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"The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NePAD) and the G8's Africa Action Plan: Is This a Marshall Plan for Africa?"

Nicholas Bayne,
London School of Economics and Political Science

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"The Marshall Plan . . . gave birth to the modern Europe we still know today."

Robert Marjolin

"Aid will only be successful where the possibility of self-help exists."

Helmut Schmidt

The Marshall Plan, initiated in 1947 to promote the economic recovery of Europe from the destruction caused by World War II, is the outstanding example of an external assistance programme that produced durable, self-sustaining results. Robert Marjolin, one of its European pioneers, called it 'the most dazzling political and economic success in the history of the western world since 1914'.[i] The term 'Marshall Plan' has passed into the language, to designate any ambitious and generous programme of international help for countries in need, leading to frequent calls for a 'Marshall Plan' of one kind or another.

But the lasting success of the original Marshall Plan did not just depend on American generosity. It was also due to the response by the European recipients. Between them, they transformed the political attitudes and structures of governance in Europe. These factors had an influence that long outlasted the flows of Marshall funds and far exceeded anything that General Marshall and his advisers could have foreseen. But most of those who call for contemporary 'Marshall Plans' show little awareness of them.

This paper will argue that, for the first time since the 1940s, there is a movement to create political attitudes and structures of governance that are close to the original Marshall Plan and contain many of its distinctive features. This is the combination of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NePAD) with the G8's Africa Action Plan, called for at the Genoa summit in 2001 and due to be decided at the Kananaskis summit on 26-27 June 2002. Until the results of Kananaskis are confirmed, it will not be clear how close a parallel there will be with the post-war Marshall Plan. But enough is known already to permit a general comparison and assessment.

This paper has three main sections. The first offers an analysis of the features of the Marshall Plan that contributed to its outstanding success. The second examines how far those features have parallels in the current proposals for Africa. The third assesses the key differences between Europe of the 1940s and Africa of the 2000s, before some brief conclusions.

I. How and Why the Marshall Plan Succeeded

The Marshall Plan was launched by General George Marshall, as US Secretary of State, in his speech at the Harvard University degree ceremony on 5 June 1947. The Second World War had been over in Europe for just over two years; but the economic and political situation there was ominous. The United States had provided substantial loans – and so had Canada – but this aid seemed to have no effect. The European economies were not recovering – they were going backwards. Levels of industrial and agricultural production and especially of exports were well below the levels of 1939, when the war began, and those levels were themselves depressed. The payments deficits of the European countries were widening; they had nothing to export and no dollars to buy imports. Economic hardship was generating political unrest. With a civil war raging in Greece and unstable government systems in France and Italy, the Americans worried that more European countries would fall under communist control. So the Marshall Plan was launched as an economic instrument to serve a political aim. The political aim was to stop the spread of Soviet power; the chosen instrument was the economic revival of Europe.

This combination of politics and economics emerges clearly from this extract from Marshall's speech at Harvard:

> "Europe's requirements of foreign food and other essential products – principally from America – are so much greater than her present ability to pay that she must have substantial additional help or face economic, social and political deterioration of a very grave character. The remedy lies in breaking the vicious circle and restoring the confidence of the European people in their economic future. . . It is logical that the United States should assist in the return of normal economic health, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace."[ii]

The first key to the Marshall Plan's success lies in the nature of American (and Canadian) financial flows.[iii] Over the period from 1948 to 1951 the US transferred $12.5 billion to Europe, amounting to 1.2% of American GNP for those years. In volume terms, this was not an exceptional figure. The United States had already made loans of up to $20 billion to European countries since 1945.[iv] But in contrast to these earlier piecemeal loans, the Marshall Plan funds were offered to Europe collectively; they were sustained over several years; and they were supplied as grants. The beneficiaries were 16 West European countries, including West Germany, but no East European ones, as Stalin prevented them from joining in. Thanks to these funds, the European economies started to recover fast. By 1952 industrial production was 40% above pre-war levels, growth was being sustained and the American official support was no longer required.

But the Marshall Plan was not just about the transfer of funds, but also about the organization of Europe. That was the second key to its success, as this further extract from Marshall's speech shows:

> "To start the European world on its way to recovery, there must be some agreement among the countries of Europe as to the part those countries themselves will take to give proper effect to whatever action might be undertaken by this [ie the US] government. It would be neither fitting nor efficacious for this government to draw up unilaterally a program designed to place Europe on its feet economically. This is the business of the Europeans. The initiative must come

> from Europe. . . . The program should be a joint one, agreed to by a number, if not all European nations."[v]

By this means the Americans gave the Europeans 'ownership' of the programme. It was not being imposed upon them from outside. They had take responsibility for it themselves. The Europeans thus had a strong incentive to cooperate among themselves, in a way that that they had never done before. For at least three centuries up till then, Europe had been marked by shifting political alliances. Since 1914 European countries had increasingly adopted protectionist, 'beggar-my-neighbour' economic policies that had contributed to the outbreak of World War II. Now the Europeans had to learn to work together. For this purpose, they created the new Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), of which the European states were full members; the United States and Canada were only observers. While the US administration were not obliged to accept the OEEC's recommendations, in practice they always did so, working behind the scenes to ensure that the OEEC framed their requests in ways that would appeal to Congress. The impulse to closer economic cooperation in Europe long outlasted the Marshall Plan itself, in a variety of ways.

The preparation of a collective European request to the United States, which reconciled all the national economic proposals, obliged the Europeans to develop techniques that were then quite unfamiliar. First, they had to assemble reliable economic data, which was scarce in war-torn Europe.[vi] Then each country had draw up its own proposals in terms that could be understood by the others and converted into a single consistent plan. In the process the OEEC developed methods of policy coordination and peer review, in which each country had to explain its proposals and respond to criticism by the others. These methods also outlived the Marshall Plan. They not only became a feature of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), that succeeded the OEEC, but were adopted by a range of other international institutions.

While the Americans were careful never to dictate to the Europeans, they made clear to them privately their conviction that economic growth required the removal of barriers to trade and payments, which stifled enterprise and prevented the development of a healthy private sector.[vii] The Europeans, in response, set in hand a process of internal liberalization, which again persisted longer than the flow of Marshall funds. They phased out all the quota restrictions that had discouraged intra-European trade. By the mechanism of the European Payments Union, they built up confidence in their currencies so that first they all became convertible against one another and finally, in 1958, fully convertible against the dollar. In this process, the Americans departed from their insistence on non-discrimination in trade and payments. They allowed the Europeans to give each more favourable treatment than they gave to the United States. Thus the Americans accepted economic disadvantage as an acceptable price for the political goal of a dynamic Europe able to resist the threat of communism.

The Marshall Plan also was at the root of the movement towards European economic integration, with a supranational element going beyond voluntary cooperation. The Americans, from their own experience as ‘United States’, were strongly in favour of this from the start. But they did not press it upon the Europeans. Within Europe there were deep divisions, with the British being especially resistant to integration. In due course the integrationist impulse led to the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC), founded in 1958 by six of the OEEC members, as a customs union with strong central institutions.[viii] Marjolin has no doubt that “the European Economic Community was the direct descendant of the Marshall Plan”.[ix] But the United Kingdom recoiled from the supra-national features of the EEC. The British proposed that the EEC should be set in a wider free trade area incorporating all the members of the OEEC. When the EEC rejected this, the UK created the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), embracing seven other OEEC countries.[x] Over time, the UK and nearly all the other EFTA members were absorbed into the EEC, now the European Union, but for many years the two groupings continued side by side.

In short, there was a transatlantic bargain. The Americans:

- Provided substantial funds over several years, in grant form;
- Privately encouraged internal liberalisation and economic integration;

- Accepted economic disadvantage as the price of their political goal.

For their part, the Europeans:

- Had ownership of the programme;
- Learnt to cooperate together;
- Developed techniques of policy coordination and peer review;
- Removed internal barriers that held back their growth;
- Laid the foundations for later integration.

The benefits endured long past the end of the transfer of US funds.

II. How NePAD and the G8 Africa Action Plan Resemble the Marshall Plan

By the end of the 1990s, Africa showed many similarities with post-war Europe. While a few countries had achieved impressive growth performance, for many them growth had either failed to keep up with their population or had been going backwards absolutely. Many years of external aid programmes had failed to produce results. There was no strong tradition of intra-African cooperation. Most countries still looked to their former colonial powers, holding them responsible for their failure to prosper. Many African states were crippled by civil war or undermined by decades of autocratic government and systematic corruption. Such countries, especially 'failed states', like Sudan or Somalia, could easily become the breeding grounds for terrorist movements. Africa was becoming marginalized in the international system and reaping few or none of the benefits of globalisation.

In 2000, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria launched their Millennium Africa Plan (MAP), aimed at reversing this downward trend. Over the next year they discussed it widely with fellow African leaders, who made their own contributions. The MAP was combined with a plan drawn up by President Wahd of Senegal, so that it mutated into the New African Initiative. By October 2001 it reached its final form, as the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which was adopted by all African leaders at Abuja in Nigeria.[xi] Before that, in July 2001, Presidents

Mbeki, Obasanjo and Wahd, with their colleagues from Algeria and Mali, had brought the New African Initiative to Genoa, where they met the G8 heads of government and sought their support.[xii] The G8 were so impressed that – without any advance preparation – they gave a general undertaking to underwrite the New African Initiative provided the Africans themselves did what they had promised to do. The G8 created a special group to work with the Africans over the next year so as to draw up their own Africa Action Plan for adoption at the Kananaskis summit.[xiii]

The NePAD proposals differ from all previous African approaches to the revival of their continent. Up to now, Africans have tried to put the blame for their troubles onto others: on the legacy of colonialism, on the inequity of the international system or on the inadequacies of aid flows and international development institutions. This time, Mbeki, Obasanjo and their colleagues have accepted that Africans are themselves to blame for their problems and that they must take responsibility for their own recovery. This means correcting their own failures, not only in economic policy but also in political governance, by strengthening democracy and respect for the law. They recognize that unless they do that, they cannot expect richer countries or international institutions to provide the aid, investment, trade access and other forms of external help that they need.

In this way the Africans have taken ownership of their own political and economic revival. This is the first and most important parallel with the Marshall Plan. They are no longer seeking to excuse failure by attributing it to policies imposed from outside. They have set standards for themselves, in both economic and political behaviour, and have undertaken to hold each other accountable for their programme's implementation. These standards have already been tested in the reaction to the recent elections in Zimbabwe, in which President Mugabe was re-elected amid widespread abuses. A lapse from democracy in Zimbabwe would not in itself undermine NePAD. But if other Africans condoned what Mugabe had done, then the NePAD's new political standards would have failed at their first test. The matter was in doubt for a time; but then Mbeki and Obasanjo, as members of a three-man Commonwealth mission, made it clear to Mugabe that they could not accept the result.[xiv]

The NePAD provides for a system of peer review among African countries, to compare and criticize each other's policy programmes. This, which is a major innovation for Africa, is a second parallel with the Marshall Plan. The modalities are not spelt out in the NePAD founding document, but are being worked up separately. The African leaders have called on the help of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Amoakao, its Ghanaian Secretary-General. The ECA have in turn established contact with the OECD, as the institution which, as the heir to the OEEC, has the longest and most extensive experience of peer review in policy coordination. So the OECD can advise the Africans on the demands of peer review and on what works and what does not.

A rigorous system of peer review, as advocated by the ECA, would inevitably mean comparing African countries with one another and grading them in relation to their economic and political performance. This is seen as a necessary part of attracting outside aid and investment. But this would be a departure from the traditional approach of the Organisation for African Union (OAU), which has hitherto resisted such differentiation and insisted that all African countries should be treated alike. The sponsors of NePAD have sought to counter this by ensuring their approach has the full support of all 53 OAU members. The NePAD Steering Committee of South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria and Egypt contains only one least-developed country and is not regionally balanced. So it has been underpinned by a 15-state Implementing Committee, with three countries from each African sub-region, including many poor ones.[xv]

A third parallel with the Marshall Plan is the encouragement of regional and sub-regional integration in Africa. There are already a number of regional economic groupings in Africa, some overlapping with one another and none very effective. The Organisation for African Unity (OAU), which covers the whole continent, is about to recreate itself as the African Union (AU) in anticipation of closer integration. The NePAD provides an opportunity both to rationalize this patchwork and to scale down excessive ambition. By giving African countries a stake in their own development, it should make them take regional integration more seriously. The NePAD does not begin by seeking to integrate

Africa as a single region; instead it aims to build on sub-regional groupings, much as Europe started with the EEC and EFTA.

The success of the Marshall Plan was not based on just what the Americans or the Europeans did, but how they worked together. In the 1940s, the Americans took the lead and the Europeans responded. This time the Africans have launched the initiative and the full details of the G8 response will only emerge at Kananaskis. But even what the G8 did at Genoa provides links with the Marshall Plan. In 1947, General Marshall promised help to the Europeans provided they organized themselves so as to cooperate and take ownership of the programme. At Genoa in 2001, the G8 members welcomed the African commitments as 'the basis for a new intensive partnership between Africa and the developed world'. They promised to help the Africans provided they honoured their own undertakings and took ownership of their own renewal. Throughout the last year the G8 have been careful to avoid any action which would appear to undermine African ownership.

The Genoa summit set up a special group of personal representatives for Africa, to draw up proposals for Kananaskis. This group has worked closely with African countries over the last year and the five African leaders of the NePAD Steering Committee – Mbeki, Obasanjo, Wahd, Bouteflika and Sadat – will sit down with the G8 heads at Kananaskis. This is the first time the G8 has ever integrated its work with another group of countries and goes well beyond the relationship with Russia in the early 1990s.[xvi] It provides another parallel with the US –Europe interaction of the Marshall Plan.

The G8 Africa Action Plan being prepared for Kananaskis covers action under five broad headings:

- Peace and security, including conflict prevention;
- Governance – political, economic and administrative;
- Knowledge (covering education and the spread of IT) and health (including the wider impact of the AIDS epidemic);
- Economic growth, including trade and investment;

- Agriculture and water supply.

The Africa Action Plan will build on the G8's commitment at Genoa, so as to ensure the countries of Africa are major beneficiaries of the programmes they had launched at earlier summits. For example, debt reduction, where the G8 countries have now written off 100% of their bilateral debts, has mainly benefited African countries. The DOT-Force, which helps developing countries take more advantage of IT, has focused on Africa this year in the run-up to Kananaskis.[xvii] The Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria has provided over half of its initial allocation of funds for Africa.[xviii] The removal of tariffs and quotas for poor countries, under the 'Everything But Arms' initiative of the European Union (EU) and the African Trade Opportunities Act of the US, has mainly improved market access for African products; Canada may announce a similar initiative at Kananaskis.[xix] All these are distinct initiatives, taken in their own right. The Kananaskis summit is likely not only to knit them into the G8's Africa Action Plan, but also to show how implementing the NePAD can improve African countries access to these programmes.

III. How NePAD and the Africa Action Plan Differ from the Marshall Plan

For all these parallels, there are fundamental differences. The first is that Africa in 2002 is in a far worse state than Europe in 1947. For example:

- European countries had been going backwards economically for 10 years or so. Many African countries have seen no real improvement for 20 or 30 years.
- Europe had endured six years of war. Some African countries, like Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique have suffered civil wars for far longer. One person in five in Africa today is affected by conflict.
- Europe, despite its lapses, had solid foundations of government machinery and law. Africa has neither.

- Europe needed to restore its plant and infrastructure, but then had plenty of well-educated people to operate them. Africa's greatest lack is in educated people at every level.
- Parts of Europe faced starvation in 1947 after the harshest winter for decades. But this does not compare with Africa's chronic vulnerability to drought, flood and famine, while in some countries a whole generation risks being wiped out by AIDS.
- While the Americans were frustrated in 1947 that their post-war loans to Europe were so ineffective, disillusion about aid to Africa is based on nearly 50 years of failed programmes.

Both those originally involved in the Marshall Plan and later students are cautious about the possibility of applying it in other contexts.[xx] They argue that Europe's rapid economic recovery was possible in four years because of the existence of a well-educated, well-organised and entrepreneurial population. These arguments lead to the conclusion that bringing Africa up from its depths will require much greater efforts and resources, both from the Africans and the G8, sustained over many years.

While the Marshall Plan was part of the political fight against communism, the Africa Action Plan can be seen as a weapon in the fight against terrorism launched since 11 September 2001. But a second difference between then and now is that the Marshall Plan relied wholly on economic instruments to achieve its political aims. There was no parallel process on the political side. But the lack of strong political institutions in Africa and the persistence of civil conflict have influenced the construction of the NePAD and the Africa Action Plan. The two approaches contain distinct elements dedicated to peace and security and to improved governance. Both sides regard this as necessary, but it will increase both the demands and the sensitivity of the process.

A third, very important difference is that the G8 have not given the same financial guarantees to the Africans that General Marshall gave to the Europeans. The members of the OEEC knew that, if their collective plans and peer review satisfied the Americans, finance in grant form would be forthcoming. While the African members of NePAD have constructed their plan in a form that is calculated to attract outside support, they have no such assurance of funding.

It is clear that Africa will a major beneficiary from the increased aid promised by donor countries in order to meet the UN's Millennium Goals. These commitments were announced at the Monterrey conference in March 2002. The US has promised an extra $5 billion a year financed through a new Millennium Challenge Account. The European Union has undertaken to raise the percentage of its collective GNP devoted to aid; this commitment should generate another $7 billion annually. Canada is increasing its aid by 8%. But these funds are not part of the G8 Africa Action Plan, which will not incorporate a pledging process.

In any case, a commitment of funds comparable to the Marshall Plan may be unrealistic today. The Americans were prepared to promise funds sustained over several years, but their commitment was not open-ended. The Marshall Plan was intended to last no more than four years. Such a time-limit for supporting the much longer process of African renewal would make little sense.

Finally, during the Marshall Plan, the Americans were prepared to endure some economic disadvantage to ensure their political objectives. It is not clear how far the G8 members are prepared for this in relation to the poor countries of Africa. Recent US policy actions, notably the new farm bill, have drawn strong criticism from Africans as making it harder for them to gain access to American markets.[xxi] European agricultural policies create similar problems, while it is unclear how far the new Canadian measures will liberalise access for textiles, where African products are most competitive.[xxii] The G8 countries in general seem too inclined to give way to domestic pressures, when these clash with the objective of helping Africa.

Conclusions

It is easy to see why the NePAD and the Africa Action Plan could fail. Within Africa, the pressure of peer review to raise political and economic standards may not prevail against the old tradition of treating all countries alike and avoiding criticism. The programme may prove too ambitious for Africa's slender resources in trained people. Among the G8, inadequate resources may be mobilised; too many trade and other barriers may persist; or there may be insufficient stamina to maintain a programme lasting over many years. For these reasons it may seems presumptuous to make a comparison with the Marshall Plan.

Nevertheless, the progress so far is encouraging. Despite the pressure to give space to other subjects at the summit, especially since 11 September last, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien has maintained Africa as the central issue for Kananaskis – and there is good hope that French President Jacques Chirac will maintain this at next year's summit in France.[xxiii] Having entered into this partnership with the Africans, the G8 will find it hard to withdraw. The African countries likewise, having secured the G8's support, will want to show that they deserve it.

There are enough parallels with the Marshall Plan process to give grounds for encouragement. The greatest benefits of the Marshall Plan did not emerge for many years and persisted long after the funds had ceased to flow. At the beginning, there were plenty of reasons for thinking it would fail. In his memoirs, Marjolin says:

> "My testimony is designed to dispel the belief that from the outset we were possessed of a fine certitude, an indomitable faith in the future, an unshakeable optimism. On the contrary, what remains branded on my memory is the doubts, the dread of the morrow, the fear of failing."[xxiv]

Even so, the Marshall Plan for Europe worked then. That gives grounds for thinking now that, when British Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke in Genoa of a Marshall Plan for Africa, this was more than a figure of speech.

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Notes

[i] Robert Marjolin was the first Secretary General of the OEEC, that organised the European response to the Marshall Plan. His vivid memoirs – Marjolin 1989 – are a major source for this paper. Another major source is the group of articles on 'The Marshall Plan and its Legacy' published in *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 76.3 (1997).

[ii] The text of General Marshall's speech (slightly edited) is reproduced in *Foreign Affairs* vol. 76.3 (1997), pp. 160-1 (Marshall 1947/1997 in the References).

[iii] Sources are scarce on Canada's contribution to aid to Europe during the Marshall Plan period, 1948-1952. But it justified Canada being an associate member of the OEEC, alongside the United States.

[iv] Kunz 1997, p.163, estimates a total of $20 billion. Marjolin 1989, p. 177 gives a lower figure of $14 billion, but even that exceeds the Marshall Plan. In fact, President Truman originally asked Congress for $17 billion over four years for the Marshall Plan, but Congress only agreed to appropriate funds year by year – Marjolin 1989, p. 188, Reynolds 1997, p. 178.

[v] Marshall 1947/1997, p. 161.

[vi] See Marjolin 1989, p. 185, Reynolds 1997, p. 177-8.

[vii] "In private, US intervention was frequent, often insistent. But public appearances had to be preserved. . . . . prodding and cajoling, while also allowing the Europeans to save themselves." Reynolds 1997, p. 183.

[viii] The original 'Six' were France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

[ix] See Marjolin 1989, p. 220. He records (p. 189) that France was strongly integrationist from the outset. In contrast, Reynolds 1997, pp. 175-7, has France resisting integration at first, fearing it would mean domination by the US. But by the early 1950s France had clearly become one of the driving forces for closer integration.

[x] The EFTA 'Seven' were the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland and Portugal.

[xi] The full text of the NePAD document is accessible through the Canadian government's Kananaskis website, www.g8.gc.ca.

[xii] Mbeki and Obasanjo, with Bouteflika (Algeria), had also been at the dinner of G8 and non-G8 leaders before the 2000 Okinawa summit. This gave them the idea of seeking the G8's help for their African initiative.

[xiii] The G8's 'Genova Plan for Africa' is accessible on the website of the University of Toronto's G8 Research Group, www.g8.utoronto.ca. See also Bayne 2001.

[xiv] See Wallis, W, Hawkins, T. and Lamont, J, 'Commonwealth Suspends Zimbabwe', *Financial Times*, 20 March 2002.

[xv] The membership of the NePAD Implementing Committee comprises the presidents of: Southern Africa – Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa*; West – Mali, Nigeria*, Senegal*; Northern – Algeria*, Egypt*, Tunisia; East – Ethiopia, Mauritius, Rwanda; Central – Cameroon, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon. Asterisks indicate members of the Steering Committee.

[xvi] The Russian president was regularly invited to the summit from 1991 onwards. But there was no joint 'sherpa' process until Russia was admitted to the G8 as part of a political deal. See Bayne 2000, pp.116-8.

[xvii] For details, see www.dotforce.org.

[xviii] For details, see www.globalfundatm.org.

[xix] See Laghi, B, 'Ottawa to Cut Some Tariffs for Poorest Countries', *Globe and Mail*, 13 May 2002.

[xx] For testimonies on this, see Kunz 1997, p. 169, Marjolin 1989, pp. 228-9, Rostow 1997, p. 210 and Schmidt 1997, p. 218.

[xxi] The South African finance minister strongly criticised US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill over this during his recent visit to Africa. See Beattie, A. and Lamont, J, 'US Farm Bill Arouses African Fury', *Financial Times*, 24 May 2002.

[xxii] South Africa also bitterly attacked the European Union for its attitude over appellations for its wines and spirits during the negotiation of the EU-South Africa trade agreement.

[xxiii] The most active members of the G8 Africa Group have been Canada, the UK and France, in the persons of Bob Fowler (the Canadian sherpa), Valerie Amos (a Foreign Office minister) and Michel Camdessus (former Managing Director of the IMF).

[xxiv] Marjolin 1989, p. 202.