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Rethinking the idea and original vision of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

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Executive summary

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Idea refers to a set of core principles on which to frame the architecture of democracy, development, peace, and security in Africa. Within the limitations inherent in analysing the multiple meanings of ideas and their role in guiding human action, this paper approaches APRM as a driver of African political and social consciousness to guide not only the understanding of the existential world, both within and outside Africa, but also the stipulation of conditions for improving or changing existential forms by designing the governance structures, institutions and processes needed to do so. In this sense, the principles defining the APRM Idea also constitute standards for determining whether there are gaps between the workings of governance institutions and processes, on the one hand, and the principles that informed their adoption, on the other.

By looking at trends in how APRM institutions and processes have operated since the Mechanism was established in 2003, the paper identifies gaps that need to be bridged between the APRM Idea and its existential forms. It concludes that those gaps should be bridged not by theorizing or conceiving another APRM Idea, but by revitalizing, reinvigorating and renewing national and continental APRM structures and processes to ensure they remain consistent with the APRM Idea and its core principles.

Section II, on the “APRM Idea and Vision and its roots in the Pan-African Idea”, looks at how the Mechanism and the Idea are rooted in the age-old Pan-African Idea. The purpose of the latter is to raise the cultural, political and socioeconomic consciousness of black and African peoples worldwide so that they take action to oppose the unequal manner in which they and Africa have been incorporated into the world system during various epochs and phases of globalization. Ultimately, the purpose of the Pan-African Idea is to transform their role in that system based on mutuality, reciprocity and recognition. The significance of APRM and the associated national

and continental processes is that they provide sites and platforms so that the African-centred debates that were set in motion by the post-Second World War formulations of the Pan-African Idea can continue in today’s post-cold war world, in the context of the new Scramble for Africa. The debates centre on African-owned solutions to the antinomies and challenges of globalization.

Section III, on “Defining the APRM Idea and Vision”, builds on the APRM Idea’s deep roots in the Pan-African Idea and in the debates that have flowed from it in order to define and analyse the principles and vision of the APRM Idea. In doing so, the section argues that the APRM Idea refers to the governance values, principles and objectives outlined in a number of standards and codes on governance, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights; the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation; the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance; and the more recent African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which was adopted after the establishment of APRM. The section then points out that the APRM Idea envisions an essentially social democratic or developmental State that goes beyond liberalism, recognizing and promoting, through constitutional provisions, positive rights such as cultural, economic and social rights, in addition to customary civil and political rights.

Section IV, entitled “From the APRM Idea to the African Peer Review Mechanism”, looks at how the APRM Idea has assumed and been translated into concrete existential forms as country and continental structures and processes designed to carry out the mandate and objectives of the Mechanism in line with the core principles of the APRM Idea set out in section III. The text argues that, as a voluntary external review mechanism, APRM is fundamentally different from external reviews conducted by development partners and is generally more comprehensive because of its participatory methodology and scope.



Summarizing the notion of peer review and the theoretical and methodological framework for undertaking it, the paper notes that, although the beginnings of APRM were marked by a mixture of euphoria, scepticism and perhaps cynicism, the Mechanism has made steady progress since its establishment and is now on the cusp of a further surge. The section concludes that the surge has laid down a challenge to deepen and expand APRM through a process of restoration, reinvigoration and renewal (known as the “Three Rs strategy”) in line with the decisions of the Twenty-Fifth Summit of the Heads of State and Government Participating in APRM, held in Nairobi in 2016, and the expanded mandate given to APRM by the African Union Assembly decisions adopted in January 2017 and January 2018.

Section V, entitled “APRM: Bridging the gap between ideas and action”, looks at what needs to be done to implement the Three Rs. Doing this will require identifying the nature of the gaps and

proposing measures to bridge them and to bring the Mechanism’s institutions and processes, which are the existential forms of the APRM Idea, in line with the core principles of the Idea. Specifically, the section addresses:

- a) Political manipulation of APRM institutions and processes;
- b) Cultural and social psychological factors;
- c) African ownership;
- d) The continuation of continental integration and integration of APRM into the African Union.

Section VI, entitled “APRM moving ahead: some design and navigational imperatives”, draws on the findings of Section V to outline a recommended action plan to bridge the gaps.



I. Introduction

The questions and the argument

What have we learned about the African Peer Review Mechanism Idea (hereafter the “APRM Idea”) and the workings of APRM country and continental structures and processes since the Mechanism was established in 2003 with a particular focus on Africa’s current governance challenges, including progress towards the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals? Set against this question, how should rethinking the idea and original vision of the Mechanism be understood and approached?

The APRM Idea, like ideas generally, is made up of abstractions or ideal forms for which existential or concrete forms are needed, such as governance structures, institutions and processes anchored on a complex set of theoretical principles derived from the APRM Idea. Within the limitations inherent to analysis of the multiple meanings of ideas and their role in guiding human action, this paper approaches APRM as a driver of African political and social consciousness to guide not only the understanding of the existential world both within and outside Africa, but also the stipulation

of conditions for improving or changing existential forms through the design of the governance structures, institutions and processes needed to do so. In this sense, the principles defining the APRM Idea also constitute standards for determining whether there are gaps between the workings of governance institutions and processes, on the one hand, and the principles that informed their adoption, on the other.

By looking at trends in how APRM institutions and processes have operated since the Mechanism was established in 2003, this paper identifies gaps that need to be bridged between the APRM Idea and its existential forms. It concludes that those gaps should be bridged not by theorizing or conceiving another APRM Idea, but by revitalizing, reinvigorating and renewing national and continental APRM structures and processes to ensure they remain consistent with the APRM Idea and its core principles.

Section II offers an interpretative analysis of how the APRM Idea is deeply rooted in the Pan-African Idea.



II. APRM Idea and Vision and its roots in the Pan-African Idea

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was established in 2003 by the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a voluntary mechanism to monitor, review progress in, and encourage compliance by African Union member States with governance values set out in a number of African and global codes and standards. Presidents Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria), Hosni Mubarak (Egypt), Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria), Abdoulaye Wade (Senegal) and Thabo Mbeki (South Africa) played major leadership roles in establishing NEPAD and APRM. The APRM Idea, however, "was first broached in the ECA's [Economic Commission for Africa] 'Compact'...which proposed that the NEPAD governing body, in collaboration with relevant and capable continental institutions, 'establish mechanisms for the broad-based buy-in by African governments to peer review performance on issues of governance and economic management'" (da Costa, 2011).

The roots of the APRM Idea also lie deep in the age-old Pan-African Idea, particularly in post-Second World War formulations of it that occurred across linguistic, racial and regional groupings in Africa.¹ The purpose of the Pan-African Idea's defining principles and orienting normative values is to raise the cultural, political and socioeconomic consciousness of black and African peoples worldwide so that they take action to oppose the unequal manner in which they and Africa have been incorporated into the world system during various epochs and phases of globalization. Ultimately, the purpose of the Pan-African Idea is to transform their role in that system based on mutuality, reciprocity and recognition. The Pan-African Idea opposes racism and all other forms of discrimination, such as those based on ethnicity, religion and gender. It espouses and spreads the

universal values of freedom, equality, justice, human security, racial pride and human dignity. Its vision remains anchored to the goal of pan-African unity and continental integration in a new, reformed world economic and political order.

As the pace of African decolonization picked up between 1945 and 1960, post-Second World War formulations of the Pan-African Idea gave rise to theoretical and public policy debates within and outside the continent regarding which governance principles should anchor the design and adoption of constitutional, economic and political reform in independent African countries. Those formulations brought about a convergence between Arab Nationalism in North Africa and Pan-Africanism in a single, broad, continent-wide political movement, albeit with many viewpoints regarding the goal of African unity and African continental integration, such as in the division between the Casablanca and Monrovia blocs (Abdul-Raheem, 1996; Abraham, 1962; Adi, 2018; Adi and Sherwood, 2003; Biney, 2011; Burke, 2010; Campbell, 2001; Du Bois, 1947; Campbell, 2001; Campbell and Worrell, 2006; Esedebe, 1994; Murithi, 2005; Thompson, 1973). Despite the different tendencies, the movement has contributed to the establishment of African regional and continental organizations, beginning with the Organization for African Unity in 1963.

The debates became more significant because of the pressing need to address the descent from democratic to authoritarian rule, resulting in the need to resolve the economic, political and sociocultural crisis, and because of the rising expectations aroused by Africa during the 1970s and early 1980s. As a result of the debates, the following doctrinal statements were made on how to resolve Africa's economic and political crisis:

¹ Notable among the formulations are those put forward in the philosophical and political writings of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ahmed Ben Bella, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Jomo Kenyatta, Cheikh Anta Diop, Julius Nyerere, Patrice Lumumba, Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral and Eduardo Mondlane.



- a) Organization for African Unity (OAU) Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa;
- b) OAU African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- c) World Bank report ***Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Plan for Action*** (the Berg report);
- d) United Nations Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa;
- e) Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, 1986–1990 (APPER), by the OAU;
- f) ***Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth***, by the World Bank;
- g) African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP), by the Economic Commission for Africa;
- h) African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation.

The statements, with the exception of that by the World Bank's, reflected the collective African vision of democracy and development and strategic governance approaches to analysing and resolving the crisis and to projecting a new, renascent Africa on the world stage. The philosophical anchors of the collective African vision and the approaches differ from those of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other Western-dominated bilateral and multilateral institutions. Thus, on the one hand, the Lagos Plan of Action and AAF-SAP attributed the crisis to historical causes and external shocks arising from global economic and political power relations that disadvantaged Africa. The documents emphasized self-reliance, equitable distribution of wealth, a human-security definition of rights, and the strengthening of the public service, implying a preference for a democratic developmental state. On the other hand, the Berg report, by the World Bank, situated the roots of the crisis in "domestic policy issues". It prescribed retooling African political economies, free enterprise-led growth and the neo-liberal or minimal State as the way out of the crisis. Box I summarizes trends and highlights in the debates since 1980.



Box I: Trends and highlights in the democracy and development debate in Africa since 1980

1980–1990

1. The economic and political crisis of the African State deepened, leading to crisis management to contain ethnic conflicts and food riots. State repression of dissent intensified to contain popular resistance against externally imposed neo-liberal stabilization and structural adjustments.
2. A number of vision statements and strategic policy papers were approved by African governments, international development partners, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, such as:
 - a) Lagos Plan of Action;
 - b) African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
 - c) Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, 1986–1990 (APPER), later adopted by the United Nations as the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986–1990;
 - d) Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Plan for Action, by the World Bank;
 - e) United Nations Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa, 1984;
 - f) World Bank report Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth ;
 - g) African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP), by ECA.
3. While the World Bank/IMF said the roots of the crisis were found in domestic politics and too much State intervention, OAU and ECA emphasized its external roots and causes, namely, the contradictions generated by the global political economy.

1990–2000

1. Following activities by pro-democracy movements within and outside Africa, another wave of democratic transitions swept across the continent. These transitions triggered debate on reinventing democracy and development in Africa and resulted in constitutional and political reforms limiting government so that diversity could be managed more democratically through accountability, transparency, competitive party and electoral politics, and the institutions promoting democracy.
2. Following the end of the cold war, China and other BRICS countries, such as Brazil, India and South Africa, emerged as major players in the world economy.
3. There was debate about accelerating steps towards African regional and continental integration, climaxing in the Sirte Declaration in 1999 and the initial steps towards transforming OAU into the African Union.
4. The highlights of the debate are captured in the following declarations and doctrinal statements:
 - a) African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (1990);
 - b) Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World (1990);
 - c) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (1993)
 - d) Cairo Agenda for Action (1995);
 - e) African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990/1999);
 - f) OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (1999);
 - g) Grand Bay (Mauritius) Declaration and Plan of Action (1999);
 - h) Sirte Declaration (1999);



- i) Declaration on Unconstitutional Change of Government (2000);
- j) Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (2000).

2000–present

1. Debate continues over how Africa's development is stalled by structural weaknesses due to human security and capacity deficits at the financial, human, institutional, infrastructural (physical and social) and technological levels.
2. A debate began regarding the fact that, despite a 5 per cent annual rise in African gross domestic product between 2000 and 2008, about 49 per cent of Africans were living below the poverty line of \$1.25 a day.
3. Two important development agendas were adopted by the African Union to define the growth strategy for Africa in the medium to long term:
 - a) The 2030 Social Development Goals, replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
 - b) Agenda 2063.
4. A broad approach to democracy and development in Africa took centre stage. It emphasized the interconnectedness of democracy and human security and highlighted issues related to economic, corporate, political and social governance and to African ownership of the development process.
5. International society moved to adopt the notion of responsibility to protect, which represented a shift from the idea of sovereignty as control to that of sovereignty as responsibility.
6. Gender equality, climate change and the environment were generally important topics in the democracy and development debate in Africa.
7. The global war against terrorism spilled over into Africa following a resurgence in intra-State and inter-State ethnocultural and religious conflicts across the continent.
8. African and international concern led to efforts to address the challenge that internal and international migration posed to democracy and development and to the management of financial and human resource flows from and into Africa.
9. Steps towards African integration were accelerated. Regional economic commissions were envisioned as building blocks towards continental integration. NEPAD, the African Union, the Pan-African Parliament, APRM, the African Governance Architecture (AGA), the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and regional and continental constitutional jurisdictions were established to serve as regional and continental accountability mechanisms to complement national ones.
10. The African Union was reformed, the Accra Declaration (2007) and the African Union Agenda 2063 (2013) were adopted and NEPAD and APRM were integrated into the African Union.
11. NEPAD was transformed into the African Union Development Agency and the mandate of APRM was expanded. Both of these measures were intended to strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of the two initiatives and their human and resource capacity to deliver the African Union development policies in its member States.
12. ECA published a monograph in 2019 that provided an overview of its 60-year engagement with the democracy and development debate in Africa. The document was entitled 1958 to 2018: 60 Years in Step with African Development.

Source: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), *Capturing the 21st Century: African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Best Practices and Lessons Learned*, Addis Ababa: ECA, 2011; and desk research by author.



Set against the interpretation that the roots of the APRM Idea lie in the Pan Africa Idea, as put forward in this section, the APRM country and continental processes are significant because they provide sites and platforms so that African-centred debates, which were set in motion by the post-Second World War formulations of the Pan-African Idea, can continue in today's post-cold war world, in the context of the New Scramble

for Africa. The debates centre on African-owned solutions to the antinomies and challenges of globalization. It is within the fundamental context of the APRM Idea's deep roots in the Pan-African Idea and in the debates about democracy and development in Africa that have flowed from it that the defining principles and vision of the APRM Idea are set out and analysed in sections III-V.



III. Defining the APRM Idea and Vision

The APRM Idea refers to governance values, principles and objectives outlined in a number of standards and codes on governance, a selection of which are listed below, in Box II.

The original vision of APRM is defined in the mandate, purpose and guiding principles that “together constitute the core guiding principles of the Mechanism”, as initially outlined in the Base Document (APRM, 2007), and subsequently in the statute (APRM, 2016).²

The larger tapestry formed by the doctrinal statements, such as the ones outlined in African and international standards and codes (see box

l) is woven out of threads from the following design issues and challenges related to the nexus between democracy, development and governance in Africa:

- a) Managing diversity to promote inclusion, public participation, human security, accountability, limited government and the rule of law, thereby strengthening public participation in governance;
- b) Redefining politics as a public interest project pursued as a joint venture or social contract between the State, the

Box II. African Regional Governance Instruments and Standards (partial listing)

1. Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa (1980)
2. African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (1981/1986)
3. Africa’s Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (1985)
4. African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (1990)
5. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)
6. Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty) (1991)
7. Grand Bay (Mauritius) Declaration and Plan of Action (1999)
8. African Platform on the Right to Education (1999)
9. Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa Solemn Declaration (2000)
10. Lomé Declaration of July 2000 on the framework for an OAU response to unconstitutional changes of government (2000)
11. Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000/2001)
12. NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance (2001)
13. NEPAD framework documents
14. Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance (2002)
15. Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa (2002)
16. African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (2003)
17. Maputo Declaration on Gender Mainstreaming and the Effective Participation of Women in the African Union (2003)
18. Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004)
19. African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007)

Source: self-assessment questionnaire, available at https://eisa.org.za/aprm/pdf/Aprm_Self_Assessment_Questionnaire.pdf, and Christof Heyns and Magnus Killander, eds. (2007). *Compendium of Key Human Rights Documents of the African Union* (Third Edition), Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press.

² The Base Document was superseded, upon the integration of APRM into the African Union, by the Statute of the African Peer Review Mechanism, in 2016.



private sector, civil society and African and international partners;

- c) Establishing external African accountability mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the compliance of governance processes and practices with the principles of governance set out in the standards and codes.

The Base Document also describes the purpose or vision of APRM, including its mission:

The primary purpose of APRM is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated subregional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building (APRM, 2007).

The document also emphasizes that “every review exercise carried out under the authority of the Mechanism must be technically competent, credible and free of political manipulation”.

The APRM Idea envisions an essentially social democratic or developmental State that goes beyond liberalism, recognizing and promoting – through constitutional provisions – positive rights such as cultural, economic and social rights, in addition to customary civil and political rights.³ Many African constitutions now contain provisions for such positive rights (Ghana, 1992; Nigeria, 1999; Sierra Leone, 1991; United Republic of Tanzania, 1977; Uganda, 1995; Mozambique, 2004). Jinadu (2015, pp. 53-54) argues that the APRM framework sets the following “seven benchmarks for assessing democracy and political governing among its members”:

- a) Democratic political succession with fixed presidential term limits within the framework of competitive party

and electoral politics and free, fair and credible elections managed and conducted by independent electoral management bodies (EMBs);

- b) Recognition, promotion and protection of positive rights such as cultural, economic and social rights, in addition to customary civil and political rights;
- c) Affirmative action to promote and protect cultural, ethno-regional, gender, political party, religious and other identity-based diversities;
- d) Separation of powers to enable the judiciary and legislature to be more effective in their investigation and oversight roles, respectively;
- e) Political devolution, with fiscal powers, to multiple centres of power within the State based on the principle of home rule, informed by considerations of subsidiarity. On a political spectrum in which the unitary state is at one end and the federal state at the other, political devolution is close to the federal State. Political devolution is designed to address the question of who owns the State by creating an uneasy combination of shared and decentralized citizenship rights to assuage the fears of domination expressed or perceived by historically marginalized groups such as women and ethnic and religious minorities, who felt they were treated as second-class citizens, despite constitutional guarantees and reassurances of common citizenship rights;
- f) Reforms to the system of political parties so that it promotes democracy and diversity;

³ On the problem that group/collective rights pose for liberalism, see Van Dyke (1982). Liberal democratic theory, with its assumptions of a common citizenship in the liberal state, has been modified by the notion of a “liberal theory of minority rights”, according to which fractured citizenship rights that should be accommodated in the liberal democratic state (Kymlicka, 1995).



g) The establishment of horizontal, democracy-promoting governance institutions (e.g. EMBs, anti-corruption agencies, ombudsmen) as an additional branch of government to ensure accountability and transparency in public life by insulating them from political influence.

The next section looks at how the APRM Idea has assumed and been translated into concrete existential forms as country and continental structures and processes designed to carry out the mandate and objectives of APRM in line with the core principles of the APRM Idea set out in this section.



IV. From the APRM Idea to the African Peer Review Mechanism

Prior to the concrete expression of the APRM Idea in the establishment of APRM, peer review in inter-African relations was typically an informal, non-institutionalized, undocumented process. It was silent diplomacy. The notion of peer review in APRM, however, goes further. The Mechanism requires the establishment of formal national and external African institutions to conduct routinized, open, inclusive, participatory and systematic peer review among member States. More importantly, the Base Document states: “Every review exercise carried out under the authority of the Mechanism must be technically competent, credible and free of political manipulation.” (APRM, 2007).

As a voluntary external review mechanism, APRM is fundamentally different from external reviews conducted by development partners, including the World Bank, the IMF and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and other governance assessment organizations, such as the African Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP), the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index, the Freedom House Index, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation Index of African Governance, and the Afrobarometer. The Mechanism is also generally more comprehensive, because of its participatory methodology and scope.⁴ The APRM guidelines vest in the African Peer Review (APR) Forum the power to “exercise constructive peer dialogue and persuasion (through offering assistance and applying appropriate measures) to effect changes in the country practice where recommended” (NEPAD, 2003). In this respect, the APRM review process is also different, because “it is the first review mechanism to combine country reviews

with a continental forum for holding countries to account” (da Costa, 2011, p. 219).

The APRM Base Document provides the conceptual and methodological framework for monitoring and evaluating the extent to which APRM member States comply with the core governance principles set out in the document. The framework, as evident in the objectives of the four APRM thematic areas, focuses on the connection between democratic political processes (governance or “soft infrastructures”) and development (socioeconomic arrangements, including “social and physical infrastructures”), both of which are designed to advance human security through broad-based, State-led distribution of social surplus. In short, while the combination of the thematic areas of economic governance and management, corporate governance and socioeconomic development outlines the policy framework and environment for socioeconomic activities, the thematic focus of democracy and political governance creates the political environment in which to pursue socioeconomic policies for development (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011a, pp. 84ff). Thus, the connection between democratic political processes and development underscores “the primacy of politics in national policy making (da Costa, 2011, p. 220).”

The foregoing summarizes the notion of peer review and the theoretical and methodological framework for carrying it out that the founding member States of APRM agreed to. Since the Mechanism was established in 2003, membership has grown from 10 countries to 38, which belong to the following African Union regional groupings.

⁴ The participatory methodology involves: (a) preparation of a draft country self-assessment report by national technical review institutes (TRIs); (b) preparation of a country background paper; (c) submission of the draft country self-assessment report (CSAR) prepared by the TRIs for peer review by other technical review institutes in the country or any other national institution; (d) validation of the draft CSAR by various stakeholders across the country; (e) another round of peer review of the CSAR by the APRM country review mission, involving “wide-ranging consultations and interactions with all stakeholders” (APRM, 2007) across the country, and resulting in the preparation of a country review report (CRR) and a national programme of action (NPoA); (f) peer review of the CRR and NPoA by the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons; and (g) peer review of the CRR and NPoA by the APRM Forum of Heads of State and Government, the Pan-African Parliament and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, among others.

**Table I: APRM Member States – distribution by regions (November 2018)**

Region	Member States	Number
Central Africa	Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe	7
East Africa	Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, United Republic of. Tanzania	5
North Africa	Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia	4
Southern Africa	Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia	9
West Africa	Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo	13

Source: Desk research by the author, October 2018 and March 2019.

Its current membership represents 69 per cent of African Union member States (African Union, 2018, pp. 2 and 4). As of the end of March 2019, some 22 of the 38 member States had already undergone the base review, four had undergone a second peer review, and three were going through the base review. In addition to its three initial strategic partners – the African Development Bank, the ECA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – APRM now has two additional strategic partners – the African Capacity Building Foundation and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. Although its beginnings were marked by a mixture of euphoria, scepticism and perhaps cynicism,⁵ the Mechanism has made steady progress, as detailed in the findings of its Reform Unit (African Union, 2018) and several other assessments of its impact and achievements (African Development Fund, 2018; African Union, 2018; da Costa, 2011; Economic Commission for Africa, 2011a, 2011b and 2017; Economic Commission for Africa and Pan-African Parliament, 2009; Hansungule, n.d.; Tungwarara, 2010, p. 22; Turianskyi, 2016). For instance, da Costa (2011, pp. 232-235) has noted the following attributes of APRM:

- a) It can widen the political space within the countries reviewed, leading to increased pressure for greater accountability, transparency and public participation;

- b) It places peer pressure on participating African leaders, with two unintended consequences: first, it places leaders of peer-reviewed countries under pressure to address issues they would not have dealt with as part of the follow-up process; and second, it places them under pressure to emulate or adopt best practices identified in peer-reviewed member States;
- c) It is a useful tool for diagnosing problems.

Despite the ebb and flow in its fortunes, APRM now appears to be on the cusp of a new surge, as evidenced by the following developments.

- a) APRM has been integrated into the African Union, which has expanded the Mechanism's mandate. Its new roles include monitoring Agenda 2063 and progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;
- b) The number of member States has increased to 38;
- c) Base and second-generation reviews have resumed;
- d) The African Union has set a goal for all member States to accede to APRM by 2023;

⁵ Kojo Busia (2016, p.33) observes that "the APRM naturally elicited a variety of reactions, ranging from an enthusiastic embrace of the novelty of the idea and the vision behind it... to a skeptical reception as yet another African initiative soon to be marred by a behavior of collective indulgence among African leaders who so often ignored each other's governance shortcomings".



- e) The number of strategic partners is increasing;
- f) The Mechanism is beginning to play a role in strengthening South-South cooperation and networks;
- g) The Mechanism's country reviews have been generating a rich database of governance reports, which has led to new legislation and policy reforms;⁶
- h) The Mechanism's newly launched African Governance Report has the potential to serve as a model for periodic governance assessment by African Union member States;
- i) The Mechanism acts as an early warning system for impending crises in its member States, as occurred in the base country review reports of Kenya and South Africa in 2007.

In short, the surge laid down a challenge to deepen and expand APRM through a process of restoration, reinvigoration and renewal (known as the “Three Rs strategy”) in line with the decisions of the Twenty-Fifth Summit of the Heads of State and Government Participating in the African Peer Review Mechanism, held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2016, and the “expanded mandate” given to APRM by the African Union Assembly decisions adopted in January 2017 and January 2018 (African Union, 2017 and 2018).

But what needs to be done to implement the Three Rs? To answer this question, section V analyses to what extent the APRM Idea and the APRM institutions and processes at the national and continental levels are aligned. It does so to illustrate the earlier contention (see the final paragraph of section I) that rethinking the Three Rs should examine to what extent governance processes within member States provide a facilitating environment for APRM to undertake, in line with the guiding principles of the APRM Idea, a “review exercise...[that] must be technically competent, credible and free of political manipulation” (African Peer Review Mechanism, 2007).

⁶ For example, the electoral reform undertaken in Nigeria in 2007–2008 was triggered by the recommendations in Nigeria's base CRR, in 2007. In addition, Ghanaian legislation on violence against women, which had been subject to long delays in Parliament, was passed after the base review for Ghana had drawn attention to it. The NPoA, which draws on the CRRs of peer-reviewed States, has revived interest in national planning and rolling plans and has enhanced the role of the Ministry of Planning in several member States. The policy changes were not solely thanks to the Mechanism, but it played a role in precipitating them.



V. APRM: bridging the gap between ideas and action

Linking the APRM Idea to assessment of governance must be set against the challenges and opportunities that arise from the dynamic flow of cultural, economic, political, and sociopsychological factors mediating the nexus between theory and policy and that create gaps between ideas and policy.⁷ But the gaps need to be bridged. Ideas provide points of reference for how the gaps should be bridged so that the vision and purpose derived from Ideas can be achieved and sustained. This is because Ideas are not merely abstractions but also living, social forces that provide a springboard for the reinvigoration or renewal of their existential forms.

Since there is often a gap between ideas and their translation into existential forms as institutions and processes, the rethinking of the Three Rs should not mean theorizing a new APRM Idea, but adopting and implementing measures to reform the processes of APRM governance institutions to bring them in line with the letter, but more importantly the spirit, of the Mechanism's core principles.

The paragraphs below indicate four types of gaps and how they can be bridged so that the Mechanism's institutions and processes conform with the "core principles" of the APRM Idea.

The "political manipulation" of APRM institutions and processes

The problem of political manipulation reflects the wide gap between the APRM Idea and the Mechanism's established institutions and

processes. A technically competent and credible review was stipulated on the understanding that it must be free of political manipulation. The problem, however, is that the Mechanism is structurally embedded in the politics of its member States. As a result, opportunities arise for the review process to be conducted in a partisan, non-transparent manner, which can generate certain perceptions. For some stakeholders, the review processes widen the political space and avenues for opposition groups to formally and openly use anti-government propaganda and to criticize the government and its policies. Such stakeholders may use the opportunity provided by the process for partisan political purposes. Other stakeholders, particularly State functionaries, their proxies and their supporters, may perceive the Mechanism as inquisitorial or confrontational and prone to manipulation by any regime opponents within and outside the country who are looking to discredit or ridicule the government.⁸ Stakeholders therefore may try to persuade the government to control the process and prevent it from degenerating into an inquisition on its activities and policies.⁹

In a political environment in which trust is weak – whether among the political elite, between the Government and opposition groups, or between citizens and the political leadership – it is difficult to achieve a review that is widely accepted as "credible and free of political manipulation". There is a widespread perception, rightly or wrongly, that the executive branch attempts to influence who is a member of the APRM national governing body and which technical research institutes conduct the country self-assessment report. In one particular case, there was a request to vet the

7 This idea draws on the theory of forms developed by Plato in books III–VII, IX and X of *The Republic*.

8 In this regard, da Costa (2011, p. 226) wrote: "Before the official review, during the country-visit stage, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame questioned the composition of the expert review team... He enquired about the nationality of each of the experts... The Rwanda review highlighted the APRM's potential to raise national sensitivities, despite the insistence of its founders that it was a neutral, politics-free mechanism." There were also anecdotal stories about delays in the release of some country review reports because the governments of some peer-reviewed countries claimed that the reports were biased or insisted on vetting the list of experts to ensure no experts that they considered hostile took part in review missions to their country.

9 In the country review missions (CRMs) in which this author participated, one common misunderstanding that regularly had to be addressed was that peer review targeted the regime in power. In reality, it looks at the general governance trend in the country in the four thematic areas. In one reviewed country, the CRM was virtually asked to leave the country before the end of its assignment because the Government feared that the mission was talking to people it should not talk to or asking too many questions.



Table II: Sample Findings on Executive Branch Dominance

APRM Country Review Report	Findings: executive-branch dominance.
Nigeria, May 2008	p. 103: "The CRM [country review mission] learnt that separation of powers is not adequately achieved in Nigeria because the judiciary and legislature at the national and state levels are heavily dependent on or subordinated to the executive."
Uganda, April 2009	p. 83: "Although the Constitution prescribes the separation of powers...in actual practice the dominance of the executive over the judiciary and the legislature is the norm and hampers the equilibrium between power and checks and balances."
Ethiopia, 2011	pp. 96-97: "Owing to the nature of the parliamentary form of government...the separation of legislative and executive powers is blurred...While under the Constitution the legislature has far-reaching powers and functions, its virtual fusion with the executive and the dominance of the ruling party are bound to compromise its independence in the oversight role."
Sierra Leone, 2012	p. 120: "...the failure of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 to provide for a strong system of separation of powers...has given rise to weaknesses and contradictions in the practice of constitutional government in the country. These weaknesses and contradictions have resulted in the creation and hardening of a strong Executive, similar in nature to the pre-eminent position of the Executive during the pre-conflict period in the country."

future list of consultants taking part in country review missions.

Another reason for that perception is that control by the executive branch connects with a broader political environment of institutional weaknesses in APRM member States. Because of the political culture and the weakness of countervailing pressures from civil society, the executive branch dominates national politics, despite constitutional provisions for the separation of powers (see Prempeh (2008) and, for a more measured position, Salih (2018)). Several country review reports confirm there is a general trend towards executive-branch dominance of the APRM country processes in APRM peer-reviewed member States, as exemplified in Table II.

Ozias Tungwarara (2010, p. 22), in the introductory chapter to a collection of studies by the Open Society Foundation on the APRM country processes in nine member States (Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa), to which the present author (Jinadu) contributed the Nigeria study, concluded that "the process has been dominated and driven by governments...in spite of clear guidelines that encourage processes that are impartial and objective"). The present author's experience as a member of six CRMs for peer-reviewed APRM countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and United Republic of Tanzania) and of the International Advisory Board of AfriMAP and the Nigerian APRM National Governing

Council (NGC) from 2008 to 2015, is that there is a general perception among stakeholders in each country that the executive branch controls the process. This perception exists because the executive has the power to appoint members to the NGC and controls budgetary approvals and releases to the NGC and because the powers of the NGC are effectively alienated to the executive branch, typically through a secretariat in the offices of the Focal Point.

How does that general perception fit in with the APRM Idea? While the extent of control by the executive branch varies from country to country, with the NGCs of Ghana and Benin perceived as relatively independent models that should be followed, the general perception raises questions about the inclusive, popular and grass roots-driven nature of national APRM processes, and therefore the shared ownership of the processes. It is because of this perception that there is apathy and indifference to the processes among other stakeholders in the legislative and judicial branches and among the private sector and civil society. For this reason, it has been suggested that safeguards are needed to prevent the APRM national and continental processes from becoming "bureaucratic routines...mere 'formalities'...[and] an extension of State-driven policy or something devoid of popular voices and popular participation" (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011a).

A major effort to explore and recommend measures to bridge this gap was undertaken by



African parliamentarians and experts during the joint ECA–Pan-African Parliament workshop on “Putting Parliament at the Heart of APRM”, held in Bagamoyo, United Republic of Tanzania, in November 2008. The workshop recommended the following measures, which largely remain unaddressed (Economic Commission for Africa and Pan-African Parliament, 2009):

- a) Establishing NGCs by constitutional provisions or legislation;
- b) Providing NGCs with secretariats outside the executive branch;
- c) Giving NGCs administrative and financial independence, as enjoyed by the judiciary and legislature;
- d) Creating at the continental Pan-African Parliament level, “a specifically APRM Committee of Parliament, preferably in each of the four APRM thematic areas” (p.43, para. X1(g));
- e) Strengthening oversight of the process by establishing, at the national Parliament level, “a specially designated NEPAD/ APRM Committee, as one of its standing committees” (p.47, para. X3(n));
- f) Capacitating civil society organizations for sustainable, effective roles in the APRM country process.

The problem of cultural and sociopsychological factors

The political and public policy terrain for conducting peer review leaves room for sociopsychological and cultural factors, such as leadership and idiosyncratic factors, to shape our understanding of the principles of APRM and to shape, establish and drive the Mechanism’s country processes, thus creating a second major gap. As has been observed, “there was an initial ambiguity surrounding the process...[and] the Heads of State had not understood what was happening and that

everyone had left Cape Town [after the official launch of APRM] without knowing what they were supposed to be doing” (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011a).

For example, what is the extent of and what are the limits on external accountability when it applies to politics, as outlined in the thematic area on democracy and political governance? This ambiguity points to a paradox in the notion of APRM as an African external accountability mechanism. On the one hand, the Mechanism sets out to monitor and ensure compliance with principles (standards and codes) under its thematic area on democracy and political governance. In doing so, the country reviews are not “steering clear of previously sovereign issues [and] have directly engaged with political questions, within countries”. On the other hand, the Mechanism has also been “projected as a neutral, technical mechanism that does not engage in politics” (da Costa, 2011, p. 220).

The founding APRM Panel of Eminent Persons accepted a bold and expansive interpretation of the meaning and scope of the APRM Idea to move the Mechanism forward as an external accountability mechanism. This move disabused initial scepticism that APRM would replicate a situation where “leaders have, in the past, ‘scratched each other’s back’ in the name of preserving African solidarity” (Busia, 2006, p. 33). Their interpretation went beyond the expectations of one of the founding Heads of State of NEPAD and of APRM, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, who said that “issues of political governance would not come under the purview of the APRM but rather would be handled by AU structures” (Busia, 2006, pp. 33-34).

There are also anecdotal stories about how the founders had complained that the founding Panel had gone beyond what APRM was designed to do. Indeed, such was the concern by a former member of the founding Panel about the future of the Mechanism that she cautioned against an “overly quantitative approach to the assessment or peer review process”, stressing that “it was important not to lose sight of the fact that the APRM country



process was above all and fundamentally a political process” (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011a).

Another idiosyncratic issue is the extent to which the appointment, deliberation and oversight functions of the Panel of Eminent Persons conform with the APRM Idea and Vision.¹⁰ For instance, the long tenure of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia as Panel Chair from 2007 until his death in 2012 went beyond the traditional two-year tenures served by his predecessors. There is also a general feeling that meetings of the Forum have become routinized formalities, at the expense of thorough peer review at the level of the Forum, and that attendance at the meetings of the Forum has progressively waned, reflecting a declining commitment. The trend is sometimes attributed to the fact that meetings of the Forum are held on the margins of the African Union Summit, giving APRM Heads of State and Government scant time to devote to meetings of the Forum. This development has led to the suggestion that the Forum should be rejuvenated, with substantial time devoted during or after the African Union Summit to more vigorous consideration of the Forum agenda and related matters.

Another gap is the trend towards the weakening of the role of the Panel of Eminent Persons in the exercise of its “oversight function over the review process, in particular to ensure the integrity of the process” (APRM, 2007). There are three aspects to that trend. The first is related to how the politics of the Panel can be contained to avoid self-inflicted wounds arising from personality-triggered conflicts, accountability-related conflicts and similar conflicts regarding appointments and discipline at the APRM secretariat, like those that occurred between 2007 and 2012 (Muna, n.d.; da Costa, 2011, p. 242). The second aspect is related to ensuring that members appointed to the Panel of Eminent Persons show “demonstrated commitment to the ideals of Pan Africanism” (APRM, 2007, para. 6) to ensure their independence from governments. For example, after three of the first panellists left the Panel, there were “concerns that replacement panellists [were] not sufficiently

independent from government influence” (da Costa, 2011). The third and final aspect is that the role of national focal points outside country processes is expanding into continental decision-making and oversight for the Mechanism (APRM, 2016, arts. 8.1(b) and 10). The role has tended to diminish the oversight power of the Panel of Eminent Persons over the review process and the continental secretariat. Focal points also portend a conflict of interest that can disturb the review process to avoid censure by their governments (Sore, 2014).

Ownership issues

African ownership of APRM is an important component of the APRM Idea and must be seen as pushing forward the idea of Africa’s ownership of the democracy and development project on the continent. The APRM guidelines therefore state that the Mechanism will be “implemented with resources to come predominantly from Africa” (NEPAD, 2003a, para. 8.2), and that funding for the Mechanism will come from assessed contributions of participating member States” (APRM, 2007, para. 27). Another APRM document requires that member States agree to “contribute fully to the funding of the African Peer Review Mechanism in order to affirm the African ownership of the Mechanism” (NEPAD, 2003c, para. 20). By implication, African ownership at the national level would also mean that country processes would be funded by national governments. Since its inception, the Mechanism has interpreted the principle of African ownership as requiring consultants on the CRMs to be “made up exclusively of African experts in Africa and the African Diaspora” (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011a, p. 70).¹¹

Since the guidelines refer to resources as being “predominantly” from Africa, they recognize that, given Africa’s political economy of underdevelopment, external funding “could be welcomed if...managed in a way that clearly respects African ownership of APRM and all its processes. Support for external partners should

¹⁰ What follows draws on Muna (n.d.) and Sore (2014).

¹¹ See also APRM (2007, para. 11): “The Secretariat may engage, with the approval of the Panel, the services of African experts and institutions that it considers competent and appropriate to act as its agents in the peer review process.”

**Table III: NPoA cost (millions of United States dollars)**

Country	Total cost (millions of US dollars)	% share of GDP
Ghana	3 653	5.6
Kenya	5 388	5.9
South Africa	1 986	0.2
Benin	2 389	13.0
Nigeria	20 000	3.4
Burkina Faso	4 907	..

Source: Adotey Bing-Pappoe (2010), *Reviewing Africa's Peer Review Mechanism: A Seven Country Survey*, Ottawa: Partnership Africa Canada, p. 8.

be sought mainly for the implementation of the Country Programme of Action and capacity building to improve performance in the weak areas" (NEPAD, 2003a, para. 8).¹² In the same vein, the APRM guidelines describe the African ownership principle as follows: "While the Panel and the Secretariat will use the African experts as much as possible, the Panel may also approve, in exceptional cases, the utilisation of the services of non-African experts, individuals or institutions." (NEPAD, 2003a, para. 3.8).

The recommendation for the Panel and the Secretariat to utilize "in exceptional cases...the services of non-African experts, individuals or institutions," is in the spirit of the need for "a new relationship of partnership between Africa and the international community, especially the highly industrialised countries, to overcome the development chasm that has widened over centuries of unequal relations" (NEPAD, 2001b, para. 8). The APRM guidelines also provide partner institutions with a role in the APRM process in the "protection of African ownership in the conduct of technical assessments" and in "financial arrangements in the conduct of technical assessments and ownership of [the] technical assessment report" (NEPAD, 2003a, para. 6.9(d) and (e)).

Nevertheless, the economic burden of the APRM continental and country processes has created a gap that needs to be bridged to ensure that African ownership of the Mechanism is not compromised. Referring to the economic cost of the Kenyan

base review, the then Focal Point and Minister of National Planning, Peter Anyang Nyong'o, made an observation that was quite revealing: "I am keen to learn from our colleagues in Ghana, Rwanda and Mauritius about how they are handling the financial aspect of APRM. This issue should be subjected to greater debate and analysis than it has been so far, since good peer review does not come cheap." (Ouma Akoth, 2007, p. 154).

Studies of the base APRM review processes in Nigeria and Kenya in 2007 and 2008 show that the estimated cost of funding Nigeria's base review was around \$14 million (Jinadu, 2008, p. 22) and Kenya's around \$1 million (Ouma Akoth, 2007, p. 15) for Kenya's base review. With estimated populations of 147 million in Nigeria and 37.2 million in Kenya at the time, this translated to \$10 per capita for Nigeria and \$37.2 per capita for Kenya. Although this cost is bearable for those two countries, it is not so affordable for less wealthy countries unless they receive external funding. Another study shows that the cost of the National Programme of Action (NPoA) of each peer-reviewed country is equally burdensome (see Table III, which shows the cost as a share of GDP for five of the six countries that completed their base reviews between 2005 and 2008).

Bridging the gap between the principle of African ownership and the burdensome economic cost of the APRM continental and country processes has been donor funding, in the form of UNDP-brokered basket funding, under the APRM trust fund. The gap, however, is symptomatic of a

¹² See also para. 2.2.e.), which mandates the APR Forum to "persuade development partners to support the recommendations approved by the APR Forum by providing technical and financial assistance".



broader and deeper structural problem of external dependence that continues to cast a gloomy shadow over African ownership of the democracy, good governance and development project in Africa.

Fortunately, there is little reason to suggest that the hugely burdensome cost of the country reviews and of the NPoAs has compromised or diminished African ownership of the country and continental processes. However, because of the politics involved in government budgets, with competing needs, cost may prevent country reviews from being thorough and fully inclusive and may constrain the implementation of the recommendations made in the country review reports (CRRs), including the NPoAs. Given that country and continental structures and processes rely on donor funding through the UNDP trust fund, da Costa (2011, p. 239) argues that, “regardless of the extent of external donor contributions to the peer review process, its very nature makes it more or less impossible for non-Africans to dictate the APRM’s scope, purpose and implementation”, although there have been indications of tensions between UNDP and APRM at the continental level over the administrative and financial management of the continental process.

Another aspect of the ownership question – namely, the cost of social and political integrity in the country review process – has created a more troubling gap that needs to be bridged. The principle of African ownership can be interpreted as having another meaning, other than the funding coming “predominantly from Africa”. It can also be interpreted to mean that “citizens of a country [are] able to assess their own political, social and corporate experience and give their view” (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011a, p. 70). That is why the methodology of the APRM processes is inclusive and participatory, as described in section IV of the present paper, and that is why the core principles of the Mechanism emphasize accountability and transparency in the management and conduct of the processes. It is also why the trend towards control of APRM

country structures and processes by the executive branch is tending to undermine this sense of African ownership of the Mechanism, creating, as indicated earlier in this section, a gap between the theory and practice that needs to be bridged.

The more the executive controls a country review process, the more likely the process is to fall short of the stipulation made in the APRM Base Document (NEPAD, 2003b, para. 4) that “every review ... must be technically competent, credible and free of political manipulation,” and the requirement in the APRM Memorandum of Understanding (NEPAD, 2003c, para. 22) that member States “ensure the participation of all stakeholders in the development of the national Programme of Action including trade unions, women, youth, civil society, private sector, rural communities and professional associations”.¹³ It is for this reason that a number of civil society organizations in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa considered conducting parallel or shadow base country self-assessment reviews independently from those being conducted by their NGCs.¹⁴

Another question that APRM has raised regarding African ownership is the role of African intellectuals in designing an African governance architecture anchored on Afrocentric epistemology and indigenous systems of thought as the basis for rethinking another development in order to create the African developmental state, as envisioned in Agenda 2063. This point was expressed well by a participant at the ECA Expert Group Meeting on APRM referred to earlier in this paper:

“But for us as Africans, it [APRM] is a very good exercise in knowledge/policy interfaces. I hear you, Professor, talking of working with many people in the policy field, but also on the ground with non-governmental and civil society organizations. It is a triangular process with a clear epistemic drive.” (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011a)

Since its establishment, APRM has accumulated a large volume of data about governance processes

¹³ See also NEPAD (2003b, para. 19), which stipulates that the “Review Team will visit the country [to be reviewed] where its priority order of business will be to carry out the widest possible range of consultations with the government, officials, political parties, parliamentarians, and representatives of civil society organizations, (including the media, academia, trade unions, business professional bodies.”

¹⁴ For Nigeria, see Akosile (2005).



in its member States. Those data should be mined to theorize “another development”. For example, the CRRs of some member States, including Ghana and South Africa, show that they have adopted indigenous and traditional dispute resolution systems as part of their alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for adjudicating electoral disputes over nomination processes for political party candidates for elective public political offices and resolving intra-State land and water disputes between communities. In some member States, including Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania, the CRRs show that public policy is directed towards integrating traditional medicine into their health systems and reviewing the place of customary or sharia law in their civil law.

This is therefore an area in which, in line with its core principle of African ownership of the development process, the APRM Idea should be applied to create a new, innovative paradigm by ensuring that the APRM Questionnaire includes questions about integrating traditional and indigenous systems of thought, institutions and practices into governance processes and by addressing governance challenges in Africa.

Integration of APRM into the African Union and the next steps

Post-1945 formulations of the Pan-African Idea envision continent-wide political union as the ultimate political objective. More recently, that objective found renewed and urgent expression in the Sirte Declaration of 1999, the Accra Declaration on Union Government of 2007 “to accelerate the economic and political integration of the African continent, including the formation of a Union Government for Africa, with the ultimate objective...[of creating] the United States of Africa” (African Union, 2007), and the Agenda 2063 road map towards an integrated Africa (African Union, 2013). The integration of APRM into the African Union, including its expanded mandate, places the Mechanism into the emergent African governance framework to “accelerate the economic and political integration of the African continent”.

The objective of political integration, however, continues to face enormous challenges. A gap needs to be bridged between this aspect of the Pan-African Idea and its realization, as evidenced by the historic disagreement between the maximalist approach, the minimalist or gradualist approach and the sceptical approaches to economic and particularly political integration in Africa (Lecoutre, 2008, especially pp. 45–55). The disagreement is over the timeline for creating the United States of Africa and the extent to which the scope of the political authority or constitutional jurisdiction of the African Union Government, relative to that of the constituent member States, should be limited. Creating a governance architecture for the projected United States of Africa involves:

- a) Designing a governance model, informed by the principle of subsidiarity, that divides powers and functions among African national, regional, and continental jurisdictions;
- b) Determining the principles and considerations used to inform the division of powers and functions;
- c) Redesigning how the African Regional Economic Communities can serve faithfully as building blocks for African continental integration.

There are four ways that the APRM Idea could help resolve the aforementioned design problem. First, the multi-layered governance principle of devolution in the APRM Idea can provide a useful design principle for creating the United States of Africa. CRRs such as those in Algeria, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania contain a rich database on the challenges of creating multiple, decentralized layers of governance and political authority through fiscal and political devolution in APRM member States. For example, the database can be mined to address the design problem of establishing the principles used to determine what competences will exist and to divide them among



national, regional and continental jurisdictions in Africa.¹⁵

Second, the African Union can learn from the design of APRM as an external African accountability mechanism anchored on voluntary, as opposed to universal, accession, with membership having increased from 10 countries in 2003 to 38 in April 2019. For example, one issue that emerged from the debate on an African Union Government within the African Union was the feasibility of moving the African integration process forward by specifying the Union Government's competences, which member States would have the right to opt out of on an *ad interim* basis, based on the principle of variable geometry. This principle means that, in certain, specific policy areas, countries reluctant to transfer powers to the Union Government would have the right to opt out so that those willing to do so could proceed without delay. Member States choosing to opt out would be allowed to opt in at a later date, once they believed it was in their national interest to do so.

Third, as part of its expanded mandate, APRM should engage the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) more vigorously, given the importance of the continental parliament and regional and national parliaments in Agenda 2063. PAP has long argued for the "symbiosis of the APRM process and parliamentary work [and] had shown, almost immediately after the establishment of the APRM, interest in engaging the APRM, and in mobilizing national parliaments in support of their country

APRM processes" (Economic Commission for Africa and Pan-African Parliament, 2009).

Fourth, the theoretical and analytic framework used in CRRs towards explaining and addressing inter-State conflicts in Africa¹⁶ can complement the mandate of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The APRM framework emphasizes the interconnectedness of historical, material and cultural factors, such as underdevelopment, ethnicity, religion, other structural and social diversities, sovereignty, human security deficits, external intervention, insurgency, and how those interconnected elements can help to shed light on and address the current human security and conflict situation in peer-reviewed member States. In doing so, the framework provides strong complementarity to AGA and APSA, highlighting what now needs to be done to advance and strengthen human security while reducing intra-State and inter-State conflict among neighbours, particularly in the areas of "preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction and development", since AGA and APSA are designed to serve as early-warning systems to address "the structural root causes of crisis and conflict in Africa" (Matlosa, 2014).¹⁷

Section VI follows up on the analysis and findings of earlier sections by providing a plan of action, or "design imperatives", to bridge the gaps identified between the APRM Idea and country and continental processes.

¹⁵ For attempts to achieve this, see African Union (2006, pp. 9–13; 2008, p. 2).

¹⁶ The phrase "inter-State conflicts" is used in the sense of violent conflicts between neighbouring APRM member States, in Objective 1, "Prevention and reduction of intra- and inter-State conflict," of the Democracy and Good Political Governance theme of APRM.

¹⁷ See also Economic Commission for Africa (2017, chaps. 4 and 5).



VI. APRM Moving Ahead: Some Design and Navigational Imperatives

Outline of a Plan of Action

Table IV outlines a Plan of Action based on the above findings and analysis.

Table IV: Outline of a Recommended Plan of Action

Dimension of the APRM Idea & Vision	Issues Recommended for the Plan of Action	Section
1. Context: APRM & the Logic of Continental Unity	<p>Reinvigorate the APRM Idea:</p> <p>(a) Continue using the APRM Idea in the broader context of the Pan-African Idea as a critical reference point to drive and strengthen Africa's quest for continental unity and integration and to enhance the role of APRM as a mechanism for external accountability regarding national governance architectures based on governance principles in a number of African codes and standards.</p> <p>(b) Re-emphasize a boldly expansive approach to the oversight role by the APRM Panel.</p> <p>(c) Review the role of Focal Points at the continental level.</p>	Sections II–V
	<p>From Agenda 2063 to African Union Government: theorizing an African governance architecture:</p> <p>(a) Revive the study of an African Union Government using the APRM voluntary accession model and applying the principles of variable geometry and political devolution.</p> <p>(b) Engage PAP in constructive follow-up to the 2018 ECA/PAP Bagamoyo Workshop on APRM.</p>	Section V
2. Bridging the Theory–Action Gap	<p>Ownership and related issues:</p> <p>(a) Minimize/constrain executive-branch dominance and bureaucratization.</p> <p>(b) Establish the APRM NGC by legislation as a democracy-promoting institution with administrative and financial independence.</p> <p>(c) Make the people active participants in governance processes through inclusive and public participation in APRM country processes.</p> <p>(d) Undertake a comparative budgetary audit and analysis of the country self-assessment and review process, including the NPoA, to reduce costs, to find a role for private-sector funding and to reintroduce donor-community basket funding without compromising African ownership of APRM.</p> <p>(e) Establish an APRM Committee as a standing committee in national legislatures with oversight and investigatory powers.</p> <p>(f) Establish APRM/African Union National Clubs to propagate the APRM Idea and disseminate APRM activities.</p> <p>(g) Pursue vigorously the indigenization of knowledge production through research into, and the use of, African knowledge systems in governance processes.</p> <p>(h) Nurture and sustain cooperation and exchanges among academic institutions and professional networks in Africa and the Global South and strengthen South-South intellectual networks.</p>	Section V



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