the same context, the debt burden on the continent's countries has reached a critical point in many African nations, with interest payments consuming about 59.9% of the gross domestic product in some of these countries. (financial times , 2025)

Africa possesses nearly 30 percent of the world's mineral reserves, 8 percent of the world's natural gas, and about 12 percent of the world's oil reserves. The continent also holds 40 percent of the world's gold, 90 percent of the world's chrome and platinum, and has significant reserves of cobalt, diamonds, platinum, and uranium. In the agricultural sector, Africa has 65 percent of the world's arable land and 10 percent of the world's renewable freshwater resources. (united nations, 2025)

The diversity of these resources, as much as it is an important natural source for attracting foreign investments and generating hard currency income, can also be a reason for fueling tribal and sectarian conflicts and a gateway for foreign competition to control the countries of the continent that possess these resources (Mali, Niger, Libya, Sudan).

Table 3: The GDP of the African continent compared to other continents.

Continent	Gross Domestic Product (trillion dollars)	Percentage of world product %
Africa	2,8	2,5
Asia	41,5	36,47
Europe	27,84	24,47
Latin of america	4,33	3,81
North america	35	30,94

Source : (world bank, 2025)

The table shows the weakness of Africa's GDP compared to other regions of the world, where Europe, for example, surpasses it by more than 10 times despite the disparity in capabilities and natural resources between the two continents. Africa's contribution to the global GDP does not exceed approximately 3 percent, which is a very low percentage that reduces the chances of making

an impact on the global economy.

The aforementioned data regarding the continent's economic conditions indicate a continued lag in meeting the requirements for real economic growth and suffering from the negative effects of its political, economic, and social situations, despite 24 years since the adoption of the NEPAD program. Most of the African leaders who embraced the initiative completed their terms without achieving the desired goals, which diminished the trust of the new generations in this program.

4. Conclusion.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) worked to address the developmental situation in the continent characterized by delays in various fields by adopting economic and social programs and supporting and endorsing them by heads of state and government within the framework of the African Union.

The NEPAD initiative faced a series of political, economic, and social challenges, the most significant of which were political instability and the continuation of disturbances and armed conflicts over power, fueled by the plans of former colonial powers to ensure resource exploitation and serve their interests.

In order for the NEPAD initiative to achieve the goals for which it was created, it is necessary to take into account the proposed solutions to the challenges it has faced, which requires:

- The genuine belief among decision-makers in the continent's ability to overcome its current situation is reflected in a sincere political will toward activating the initiative's programs.
- Adhering to the rules of democracy and the peaceful transfer of power, and rejecting all forms of power monopolization that often lead to armed conflicts.
- Working to achieve and continuously maintain political stability in African countries, as it is a key factor in creating favorable conditions for improving other areas.
- Ensuring individual rights and public freedoms to instill loyalty and a sense of belonging to the homeland and to Africa in general.
- Settling border disputes between African countries to pave the way for the implementation of bilateral and collective economic programs.
- Working to limit the expansion of armed groups, which in general are entities operating in the interest of foreign countries.
- Coordinating the foreign policy of African countries to unify positions on global issues and address international challenges.
- Strengthening the role of the African Union as a regional organization authorized to oversee the achievement of African integration.
- Activating the tasks of the African Peace and Security Council as a mechanism to reduce conflict hotspots between and within countries.
- Unifying visions and orientations among countries to defend the continent's interests within an

integrative framework to be able to confront global powers, including economic programs, political stances of the continent's countries, and their relations with world countries and international and regional organizations.

- Reducing external influence that aims to maintain the underdevelopment and division of African countries to ensure the continued exploitation of their resources.
- Each country refrains from implementing economically harmful projects for neighboring countries, even if they yield significant returns, to avoid creating conflict hotspots (dam projects, oil and mineral exploration in border areas without coordination) and to ensure balanced development for the continent.
- Drawing inspiration from global models of regional and continental blocs (the European Union, ASEAN) by revitalizing the African Union and its affiliated organizations.
- Applying sustainable development standards to rationalize the exploitation of natural resources and adapt to climate changes to avoid future negative impacts.
- Adopting an economic strategy based on accounting for resources within the continent and ways to exploit them without resorting to investments from outside the continent, which are often from global companies serving the interests of major countries and investing under conditions that may extend beyond the economic sphere to political bargaining.
- Eliminating the factors causing the increase in illegal immigration, which leads to the loss of human resources and threatens the social fabric of the state. This can be achieved by focusing on the continent's population in terms of providing job opportunities and decent living conditions.
- Reviewing and evaluating the adopted NEPAD programs to identify and address their shortcomings, while updating their implementation mechanisms and the structures responsible for managing them, and comparing them with similar development programs, especially the European Union's experience in economic integration and foreign policy coordination.

The NEPAD initiative has set an agenda for the 2063 horizon, but a realistic view of the political, economic, and social state of the African continent makes it necessary to work on overcoming the obstacles that have prevented effective development since 2001, the year the initiative was adopted, before discussing new agendas and programs. The current conditions will not allow for the achievement of goals in the short and long term unless a joint strategy is adopted to overcome these obstacles, driven by the sincere political will of African countries and the unwavering confidence of political systems in the continent's ability to achieve better outcomes.

Targeting the realization of the African continent's population's confidence in their ability to develop their countries is essential to activate the new partnership initiative for Africa's development, considering them as key actors in the principle of "Africa for Africans." Any foreign role not bound by African participation will only exploit the continent's resources and its people, continuing its backwardness compared to the rest of the world and its dependency on them as a form of indirect colonization.

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