

Challenges to Africa's Economic Development and Barack Obama's Policies toward the Continent thus Far*

Introduction

As a member of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) based in Dakar, Senegal, I have been allowed to grapple with the realities of Africa's economic development efforts. When I think about the continent's economic development challenges and Barack Obama's policies toward the continent thus far, what comes to mind are Africa and the world trading system; mobilising financing for development in Africa; citizenship, democracy and development; education, health, social services and development, and gender equity and equality in development. Thus, I segment my discussion in this paper into four major sections: (i) challenges to the space of Africa's own thinking on development, (ii) external and internal obstacles to Africa's economic development, (iii) Barack Obama's policies toward Africa thus far, and (iv) a call for action. In the end, I draw some conclusions.

Challenges to the Space of Africa's Own Thinking on Development

I recall the series of initiatives by Africans themselves aimed at addressing the development challenges of Africa, in particular the Lagos Plan of Action and the companion African Alternative Framework for Structural Adjustment. Each time, these initiatives were counteracted and ultimately undermined by policy frameworks developed from outside the continent and imposed on African countries. Over the past several decades, a false consensus has been generated around the neoliberal paradigm promoted through the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This stands to crowd out the rich tradition of Africa's own alternative thinking on development. It is in this context that the proclaimed African initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was developed in the same period as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) *Compact for African Recovery*,

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as well as the World Bank's *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?* are to be assessed.

The uneven progress of democratisation, and in particular of the expansion of space for citizen expression and participation are to be noted. The contribution of citizen's struggles and activism to this expansion of the political space, and for putting critical issues of development on the public agenda, must also be acknowledged.

External and Internal Obstacles to Africa's Economic Development

The challenges confronting Africa's development come from two inter-related sources: (i) constraints imposed by the hostile international economic and political order within which African economies operate, and (ii) domestic weaknesses deriving from socioeconomic and political structures and neoliberal structural adjustment policies. The main elements of the hostile global order include, first, the fact that African economies are integrated into the global economy as exporters of primary commodities and importers of manufactured products, leading to terms of trade losses. Second, reinforcing this integration have been the policies of liberalisation, privatisation, and deregulation, as well as an unsound package of macroeconomic policies imposed through structural adjustment conditionality by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These have now been institutionalised within the WTO through rules, agreements, and procedures, which are biased against African countries. Finally, the external and internal policies and structures have combined to generate an unsustainable and unjustifiable debt burden which has crippled Africa's economies and undermined the capacity of Africa's ownership of strategies for development.

The external difficulties have exacerbated the internal structural imbalances of African economies and, together with neoliberal structural adjustment policies, inequitable socioeconomic and political structures have led to the disintegration of African economies and increased social and gender inequity. In particular, African manufacturing industries have been destroyed; agricultural production (for food and other domestic needs) is in crisis; public services have been severely weakened; and the capacity of states and governments in Africa to make and implement policies in support of balanced and equitable national development has been emasculated. The costs associated with these outcomes have fallen disproportionately on marginalised and subordinated groups of African societies, including workers, peasants, and small producers. The impact has been particularly severe on women and children.

Indeed, these developments have reversed policies and programmes and have dismantled institutions in place since independence to create and expand integrated production across and among African economies in agriculture, industry, commerce, finance, and social services. These were programmes and institutions which have, in spite of their limitations, sought to address the problems of weak internal markets and fragmented production structures as well as economic imbalances and social inequities within and among nations inherited from colonialism, and to redress the inappropriate integration of African economies in the global order. The associated social and economic gains, generated over this period, have been destroyed.

This reality should inform our reflections on the NEPAD. We must conclude that, while many of its stated goals may be well-intentioned, the development vision and economic measures that it canvases for the realisation of these goals are flawed. As a result, the NEPAD will not contribute to addressing Africa's development problems. On the contrary, it will reinforce the hostile external environment and the

internal weaknesses that constitute the major obstacles to Africa's development. Indeed, in certain areas like debt, the NEPAD steps back from international goals that have been won through global mobilisation and struggle.

The most fundamental flaws of the NEPAD, which reproduce the central elements of the World Bank's *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century* and the ECA's *Compact for African Recovery*, include the following:

- (a) the neoliberal economic policy framework at the heart of the plan repeats the structural adjustment policy packages of the preceding several decades and overlooks the disastrous effects of those policies;
- (b) the fact that in spite of its proclaimed recognition of the central role of the African people to the plan, the African people have not played any part in the conception, design, and formulation of the NEPAD;
- (c) notwithstanding its stated concerns for social and gender equity, it adopts the social and economic measures that have contributed to the marginalisation of women;
- (d) in spite of claims of African origins, its main targets are foreign donors, particularly in the G8;
- (e) its vision of democracy is defined by the needs of creating a functional market;
- (f) it underemphasises the external conditions fundamental to Africa's development crisis and, thereby, does not promote any meaningful measure to manage and restrict the effects of this environment on Africa's development efforts. On the contrary, the engagement that it seeks with institutions and processes like the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, the United States Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, and the Cotonou Agreement will further lock Africa's economies disadvantageously into this environment; and
- (g) the means for mobilisation of resources will further the disintegration of African economies that we have witnessed at the hands of structural adjustment and WTO rules.

In order to address the preceding development problems and challenges, Afri-

cans on the continent and in the Diaspora must take action at the national, continental and international levels to implement the measures described in the section titled 'Call for Action'.

Barack Obama's Policies toward Africa thus Far

In September 2008, Whitney W. Schneidman, an adviser on Africa to the campaign to elect then Senator Barack Obama as President of the United States, stated Obama's three objectives for the African continent as follows:

- (a) to accelerate Africa's integration into the global economy;
- (b) to enhance the peace and security of African states; and
- (c) to strengthen relationships with those governments, institutions and civil society organisations committed to deepening democracy, accountability and reducing poverty in Africa.

These objectives, Schneidman made very clear, are geared toward Obama's goal 'to strengthen our common security, invest in our common humanity and, in this way, restore American leadership in the world' (Schneidman 2008).

On January 13, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, outlined in a testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Obama's Africa policy as being 'rooted in security, political, economic and humanitarian interests' (Corey 2009). She added that Obama's foreign policy objectives for Africa also include 'combating al-Qaeda's efforts to seek safe havens in failed states in the Horn of Africa; helping African nations to conserve their natural resources and reap fair benefits from them; stopping war in Congo; ending autocracy in Zimbabwe and human devastation in Darfur; and supporting African democracies like South Africa and Ghana' (Corey 2009).

However, as Josh Gerstein and Zachary Abrahamson (2009) have demonstrated, Obama's Africa policy has been more talk than action. They pointed out how some of the changes Obama has discussed for Africa amounted to 'words about future words'. In fact, they restated some of the terms Obama has used to admonish Africans, such as 'tribes', which would have raised some serious objections by Afri-

cans had other United States Presidents used similar words.

As far as I can assess, just as he has done at home in lecturing African Americans on their shortcomings but has done nothing significant for them besides appointing Eric Holder to what has become a second-tier cabinet level position since the creation of Homeland Security, as a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, Obama has thus far done nothing substantive to point to in terms of Africa's economic development, besides visiting Egypt and Ghana and lecturing Africans about their shortcomings. This situation may be the result of the economic crisis and two wars (Afghanistan and Iraq) Obama inherited from George W. Bush. Consequently, two dominant paradigms seem to undergird Obama's foreign policy for now: (i) power and coercion and (ii) world order. The discussion in the rest of this section seeks to explain this suggestion.

Power and coercion is an area of study within the fields of International Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and International Development (ID) that is rarely addressed by scholars. Despite its ability to achieve peace and development, it is seldom respected. An analysis and understanding of coercion is, however, crucial to the building of a comprehensive peace and development paradigm. It might appear rather contradictory to the ultimate goal of peace and development, given the forceful and destructive means at which power and coercion can be implemented by political actors - i.e. individuals, groups, states, regional and international organisations. But it is arguable that violence and coercion are sometimes a necessary reality to enforce rule of law.

Force does not have to be destructive in nature to be effective. The threat or potential use of force might be just as viable, interwoven with diplomacy, to control another actor. When an actor's peace and security is threatened, force becomes an effective policy instrument. 'Force is neither the normal nor the only means of state power, but it is the specific means through which, as a last resort, a state can enforce its sovereignty' (Weber in Scott 2001:34). Although there are other viable avenues to achieve peace, the use of military force is the most effective when a state is under a direct threat.

Power is the capacity to coerce another actor to yield to the aggressor's will or interest. According to Scott,

Power is a social relation between agents, who may usefully be called the 'principal' and the 'subaltern'. A principal is the paramount agent in a power relationship, while a subaltern is the subordinate agent. The principal has or exercises power, while the subaltern is affected by this power (2001:2).

A state's desire for self-preservation, survival, and protection is obvious. Since security for any state is by no means guaranteed, a state must act within its best interest to preserve its chance for survival and defence in the world. Thus, in unstable situations, countries will either form alliances or act independently to ensure stability in the region. States generally practise peace in world affairs; under great pressure, however, they may use coercion to make important gains in security (Lerche, Jr. and Said 1979:34-45). Forms of coercion, whether through force or diplomatic pressure, are appropriate for the sake of peace and development and upholding the interests of the superseding actor.

Through coercion, a state may be forced to bend to its adversaries. Thus, coercive power is the capacity to influence other states to a particular conclusion. Coercive power can thereby assure conformity to the aggressor state's desires. Coercive power may be applied in one of two ways: (i) through the use of force or threat, or (ii) by applying pressure through diplomacy. Coercive bargaining employs inducements rather than threats to entice the adversary to bend to its particular interests in conflict. Charles Lerche, Jr. and Abdul Aziz Said state that 'A policymaker may be able to obtain the consent of another government in another atmosphere or agreement ... More commonly, the desired approval may be forthcoming after some measure of positive inducement: the promise of direct benefit, a modification of policy in another area' (1979:60). The ability of the state to effectively use coercive power rests upon four conditions: (i) capability, or whether sufficient force could be made available; (ii) credibility, or whether others believe that the force would in fact be used; (iii) relevance, or whether the force could affect the real interests and decision-making process of the other side; and (iv) legitimacy, or the perceived right to engage in force in a specific situation (Schellenberg 1996:134).

Physical force, however, does not always achieve peace and development in a conflict area. In fact, it may very well escalate the situation. Therefore, we must recognise that coercion also functions in the sense of one party being influenced by the will of another. This is coercion without direct force.

One of the most famous diplomatic contests of the last half century between states involved the building and deployment of nuclear weapons throughout the world between the United States and the Soviet Union. One theory about this contest was that nuclear weapons acted as a deterrent against invasion, while simultaneously assuring that any country that possessed them resisted using them because of the disastrous consequences of being destroyed in turn by the opposing side. 'Deterrence is a means of safeguarding peace to the extent that maintaining a status quo is peaceful; most of the time disruptions of the status quo lead to tension or war' (Treverton in Thompson and Jensen 1991:18). Historically, there have been trends in the realm of deterrence that are a tacit part of international relations theory. As Treverton puts it,

Throughout most of history, deterrence has been more a fact than a strategy. Weaker powers did not attack stronger ones unless they were driven to desperation or led by desperados; understanding that commonsensical proposition, groups, then states, arranged their forces and policies accordingly. This arrangement was what we now call 'deterrence through denial'; groups were deterred from attacking by the knowledge that they would be defeated on the battlefield (1991:15).

Examples of power and coercion in history are abundant. Force, properly mandated, applied and controlled, can halt unrestricted violence and possibly genocide between actors in a conflict. In *African Peace Paradigms* (2008), I discuss five such African cases: (i) the Epic of Sundiata Keita; (ii) Emperor Haile Selassie's Magnanimity after Italy's Defeat; (iii) the Soft Revolution of Madagascar; (iv) the Bushongo of Congo during the Torday, Holton-Simpson and Hardy Expedition; and (v) the Political Longevity of El Hadj Omar Bongo in Gabon.

As it concerns Obama and power and coercion, in his essay titled 'Obama and the Empire' (2008), Allen Ruff provides ample evidence to show that Obama has been

remarkably consistent in the realm of foreign policy and his unflagging support for the United States imperial agenda. According to Ruff, while sectors of liberal opinion and antiwar activists may feel disillusioned by Obama's later pronouncements, Obama's record shows that those disappointed supporters have mainly engaged in self-deception for the following reasons.

To begin with, in the *New York Times* of July 14, 2008 and in a major Washington speech the following day, delivered just ahead of his 'fact finding trip' abroad that included stops in Afghanistan and Iraq, Israel/Palestine and Europe, Obama detailed the 'five goals essential to making America safer': (i) putting an end to the war in Iraq, (ii) pursuing the 'War on Terror' against al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, (iii) ending United States oil dependence, (iv) securing all nuclear weapons and materials from terrorists and 'rogue states', and (v) rebuilding United States's alliances. With whatever minor refinements, those mid-July statements amounted little more than the repetition of positions mapped out some time ago and articulated from the start of Obama's campaign, most often to elite audiences in less public venues, and entirely within the mainstream of Democratic Party politics. While it still remains unclear just how Obama would uphold and maintain United States imperial power, especially in the event of unforeseen new crises, nor how much he would continue George W. Bush's obscene executive abuse of power under the cover of the 'War on Terror', Obama's positions have long conveyed the clear message that there will be little, if any, change in the overarching strategic course and direction of the imperial state (Ruff 2008).

Obama's election is historic in its symbolism: a black man as the chief executive of the remaining global superpower. It has nothing to do with challenging the 'right' of that superpower to dominate the world - 'for the world's own good', of course. Obama's global outlook is firmly situated at the centre of the long-established ruling-class consensus on the United States prerogative to intervene anywhere and at any time to make the world safe for capital, couched, as always, in the rhetoric of 'freedom', 'democracy', and 'stability'. Obama therefore personifies a deep strand of liberal interventionism with roots extending all the way back to the early 'progressive' imperialism of a Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Given

the disastrous results of the Bush regime's ideologically driven Iraq adventure and the impasse with Iran, however, Obama's promised course appeals to most of the elites and the general populace because it seems more 'realistic' and less 'unilateral' (Ruff 2008).

On 'renewing American leadership', Obama earlier articulated his major foreign policy positions in the form of an address before the non-governmental and bipartisan Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), historically the most important foreign-policy formulating body outside the State Department. Obama laid out the framework and strategic vision for his intended audience, the elite who's who of the foreign policy establishment. These included the upper echelons of the foreign relations and national security state bureaucracies, corps of think tank and academic policy wonks and, most importantly, the key CFR patrons from the 'commanding heights' of the corporate world. While certainly promising a change in direction from the course of Bush's failures and outright blunders, Obama systematically promised to stay the grand strategic course of global predominance pursued by every President across the twentieth Century. Obama pledged the continuation of a struggle to reclaim and guarantee United States imperial hegemony, euphemistically described as 'leadership' in a world that has grown increasingly hostile to American domination. This hostility is caused, according to Obama, by the arrogant unilateralist contempt for allies, failed diplomacy and mismanaged military adventurism of the Bush regime. Invoking Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman and John Fitzgerald Kennedy as the pantheon of a tough but enlightened liberal interventionism that supposedly carried the 'torch of freedom' and the promise of 'democracy' from the Second World War to victory in the Cold War, Obama promised a return to a pragmatic and rational revival of the United States as 'the leader' of a 'free world' (Ruff 2008).

Offering to reward friends (i.e. those in support of the United States agenda) and penalize foes (i.e. any opposition) and ready to 'walk the walk' with an unsurpassed military to be augmented by tens of thousands of new soldiers, Obama assured his CFR audience of his willingness 'to place boots on the ground' anywhere, with or (when necessary) without the support of those 'partners' ready to follow the American 'lead'. Steeped in the rheto-

ric of an American global mission, Obama stated that 'The American moment is not over, but it must be seized anew. To see American power in terminal decline is to ignore America's great promise and historic purpose in the world'. He then highlighted a litany of twenty-first century threats and challenges as follows:

... They come from weapons that can kill on a mass scale and from global terrorists who respond to alienation or perceived injustice with murderous nihilism. They come from rogue states allied to terrorists and from rising powers that could challenge both America and the international foundation of liberal democracy. They come from weak states that cannot control their territory or provide for their people. And they come from a warming planet that will spur new diseases, spawn more devastating natural disasters, and catalyze deadly conflicts... (Ruff 2008).

Absolutely nowhere in his list of major international threats facing America was there a hint that the United States itself has played a historic role, directly and indirectly, in shaping that dangerous world. Nor was there any mention that America's drive to dominate the world, including its energy resources and the permanent war economy that is required for this, has anything to do with the looming catastrophe of the 'warming planet' (Ruff 2008).

On Iraq, Obama stated that the United States must bring its war on that country to a 'responsible end' in order to 'refocus attention on the broader Middle East'. His central point is to pacify the situation in Iraq in order to get on with the larger imperial project of winning and maintaining strategic control over the region and its oil reserves. While failing to mention the invasion and occupation of Iraq as the major source of violence in the country, and focusing on the Sunni-Shiite civil war, Obama argued that Iraq's Sunnis and Shiites would most likely settle their differences without the United States presence. He then astoundingly went on to suggest that the contending sides could be pressured toward an agreement by the threat of an imminent American withdrawal, as if the overwhelming majority of Iraqis do not want the United States occupation to end (Ruff 2008).

On Afghanistan, Obama promised to move at least two combat brigades, some 10,000

soldiers, to that country. He talked about increasing the number of 'boots on the ground' in Afghanistan in order to 'confront ... terrorists where their roots run deepest'. Like any tough-talking politician, he didn't mention how many of those 'boots' will wind up 'in the ground' along with the soldiers wearing them, or the enormous casualties to be suffered by Afghan civilians. Pledging to pursue the 'real war', the one against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, Obama openly spoke of military strikes against 'high-value terrorist targets' in Pakistan's Waziristan province. Obama's inexperience was showing, as this kind of outrageous violation of an allied nation's sovereignty is not supposed to be explicitly acknowledged, let alone advertised in advance (Ruff 2008).

Obama called for 'more troops, more helicopters, more satellites, and more Predator drones in the Afghan border region'. Convinced that 'success in Afghanistan is still possible', Obama promised to 'pursue an integrated strategy that would not only increase United States troop strength in Afghanistan', but would 'work to remove the limitations placed by some North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) allies on their forces'. He added that 'To defeat al-Qaeda, I will build a twenty-first-century military and twenty-first-century partnerships as strong as the anticommunist alliance that won the Cold War to stay on the offense everywhere from Djibouti to Kandahar'. Neither Hillary Clinton, nor John McCain or George W. Bush himself could make a more explicit statement of unrestrained imperialist ambition (Ruff 2008).

On Iran, Obama promised no departure from the longer trajectory of United States policy toward that country. The bottom line for Obama is that Iran must concede to Washington's demands on all fronts, halt its nuclear programme, its alleged 'sponsorship of terrorism' and 'regional aggression', or pay the price through increased sanctions and, if need be, direct intervention. While liberal pundits have noted and right-wingers have denounced Obama's willingness to 'sit down and talk' with the leadership in Tehran, Damascus and elsewhere, few have noted that such negotiations would be based on sets of preconditions and the constant threat of 'realpolitik' penalties: i.e. the use of coercion and threat of force. Obama has called for stronger international sanctions against Iran to persuade it to halt uranium enrichment. He co-sponsored the Durbin-

Smith Senate Bill, the Iran Counter Proliferation Act, which calls for sanctions on Iran and other countries for assisting Iran in developing a nuclear programme. Obama authored and introduced, as the primary sponsor, the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act in May 2007. The bill would make it easier for state and local governments to divest their pension funds from companies that invest in Iran's energy sector. As Ruff asks and responds, 'Divestment and sanctions for Iran, yes. Divestment and sanctions aimed at Israel's nuclear weapons? Out of the question' (Ruff 2008).

Interventionism will remain a key component of Obama's international 'peace through strength' strategy. As he put it:

We must also consider using military force in circumstances beyond self-defense in order to provide for the common security that underpins global stability - to support friends, participate in stability and reconstruction, or confront mass atrocities (Ruff 2008).

On Israel, Obama stated in 2007 that 'For more than three decades, Israelis, Palestinians, Arab leaders, and the rest of the world have looked to America to lead the effort to build the road to a lasting peace:

... Our starting point must always be a clear and strong commitment to the security of Israel, our strongest ally in the region and its only established democracy'.

In the Senate, Obama unflinchingly supported increased economic and military aid to Israel and came out strongly in favour of Israel's July 2006 attack on Lebanon (Ruff 2008).

In speeches before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and elsewhere, Obama has consistently confirmed the United States-Israeli 'special relationship' and the 'unwavering support' of Israel as a cornerstone of United States Middle East policy. Feeling compelled to counter claims by critics and opponents, Obama consistently voiced the belief that Israel's security is 'sacrosanct' and affirmed 'an unshakable commitment to the security of Israel and the friendship between the United States and Israel'. In order 'to secure a lasting settlement of the conflict with two states living side by side in peace and security', Obama told the CRS elites that 'we must help the Israelis identify and strengthen those

partners who are truly committed to peace, while isolating those who seek conflict and instability'. Ruff points out that as Chicago area Palestinian activist Ali Abunimah has recounted from his personal contact, Obama knows perfectly well that the Israeli occupation is the real source of 'conflict and instability' - thus Obama's speech to AIPAC was more than a statement of obedience to the Zionist lobby; it was part and parcel of his loyalty oath to the empire and the fundamental continuity of United States Middle East policy (Ruff 2008).

On Cuba and Latin America, during a May 23, 2008 speech before the Miami-based right-wing Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), Obama promised to maintain the existing trade embargo against the island 'as leverage for winning democratic change'. He said that he would lift restrictions on family travel and remittances to the island but would offer to start normalising relations with the country if it released all political prisoners. This is a reversion to the Clinton Administration's position. In essence, the blockade will remain in place as will the United States insistence on 'regime change' and a ceaseless opposition to Cuba's self-determination in place since the Kennedy era (Ruff 2008).

Obama has also promised a continuation of United States support for 'regime change' in Venezuela, neither more nor less than a reversal of the Bolivian revolution. While his CANF speech spoke of the lack of democracy in Cuba, it seemed to suggest something else in regard to Caracas. In his words, '... We know that freedom across our hemisphere must go beyond elections. In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez is a democratically elected leader. But we also know that he does not govern democratically. He talks of the people, but his actions just serve his own power'. As Ruff notes, much the same might be said of George W. Bush, except for the detail that Bush probably was not ever democratically elected at all, but that is not the Obama agenda (Ruff 2008).

Voicing opposition not only to Hugo Chavez, but to the inroads in self-determination from Bolivia to Nicaragua, the CFR speech raised another concern:

While the United States fails to address the changing realities in the Americas, others from Europe and Asia - notably China - have stepped

up their own engagement. Iran has drawn closer to Venezuela, and Teheran and Caracas have launched a joint bank with their windfall oil profits (Ruff 2008).

In sum, according to Ruff, Obama seeks to uphold the 'national interests' of the United States's imperial project. Obama's promise of the reversion to Clinton-era policy but no actual change in the Middle East status quo, his talk of diplomacy reinforced always by the threat of military force 'beyond self-defense' and unilateral interventionism, his call for 'regime change' and counter-revolution in Latin America, none of these bode well, especially for all those still hungry for something more material than the rhetorical promise of 'change' (Ruff 2008).

It is therefore not surprising that just four days in his occupancy of the White House, Obama ordered his first missile strikes in Langham province along the Afghan-Pakistan border that killed at least eighteen people. Obama believes that the area is a hiding place for Taliban fighters, an area Bush struck thirty times in 2008 killing more than two hundred people (MacAskill, 2009).

On the diplomatic front, on January 21, 2009, the day after his inauguration as President of the United States, Obama rang and spoke to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Jordan's King Abdullah, and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority. White House staff said that Obama emphasised his determination to help ensure that the current Hamas-Israeli cease-fire holds. In expressing his commitment to pursuing Arab-Israeli peace, Obama said that he would help the Palestinian Authority with a major reconstruction effort in Gaza. Analysts have said that the calls were an opportunity for Obama to make a commitment over an Arab-Israeli peace deal from the very beginning of his term (*North Korea Times*, January 21, 2009).

In terms of law and world order, power should be limited to universalising legal ways and means of peacefully resolving conflicts among and within groups and nations, regardless of their cultural affiliations or biases. The current world order is based on the precepts of international relations, which concern the relationships among the world's governments: their peoples and cultures, politics, security and economics, and a host of other char-

acteristics. Strictly defined, they are the relationships among the world's state governments and the connections of those relationships with other actors (such as the United Nations, multinational corporations, and individuals), with other social relationships (including economics, culture, and domestic politics), and with geographic and historical influences.

A variety of existing theories abound that explain international order. However, these are generally classified as conservative, liberal, and revolutionary worldviews. The conservative worldview generally values maintenance of the status quo and discounts the element of change in international relations. This perspective focuses on the laws of power politics, which are considered timeless and universal. The conservative approach tends to value order. In this perspective, war is viewed as the natural order of things. Next is the liberal worldview which values reform of the status quo through an evolutionary process of incremental change. Liberalism values freedom, especially free trade and free exchange of ideas. War is not a natural tendency but a tragic mistake to be prevented or at least minimised by international agreements and organisations. Third is the revolutionary worldview which values transformation of the status quo through revolutionary and rapid change. Focusing often on the unfair and exploitative aspects of international relationships, the revolutionist sees the need to radically change those relationships. War is viewed as a product of underlying exploitative economic relationships. For there to be international relations, policy makers of nation states must be willing to behave in a cooperative manner, thereby becoming signatories to laws applicable to all parties that have ratified the said laws. These agreed upon laws and scopes of relationships are administered and governed by actors such as international organisations and multinational corporations.

Law is an essential element in the sustenance of a stable functioning society. One source defines it as 'All the rules of conduct that have been approved by the government and which are in force over a certain territory and which must be obeyed by all persons on that territory' (LawInfo.com). Another source states that law is 'The combination of those rules and principles of conduct promulgated by legislative authority, derived from court decisions and established by local custom' (www.nacmnet.org).

The *International Law Dictionary and Directory* defines international law as 'the body of legal rules and norms that regulate activities carried on outside the legal boundaries of states' (www.August1.com). Administered by the United Nations, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the highest judicial authority of international law. ICJ's Article 38 of its Statute lists the sources of international law: (i) international conventions, whether general or particular, establishing rules expressly recognised by the contesting states; (ii) international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law; (iii) the general principles of law recognised by civilised nations; and (iv) subject to the provisions of Article 59, judicial decisions and the teachings of the most highly qualified publicists of the various nations, as subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law (ICJ, Article 38). For international law to work, it must be accepted and adhered to by the nation states which are signatories to it. International organisations created by international agreement or consisting of nation states such as the United Nations function as a relationship builder and enhancer of nation states. Created on June 26, 1945, the United Nations remains the most influential among international organisations. The events leading to the ongoing United States' war on Iraq, however, unearth the more influential arm of the United States.

Owing to the sovereignty of nation states, the essence of law is subjected to a nation's specific need resulting in differences in interpretation. As the world continues to shrink, there is a growing need for a universalised interpretation of law. In an effort to introduce better world cohesion and prevent global mayhem, the peace through law paradigm brings together commonalities and irons out disparities that are characteristic of the different interpretations of law by various actors. If one gives credence to Bishop's ideas, there are customs that are shared by all nation states and general legal principles that are applicable to every society (Bishop 1971). The paradigm recognises the need for sustained collaboration among actors. The five African examples I discuss in *African Paradigms* (2008) are (i) King Moshesh/Moshweshwe/Moshoeshe I (1786-1870): Legal and Diplomatic Genius; (ii) Gender, Justice and Peace in the *Dikgotla* in Malepole, Botswana; (iii) Peace

through Law in Traditional Akan and Ashante Societies of Ghana; (iv) the Hadza of Tanzania; and (v) the Code Pastoral of Mauritania.

In terms of Obama and world order, during one of the presidential debates with Republican nominee John McCain, Obama's citing of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in his answer to a question on foreign policy left me, and I am quite sure many other listeners and viewers, flabbergasted. Reading Kurt Nimmo's article titled 'Kissinger again Shills Obama and the New World Order' (2008) gave me an inkling why Obama was citing Kissinger. It appears that Obama had been the consumer of what Nimmo calls Kissinger's 'ebullient editorial lauding the coming depression for the *International Herald*'. According to Nimmo, in that piece, Kissinger argued that the rapidly unfolding economic depression with the accompanying misery for billions of people 'generates a unique opportunity for creative diplomacy' to usher in 'a world financial order' and force sovereign nations 'to face the reality that its dilemmas can be mastered only by common action'. In other words, it is time for a world government and a New World Order, a phrase Kissinger repeated several times in the article. As Kissinger put it, 'An international order will emerge if a system of compatible priorities comes into being. It will fragment disastrously if the various priorities cannot be reconciled'. Put differently, if nations do not embrace the 'international order' in response to the 'banksters' engineered global depression, they will be left to twist in the wind. As Kissinger warned:

The nadir of the existing international financial system coincides with simultaneous political crises around the globe. Never have so many transformations occurred at the same time in so many different parts of the world and been made globally accessible via instantaneous communication. The alternative to a new international order is chaos (Nimmo 2008).

Obama, Kissinger argued, is the answer to this opportunity, because the extraordinary impact of Obama 'on the imagination of humanity is an important element in shaping a new world order' (Nimmo 2008).

Prior to the *International Herald* article, Kissinger had mounted the floor of the New York Stock Exchange and told

CNBC's 'Squawk on the Street' hosts Mark Haines and Erin Burnett that in essence Obama would be the man tapped to realise the one world control grid. As Kissinger put it, Obama's 'task will be to develop an overall strategy for America in this period when, really, a new world order can be created. It's a great opportunity, it isn't just a crisis' (Nimmo 2008).

According to the *Aangirfan* (2009), Kissinger has revealed what Obama is going to try to do to bring about a New World Order based on the following premises:

- (a) The alternative to a new international order is chaos.
- (b) The extraordinary impact of the President-elect on the imagination of humanity is an important element in shaping a new world order.
- (c) The ultimate challenge is to shape the common concern of most countries and all major ones regarding the economic crisis, together with a common fear of jihadist terrorism, into a strategy reinforced by the realisation that the new issues like proliferation, energy and climate change permit no national or regional solution.
- (d) The role of China in a new world order is crucial.

As Maurizio d'Orlando (2008) continues with the same postulate, the depth of the current economic crisis is leading many people to favour a form of governance that would place economic and political life under the trusteeship of international organisations. He adds that Obama's new cabinet, which is made up of those responsible for the crisis, will ensure the ascendancy of financial interests. Meanwhile, no one is calling for the people to have power in the monetary sphere, thereby democracy being killed by financial power.

According to d'Orlando, a new world order has been in the making for quite some time and is now becoming 'inevitable'. Many politicians and economists are quick to say that great sacrifices need to be made and that any 'reasonable' person will see that suffering and hardship are 'necessary'. The current crisis affecting us is behind this global shift. It has moved from real estate to banking and finance and has now reached industry, agriculture, and the whole economy. From the heartland of the United States, it is reverberating throughout the world. The

fear of a domino effect and its potential for economic, political and social upheavals and the fear of widespread anarchy provide the necessary tools to install this new order, which for most people will appear as the only possible outcome. The act of governing will change as a world body will be in charge of the financial, economic and tax systems. Police, prisons and private relations inside and outside the family will come under its purview, so too will national sovereignty of the peoples and the right to express opinions that are different from those of the single thought of relativism, which will be seen as the only solution that is available and desirable (d'Orlando 2008).

Until a few decades ago, such a new world order would have been an anathema, a nightmare, a first step towards a worldwide dictatorship. Now world leaders are being praised when they show concern for the well-being of the Earth's peoples and social groups at a time of difficulties. The G20 summit convened on November 15, 2009 was billed as a time when the 'miracle' would be found, one that would entail a world central bank that regulates a single currency of account and its relationship to local currencies. After a brief lesson and a quick diagnosis of the current problems, during which G20 participants heard that 'it was all the fault of Bush's brainless laissez-faire advocates', the same people responsible for the current crisis would supply the treatment for putting things right. All we have to do is see who funded the most expensive presidential campaign in the United States (more than a billion dollars at a time of great recession). Obama pulled it off money-wise almost twice as much as Republican candidate John McCain. In addition to traditional sectors like show business, media, academe, education, information technology and the Internet, law firms (closely linked to the world of creative financial mediation) and private equity funds bankrolled Obama's campaign (d'Orlando 2008).

For d'Orlando, in order to change nothing, the appearance of everything has to change. And according to him, it has been business as usual as Obama's new cabinet is made up of the same, 'reckless people'. Larry Summers, Tim Geithner, and Robert Rubin are all extreme laissez-faire advocates who believe in an unfettered financial system, enemies of the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 that established the Federal Department Insurance Corpora-

tion (FDIC) in the United States and included banking reforms, some of which were designed to control speculation. They are the same people who swapped jobs at the IMF, the World Bank, the Clinton Administration; they played side-kicks for Alan Greenspan and Ben Shalom Bernanke, or at the headquarters of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York (Geithner); they are the same people who masterminded events before and after the current crisis. Obama picked Rahm Emanuel to be his chief of staff, a man whose career straddled politics and Wall Street's great financial groups. According to d'Orlando, there is more to Emanuel's case: not only that his father was a member of the Irgun ('National Military Organisation in the Land of Israel' - a militant Zionist group that operated in Palestine between 1931 and 1948) - he also holds Israeli citizenship, has fought for Israel, and represents the country's armed forces. He also endorsed Obama before the leadership of the AIPAC. In Israel, many view Emanuel as 'our man in the White House' (d'Orlando 2008).

Thus, d'Orlando argues, Obama's presidency will not change how the financial crisis will be handled. Contrary to what many say or believe, the Obama Administration will strengthen the trend to protect large institutions and industries at the expense of small enterprises and the man and woman on the street who voted for Obama (d'Orlando 2008).

Call for Action

In terms of the external environment, action must be taken towards stabilisation of commodity prices; reform of the international financial system (to prevent debt, exchange rate instability and capital flow volatility) as well as of the World Bank and the IMF; an end to IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes; and fundamental changes to the existing agreements of the WTO regime, as well as a stop to the attempts to expand the scope to this regime to new areas including investment, competition, and government procurement. Most pressing of all is that all African nations' debts must be cancelled.

At the local, national and regional levels, development policy must promote agriculture, industry, services, including health and public education, and must be protected and supported through appropriate trade, investment, and macroeconomic policy measures. A strategy for

financing must seek to mobilise and build on internal and intra-African resources through imaginative savings measures. It must reallocate expenditure away from wasteful items including excessive military expenditure, corruption and mismanagement. There must be creative use of remittances of Africans living abroad; corporate taxation; retention and re-investment of foreign profits; and the prevention of capital flight and the leakage of resources through practises of tax evasion practiced by foreign investors and local elites. Foreign investment, while necessary, must be carefully balanced and selected to suit national objectives.

These measures require the reconstitution of the developmental state. This form of state is one for which social equity, social inclusion, national unity, and respect for human rights form the basis of economic policy. It is a state which actively promotes and nurtures the productive sectors of the economy and which actively engages appropriately in the equitable and balanced allocation and distribution of resources among sectors and people. Most importantly, it is a state that is democratic and which integrates people's control over decision-making at all levels in the management, equitable use and distribution of social resources.

Recognising that, by raising anew the question of Africa's development as an Africa-wide concern, the NEPAD has brought to the fore the question of Africa's autonomous initiatives for development, we must engage with the issues raised in the NEPAD as part of our efforts to contribute to the debate and discussions on African development. In support of a broader commitment to contribute to addressing Africa's development challenges, we must work both collectively and individually, in line with our capacities, skills and institutional location, to promote a renewed continent-wide engagement on Africa's own development initiatives. To this end, we must deploy our research, training and advocacy skills and capacities to contribute to the generation and dissemination of knowledge of the issues at stake; engage with and participate in the mobilisation of social groups around their interests and appropriate strategies of development; and engage with governments and policy institutions at local, national, regional and continental levels. We must continue our collaboration with our colleagues in the global movement. Furthermore, we must call:

- (a) for the reassertion of the primacy of the question and paradigm of national and regional development on the agenda of social discourse and intellectual engagement and advocacy;
- (b) on Africa's scholars and activists within Africa and in the Diaspora to join forces with social groups whose interests and needs are central to the development of Africa;
- (c) on African scholars and activists and relevant organisations to direct their research and advocacy to some of the pressing questions that confront African policy and decision making at international levels (in particular, negotiations in the WTO and under the Cotonou Agreement), and domestically and regionally; and
- (d) on our colleagues in the global movement to strengthen our common struggles in solidarity.

We must ask our colleagues in the North to intervene with their governments on behalf of our struggles and our colleagues in the South to strengthen South-South cooperation.

Finally, we must pledge to carry forward the positions and conclusions of this conference. And we must encourage other like-minded individuals and organisations to explore, together with other interested parties, mechanisms and processes for follow-up to the deliberations and conclusions of this conference.

Conclusions

The economic relationship between Africa and the United States can best be characterised in terms of the type of 'interdependent', albeit unequal, relationships between developed and developing nations. On the one hand, United States development assistance to Africa appears more as a means to strengthen American economic and geopolitical interests in Africa; on the other hand, Africa benefits by having a peaceful relationship with the United States and employing American aid to promote government programmes. More basically, then, the issue can be raised as to whether or not the present American mode of pursuing its interests in Africa cripples the ability of the continent to control its own destiny; for, implicit in United States development assistance is an ethnocentric view that prevents it from seeing what is good in

'underdeveloped' Africa and to feel justified in treating Africa as standing in need of American 'know-how'.

This ethnocentric view hampers innovation and change and results in social isolation. This explains why some African leaders often reject American solutions to their development problems, and see no need to change what they feel is already a good thing from their own perspective. At worst, it leads to stagnation; at best, it results in retarded growth and development. The fragmentation of United States development programmes in Africa is the additional negative consequence of this ethnocentric view.

Since the United States government possesses most of the needed technological and financial resources for development, or enjoys access to them, the United States understandably 'aids' the development efforts of Africa only to the degree that such activity enhances American objectives. And since the United States is technologically and economically more powerful, transfers of resources, information, and personnel consolidate the dominant American position and further accentuate the dependency of an economically weak Africa.

When development techniques are transferred from the United States to Africa, only a fraction of the entire process of technical change is bound to emerge within Africa when the technique is implemented. It is those parts of the process that are taking part outside the United States that dictate the basic properties of the technique. These characteristics are shaped by the social organisation and the factor endowment of the United States where the inventions and innovations are made. And for those techniques that are generated within American transnational corporations, it is obvious that they will be geared toward those corporations' maximum profitability in their international corporations, and not necessarily adapted to the conditions in Africa. Most frequently, Africa is able to choose only among techniques generated in American transnational corporations. This limitation gives rise to a structural technical dependency by Africa in terms of American projects in the continent.

This being the case, a more coherent American foreign assistance programme for Africa calls for terminating project aid and converting it to outright security assistance. This will allow Africa to spend

its aid dollars on programmes that it perceives important to its development needs (a relationship that will parallel that between the United States and Israel), putting Africa fully in charge of its own economic destiny.

The major consequence of such a foreign aid policy, however, will hinge upon the American public's attitude towards its government. This attitude, which must be conditioned by trust, calls for clarity and honesty with which American leaders explain the African situation and argue for actions they believe are necessary to meet the critical challenge in that part of the world.

Such a foreign aid policy cannot be expected to lead the United States to a foreign policy consensus, but it can play a role in generating domestic support for African initiatives if it is explained honestly in terms of what it is and what it will do. It should neither be explained as a humanitarian programme nor as a development programme, since security assistance programmes are not primarily designed to spark self-sustaining economic growth (Israel is a good example).

A United States foreign aid programme for Africa that is comprised of security assistance entirely would increase Africa's maneuverability; and what it will do with this ability will depend on its priorities and capabilities. This will also allow the African governments to increase their odds of survival - no government can pursue effective development policies if its future is in doubt.

This is why the application of security assistance compels different rules. The unpredictable nature of African politics and the uncertainties inherent in intra-African relationships, in particular, suggest that such a security assistance programme for Africa will carry with it the potential for excesses. This could lead to charges of waste and inefficiency by its critics. While such outcomes are inevitable, they can nevertheless be kept in check through careful management.

In essence, United States development assistance to Africa should be used to reinforce both actors' political, economic and moral objectives. If these purposes are sound, then United States aid will become an effective form of foreign policy for strengthening America's interests in Africa. The continent, on the other hand, will be able to buy breathing space in maintaining stability as it works to meet its development needs.

Indeed, the modern system of communication has overcome the geographical barriers between Africans and Americans and expanded their horizons. Africans, especially, have become more acutely aware of the state of affairs in the United States than ever before. They are hauntingly reminded of America's affluent style of living. Many in the United States have also been frequently moved to help Africans work towards eradicating poverty and causes of disease and unrest. Many in Africa grow restive to achieve a higher standard of living, to emulate the American way of living. Both Africa and the United States stand to benefit from increased prosperity in Africa and from mutual trade.

As it concerns security, the first decade of the new century is witnessing a continuation of the complex and profound changes in the international arena and the further advance of globalisation. Development and peace remain the paramount issues of our times. On the one hand, promoting development, safeguarding peace and enhancing cooperation, which are common desires of all peoples, remain imperative. On the other hand, destabilising factors and uncertainties in the global arena are increasing. Security issues of various kinds are interwoven. Development remains more pressing and peace more illusive.

Africa, which encompasses the largest number of developing countries, is an important force for global development and peace. Africa-United States relations face fresh opportunities under new circumstances. The two entities must therefore pursue objectives for vibrant and lasting relations and the measures to achieve them.

Africa, the home of humans, has a long history, abundant natural resources and huge potential for development. After many years of struggle, Africans freed themselves from slavery and colonial rule, wiped out apartheid, won independence and emancipation, thereby making a significant contribution to the progress of humanity. Africa still faces many challenges on its way towards development. With the persistent efforts of African states and the continuous support of the United States and the rest of the international community, Africa will surely overcome the difficulties and achieve rejuvenation in this new century.

Thus, in pursuing its security interests, the Obama Administration must rethink the United States policy within the framework of an equitable partnership with Africa. At the core, the administration must be cognisant of the fact that African states also have national interests. So, the appropriate approach would be for the administration and African states to work together within a framework of an equitable partnership and find ways in which their respective interests can be harmonised for the benefit of the people. Once this mindset is established, it will then provide the crucible in which Africa-United States relations will henceforth be conducted.

Africa must also realise that it exists in a world in which political and economic strength counts, where might is right, and not one which simply operates on morality. For Africa to be heard and make a positive impact, it must seriously consider the conditions or structures that can sustain economic and political growth. This means that it must be stable and secure. The challenge to the various governments and peoples of Africa is to build an Africa that is noticed for its strengths and not for its misery and weakness. This calls for an Africa that is economically integrated, financially stable, and politically united.

Note

- * Paper presented at the Conference on *The Obama Administration, Africa, and the Diaspora: Promises, Prospects, and Realities*, Washington, DC, January 25, 2010.

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