

## AFRICA

Spain has discovered Africa. After hurriedly publishing an executive summary in May under public pressure to respond to the media-hyped refugee crisis at the fences of Ceuta and Melilla and the constant arrival of 'boat-people' in the Canary Islands, the government presented the final version of the Spanish Africa Plan in July. It is the first comprehensive plan that positions Spain's diplomatic, security, trade, migration and developmental stance towards Africa.<sup>1</sup>

This background document intends to position this newly emerging interest for Africa within the context of "development" in Africa in a historical perspective, recurring on domestic and external reasons for African underdevelopment. It then distinguishes between value-based and interest-based policies towards Africa and calls for a more politically informed approach on the part of NGOs working on development in order to form alliances with reform-minded segments in the Spanish administration. Furthermore, it argues for a united European stance towards Africa and examines African initiatives for regional integration. The paper ends by posing questions for discussion in the forum.

### The Africa Plan

What does the Africa Plan of the Spanish government propose? In general, it entails a wide mixture of priorities and actions. As such, it is rather a declaration of intent with the outstanding task of translating it into measurable policy commitments and time-bound actions.

Here are some key features of the Plan:

- Interest-based policies: The Plan indicates clear interest in fisheries, energy and migration. It proposes a promotion of Spanish exports and foreign investment.
- Increase in aid: Reiterating the commitments of the government's Master Plan 2005-08, the Africa Plan indicates a significant increase in aid to Africa. In 2006 the official development aid to Africa supersedes EUR 400m, compared to EUR 122m in 2003.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in debt relief for African countries Spain goes beyond the G8 commitments by cancelling or swapping both multilateral and bilateral debt.
- Multilateralism: There is a clear commitment to work within the policy and institutional framework of the United Nations and the European Union. Human rights are mentioned as the core value set. Partnership with the African Union and regional institutions, particularly ECOWAS, are fostered. Multilateral initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) are endorsed. A large part of the aid is spent multilaterally.
- Gender: Perhaps the most surprising element of the Africa Plan is its very explicit focus on gender. There seems to be a clear commitment by the Spanish government to advance gender-sensitive policies, supported by the Vice-president of Government. However, it remains to be seen whether the

<sup>1</sup> The [Spanish Africa Plan](#). A first "Plan Africa" had been issued by the previous government without the comprehensive nature and the respective diplomatic action and aid commitments of the current one.

<sup>2</sup> Plan Africa p. 54. However, one has to take into account the size of Spanish aid in context: In Mozambique, top receiving country of Spanish aid in Sub-Sahara Africa, Spain was the 18<sup>th</sup> largest donor. Data from PACI 2004, and DEP 2006.

promotion of gender equity in Africa becomes a trademark of Spanish development policy.

- Migration: Perhaps the most controversial topic, a section on migration promises to control the influx of migrants from Africa. An integrated approach of various instruments from internal affairs, to bilateral and multilateral instruments tries to both regulate and impede the entrance into Spain. On the positive side, the instrument of co-development is being proposed.
- Research: In the section on democratic governance, the Plan commits to conduct in-depth studies to understand underlying social and political structures.<sup>3</sup>

The follow-up is being organised in a process of information collection and planning at embassy level in order to publish a consolidated progress report. It is left to the embassies to elaborate an action plan. No benchmarks or indicators are communicated. No budgetary allocation is specified. Neither is the participation of civil society – African or European – specified in the follow-up.

### **Narratives on African (under-)development**

After the Second World War, many regions in the world suffered poverty. Sixty years later, some regions – mostly in Asia – have taken off economically eradicating poverty levels for its increasing populations. Not so in Africa. Indicators for economic and social development remain poor; in some countries they have fallen since the seventies. Why is that so? There are a number of narratives on African underdevelopment. Principally, they can be distinguished between those attributing the failure in development to internal factors or external factors.

**The “Big push”:** Let’s start with one factor that tried to alleviate domestic shortcomings with external assistance. The fifties started with the theory that what poor countries needed was an increase in the domestic investment to cover the gap between domestic savings and investment and between foreign exchange reserves and imports. A “Big push” – of mainly financial transfers – was based on the premises that bridging the “investment gap” would lead the countries to “take-off” into self-sustained economic growth. Another gap identified was the lack of technical skills in Southern countries, which give birth to “technical assistance”, which at the time was dominated by those with engineering profiles but later this changed to a profile focusing on social sciences. Historical evidence shows that the simple link between inserting money in order to buy development did not work, maybe even the opposite occurred: countries with a large increase in aid frequently performed worse than those that declined aid or graduated from relying on aid.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, technical assistance has been accused of increasing dependence rather than transferring skills.<sup>5</sup> These insights gave birth to the latest movement in aid thinking and dubbed the concept of “aid effectiveness”, which could be summarised as “aid works, but only in a supportive context”, the latter being good governance.<sup>6</sup> However, the recent public mobilisations in 2005 to increase aid, focussing

<sup>3</sup> Plan Africa p. 47

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Browne 2006: *Aid & Influence – Do Donors Help or Hinder?*, London (Earthscan), pp. 23-41

<sup>5</sup> To quote just one of the main reports: Elliot Berg, *Rethinking Technical Cooperation: Reforms for Capacity Building in Africa*. New York: UNDP, 1993

<sup>6</sup> Shantayanan Devarajan, David Dollar & Torgny Holmgren (Ed) 2001: *Aid and Reform in Africa: A Report from Ten Countries*, Washington (World Bank); David Dollar & Lant Pritchett (Ed.) 1999: [Assessing Aid—What Works, What Doesn't, and Why](#). Washington (World Bank), both available at

principally on the quantity of aid, gave reason for concern that “development”, once again, might be identified as simple gap-filling by throwing money at the poor. Likewise, the Millennium Development Goal #8 in general and the UN Millennium Project in particular have been criticised of being a remake of the fifties spirit<sup>7</sup>. Any discussion about aid to Africa should therefore not fall behind this awareness. The same holds true for the increase in aid to Africa, championed by the Spanish government. Though welcome, – a word of caution – it might just as well end up doing harm when it is not provided through the right modalities.

**Dependencies:** Other narratives focus on the external influences that disable African development. This discussion starts with colonialism that not only extracted the most valuable resources – human beings – but established infrastructural and political configurations of extraction<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, the sixties witnessed a theoretical reasoning, dubbed “dependency theory”, that claimed that the rich countries are rich because the poor are poor, arguing that unfavourable terms of trade leads to a net-transfer of wealth to the metropolitan countries. In the eighties, the World Bank embarked on a campaign to cut down state-driven development and rely on the forces of markets for economic growth. “Structural adjustment” became the icon for a policy mix of macro-economic stabilisation, the opening of the economy and the downsizing of the public sector. Critics emphasise that structural adjustment in Africa not only has failed to produce economic growth, but has been responsible for the misery of many.<sup>9</sup>

**Domestic factors:** Another narrative focussing on the domestic condition of Africa has been subsumed under the heading of “Neopatrimonialism” or “shadow states”. Economic development in Africa does not take off because market principles do not work in a “moral economy” of kinship-based societies. Neither do the principles of European statehood apply. The African state is organised along lines of kinship and ethnics that put the president in a pyramidal cage of personalistic dependencies to clients, whose loyalty is assured by tapping into state resources. Appointments, promotions, public contracts, credits and licences are not given by rule-bound procedure but as a personalised favour, in order to nurture the presidential machinery. Thus corruption is a systemic element of African political order and not just an exception. Although administration and rhetoric are presented to incoming donor-missions as alike to Western rational-legal institutions, under the surface of this aid-theatre is the reality of a world in which the distinctions between state and society, between person and office do not exist.<sup>10</sup> The term of neo-patrimonialism

<sup>7</sup> See: the [Millennium Project](#); William Easterly 2005: [Reliving the 50s: the Big Push, Poverty Traps, and Takeoffs in Economic Development](#), New York (mimeo)

<sup>8</sup> For a description of colonial rule in Africa see for example: Adam Hochschild 1998: *King Leopold's Ghost—A story of greed, terror and heroism in colonial Africa*, Basingstoke (Macmillan). Classical belletrist accounts can be found in Joseph Conrad's “Heart of Darkness” or Thomas Pynchon's “V”, Chapter 9. An interesting discussion for international law is the debate about [reparation for slavery](#); see *African Studies Quarterly* 2(4) 1999

<sup>9</sup> For the failure of macro-economic policies see for example the [report of the Findings of the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network](#) the same as well [in Spanish](#); for the human impact of SAPs see Cornia, G., R. Jolly & F. Stewart 1987: *Adjustment with a Human Face: Protecting the Vulnerable and Promoting Growth*, Oxford (Clarendon Press)

<sup>10</sup> Main contributions have been: Nicolas van de Walle 2001: *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge; Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz 1999: *Africa Works. Disorder as Political Instrument*. Oxford and Bloomington; Jean-François Bayart 1989: *L'État En Afrique. La politique du ventre*. Paris: Fayard. Jean-François Bayart, Stephen Ellis & Béatrice Hibou 1999: *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*. London; William Reno 2000: *Clandestine economies, violence and states in Africa*. *Journal of International Affairs* 53/2; for an intent to operationalise the concept see Gero Erdmann & Ulf Engel 2006: [Neopatrimonialism Revisited](#), Hamburg

has been criticised as a catch-all concept, as cover-up for neo-liberal policy intrusions and – in its most simplistic version – ultimately racist.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever narrative one might prefer – domestic or external reasons – it is without doubt that the African state lies in the centre of the solution of African development problems. Lately, an additional dimension has come up in the Post-Washington Consensus World. With PRSP and the Paris-Declaration, emphasis has been drawn on Ownership, Mutual Responsibility and Partnership. Albeit nice terms, in practice they could lead to a situation where nobody is responsible for anything.<sup>12</sup> Just as the World Bank blamed African leaders for the failings of their successive policy prescriptions, African leaders infinitively recur to colonial legacies as reason for staying behind. In order to identify policies that work, aid programming has to be accompanied by serious research and evaluations that try to disentangle the threads of causalities.<sup>13</sup>

### Policy considerations for an emerging donor and NGOs

**Ethics and interests:** The Master Plan *2005-08* promised greater attention of Spanish development policy towards Africa. The Africa Plan, elaborated nearly two years later, has a wider reach and includes all policies towards Africa. As such, it has been negotiated within government, bargaining between values and interests. However unpleasant an interest-based policy towards Africa might seem as opposed to altruistic – humanitarian, developmental etc. – engagement, it is more realistic and, moreover, departs from cloudy summit rhetoric and the paternalistic images of Africa as a poor and ultimately barbaric place.<sup>14</sup> Europe and Africa have diverging and common interests. Some of the former are in trade issues. Some of the latter are in issues of security and global governance. Migration issues might lie somewhere in between.

In the wake of the new global politics of oil and other strategic resources a new “scramble for Africa” has been diagnosed.<sup>15</sup> A team of highly influential researchers has meditated about the strategic significance of Africa for the United States.<sup>16</sup> China has drafted an Africa Strategy and is being observed with maximum alert by Western governments.<sup>17</sup> Other bilateral donors without traditional relations with Africa are positioning themselves as players.<sup>18</sup> Each of these new comprehensive Africa policies lies somewhere between altruism, influence and extraction. Where it ends up depends heavily on the vigilance of European but even more so on the

<sup>11</sup> On the relation of “neopatrimonialism” and neo-liberal politics see for example Adebayo O. Olukoshi 2002: [Governing the African Developmental Process: The Challenge of the New Partnership for Africa's Development \(NEPAD\)](#), Copenhagen,

<sup>12</sup> See a recent discussion on the [evaluability of development approaches](#) in the Boston Review

<sup>13</sup> In Spain the “[Grupo de Estudios Africanos](#)” tries to gather knowledge and expertise on Africa. It is to be seen how the tension between independent research and policy advice will be handled.

<sup>14</sup> Jean-François Bayart 2004: Commentary: Towards a new Start for Africa and Europe, in *African Affairs* 103/412, 453-458

<sup>15</sup> UN Secretary General [Kofi Annan](#) addresses the African Union Summit in Banjul, Gambia, 02 June 2006

<sup>16</sup> Council on Foreign Relations 2006: [More Than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach Toward Africa](#), Washington / New York;

<sup>17</sup> Richard Manning 2006: Will 'Emerging Donors' Change the Face of International Co-operation?, in: *Development Policy Review*; July 2006 - Vol. 24 Issue 4 Page 371-496; Stephen Marks: [China in Africa - The New Imperialism?](#), in *Pambazuka News* 244 (2006-03-02)

<sup>18</sup> See for example the German Partnership with Africa: Stefan Mair 2005: [Partnerschaft mit Afrika](#) – SWP discussion paper FG6-2005/04

African civil society. European NGOs are advised to reconsider if more impact on justice and welfare for Africa could be achieved by strengthening African civil society's power to analyse and influence and pursue its own role as watchdogs of their own governments (and private companies) rather than focussing on providing services.

**Influencing non-aid policies:** "Development" as a policy area and "aid" as its respective implementation mechanism are only a small part of the overall picture and it would be a bad idea to ring-fence attention to human rights and social justice to this area whilst the real impact on poverty and freedom is being done in other policy arenas. Spain has taken an honest step forward by proposing a plan that articulates both interest and ethics. The ball is now in the court of those who want to tip the balance to the latter. Focussing exclusively on Official Development Aid would be the wrong strategy.<sup>19</sup> The explicit referral to human rights and particularly to economic and social rights in the Spanish Africa Plan provides a framework awaiting its operationalisation that would permit to hold the Spanish government (and private businesses) accountable against measurable international standards.<sup>20</sup> An alliance of those segments of the Spanish government interested in the promotion of human rights and social justice with civil society groups that are capable in advocacy and well informed about African issues could take on board this task.

**One Europe:** Africa policies of European community member states are best being done within a European framework.<sup>21</sup> Only so, post-colonial bonds and client relations - exemplified in competitive flag-posting of Commonwealth, Francophonie and the like - could be overcome. The lack of colonies on African soil could, hence, be an advantage for Spanish policy making, if it leads to a multilateralisation of aid. It has been a matter of concern that Spain had focussed on Lusophone countries, giving the impression to claim "Iberian" territories. The current Africa Plan and the diplomatic outreach seem to move away from trajectory. However, the new cultural policy of promoting the Spanish language must justify if it either means to offer opportunities to young Africans or if it tries to expand influence by linguistic politics. Again, Spanish NGOs are recommended to integrate into European advocacy and policy networks to fine-tune their actions within a European civil society.<sup>22</sup>

**One Africa:** African development has lately celebrated a step forward with its regional integration into the African Union and the initiative of NEPAD. Particularly the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has been received as a major tool to promote good governance and sound economic management, by leaving behind the principle of non-interference and submitting national sovereignty to benchmarks of human rights, economic performance and governance standards.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the Regional Economic Communities have gained more weight and administrative

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<sup>19</sup> A notable exception to a charity-based approach is [the work of IntermonOxfam on trade](#), which has been given the chance to appear in the Development Commission of the Spanish parliament.

<sup>20</sup> Plan Africa Page, p. 46

<sup>21</sup> In November 2005 after talks with the Commission of the African Union's Commission, the European Commission issued its Africa strategy which has been ratified by the Council and the Parliament. It is meant to guide both the EC and its member states (!). [EU Strategy for Africa: Towards a Euro-African Pact to Accelerate Africa's Development](#) Brussels 12.10.2005 COM(2005)489final

<sup>22</sup> Some of the European coordination bodies are Concordeurope ([www.concordeurope.org](http://www.concordeurope.org)), Eurodad ([www.eurodad.org](http://www.eurodad.org)), Eurostep ([www.eurostep.org](http://www.eurostep.org)). Many discussion on European policies including NGO involvement are documented by the European Centre for Development Policy Management ([www.ecdpm.org](http://www.ecdpm.org))

<sup>23</sup> African Union [www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org) ; NEPAD [www.nepad.org](http://www.nepad.org)

strength. These developments have been answered by the creation of the Africa Partnership Forum that has emerged as a response at the G8 2003 summit in Evian and comprises the G8 nations, other OECD countries and representatives from Africa.<sup>24</sup> Spain has committed to fully support these initiatives. Latest assessments, however, argue that the beforehand confidence that was given to the NEPAD initiative is increasingly being frustrated by the lack of outcomes.<sup>25</sup>

### Questions for the discussion

- The Master Plan lays out a number of aid instruments without prioritising or giving target dates. How will the Spanish government be held accountable against the promises made?
- Which aid instruments – multilateral contributions, bilateral budget support, projects – will be applied and what criteria influence these choices? With the increase of priority partner countries, will Spanish aid spread or will it focus on some key countries? Will implementation be delegated to other development partners?
- Migration is one core topic in the Africa Plan. How are altruistic values reconciled with crude interest in migration control? Who are the actors within government and whose policies will ultimately prevail?
- The Spanish administration has shown interest in investigating co-development as an instrument to both integrate migrant communities into Spanish society and to promote development in their countries of origins. What would a successful strategy for migration and co-development for Africa look like? Are there any examples?
- Is it necessary to develop a new configuration in the division of labour between official aid and the actions of NGOs? Will the AECI continue to work just as another NGO? What are the particularities in Africa that impede transplanting the default mode of Latin American project implementation?
- What is the potential contribution of a small European donor to foster the advancement of effective, democratic states in Africa?
- Are the Spanish practitioners and researchers prepared to analyse the African realities? Is the Spanish administration ready to factor in lessons learnt and adapt its policies and practices? How is research up-take by policy makers being managed?

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<sup>24</sup> DFID 2005: [Mutual Accountability and the role of the Africa Partnership Forum](#), London

<sup>25</sup> Charles Manga Fombad & Zein Kebonang 2006: [AU, NEPAD and the APRM - Democratisation Efforts Explored](#) (Edited by Henning Melber), Upsalla



## Foroaod – Spanish Development Aid

FRIDE organised the project “Spanish Development Aid - Mid-term Review and a Proposal for a Participative Consultation” between June 2006 and April 2007. This project aims to develop a consultation process about the current Spanish government’s development cooperation policy. We have created a forum for participation and debate, in order to assess the Spanish development cooperation reform agenda and to identify the main achievements and shortcomings in operationalising the initiatives based on the principle of “More Aid, Better Aid”. A set of recommendation guidelines were developed, through participative methods, with the objective of putting into practice the aspirations of the Spanish development cooperation policy.

[www.foroaod.org](http://www.foroaod.org)