Governance Research Agenda: Towards A Democracy Assessment Framework for Southern Africa

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Introduction

Research for research's sake is an exercise in futility. All research endeavours ought to aim at concrete outcomes in terms of influencing or changing behaviour and policy perspectives as part of the positive transformation of society. Thus, social science research in general and governance research in particular, should not be undertaken merely for pure academic purposes alone in abstract fashion using high-flying jargon incomprehensible to both policy makers and the ordinary people in Africa.

This does not in any way suggest that a theoretical engagement in governance research should be abandoned, but rather that this should be done in such a manner that it does not detract from the research enterprise and is not devoid of social relevance and responsiveness. Neither does this suggest that high quality scientific rigor in governance research needs to be scaled down, but rather that the scientific nature of research ought to be complemented by the actual development orientation and policy relevance of the research process and its specific outcomes.

In essence, therefore, the research process, methods used to undertake the research enterprise and the outcome of such research are as good as its utility by policy makers and communities alike in bettering their lives in today's globalising world. Much as research is all about knowledge creation, it is also about positive social change.

We propose that the rationale behind governance research in Southern Africa

should be to, *inter alia*, (a) unveil the state of art of the entire gamut of democracy in a given setting; (b) unravel progress made thus far especially since the 1990s transitions; (c) identify democracy deficits or problems that still exist and uncover the root causes of those deficits; (d) suggest the necessary policy/institutional reform measures required to address and redress the democracy deficits; (e) develop a regional comparative analysis of democratic trends; (f) identify possible external influences and their impact on the democratization process; and (g) provide a prognosis of possible future scenarios for democratic consolidation in each SADC country. The six points above, in essence, form part of the justification for an in-depth research endeavour in the governance field in the SADC region.

Methodologically, it is prudent to combine scientifically sound conceptual frameworks on one hand and policy relevance and social responsiveness on the other in the design and implementation of a governance research agenda in Africa and the SADC region. In this vein, governance research becomes much more relevant not only to the scientific community, but also to policy community and ordinary citizens. Even the language used in unraveling the research results should be user-friendly and accessible to ordinary citizens and, where appropriate, research results ought to be translated into the vernacular of a given country. The main outcomes of governance research should include the following:

- Information sharing, public awareness and informed policy dialogue on key governance issues;
- Generation of national and regional debate on progress, problems and prospects for democratic governance;
- Provision of concrete scientific evidence on the nature of democracy emerging in Africa and the SADC region;
- Production of credible and reliable research instruments and methodologies for future research endeavours; and

- Production of user-friendly and easily accessible publications on democratic consolidation.

Given this background, this paper discusses the utility of research methods in the governance field in the SADC region in particular. The main argument of the paper is that the methods are as good as the outcome of the research exercise. In a word, the poorer the methods, the poorer the concomitant results of the research. If methods are poor and leading to poor results, the research enterprise is likely to lack utility for positive policy change, democratic transformation and social advancement of the lives of communities.

However, choosing a relevant method for a specific governance research enterprise is dependent upon a plethora of factors, some of which are interrogated in the subsequent pages of this paper. Suffice to mention, from the outset that, as a rule, there is no specific method that could be considered useless or perfect, for all methods are context specific. In this paper, we focus discussion mainly on two commonly used methods in governance research namely (a) qualitative methods and (b) quantitative methods. Both methodologies are applied using either regional comparative approaches or country case studies or a combination of the two. We wind up the discussion with a fairly elaborate treatise of some democracy assessment frameworks in use in the continent and beyond.

The idea is to alert a political science researcher to the following ABC of governance research: (a) careful epistemological rigor ought to go into the planning for the research enterprise; (b) research should not be confined only to abstract philosophical constructs about phenomena; (c) theoretical/philosophical imperatives and the scientific soundness of the study ought to be neatly balanced with its political relevance to its context and social responsiveness; (d) research has to deliberately aim for effective policy changes that advance democratic transformation; (e) research has to aim at transforming socio-economic livelihoods of communities and citizens in a positive

direction. Firstly we begin the discussion with an introduction to key concepts in governance research.

Definition of Basic Concepts

Any research endeavour on governance has to grapple with the following key concepts: (a) democracy; (b) state; (c) government; (d) governance; (e) political parties; (f) civil society; (h) elections; (i) electoral systems; and (j) democratic consolidation. It is worth our while to provide a brief description of these terms.

There are as many definitions of **democracy** as there are writers on the subject. For the purpose of this study, democracy is taken to mean a political system that allows citizens to freely choose their government over time through fair elections; a system that accords them adequate participation in national affairs and; a system in which the national affairs are run in a transparent and accountable manner and, above all; a system in which there is a fair distribution of the national wealth.

In a plethora of literature, the term **state** is usually enmeshed in heated controversy and debate marked by varying paradigms and the ideological persuasions of different authors. This study conceives of the state as a set of institutions of government comprising decision-making structures, decision-enforcing organs, decision-mediating agencies and decision-informing bodies[1]. The state, thus, comprises permanent institutions that do not change, irrespective of change of governments over time.

Similarly, the concept **government** is also not very easy to define. For this study, however, government refers to officers who man state institutions charged with responsibilities of running national affairs of countries. Unlike state institutions, governments come and go either through military coups or through electoral contests among politicians organised largely through party political formations.

The concept **governance** refers to the art and the process of governing. This concept has gained currency in earnest since the last decade. For the UNDP, governance refers to "the exercise of political economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs."[2] Some of the ingredients of democratic governance include: (a) human rights and democracy; (b) rule of law; (c) public accountability and transparency (d) free and independent press; (e) decentralisation; (f) vibrant civil society and robust private sector and (g) political stability, peace and security[3]. Goran Hyden agrees that governance refers "in a generic sense to the task of running a government .."[4]. According to a recent publication edited by Mhone and Edigheji, governance refers to "the manner in which the apparatus of the state is constituted, how it executes its mandate and its relationship to society, in general, and in particular to particular constituencies such as the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organisations and community organisations."[5]

Political parties are organised groups that are formed with a sole purpose of contesting control over state power and government and directing a country's development process in line with their own ideological orientations and their policy frameworks as defined in their manifestos. Parties are among the most important organisations in modern democracies; "Students of political parties have commonly associated them with democracy itself. Democracy, it is argued, is a system of competitive political parties. The competitive electoral context, in which several political parties organise the alternatives that face voters, is what identifies contemporary democracy.[6] Their specific roles and effectiveness in a democracy is essentially determined by (a) the nature of the party system in place in a country; (b) the nature of the electoral system in place in a country; and (c) equally important, the effectiveness of a parliament in a given country.

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[1] Chazan et al, 1988; Dunleavy and O'Leary 1987; Hall and Ikenberry, 1989; Forrest, 1992

[2] Mwase 1998. p3
[3] ibid
[4] Hyden 1992, p5
[5] Mhone and Edigheji 2003, p3
[6] The Encyclopedia of Democracy 1995, p924

Civil society plays as crucial a role in the governance process as some of the key organs of government. This point suggests that governance should not be the sole monopoly of government alone. Both state and non-state actors should have a critical stake in governance. Civil society, simply defined, denotes organised social formations between the public sphere dominated by the state and the private sphere of the family. The effectiveness of civil society in governance ought to embrace the participation of community-based organisations in governance at the micro-level of a village in an African setting.

Elections allow citizens to use their own choices and voices to appoint both local and national leaders to run national affairs on their behalf. Jackson and Jackson isolate seven (7) key functions of elections in entrenching democratic governance. They (a) provide routine mechanism for recruiting and selecting individuals who will occupy seats in representative institutions; (b) provide for orderly succession of governments; (c) provide a periodic opportunity for people to review government's record, assess its mandate and either renew the mandate or replace that government with an alternative one; (d) provide an elected government with a moral title to rule or what is also referred to as legitimacy locally; (e) ensure international legitimacy for the elected government in the arena of foreign policy and diplomacy; (f) Act as agents of political socialisation and political integration, providing a unifying focus for the country for nation-building purposes; and (g) Allow a periodic opportunity for smaller parties and independent candidates to air their political views and canvass their programmes and manifestos.[7]

While elections basically refer to a process of selecting local and national leaders on a periodic basis defined in a national constitution, an **electoral system** refers to a method of selecting these leaders and translating votes into parliamentary seats. According to Reynolds and Reilly[8] "electoral systems translates the votes cast in a general election into seats won by parties and candidates. They key variables are the electoral formula used (i.e. whether the system is majoritarian or proportional, what mathematical formula is used to calculate the seat allocation) and the district magnitude (not how many voters live in a district, but how many Members of Parliament that district elects)."

An electoral system encompasses procedures, rules and regulations for the electorate to exercise their right to vote and determines how elected Members of Parliament (MPs) occupy their allocated seats in the legislature. The procedures, rules and regulations governing elections are commonly defined by both national constitutions and specific electoral laws.

Reynolds and Reilly advise appropriately that states of the world should endeavour to review and deliberately design electoral systems that suit their own conditions with a view to deepening democratic governance. In doing so, they argue that it is advisable that ten (10) key criteria are used to guide the process: (a) ensuring a representative parliament; (b) making elections accessible and meaningful; (c) providing incentives for conciliation; (d) facilitating stable and efficient government; (e) holding the government accountable; (f) holding individual representatives accountable; (g) encouraging "cross-cutting" political parties; (h) promoting legislative opposition and oversight; (i) making the election process sustainable; and (j) taking into account international standards[9]

Democratic consolidation is also not a simple concept to grasp, although it suggests a positive democratic transformation on a fairly sustainable basis. The concept of **democratic consolidation** has, in fact, occupied centre-stage in the governance discourse since the 1990s. Earlier debate on governance in the SADC region focused attention on democratic transitions. A plethora of literature on **democratic consolidation** suggests that heated debate still rages regarding exactly what constitutes consolidation in the democratic process, including whether or

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[7] Jackson and Jackson 1997, p366
[8] 1997, p:366.

[9] Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis 2005, p:9-14

not the transition process has been completed. In other words, the debate also interrogates both the process of democratisation and the state of democracy highlighting both continuities and discontinuities in the governance realm. While some scholars would argue that a country could be said to have achieved **democratic consolidation** if it is able to hold two successive and successful elections that produce a legitimate government, others argue that the frequency and number of elections may not be a sufficient condition, but rather that a country has to experience a smooth 'regime change' and still enjoy political stability.[10] For instance, Agyeman-Duah suggests that there are basically three main typologies of elections following a transition from an authoritarian to a democratic governance namely (a) transitional elections i.e. the first election following dictatorial rule; (b) test of democracy elections i.e. the second election following the transition; and (c) Consolidating elections i.e. the third successive election since the transition.[11] Both schools of thought (namely the frequency of elections school and regime change school) have canvassed their own arguments in order to justify their entry point into the current debate on the democratic process in Africa. According to Larry Diamond, democratic consolidation intrinsically presupposes not only legitimate and institutionalised governance, but also enhances civil society participation in the governance process itself. He further argues that consolidation "involves behavioral and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and narrow its uncertainty. This normalisation requires the expansion of citizen access, development of democratic citizenship and culture, broadening of leadership recruitment and training, and other functions that civil society performs. But most of all, and most urgently, it requires political institutionalization."[12] Our understanding of **democratic consolidation** transcends notions of frequency and number of elections as well

as regime changes in that it considers consolidation of democracy as interlinked to the improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of the people. In other words consolidation has to be investigated and discovered in the nature and outcomes of the democracy-development nexus taking five key factors into account (a) life expectancy (longevity); (b) literacy (knowledge); (c) health services delivery (descent living); (d) poverty eradication (fair distribution of wealth) and (e) employment creation (human resources development).

In sum, therefore, **democracy** tells us something about the nature of the political system of a particular country. The **state** locates public institutions within that political system. The **government** defines public officers who man state institutions. **Governance** gives meaning to the manner in which national affairs are run by those institutions and public officers who are duly mandated to do so. **Political parties** give us some idea of how the electorate is organised through political formations in charting a political destiny of a country through varying ideological and policy frameworks that, in turn, define contestation for state power. **Civil society** tells us something about the manner in which society is mobilised and how it participates in the governance process. The **elections** allow the citizenry to choose a country's leadership on the basis of a diverse menu of national programmes and ideological orientations of political parties and independent candidates. An **electoral system** facilitates the calculation of valid votes and the translation of votes cast into parliamentary seats and hence the composition of parliament. **Democratic consolidation, therefore** tells us something about not only frequency of elections and possibilities of regime changes, but also the nature of the interface between democracy and development. Multiparty democratic elections and periodic power alternance are crucial indicators for democratic consolidation. However, we also need to measure the extent to which democracy itself translates into the socio-economic improvement of the livelihoods of the ordinary citizens. If we confine our understanding of democratic consolidation simply to elections and power

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[10] Huntington 1991
[11] Agyeman-Duah 2003
[12] Diamond, 1994, p15

alternance, we run the risk of two possible fallacies: (a) the fallacy of electoralism (Osaghae, 2004, Osaghae, 2005); and (b) the fallacy of elitism (Bond, 2005). The former reduces democracy to elections and the latter reduces democracy to mere circulation of elites through contestation of state power. Electoral democracy and elite-driven democratic transitions have to embrace developmental democracy. Thus, the combination of multiparty elections, power alternance and improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of the citizens taken together make up the critical elements of democratic consolidation. In a word, democratic consolidation ought to transcend the current focus on mere political and economic liberalisation within the academic and policy discourse. It must ensure genuine political liberation (to borrow from Osaghae, 2005) and economic emancipation. Without political liberation and economic emancipation of the citizen, it is impossible to even imagine the existence of democratic consolidation in the SADC region.

Contemporary Governance Discourse in the SADC region

Current discourse on governance acknowledges the positive developments that SADC member states have made, especially since the early 1990s, towards democratic governance. This has ensured a commendable political transition away from mono-party rule, one-person regimes and military juntas towards multi-party governance. This is marked in the main by the holding of regular elections to put in place relatively legitimate and credible governments. Although, the significance of the current political transition cannot be questioned nor dismissed as inconsequential, what is still contested within both academic and policy discourses in the SADC region today, is whether what we are witnessing before our eyes amounts to democratic consolidation or some ephemeral political phenomenon that could easily be reversed, plunging the region back into the authoritarian rule of the yesteryear. Put somewhat differently, the key research question today is whether the current political liberalisation (read formal liberal democracy) is synonymous with democratic governance (read substantive developmental democracy) suitable for the SADC region still remains a moot point.[13] The political liberalisation underway in the region is fundamentally steeped in and steered towards western-type liberal democracy in a majority of the states. It has indeed become part of the political conditionality of aid by western multilateral and bilateral donors as well as the powerful international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) upon whom these states so overwhelmingly depend for economic survival.

Although it is not yet certain that the democratisation process, in and of itself, has already been nurtured, consolidated and is thus irreversible. What is obvious however is that throughout the African continent as a whole and the Southern African region in particular, states have deliberately steered their political systems towards a Western-type liberal democracy since the early 1990s. This new momentum has ushered in an all-pervasive embrace of the liberal democratic logic and thus reversing both military authoritarianism and one-party/one-person rule of the last three decades. Thus, there is no controversy today that the Southern Africa region has transcended the authoritarian governance logic and embraced multi-party governance and this, in and of itself, represents an important progressive development forward. The most notable aspects of this transformative process have been enhanced political participation, deliberate efforts towards broader representation and accountability of the political elite wielding state power and in particular the holding of regular multi-party elections. It must be emphasised that even the wholesale adoption of Western-style liberal democracy by African states and the Southern Africa region has now become a matter for debate. Some scholars have in fact argued strongly that African states do not need liberal democracy, but would rather adopt social democracy or what others refer to as developmental democracy, which, compared to liberal

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[13] See Matlosa 2003b

democracy, is more participative, inclusive, representative, accountable and developmentally social welfarist.[14]

One single component of this phenomenal political transition is clearly the holding of regular multi-party elections by almost all African states generally and Souhern African states specifically. This excludes only three SADC states namely Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Swaziland. In both Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, protracted violent conflicts have acted as a major hindrance towards the democratisation project. Recent developments however, tend to paint a fairly bright prospect for the development of democracy following the cessation of hostilities and political transition arrangements are underway. Swaziland is a rather eccentric case, for this is the only country in the SADC region in which the dynastic ruling elite has managed not only to entrench authoritarianism premised upon excessive eulogy of traditionalism, but also to quell both internal and external pressures for political change in the country.[15] It should be noted, however, that regular elections are not tantamount to democratic governance as such. They are just a single component of a fairly complex process. Furthermore, it is abundantly evident from Table 1 below, that despite regular multi-party elections, the SADC region is still marked by a dominant party system and the age-old and dominant parties still exercise considerable hegemony over the political system in general, and the legislature in particular.

Although critical to the current democratic process in the region, elections, as such, are not synonymous with democracy. Two important observations are worth emphasising in respect to elections in Africa and Southern Africa. First, although the region is currently marked by regular multi-party elections, the political system is still characterised by what can aptly be described as one-party dominance – a

situation wherein only one party dominates and is often reproduced as a hegemonic force in control of the state.[16] There is no gainsaying therefore, that one-party domination remains the hallmark of democratic governance in the region, although this system is fundamentally distinct from one-party rule or military authoritarianism of the yesteryear. The three (3) key features of one party dominance are as follows: (a) electoral dominance for an uninterrupted and prolonged period; (b) dominance in the formation of government; and (c) dominance in the determination of the public agenda and policy making.[17]

It should be noted that this system, in and of itself, is not necessarily tantamount to authoritarianism. The second is that evidently the political culture of holding regular multi-party election has been institutionalised. However, although critical to the democratisation process, an election as such is not synonymous with or tantamount to, democratic governance. An election is just one of the key ingredients of democracy and democratisation. As the latest UNDP Human Development reminds us "true democratization means more than elections. It requires the consolidation of democratic institutions and the strengthening of democratic practices, with democratic values and norms embedded in all parts of society."[18] To this end, therefore, the challenges for democracy and democratiation in the SADC region, as is the case elsewhere in the African continent, are still many and varied and indeed daunting. The UNDP Human Development Report identifies six (6) such challenges: (a) a system of representation, with well functioning political parties and interest associations; (b) an electoral system that guarantees free and fair elections as well as universal suffrage; (c) a system of checks and balances based on the separation of powers, with independent judicial and legislative branches; (d) a vibrant civil society, able to monitor government and private business – and provide alternative forms of political participation; (e) free

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[14] See Ake, 1996; Ake, 2000; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2002; Matlosa, 2002

[15] Matlosa, 1998

[16] Giliomee and Simkins 1999
[17] Giliomee and Simkins 1999, p:xvi
[18] UNDP 2002, p14

and independent media; and (f) effective civilian control over the military and other security forces.[19]

While not all the above critical elements of the democratisation process have already been achieved in the SADC region, there is no gainsaying that recognisable progress towards democratic governance has been registered. Furthermore, one of the most daunting challenge that still face the SADC states is to deliberately steer their political systems away from liberal democracy towards social democracy, which scholars like Lumumba-Kasongo (2002) and Ake (1996, 2000) consider the most appropriate and relevant political system for the continent. Lumumba-Kasongo persuasively argues that "given the nature of the African society, which is essentially communal, with a high level of tolerance of differences among various peoples and nations, it is possible to learn from a social democracy approach to development than from an individualistic capitalist model of development".[20]
In Ake's own words[21]:

*Democracy movement in Africa is being moved in the direction of a simple liberal democracy of multi-party electoral competition. The pressure to move in this direction will remain strong. **But this is not the democracy that is most relevant to the social realities of contemporary Africa. Social democracy would be more feasible**. Its advantages are an activist role for the state and strong commitment to social welfare. It places less emphasis on abstract political rights and more on concrete economic rights and also on removal of conditions, which block the democratic participation such as gross economic inequality. **This is the democracy, which the ordinary people, who have the greatest interest in democratization, want. And it is the kind of democracy they need** (Emphasis Mine).*

This is not only consideration. The process of the political transformation in Africa and Southern Africa must also temper with the current electoral systems. Put somewhat differently, African states should deliberately reform their electoral systems in order to ensure broader representation, enhanced participation in the process of governance, strengthening of local government authorities, inclusiveness and accountability.[22] There is no gainsaying that African states inherited their electoral systems from the departing colonial administrations in the 1960s and the most dominant electoral system in the continent is the British-style First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system. There is an emerging consensus today that this system has not helped the continent to nurture and consolidate its fledgling democratic governance, hence the dire need for institutional reform in this area.

For Bujra and Adejumobi, "in most African countries, the tendency has been to adopt a first – past – the – post electoral system. While this kind of electoral arrangement is easier and straightforward, it is fraught with serious dangers. It promotes a winner takes all game, and increases the stakes of politics. Those who win do so very handsomely, and those who lose are bad losers. In this situation, none is prepared to lose, but win. However, all cannot be winners in a zero-sum contest. A first-past-the-post electoral system often marginalises small parties and entrenches the dictatorship of big and wealthy parties in a democracy. As such there is need to revisit the electoral system in many African countries. A system of proportional representation, though more complex, offers a more inclusive and participatory electoral system".[23]

Elsewhere, we have argued that although the need for electoral reform in the SADC region is indeed real and urgent, there is a sense in which only two options are open for the region to nurture and consolidate its democratic governance. One is through adoption of the proportional representation especially by countries emerging from protracted violent conflict as part of

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[19] Op Cit, p4
[20] Lumumba-Kasongo 2002, p102
[21] Ake 2000, p185

[22] Matlosa 2003a; Matlosa 2003b
[23] Bujra and Adejumobi 2002, p352

conflict resolution, reconciliation and peace such as Angola and the DRC. In this regard, the positive political developments in Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa that adopted the PR system following the resolution of their own protracted wars, are extremely instructive. The other is that most other countries are better off adopting what is termed the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system that has just been introduced in Lesotho and is being considered for adoption in Mauritius. This system blends some basic tenets of both the FPTP and the PR systems.[24] As the electoral systems in most African countries are flawed and in combination with various other factors, the competitiveness of African politics still remains highly questionable leading to, among others, weak and fragmented opposition parties.[25] For Olukoshi, "there is no doubt that the electoral system operated in most African countries, namely the British first-past-the-post, winner-take-all model worked to the detriment of the opposition. The number of seats which opposition won in most countries was not proportionate to its share of the vote".[26] Not only does the political landscape debilitate against full participation of all political parties in Africa thus ensuring fair competition, but concerns have also been raised about a rather hostile environment for free civil society participation in the political process as well.[27]

Survey of Selected Methodologies in Governance Research

The form and substance of any study is highly dependent upon the methodology used in carrying out the investigation of the subject matter. Thus, methods of any study in any field of enquiry are as crucial and important as the findings and conclusions of the study. Studies in political science as a whole and governance, in particular, are thus no exception to this general rule of thumb.

[24] Matlosa 2003a; Matlosa 2003b
[25] See Olukoshi 1998.
[26] Olukoshi 1998, p3
[27] See Beckman et. al 2001

Political science research is premised upon social science research methods of which there is a multiplicity of varieties. The bottom line is simply that there is no perfect methodology nor is there a completely faulty or useless methodology in governance research. However, each method used at any point in time is influenced by a number of factors namely:

- The nature of the study;
- The scope and coverage of the study;
- The stages and time frame of the study;
- The resources available for the study;
- The intended use of the results of the study; and
- The beneficiaries of the research outcomes and outputs.

Whereas in economics, a household survey method is a dominant mode of scientific enquiry and in history oral testimony tends to be the most preferred method, in political science as a whole and the governance research in particular, the two most preferred methods include (a) comparative analysis; and (b) case study approach. Both of these methods could be used in a complementary manner and many regional/continental research institutions make use of these approaches including the Council for Development and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) based in Dakar, Senegal, African Association of Political Science (AAPS) based in Pretoria, South Africa and the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA) based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Africa. A recent research work that illustrates the essence of a case study approach in the governance field is the *Zimbabwe Human Development Report* of 2000 which was undertaken by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), based at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare. The study focused on governance and development in Zimbabwe as a specific case study. Between 1999 and 2002, EISA undertook case studies on the electoral processes in SADC and compiled a publication in 2002 entitled the *Compendium of Elections in SADC* edited by Tom Lodge, Denis Kadima and David Pottie. This study combined both case

study approaches and comparative analysis.

Comparative approach is a very useful methodology in political science discourse for it portrays both the distinctiveness and similarities of phenomena. As such this approach reveals many insights in terms of contemporary political development in the SADC region. Comparative analysis is a specific approach that falls within the rubric of a branch of political science better known as comparative politics. According to Jones and Olson[28], this field of political enquiry *"is of great interest and importance to political scientists. The comparative perspective allows us to develop more general theories about politics and government (remember that one goal of scientific knowledge is generalization). It also helps us understand the multitude of differences in the world community. Finally, the questions posed in comparative politics are fundamental to the study of politics. Why are some political systems free and democratic while others tyrannize and torture their own people? In short, the field provides us an opportunity to scientifically examine the fundamental political question 'which government is best (or at least better)?"*

The case study approach allows a researcher to focus her/his enquiry on a particular case of a subject matter be it an organisation, a social group or a country. It is a distinctive method that deals with a specific subject without necessarily comparing it with its similar species. Unlike comparative research, case studies unravel the distinctive nature and peculiarities of phenomena under examination and thereafter draw conclusions.

Such conclusions may in fact be replicated in other settings of a similar nature. They may also be contrasted with other case studies undertaken elsewhere in conditions dissimilar to those of other case studies. For instance, case studies of governance research in Botswana and Lesotho may exhibit a number of similarities in a number of aspects such as the institutions

of governance, even if the governance processes have proceeded differently in both countries over time. On the contrary, a case study of the governance arena in South Africa will exhibit enormous dissimilarities with, for example, those undertaken in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. What is obvious therefore is a simple fact − namely that case studies assist us as political scientists to be able to identify comparable and contrasting factors that influence the governance process in our continent.

We now turn to a sketchy overview of selected democracy assessment frameworks. These include (a) the UNECA Africa governance study; (b) the International IDEA democracy assessment; (c) OSISA's African Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP); (d) the UK Democratic Audit; and (e) the IDASA Democracy Index.

THE UNECA STUDY ON GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has played an important role in recent years in highlighting academic and policy debate on the key issue of governance in the continent. It should be noted from the onset that the UNECA efforts are consistent and consonant with the African Union (AU) initiatives on the governance arena in the recent past. It is no wonder, therefore, that UNECA became one of the key pioneers of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) alongside initiatives that emanated from presidents of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade. NEPAD is now a living development vision of the African continent and there is no doubt that this UNECA governance project will dovetail neatly within the broader vision of NEPAD. The broad overarching goal of this continental assessment of democratic governance is to take stock of progress made and problems that still bedevil the continent's democratic path thus far and suggest appropriate policy interventions. It is thus in order to sketch the key

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[28] Jones and Olson 1996, p132

objectives of this UNECA governance project right from the onset. These are six-fold as follows:

- To provide a mechanism for monitoring the success of current efforts towards the creation and sustainability of capable states supportive of broad-based development initiatives, sustainable human development and poverty reduction;
- To promote a broad measure of consensus on what exactly constitutes a capable and democratic state;
- To have a better understanding of governance processes, mechanisms and requisite policy frameworks for democratic governance;
- To maintain and promote an analytically founded dialogue and consultative policy making machinery in governance arena;
- To maintain governance issues on the agenda of policy makers;
- To assist in institutional capacity assessment, identifying capacity gaps and ascertaining required institutional capacity building for effective and efficient policy, programme and strategic interventions for deepening democratic governance; and
- To complement government's efforts in deepening and broadening democratic governance.

Judging by the broad purpose of the UNECA study elaborated above, it is abundantly clear that the project fundamentally aims at exploring institutional, systemic and policy frameworks for good governance in the select countries. These studies are undertaken under a broad theme "Monitoring Progress Towards Good Governance". About twenty-eight (28) African countries have been selected for this assessment and these are clustered in three main phases namely phase one comprising Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. The second phase covers the following countries: Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Lesotho, Mauritius, Swaziland, Zambia and

Zimbabwe. The third phase will cover Cameroon, Chad, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger and Rwanda. To date, most of these studies have been completed.

These case studies, which will later assist UNECA in making a generalised comparative analysis of the state of governance in Africa, use three (3) main variables or components of democratic governance as elaborated below. The investigation of the three variables or components involves the utilisation of questionnaires; thus, the study therefore employed four distinct, albeit interrelated, research instruments namely appendix C.1 which solicits the informed opinion of an expert group in each country, Appendix C.2 and C.2a gathers information from selected households through a representative national survey, Appendix C.3 guides a desk research and literature survey in each country and Appendix C. 4 presents a common understanding of the terms used in the study for purposes of equivalence and comparability.

Political Representation

Political representation is one of the key cornerstones of democratic governance given that essentially, it is one of the indicators of the levels of the participative nature and the degree of inclusivity of any political system. This component of the study focuses on various aspects of political representation including, *inter alia*, key landmarks of the political history; regime type and political structures; social inclusiveness and political participation; gender representation; legitimacy of the political framework; political parties; and the electoral process and electoral system.

Economic Management and Corporate Governance

Any research and/or discussion on democratic governance would be incomplete should it omit the economic management of public affairs. There has been a tendency in much of the current academic and policy discourse on governance to erroneously assume that governance issues rotate primarily upon the political framework of managing the public affairs. This has obviously led to a

rather skewed and partial treatment of the governance issue both at the level of research and policy making with dire consequences for democratic consolidation in Africa as a whole. With the benefit of hindsight, it is only fair to observe that a balanced discussion and research on governance must, of necessity, cover both the political and economic spheres of the management of public affairs. It is in this vein that this research also covers the often times neglected issues around economic governance. The focus of discussion in this area revolves around the nature of the economic system; the enabling policy environment and regulatory framework; public financial management and accountability; integrity of monetary and financial systems; private sector development; accounting and auditing systems.

Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability

Ingredients of democratic governance are many and varied. These include, representation, transparency, participation, human rights, the rule of law, institutional effectiveness and accountability. This component of the UNECA governance study is therefore relevant in that it teases out some of the key elements in a working democracy. Institutional effectiveness essentially speaks to the degree to which a political system is driven and propelled by robust and working institutions and, as such, not derived from personalities of the political elite, as it were. There is abundant evidence to suggest, in fact, that the African continent has had its (un) fair share of deleterious personality cult politics especially during the heyday of mono-party rule, one-person regimes and military juntas of the past three decades. These types of political systems are, in part, to blame for the authoritarian type of governance that the continent experienced during that period much to the detriment of democracy, political stability and, indeed, economic development itself. The focus of the UNECA research on this component of the governance study rotates around the meaning and relevance of governance; checks and balances; respect for the rule of law; the workings and interrelationships among key organs of the state namely the legislature, the judiciary and the executive arms of government; access, quality, gender dimensions of service delivery institutions; role of non-state actors; policy environment for capacity building; capacity gaps within both state and non-state sectors.

Methodological Issues

There is no doubt that undertaking an empirical study on governance in Africa is a rather cumbersome and hazardous business. This situation could be explicated by reference to the stark reality that often the political elite tend to become uneasy whenever a probe into the management of public affairs is instituted preferring to live with the *status quo ante* either for better or for worse. This is often more so with the political elite at the helm of state power than with both those out of power or in opposition who are still jostling for power. This might have been the case in most countries undertaking this study. These studies employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to make sure that a thorough analysis of the profile of governance is unravelled. Three key aspects of the methodology of the UNECA study rotate expert panel, household survey and desk research as outlined below.

Expert Panel

The expert panel surveys opinions of an informed category of society on governance issues in country under study. For this purpose, the study uses Appendix C.1 as the main instrument for soliciting these opinions. A total of between 150 and 200 experts in a country is established purely on the basis of purposive or judgemental sampling and this questionnaire is administered to them by the implementing research institution. The Appendix C.1 instrument used for this purpose covers the following areas in terms of information required:

- The political system and distribution of power;
- The electoral process;
- The Competitive environment for political parties;
- The legislative effectiveness;

- The Judiciary independence;
- Management of state structures;
- Civil service transparency, accountability and accessibility;
- Effectiveness of government services;
- Decentralisation structures;
- Respect for human rights;
- Respect for the rule of law;
- Law enforcement organs;
- Ombudsman/public protector;
- Independence and participation of Civil society organisations;
- Independent mass media;
- Development of the private sector;
- The tax system;
- The tax system and investment promotion; and
- Investment and crime

Household Survey

The household survey seeks opinions of ordinary people in the communities on various aspects of governance and covered a representative sample of the country's total population through a scientifically sound stratified random sampling of households. Enumerators and supervisors are engaged to administer the questionnaire to the households.

The process involved instrument validation (done by UNECA), translation of questionnaire, pilot survey, fieldwork, data collection and data processing. For this purpose, specific instruments, Appendix C.2 and Appendix C.2a, are used for this component of the study. As is the case with questions asked in Appendix C. 1 above the information gathered through Appendix C.2 and Appendix 2a rotates around the three variables namely political representation, institutional effectiveness and economic management and corporate governance through the following sections:

- General questions;
- Political participation;
- Institutional effectiveness and accountability;
- Quality and accessibility of services; and
- Judiciary and law enforcement.

Desk Research

Desk research for the study is undertaken by local researchers guided by Appendix C.3 and Appendix C.4. The latter is basically a glossary of terms meant to assist the researchers in terms of a common understanding of the definition of key concepts for the study. The former poses key questions that the researchers are supposed to address and these also cover the three components of the study much the same way as Appendix C.1, Appendix C.2 and Appendix C.2a do as follows:

- Political representation
  o Appointment to the executive and legislative office;
  o Political parties and the electoral process;
  o The constitutional reforms;
  o Conflict management mechanisms;
- Institutional effectiveness and accountability
  o The constitution;
  o The legislature;
  o The judiciary and the rule of law;
  o The executive;
  o The public service management;
  o Regional and local government;
- Economic management and corporate governance
  o Enabling policy environment and regulatory framework;
  o Effectiveness of government policies and private sector development;
  o Poverty reduction strategies;
  o Promotion of good public finance management and accountability;
  o Effectiveness of the taxation system;
  o Procedures for government budgeting and procurement;
  o Integrity of monetary and financial systems;
  o Effectiveness of the accounting and auditing systems; and
  o Effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies.

Important as this studies are and comprehensive as these instruments appear to be, the study's main limitations revolve around critical issues namely (a) use of the notion of good governance rather than democratic governance; (b)

neglect of gender equality and (b) the neglect of role of traditional leadership institutions. First, the debate in Africa suggests that good governance as used by institutions such as the World Bank and others is a rather nebulous concept and increasingly the discourse is shifting towards a more useful terminology of democratic governance.[29] Second, the study does not interrogate the significance of gender equality in various organs of the state for democratic governance. Third, the study also falls short of exploring the importance of the traditional leadership institutions for both national and local democratic governance.

The Significance of the UNECA Governance Studies for Democracy Building in Africa

The focus on the UNECA studies above is deliberate for this study brings into sharp relief, the stark reality that any meaningful research ought to have a clear-cut purpose of affecting political behaviour and changing existing policies in a positive direction. It should be noted that the UNECA studies are aimed at covering at least a majority of the 53 member states of the African Union, are not intended as an end in themselves but are meant to feed into the overall framework and thrust of NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism. NEPAD is a culmination of various efforts by the African political elite to chart a way forward for the development of the continent in the face of grave challenges posed by accelerated globalisation.

It is primarily an embodiment of separate, *albeit* interconnected, initiatives which were initiated by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal. Both of these were anchored on the ideal of African Renaissance. The South African President had developed the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme and this had the full backing of Presidents Bouteflika of Algeria and Obasanjo of Nigeria, whilst the Senegalese President had developed the OMEGA Plan for Africa. Further more, NEPAD draws its

thrust from the Compact for African Recovery: Operationalising the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme "which was prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa following a request emanating from the African Ministers of Finance Conference held in Addis Ababa in November 2000".[30] The discussion that ensued following these three initiatives suggests that the pioneers of the NEPAD programme are four African presidents namely Thabo Mbeki (South Africa), Abdoulaye Wade (Senegal), Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria) and Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria).[31] (The initial merger of the Millennium Recovery Programme of President Mbeki and the OMEGA Plan of President Wade culminated in what was called A New African Initiative in July 2001. However, the programme was changed to the New Partnership for Africa's Development three months later. Of all the aspects of NEPAD, the currently most widely debated is the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

There are five (5) stages through which the APR process evolves. These are:

- **Stage one**: Preparatory activities by the APR Secretariat;
- **Stage two**: Country Review Visits by APR Review Team;
- **Stage three**: Drafting of the country report by the Review Team;
- **Stage four**: Review of report by the Panel of Eminent Persons and drafting of recommendations for the APR Forum of heads of state and government; and
- **Stage five**: Publicisation of the country report through continental and regional structures including PAP and Regional Economic Communities.

It should be noted that all the stages of the APRM process are coordinated by the APRM Secretariat which is subsumed within the NEPAD Secretariat based in Johannesburg, South Africa. In stage one, studies (both qualitative and quantitative)

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[29] See UNDP, 2003

[30] Hope, 2002, p388
[31] Hope, 2002; Anyang' Nyong'o et al. 2002; Matlosa, 2002

are undertaken in various African countries to gauge the progress that these states have to date, made towards democratic governance. It is during this first stage that countries are expected to draw up their Programme of Action. The governance studies commissioned by the UN Economic Commission for Africa covering about 28 countries between 2003 and 2004 were meant to assist the early stages of the APR process. Basically, these studies investigate the state of governance in Africa at three main levels or components namely:

- Political Representation;
- Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability; and
- Economic Management and Corporate Governance.

These studies will be followed by the publication of the Africa Governance Report planned for 2005. In November, 2004, the UNECA convened the African Development Forum Four (ADF 1V) focusing on governance in Africa. Following completion of most of the case studies and in preparation for the ADF 1V, the UNECA in collaboration with the African Development Bank (ADB) and the African Union (AU) organised preparatory workshops for all the five regions of the African continent. The workshop that combined Southern and Eastern Africa was held in Lusaka, Zambia on 24-26 November 2003. The main objectives of these regional preparatory workshops for ADF IV were to: (a) critically examine the sub-themes of the ADF IV in light of the sub-regional context; (b) discuss an overview of the continent-wide perspective on governance as well as examine national reports; (c) assist ECA Offices in the sub-regions in establishing the best modalities for mobilising participation to the Forum proper; (d) create a critical mass of focus groups who would be in a position to inform and influence the discussion during the Forum; and (e) assist ECA Offices in the sub-regions in their contribution to post-ADF IV follow-up activities with key partners at the national and sub-regional levels.[32]

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[32]UNECA Aide-Memoire on Sub-Regional Workshops Preparatory to ADF IV on Governance for a Progressing Africa, 2003

Almost all of the SADC countries formed part of the group of countries selected for UNECA studies. These were undertaken by various institutions in these countries commissioned by UNECA.

In stage two of the APRM, the review team of Eminent Persons (Review Team) visits a country under review with a view to carry out broad-based consultations with government, political parties, parliamentarians, and representatives of the civil society organisations. In order to kick-start the APRM process, a panel of experts representing all the five sub-regions of the continent has been established comprising:

- Ms. Marie-Angelique Savane - West Africa ;
- Prof. Adebayo Adedeji - West Africa;
- Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat - East Africa (Chairperson);
- Dr. Graca Machel - Southern Africa;
- Dr. Dorothy Njeuma - Central Africa;
- Ambassador Mourad Medelci - North Africa and
- Dr. Chris Stahls - Southern Africa.

The panel of experts above constituting the APRM Review team together with the NEPAD Secretariat has developed the APRM Assessment Instrument to guide the review process. This assessment is closely aligned to the UNECA democracy assessment and covers four main areas of governance namely:

- Democracy and political governance;
- Economic governance and management;
- Corporate governance; and
- Socio-economic development

To date, 23 African countries have acceded to the APR process. These are Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Three other countries have expressed intention to accede to APRM namely Sudan, Zambia, Sao Tome and Principe. Thus far, two countries have already undergone the APRM process namely Rwanda and

Ghana. The APR process is expected to be completed in other countries during the course of 2005 namely Mauritius, Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa.[33]

In stage three, the Review Team then prepares its report on the basis of its preliminary consultations undertaken in stage two above and the findings of the studies that were undertaken in stage one above as well as the country's Programme of Action. The substance and content of the report is measured against the indicators developed by the ECA for good governance commitments section of the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. The report is discussed with government and appropriate revisions made. At this it should be noted that the process no longer involves other non-state organisations or actors. In other words, the process begins to become narrowly focused on government alone as if government is the only actor in the governance arena.

In stage four, the revised (and presumably final) review report (Country Report) is submitted to the NEPAD Head of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) through the APRM Secretariat (UNECA). The adoption of the report by this highest body then completes that specific round of the APRM and what then remains is for the country concerned to implement the recommendations. Once again at this stage, the role of non-state actors or civil society organisations is not defined. The process has already become extremely state-centric and excludes civil society organisations right from stage three above. This is one of the key areas of controversy surrounding the APRM i.e. how broadly participative is this process? To what degree will the views/opinions be for judging the state of governance be represented? What will be the role of civil society organisations throughout all of the stages, but more importantly in situations where governments renege on both commitments and recommendations of the Review Team? Encouragingly, clause 22 of the MOU on the APRM adopted during the AU Summit in Maputo, Mozambique in March 2003 states that upon signing the

MOU in readiness for review, each state should "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.[34]

Furthermore, it is not clear what mechanics ought to be put in place should the government of a country under review fail to implement the recommendations of the Review Team. In a situation where the government is reluctant to reform its political arrangements, according to the official NEPAD position, "the participating states should first do everything practicable to engage it in constructive dialogue, offering in the process technical and other appropriate assistance. If dialogue proves unavailing, the participating Heads of State and Government may wish to put the government on notice of their collective intention to proceed with *appropriate measures* by a given date."[35] (Emphasis Mine). It should, again, be noted, that the so-called appropriate measures remain undefined in NEPAD Documents and this presents one of the many areas of controversy around the APRM.

However, in a situation whereby a government shows willingness and preparedness to comply with the recommendations, then it is imperative upon the participating governments to lend a helping hand and also to call upon the donor community to provide needed assistance.

In stage five, the final report reviewing governance progress in a country will then be submitted by the Heads of State and Government of participating countries in key regional and sub-regional structures such as the Pan-African Parliament, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Peace and Security Council and the Economic, Social and

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[33] Masterson, 2005

[34] The Memorandum of Understanding on the African Peer Review Mechanism, 9 March, 2003, South African Department of Foreign Affairs

[35] NEPAD Action Plans 2002, p11

Cultural Council of the African Union thus completing fully the entire process. At the end of the whole process a country under review would then be classified in one of the four categories itemized below, in relation to the AU Democracy and Political Governance Initiative and the AU Declaration on Political, Economic and Corporate Governance:

- NEPAD compliant;
- Aspiring to NEPAD compliance, but in need of assistance;
- Willfully non-compliant; and
- Post-conflict countries requiring special reconciliation and reconstruction.

Following a review of the state of governance in 28 African countries, the UNECA study concluded that democratic governance requires capable and accountable states and to this end the following challenges should be tackled head-on: (a) strengthening parliaments; (b) deepening legal and judicial reform; (c) improving public sector management; (d) expanding service delivery; (e) removing bottlenecks to private enterprise; (f) promoting e-governance; (g) fostering responsible media; (h) leveraging traditional governance; (i) attacking HIV/AIDS; and (j) getting partners to live up to their commitments[36]

The relationship between this UNECA initiative and the NEPAD governance programme including the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) still remains rather obscure.

INTERNATIONAL IDEA DEMOCRACY ASSESSMENT

The International Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) also has a project on democracy assessment which uses its distinctive methodology combining both the case study approach and comparative analysis. The two basic principles for the study are popular control over public decisions and decision makers; and equality of respect and voice between citizens in the exercise of that control.[37] The study is anchored upon seven (7) mediating values namely participation, authorisation, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness and solidarity as depicted in the table on the next page.

Although covering a more or less similar ground as does the ECA study, the IDEA assessment framework is a little broader in its scope and coverage. It covers the following key areas of the governance realm:

Citizenship, law and rights
- Nationhood and citizenship;
- The rule of law and access to justice;
- Civil and political rights; and
- Economic and social rights.

Representative and Accountable Government
- Free and fair elections;
- Democratic control of political parties;
- Government effectiveness and accountability;
- Civil control of the military and police;
- Minimizing corruption.

Civil Society and Popular Participation
- The media in a democratic society;
- Political participation;
- Government responsiveness;
- Decentralisation;

Democracy beyond the State
- International dimensions of democracy

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[36] UNECA, 2004:vi-vii

[37] IDEA,2002, p4

MEDIATING VALUE	REQUIREMENT	INSTITUTIONAL MEANS OF REALISATION
Participation	Right to participate; Capacity/resources to participate; Agencies for participation; Participatory culture	Civil and political rights system; Economic and social rights; Elections, parties, NGOs; Education for citizenship
Authorisation	Validation of consultation; Choice of officeholders/programmes; Control of elected over non-elected executive personnel	Referenda; Free and fair elections Systems of subordination to elected officials
Representation	Legislature representative of main currents of popular opinion; All public institutions representative of social composition of electorate	Electoral and party system; Anti-discrimination laws; Affirmative action policies
Accountability	Clear lines of accountability, legal, financial, political, to ensure effective and honest performance of civil service and judicial integrity	Rule of law, separation of powers; Independent auditing process; Legally enforceable standards; Strong parliamentary scrutiny powers
Transparency	Government open to legislative and public scrutiny	Freedom of information legislation; Independent media
Responsiveness	Accessibility of government to electors and different sections of public opinion in policy formation, implementation and service delivery	Systematic and open procedures of public consultation; Effective legal redress; Local government close to the people
Solidarity	Tolerance and diversity at home; Support for democratic governments and popular democratic struggles abroad	Civil and human rights education; International human rights law; UN and other agencies; International NGOs

MONITORING AND ADVOCACY PROJECT (AFRIMAP)

The Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP) is an initiative of the Open Society Initiative (OSI). It is aimed at monitoring compliance by African states to commitments and declaration on democratic governance through both sub-regional, continental and international treaties and conventions. The AfriMAP mission is to:

- Promote the observance by African states and donor institutions of African and international standards relating to democratic governance in order to help make real the new commitments by the African Union to improve the situation of Africa's peoples;
- Produce and facilitate high-quality research into respect for international standards relating to human rights, the rule of law and accountable government on the African continent;
- Promote the critical role of civil society in independent monitoring and advocacy on government and donor performance with respect to human rights, the rule of law, and accountable government; and
- Complement and expand upon the NEPAD Peer Review Mechanism's monitoring efforts and evaluating the impact of the NEPAD peer review process on the policies of the states reviewed.

This initiative aims to investigate how African states aim to deliberately turn political commitment to NEPAD, AU and the African Peer Review Mechanism into political culture and practice. The focus of AfriMAP revolves around three governance themes namely:
- Justice sector and the rule of law;
- Political representation; and
- Civil service accountability and transparency .

The AfriMAP has already developed its questionnaire covering the above topics aimed at collecting relevant information which will assist determine compliance of governments to international standards for democratic governance. The questionnaire is organised along the following broad areas:

- Constitutional Framework;
- Equal citizenship;
- Participation in the policy process;
- Elections;
- Political parties;
- National Assembly;
- Regional and local government; and
- Financial institutions and foreign governments

The pilot phase of the AfriMAP will focus on four countries that have signed up for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) namely Senegal, South Africa, Mozambique and Ghana.

THE UK DEMOCRATIC AUDIT

The Human Rights Centre based at the University of Essex, has developed the Democratic Audit of the United Kingdom under the leadership of David Beetham and Todd Landman, both co-directors of the Centre. The latest report on this Audit has recently been published under the theme *Democracy Under Blair-A Democratic Audit of the United Kingdom (2002). The Democratic Audit-UK* focuses upon political governance and its main distinguishing features of political democracy are:

- Free and fair elections providing a platform for popular control over government, electoral choice, open access to political office and equality between electors;
- Open and accountable government guaranteeing rule of law and responsive decision-making;
- Civil and political rights and freedoms enabling citizens to associate freely with others the creation of an informed public opinion; and
- A democratic society where there is agreement on the political nation; a flourishing of independent and accountable associational life; social inclusion and a democratic culture of tolerance, non-violence, participation and trust.[38]

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[38] Baker 1999, p177

The Audit aims to examine the following aspects of governance:

- The Electoral Process;
- The Openness and Accountability of Government;
- The Civil and Political Rights; and
- The Democratic Society

Accordingly, the structure of the assessment is four-pronged as follows:

Block 1: nationhood and citizenship; the rule of law; civil and political rights; economic and social rights;
Block 2: free and fair elections; democratic role of political parties; government effectiveness; civilian control of the military, police and intelligence services; minimising corruption;
Block 3: the role of the media; political participation; government responsiveness; decentralisation and local government;
Block 4: international dimensions of democracy including issues of government autonomy from external control and government support for democracy and human rights abroad.

IDASA'S DEMOCRACY INDEX

The South Africa-based Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) has also developed its own democracy assessment instrument that has just been put to the test in evaluating South Africa's ten (10) years of democracy between 1994 and 2004.[39] Developed under the stewardship of Paul Graham, Robert Mattes and Richard Calland, the IDASA framework covers the following areas:

- Participation and democracy
- Elections and democracy
- Accountability and democracy
- Political freedom and democracy
- Human dignity and democracy

Undoubtedly, the IDASA Democracy Index, outlined above, has been influenced heavily by the UK Democratic Audit and bears a strong affinity to the Afrobarometer that IDASA itself coordinates. It is aimed at gauging public

opinions on a variety of governance and development issues throughout the African continent.

While there is evidently an emerging consensus within the democracy discourse on the conceptualisation of both democratic transition and democratic consolidation, the actual measurement of the process remains both nebulous and controversy-ridden. The next section attempts to decipher from the available literature and approaches the form of democracy assessment proposed in this study.

Towards a Democracy Assessment Framework for the SADC Region: Key Themes and Indicators

The five (5) democracy assessment frameworks outlined above (OSI's AfriMAP, Beetham's UK Democratic Audit, IDEA's Democracy Assessment; the UNECA's Africa Governance Assessment and the IDASA Democracy Index) have been useful in influencing the conceptual thrust and methodological outlook of the proposed democracy assessment framework in this paper.

This proposed framework is premised upon three main principles of democracy namely (a) political control, (b) political equality and (c) socio-economic equality (which cut across the above five democracy assessment tools).

The framework is guided by a specific focus on key indicators for assessing democracy in the SADC region. The indicators chosen for the study are not just an arbitrary list of issues. The have been carefully selected and are drawn from our definition of democratic consolidation above encapsulating (a) multiparty elections; (b) power alternance and (c) improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of the citizens. All these aspects of democratic consolidation have to take into account the exogenous factors brought to bear on the political system by accelerated globalisation. The framework is therefore predicated upon six (6) broad clusters outlined below.

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[39] Calland and Graham, 2005

Cluster I
Socio-economic Development:
Economic Governance

- Development strategy;
- Economic policy (macro-economic framework);
- Social policy (social welfare strategies);
- Poverty reduction strategies;
- Corruption and anti-corruption strategies;
- HIV/AIDS pandemic;
- Budgeting;
- External resource flows;
- Public-private linkages;
- Gender aspects of resource distribution.

Cluster II.
Government and Non-state Public Institutions: Representation and Accountability

- The executive branch;
- The legislative branch;
- The judiciary;
- The public service;
- The security establishment;
- The parastatals (public enterprises);
- Local government and decentralisation;
- Traditional institutions of governance;
- Gender equality in public institutions;
- Leadership and governance;
- Political parties;
- Autonomous public institutions (such as the human rights commission, the public protector or Ombudsman, the independent media commission or authority etc).

Cluster III.
Citizen Participation

- Civil society organisations;
- NGO legislation;
- Human rights culture (social and economic rights and political rights);
- Political participation;
- Voting behaviour;
- Political culture;
- Political representation;
- Elections;

- Election administration;
- Electoral system;
- Election management body;
- Gender and political participation.

Cluster IV.
Women and Men in Governance:
Gender Dimensions

- Gender policy;
- Gender representation in key government institutions;
- Gender and economic governance;
- Gender dimensions of citizen participation;
- Gender equality in local governance;
- Ratification and implementation of international and regional instruments on gender equality.

Cluster V.
Local Governance

- Nature of decentralisation;
- History of local government;
- Relations between central & local government authorities;
- Local governance legislation;
- Local governance institutions;
- Local government elections;
- Local government capacity (finance, human resource, infrastructure);
- Gender issues in local governance

Cluster VI.
International Dimensions of
Governance: Globalisation

- Globalisation;
- External environment;
- IMF/WB/WTO policies;
- UN programmes and policies;
- Development assistance (foreign aid);
- Trade;
- Foreign direct investment;
- Democracy assistance;
- Global governance institutions;
- Continental regional integration schemes such as the AU;
- Regional integration schemes such as SADC

Conclusion

The discussion in this paper has established that research for the sake of pure academic exchange, although still a gainful epistemological exercise in and of itself, may run the risk of ivory tower discourse. The governance debate becomes ivory tower if it is too philosophically abstract and divorced from the stark reality of the living experience of the people. Theorising the governance realm is a fascinating experience and adhering to scientifically sound techniques and methodologies is always the desire to which every well-meaning and accomplished social scientist aspires. However, both theory and scientific rigor of any governance research ought to be complemented with an obligation by the researcher to be socially responsive, contextually relevant and organically linked to his/her immediate socio-economic and political reality. This is one of the biggest challenges that face social science research today: precisely how to strike a fine balance between intellectual engagement and policy dialogue/advocacy in the governance realm. Once this balance is achieved, then we are able to talk of relevant and socially responsive research. To this end, the way in which we conduct research in the governance area should be such that the problem statement is well articulated; theoretical and scientific rigor is upheld; appropriate methods are adopted; key products of the research are well defined; there is clarity on how the research results are supposed to influence policy reforms; and lucidity of thought on how the research results are supposed to add value to the transformation of the livelihoods of communities. Useful lessons in this regard can be learnt from the recent democracy assessment instruments and the way they have been operationalised as elaborated in this paper. The paper further proposes a preliminary framework for a SADC Democracy Assessment tool.

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