

Introduction

The African Union Development Agency and Africa's Transformation in the Twenty-First Century

The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) was adopted by African heads of state and government in October 2001. These leaders defined it as a “pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development and, at the same time, to actively participate in the world economy and body politics” (NEPAD 2001). Thus, NEPAD’s formation was rooted in the determination of Africans to extract themselves and their continent from the twin problems of underdevelopment and exclusion from a globalizing planet. On July 1, 2018, NEPAD was officially renamed the African Union Development Agency (AUDA).*

There are two levels to the partnership: at the continental level, there is cooperation among African leaders, and internationally, between African and Western leaders.¹ AUDA is highly ambitious, for it aims to strengthen democracy and promote good governance; contribute to economic, social, technological, and human development; and eradicate poverty. In order to reach these goals, AUDA has developed continent-wide strategies and programs to be implemented by its various member countries.

When AUDA, as NEPAD, was created, it claimed to be an “innovative” initiative, although for more than fifty years, the major international financial institutions (IFIs) – mainly the International

* I use the terms NEPAD and AUDA interchangeably throughout.

¹ The major Western partners are, first, the leaders of the G8 and, more broadly, the member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). However, NEPAD also counts international organizations among its partners; the most important of these are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the United Nations Development Program.

Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB)² – had been working toward these same goals of growth and development. These institutions had encouraged African states to adopt programs³ intended to bring sustained economic growth and a considerable reduction in poverty, ultimately resulting in long-term development. The similarity of goals between AUDA and IFIs raises three specific questions that guide my research.

1. To what extent does AUDA constitute an innovation or a continuation compared to earlier IMF and WB initiatives? To this end, what are its functions and effects?
2. How and why did AUDA emerge, and how has it changed over time? What does this teach us about the creation and evolution of new continental development institutions and paradigms in Africa?
3. Almost two decades after its adoption, what critical assessment can be made of its institutional development and the implementation of certain key programs, and what changes, if any, have manifested in interstate relations? In other words, why do African states choose to cooperate for development through AUDA when near-anarchy reigns?

In order to answer the first question, I test the following two hypotheses:

1. AUDA represents a change in the behavior and political attitudes of African leaders. In addition, the development of a specific institutional framework for facilitating interstate cooperation and implementing continent-wide development strategies *represents something new*. In other words, AUDA reflects a truly novel

² The IMF and the WB were born out of a series of multilateral agreements, signed at Bretton Woods (United States) in July 1944, which dealt with international economic relations. While the IMF mainly attends to the equilibrium of the international financial and monetary system, the WB has multiple functions. The WB Group is made up of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), created in 1946 to finance middle-income and creditworthy low-income countries; the International Finance Corporation (IFC), created in 1956 to promote growth in the private sector; and the International Development Association (IDA), created in 1960 to finance developing countries. For more information, see WB 1998; Cantin 2002, 21–25; Defarges 1996, 37–43.

³ These structural adjustment programs will be presented and assessed later in the present study.

dynamic on interstate cooperation for economic development and continental integration in Africa.

2. In terms of the development policies and strategies that it promotes, AUDA represents continuity from a paradigmatic or ideational perspective. In other words, its strategies and initiatives are similar to those earlier created or newly developed by international institutions such as the IMF, the WB, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the United Nations (UN).

My analysis addresses discourses as well as strategies and programs of various organizations and their leaders. Specifically, since the IMF and the WB have been criticized for limiting the state's intervention in high-priority sectors, I examine whether, with AUDA, African states and regional institutions have, in fact, become key players in producing public policies, particularly in the domains of political, economic, and social development.

In order to answer the second and third questions, I first analyze the context of AUDA's emergence in order to better understand its creation, particularly the institutional environment in which it arose, the ideas it transmits, and the strategies of the actors involved. To better grasp AUDA's evolution and institutional development, I then look at a few specific projects and assess the implementation of certain programs since 2001, exploring the form and degree of interstate cooperation. I focus specifically on projects related to political and economic governance (the African Peer Review Mechanism, APRM), agriculture and food security (the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program, CAADP), and regional integration and infrastructure (the NEPAD Short-Term Action Plan, which was eventually incorporated into the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa, PIDA 2010–2040). This analysis helps me to discern AUDA's contributions and limitations and, more broadly, to understand the emergence, development, and efficacy of institutions in Africa and the reasons that African states cooperate for development. Chapter 7 discusses policy options for using AUDA in the future to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2063.

NEPAD's creation has prompted a great deal of analysis. For some, the project is no different than earlier ones, as it continues the initiatives already taken by international financial institutions (the IMF and the WB). For others, the project contains alternative solutions and

represents a break with these initiatives. These analyses can be classified into various perspectives according to the frameworks used: the political-technocratic perspective;⁴ the activist or societal perspective (L'Écuyer 2002; Nkoyokm 2002); and the analytical perspective. Furthermore, the analytical perspective itself contains the following schools of thought: liberal and neoliberal approaches (Hope 2002, 387–402; de Waal 2002, 475); the neo-Marxist approach (Amuwo 2002, 65–82; Loxley 2003, 119–28); and the historical approach (Chabal 2002, 447–62). Many of these studies share normative, prescriptive, and prospective aspects, and are weak in terms of their heuristics and their capacity to explain either change or continuity in African development strategies. Let us examine these different perspectives, their foundations, and their major limitations.

The political-technocratic perspective is represented by the various official publications of international institutions working for development in Africa and by experts' discourse on the work of these institutions. This perspective either presents an official position or legitimizes the policies and members of these institutions. These analyses focus on the origins and causes of problems, ways to remedy them, and prescriptions for the future. The publications of the World Bank (2000a), the G8 (2002), and certain African Union officials, such as Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah (2002, 97–102) and Vijay S. Makhan (2002, 5–10), illustrate this perspective.

Ould-Abdallah, a senior UN official, takes a position favorable to the creation of NEPAD, which he considers “an innovative program . . . which, by its approach and the scope of its intervention differs significantly from earlier initiatives” (Ould-Abdallah 2002, 98–99). This view is repeated by Makhan, a senior AU official, who describes NEPAD as an operational program for “self-development,” whose objective is to offer “an operational vision encompassing social, political, and economic activities” (Makhan 2002, 9–10). The leaders of the G8 share a similar view: after the 2002 G8 summit at Kananaskis, they proposed the “G8 Action Plan for Africa,” which described NEPAD as “a bold and clear-sighted vision of Africa's development” and included measures in partnership with African leaders, whose project they said offered “a historic opportunity to overcome obstacles

⁴ See G8 2002. See also the WB's yearly publications, including the *World Development Report, 2000/2001* (WB 2000a).

to development in Africa” (G8 2002, 1). We may conclude by noting that the purpose of political-technical publications is largely political: to support the institutions and officials that produce development strategies and to guide their future actions. This view, with its normative and political conception of development, is limited in its capacity to explain change or continuity in development strategies heuristically.

The same critique can be made of the activist perspective, which comprises analyses from civil society actors who either condemn or commend various development strategies on the basis of their own values, which they foreground to varying degrees in their analyses. Here, the activist perspective is represented by François L’Écuyer (2002), “The African Civil Society Declaration on NEPAD” (SARPN 2002), and Jacqueline Nkoyokm (2002).

The highly skeptical “African Civil Society Declaration on NEPAD,” questioned what it viewed as an initiative pursued by an elite minority, which was not representative of civil society, and which effectively continued the past actions of international financial institutions. In his work, L’Écuyer takes a similar view and also questions AUDA’s foundations and the process of its creation. According to him, AUDA’s strategies are based on erroneous postulates concerning the causes of underdevelopment, and the program was adopted without serious consultation. Not all of the authors in the activist/societal school share this extremely skeptical view. Nkoyokm, for example, is enthusiastic about AUDA and considers it an innovative initiative, particularly in light of the exceptional willingness of African leaders to participate in it. She also offers prescriptions for AUDA success, notably through increasing the involvement of civil society, which she considers essential to the program’s legitimization (Nkoyokm 2002).

It is therefore evident that these partisan analyses take a normative and prescriptive approach, and they are hardly heuristic in their capacity to explain change or continuity with respect to AUDA.

In contrast, authors who take an analytical approach often have heuristic aims, although these are often limited or inadequate. They look for the sources of Africa’s underdevelopment in governance and the structure of the international economic system. They criticize the blind spots of development strategies and seek solutions to remedy them. This approach includes liberal, neo-Marxist, developmentalist, self-developmental, and historical perspectives. Many of these schools of thought have a specific understanding about optimal

development strategies and how to achieve them. Thus, they are also largely normative, prescriptive, and limited in their ability to explain innovation heuristically. There are, however, a few authors who have attempted to go beyond these limits, particularly within the historical school (see Chabal 2002).

The approaches inspired by liberal theories of development emphasize the stages of growth and the need to follow them (Rostow 1970), good governance (World Bank, quoted in Chang 2002), the free market (Smith 1976), and specialization based on comparative advantage for development to occur.⁵

Kempe Ronald Hope (2002, 387–402) identifies the liberal principles contained in AUDA as preconditions for Africa’s renewal. He claims that, in order to become internationally competitive, to reach a high rate of economic growth, and to develop, African countries first must meet certain criteria: good governance, democracy, peace, security, the restoration and maintenance of macroeconomic equilibrium, liberalization, regionalization, productive bilateral and multilateral partnerships, local appropriation of AUDA, and strong leadership (Hope 2002, 396). Hope’s analysis is thus normative and implicitly prescriptive. Indeed, rather than analyzing change or continuity, he studies the conditions favorable to the kind of continuity he promotes.

Although Alex de Waal is more critical, his analysis follows the same vein. He considers the partnership to be founded on the principles of good governance, whose main characteristics are good macroeconomic policies and improvement of economic and business governance. In spite of AUDA’s excessive ambitions, for him the partnership remains an exceptional and “properly oriented” opportunity for Africa’s development (de Waal 2002, 464). According to this perspective, therefore, AUDA represents a true innovation.

Thus, we may observe that analyses inspired by liberal theories have a heuristic value not so different from that of partisan political-technocratic analyses: for the most part, they are normative and prescriptive, which limits their capacity to explain AUDA’s elements of innovation or continuity.

The neo-Marxist approach is inspired by theories of unequal exchange (Emmanuel 1972), critiques of imperialism and multinational corporate dominance (Amin 1976; Frank 1966), the core–periphery

⁵ In particular, Hope 2002 and de Waal 2002.

model (Perroux 1961), and dependency theories (Cardoso 1978). In analyzing African development, Amuwo (2002, 1–2) emphasizes unequal exchange and the economic domination imposed on Africa for centuries by the Western powers. Following his example and starting off from the same premises, Loxley (2003, 119–28) believes that this domination is at the root of the extroversion and vulnerability of African economies within the global capitalist system. For these authors, not only does AUDA fall within this same pattern, it reinforces it by propping up the capitalist system and, thus, risks leaving the continent underdeveloped. This analysis suggests, therefore, that AUDA is not at all new. However, it does not attempt to explain the process of its emergence. Supporters of this perspective implicitly believe that a good development strategy must not be capitalist, and they therefore propose redefining AUDA's strategies. Yet, we may note that some authors in this school have made an effort to keep their analyses heuristic by adopting a historical approach.

Unlike the normative and prescriptive approaches analyzed above, Patrick Chabal's (2002, 447–62) approach is defined by his emphasis on axiological neutrality. He takes a historical approach in order to demonstrate that African leaders' compliance with AUDA's proposed "democratic orthodoxy" plays into the liberal framework and rewards actors who accept the notion of good governance. Thus, these leaders' objective is to increase the transfer of resources toward Africa rather than achieving development. As a result, the instrumental relationship between African leaders and international partners is strengthened (Chabal 2002, 462). It is therefore tempting to conclude that AUDA does not represent a true innovation, but rather a continuation of the kinds of utilitarian partnerships that have always existed between Africa and the donor community.

Although this historical analysis is interesting, it is incomplete. Chabal identifies and explains the reproduction of partnerships,⁶ but he does not entirely explain the mechanism of change in development strategies. A greater emphasis on the institutional factors could fill this gap.

⁶ In fact, Africans adapt to their partners' demands in order to obtain the profits they count on. This adaptation does not imply agreement, but rather strategic imitation.

A review of the literature shows that many authors have exhibited little scientific rigor in establishing their theoretical and methodological frameworks.⁷ With this in mind, I adopt a more scientific approach to my own research. First, in Chapter 1, I present the theoretical and methodological approach that allows me to explain the emergence, development, and effects of AUDA. I employ an analytic, neo-institutional, inductive approach in order to explain present phenomena through the lens of the past. Moreover, I complement the institutional analysis by drawing on realist, liberal, and idealist/social constructivist concepts from the field of international relations.

Second, in accordance with the requirements of this approach, I evaluate the fundamental principles and impacts of international financial institutions (Chapter 2). The goal is to observe the context that gave rise to their interventions, the theories and ideologies that underlie these interventions, and their observable results. This helps elucidate the fundamental elements of the comparison of IFIs and AUDA.

Next, I examine the various shifts in IFIs' discourses and strategies and the context that contributed to AUDA's emergence (Chapter 3). The objective here is to test whether there is a connection between the change in these institutions' discourses and the emergence of AUDA and to identify a possible "critical juncture" or institutional "bifurcation."

I then use a strictly comparative process to shed light on the similarities and differences between AUDA and international financial institutions (Chapter 4). First, I take a blanket approach, and by comparing discourses I conclude whether the initiative is endogenous or exogenous. I then take a sector-based approach by observing specific strategies and programs proposed in order to promote democratic governance, economic governance, and the fight against poverty. This analysis makes it possible to conclude whether AUDA's institutional trajectory is different from that of the IMF and the WB in terms of its policies and development strategies for Africa.

Additionally, I analyze the evolution, institutional development, and implementation of certain AUDA programs since its creation in 2001,

⁷ I should note that the concerns of most of these authors were more empirical than theoretical, and they did not necessarily seek to reach generalizable theoretical conclusions about innovation.

as well as the extent to which it has affected interstate cooperation for development in Africa (Chapter 5). To do this, I pay particular attention to AUDA's organizational transformations, as well as the impact of certain programs on its institutional development. The principal programs analyzed will be those for political and economic governance (the APRM); for agriculture and food security (the CAADP); and for regional integration and infrastructures (the NEPAD Short-Term Action Plan, eventually incorporated into the PIDA 2010–2040). I also explore African countries' levels of involvement, ownership, and degree of implementation of such programs. All of this contributes to a better understanding of the key actors, their motivations, and the determinants of interstate cooperation for development in Africa.

I also assess AUDA's resource mobilization strategy (Chapter 6). The AUDA resource mobilization strategy is constituted by the Capital Flows Initiative and Market Access Initiative. The Capital Flows Initiative focuses on increasing domestic resource mobilization, overseas development assistance, and private capital flows while seeking "the extension of debt relief beyond its current levels." While the Market Access Initiative focuses on the removal of nontariff barriers, the diversification of production, and the promotion of the private sector, African exports, and specific sectorial activities. Chapter 7 discusses policy options to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063, and explore the newly created African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

To conclude, this book will allow us to better understand, both theoretically and practically, the emergence and development of continental institutions, the implementation of regional programs for Africa's integration and development, and interstate cooperation through continental institutions.