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From Non-Interference to Good Governance: Shifting Perspectives on Development in Africa

Mouzayian Khalil-Babatunde

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Programme head: Steven Gruzd, steven.gruzd@wits.ac.za

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ABSTRACT

This paper¹ introduces the contextual linkages between the good governance agenda and Africa's development strategies, especially the newly defined role of civil society actors in Africa's governance. The paper illustrates the institutionalisation of this ideal using the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). This suggests a shift away from the 'non-interference' approach of African leaders towards a more proactive approach to governance. Furthermore, while the role of civil society is emphasised for its potential to bring about the kind of participatory and collaborative governance and development processes desired in Africa, there is not yet sufficient empirical evidence that this brings about sustainable development.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Mouzayian Khalil-Babatunde is an independent researcher on the African Peer Review Mechanism and governance and development issues in Africa, with particular interest in regional and sub-regional institutions. She is also a lecturer at the Nigerian Turkish Nile University, Abuja, where she teaches Development Administration; Third World and Dependency; and the History of Political Thought. She holds a PhD in Politics and International Studies, and an MA in Globalisation and Development from the University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AGA	African Governance Architecture
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
EU	European Union
IIAG	Ibrahim Index of African Governance
IFI	international financial institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAP	structural adjustment programme
TNC	transnational corporation
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa
WGI	Worldwide Governance Indicator

INTRODUCTION

This paper begins by defining the concept of governance through the lens of theory and practice in the African context. This is done by exploring the concept and issue of governance within the framework of development discourse in Africa and then linking it specifically to the good governance agenda, using the example of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The analyses will also assess the formal and possibly accidental role of civil society participation within the good governance agenda, and civil society's contribution to the relationship between governance and development. The paper concludes that due to limited empirical evidence it is difficult to ascertain that there is indeed a positive reinforcing correlation between good governance and development, although each one is desirable in itself. Finally, the paper asserts that while a healthy and participatory civil society is highly desirable in Africa, it is not yet proven that this leads to effective development.

THE IDEA OF GOVERNANCE IN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

The concept of governance is not new but has gained significant attention in politics and development studies literature in recent years. The context of its usage over the past two decades indicates changes in the understanding and application of its meaning, and these changes hold implications for its use as a concept, in both theory and practice of politics and development studies. This research examines a crucial issue in debates about development – the issue of governance, and especially the relationship between governance and development in the African context.

Governance in general refers to the process of decision-making. There is hardly any consensus about its core meaning, much less its application, yet there are certain common elements that can be identified in the various definitions. Essentially, it refers to the 'management of society by the people, or ... the exercise of authority to manage a country's affairs and resources'.² The World Bank defines it as 'the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources'.³ The Commission on Global Governance defines it as 'the sum of many ways individuals and institutions, public, and private, manage their common affairs'.⁴ Classical definitions tend to imply that 'government' is synonymous with the term 'governance', yet, arguably, governance includes the process(es) behind the actions of governments rather than the institution itself. Thus, James Rosenau, one of the influential academics associated with the concept, posits that whether at the grassroots or global level, it 'encompasses the activities of governments, but it also includes the many other channels through which *commands* flow in the form of goals framed, directives issued, and policies pursued'.⁵ Governance goes beyond formal government institutions and can be used to describe processes outside the political sphere, such as in business.

The literature on governance is extensive, so this research utilises two main filters: the development industry – mainly comprising the donor community, including bilateral and multilateral organisations – that focuses on policymaking and implementation (practice); and the theoretical body of knowledge arising from academia (theory). Governance is relevant at the global, national and grassroots levels among various multilateral, regional,

state and local institutions and organisations. At the practical end of the development industry, the term governance is synonymous with good governance and this has specific implications for development policies. International financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the UN; and many other multilateral and bilateral aid donors such as the European Union (EU), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the US have played a major role in shaping the conceptualisation of governance.

Academic literature on governance tends to vary in focus, depending on the subject area. This affects the kind of ideological and theoretical ascriptions and explanations. For example, within the business and management discipline, there has been growing research interest in the subject of corporate governance, both at the level of small-scale organisations and at the international level with transnational corporations (TNCs) in international business. This area can overlap with inquiries carried out by economists, political scientists and even within development studies with regard to the role and impact of TNCs in shaping trade, economic policies and the political economy at national, international and global levels.

In politics and development studies, governance was originally discussed within the context of how governments/states make decisions, how power is exercised, and how policies are adopted and implemented. Since the late 1980s, new ways of thinking about governance have emerged. There are many explanations and events in history that contributed to changes in conceptualisation and the significance of governance in national and international politics, such as the introduction of the globalisation paradigm to the understanding of politics and development studies. Furthermore, the increase and changes in nature, context and pace of interaction within and between various participants (eg, states, multilateral institutions, TNCs and civil society organisations) have further contributed to the metamorphosis of the meaning and usage of the concept of governance; for example, globalisation as a concept and reality has affected the contemporary understanding of power relations.

Another notable reason for focus on the concept of governance originates at the country level, due to disgruntlement with the state-dominated models of economic and social development within the socialist bloc and much of the developing world from the 1950s to the 1970s.⁶ This relates to ideas of sovereignty and the issue of non-interference in the internal affairs of states that were emphasised in the UN Charter, but which have come under fire in the era of globalisation and its ability to transcend traditional notions of state sovereignty.

Furthermore, interest in the study of international organisations, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s (with the introduction of key issues such as social capital and the role of civil society), has seeped into the global political and economic space. These changes are evident in the relationship between the international community and the developing world, particularly since the end of the Cold War, bringing on the domination of market-based development strategies that require a reduction in state interference and increased engagement with international markets.

There sometimes appears to be a parallel relationship between donor/policy and academic literature on governance, which is indicative of the reality in development practice. However, there are overlaps facilitated by certain intermediary participants, such as development research institutes and regional institutions (eg, the African Union

(AU), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Economic Community of West African States and the APRM). They serve as a link between both worlds by making academic research more accessible for the purposes of policy formulation and implementation for the benefit of all role players. This suggests a growing need for balancing out the rhetoric and reality of development, on the one hand, and, on the other, it is indicative of the need to narrow the ideological and/or intellectual divide between policy and academia. This observation requires further enquiry and evidence-based analysis.

It has been argued that the academic stream of discourse on governance deals mainly with the understanding and contextualisation of power and authority, and their relations within the different political (and/or economic) structures, as well as the institutional linkages between different participants involved in the process of governance; whereas donor-driven discourses are primarily oriented towards enhancing policy effectiveness.⁷ On the surface this appears to be the case, but recent efforts by donor organisations have sought to bring academics into the vanguard of discussions on governance issues at the point of creating and implementing policies and programmes.

The fall of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War are historical events that signified a major change to the face of power and politics at the international level. There was no longer an imperative on the part of Western states and institutions to support undemocratic and corrupt regimes in the developing world in a bid to ensure that they did not gravitate towards an alliance with the Eastern bloc.⁸ As Thomas Weiss pointed out, 'the end of the Cold War suddenly removed both the willingness to turn a blind-eye towards outlandish regimes as well as incentives for the West to support authoritarian rule'.⁹ Another significant change in the political climate following this period was the reinstatement of the state as a key player in the development process. This meant that, once again, the state had a role to play through governmental institutions and frameworks, policy and management of the public service to engage with the international community in the implementation and management of development programmes.

The so-called Third Wave of democratisation marks another significant ideological shift that is recognised for its effect on the politics of development theory and practice.¹⁰ The political reforms that were characteristic of the post-Cold War era led international donors, especially from the US, to invest in promoting democratic reforms through election monitoring, strengthening the rule of law and introducing multiparty democracy to most of the developing world. The acceptance and implementation of these reforms became a conditionality for foreign aid and were widely imposed across the developing world, with the exceptions of states such as North Korea and Cuba, which remained estranged from mainstream international trade and politics.

Other equally pertinent contributors to the on-going shifts include the role of civil society in the political landscape with growing influence in state policy in what used to be an exclusively state-led political space. The opportunities created by the rethinking of state sovereignty and traditional ideas of statehood related to non-interventionist policies were replaced with 'sovereignty as responsibility', which provided justification for intervention in the domestic affairs of failed states such as Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.¹¹

All of the above developments have contributed to creating a conceptualisation of governance that embodies government institutions, 'subsumes informal, non-governmental

institutions operating within the public realm’ and also ‘transcends traditional notions of domestic politics’.¹² This is multi-actor, participatory governance in a global world.

Governance and development in Africa

This research is focused on a discussion of the relationship between governance and development in Africa. This section provides the backdrop to the relationship between the two concepts in Africa, before delving into the notion of good governance and its policy agenda in the next section.

There have been various explanations for Africa’s failure to develop, and Africa is not lacking in the number of strategies and programmes aimed at its development either. Yet, despite the attention and support in the form of foreign aid pumped into the African continent over the years – more than \$20 billion (ZAR 20 trillion) of foreign aid over the past 55 years – development remains elusive. This is despite the genuine advances in economic growth and even in some human development indicators that a number of African countries have recorded in the past decade.¹³ Explanations given for this failure in Africa include, among many more, geographical and topographical factors;¹⁴ historical and cultural factors;¹⁵ disparate tribal groupings and the ethno-linguistic composition of African peoples;¹⁶ lack of strong, credible and transparent public institutions;¹⁷ and aid dependency.¹⁸ Presumably, this failure is a result of a confluence of all or some of the above factors, in varying combinations in different parts of this diverse continent.

The end of the Cold War marked a significant shift in the approaches to development aid, specifically in donor–recipient relationships. Foreign aid was here to stay, and no longer targeted recipients primarily for the purpose of political affiliation (to encourage alliance with East or West blocs).¹⁹ The overall failure of exclusively market-based structural adjustment policies of the 1970s to bring about development in developing countries shifted the attention of donors to the effects of *bad* governance in Africa. Since the early 1990s, the concept of governance has begun to take on a new meaning in its conceptualisation and usage.

The role of governance gained popularity among development practitioners as a crucial factor for effective development; and good governance ‘often became a condition for development assistance from donor agencies’.²⁰ There appears to be a consensus among policymakers and academics that ‘good governance matters for development, and herein, for effectiveness of development assistance’ and that this has increased the demand for monitoring governance.²¹ The quest for good governance gained popularity on the development agenda.

Some analysts have argued that good governance is a *sine qua non* for development.²² This idea corresponds with the thinking and practice of democratisation that swept through the developing world from the latter part of the 1980s.²³ Olukoshi and Chabal argued that the change in focus could be ascribed to the failure of first-generation structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), ideological shifts in the international sphere and the significant deterioration in socio-economic development in much of the developing world.²⁴

The good governance agenda in Africa

Since the 1980s, when ‘bad governance’ was identified as the primary deterrent to the success of development programmes on the continent and, consequently, Africa’s failure to develop, international organisations have taken on a new approach.²⁵ This set the stage for the new phase of foreign aid conditionality, known as the good governance agenda. The introduction of this agenda had wide significance and implications for the approach to, and practice of, development strategy by leaders in developing countries, and especially in Africa.

This approach is built around the World Bank’s conclusion that bad governance is responsible for the failure to achieve growth and development in many developing countries (particularly those in Africa) and subsequent reports subscribed to similar ideas in the following years.²⁶ The good governance agenda came into prominence following these reports and was quickly adopted among the international development community, shaping policy recommendations and programmes targeted at the developing world. Many developing countries embraced this idea and strategy themselves, and even attempted to integrate the agenda innovatively into their own domestic policies. More so, it has gained significant interest from academics and professionals within this area, and the meaning of good governance is now widely regarded as being synonymous with governance within development theory and practice.

If governance in simple terms can be defined as ‘the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)’, then good governance generally refers to the effectiveness and efficiency of the institutions and role players involved in these processes.²⁷ According to the UN, good governance ‘has eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law’.²⁸ The quest for good governance tends to focus on structural and management characteristics of governments such as budget regulations, bureaucratic quality, level of service delivery of social services, degree of decentralisation and fiscal stability.²⁹ These are all highly desirable features of a well-run government. However, effective management of government processes does not necessarily translate into participatory and equitable governance. ‘Good governance entails the existence of efficient and accountable institutions – political, judicial, administrative, economic, corporate – and entrenched rules that promote development, protect human rights, respect the rule of law and ensure that people are free to participate in, and be heard on, decisions that affect their lives.’³⁰

The indicators of good governance can be classified into two broad categories: (i) indicators for conceptualisation and (ii) indicators for performance measurement.³¹ Following on from the earlier classification of governance literature along the lines of policy and academic work, this research suggests that academic literature focus on the understanding and conceptualisation of governance, while policy-oriented contributors focus on performance measurement. This classification is a broad generalisation for the sake of analysis, as there tends to be a middle ground where both parties are involved in the two aspects of analysis. Most policy-focused contributors (especially donors) use pre-set indicators for measurement and analysis. Some of these indicators, according to the World Bank’s *Governance Matters Report Worldwide Governance Indicators* (WGI) project, are voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence; government

effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption.³² Coming out of Africa, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation created the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), which assesses governance within four main categories: safety and rule of law; participation and human rights; sustainable economic opportunity; and human development.³³

In general, the IFIs and the UN appear to present two different, yet overlapping, aspects of the good governance agenda. The indicators of the IFIs tend to be geared towards creating efficiency of the institutions of state, expressed in a preoccupation with public sector management, reduction of transaction costs, contract enforcements and other fiscal technicalities.³⁴ The UN, through the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in particular, focuses on the key characteristics of good governance through a human development approach that focuses on the ‘richness of human life rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live’.³⁵ This means a focus on indicators across three dimensions: health, education and living standards.³⁶ What this suggests is the possibility of multiple approaches within the good governance paradigm, where the IFIs seemingly focus on good governance for the maximisation of economic growth, while the UNDP seeks to explore the agenda towards improving quality of life in terms of socio-economic development. There is also the socio-political dimension to the good governance agenda that targets the achievement of desirable political freedoms within societies in the developing world, and is strongly tied into the West’s democracy promotion regime targeted at developing countries.

The justification for this agenda for both the IFIs and the UN lies in the assumption that effective and efficient governance is a prerequisite for economic growth and development conceived more broadly. According to the UNDP’s 2002 *Human Development Report*, there are three reasons for claiming that good governance advances sustainable development. First, enjoying political freedom and participating in the decisions that shape one’s life are fundamental human rights, since there are many economically developed countries with a poor record of respect for human rights (eg, China). Second, good governance helps to protect people from economic and political catastrophes. Third, good governance can promote sustainable development by empowering citizens to influence policies that promote growth and prosperity, and reflect their priorities.³⁷ For the IFIs, an emphasis on promoting good governance stemmed primarily from the observation that bad governance in the form of corrupt and inefficient governments is the key deterrent to the success of development programmes in developing countries. More so, ‘good governance can be demonstrated to indicate positive correlation with the achievement of better growth rates and particularly through the building of institutions in support of markets’.³⁸

One of the most dramatic changes in the World Bank’s approach to development in the 1990s has been its new commitment to governance improvements and specifically to fighting corruption in some of the poorest countries in the world. Driven by evidence that corruption reduces growth and investment in developing countries, the Executive Board of the bank approved its anti-corruption strategy in September 1997, defining corruption as the ‘use of public office for private gain’.³⁹ The bank now supports programmes ‘involving liberalisation, reforms of the civil service, “rightsizing the state”, and privatisation’, giving renewed impetus with an emphasis on the anticorruption and governance improvement aspects of these reforms.⁴⁰

Some academics have contested the justification for the good governance agenda and its promotion as a prerequisite to development; for example, Mushtaq Khan argued that the exclusive focus on promoting the good governance agenda in the normative sense as pursued by donors in developing states could be a 'waste of resources on unattainable (though highly desirable) objectives while creating frustration and demoralisation in developing countries because true sustainability is not enhanced'.⁴¹

GOOD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

This section explores the meaning of good governance in the context of Africa's political and development agenda. As already indicated, it is usually associated with conditionality for development aid in many countries and defined within this context or more broadly linked with overarching international development agendas and discourses.⁴² This trend in Africa can be directly related to efforts by the Bretton Woods institutions from the 1990s to promote good governance as a conditionality for multilateral aid. At its most basic, governance to the World Bank is simply 'a commitment to efficient and accountable government'.⁴³ According to the AU, '[i]t is now widely recognised that political power should be acquired through constitutional means and democratic processes. Unconstitutional changes of government are no longer condoned nor tolerated by Africa.'⁴⁴ So, good governance is a condition whereby such responsibility is discharged in an effective, transparent and accountable manner, while bad governance is associated with maladministration in the discharge of responsibility. This is predicated upon mutually supportive and co-operative relationships between government, civil society and the private sector.⁴⁵ Therefore, some of the key elements of good governance in Africa as seen by the AU are the promotion and sustainability of democratic values in social and political processes and structures; the introduction of civil society into political spaces; and the enhanced or structured co-operation between the state and private sectors.

Efficient institutions and rules are not enough to ensure good governance, as low capacity of state actors to engage and function within such systems will also impede good governance. Kingsley Y Amoaka, for instance, draws attention to the legislature in particular: lack of knowledge; lack of commitment, willingness and motivation; lack of freedom and independence; lack of resources to perform constitutionally mandated functions efficiently and effectively; and lack of regular and reliable consultation with civil society, the private sector, universities, think tanks or the rural community have all become a serious impediment to the effectiveness of most legislatures in Africa.⁴⁶ Attempts to address these shortcomings are made through various capacity-building strategies and programmes initiated and funded primarily by the international community as a means of strengthening democracy and improving governance in African states. These programmes include training of legislators and judiciaries, and structural and institutional support in the form of funding and/or providing computers and other information and telecommunications technology material to support efficiency in the execution of their duties.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

This section assesses the normative and redefined role of civil society in governance matters in Africa. The debates on governance in Africa have been lively, especially within policy frameworks, and one of the key issues has been the role of non-state participants, especially civil society organisations, in the processes of governance. The concept of civil society has always been problematic in its definition and conceptualisation. According to Jan Aart Scholte, ‘in relation to contemporary world politics, civil society might be conceived as a political space where voluntary associations seek, from outside political parties, to shape the rules that govern one or the other aspect of social life’.⁴⁷ In a globalised world, notions of civil society transcend national borders; this trend is referred to as the emergence of global civil society, a concept that emerged in the 1990s.⁴⁸

Over the decades, international and, increasingly, national bodies have endeavoured to include civil society organisations in the institutional framework of governance. Their role has been geared towards providing a critical legitimising edge for those in power. Voice and accountability as an indicator of good governance fundamentally refers to civil society’s having the freedom to express opinions about government policies and actions. This expression may or may not be critical of the political regime as a whole (ie, the extent to which it is authoritarian or democratic), however, it remains significant in the assessment of effective and representative governance within a democratic context. Within the good governance agenda the role of civil society has morphed beyond that of mere activism against the status quo of government to include the participation of these groups and organisations in the very processes of governance. The literature on governance and the development agenda suggests that the roles civil society plays in the process were first highlighted in the relationship established by the international donor community, which directly or indirectly initiated engagement of civil society with national governments.

The UN Economic Commission for Africa’s (UNECA) *Governance Report* published in 2005 stated that at that time 43% of experts deemed the influence of civil society on government policies to be fair; another 23% considered it to have a ‘strong or fairly strong influence’.⁴⁹ This observation is an indication of the growing tolerance of African governments towards criticism as the democratisation process continues to unfold in most of these states. However, this is not the case in every African state as some had, or still have, highly intolerant governments, such as Kenya (at the time of this report) and Swaziland, where 85% of experts consulted for the 2005 report noted that the level of state control encouraged human rights violations of expression, and media operations were restricted.⁵⁰ The propensity of some African leaders, in the form of outright authoritarian rule or through imposing executive control, to dominate the bureaucratic and policy process – even in a formally democratic system – both undermines the capacity of institutions and stifles the ability of civil society to engage meaningfully in the governance process. As the UNECA report goes on to say: ‘[T]he government therefore misses the advantages of active exchanges on its policies . . . which can improve the quality of public decision making and accountability.’⁵¹

GOOD GOVERNANCE ON AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

This section narrows down the discussion and analysis to focus on the agenda approach of 'good governance' within the development strategy of African leaders and institutions. The concept of governance has come to dominate policy debates; in developed countries, the term governance has entered the vocabulary of both elected and unelected officials.⁵² In the developing world, it is also found in policies and programmes on the development agenda and, increasingly, in national policy debates. This was not always the case. As stated earlier, the link between good governance and development was made popular by the World Bank report of 1989. Dambisa Moyo, a Zambian-born economist, in her book titled *Dead Aid*, also argued that 'political institutions are the backbone of a nation's development [and] in a state where corruption, rent-seeking, public and private mismanagement of resources, economic graft, are rampant, development is elusive'.⁵³ However, her argument was put forward in strong criticism of foreign aid to Africa; essentially calling for an end to systemic aid as it feeds this corrupt and rent-seeking behaviour, and sustains the mismanagement of funds by African leaders.

Moyo's observation on the relationship between political institutions and Africa's quest for development is in line with an earlier observation by KY Amoako, an African scholar and sixth Executive Secretary of UNECA. He also argued that institutions, and public institutions in particular, have been a failure in Africa – the targets of elite groups for their personal interests – where most African states are unable to provide the requisite institutional framework to support good governance.⁵⁴ Paul Ndue pulls these points together when he claims that governance has emerged as the most important element on the development agenda, as experience has taught that socio-economic development will remain elusive due to the manner in which Africa's politicians tend to rule. Africa has reached the realisation that all the necessary formal institutional changes and improvements will have 'little use unless accompanied by changes in the overall system of governance' and attention to civil society as well as reform of the state.⁵⁵

The AU has taken these observations into consideration: they are expressed in its reaffirmation of a commitment to the promotion of good governance for development on the continent that is embodied in the mandate of NEPAD and the APRM. Moreover, the AU Commission has been mandated by a declaration adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, in line with the AU Strategic Plan for 2010–2015, to facilitate the establishment of an African Governance Architecture (AGA) for the promotion of good governance on the continent.⁵⁶

The envisioned AGA will consist of three pillars: (a) a set of norms that constitute a governance vision for the continent; (b) a set of governance institutions and organs with a mandate in governance; and (c) an interactive mechanism and processes to constitute an *African Governance Platform* to give operational expression to the governance agenda.

This is a change from 'non-interference', describing the framework for intergovernmental discussion.

The African Peer Review Mechanism on Africa's good governance agenda

In line with the recognition of the need for a move away from non-interference, and the prescriptions of the AGA, African leaders at the first Assembly of the AU hosted in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002, expressed the need to design their own governance agenda. The guiding principles for a unified governance framework were articulated in the 'Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance'.⁵⁷ This declaration is the framework for NEPAD to strengthen the political and administrative framework of African governments in line with the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, integrity, respect for human rights and the promotion of the rule of law.⁵⁸

The APRM is one of NEPAD's tools for improving governance on the continent in accordance with these principles. The APRM fits into the prescriptions of the second pillar of the AGA. The process examines governance in four thematic areas: democracy and political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and socio-economic development. The challenge for the APRM is therefore to help shape policies and institutional development in ways that enhance good governance towards sustainable development, through peer review and sharing of best practice.

African leaders, through NEPAD and the APRM, seek to reaffirm their commitment to improving governance and their collective self-determination expressed via the AU. The language of the AU has been that of optimism, assertiveness and determination, and a movement from 'non-interference' to 'non-indifference', where the latter principles acknowledge the internal affairs of each member as the collective responsibility of all.⁵⁹ 'It also marked the increasing awareness among African states of the need for commonly shared values to shape and determine individual and collective actions.'⁶⁰ More so, a commitment to democratic values provides the guiding principle in their quest for development, thus emphasising the interdependency of democracy and development, and mutual reinforcement within African development strategy.

While it is widely acknowledged that 'African countries have not been successful in creating viable economies to provide a decent standard of living for the people of the continent, by committing to improvements in these essential areas, African countries have demonstrated an initial commitment to reversing the continent's reputation of mismanagement and poor governance.'⁶¹ This effort was recognised in the *UNECA 2005 African Governance Report*, which observed that at the continental level the AU and NEPAD are defining new parameters for governance and providing benchmarks for a new governance culture in Africa. Emerging structures and processes such as the APRM, if properly designed and implemented, can improve governance in many African countries.⁶² In general, the APRM, like its mother body, NEPAD, received a positive response from the international community, in the early years anyway. Steven Gruzd mentions that the UN held a high-level meeting on Africa's development needs in New York, where the APRM was identified as the most significant component in 'the development of governance, and governance of development'.⁶³

The APRM is at the core of Africa's development agenda, with its primary purpose integrated into compliance with NEPAD's core democratic principles. The scheme has been described as the 'moral contract' that ensures that African leaders adhere to their commitments.⁶⁴ Essentially, the APRM, through self-assessment and peer review, aims

to enhance mutual trust and accountability, improving governance towards regional integration for development across the continent.

The APRM's role has been predominantly diagnostic. It initiates country self-assessment and consultative formulation of a National Programme of Action to address the identified problems. Still, the mechanism has the potential to trigger other processes such as civil society participation that will stimulate improvement and progress in African states, as the APRM process opens socio-political spaces through consultation between members of civil society and national governments.

Conceptually, the agenda of the APRM is in accordance with the overarching agenda of international development agencies, both multilateral and bilateral. Yet, by its emphasis on African ownership and to the extent that it can establish, assert and sustain this position, the APRM has the ability to take on an African life of its own. This can only be determined by the degree to which it enforces its guiding principles; successfully promotes civil society participation in the process; helps reduce corruption and rent seeking in political and social life; and creates a suitable environment for economic development not only through foreign investment, but also through the development of indigenous businesses and investment.

Udo Simonis first defines good governance as a possession of all, or some combination of, the following elements: participation, transparency of decision-making, accountability, rule of law and predictability.⁶⁵ Writing on the conceptualisation of governance, he states that 'good governance is normative in conception'.⁶⁶ He goes on to say that, therefore, the values that provide the underpinning for governance are the values postulated by the defining actors and institutions; hence, if 'donor-conceptualised standards of good governance were insisted upon, it would imply an insistence that Western-derived standards of conduct be adopted in non-Western politico-cultural contexts'.⁶⁷ Based on his argument, the impact made by the APRM on governance in Africa is premised on Africa's ability to take ownership of or own the governance agenda, rather than merely reiterating the governance conditionality agenda of the international donor community. Simonis observed that on a continent that has produced many failed development projects, the APRM risks being yet another failed initiative, prone to political manipulation by African leaders who may be seeking to present a positive image to the donors and pay lip service only, especially if there are no internally generated pressures to hold them accountable.

It is therefore imperative that the language of African ownership emphasised in the documents of NEPAD and the APRM are followed through in practice; and this factor provides a relevant indicator for the assessment of the impact of the APRM. According to Ambassador Isaac Aluko-Olokun (National APRM Co-ordinator in Nigeria 2005) in a report to the African Democracy Forum in Lagos in 2005 at the start of the review process on the APRM in Nigeria, in order for the APRM to succeed, it is important to have the government's commitment, national ownership, people's involvement and understanding, and technical competence. In addition, the national review process should include all stakeholders, including state actors and non-state actors such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), communities, and academics. He even suggested that NGOs monitor and evaluate the processes and results of the national reviews.⁶⁸

One of the strategies of the APRM for ensuring African ownership, therefore, centres on its source of funding. This has received attention from scholars and policymakers discussing the APRM. One of its base documents clearly states that 'the APRM will be implemented

‘with resources to come predominantly from Africa’, that is, through the contributions of participating member states, as agreed in the memorandum of understanding.⁶⁹ The agreement signed by the APR partner institutions (donors contributing funding to the mechanism) has specific definitions, one of which is the ‘[p]rotection of African ownership in the conduct of technical assessments’.⁷⁰ Furthermore, based on the recommendations of the African Peer Review Forum, if there are to be agreements with other partner institutions apart from the ECA and African Development Bank, one of the criteria for selection would be ‘the protection of African ownership of the APRM’.⁷¹

This emphasis on ownership is what separates the APRM from every other peer review or assessment carried out in post-independence Africa. Although international donors expressed their willingness to provide financial and technical support, the response from the APRM is that, even though many African countries are poor, ‘[i]t is essential, however, that it [the APRM] does not rely on external partners for funding, although such partnerships could be welcomed if they are managed in a way that clearly respects African ownership of the APRM and all its processes’.⁷² However, funding is one of the main challenges of the APRM and it remains to be seen how far the resolve to steer clear of international funds can be maintained. Therefore, the ownership criterion is significant in both the conceptualisation and analysis of the APRM’s success in Africa, especially in determining its impact on national and regional development agendas in acceding countries. Recent years have seen a marked reduction in international funding to the APRM Secretariat – perhaps a sign of waning interest and confidence in the APRM?

LESSONS LEARNT

There are many lessons that emerge from the conceptual, theoretical and policy analysis of the relationship between governance and development in the African context. At the most fundamental level, it is worth noting that in spite of criticisms levelled against Western-dominated ideology and the promotion of ‘good governance’ as a political conditionality for access to donor funds, there is clear evidence of an innate link between good governance and effective implementation of the development agenda. This link draws attention to principles and values, including strategies and policies that allow and encourage the participation of civil society in the governance process. As development, and indeed sustainable development, cannot be left solely in the hands of politicians or government officials, it is imperative that civil society efforts are incorporated into a unified and relatively co-ordinated agenda, to the extent that this is possible within a country or region.

Furthermore, while critics may argue against the implied significance or impact of good governance as a necessary prerequisite for development above other factors such as natural, political or socio-economic considerations, bad governance remains an undermining factor for achieving development in African states. Poor leadership capacity, mismanagement and misappropriation of time and resources not only compromise the state of development, but also create an unhealthy environment for future investment by diminishing limited resources and existing infrastructure.

It is equally important, in spite of the pressures of globalisation, that efforts to improve governance are considered in a historical and even politico-cultural context. The

motivation and justification of African leaders in the creation of the APRM is a good illustration of this point. The notions of ownership and self-determination at the level of the AU and NEPAD not only foster the right environment for initiative at the state level, but also enhance civil society engagement with the state on issues of governance and formulation of the national development agenda.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

First of all, it is imperative for policymakers to recognise the innate value of good governance, for what it is worth, in any society. These principles and values are indicative of a healthy polity and beneficial for government effectiveness. Furthermore, policymakers need to internalise the principles and values that embody or represent the link between governance and development. This is important in order to be able to translate these principles into a policy agenda and to implement them. Perhaps, a prior step to this is to create and promote awareness of the conceptual and theoretical links so policymakers understand the impact and implications of pursuing good governance in their countries. This necessitates a role for academics, research institutions, civil society organisations and other non-state actors to engage with policymakers. Again, the APRM provides a unique opportunity for engagement between the state and non-state role players, and the chance to address some of the suspicions and biases these groups tend to hold against one another.

As an example of a tool for honing the links between improved governance and development, the APRM represents good practice in the desire and efforts by African leaders and governments. It should therefore be well understood, supported and monitored by policymakers and civil society alike.

CONCLUSION

The paper has provided an overview of the meaning of governance and its relationship to development, including how this is expressed in development strategy using the good governance agenda. In the case of Africa there is a shift from 'non-interference' towards proactive strategies, such as the APRM, which feeds on a healthy civil society to participate in governance. Such strategies are at least indicative, if nothing else, of recognition by African leaders that the age of non-interference has come to an end and that they must make efforts to change how governance works in order to achieve sustainable development. It is especially important that they recognise that there is a role for civil society and public participation in national and regional governance agenda.

However, although the effect/impact of good governance is generally positive and has potential to create, accelerate and sustain development, there is still limited evidence to suggest that good governance is the ultimate prerequisite for development, especially in the African context. This is especially so in the light of examples in Asia where there has been/is rapid and sustained development with authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes. This challenges the assumption that good governance is synonymous with or only possible within a democratic government, especially in the form promoted by the US and other Western states. More so, it challenges the basis of policy focus to invest in

the good governance agenda in African states. This lack of empirical evidence can be the basis for refusal by some corrupt leaders to embrace this approach. Therefore, the APRM can provide the opportunity to test this positive relationship between governance and development for the benefit of all concerned.

While it may come across as a ‘chicken and egg’ situation, it can be concluded that good governance is a desirable condition, like development, especially for African countries where people suffer needlessly due to irresponsible and callous governance.

ENDNOTES

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South African Institute of International Affairs
Jan Smuts House, East Campus, University of the Witwatersrand
PO Box 31596, Braamfontein 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)11 339-2021 • Fax +27 (0)11 339-2154
www.saiia.org.za • info@saiia.org.za

