

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Africa and Development Challenges in the New Millennium: The NEPAD Debate.* Edited by J. O. ADÉSINÀ, YAO GRAHAM and A. OLUKOSHI (London and New York: Zed Books, Pretoria: UNISA Press, in association with CODESRIA, Dakar, 2006, pp. 288+xvi, p/bk £19.99).

This book is a collection of critical papers written mainly by eminent African scholars and activists as a response to the launch of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001. NEPAD was initiated by a small number of African heads of state under the leadership of South African President Thabo Mbeki. These leaders offered a deal to the rich countries whereby African countries would commit themselves to political reform and economic development if the West would triple aid flows to the region. NEPAD also promised to put in place the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to monitor progress, which raised expectations of democratisation and improved governance on the continent. However, both African and Western governments soon backed away from these commitments, and Mbeki's unwillingness to criticise President Robert Mugabe's dismal rule in Zimbabwe has substantially damaged NEPAD's credibility.

The papers published in this book were presented at a conference jointly organised by the Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Africa) and the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Accra, Ghana, in April 2002. The conference ended with a resolution (published in the appendix of the book) that outlines NEPAD's fundamental flaws. The resolution argues 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 [...] 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, NEPAD steps back from international goals that have been won through global mobilisation and struggle' (p. 276). The resolution calls for a financing strategy that mobilises and builds on internal and intra-African resources, while carefully balancing foreign investment with national objectives.

Running through all of the chapters are three core arguments: first, the neo-liberal economic policy framework at the heart of the plan repeats the mistakes of the structural adjustment policy (SAP) packages; second, in spite of claims of African origins and focus, its main targets are foreign donors and third, the engagement that NEPAD seeks with the International Financial Institutions and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will further lock Africa's economies disadvantageously into its external environment.

Indeed, there is a recurring theme in the NEPAD base document that Africa is 'marginalised' and that therefore one of the solutions to the continent's predicament should be sought in its 'integration' into the global economy. Several authors point to convincing evidence suggesting that the continent is in fact the most integrated region in the global economy. As Maloka observes, 'the problem is not 'exclusion' or 'marginalisation', but rather the form and terms of the integration of the continent into the global economy' (p. 90).

The book is composed of 11 chapters, divided into three parts. Preceded by a valuable introduction, the first part is entitled 'NEPAD: the Debate' and includes a highly useful chapter by Eddy Maloka that summarises the various critiques of NEPAD. It also reviews the often-overlooked pan-African policy initiatives that preceded NEPAD. The second part deals with 'Sectoral challenges', addressing NEPAD's strategies for agriculture, industrialisation, trade (in an excellent chapter by Dot Keet), education and bridging the digital divide. Here, the contributions

emphasise NEPAD's neglect of Northern trade-related constraints to African agriculture, the misguided emphasis on liberalisation and privatisation, as well as the lack of inter-sectoral linkages, specific implementation plans, and coordination with existing regional development plans and funds. The third part examines options for 'Financing Africa's development'. Here, Zo Randriamaro questions the underlying assumptions of NEPAD's financing strategy, and makes an important original contribution by examining the gender blindness of NEPAD. In her words, 'NEPAD argues that gender equality can be achieved by micro, women-specific projects, as opposed to tackling the fundamental structural causes of women's poverty and inequality such as discriminatory laws, cultural norms, male-biased development priorities, land reform, public expenditure and macro-economic policies, just to name a few' (p. 215).

A further important contribution of the book lies in drawing attention to South Africa's self-serving leadership of NEPAD and how this has served to undermine the negotiating position of African countries within the WTO and other fora.

The book's main limitation is the absence of any discussion of the APRM, which is billed as a core element of the NEPAD process and is perhaps its most innovative aspect. This omission is probably due to the fact that the APRM effectively only got started in 2004, and that the 2002 conference papers were not updated before being published in this book. A further shortcoming is that Africa is treated as a monolithic bloc (apart from the singling out of South Africa), without any indication of the differences in engagement with NEPAD among African countries. Finally, I missed some more concrete suggestions on how the NEPAD process could be used to advance struggles by non-state actors. Nevertheless, this book represents an important contribution to the debate from a Southern perspective, and will be appreciated by students, academics and activists alike.

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*Policy Matters: Economic and Social Policies to Sustain Equitable Development.* Edited by JOSE ANTONIO OCAMPO, K.S. JOMO and SARBULAND KHAN (London and New York: Zed Books, Penang: Third World Network and Hyderabad: Orient Longman in Association with the United Nations, 2007, pp. xv + 347).

*Policy Matters* is a collection of essays that provide multifaceted analyses of world development, or rather why development remains an elusive goal. Written by economists with a combination of academic and professional backgrounds in the field, it contains thoughtful, carefully crafted arguments about the nature of the contemporary economy and the persistence of problems such as poverty, inequality and unemployment. *Policy Matters* covers a vast terrain and may indeed prove to be a signpost in development studies. It was compiled from a selection of papers presented at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Development Forum on 'Integrating Economic and Social Policies to Achieve the United Nations Development Agenda' held in 2005.

The book is divided into 13 stand-alone chapters, each teeming with data and analyses that beg further engagement. A bold opening chapter by Ocampo on the conceptual links between markets, social cohesion and democracy sets the tone for the following chapters. Some of the themes covered in the book are: mutually reinforcing linkages between economic growth and human development; domestic income distribution inequities; the effects of trade on employment; the impact of international capital flows on financial stability; the social and economic effects of financial liberalisation; the role of development aid in international relations and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the United Nations and the monetary policies of aid-receiving countries. Needless to say, this is not light bedside reading material and the editors need to be commended for having taken on an ambitious project.