

## Trends and Prospects for Afro-Arab Co-operation\*

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In March 1981, the Afro-Arab Co-ordination Committee,<sup>1</sup> set up by the Afro-Arab Summit in Cairo in March 1977, met in Khartoum, Sudan, for the first time in more than two years and reaffirmed their continued commitment to the cause of Afro-Arab co-operation in a bid to smooth the path for greater Arab aid to hard-pressed sub-Saharan Africa. Earlier, in the euphoria of growing Afro-Arab cohesion following the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973, many observers had hastened to conclude that the Middle East and black Africa are in the process of merging into a single international system. However, the tensions and conflicts created by the oil crisis and later the serious situation caused by the Camp David Accord between Egypt and Israel in March 1979 have inflicted a crushing blow to the healthy development of Afro-Arab co-operation. It is clear that successful growth of Afro-Arab co-operation will not be possible without the motivating force of a larger common purpose to which all subscribe. The fundamental question is whether the Arabs, once accomplices in black Africa's enslavement and later allies in her political liberation, could also become sustained partners in Africa's struggle for economic liberation. What are the problems and prospects for the future of Afro-Arab co-operation? This paper seeks to analyse briefly the conditions, significance and prospects for the development of Afro-Arab co-operation in the context of Third World solidarity in their joint struggle against the forces of imperialism and neo-colonialism.

### HISTORICAL BACKDROP

In order to properly appreciate the dynamics and dilemmas in the growth of Afro-Arab relations in the recent years it is necessary to have a historical and neo-political perspective. Geographically, the Arab world and Africa are contiguous and even overlap. This over-lapping of the two regions is clearly reflected in the fact that nine<sup>2</sup> out of the twenty-two members of the League of Arab States (LAS), accounting for about two-thirds of the Arab world, live in the continent of Africa and are at the same time members of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.). About

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25 per cent of Africa's population is Arab. Historically the link between the two regions is many centuries old when the Arabs started penetrating much of Africa for trade, travel, exploration, immigration and Islamization. The Arab states have from ancient times had commercial, religious, cultural and economic ties with the African continent, particularly the East African coast. Millions of Africans became followers of the Islamic faith, the traditional religion of most Arabs. Particularly one can notice Arab religious, cultural and social influence in most part of East Africa, notably Zanzibar, Malindi, Mombasa, Lamu, and Pemba. Swahili, the *lingua franca* in East Africa and indeed the language of African nationalism, is closely linked to Arabic. Historically, the Arab traders long preceded the European explorers as the first visitors to most of the East African regions with their base in Zanzibar. However, the founding of European colonial rule in East Africa and elsewhere following the Berlin partition of Africa in 1885 marked a turning point.

During the period of European colonialism a more positive aspect of Afro-Arab relations emerged mainly due to the fact that both the peoples were subjected to the same colonialism, particularly the British and the French. Thus during the period of anti-colonial liberation struggles both the Africans and the Arabs rendered mutual support. It has been pointed out often enough that President Nasser of Egypt committed himself to participation in matters connected with Africa. Nasser viewed Egypt as the centre of three concentric circles, namely, the 'Arab circle,' the 'African circle' and the 'Muslim circle.'<sup>3</sup> He envisaged the flourishing of Afro-Arab co-operation as a natural and inevitable fact of history and geography and took the lead in providing material and propaganda support to a variety of nationalist and dissident groups from African colonies south of the Sahara. Later, after the formation of the O.A.U. in 1963, the Arab countries, members of the O.A.U., gave full support for the total liberation of the whole of Africa even though they themselves were largely preoccupied with their conflict with Israel. In recent years the intense competition between Israel and the Arabs for friendship with black African states has added a new dimension to the development of Afro-Arab relations.<sup>4</sup>

### ISRAEL AS A FACTOR IN AFRO-ARAB RELATIONS

After the creation of Israel in 1948, with the connivance of the West, she moved quickly to establish friendly ties with the Afro-Asian world, in her bid to compete with the Arab states. Through its much publicized "constructive co-operation" and "technical aid diplomacy," Israel soon established close diplomatic and economic ties with many African countries south of the Sahara. Israel presented herself as a small country belonging neither to the capitalist West nor the Communist East but as a country fully self-reliant and one that represented the "perfect model" of rapid development and progress and the supreme example of democracy

and socialism. Finding this "charming new-comer" as a "socialist" and "peace-loving" state stretching out a helping hand, it was no wonder that the needy Africans welcomed it warmly. Some countries like Tanzania were particularly impressed by the Israeli experiment in the 'Nahal' and 'Gonda' organizations.<sup>5</sup> Many pointed out that Israel's moderate form of socialist development could serve as an important example for developing nations rebelling against Western domination. As the *Standard* newspaper (Tanzania) put it:

The Israeli model may well prove to be a sort of economic third force — an alternative differing from the Western pattern, but certainly far more compatible with free world interests than any Communist model.<sup>6</sup>

Most black African states soon established cordial relations with Israel thereby recognizing the legitimacy of the Jewish state's existence. None was willing to accept the line then advocated by persons like Nasser and Ben Bella on behalf of the Arab League. The Israelis fully exploited this opportunity with brilliance and put in use their financial and skilled manpower resources. The technique of concluding special agreements of co-operation between Israel and African countries was formulated and implemented. By 1965 some twenty-eight African countries were getting aid from Israel in the form of technical assistance in agriculture, joint commercial ventures and most importantly military assistance.<sup>7</sup> The military and para-military assistance to Africa constituted the most important component of Israel's Africanist policy which was aimed at acquiring political influence and respectability in Africa. It was extended to some fifteen African countries including Zaire and Uganda.

Israel's non-military assistance to Africa was highly diversified. It is reported that by 1966 Israel became involved in nearly 200 African companies operating in twenty-four countries. It is significant to note that most of these used U.S. capital (a fact strictly concealed from the African countries). Over 4,000 Israel experts and advisors were working in black Africa. Besides, it is also estimated that since 1950s over 8,000 Africans studied medicine, engineering and allied subjects in Israel. It was no wonder that most observers had only praise for Israel's role in Africa. It was not surprising therefore, that in the euphoria of friendship and admiration, most Africans evaded the fundamental question as to how Israel, itself small in population and resources and dependent on foreign aid for its own existence from the outset, could bestow such bounty on others! At the same time both the United States and South Africa considered Israel efforts in Africa as contributing to the struggle against African national liberation movements which threatened their separate and complementary interests.

Israel's relations with racist South Africa was yet another factor that influenced Afro-Arab relations. South Africa gave full support to Zionism and had considerably helped in the creation of Israel in return for the strong South African Jewish Community's support for the *apartheid*

regime. The south African Jews had been sending huge sums of money every year to Israel. Israel's exports to South Africa continued to increase from year to year.<sup>8</sup> The Israel — South Africa connection has been most effective in the field of military collaboration. The most sinister and dangerous aspect of this relationship is the nuclear collaboration. However, paradoxically, Israel — South Africa relations continued to grow simultaneously with Israel's honey-moon with black Africa.

#### THE SHIFT

By the mid-1960s Africa's infatuation with Israel started declining. Many radical African countries came to see Israel as an agent of Western imperialism, a friend of minority racist regimes in Southern Africa and a tool of "neo-colonialism."<sup>9</sup> The Arab diplomacy in Africa mounted a counter offensive. The Africans began to question the **bonafides** of Israel following the Arab-Israel War of June 1967, when Israel showed a cynical disregard for the resolutions of the U.N. and the O.A.U. which asked her to vacate the occupied territories. With the Israel occupation of Egyptian territory, 'sovereign African territory,' Africa's shift away from Israel was no longer a matter of controversy.

From 1967 onwards the African stand on the Middle East crisis was to support the implementation of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 which *inter-alia* recognized both the illegality of Israel's occupation of Arab territory and the right of the Jewish state to exist within secure and guaranteed frontiers. Even pro-Israel countries like Senegal and Niger voiced their support to Egypt which was the victim of aggression.

In 1971 when the African leaders met in Addis Ababa they took a more serious view of the 'arrogant,' 'intransigent' and 'non-cooperative' attitude of Israel in rejecting in February that year the peace proposals of the U.N. Secretary-General's special envoy, Gunnar Jarring, despite Egypt's accepting them.<sup>10</sup> The failure of the Jarring Mission to break the Middle East deadlock prompted the O.A.U. in 1971 to engage in an African mediation effort,<sup>11</sup> to secure the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 through the appointment of a Committee of Ten Wise Men,<sup>12</sup> which also failed. This failure of the O.A.U. mediation effort and the apparent obduracy of Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territories produced a new politico-psychological climate more favourable to intensive Arab lobbying in Africa. This new climate of Afro-Arab cohesion was evident in the resolutions adopted at the Rabat Summit of the O.A.U. in June 1972. Another indication, at Rabat, of the growing Arab influence in the O.A.U. affairs was the granting of observer status to the Palestine Liberation Organization (P.L.O.) with the right to attend O.A.U. meetings.

#### AFRO-ARAB RELATIONS SINCE 1973

The intensification of Arab diplomatic offensive in Africa coupled

with the increasing African disenchantment with Israel marked a new phase in Afro-Arab relations. The year 1973 marked a watershed in this development. The year started with three African countries, Congo (Brazzaville) Niger and Mali breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel following the example of Uganda and Chad in the preceding year. The fourth Arab-Israel War of October 1973 acted as a catalyst in consolidating and furthering Afro-Arab relations. Within less than a month following the war, a record number of African countries (21 in all) broke diplomatic relations with Israel in addition to the eight which had done so previously.<sup>13</sup> Following the war the Arab states launched their oil weapon against the Western powers in order to force them to put pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied territories. The Africans took the opportunity to call on the Arab states to impose an oil embargo on the white minority regimes in Southern Africa as well. Thus a number of factors<sup>14</sup> strengthened Afro-Arab co-operation in 1973.

However, the oil crisis was also a severe set-back for most African economies. Africa's initial enthusiasm soon gave way to growing concern at the effects of the rising price of oil. Oil is the predominant source of energy of almost every African country, Ghana relying on it for 80 per cent of its energy requirements and Tanzania for 95 per cent, in marked contrast to the Western countries which can get by with greater reliance on other energy sources.

The cost of oil imports to thirty African countries, i.e., all those without enough oil of their own, rose from \$500 million in 1973 to \$1,300 million in 1974. Although this amount is small compared with that paid by industrialized nations, the increase has been a heavy additional burden on their already strained economies. Besides, at the same time the prices of imports of manufactured goods from the advanced countries skyrocketed and the non-oil producing African countries were the most hard hit from both sides. The rhetoric and the international campaign to bring about a new international economic order produced no relief.

Africans warned that the solidarity between black Africa and the Arab world during the October War would be impossible to maintain unless the Arab oil states took account of the special needs of the developing sub-Saharan countries.<sup>15</sup> The question became seriously asked in Africa as to how much reality exists behind the rhetoric of Afro-Arab solidarity born out of the October War.

Under these circumstances it was only natural that some African countries expected special rewards from the Arabs following their break with Israel in an effort to balance the Arab political gain with the black Africa's economic loss, on the basis of equality.<sup>16</sup>

The Arab response was positive. The 6th Summit of the Arab Kings and Presidents held in Algiers on 26-28 November 1973 acceded to the OAU's request for using oil as a weapon against white minority regimes in Southern Africa. It went further in proposing an Arab-African summit meeting to broaden the content of the Afro-Arab co-operation. The Arab

Summit further decided to establish an "Arab Bank for Industrial and Agricultural Development in Africa" (later called the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa — BADEA) with an initial capital of \$231 million. However, the new problems caused by the oil crisis remained to be dealt with and continued to be a source of tension.

The African countries suggested the establishment of a two-price system — one for the developed countries and the other for Africa the Third World. The Africans were assured of all the oil they needed but their request for a dual price system was rejected on the grounds that: (i) a double price policy could be abused by the multinational oil companies which still handle all distribution of oil in Africa, and (ii) prices of oil are fixed by the OPEC and could not be unilaterally changed by only some of its members.

At the end of the Cairo conference, however, the Arabs undertook to accelerate the creation of the Arab Bank for the Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) as agreed at the Algiers Summit of the Arabs with an increased capital of \$500 million. In the meantime the Ministers recommended the speedy establishment of a \$200 million Oil Fund (Special Arab Aid Fund for Africa (SAAFA) for the granting of credits to African countries at a nil or nominal rate of interest for the purchase of Arab oil.

The Cairo conference, however, could not remove the growing worries of African countries. They pointed out that the Arab Bank for Economic Development of Africa is not a real solution. First of all, it is an Arab and not Arab-Africa Bank, and the Arabs alone take the decisions on all projects under consideration. Secondly it is a commercial bank and not an interest-free institution and its objectives are profits rather than aid. The Africans of course appreciated the promised \$200 million aid but felt that the Arab oil-producing countries could and should do much more.

The extent of African disappointment was evident at the next meeting of the OAU Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in June 1974 in Mogadishu, Somalia, particularly in the politics of the election of the new O.A.U. Secretary-General.

Many African States continued criticising Arabs for not helping them sufficiently and for their lack of political support. Commenting on the \$200 million Arab aid to Africa, a Kenyan Minister remarked: "This is equivalent to a two year outlay for the Ministry of Education. This is not enough for the 42 countries of Africa."<sup>17</sup>

An added factor that contributed to the growing tension between the Arabs and black Africa was the discovery of some Arab links with racist South Africa. Many African countries expressed surprise at the behaviour of some Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia who, despite African solidarity in the struggle against Zionism, had decided to do business with South Africa.

Another major reason for disagreement between Arab and African policies has been the Arab role in the conflicts in Africa, both internal and intra-regional. An illustrative example was the disagreement over the

Ethiopian rebel province of Eritrea. The majority of Arab states, supporting the policy of Somalia, gave both political and economic support to the Eritrean Liberation Front, and supported their demand for secession and independence from Ethiopia — a policy opposed to the great majority of OAU members. Arab policy on Eritrea was strongly condemned by the Ethiopian regime and led to a rupture in diplomatic relations with Tunisia.

#### TOWARD CLOSER ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

However, despite all the setbacks and tensions, attempts at sustaining and strengthening Afro-Arab co-operation were not abandoned. The Arabs instead chose to ignore the African protests and began to strengthen the co-operation as demanded by the OAU. In 1974 at the controversial OAU Summit at Mogadishu itself the Arab countries averted the dissolution of the OAU Committee of Seven by supporting the proposal that the \$200 million promised to be the starting capital of the Special Arab Aid Fund for Africa should be deposited with the African Development Bank in Abidjan. The Arab delegations took pains to point out that the Arab Fund should not be regarded as a reward for African support of the Arab stand on Israel, but should be seen as part of a genuine effort at economic co-operation.

**Multilateral as well as bi-lateral Arab aid to Africa continued to increase. The proposed Arab Bank for Economic Development of Africa established during the 6th Arab Summit in Algiers in November 1973 started functioning in Khartoum, Sudan in March 1975 with an initial capital of \$231 million. The paid up ordinary capital of the Bank at the beginning of 1978 stood at \$742.25 million contributed by 18 Arab countries.**<sup>18</sup>

The increasing flow of Arab economic aid to Africa symbolized the acceleration of efforts towards consolidation of Afro-Arab co-operation. The 24th meeting of the OAU Council of Ministers in February 1975 recommended that a Summit meeting of African and Arab heads of state should be held to review further close relations among them.

Attempts at consolidating Afro-Arab co-operation continued. A number of factors contributed to the strengthening of Afro-Arab co-operation in 1976, the most important among them being: (a) the smoother flow of Arab money into the African economies and the intensification of the institutional co-operation between the OAU and the Arab League; (b) The increase in the economic and military co-operation between Israel and South Africa; and (c) The Entebbe raid by the Israel Commandos on 28 June 1976.<sup>19</sup> As regards the Entebbe raid, even though many African leaders might have been privately delighted by the swift release of hostages and by Idi Amin's humiliation, their feelings soon gave way to profound shock at what they described as "the rape of Africa." The resolution adopted by the 13th OAU Summit at Port Louis in July 1976, which was in session when the raid took place, was reflective of these

feelings.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT CONFERENCE, CAIRO, 1977

The convening of the Afro-Arab Summit Conference in March 1977 was a timely and very significant event in the development of Afro-Arab co-operation. Its significance was also reflected by a record number of 60 Heads of State and Government, which comprised all the members of the O.A.U. (except Malawi) and the Arab League, attending.

The representatives of the Arab world were now able to grasp the extent of the need for economic development in Africa, and, consequently, the importance of the role which could be played in this by Afro-Arab co-operation. The Summit, therefore, marked a new very significant phase in the development of co-operation.

The summit adopted four crucial documents: viz (1) a Declaration and Programme of Action on Afro-Arab co-operation, (known as the "Cairo Declaration"); (2) a Political Declaration; (3) a Declaration on Economic and Financial co-operation; (4) a Resolution on the Organization and methods of future Afro-Arab Co-operation. These documents elaborated the nature and structure for future Afro-Arab cooperation.

In the "Cairo Declaration," for example, the African and Arab states undertook to co-operate in the fields of politics and diplomacy, economy and finance, trade and education, culture, science, technology and information with a detailed action programme being outlined for all these fields. It was also decided to establish a Permanent Joint Committee at ministerial level to ensure the implementation of the programme. Among others, the Resolution on the organization and methods of future Afro-Arab co-operation decided to create various bodies and institutional mechanisms to achieve the aims and objectives of Afro-Arab co-operation. They included:

- (a) the Standing Commission,
- (b) the specialized working group,
- (c) the co-ordinating committee,
- (d) the ad-hoc conciliation and arbitration court.

**Although the African countries had asked for urgent aid of US\$ 2 billion, they were satisfied with the response of the Arab oil-exporting countries by their pledge of US\$1.5 billion. But the African states were disappointed four months after the Summit when they learned that the funds so promised were not to be available directly to them, but through BADEA. And hence the funds in question were remaining in the donors' capitals.**

In Cairo, while political conflicts were scrupulously avoided, no attempt was made, conversely, to reduce areas of disagreement among the African and Arab states. Nigeria, Ethiopia and other African states were disappointed in their attempt to include in the Political Declaration any

mention of disapproval for "secessionist or counter-revolutionary movements," a disappointment seen by many as containing more than procedural relevance, especially given open Arab support for Eritrean separatists.<sup>21</sup>

### AFTER THE CAIRO SUMMIT

The record of Afro-Arab co-operation has been largely encouraging in 1977 and 1978 following the first Afro-Arab Summit. The rapidly expanding co-operation machinery created at the summit has been working without much friction or tension, with a view to serve a common goal to make Afro-Arabism work. A number of meetings and conferences among the concerned parties were held in order to ensure the implementation of the Cairo Declaration and Programme of Action on Afro-Arab Co-operation.<sup>22</sup>

However, this encouraging development in Afro-Arab co-operation, especially in the economic field, was frustrated in early 1979 by the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel. As a result one of the co-operation partners, the Arabs, remained deeply divided. Their differences have brought about a dangerous split among the Arab ranks. The expulsion of Egypt from the Arab League, the removal of the League Headquarters from Cairo to Tunis, the freezing of League accounts and the seizure of all Arab League documents by Egypt all highlight the Arab differences.

It is serious not because it is the end of Pan-Arabism, as some tend to put it, but because African countries are likely to import among themselves the Arab differences. There are several ways in which the Arab split could be extended to Africa. First, the question of a Peace Agreement between Egypt and Israel. There would be some African leaders who might support it on the one hand and who reject it on the other.

Secondly, there must be a split among the O.A.U. member states over the question of resuming diplomatic relations with Israel. Thirdly, there might be a split among the O.A.U. member states over the question of expulsion of Egypt from the O.A.U. The present situation if allowed to continue may cause serious, irreparable damage to Afro-Arab co-operation at a time when this would be particularly desirable in view of the huge surpluses accumulating on the Arab side, due to the ever-escalating prices of oil, and mounting debts and balance of payments problems on the African side.

It is pertinent to note here that at the first O.A.U. Economic Summit held at the end of April 1980 in Lagos there was little or no talk of Afro-Arab co-operation. Many even started asking the question: is the Afro-Arab movement dying?<sup>23</sup> It was only a few years ago the idea was regarded by some as one way out of Africa's problems of under-development and poverty.

However, the recent meeting of the Afro-Arab co-ordination Commit-

tee in Khartoum, Sudan, in March 1981 after over two years of dormancy seems to provide a ray of hope.<sup>24</sup> This meeting, attended by the Secretaries-General of the Arab League and the O.A.U. (Chedli Klibi and Edem Kodjo) and a small number of delegates from each side, took a number of decisions to smooth the course of Afro-Arab co-operation. It was decided that the Arab League and the O.A.U. would be permanently represented at each other's headquarters to reinforce co-operation between the organizations. The Co-ordination Committee also agree to take steps to supplement the Arab official aid to sub-Saharan Africa by Arab private investment and to provide guarantees for such capital. Mutual trade will also be encouraged. The Committee also decided to set up an Afro-Arab Fund for studies and cultural activities.

According to BADEA, total Arab assistance to Africa in 1980 was just over US\$ 1.15 billion — an all time record, which brings the total since 1973 to about US\$ 5.5 billion. Most of it is on concessional terms, i.e. with a grant element of at least 25 per cent. BADEA itself in 1980 committed \$71.95 million (compared to \$44.07 million in 1979) to help the least developed and seriously affected African countries. BADEA has also pledged \$50 million for the three year reconstruction programme in Zimbabwe, in addition to funds from other Arab donor countries and agencies.<sup>25</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

It should be clear from the above survey of developments that the crucial problem obstructing the growth of Afro-Arab cooperation is not the lack of "Arab money" as such. Given the divisions within both the Arab and the African tanks, and the continuing tendencies of suspicions, there is a need for a common unifying objective in addition to the long term enlightened economic interest. Although the Arab-Israel wars have been of a limited nature the experience of these wars would produce unifying bonds for Afro-Arab economic cooperation.

Black Africa and Arabs have still a good chance of greater co-operation between them. The key assertion of this analysis is that the Arabs have a substantial economic stake in the present and future prosperity of Africa. And that there are numerous areas for cooperation that can be mutually and fruitfully exploited. **As Cervenka rightly points out:**

Once the Arab industrialization programmes are completed and the dependence on Western technology is over, the time will come when the Arabs will be in search of the raw materials to sustain their industries. Only Africa will be in a position to supply them.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore serious attention needs to be given to ensuring that the African countries become an integral part of the new mechanism of future regional economic growth.

On the question of Afro-Arab co-operation the view of many African countries is that African support of the Arab-led diplomatic crusade to isolate Israel in the third world has been rewarded by paltry material assistance. It has been noted that Arab countries are more concerned with floating their surplus funds on international money markets than investing these unused funds in African countries which are in dire need for investment. Some African states have also begun to experience the fact that the Arab multinationals behave no differently from the Western based ones.

Undoubtedly, there is need now to make government policies and Afro-Arab institutions congruent with the needs of the regions. Arab economies can gain from African progress. There is need for action in several areas of policy implementation. The Arab oil-producing countries should increase efforts to enhance economic progress in the African countries through suitable policies and structural trade adjustments etc. over a long term. There is great need to increase the stability of the revenues from raw material exports earned by the African countries as well as to increase productive investment in Africa concentrating on increased production of food and energy. It is necessary to increase the capacity of both B.A.D.E.A. and A.D.B. to supply resources to African countries and to expand the access of the African states to Arab markets. Also the African policy makers should accept the premise that mutual benefits imply mutual responsibilities.

On a practical level there is also need for structural changes in the working mechanisms of various Afro-Arab co-operation institutions such as the B.A.D.E.A. in order to facilitate meaningful participation of the African countries. This may involve changing the membership and voting structures in such institutions more equitably between donors and recipients. Besides, the question of lack of understanding between the black Africans and the Arabs should be tackled through various means including enhancement of diplomatic and **consular representations** in their respective countries. Not many African governments have diplomatic or consular representatives in Arab capitals and vice versa.

It is a fact that the elaborate economic co-operation arrangements could only function satisfactorily in the background of political co-operation and cohesion. Obviously oil prices are not the only source of tension and division between the Arabs and the Africans. In fact the oil crisis acted as a catalyst for fuller co-operation between Black Africa and the Arab World. It is true that African non-oil countries received Arab oil supplies at a very great cost. They were forced to cut back their development plans as a result of the fall of their foreign currency reserves. While it is generally agreed that most African states' economies have been seriously affected adversely by the oil price rises, it is far from easy to determine just how much this has been the case in any given country. Others factors have to be taken into account.

It is common knowledge that the deficit within the African coun-

tries' balance of payments is not entirely due to the increase in oil prices, but mainly to the historical nature of colonial exploitation of these countries by imperialism and the continuing operation of neo-colonialism. These forces make the Third World a perpetual exporter of cheap raw materials and importer of costly industrial manufactured goods. The Arabs and Africans are all victims of the same domination and exploitation.

Experience has proven that Arab money cannot alleviate the ailing African economies or solve the problem of economic development in Africa. The structural domination of African countries by imperialism ensures that any investment from whatever source that is put into these countries and profits generated end up in the imperialist countries in one way or another. This being the case it would be illogical to say, as some do, that the Arab oil-producing countries are becoming the new imperialists. It is so because the Arabs themselves are a dominated nation. The argument of new Arab imperialism, therefore, will only help alienate the Arab people from their allies in the Third World and in Africa in particular.

A major factor obstructing the healthy development of Afro-Arab Co-operation has been the growth of Pan Islamism in recent times. To illustrate, while BADEA, supposed to be the backbone of Afro-Arab co-operation, had a working capital of \$231 million, the Islamic Development Bank established at the same time (in 1974/75) had as its capital \$2,400 million and Saudi Arabia alone contributed \$240 million, an amount greater than that of the total capital of BADEA. The objectives of the Islamic Development Bank is to spread Islam especially in Africa. Many African countries have resented this. Even their shady manner of allocating money from other Arab Banks to African countries alludes to this "Islamism." Thus when granting loans to independent African countries, Mozambique was given much less than the sum given to the tiny Comoro Islands. The Comoros are an Islamic state. At a bilateral level Saudi Arabia has given Pakistan \$1,700 million to buy American missiles whereas the Arab oil-producing countries together have provided a mere 124 million dollars to help black African countries to come out of the recession. The Libyan and Saudi Arabian military assistance to fascist Idi Amin of Uganda in the 1978/79 Uganda-Tanzania War can only be explained on the basis of Islamism.

A more fundamental obstacle to the practical growth of Afro-Arab co-operation, however, remains to be the political conflicts and disunity within and between these two blocs. The Libyan-Egyptian disputes, Sudanese support of the Eritrean Liberation Front against Ethiopia, the Arab support for President Mobutu during the armed conflict in Shaba (Zaire) in 1977 and 1978 and the Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi's open military intervention in the Uganda-Tanzania War 1978-79 in favour of ex-President Amin are only some of the recent examples of such conflicts which undermine Afro-Arab solidarity and cohesion. Many Africans seem

to ask what are the Arabs up to in Africa? Are they trying to arrogate the right to be the guardians of African soul? These seem to be relevant question in the present context.

However, despite failures, obstacles and criticism there exist wide possibilities of increasing practical co-operation between these two major regions of the Third World, both sharing problems of development and dependence. In this regard the Arabs and Africans need each other equally so that they may in the long long present a united front to the rich world in the search for a New International Economic Order.

Thus, in the long run, Afro-Arab co-operation, if properly oriented and developed, could greatly help in building up Third World Self-reliance both nationally and collectively. Even in the short run Afro-Arab co-operation appears to be mutually beneficial.

Briefly it may be said that the main obstacle to Afro-Arab solidarity and co-operation is imperialism which plays with the genuine interests of the Arab and African masses as well as infiltrates and sabotages the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Therefore, a firm basis for Afro-Arab co-operation in the long run can only be forged on the basis of commitment to the principle of anti-imperialism and anti-neo-colonialism. This involves first the intensification of the war against *apartheid* and Zionism and secondly the struggle towards the establishment of socialism.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. The Afro-Arab co-ordination Committee, created in 1977 at the first Afro-Arab Summit, consisted of the two Secretaries - General of the O.A.U. and the Arab League and the Chairmen of the O.A.U. and the Arab League Committees for co-ordinating Afro-Arab co-operation.
2. These are: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia.
3. G.A. Nasser, *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of Revolution*, Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1955.
4. For details see, A.B. Savant, "Rivalry between Egypt and Israel in Africa South of the Sahara, 1956-1970," *International Studies*, New Delhi, Vol. 17, No. 2, April-June 1978, pp. 299-330.
5. "Nahal" comprises combat units and detachments set up in the country's border areas. The personnel combine military preparedness with agricultural training and settlement pioneering.  
"Gonda," is a youth organization in Israel with army units. It is a pre-military youth organization which attempts to reach all youngsters aged 14 to 17.
6. *The Standard*, Dar es Salaam, 10 July 1970.
7. For details see, Abel Jacob, "Israel's Military Aid to Africa, 1960-1966," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1971, pp. 165-187.
8. Between 1961 and 1967 Israel's exports to South Africa rose from \$1.4 million to \$4 million while imports in 1967 reached \$3.3 million. See "Israel-South Africa Connection," *Africa*, London, No. 68, April 1977, pp. 41-43.

9. See, V. Grigoryev, "Israel: A Servant of Neo-Colonialism in Africa," *International Affairs*, Moscow, No. I, January 1961.
10. On 8 February 1971, the Swedish Ambassador Gunnar Jarring had called for the re-opening of direct talks between Egypt and Israel asking Israel to commit itself to withdrawal from occupied territories.
11. See, S.A. Gitelson, "The O.A.U. Mission and the Middle East Conflict," *International Organization*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Winter 1973, pp. 413-419.
12. For details see, *ibid*.
13. Mauritius, one of the four remaining African states broke diplomatic relations with Israel on 6 July 1976.
14. See Gervenka Z., *Unfinished Quest for Unity; Africa and the OAU*, London, Africa Publications, 1977, pp. 164-65.
15. *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 December 1973.
16. See Colin Legum, "Africa, Arabs and the Middle East," *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1975-76, p. A-76.
17. *Ibid*, p. A-87.
18. BADEA *Annual Report*, 1977, p. 56.
19. See Cervenka, n. 14, p. 171.
20. OAU Doc. AHG/Res., (XIII).
21. *Africa Research Bulletin* (A.R.B.), March 1-31, 1977. p. 4347.
22. See *West Africa*, April 1, 1977.
23. See *Africa*, London, No. 106, June 1980, p. 103.
24. See *Africa*, London, No. 117, May 1981.
25. *Ibid*.
26. See Cervenka, n. 14, p. 175.