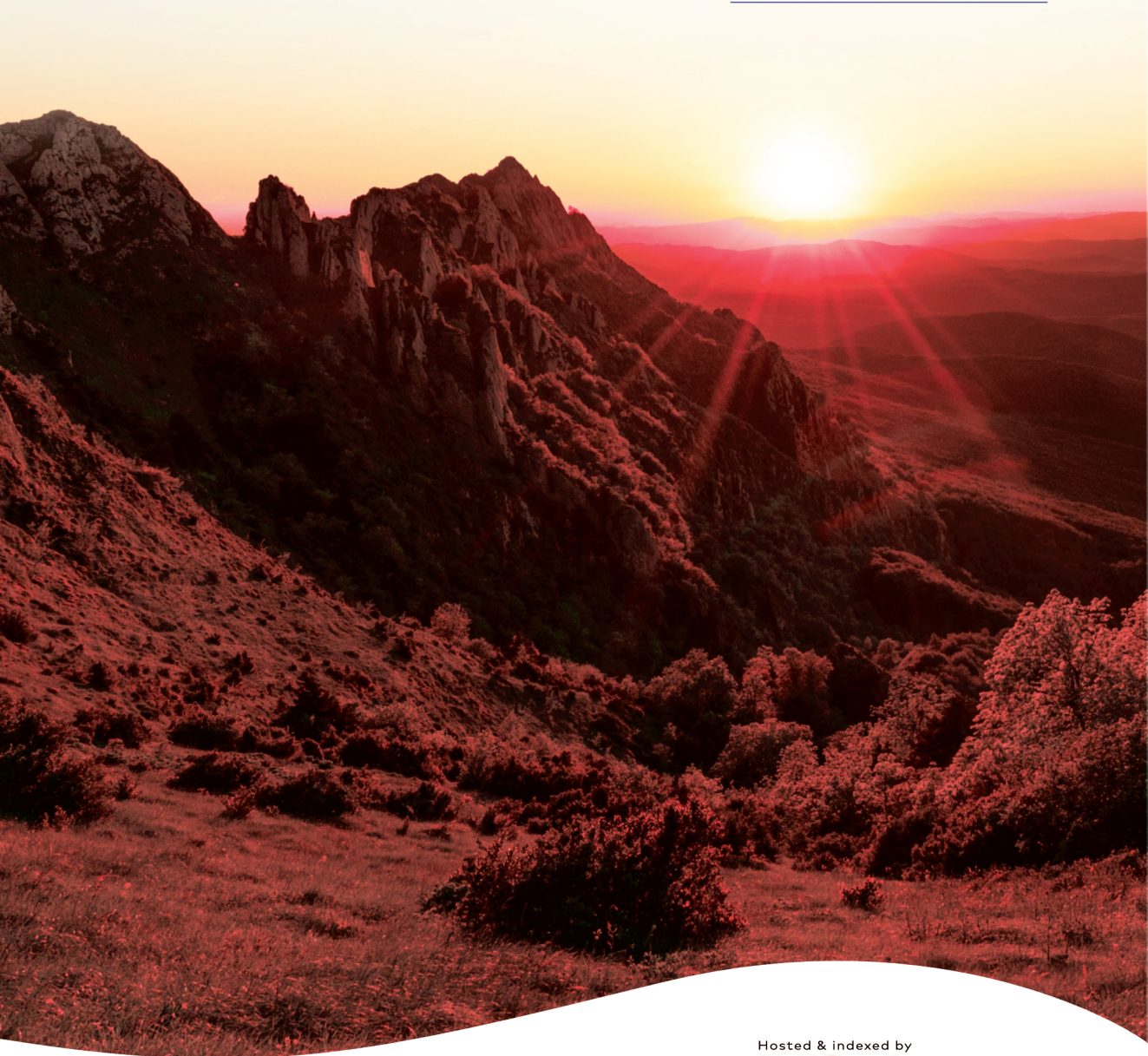


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The contribution of New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) to the Development of the Global South. A Case of Africa.

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ABSTRACT

Africa's development trajectory appears to be opaque and stranded despite the continent being the conduit of human and mineral resources. This paper acknowledges regional integration as a viable strategy to redress Africa's development challenges and marginalisation in world affairs. The paper analyses ongoing efforts by the African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) initiatives as the latest attempt by African leaders to foreground sub-regional and continental goals of economic cooperation and integration. Examining the discourse from the angle of governance deficits in African countries, the study specifically assesses the APRM's effectiveness in interrogating regionalism issues in Africa and in furthering the AU/NEPAD agenda. Guided by primary and secondary sources, the paper employed a qualitative research methodology and thematic discourse to analyse data. The paper is hinged on both economic and political theories for incisive political-economic analysis of NEPAD's efficacy in regional integration. The paper established a connection among governance; democracy; peace, stability, security, and development at different levels of analysis. The paper recommended the strengthening of APRM/NEPAD's institutional capacity, resource mobilisation strategies and decision-making mechanisms and approaches for successful and constructive continental integration.

Key Words: Regional integration, national sovereignty, democratic consolidation, good governance, and regional security



Introduction

The quest for African economic integration has been pursued through various policies and programmes developed by African leaders and facilitated by different regional institutions within the continent that promote integration goals (African Development Bank, 2019; Ngome & Radebe, 2021). The literature on this topic is growing as scholars engage in diverse debates on strategies to achieve Africa's development and integration agenda. Resolutions and policy recommendations are regularly reached at forums of African Heads of State, policymakers, and civil society representatives, urging accelerated implementation of regional agreements and the advancement of deeper integration across Africa (Anyanwu & Salami, 2019; Keet, 2021). Decades of effort show that African leaders, policymakers, and citizens are committed to developing meaningful ideas and visions to promote the continent's progress. There is a general conviction that Africa's socio-economic development and transformation can best be achieved through cooperative and integrative approaches at sub-regional and regional levels (UNECA, 2017). However, despite Pan-African aspirations, the current state of Africa remains highly unsatisfactory, with significant levels of political, economic, and social instability as well as persistent poverty and underdevelopment.

In 2001, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was launched in Abuja. The goals of this organisation were set to eradicate poverty, promote sustainable growth, counteract the marginalisation of minorities, and accelerate the empowerment of women (African Union, 2020). NEPAD established the principles of ongoing integration and partnership among African states as essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2010, NEPAD became a technical arm of the newly formed African Union (AU) and introduced the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as an inspectorate to promote good governance and democracy in African nations (Ngome & Radebe, 2021). This paper interrogates issues of governance and socio-economic development and examines their impacts on the African Union/NEPAD objectives for the continent's integration agenda.

Context

Despite Africa's vast natural, material, and human resources, the continent has remained underdeveloped, with many of the world's least developed countries located within its borders. The question persists: why does Africa,

one of the richest continents in terms of resources, remain so underdeveloped? The continent faces numerous challenges, including inadequate food supplies, poor healthcare, cultural and religious conflicts, intra- and inter-state disputes, economic underdevelopment, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and ongoing marginalisation on the world stage. These issues have contributed to Africa's underdevelopment, leaving many citizens in poverty. It is estimated that "41% of people in Africa live on less than \$1 a day" (Jiboku, 2016 p. 2), and according to the *Millennium Development Goals Report* (2019), sub-Saharan Africa is among the regions where the "majority of people are living on less than \$1.25 a day." The *World Bank Report* (2015) further forecasts that by 2030, a significant portion of the world's poorest people will reside in Africa, where many live in rural areas with limited access to national social services. Life expectancy remains low (WHO, 2020), and unemployment is a persistent issue in many African countries. Additionally, Africa hosts a large percentage of the world's refugees (Foluso, 2021) and suffers from widespread malnutrition, food insecurity, and high rates of HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, preventable diseases like malaria and cholera continue to claim lives. Environmental challenges, including drought, "desertification, deforestation, and poor agricultural practices" (Nana-Sinkam, 2021), exacerbate poverty and disease. Such issues weaken Africa's position in the international economic system as its resources continue to be exploited by powerful global actors.

The paper highlights that conflicts across the continent have further hindered Africa's development. In 2014, 15 African countries were "involved in a war or were experiencing post-war conflict tension" (African Sun News, 2014, np.). This situation has stifled national and collaborative initiatives, investment, and long-term planning. Political and socioeconomic challenges remain pervasive, with many African nations relying on external assistance for developmental projects (Ndegwa, 2015). The AU, NEPAD, and APRM initiatives symbolise the resolve of African leaders to prioritise regional goals of economic cooperation and integration. These initiatives reflect a consensus that successful integration is essential to overcoming both internal and external barriers to Africa's progress in an increasingly globalised world. This renewed drive shows African leaders' determination to address the continent's numerous challenges. Given the circumstances, however, the anticipated post-independence transformation and improvements that were expected to enhance the lives of people across the region have largely remained unrealised.

The paper further notes that Africa's political, social, and economic challenges indicate that past national and international efforts to address the continent's issues have not achieved the desired success. Many of these problems have worsened, making it increasingly challenging for African states to function effectively as independent entities (Rugumamu, 2011). This paper argues that Africa's socio-economic transformation and development are indispensable to effective sub-regional and regional economic cooperation and integration through NEPAD. Indeed, such integration is essential to positioning Africa to participate actively in the global economy. A re-evaluation of the concept, and objectives, of regional integration is necessary for African countries to maximise their potential within the global capitalist system. The quest for African economic integration is thus a noble pursuit, considering the continent's colonial history of fragmented political and economic structures. Regional integration should be seen as a survival strategy for African countries in the 21st century, with the potential to address Africa's enduring development challenges.

These arguments align with Asante's (1986, np.) statement that "no amount of foreign aid or assistance from externals can substitute for Africa's regional determination and effort to develop." This paper contends that the development of the Global South will remain superficial without meaningful national, sub-regional, and regional cooperation and integration. The article's objective is to assess the status of African political economies within the current international system and examine how globalisation, regionalisation, and liberalisation shape them. It also evaluates NEPAD's contribution to advancing the Global South's development.

Regionalism: A global perspective

The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s saw a significant rise in the formation of regional organisations as a strategy to promote economic progress and development in the global south. This period marked a shift from the realist perspective, which views states as predominantly in conflict with each other, towards an idealist perspective that emphasises cooperation among states within the international system. The success stories of integration schemes in Europe and North America appear to have motivated the global south towards regional integration. This paper argues that the benefits of regional integration far outweigh the costs and suspicions, as regionalism has been embraced as a survival strategy within an increasingly competitive global economic system.

Regional integration arrangements vary greatly in scope and structure, reflecting the unique political and economic histories of each region. In Europe, for example, integration is underpinned by a strong institutional framework, particularly following the establishment of the European Union (EU) in 1992. According to Phelps and Alden (2019), regional integration in North America was primarily driven by economic motivations, resulting in the creation of a Free Trade Agreement between the US and Canada, which expanded in 1994 to include Mexico through the formation of NAFTA. Meanwhile, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has achieved economic prosperity through “trade integration based on the exploitation of intra-regional comparative advantage” (Biswaro, 2018, p.3).

Founded in 1967, ASEAN has gradually progressed, establishing a Free Trade Area and aiming to fully integrate into an ASEAN Economic Community by 2020. By 2011, ASEAN's trade with the rest of the world had grown from US\$428.1 billion in 2004 to US\$914.8 billion, representing 75% of total ASEAN trade. Soderbaum (2013) notes that ASEAN's progress fuels a debate over the effectiveness of an informal, non-legalistic approach in regional organisations within Asia. In contrast, Africa presents a different picture as limited progress has been achieved at the sub-regional level, and Africa remains the least integrated and developed of the world's major regions (Olivia, 2015). Factors such as a lack of unity and political will have hindered integration efforts on the continent.

The trend of African economic integration efforts

Africa's Regional Integration Arrangements (RIAs) have been inspired by Pan-African ideals aimed at fostering unity, solidarity, and collective self-reliance among states (Landsberg, 2012). This paper argues that African countries possess diverse comparative advantages due to their vast resources, making regional integration a strategic initiative for integrating economies and optimising capacities and resources. Despite this potential, Africa has encountered significant challenges in addressing the barriers to its development. Stiglitz (2008) posits that regional integration is critical for Africa to exercise effective control and management over its extensive natural resources, while establishing minimum standards for resource exploitation to benefit the continent. According to Ndayi (2009), Africa possesses over 7% of the world's oil reserves, 8% of its gas resources, and an enormous hydropower potential equivalent to 13% of the world's total capacity. Africa's abundance of renewable resources is also

substantial: solar energy is widespread, and 15 African coastal countries have high wind energy potential. Africa has 59 international transboundary river basins, 15 major lakes, 38 transboundary aquifer systems, and 24 principal watersheds that cross political boundaries of two or more countries. These water resources cover about 64% of the continent's land area and contain 93% of its surface water resources. This abundance calls for policies promoting good stewardship and responsible exploitation, ensuring that development benefits all states within the continent.

Regional cooperation and integration offer Africa a viable strategy for developing infrastructure, addressing human development issues, and enhancing capital formation. African leaders need to explore integration strategies that support scientific research, innovation, and resource mobilisation (Kambudzi, 2008), as well as industrial growth to increase the continent's productive capacity in goods and services (Klugman, 2011). Of paramount importance is the creation of robust democratic institutions, as regional integration can result in governance improvements and enhanced public administration (Klugman, 2011). Effective regional institutions and policies that promote shared governance standards and democratic values could help address the continent's developmental and governance challenges. However, realising the potential of regional integration requires political will, commitment, and sacrifices from both governments and the people.

Overview of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), launched in Abuja in 2001, was established with the ambitious goals of eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable growth, reversing Africa's marginalisation, and empowering women and minorities. NEPAD championed continuous integration and partnership among African states and with nations outside the continent. In 2010, NEPAD became the technical arm of the African Union (AU) and introduced the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which monitors governance and democracy across African nations.

NEPAD was intended as a platform to mobilise political will, providing both technical and financial support to African development initiatives. However, it does not replace the responsibility of individual states for their citizens' well-being or their development plans, which rely on a mix of national and external

resources. Given this structure, NEPAD should prioritise robust integration among African nations by leveraging each country's development potential.

This paper highlights the importance of maintaining momentum in NEPAD's objectives, noting that integrating NEPAD priorities into national development plans is complex and involves several critical steps: establishing institutional frameworks, securing funding, developing mechanisms for decision-making, implementing programmes, and mobilising public and political support. The paper observes that the commitment of member states significantly influences NEPAD's effectiveness. A lack of commitment from some countries has stifled NEPAD's initial momentum. Despite these challenges, member states must renew their efforts to embed NEPAD priorities into their national agendas, focusing on sustained development, institutional capacity-building, secure funding, and strengthening partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

Theoretical Framework

African integration and development issues cannot be analysed meaningfully using a single theoretical framework. This complexity is due to the challenges of regionalism in Africa and the evolving interpretations of regional integration as scholars grapple with the realities of globalisation, regionalisation, and liberalisation. Africa has experimented with various forms of regional economic integration and has adopted policies rooted in Pan-African ideals. This paper, therefore, is informed by a range of political, economic, and market-oriented theories, providing a political-economic analysis of African integration within the context of NEPAD's contribution to the development of the Global South. The main integration theories include realism, functionalism, inter-governmentalism, institutionalism, market and trade integration, and developmental integration. Each theory has strengths and weaknesses in explaining specific aspects of integration processes. According to Olivier (2010), the challenge is to integrate these theoretical approaches into a coherent framework that captures Africa's unique role in furthering the continent's integration agenda. However, as Gilpin (2001) observes, institutionalism has not resulted in a specific paradigm of economic and political integration.

Despite this, Simmons and Martins (2001) note that scholars continue to explore the value of regional and international cooperation in addressing global issues. Institutionalisation remains a significant challenge in Africa, as many African institutions lack the capacity to operate effectively. This paper argues

that strengthening regional and continental institutions is crucial to achieving integration goals, requiring ratified structures at the national level to facilitate meaningful integration (Manboah, 2020).

Market Integration: Trade and Open Regionalism

Evidence suggests that the main reason advanced countries participate in regional economic integration is the economic benefits enjoyed by member states. Market integration theories, including trade and open regionalism, adopt a neo-classical economic perspective, advancing the benefits of free trade, economies of scale, and the opportunities created by economic liberalisation for expanding business ventures (Gibb, 2009). Market integration is defined as a “linear progression of various degrees of integration” (Lee, 2001 p. >), where countries progress from forming a free trade area to establishing a customs union, then a common market, and finally, an economic union. Economists argue that the ultimate objective of regional cooperation and integration frameworks, like NEPAD, is the merging of participating countries. This involves removing all barriers to the movement of goods and capital, promoting the benefits of economic integration (Sako, 2006). Meanwhile, open regionalism is a broader, more flexible variant of market integration theory, encouraging economic liberalisation as a core tenet of regionalisation (Gibb, 2009).

Economic theories such as market integration, trade, and open regionalism provide a valuable lens for understanding the dynamics and complexities of regionalism. These theories help to explain the benefits of different forms of regionalisation and the factors influencing the formation of regional groupings worldwide. Essentially, economic theories argue that the economy is the fundamental driver of integration processes, forming the basis for assessing the success of regional economic cooperation and integration. This paper asserts that equating the progress of African integration solely with the continent’s developmental levels dilutes the objectives of NEPAD. Evidence indicates that while Africa is economically ‘underdeveloped’, the continent’s challenges are exacerbated by the uneven nature of international trade and protectionist policies (Gibb, 2009). Many African countries are impoverished and at varied stages of economic development, and these theories often fail to consider the unique state-society dynamics and political economy of Africa (Gibb, 2009).

Hartzenberg (2011) observes that the design of regional economic integration arrangements in Africa is problematic, with poor performance records and frequent failure to meet action programmes for deeper integration. The paper

finds that intra-regional trade remains low due to the underdeveloped nature of African economies and the lack of an institutional framework to support integration. The primary concern highlighted in this paper is that market integration theory does not address the realities of Africa's political economy (Gibb, 2009). This critique is supported by Geda (2015), who argues that classical trade theories do not fully explain the regional economic integration policies in Africa. Similarly, Hartzenberg (2011) and Ogbona et al. (2022) recommend that African governments re-evaluate the applicability of the market approach to Africa's development context.

The paper further advocates that regional integration policies must align with the continent's unique needs and realities, recognising that successful integration requires structures and institutions rooted in Africa's development philosophy of Pan-Africanism. The paper also notes that effective economic integration requires unwavering commitment from member countries, founded on defining shared development goals and objectives. Market integration theories prioritise economic variables in explaining African regional integration, yet they often overlook the role of institutional and political forces in sustainable development (Mattli, 1999). These theories assume that states can create a regulatory environment conducive to integration (Gibb, 2009).

Methodology

This paper used a qualitative research methodology, taking a descriptive and analytical approach. Research was conducted in the natural context of social actors, focusing on the processes rather than outcomes, with the main objective being to understand social action within a specific context rather than generalising the phenomenon. Data collection was guided by both primary and secondary sources. Initially, a thorough document review was conducted, analysing NEPAD, AU, SADC, and UNDP reports to evaluate the performance of NEPAD's institutional organs in promoting Africa's political and economic integration. Secondary sources were complemented by in-depth interviews with key informants from African embassies in Zimbabwe, representatives of regional bodies such as the AU, SADC, and the UN, and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Thematic analysis was used to handle data analysis. Recorded interviews were transcribed into text documents, and data was categorised according to the research problem and questions. Emerging themes were identified and examined through source triangulation, where the findings were validated

against theoretical perspectives and existing literature. The themes were further analysed to assess the extent to which they addressed the research questions. An iterative, reflexive process was employed to gain insights and interpret meaning. A manual approach to data analysis was used, with keywords written in the margins of physical documents. A multi-layered coding approach was applied, categorising themes based on participants' perceptions, concerns, interpretations, and theoretical knowledge on NEPAD's role in the development of the global south. This rigorous approach ensured robust data analysis and the reliability of the research findings.

Findings

Redefinition and Harmonisation of NEPAD's Agenda and the Continent's Integration Goals

The study established a mismatch between NEPAD's development Agenda and the continent's regional integration goals. Despite that NEPAD initiatives were established in response to Africa's integration and development challenges, one of the key issues that have been of note is the need to redefine the goals of regional integration in Africa in line with contemporary global integration trends. The inclination of NEPAD's agenda with the Pan-African philosophy has been questioned as it disregards the recurring challenges bedevilling Africa for leadership crisis, governance crisis, ethnic and religious conflicts, ecological disparities, economic underdevelopment and poverty within the continent which are critical to the continent's integration agenda if addressed (Stafford-Smith, 2017). Furthermore, limitations of the traditional approach and reliance on the emphasis of the trade and market integration theory in promoting growth and socio-economic development in the continent ne redefinition both in "the theory and practice of regional integration.

A member of the Secretariat of NEPAD interviewed averred:

The development trajectory of the organisation has been soiled due to the different wavelengths of development. Due to the disparities in development progression, nations have failed to coalesce and develop common development norms and values that define the "Africa we want".

The above conviction reflects the leadership crisis that the continent faces as leaders are suspicious of the integration agenda as they feel that national sovereignty will diminish as intra-governmental organisations will usurp state authority and hegemony. The paper notes that the presence of transformative, rational and versatile political leadership and governance approaches with

African Nations and organisations are critical for effective regional integration. The above submission was supported by a member of the Civil Society Organisation interviewed who noted that:

African policymakers and politicians should promote tolerance, diffuse ethnic and tribal fissures and de-emphasise the artificial divisions engineered by colonialism which ruin the cementing of the United States of Africa as proposed by the late Libyan leader Muamar Gaddafi. A united Africa will enable the continent to reposition itself to influence international complexities and realities. The continent needs to be focused and prepared to shape plans and priorities not to remain as cases of charity but proposers of development initiatives."

The two preceding views according to the study emphasise the need for regional integration to be the centre pivot and scaffold for poverty eradication among African nations and organisations. Regional integration tends to unlock opportunities for Africa to steward and explore the resources expeditiously to develop Africa and improve the living conditions of Africans. The absence of a robust enforceable regional framework and institutional structure that administers the implementation of regional policies and programmes as the initiative of integration is left to the goodwill of the member states, thus impairing progress.

Weak democratic and good governance frameworks

One of NEPAD's primary goals is to foster a culture of democracy and good governance, creating a strong foundation for effective, inclusive, and responsive regional integration that aligns with Africa's development aspirations. This paper notes that many nations on the continent face a democratic deficit, as some African countries function as either *de jure* or *de facto* one-party states, characterised by authoritarian governance and limited international cooperation. African leaders often prioritise strategies for power retention, which frequently conflict with NEPAD's development agenda that centres on regional integration as essential for continental progress. While some leaders argue that Africa requires a model of guided democracy or developmental dictatorship to achieve progress, the paper finds that numerous African nations struggle with electoral inconsistencies, succession conflicts, resource-based disputes, and corruption—all of which are counterproductive to NEPAD's objectives.

According to Stiglitz (2015), Africa must reconfigure and overhaul its governance frameworks to strengthen institutions that ensure predictability, accountability, and transparency in public affairs. For instance, African nations should work to establish credible electoral systems that empower state institutions, such as

electoral boards, to operate transparently. Concerns about electoral management have recently been raised in countries like Kenya and Nigeria, where electoral processes have faced scrutiny. The NEPAD Business Plan of 2013 states that good governance is a precondition for poverty reduction, and this paper argues that there is a clear correlation between peace, economic prosperity, freedom, and socio-economic development.

A key informant interviewed for this study commented on governance in Africa, saying:

African governments need to enforce and implement conflict-prevention mechanisms and decision-making approaches that are inclusive of all stakeholders. Governments should combat corruption, adopt sound economic policies, and improve accountability and transparency. Robust policy frameworks are necessary to support NEPAD's development goals. Despite the challenges, Africa has made progress, especially in gender mainstreaming. However, poor electoral management, electoral violence, and weak policy implementation continue to hamper reform.

These views align with Meredith (2015), who acknowledges the persistence of corruption and divisive politics across African nations.

Challenges in Conflict Resolution and NEPAD's Role

Africa has recently experienced high levels of instability, as seen in the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, Nigeria, and Mozambique, along with xenophobic violence and the rise of terrorist groups such as Al-Shabab, M23, and Boko Haram. This unstable environment has hindered the continent's political and economic growth, which is further exacerbated by weak conflict management and resolution frameworks. NEPAD was envisioned as a potential solution to regional conflicts, offering mechanisms for managing diversity within African states. However, the paper notes that NEPAD's conflict resolution framework is often ignored, limiting its role as an early-warning system for emerging crises.

A senior official from the African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Disputes highlighted that:

If embraced and implemented by member countries, NEPAD could foster a stable political environment conducive to growth. Stability is essential for good governance and democratic consolidation. NEPAD members should incorporate the organisation's conflict-resolution strategies into their national policies and development agendas.

NEPAD-Civil society relations

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are key players in reforming, challenging, and complementing government and non-state actions. Evidence shows that CSOs recognise NEPAD's efforts to tackle major development challenges and advance African countries collectively towards sustainable growth. However, the paper suggests that policy directives within NEPAD often appear elitist and undemocratic, with individual African governments obstructing regional integration. A World Vision Country Director interviewed for the paper stated that:

Despite its vast resources, Africa remains marginal in global trade. Integration across the continent could help overcome the limitations of Africa's small economies. NEPAD frameworks allow countries, regions, and global partners to collaborate and accelerate progress.

Civil society plays a critical role in fostering citizen activism, inclusive governance, and development in Africa. The paper notes that, since NEPAD's inception, CSO participation has improved (Gruzd, 2014), empowering citizens to speak out against governance issues. However, Landsberg (2012) points out that the space for citizen and civil society engagement remains limited, as CSOs and citizens often struggle with coordination and cohesion. An official from NEPAD commented:

NEPAD's inclusion of CSOs through ECOSOC and the Pan-African Parliament is a step towards integrating citizens in governance processes. However, existing forums require strengthening to foster effective civil society participation.

The paper underscores that CSOs contribute significantly to development, governance, and peace in Africa, actively engaging with AU departments, APRM Secretariats, and regional economic communities on various issues, including civic education, peacebuilding, human rights, and environmental protection. NEPAD has made strides in collaborating with CSOs across African countries, though it faces challenges due to the resistance of some host countries, which view CSOs as threats to sovereignty and national integrity.

Economic growth and NEPAD's role in the global south

NEPAD's objectives include poverty reduction, sustainable development, and reducing Africa's marginalisation, with a focus on economic integration and growth as essential for the continent's advancement. The paper notes that NEPAD's role as an AU organ has facilitated some progress in economic integration. According to the ECA (2012):

...six African countries were among the world's ten fastest-growing economies from 2001-2011: Angola (11%), Nigeria (8.9%), Ethiopia (8.4%), Chad (7.9%), Mozambique (7.9%), and Rwanda (7.6%).

As the governance index improves, the continent may see sustained economic growth and movement towards sustainable development. From the perspective of NEPAD/ECA/OSAA (2012 p. 4), "22 non-oil-exporting African countries have recorded growth rates above 4% annually since 1998." NEPAD's focus on pro-market economic and corporate governance standards has led to noticeable investment increases in sectors like agriculture, infrastructure, and banking. However, the paper points out that improved growth rates have not translated into higher living standards, reduced unemployment, or poverty alleviation for the broader population. A CSO member interviewed for the paper commented:

Economic growth should reduce poverty levels as industrial capacity and production increase, enabling economies of scale. NEPAD and fiscal authorities seem to overlook the social and human aspects of economic growth. Poverty levels remain high, and inequality is growing. Many African governments are more concerned with retaining power than developing pro-poor policies.

The paper raises concerns about NEPAD's development projects, noting that progress has been limited in addressing poverty reduction. The ECA underscores that translating economic growth into poverty reduction remains a challenge. This paper suggests empowering the APRM to monitor and ensure governments implement policies addressing socio-economic needs.

Weak Coordination and Harmonisation within NEPAD

The paper identifies issues with NEPAD's fragmented approach to projects and programs at national, sub-regional, and continental levels, emphasising the need for improved coordination and harmonisation under the African Union. Evidence shows that successful economic integration requires NEPAD to build symbiotic relationships among member states and stakeholders. According to Silla (2020), NEPAD's role in the AU structure is often ambiguous, and its integration into AU and REC structures is insufficiently developed. An AUC official noted:

The AU and NEPAD should view their development agenda as mutually inclusive. NEPAD, as an AU organ, must harmonise with other AU entities to support a unified regional integration model. NEPAD's functions and responsibilities need alignment within the broader AU agenda.

The paper points to a slow pace of harmonisation in the region, often hindered by conflicts between state sovereignty and international cooperation. The paper argues that African leaders must prioritise collective decision-making and regional interests to fully realise NEPAD's integration and development agenda.

Recommendations

The paper established that for Africa to achieve regional economic integration, the complexities, realities and challenges of the continent require the sacrifices, commitment and political will of leaders as NEPAD tends to be a viable tool and avenue to address coordination and harmonisation projects and programs to suit the continent's development agenda. The major recommendation for African nations and NEPAD to successfully execute its development agenda there is need for propagation of robust enforceable regional and institutional frameworks that propels the implementation of regional policies and programmes and compels state to ratify, abide and domesticate development strategies that envision the vision, mission, goals and objectives of NEPAD's development agenda.

Conclusion

The NEPAD initiatives, as so far implemented in Africa can only be said to have contributed insignificantly to the overall development of Africa. The paper established that the success of NEPAD's programs seems to be hindered by first, the mismatch between NEPAD's development agenda and the continent's development goals. Second, weak democratic and good governance framework and conflict resolution strategies. Third, lack of pro-poor and people-centred approaches to development and finally, weak coordination and harmonisation of regional integration programs. Therefore, the paper notes the absence of robust enforceable regional and institutional frameworks that administers the implementation of regional policies and programmes as the initiative of integration is left to the goodwill of the member states, thus impairing progress.

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