



Rethinking Developmental States in Southern Africa

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**African Peer Review Mechanism and the Call for Democratic Developmental States in
Africa**

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Abstract

Since the 1970s, the “developmental state” (DS) discourse has become prominent and attractive among development scholars, writers, governments and policy makers in analysing the role of the state and the market in development. Exemplified by the rapid growth achieved by the Asian Tigers through self/indigenous efforts and good political leadership committed to formulation and implementation of sound economic policies, the DS discourse within the African context has been fuelled by the need to redesign state-led development strategies because the Structural Adjustment Programme and other development initiatives such as the Lagos Plan of Action were unsuccessful. The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s signalled the process of more intense globalisation, liberalisation and regionalisation with several challenges for individual African political economies, thus, the need for developmental states can no longer be over-emphasised. This paper examines the link between the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the discourse of developmental states in Africa. It examines Africa’s development challenge from the angle of governance deficiencies in most of its states with the aim of examining how the APRM in its capacity, not only advances the call for democratic developmental states in Africa, but is actually intervening to build its kinds in the continent. Employing data obtained from both primary and secondary sources, the paper addresses the questions: Does the APRM represent an answer to the call for democratic developmental African states? Considering the poor record of governance in the continent, what possibilities exist that the APRM will succeed in achieving its objectives?

Introduction

Popularised by the success of the Asian Tigers, a developmental state is a state “that puts economic development as the priority of governmental policy and is able to design effective instruments to promote such a goal” (Bagchi, 2000:398). Mkandawire (2010:65-78) argues that this economic aspect of a developmental state has to be supplemented by a political and social one, that is, the reconciling of democracy and development. Democracy and development are often linked together (see, Hope, 2005:284; Aredo and Adal, 2009:133-150; ECDPM, 2009; Landsberg, 2012:105-106); however, it has proved difficult to establish how both concepts directly impact each other particularly within the African context (Santaksing, 2004; ECDPM, 2009). African countries suffer from democracy and governance deficits which account for the continent’s underdevelopment.

Despite its enormous wealth in natural, material and human resources, Africa has remained slow in its development trajectory. The continent has been plagued by several challenges such as: inadequate food supplies, poor health facilities, cultural and religious crises, intra-state and inter-state conflicts, economic underdevelopment, environmental degradation and resource depletion, and continued marginalisation in world affairs. Africa is home to most of the least developed countries of the world while the continent also houses some of the world’s fastest growing economies, what a paradox! While some non-developed economies such as South Korea, Brazil, Argentina, India, among others, have made progress in their

development efforts and exploited the globalisation process to their advantage exemplifying what some dependency theorists have termed “dependent development”, Africa continues to lag behind.

With majority of the people in sub-Saharan Africa living on “less than \$1.25 a day” (UN, MDG 2014:9), the attendant poverty in most sub-Saharan African countries cannot be dissociated from lack of good governance, poor leadership, the prevalence of weak socio-economic policies and domestic mismanagement. As in some other parts of the world, diseases in various parts of Africa for which are preventable through adequate education and proper hygiene impose huge burdens on African economies (Shah Anup, 2011). In the case of Africa, however, such diseases become especially pronounced as a result of the poor capacity to address health related issues. Diseases that occur or begin elsewhere in other non-African countries often impose major impacts on African communities. The latter is due to the fact that Africa has dependent scientific and medical culture that lacks the capacity to address health issues without reference to the West. Most universities in African countries are poorly funded and are rudderless with regard to the need to focus on addressing important local issues. According to the information provided by the Global Health, Division of Parasitic Diseases and Malaria (see, CDC, 2014), “91% of deaths from malaria in 2010 were in the African region... Direct cost of treating the malaria epidemic was estimated at least to be US\$12 billion per year. The cost in lost economic growth is many times more than that”. HIV/AIDS is a major health problem in Africa (UNAIDS, 2011:7). The estimated number of adults and children living with HIV in the world, 2013, is highest for Africa (UNAIDS, 2014). Poor living conditions and the lack of access to basic social amenities and services such as clean water and adequate sanitation have resulted in decreased health systems (Shah Anup, 2011).

Most African countries still lag behind in terms of human resource development as their educational infrastructure bases are yet to be developed. For instance, according to a UNESCO Report (2009-2014), “38% of African adults (some 153 millions) are illiterate; two thirds of these are women. Africa is the only continent where more than half of parents are not able to help their children with homework due to illiteracy...Only 1% of national education budget of most African governments is earmarked to address the issue of illiteracy”. In addition to these weaknesses, lack of adequate human capital and modern technology to promote economic growth and development are concerning issues (Oshikoya

and Hussain, 1998:9; Greve, 1980:26-28). Lack of adequate investment in science and technology has left Africans as consumers of technology (Ogbu, 2004:1). Ogbu notes that, “only 1% of patents registered in the United States Patent and Trademarks Office originate from sub-Saharan Africa and that sub-Saharan Africa has 113 researchers per million population compared to China’s 554, India’s 151, and NICs’ 595” (2004:1-2). Yet, African leaders have formulated several development plans emphasising their commitment to the development of science and technology in the continent without effective implementation (Ogbu, 2004:2). There is constantly, the issue of brain drain as many professionals in Africa (particularly in the medical sector) migrate to other developed countries for lack of enabling environment to realise their potential (Shah Anup, 2009). This, perhaps, negatively affects the continent’s development.

Importantly, the intra-state and inter-state conflicts in Africa (as a result of leadership failures, divisive politics, inequalities in the distribution of national resources, weak state-society relations, poverty, among other causes) and associated political instability and insecurity they breed, are issues to worry about (Aremu, 2010:549-560). Beyond the negative impacts of conflicts on national and regional integration and development, conflicts also limit the opportunities available for African countries to attract foreign investments.

The level of challenges confronting the African continent is further complicated with on-going processes of globalisation, liberalisation and regionalisation. Africa has remained in the export of primary commodities rather than manufactured goods, which is a major impediment not only to industrial development but also to development of self-reliant and self-sustaining economic systems that are less susceptible to fluctuations in the world market (Greve, 1980:24-27). Another aspect of this challenge is that the vulnerability of Africa’s economies to changes in the global market is made worse by “the fact that a large number of them are based on a single major commodity” (Greve, 1980:24-27). With these human security challenges, the continent is not poised to compete in the world market neither would it benefit immensely from globalisation. Hence, Africa is a weak player in the international economic system whose resources continue to be exploited by non-regional actors. Its external dependence and increasing foreign debts further worsen the problems (see, Adams 2015:4-8). Clearly, the problematic issues mentioned above demonstrate that Africa’s development initiatives are yet to fully align with the realities and challenges of the continent as well as

reflect the needs of its people. Hence, the call for democratic developmental states which would transform the African continent is justifiable.

Our argument in this paper is that Africa will be better able to confront its daunting challenges and achieve development objectives if the continent's leadership promote good governance, democracy, effective leadership and implement deliberate and appropriate policies. Some useful lessons could be adapted from the experience of the East Asian new industrialised countries (NICs) which were formerly colonised but have made significant progress and improved their economies. It is within the context of Africa's political-economic history that the paper conceptualises the developmental state; examines salient issues in the discourse particularly how it affects the continent and thereafter assesses the instrumental use of the APRM in establishing such states on the continent. The paper's interest is to ascertain, empirically, whether the policies of the APRM are informed by the governance and development deficits in the continent and if the Mechanism would be allowed to function to advance the process of constructive change in Africa.

Conceptualising developmental states: Linking Africa's political economic history to the discourse

The concept of developmental state rekindles the long standing debate among development scholars on the role of the state vis-à-vis the market in development. There have been arguments for a minimal state where the development process is market driven and government's role is limited to "preventing monopoly and externalities, providing public goods and enforcing the law" (Denny, 2006:1-2; see also, Abe, 2006:8). There is the contention for a regulatory state whose government regulates the economy, provides for the welfare of the people and may assist the growth of the private sector by providing the enabling environment for businesses to thrive (Denny, 2006:1-2; see also, Kasahara, 2013:4). On the other hand, the developmental state which has attracted scholarly focus since the 1970s sees the government actually providing the direction for development and effectively leading the process (Maphunye, 2009:1-2; Amuwo, 2010:1-2; Green, 2011). The role of the market is supportive to the government of the state. The argument is that the market has to be regulated because of its 'perceived' shortcomings (Amuwo, 2010:2; Maphunye, 2009:2).

According to Maphunye (2009:1-2), "the developmental state is by definition interventionist and pro-poor and seeks to address challenges such as poverty, low economic growth, lack of

infrastructure and unequal development deliberately using state resources to address these challenges”. Although the concept of developmental state was first coined by Johnson (1982) to explain the economic growth in Japan which happened as a result of the effective involvement of the government in guiding the country’s development process,¹ it became popular when scholars reviewed the rapid economic progress achieved by the Asian Tigers from the 1970s and the shortfalls of market-led policies in Africa and Latin America (Green 2011; see also, Abe, 2006:8; Tawfik, 2008; Kashara, 2013:4; George Klay Kieh Jr. 2015). In addition, there is now a growing emphasis on the role of the state even by the promoters of market-led policies -- the international financial institutions -- in promoting the call for good governance, civil society participation, and effective and functioning institutions (ECA, 2013:1-2; see also, Green, 2010). In particular, the global financial and economic crisis in 2007 saw many developed countries take realistic measures to strengthen their failing economies (ECA 2013:2). However, while the role of the state in the development process may no longer be in dispute, the emphasis appears to be about what form the intervention of the state should take in partnership with the market and civil society.

In various studies on the developmental states, scholars note that the newly industrialised countries of the Global South were not democratic (at least in their early decades). As such, the discourse on developmental states appears not to be linked to the leadership pattern of the day (see Tawfik, 2008; Musamba, 2010:26-27; George Klay Kieh Jr. 2015). George Klay Kieh Jr. (2015) examines, for instance, the Singaporean and South Korean experiments with authoritarian developmental state and Botswana and Maritius experience with the democratic model. His conclusion is that there are several positive lessons which Africa can derive from the different models and adapt to the African context.

The key features of a developmental state as Musamba (2010:21) outlines are: “development oriented political leadership, autonomous and effective bureaucracy, productive oriented private sector and performance oriented governance”. For many scholars, therefore, it is possible to build developmental states within a democratic framework (Musamba, 2010:27; Mkandawire, 2010; ECA 2013:3). This is one of the key issues in the discourse of developmental states within the context of Africa. The question has remained whether it is

¹According to Professor Michael Chege, Japan had “emerged from the ruins of the 1945 bombing and the destruction of Nagasaki and Hiroshima to become the world’s second largest economy in less than fifty years” (ECA, 2011a:85) because the state took a centre stage in its development process.

possible to establish developmental African states. Scholarly literature seems to be in favour of democratic developmental African states (Musamba, 2010; Mkandawire, ECA, 2013).

African countries such as Botswana and Mauritius have been considered to possess the qualities of a democratic developmental state (see, Routley 2012:10-11; George Klay Kieh Jr. 2015). More so, at different periods, governments of African countries such as South Africa and Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, have made reference to their commitments to establishing such states (Routley, 2012:10-11). In recent times, a number of African countries have been named among the fastest growing economies in the world (see, Radelet, 2010); notwithstanding, the reality is that economic growth may have been achieved but has failed to translate to poverty reduction and job creation that will ensure meaningful socio-economic development and improved standard of living for the mass of Africans. Despite the existence of various national, regional and continental policies, the hopes of achieving good governance and economic prosperity are yet to be realised five decades after independence of most African countries. To this extent, the debate on the role of the state is significant in Africa considering the different development patterns which the continent's leaders have followed in the post-independence period; poor governance record in Africa; leadership and policy failures; capacity deficiencies of both governmental and non-governmental institutions; and the continent's present political, economic and social conditions (ECA, 2013-3-4).

Emerging from colonial rule, newly independent African countries were to participate in an international system where the rules governing international economic intercourse had been created without their participation. Thus, African countries were faced with the challenge of developing the continent and achieving economic prosperity in a Cold War era international system divided between the Western and Eastern blocs. As such, during the 1950s and 1960s, the African state was the main institution promoting development. For instance, in countries such as Ghana, Tanzania and Botswana and later Mauritius, the developmental state model was adopted although some African countries adopted the liberal model of development (George Klay Kieh Jr. 2015:1). Whichever system was adopted, government spearheaded the implementation of the Import Substitution Industrialisation.

It is therefore possible to identify the attempt to achieve state-led development as newly independent African states took up various economic activities. The state was in charge and

controlled the production industry as the private sector was weak (Musamba, 2010:28). The state was actually concerned with nation building, welfarism, promoting socio-economic development, building infrastructures, investing in sectors such as education, health and agriculture, and considerable progress was achieved (Baah, 2003; Musamba, 2010:28; Nzau, 2010:150; George Klay Kieh Jr. 2015). Baah (2003:1) refers to the period of the 1960s as the “Golden Decade” for Africa. It was, in his words, “a period of political freedom, self-realisation, economic growth and increased standard of living”. The success story of the immediate post-independence period was however short-lived as the state-led development model could not be sustained in many countries that adopted it (Baah, 2003; Musamba, 2010). This was due to various reasons including the: weak economic base of African economies, “susceptibility of new monocrop economic base; price fluctuations in the world capitalist system which affected the export earnings of African states” (George Klay Kieh Jr. (2015:1). A large number of state enterprises which were set up could not be sustained as they became unproductive (Musamba, 2010.George Klay Kieh Jr. 2015:1).

For his part, Baah (2003:2-3) pointed out that the West feared that socialist oriented policies undermined their free market ideology and endeavoured to get many African states on their side through the assistance of the World Bank and IMF, which took part in developing African infrastructure in African countries in the 1960s. Hence, the Cold War had its effect on Africa’s development efforts. To a considerable extent, African leaders adopted authoritarian models of governance where only a few countries (Botswana and Mauritius) remained democratic (Nzau, 2010:151; Musamba, 2010:30). Bad governance, poor leadership and domestic mismanagement led to the civil wars and military coup d’etats witnessed in most African countries during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Nzau, 2010:151). The impact of these problems on the economy was drastic as many African countries suffered severe economic hardship from the late 1970s.

Most leaders sought financial assistance from the IMF and World Bank. Such foreign aid, however, did not come without conditionalities. For instance, recipients who agreed to SAPs were required to shift toward the market economy model. The IFI policies ultimately proved to be unsuccessful causing economic hardship or stagnation and a decline in living conditions through the 1980s - often referred to as “Africa’s lost decade” (see, Edigheji, 2005; George Klay Kieh Jr. 2015:2). The OAU’s Lagos Plan of Action which was drafted in 1980, aimed to ameliorate the economic regression experienced in Africa and promote collective self

reliance, sub-regional and regional cooperation and integration for Africa's socio-economic development and transformation. The LPA (although emphasised the role of the state in the continent's development process) failed to achieve its objectives because it associated Africa's development challenges more with external factors than with bad local leadership and poor governance (see, Owusu 2003). By the late 1990s, it was clear from all indicators that Africa was lacking in terms of socio-economic development. The failure of SAPs led to a rethink on development strategies and re-enacted the debate on the developmental state in Africa during this period (Amuwo, 2010; Meyns and Musamba, 2010:7-8; Olaoluwa, 2012:139-141).

African leaders sought to redesign and redirect development strategies in order to address the political and socio-economic challenges confronting the continent and to meet the changing demands of a globalising economy. Their efforts culminated in the establishment of the African Union whose Constitutive Act was adopted in 2000 at the OAU Summit in Lome, Togo and became effective in 2001 (AfriMAP, 2009:4). The period of transformation from the OAU to the African Union coincided with the formulation of the NEPAD initiative by some of the continent's leaders in promoting the drive for change in Africa. In 2001, the NEPAD initiative was approved for implementation by the African Union Heads of State and Government as Africa's blueprint action plan for development (NEPAD/ECA/OSAA, 2012:X), and in 2002, African leaders took a decision to establish the APRM as a governance monitoring mechanism to further the effective implementation of the AU/NEPAD initiatives.

In establishing the NEPAD and APRM initiatives, African leaders recognised the "imperatives of good governance for human security, political stability, high economic growth sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration". The APRM aims to promote the ideals of good governance and popular participation of Africans at all levels of governmental and development activity – national, sub-regional and continental – in furtherance of the AU/NEPAD objectives. However, while these values are critical of democratic developmental states, considering the record of governance in Africa, the nature of politics and political leadership, many are skeptical that the APRM will achieve its objectives. Good governance; although is a subject of contestation by African scholars, there has also developed the interest to domesticate the idea towards reconstructing African states to trigger much needed socio-economic development and transformation of the continent.

As Adar, Juma and Miti (2010:XVI) point out, “the concept of developmental state is premised on the idea that state intervention is determined by socio-economic and political context”. The DS concept has been employed by different scholars to re-examine the position of the states in Africa in light of the continent’s development challenges and also taking cognisance of global realities and complexities. The indisputable reality this paper argues is that Africa is in need of developmental states that would: function within the democratic framework; be committed to promoting good governance, efficient public administration, management and service delivery; and promote the implementation of sound economic policies which would address human security challenges, human capital formation and development; promote industrialisation in the continent, among others. Such states would not only exploit Africa’s vast resources for developmental purposes, they would be positioned to exploit both regional and global opportunities and to manage the adverse effects of globalisation.

Bringing together the various scholarly discourses, the focus in this paper is to examine how African governments, through the instrumentality of the APRM are furthering the call for democratic developmental states in the continent. The aim is to examine how APRM’s policies and strategies align with the objective of bringing back African states to drive and effectively implement Africa’s development agenda by encouraging good governance; responsible and accountable political leadership; broad-based policy making processes; and implementation of appropriate policies.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this paper is qualitative and the approach of examining issues is descriptive and analytical. Research data were selected from interviews held (on an on-going PhD study) at the African Union Commission; Pan African Parliament; NEPAD and APRM Secretariats; Economic Commission for Africa; a number of CSOs and media houses in Addis Ababa, South Africa and Nigeria. Members of the academia who are experts in the field and doctoral students were interviewed. Data were also obtained from extant literature and documentary sources. Included in the methodology is an analysis of South Africa’s APRM Country Review Report to give a practical nuance to the functionality of the Mechanism in member states. This process also provides an additional source of data with

regards to addressing key concerns of the paper. A thematic discourse analysis is employed to explore key issues that emerged from the data.

The African Peer Review Mechanism: Structure and processes

Initiated in 2002 and established in 2003, the APRM -- a product of the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government at the first Summit of the AU – was integral to the implementation of NEPAD. APRM seeks to assess the governance challenges which have affected Africa's development several years after independence and monitor African governments' commitments in the AU's Declaration to promote good governance. The APRM hopes to put in place conditions that will improve the quality of governance and policy making processes in the African continent and assist African countries to build effective governance structures that will manage the continent's resources for the purpose of development. In creating the APRM as part of the NEPAD initiative, African leaders were conscious of the reality that: "there cannot be peace and security in the continent without socio-economic development, and that there cannot be socio-economic development without peace and security... One cannot separate the 'political' from the 'economic'...the two must go hand in hand"². The APRM addresses issues of political leadership which is the bedrock of a democratic developmental state.

The APRM aims to promote citizen involvement in policy making processes and effective implementation of policies that take into account the needs of the African people and focus on human security and human capital development. The contention is that many of the solutions to the myriad problems confronting the African continent might be found at the country level, but the challenges can only be resolved through genuine democracy, good governance and visionary leadership. In the African context, good governance centres on the need for strategic political and economic restructuring to bridge the gap between the state and civil society and allow civil society a place in governance and development processes at all levels. Hence the APRM provides an innovative approach for governments and the citizens to work together as partners in building an open, corrupt-free, democratic, progressive and peaceful society which would be attractive to foreign investors and development partners (ECA, 2008:XIII). To this extent, the APRM has been considered to serve as a "dual contract

² Interview with a senior management official (AUC 'C') at the African Union Commission. Date: 17 June, 2013.

between African governments and their citizens on the one hand, and between Africa and its development partners on the other” (ECA, 2008:XIII).

The APRM continental institutions consist of the:

- (1) Committee of Heads of State and Government of Participating Countries also known as the APR Forum;
- (2) Panel of Eminent Persons (APR Panel);
- (3) APRM Continental Secretariat;
- (4) Group of Independent Experts;

The APRM partner institutions include the:

- (1) United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA);
- (1) African Development Bank (AfDB); and
- (2) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Together, these continental and partner institutions are responsible for the overall implementation of the APRM. In addition, member countries have also established Focal Points, National Governing Councils, Secretariats and Technical Research Institutions in their countries to liaise and work with the Continental Secretariat as stipulated in the APRM Guidelines.³

The APRM is open to voluntary accession which indicates that member-states of the AU are under no obligation to participate. Its document also provides that a participating country may withdraw from membership by giving a notice to this effect to the APRM Secretariat (APRM, MoU paragraph 32). The APR process involves the conduct of periodic assessments and reviews of the overall governance structures and processes of participating countries to monitor compliance with those criteria which have been drawn from the NEPAD framework (Uzodike, 2010/11:94). Basically, the APRM conducts its reviews on four focus areas: democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance, and socio-economic development. By virtue of APRM membership, participating countries submit themselves not only to periodic peer reviews but also to

³The roles and responsibilities of the APRM continental and national institutions are outlined clearly in ECA, 2008. *African Peer Review Mechanism – Handbook for African Civil Society*, 5-6.

commit necessary resources towards the success of such reviews, and to undertake to be guided by agreed principles, goals, parameters and standards as articulated in the official documents of the APRM (APRM, Mou paragraphs 18-26). There are five stages marking the APR process consisting of both the Country Self-Assessment Review and others by the APRM institutions.⁴ It is worth mentioning that the “African Union and its organs such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC), Pan African Parliament(PAP), and the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights are involved in the implementation of this continental mechanism” (Uzodike, 2010/11:94).

Having conducted their Country Assessment processes, member countries are expected to draw up a National Programme of Action (NPOA) to provide realistic policy measures and time-frame to address identified problems emanating from the reviews (ECA, 2008:XIII). Presently, 35 countries out of the 54 African Union member states are participating countries while 17 member states have been peer reviewed and some countries have started implementing their NPOAs (Gruzd, 2014:6).

In the next section of the paper, we present an overview of South Africa’s APRM Country Review Report to show the practical functioning of the Mechanism in member states with regards to the purpose of the APRM; its organisational structure and the significance of its focus areas. South Africa was selected to represent one of African countries in contention as having the potential of developmental states. The country was among the first few to accede to the APRM upon its inception in 2003 and it would be worthwhile to examine its political and socio-economic condition. The government of South Africa perhaps, identify the need for political and socio-economic reforms on the basis of the country’s historical experience.

**APRM Country Review Report 5:
Republic of South Africa (September 2007)**

1. Implementation of the APRM Process in South Africa

The Country Review Report (pages 39-50) highlights the activities undertaken to complete towards completion of the Country Self Assessment Process as follows:

After accession to the APRM in 2003	Establishment of National Focal Point; creation
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⁴Participating countries engage in Country Self-Assessment Reviews after which the country prepares for other reviews from external bodies of the APRM and peers from other participating countries. For details, see the AU/NEPAD, 2003a. *Guidelines for Countries to prepare for and to Participate in the African Peer Review Mechanism.*

	of an inter-departmental committee; establishment of a temporary Secretariat in the Department of Public Service and Administration
28 – 29 September 2005	National Consultative Conference on the APRM; establishment of 15 member National Governing Council. Similar activity at the Provincial level
9 – 11 November 2005	Visit of the Country Support Mission (CSM)/ Discussion led to expansion of 15 member NGC to 29; creation of research group of 7 members by the NGC. Four research institutions were selected to compile the CSAR; appointment of the HSRC and Auditor General to assist the process
4 – 7 April 2006	Seminars held to review Report and NPoA
4 – 5 May 2006	Second National Consultative Workshop for presentation of Draft CSAR. Similar activity at the Provincial level
June 2006	Submission of CSAR and draft NPoA
9 – 25 July 2006	Hosting of the Country Review Mission (CRM)

In different studies assessing the APRM process in South Africa, a number of concerns were raised particularly regarding government's leading role in the process (see, Mbelle 2010:322; Hutchings, Dimba and Tilley, 2008:1-3). Not only were the national APRM structures constituted mainly by public officials, the government "dictated which CSOs were to participate; setting the norms of civil society engagement throughout and substantively editing the final CSAR after the final consultative conference had discussed the summary reports prepared by the four research institutes" (Mbelle, 2010:322; see also Seaton, 2008; Hutchings, Dimba and Tilley, 2008:1-3; 8-9; Bond, 2010:1-4). Other studies also identified challenges in the engagements between the government and CSO representatives (Hutchings, Dimba and Tilley, 2008:1-3; Boyle, 2008:1-2; Bond, 2010:1-4). Moreover, the visits of the CSM and CRM were considered to be "very short" and "tended to concentrate on urban centres and consultations with towns people, ignoring the country's huge rural population" (Mbelle, 2010:323; see also Seaton, 2008).

The issues raised by these scholars are germane in showing some of the weaknesses of the APRM which should be addressed to improve future reviews. While the South African government and its people recognise the importance of the APRM, the government is perhaps not honest about being assessed and scoring low in meeting the benchmarks which have been set. Again, it is partly because of such fears that some other African countries have not acceded to the APRM and they are criticised for hiding bad and unacceptable practices. It would however be worthwhile if the APRM could motivate countries to improve performance bearing in mind that bad governance would be exposed during the assessment

and review processes. This paper argues that civil society, organised in various groups, could be challenged to effectively utilise the opportunities provided by the APRM to improve governance in their countries.

2. Background notes on South Africa

The APRM CRR provides background explanations on the political history of participating countries in order for a comprehensive assessment of the country's challenges, development efforts and persistent problems. South Africa (see pages 51-67) experienced several years of colonial and apartheid rule. The country's first democratic elections which held on 27 April 1994 increased the impetus for reform in the country based on good governance, democracy and popular participation. The adoption of a new constitution, in 1996, marked a new beginning for South Africa to garner the gains of the freedom and democracy. The country has since moved on and has achieved progress in a number of areas. Nevertheless, despite the policy and institutional frameworks put in place to achieve a peaceful, stable and progressive society, the aftermaths of the apartheid era have remained. The country is bedevilled with a number of governance socio-economic challenges (AU/APRM, 2007:51-67; see ECA, 2011b:9).

3. Democracy and Political Governance: Overview of South Africa's Country Review Report

The CRR identifies that South Africa has made giant strides in terms of legal, policy and institutional frameworks to promote the values of democracy, particularly providing for the rights of the diverse communities, combating corruption and ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of the public service, addressing gender issues, among others. The South African Constitution is "celebrated" as that document that binds together the diverse communities in the country as the government and people chart their way forward in establishing democracy and good political governance (AU/APRM, 2007:69). It established three spheres of government which although are autonomous, are "interdependent and interrelated" (AU/APRM, 2007:71). Substantive efforts of the government towards achieving the APRM objectives under this thematic area are detailed in the CRR, pages 73-119.

The IDC/DRI Report (2013:1) indicates economic progress in South Africa since the beginning of democracy. The country "recorded an average rate of economic growth of 3.3% per annum in real terms over the period 1994-2012, a remarkable improvement on the 1.4%

average annual growth registered during the period 1980-1993". However, an analysis of the CRR revealed that despite the stable political condition in South Africa and various government policies since 1994 to improve the socio-economic situation in the country, it is proving to be difficult to address persistent socio-economic challenges. These constitute pull-back factors to the country's economic growth and progress.

Key challenges in South Africa include: poverty and racial inequality in accessing social services and public wealth, unemployment; weak capacities and human capital base particularly at the local level making for rural-urban dichotomy; corruption; high rate of crime and violence, HIV AIDS, among others (see Objectives 1-9 pages 74-119; see also, Mbelle, 2010:324). For instance, "almost 25% of the population (and 65% of young people) are without work" in South Africa (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2014:122). Statistics South Africa (2014a:III) records that "an estimated 730,000 households in South Africa experienced house breaking/burglary in 2011 and a further 200,000 households were victims of home robbery, making these crimes the most prevalent household crimes". The question to ask is: How can the people enjoy their various rights with the prevalent high rate of crime and violence? One of the effects of such challenges as inequality, poverty and unemployment is the feeling of xenophobia observed by the CRM and the Mission made recommendations to reverse this trend (see Objective 1, page 77 and 80). Other studies have also noted the feeling of xenophobia (see Musuva, 2014:377-402) which shows the APRM's potential in identifying governance challenges. Xenophobia (which has so far remained especially considering the 2015 incidents in Durban and other parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces) hinders the actualisation of the benefits of regional integration.

The CRR revealed also that there are challenges in the intergovernmental relations process as stakeholders view the local government (which is central to promoting the interests of the people) as subordinate (AU/APRM, 2007:71). Turianskyi (2009:5) observes that, there are challenges in implementing the principle of separation of power, even though this was not mentioned as an overarching issue. The South African government was encouraged to strengthen the local units to perform their key roles in the country's democracy (AU/APRM, 2007:71). The need for South Africa to encourage multiparty systems and avoid the issue of "floor-crossing", in order to consolidate and deepen its democracy was greatly emphasised by the CRM (AU/APRM, 2007:71). The government has since taken action concerning the issue of "floor-crossing" (see, Gruzd, 2014:17). The CSAR lists the various protocols under this

thematic area which have either been signed or ratified by the South African government and others yet to be ratified. One area of concern noted by the CRM is inadequacy in domesticating and implementing some of these conventions. As the CRM found during its consultations with stakeholders, South Africans' awareness about the existence of these protocols and conventions is low. The lack of capacity for parliament to perform its oversight functions and monitor the domestication and implementation of regional and international codes and standards were also addressed. The APR Panel's recommended some measures to correct these trends (AU/APRM, 2007:71-73).

4. Economic Governance and Management: Overview of South Africa's Country Review Report

Since 1994, the government of South Africa has been making efforts to reposition the country on the path of economic growth and management, to address the socio-economic challenges confronting the country and meet the needs of its growing population. The CRR lists the various factors which negatively affected the country's economy during the apartheid regime and the several challenges which were legacies of the past. Black Africans were marginalised in undertaking economic activities; it was difficult for them to access and enjoy social services while many were dispossessed of their economic resources and others left in poverty. Moreover, the unfavourable environment did not encourage investors while the country was economically sanctioned for many years (AU/APRM, 2007:121-156).

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) initiated in 1994 was the first development programme of government aimed at turning the tide of the economy, promoting economic growth; and delivery of basic services. In response to new and emergent challenges, in 1996, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy was introduced. The GEAR strategy also contributed to developing the economy; however, the challenges it faced resulted to the formulation of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) in 2005. AsgiSA was expected to address the challenges to fast economic growth and development which will positively impact on the people's wellbeing in society. Evidence reveals that South Africa has recorded moderate economic growth in the period since 1994 (see, IDC-DRI, 2014:1).

According to the CRR, South Africa has moved forward significantly in addressing its internal challenges. The government's development agenda has sought to address the issue of

poverty and reduce inequality (see, Stat. SA, 2012). Development policies, mechanisms and strategies have been put in place to reflect government's drive to promote economic growth and socio-economic development. Efforts have been made by government to promote decentralisation, efficient public service delivery, combating corruption and money laundering. Improvements are recorded in budget administration and ensuring proper public finance management. The country has a developed economy and do not lack in terms of infrastructures. Over the years, South Africa is one of the African countries "that have qualified to be listed in the exclusive league table of developing countries that are striving to move up the economic ladder" (AU/APRM, 2007:127). In fact, Mbelle (2007:351) noted that South African governments just like other African governments, do not lack when it comes to formulating policies, but their willingness and commitment to programme implementation is a huge challenge. Lack of commitment to implement constitutional provisions is a basic challenge notable among African leaders (Turianskyi, 2009:17-18).

Despite the progress made in addressing its national challenges, the CRR identifies several persisting challenges in achieving the objectives in this thematic area: constraints of the parliament in performing its oversight functions; poor management of public resources are noted at the sub-national levels of government; poverty, unemployment and shortage of skilled personnel; crime; violence; corruption; are among the socio-economic challenges in South Africa. There appears to be disconnects in programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (see, Pillay, 2000). Such issues reflect a part of the concern of this paper based on the imperative of broad-based participation in governance and development processes. The APRM proves to be an intervening factor in ensuring that national economic growth promotes inclusive socio-economic development.

Notwithstanding its challenges, South Africa, as one of the larger economies in Africa attracts investment flows to its rapidly growing consumer sector (Africa Pulse, 2013:20). The IDC/DRI (2013:29) however highlights a major concern of: "A large and widening deficit on the current account of the balance of payments as the country remains particularly reliant on inflows of foreign capital to fund the substantial shortfall between investment and savings. The openness of the economy and the highly concentrated nature of the national export basket make it extremely vulnerable to global economic developments". According to the findings of the CSAR and CRM (see pages 152-154), South Africa promotes regional economic integration. The country is however advised to ensure that its national economic

policies support the pan-African agenda. South Africa is seen to be more open to engaging more with developed partners and one can raise issues how much more it promotes regional concerns because the country is one of those that could assist other African countries in the sub-region in promoting the ideals and objectives of regional cooperation and integration. But, South Africa's hegemonic power in the sub-region, rather than being a blessing, in some minds, is seen as a problem.

5. Corporate Governance: Overview of South Africa's Country Review Report

The South Africa's CSAR indicates the different factors which makes South Africa a force to be reckoned with and an active role player both in international and regional affairs (AU/APRM, 2007:157). The government considers corporate governance to be crucial in promoting socio-economic development, especially considering the political-economic transformation that has been taking place in the country since 1994. The government has reformulated existing laws and enacted new legislations; established rules and regulations to ensure that its private and state-owned enterprises, in their economic activities, conform to regional and international codes and standards endorsed by the country. There are various laws regulating the financial sector, trade and investment promotion, and export promotion. Corporate governance laws embody those relating to employer-labour relations; environment; human rights; shareholder rights; consumer rights; among others (CRR, pages 167-223).

The CSAR mentions the progress made in implementing regional codes and standards on corporate governance. In terms of legal, policy and institutional frameworks promoting good corporate governance, the country can be considered not to be lacking. The challenge is in the area of implementation and monitoring compliance. However, the views of stakeholders are different on the adequacy of country's labour laws. For instance, the Report notes that South Africa faces the challenge of "balancing economic growth with adequate safeguards for workers given the historical background of the country" (AU/APRM, 2007:159). The "Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) strategies, as well as related codes, sectoral charters and various microfinance schemes" are part of reforms of the government to make historically disadvantaged groups actively participate in the economy (AU/APRM, 2007:159).

Despite these efforts however, South Africa has continued to “operate dual economies – one advanced and sophisticated with first class infrastructure and competitive industries and the other informal and characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment” (AU/APRM, 2007:159). This is apart from the prevalence of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and other socio-economic challenges which have been highlighted. Corruption, lack of proper oversight by the parliament and other related issues such as poor accountability were identified in the Report. The APRM encourages the formulation of policy where there is none and effective implementation and monitoring of existing policies. It identifies the areas requiring attention by government in national development (see AU/APRM, 2007, 199-204). South Africa still has to be more forthcoming in implementing policies and strengthening institutional monitoring mechanisms. The challenges it faces, such as lack of skilled manpower for instance, portray that the open economy which the country operates is yet to benefit majority of the population and this necessitates a re-look at South Africa’s national development and foreign policy objectives. Moreover, the socio-economic challenges are concerning to investors within the country, in Africa and outside Africa.

6. Socio-Economic Development: Overview of South Africa’s Country Review Report

Despite its wealth in resources and infrastructures that place South Africa as one of the fast growing economies in Africa, the country’s socio-economic challenges cannot be over-emphasised. South Africa, as already noted in the previous focus areas, has two economies – developed and underdeveloped (see pages 225-271). South-Africa’s socio-economic development is examined in the context of the country’s experiences during the apartheid era and the legacies of this period. The need to provide for previously disadvantaged groups therefore presents a challenge to government. Since 1994, however, the government has made efforts to put in place legal, policy and institutional frameworks to address daunting challenges facing the country. The AsgiSA is the current initiative of government to address the socio-economic challenges and accelerate reforms based on democratic governance principles.

Concerning the various objectives identified under the APRM thematic area on socio-economic development, South Africa has progressed minimally in a number of areas. These were highlighted in the CRR. Poverty level decreased (MDG/Stat SA, 2013:28). This report also highlights the social packages including grants given to indigent households and provision of basic services (see pages 22-23). In the area of creating jobs, there are

improvements although the problem still persists with the unemployment rate at 25%, (see, Stat. SA 2014b:V). In the education sector, enrolment and completion rates have increased. Progress is noticeable in effort at skills development even though the skills gap is still a cause for concern as it is a major factor causing unemployment (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2014:131). The government has also emphasised gender issues in the formulation of policies and programmes. This has earned South Africa as one of the African countries which have achieved success in promoting gender equality (see, MDG/Stat SA 2013:53). In the area of health, statistical figures show the challenge in managing the spread of HIV/AIDS (Statistics South Africa 2014c:7).

7. Cross-cutting issues in South Africa

This section presents the cross-cutting issues which were identified in South Africa's CRR (pages 273-288). They were mentioned across all four thematic areas. These governance issues require the urgent attention of the government and people of South Africa because they are not only national but also regional concerns.

8. Concluding remarks on South Africa's Country Review Report

The next sessions of the South Africa's Country Review Report present the country's Programme of Action; comments from the government of South Africa on the Report; Report on the peer review of South Africa by the APR Forum and conclusion. These processes show that the five stages of the APR processes were completed.

The South African government welcomed the report and commended the APR Mission for a positive Report. However, the government, in discussions with members of the APR Panel, raised a number of methodological and conceptual issues bordering on how data and reports were presented in the report. Some of the issues which the President clarified were raised at the floor of the APR Forum, for instance, the issue of xenophobia and racism (AU/APRM, 2007:360). This is in the spirit of the APRM – engaging with the government of the member state to express his observations on the Report and also allowing the other governments to share ideas and best practices.

The role of the African Peer Review Mechanism in developing democratic developmental African states

The question addressed in this section of the paper is: *How does the APRM advance the call for democratic developmental African states?* Considering the mandate of the APRM; its focus areas and associated objectives; the AU/NEPAD regional codes and standards it promotes and the APR process, the APRM, for many scholars and observers is a novel initiative. The premise on which the APRM is established is solid. The Mechanism is significant reflecting on Africa's political-economic history, the myriad of challenges facing the continent and the current threats of a fast globalising world economy. Hence, the APRM has received both regional and international recognition (see, Mangu, 2007:363-366; Poku and Mdee, 2011:24; Landsberg, 2012:105-106). The responses obtained from different interviewees also reflect these assertions. For instance, one interviewee stated that the APRM as a governance tool was established, "as African Heads of State realised that they have to take their destinies in their hands and that governance cannot be an externally driven process, every time coming from outside, with conditionalities..."⁵ Its establishment is a pointer to the world that Africans are showing that they are capable of solving their governance challenges and coming up with initiatives on development.⁶

The APRM Country Assessment Process, subsequent reviews are good governance monitoring strategies, whose outcomes would encourage political and socio-economic reforms, strengthen implementation of policies, build capacities for existing institutions to function and motivate the establishment of new ones. The Country Review Report details a country's political-economic history; its governance and development challenges; government policies in various sectors; good practices which should be consolidated; and other important information. The usefulness of the data provided in the Report for national and regional development cannot be over-emphasised. A senior official at one of the civil society organisations underscored this point:

The APRM is a novel African driven initiative which is generating crucial data and information through its reviews and committing its members to the process of improving identified weaknesses in their respective governance. Like NEPAD, the APRM is 10 years old in 2013, but despite this milestone remains very much a work in progress although its membership has grown from 16 original members to the current 34 member states. The potential of the APRM in transforming the continent organically from the bottom-up is

⁵ Interview with a senior official (ECA 1) at the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Date: 18 June 2013.

⁶ Interview with a top level official (NEPAD 1) at the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, Midrand, South Africa. Date: 4 July 2013.

immense, but the mechanism is still young, despite a decade in existence, and this potential remains exactly that – potential.⁷

Through its processes, the APRM could contribute extensively in building democratic developmental African states. Although the success of the APRM has national, sub-regional, regional and global implications, its strategy is national. One interviewee who is a renowned scholar for his contribution in promoting pan-african ideals asserted that, “indeed, for as long as we have divisions in Africa; as long as national integration remains a challenge; as long as Africa is in dire need of accountable and responsible leadership; we need the APRM...”⁸ Another interviewee at the APRM Secretariat also noted: “Governance is our mandate... Africa needed to improve governance and that is the foundation of the mandate of the APRM -- the need for common standards. APRM ensures that member states agree on common standards and frameworks”.⁹

The APRM is praised as an important instrument for exposing governance challenges in member states (in the different thematic areas) and recommending how these could be resolved. It is expected of member countries to integrate the recommendations emanating from the review process in their national programmes for implementation and submit regular reports on measures they have taken in attending to such identified challenges (see, Herbert and Gruzd 2008; Marcelin, 2014:18). ECA [1] noted that, “the APRM has been successful in bringing to public limelight, many “cross-cutting” issues on governance that affect African countries”.¹⁰ These challenges are documented in a number of studies and scholarly materials. They include: corruption, gender inequality, youth unemployment (NEPAD, 2011:22), land use, electoral processes and management challenges, and managing diversity (SAIIA, 2010:3; ECA, 2011b:V). For his part, NEPAD [1] added: “it is not a report from the Bretton Woods institutions that identified those cross-cutting problems. So, it is an innovation from this particular continent. Yes, I think, for me, APRM is a great success”.¹¹

Civil society participation is at the heart of the APRM and to an extent, Africa’s civil society and their different groups are now more aware about governance processes in the continent.

⁷ Interview with a senior official (EISA 1) of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA). Date of interview: 9 October 2013.

⁸ Interview with a Former Chairperson of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons (APRM 1). Date of interview: 1 February, 2013.

⁹ Interview with a senior official (APRM 2) at the APRM Secretariat, Midrand, South Africa

¹⁰ Interview with ECA 1. Date: 18 June 2013.

¹¹ Interview with NEPAD 1. Date: 4 July 2013.

Governments are also becoming conscious that they have to be accountable not only to the development partners but also to their citizens (NEPAD, 2011:22). Respondent EISA [1] explains:

The APRM opens up a conversation across all levels of society, from the President down to the line Ministries, civil servants, the corporate sector and the non-state sector. In many countries prior to APRM, these different groupings rarely interacted in any formal manner around governance issues and institutions in their country. The APRM has stimulated more systematic engagement by non-state sectors in the daily business of government than was previously either permitted or possible.¹²

As ECA [1] added: “since the APRM is a governance instrument, it has the base for a stable African continent”.¹³ Hope (2005:296-298), highlights that the APRM provides many benefits to countries such as, “greater transparency and improved public accountability”. With the establishment of the APRM, democracy and good political governance are becoming a prevailing issue in Africa despite the arguments about the concepts. Governance is beginning to assume a deeper meaning to include various discourses on civil society involvement (Hope, 2005:284-285; Poku and Mdee, 2011:24; Kebonang and Fombad, 2006:4, Grimm and Katito, 2010). APRM [1] underscored the same point that “the strength of the APRM -- though initiated by governments -- is that it deals directly with the people, the concerns of the people. People’s views about governance in their countries are reflected in the APRM report.”¹⁴

The APRM has also been considered to function as a conflict prevention instrument (Gruzd, 2010; Sawyer, 2012:63). In some member countries, it cautioned the government about imminent crisis: “the issue of management of diversity as manifested in election related violence between ethnic groups in Kenya, and the challenge of xenophobia in South Africa” (ECA 2011a:12-13; Sawyer, 2013:62-63). The recent xenophobic attacks witnessed in parts of Durban and KwaZulu-Natal could have been avoided if the warnings of the APRM were given serious attention. Notwithstanding, the efforts of the media, the public and international community in stemming the tide of the attacks are worth mentioning. Although the warnings of the APRM go unheeded sometimes, the APRM NPoAs are often helpful in providing directions for necessary action in the case of conflict within a member state (SAIIA, 2010:3).

¹² Interview with EISA (1) of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa. Date: 9 October, 2013.

¹³ Interview with ECA 1. Date: 18 June 2013.

¹⁴ Interview with APRM 1. Date: 1 February, 2013.

In this paper, we favour the idea that the APRM could function as an early warning instrument and could assist governments to be proactive in addressing political and socio-economic issues.

Another area in which the APRM has been considered effective is in promoting “peer sharing, experience sharing, best practices, and peer influence in the area of governance which are important elements for socio-economic development in the continent (Hansungule, 2007:7; Bing-Pappoe, 2010:27; Tungwarara, 2010:VII). ECA [1] identified that: “the APRM brings Heads of State of different African countries together to take stock of what good they are doing in their countries, their weaknesses and shortcomings; the positive sides; and to share experiences.¹⁵ The APRM, according to EISA [1] also provides a platform within which African states are able to dialogue on common issues, explore and share unique and novel solutions to common challenges and reflect critically on the role of other states in supporting the governance processes of each member state.¹⁶ Another interviewee added: There is lack of information on the APRM where some people think it is some report from the Bretton Woods institution, but this is not the case and it misses the peer learning aspect of the APRM. You see, if it didn’t identify the right things, you would then be questioning, you know, we would be saying look... And if it praised things that were not supposed to be praised, then we can question. So far, on a substantive level, nobody has been able to point out that one.¹⁷ Our argument is that peer learning and experience sharing could be exploited not only by Heads of State but also civil society, private sector and even the media. They could be on different issues such as politics health, education and skills development, creating employment, and agriculture, industry, infrastructure development, among others. CSOs and the media could help document the best practices which could become handy as reference materials.

It is also notable that the way the APRM works, for instance in interrogating the performance of public office holders, raising questions about national budgets and providing a forum for non-state stakeholders and external personalities to partake in country assessment processes, it interferes in some ways, in the national affairs of member states. Its process is a pointer to the shift by African leaders from the position of “non-interference” to “non-indifference” as associated with the AU. NEPAD [1] noted that: “Non-indifference simply means, as an

¹⁵ Interview with ECA 1. Date: 18 June 2013.

¹⁶ Interview with EISA 1. Date: 9 October 2013.

¹⁷ Interview with a senior official (NEPAD 2) at the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, Midrand, South Africa. Date: 4 July 2013.

African country, I cannot be indifferent to what is happening in other African countries, especially those around me. Take for instance, I am in Nigeria, I have Ghana and Benin Republic as my neighbours, I cannot be indifferent to what is happening in Benin Republic, in Cotonou or in Accra because if there are issues, conflicts or crisis; if things are not done right there, I would have refugee problems because they will flood my country...¹⁸ The interviewee further mentions that the APRM is pushing the AU's decision not to tolerate any government that comes to power through unconstitutional means.¹⁹

Missing links and challenges of the APRM

While the APRM is seen to have recorded some success stories since its establishment and presents a useful tool with potential to build democratic developmental states on the continent, many argue that African leaders lack strong political will and commitment required not only to abide by the policies of the APRM but also to overcome the challenge of funding and other logistics both at national and regional levels. Funding issues particularly pose challenges to the effective functioning of the Mechanism and for member states to follow through the process of assessment and implementation of their NPoAs (Mangu, 2007:384; Bing-Pappoe, 2010:22; Landsberg, 2012:144). One interviewee argued that:

The APRM can only be the mirror of what African states are. When you have democracy functioning well, then the APRM will operate and function very well. But when you do not have that, hmmm....They are not going to walk out the government in place; it is the government in place that will facilitate the entire process. And so, if you have a government that is not transparent and accountable, what will the result be? Is the APRM a good thing? Will it work in Nigeria where, for instance, the National Assembly cannot challenge the executive?" We are not yet ready for peer review. You see, peer review wants everything, not only good governance, but also improvement in public service... But if you see the way it is done... ah, ah. The conditions are simply not in place.²⁰

Some people are of the opinion that African governments were motivated by the desire to attract more donor funds in establishing the APRM. It is not truly about promoting good governance and democracy (see, Dot Keet, 2003:32-45; Bond, 2010:1-7). These sorts of criticisms are expressed when many reflect on the character of Africa's political leaderships;

¹⁸ Interview with NEPAD 1. Date: 4 July 2013.

¹⁹ Interview with NEPAD 1. Date: 4 July 2013.

²⁰ Interview with a high level top official at the Justice, Development and Peace Commission, (JDPC), Ogun State, Nigeria. Date: 4 February 2013.

insincerity on the part of government, bad governance, corruption, and other political challenges. African governments are considered to be insincere in formulating initiatives. In other words, the APRM faces the challenge of African leaders' rhetoric and reality (Akokpari, 2003:13). The African Union, one expert noted for instance, "is still a club of dictators. The AU is still made up of many leaders who have stayed in power for more than 20 years and who are still oppressing their people and leading their people to underdevelopment. What can the APRM do about this?"²¹

A major challenge which constitutes a missing link is that not all members-states of the African Union have joined the APR process. In addition, the APRM appears not to have effectively addressed the issue of sovereignty of member states as non-compliance to its principles and resolutions do not attract serious penalty measures (Akokpari, 2003:14). The question to ask, therefore, is: what possibilities exist that the APRM would transform the governance architecture in Africa? Moreover, member states are not bound to accept the outcomes of the APR process. This challenge has been obvious in some of the countries which have undergone the review process. As another interviewee highlighted, "the Ethiopian Prime Minister was very reticent in publishing the Country's Review Report because he did not agree with some of the things there. He wasn't the only one; there were countries where there were tensions also".²²

Monitoring and evaluation issues are also challenging. RP1 identified that "countries undergo the review process, compile and submit their reports and NPoAs, but there is a missing link, a problem in terms of follow-up to how far the government in question has taken action to implement the suggestions that came as a result of the review process. So, countries have joined the APRM just to look good because what eventually happens is that the reports come back to them and it ends there. Nothing trickles down. No serious change can be really evaluated".²³

Despite these challenges, however, some other scholars and observers consider that the APRM is a good initiative; that its objectives may have been well conceived despite some weaknesses in the area of implementation. For instance, one interviewee noted that:

²¹ Interview with Professor P1, University of Peace, Costa Rica. Date of interview: 20 June 2013.

²² Interview with a senior official (ECA 2) at the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Date: 19 June 2013.

²³ Interview with RP1. Date: 20 June 2013.

APRM is important. APRM is something we need to the extent that it establishes standards that we voluntarily can hold on to on a comparative basis; standards which are difficult to impose from outside but which once we agree to, we can do all in our power, all in our means to try to meet up to...However, as good as it is, the pity of it all, in my own opinion, is that the APRM is not well publicised. I don't know whether to say it is not well adhered to. But, it is as if ever since it came into being with NEPAD, it has, in some countries, not been taken too seriously and I think Nigeria is one of those countries...This says a lot about how seriously on a continental basis, we are taking this APRM initiative. I would have assumed that at least, major indices or major areas of emphasis of the APRM initiative should also be reflected, on an annual basis, either in countries' annual budget or key initiatives such as the Transformation Agenda of this administration and also key policy initiatives of past administrations. I would have expected APRM's key goals and objectives to be reflected in them; but, unfortunately, they are not, and you know, that begs the question what is it all about...²⁴

The assessments and assertions of experts raise key questions about the commitment and sincerity of African governments in ensuring the success of the APRM and these are areas in which effective civil society participation in the APR process and in monitoring and holding government accountable becomes critical. However, Africa's civil society and their groups are constrained by several challenges. As Mulikita (2005:9) asserts, "to date, the principal criticisms directed at the APRM concept have been the lack of ownership by African citizens and the top-down approach, both at the continental level and within individual countries". The APRM appears to be unpopular among ordinary Africans and not many are educated and knowledgeable about its objectives and how they can exploit the opportunities provided by the AU/NEPAD and APRM. Equally concerning is the fact that some governments are not yet favourably disposed to allowing civil society organisations to operate freely. Measures are established to limit the activities of CSOs and define the issues which they can handle. One interviewee from a civil society organisation in Addis Ababa underscored the same point:

In some ways, eem yes, there are government's restrictions on civil society activities. Of course, that's the reality. For example, in Ethiopia, there are clear limitations to how far you can talk about human rights. But these are not unique to us here. These limitations affect every research organisation,

²⁴ Interview with a high level top official (NIIA 1) at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, Nigeria. Date of interview: 31 January, 2014.

every university, every researcher, basically. If you come to Ethiopia, journalists, for example, are known to be jailed here. So, this is nothing new, and it is not unique to us. It is just the way the politics currently is.²⁵

It could therefore be argued that citizen participation, which is the hallmark of the APRM, is yet to be fully achieved. The APRM as an African Union initiative, therefore, is affected by the leadership problems in the continent.

Conclusion: APRM fostering the call democratic developmental African states?

From the analysis in this paper, the APRM's policies, to a considerable extent, align with the objective of establishing democratic developmental states in Africa. The reality is that most of Africa's governance and development problematics are man-made and will largely be addressed by good political leadership, good governance and appropriate policies which are in consonance with the priorities and needs of the continent and reflect the choices of the African people. Establishing that there is a linkage between good governance, democracy, peace, stability and security, and development, the APRM presents a good initiative of the AU/NEPAD. Theoretically, its objectives are laudable and appear to be well-conceived. However, despite the achievements recorded by this initiative since its establishment, the reality is that the Mechanism is constrained by political challenges. Persisting political, social and economic challenges currently facing most African countries portray that the APRM needs to be redesigned and strengthened to achieve its mandate.

Recommendations

There is need for more education for promoting the goals of not only the APRM but also other regional initiatives. Africans need to be sensitised on the aims, objectives and processes of the APRM; how the Mechanism functions in member countries and the expected role of the civil society in the APR process. The role of CSOs, research institutions and media is critical in achieving this objective. Some CSOs are making efforts in this regard which is commendable and should be consolidated.

CSOs need to be more proactive, strategic and properly organised to exploit the opportunities provided by the APRM. The academia needs to be effectively involved in public discourses and debates on the strategies of realising the mandate of the APRM and also issues of policy

²⁵ Interview with a senior official (ISS 1) at the Institute for Security Studies Date of interview: 19 June 2013.

implementation particularly the outcomes of the APR process. The media, as a critical segment of the civil society should not be “silent” considering its centrality in the propagation of information, education, sensitisation and monitoring of the APRM. The activities of key segments of the civil society and the media would go a long way to increase public interest in the APR process and would enable a change in the negative perceptions about the APRM.

It is apparent that for the APRM to realise its objectives, African leaders would need to be politically willing and genuinely committed to making the Mechanism function by committing resources, both human and material at the national and regional levels required to enable the process and enhance the implementation of policies. They would prove their sincerity by adhering to the principles, codes and standards promoted by the APRM; integrating the APR policies in national development programmes; implementing their NPoAs; and encouraging the effective participation of the civil society in the APR process. These measures are important to reinvigorate the APRM. There is no doubt that the effectiveness of the APRM is dependent on political leadership of the continent.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are crucial for the APRM process to be effective and these should be innovatively created and existing ones strengthened. The APRM needs to partner more with the media, research institutions and CSOs in this regard. This paper also advances the view that membership of the APRM be encouraged for all member countries of the African Union and for the AU and its principal organs to be more involved in providing political support for the APRM and promoting its ideals.

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