

# Evaluation of the state and causes of ineffective leadership in Africa

By

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## Abstract

*Even though Africa is the richest continent in terms of natural resources, it is arguably the poorest in terms of development. The protracted economic challenges experienced around the continent have sometimes led to social unrest which has unfortunately given birth to migration with sometimes unintended consequences such as xenophobic attacks and people drowning while trying to reach Europe. For some time now scholars and policymakers have been trying to unravel the quagmire of Africa's problems without palpable success. With over sixty years since the first African country gained independence, effective and sound leadership continues to be evasive around the continent with a few notable exceptions. The study sought to find out who was responsible for the dearth of leadership prevalent on the continent. A secondary (desk) research was conducted focusing on all the 54 countries on the continent. The study found that although the continent should shoulder much of the blame for poor leadership, colonialism, post-colonial exploitation, and white monopoly capital cannot be absolved. Africa requires leaders who are not afraid to speak their minds and take bold, difficult, and unpopular decisions. The continent should shed the unfortunate tag of being a net importer of leadership theory and practice by developing African leadership based on the principles of ubuntu.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership, Colonialism, Post-Colonial exploitation, Ubuntu*

## **Introduction and Background**

Although Africa is the richest continent in terms of natural resources, it is, unfortunately, the poorest. The perception of African leadership is generally negative with labels such as “corruptocracies”, “chaosocracies” or “terrorocracies” (Van Wyk, 2007) constantly used about failed African leadership. With six decades of independence, the debate currently focuses on leadership as the most plausible explanation of the continent’s poverty and underdevelopment (Poncian and Mgaya, 2015).

Non-Western perspectives including African voices are silent in leadership and management theories (Jack & Westwood, 2009). According to Lyne de Ver (2009), many leadership conceptions found in the literature are Western-oriented, Universalist, or individualistic. In management textbooks, African leadership and management are largely invisible. House & Aditya (1997) cited in Nkomo (2011) argued that leadership theory originates primarily from the United States of America focusing on American leaders. Mkapa (2008) is of the view that there is no theory of leadership in postcolonial Africa except one of learning as we move forward, referred to as “muddling through”. Although the scholarship shaped on African leadership is still limited, it is increasing at a swift pace.

Ebegbulem (2012) argued that the greatest obstacle to Africa’s development is the leadership crisis and corruption. Moghalu (2017) asserts that African countries, with few exceptions, have been plagued by a calamity of leadership. With over fifty years of independence, Africa’s poverty and underdevelopment can be explained in the context of its leadership (Poncian and Mgaya, 2015). Mills (2011) opined that Africa is poor today because its leaders have made the bad decision of choosing poverty over development.

Several scholars including Mangaliso (2001), Mbigi (2005), and Ngambi, (2004) have argued that the development of Africa will continue to be unsuccessful until management and leadership systems are established and institutionalized. Nkomo (2011) believed that to solve a myriad of developmental challenges bedeviling the continent, indigenous African leadership and management must be reclaimed and reinstitutionalised. To move Africa from the rancorous circle of pervasive problems, the continent demands new leaders and a leadership style that is predicated on vision, competence, honesty, and commitment (Mohiddin, 1998).

## **Statement of the Problem**

The fact that African leadership does not inspire total confidence is undisputable. Several challenges that continue to bedevil the continent could have been history if sound leadership had been exercised. Several decisions that had the potential to extricate the continent from the quagmire of underdevelopment and poverty were not made, and in cases where they were eventually made, they were too late. The question that immediately comes to mind is whether Africans by nature are less capable when it comes to leadership or if certain exogenous forces militate against sound and effective leadership. Who is to blame for poor leadership generally exhibited around the continent?

## **Purpose of the article**

The study sought to evaluate the state and causes of ineffective leadership prevalent in Africa.

## **Study Questions**

To achieve its intended purpose, the study was guided by the following questions:

- i. What are the causes of ineffective leadership in Africa?
- ii. Who is to blame for the ineffective leadership in Africa?

## **Literature Review**

Although leadership cannot be a panacea for everything, it is widely believed that it provides answers to the success of individuals, organisations, and nations (Bolden, 2004). Leadership is a process of influencing either an individual or a group of people towards the accomplishment of an objective. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) opined that leadership comprises persuading people to set aside, for a time, their selfish quests and work in support of the collective interest.

Schenk (1928) cited in Lyne de Ver (2009, p.5) stated that “leadership is the management of men by persuasion and inspiration rather than by the direct or implied threat of coercion.” Kotter (1988) cited in Silva (2016, p.2) defined leadership as “the process of moving a group in some direction through mostly non-coercive means. Dwight

Eisenhower, the former United States of America President is quoted as having said that “You don’t lead by hitting people over the head; that’s assault, not leadership” (Axelrod, 2006, p. 120). In this context, Bolden (2004) argued that it becomes difficult to categorize characters such as Hitler, Stalin, and Hussein as leaders. To show the importance of leadership, Napoleon asserted that an army of lions commanded by a rabbit can easily be defeated by an army of rabbits commanded by a lion.

## **Methodology**

A desk (secondary) research was conducted focusing on all the 54 African countries recognized by the United Nations. A sample of articles published about different African countries was utilized for the research. To choose the articles purposive sampling and in particular, heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling were employed. This was necessitated by the desire to use judgment in selecting informative articles that enabled the research questions to be answered. Maximum variation sampling enabled the researcher to work with articles representing different African countries with diverse characteristics such that maximum variation was obtained in the data that was used for the research. This was necessary because Africa by nature is a diverse continent. In addition, this enabled the researcher to target articles that portrayed a positive picture of African leadership on one hand and those that portrayed a negative picture on the other hand so that a balanced view could be established.

## **Discussion**

Moghalu (2017) argues that while effective leaders in Africa are found in abundance in professions, entrepreneurship, and civil society, the same cannot be said when it comes to the regiment of political leadership. This is in agreement with the assertion of Jacobs and Versi (2013) who argued that Africa has produced more outstanding leaders in business than in politics. They went on to proffer the following names as a testament to remarkable business leadership around the continent; Strive Masiyiwa (chairman of Econet Wireless Global), Aliko Dangote (Dangote Group), Tony Elumelu (former CEO, UBA Group, CEO Heir Holdings), Manu Chandaria (chairman Comcraft Group), James

Mwangi (Equity Bank), Naguib Sawaris (founder Orascom Telecoms Holdings) and Arnold Ikpe (former CEO Ecobank Transnational). It is worth noting that this list is not exhaustive of leadership capability in business around Africa.

### **Colonial and post-colonial exploitation as the cause of the dearth of effective African Leadership**

Pre-colonial African leaders exhibited democratic leadership in the same mould as the contemporary Western-influenced democratic leadership style. Although leaders of that time had colossal powers, there were checks and balances in place as citizens were either directly or indirectly involved in the governance of their respective states (Ayittey, 1992, cited in Poncian and Mgaya, 2015, p. 111). If we take on board this school of thought, it can only mean that leadership problems in Africa started with the scramble for Africa which occurred in Berlin between November 1884 and February 1885. Some of the leadership problems we experience today as a continent can be traced back to how leaders were enlisted under the colonial system.

Although Africa as a continent is abundantly endowed with natural resources more than any other continent, it is arguably the poorest with its citizens who have not benefitted in any meaningful way. This is a quagmire that is difficult to fathom. To borrow the description of Africa from the words of the New African of February 2014; “the super-rich man who is yet poor, living in abject poverty, who, without the grace of alms liberally begged from abroad, cannot make ends meet”. This is because most African nations are shortchanged by western corporations who demand between 95 and 97 percent of the proceeds from the continent’s resources over so many years, and sometimes a couple of decades supposedly to recoup the investment they put into exploration, drilling, and production, leaving the owners of the resources with a paltry 3 to 5 percent royalty. Former Gambian president Yahya Jammeh believed that the panacea to getting a better deal for natural resources lies in African leadership (New African, 2014).

Despite their sins of omission and commission, several African leaders have been punished dearly by western companies with the support of their governments for refusing to aid and abet the looting of the continent’s resources for a song. When Charles Taylor was President of Liberia, he refused to sanction a deal where an influential American oil

giant would exploit oil in exchange for giving Liberia 5 cents in every dollar. When Taylor was indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in 2004 for supporting rebels, the company offered to protect him in exchange for permission to exploit oil (New African, 2014). Today Taylor is incarcerated in a British jail for fifty years because the oil giant refused to protect him. Those who decide to play ball are protected irrespective of the quality of their leadership, and in certain instances despite the despicable atrocities they might have committed.

When President Pascal Lissouba of Congo Brazzaville came to power in 1992, he renegotiated the royalties his country was getting from its oil resources from 15 percent to 33 percent. This angered one French oil giant which strongly lobbied the government of the then French President Jacques Chirac to force Lissouba to reverse his decision. After some maneuvers by the French president, which included trying to force the Congo Brazzaville president to appoint the ex-military ruler as vice president and head of the armed forces, Lissouba's government was overthrown in a matter of weeks and replaced by the ex-military leader (New African, 2014, p. 10). What a coincidence indeed? This is not the only time that the French have been accused of interfering in the internal affairs of an African country. Analysts believe that France supported the Seleka rebels who toppled Francois Bozize of the Central African Republic on 24 March 2014 with military material because they were not happy with the presence of the South African troops, who were in the country to protect the President (New African, 2014, p. 58).

France is not alone in these escapades, The United States of America has been accused of directly and indirectly supporting the ascendancy of Laurent Kabila in then Zaire, to replace longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, whom they had supported for 32 years because he was no longer reliable as a business partner (New African, 2005, p. 26). In her investigative book *Glitter & Greed – The Secret World of the Diamond Cartel*, Janine Cartel alleges that “US Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft delivered tanks and other arms for the invasion army” (extract published in the New African, October 2005, p. 27). When Kabila proved not to be acquiescent to Western influence, fired the Tutsi head of the DRC army, and ordered all Tutsi forces to leave Congo because of the atrocities they were committing against the Hutu refugees, his government came under attack from the

Rwandan and Ugandan invaders, supported by the US Special Operations troops (New African, 2005, p. 27).

In a book titled *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, John Perkins narrates how the most powerful nation on earth, The U. S recruits men and women called Economic Hit Men (EHM) through the American intelligence community (NSA and CIA particularly), who go about “encouraging world leaders to become part of a vast network that promotes US commercial interests”. This system is premised on the belief that the developing world is awash with corruptible leaders. If the EHM falters, *the jackal* – the CIA-sanctioned assassins – steps to the plate before the military steps in if they also fail. Perkins speculates that General Omar Torrijos, the late former president of Panama, and Jaime Roldos, the late former president of Ecuador were victims of such Machiavellian shenanigans. Torrijos’ plane blew up and crashed into a mountain while Roldos’ helicopter also blew up (New African, 2005, p. 51).

Despite the hullabaloo and trumpeting of the ideals of free speech by the Western world, some of them cannot stomach free speech that is not in line with what they believe in. Western donors who had religiously funded the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) are alleged to have threatened to stop funding the event because they were not happy with the list of speakers which included the editor of the New African, Baffour Ankomah. This militates against African leaders thinking for themselves and making decisions that benefit the continent and their fellow citizens rather than promoting the interests of outside forces that may not advance the interests of the continent.

Ekoriko (2005, p. 5) opines that “although Africa bears some responsibility for its state, developed countries have contributed to its travails”. He goes on to give an example of the rich countries providing a haven for looted money from Africa. In 2017 Switzerland finally agreed to return to Nigeria US\$321 million that had been looted from Nigeria by its late military strongman Sani Abacha following a series of negotiations and legal action. Analysts believe that between 1980 and 2009, Africa had lost between \$1.2 trillion and \$1.4 trillion, surpassing by far the amount of money it had received from outside over the same period. Former South African president Thabo Mbeki has alleged that the continent loses over \$50bn dollars each year as a result of the illicit flow of funds.

Even though Africa as a block has the largest number of member states in the United Nations, it does not have a single permanent seat on the powerful Security Council, which clearly shows that as a continent its leadership is not taken seriously. The recent contest for the presidency of the World Bank showed flagrant contempt for African leadership by Western powers. Despite Africa having the best candidate in the form of Nigerian Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a trained economist with a protracted and eminent career at the World Bank, strongly supported by the Global South and beyond, the job was given to an American because of the long-standing arrangement where the top job at the World Bank is ceded to the US while Europe gets the top job at the International Monetary Fund (Ikpe, 2013).

There is a repugnant belief by most Western powers that Africa is a continent comprising of perpetual minors who always require guardianship in all matters. Nicky Oppenheimer the former De Beers chief once said that “there is a misguided assumption that when it comes to Africa, the West knows best” (NewsAfrica, 2005, p. 14).

On the eve of the 2013 Kenyan general elections, Western powers tried to influence the outcome of the elections by warning Kenyans that vote for Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, who were at that time facing prosecution for the 2007 post-election violence by the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague would have consequences, whatever they meant. Johnnie Carson, the former US assistant secretary of state for Africa is alleged to have remarked that “actions have consequences”. Luckily Kenyans did not heed the warning and voted for candidates of their preference, handing Kenyatta and Ruto of the Jubilee Alliance a first-round victory. Whether Kenyatta or Ruto had orchestrated the dastardly violence that resulted in innocent lives being lost is not the point here, but trying to influence the democratic and constitutional right of Kenyans through the back door is shameful and reprehensible, and should be resisted by every right-thinking patriotic African.

Critics of the ICC accuse the institution of turning itself into an instrument of recolonization of the continent. African countries such as Rwanda have long dismissed the ICC as “a court of Western imperialism” (The Africa Report, 2013, p. 33). Their main argument is that the court’s focus is exclusively on Africa, except in a few cases of what they call

Europe's Africa (Eastern Europe). Despite the fact that Africa as a block has the highest number of nations that have ratified the Rome statute that gave birth to the ICC, the court ignores the views of African leaders, whose countries are stakeholders but is too pleased to parrot the pronouncements of nations that are not even members. A case in point is the three permanent members of the UN Security Council namely the US, China, and Russia who hold veto powers over important global issues and have participated in cases that have been referred to the ICC by the Security Council yet they are not members of the court.

It is alleged that former UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook once said that it was not a court that would call to account British premiers or US presidents. This gives credence to assertions that the court represents nothing more than the neo-imperialist justice of the white man. If it is a fair court, why is it that George W Bush, the 43<sup>rd</sup> US president was never prosecuted for invading Iraq and causing the deaths of many people under the false subterfuge that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, which by the way were never found? Recently former Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) vice president Jean Pierre Bemba was acquitted on appeal of war crimes after spending 10 years incarcerated at the ICC. While this argument does not seek to absolve Mr. Bemba and his former militia of any crimes that may have been committed, his reputation may have been irreparably tarnished and might find it difficult to assume any leadership position, especially in his native country DRC.

It should be noted that the ICC was formed with the critical role of ending global impunity through its mandate to intervene when a country lacks the capacity or is reluctant, to prosecute people accused of the gravest crimes such as genocide, and war crimes, and crimes against humanity. It is incontestable that the continent should end impunity and hold to account those who are found to have committed such crimes without fear or favour. The furore about the ICC should be blamed on the continent's leadership which has dismally failed to institute mechanisms to hold each other accountable for disgusting excesses.

What happened to the African Court of Human and People's rights? Despite the establishment of this noble institution in January 2004, only 30 African states have ratified

the protocol. Of the 30 nations, only 8 have made the declaration recognizing the competence of the Court to receive cases from NGOs and individuals. The Economist (2010) was spot on when it argued that African countries must strengthen national judicial systems so that they can do the ICC's job themselves. Since African leaders are unwilling to make difficult decisions that are necessary to end impunity on the continent, they unnecessarily leave the door wide open for the ICC to step in as a last resort, sometimes without the capacity of meeting the notions of justice as desired by Africans and without being sensitive to peace issues.

Scholars and analysts have accused the West of double standards in Africa and beyond. On one hand, they preach about democracy while on the other hand they support and sustain autocratic leaders. Before the Arab Spring uprisings, the US was a staunch ally of Hosni Mubarak, the former Egyptian strongman, despite his strong shortcomings when it comes to democracy. It was only when they had realized that there was absolutely nothing, they could do to save him that they grudgingly threw him under the bus.

To prove the West's double standards about democracy, they were quiet when the military-led by the current president Abdel Fatah el-Sisi overthrew the democratically elected former engineering professor Muhammad Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood and allegedly massacred over 800 pro-Morsi protesters at Rabaa in August 2013. Democracy works only when it is positively correlated with the interests of the powerful. Some scholars have argued that the West had long associated the Muslim Brotherhood with al Qaeda (Botha, 2011) such that it was inevitable they would have welcomed any measure aimed at shortening the political lifespan of the brotherhood. Others have concluded that there was a great fear of a repeat of the 1979 Iranian revolution – brought on by another popular uprising, which saw the fall of the Western-backed Shah of Iran.

**Africa should assume responsibility for the state of leadership on the continent**

Although notable scholars such as Bond (2006) and Amin (2014) strongly believe that the root cause of Africa's backwardness lies in its colonial and post-colonial exploitation by colonial powers and capitalist vices, African leadership cannot be relegated to the equation. The fact that colonial powers continue to influence events in most African countries and the fact that as a continent we continue to be beholden to these powers more than half a century after the first African nation attained independence is a great indictment of the leadership of the continent. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, in an interview with the *New African*, asserted that "Africa should look beyond its colonial past to understand its current problems" (*New African*, 2014). Former Tanzanian President Benjamin William Mkapa in his article titled 'Leadership for Growth, Development, and Poverty Reduction: An African Viewpoint and Experience' asserted that "Africa cannot forever hold its history of slavery and colonialism responsible for its current poverty levels and economic woes." (p. 20).

Even though radical scholars have the propensity to blame African problems on external factors such as neo-colonialism, economic imperialism, and the international economic system, pragmatism calls for introspection, especially by African leaders. Mills (2011) argued that the external factors did not teach Omar Bongo, the late former President of Gabon to cling to power for over four decades and practice grave nepotism which saw him appointing his son Ali (the current President) minister of defense, Pascaline, his daughter to head the presidency and his son-in-law Paul Tongine the minister of foreign affairs.

The sad part is that this is not only peculiar to Gabon. In DRC Laurent Kabila was succeeded by his son Joseph who had been the head of the army; When Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo died in office in 2005 after 38 years in power he was succeeded by his son Faure Gnassingbé with the help of the military (Carbone, 2013). In Libya and Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi, who was affectionately known as Brother Leader, and Hosni Mubarak had been grooming their sons Seif al- Islam el- Gaddafi and Gamal Mubarak respectively before they were overthrown in the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 (Swart, Van Wyk and Botha, 2014). In Zimbabwe, former President Robert Mugabe had nearly succeeded in

installing his wife Grace as his successor before his plans were thwarted by the military intervention of November 2017.

One challenge that continues to beset Africa in the context of leadership in succession. Very few leaders have managed to initiate and sustain systems that guarantee continuity after they exit the leadership stage. Many African leaders especially in the political arena believe that they are the only ones capable of providing effective leadership. Most African Presidents sincerely believe that the continent cannot produce effective leaders like them (Mawere, 2009). Former Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, for many years genuinely believed that he was the only one intelligent and anointed to lead the country. It was not unusual to hear him assert that he was constantly postponing retirement from politics because there was no one capable of leading the country. Great leadership rests in the ability to make oneself irrelevant. As such going for a protracted period such as thirty-seven years without mentoring people capable of taking over is a sign of ineffective leadership.

Several African leaders have either succeeded or failed in amending their respective countries' constitutions to enable them to serve third terms. Those who succeeded include Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda, Chadian President Idriss Deby, Paul Kagame of Rwanda, and Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi. Those who have not been so lucky include Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Bakili Muluzi of Malawi, and Joseph Kabila of the DRC, despite strenuous attempts.

African leaders have been reluctant to take tough and unpopular decisions despite the trumpeting of African solutions to African problems mantra. This has resulted in some shameful episodes that could have been avoided. Approximately 800 000, mostly Tutsis were hacked to death with machetes by their Hutu brothers in an ethnic conflict in Rwanda in 1994 while African leaders watched on the sidelines. Somalia has not had a functioning government since 1991 when clan militias removed Mohamed Siad Barre from office. Twenty-eight years down the line, no meaningful solution has been found and the country continues to degenerate into a failed state. From 2003 the Darfur region in Western Sudan became an extension of hell when an army of tribal fighters from the Arab Baggara tribes – known as the Janjaweed (New African, 2012) unleashed indescribable suffering on the

populace, raping, killing, and burning down thousands of village homes, without any meaningful response from African leaders.

The response of the African Union (AU) in several situations has been lackluster. During the Arab Spring uprisings when Muammar Gaddafi was butchering protestors mercilessly, the continental body was very slow to respond leading some analysts to allege that the continental body had become the mouthpiece of Gaddafi (Souar'e, 2011). In arguing for the African Union to respond, analysts argued that it was important to respond otherwise Libya was likely to become hostile to the rest of the continent. Zounmenou (2011) argued that apart from appointing a panel of leaders to try and mediate in Libya, the AU did not exhibit any meaningful initiative to solve the problem or hold any extraordinary summit to deliberate on the uprisings in North Africa.

African leadership has been long associated with brutality, from the days of Shaka Zulu to the reign of Idi Amin, Foday Sankoh, and General Sani Abacha. Foday Sankoh, the former dictator of Sierra Leone founded and led Sierra Leone's rebel group Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in the 11-year-long Sierra Leone Civil War which resulted in the massacre of an estimated 50,000 people and the displacement of over 500,000. He encouraged his soldiers to loot by paying them irregularly. Recruits who comprised children as young as seven were sometimes required to murder their parents, which toughened them and made it hard for them to return home.

Idi Amin Dada's ruthless rule is estimated to have resulted in the massacre of not less than 80 000 and more likely around 300 000 civilians by the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva. Exile organisations with the assistance of Amnesty International estimated the number to be around 500 000. Amin ruled Uganda from 1971 to 1979. He also presided over the expulsion of Indian and Pakistan nationals from Uganda, alleging that it had been given to him in a dream.

Nigerian human rights organisations have alleged that more people were arrested in Sani Abacha's five and a half years in power than in the five decades of British rule (Kaufman, 1998). After a strike by oil workers, General Abacha's government arrested labour officials, journalists, politicians, and rights activists. Under his reign, preventive detention was allowed. After his administration alleged a coup attempt in March 1995, it is alleged

that within a month between 60 and 300 officers were executed along with 40 civilians (Kaufman, 1998).

However, other regions have also had their fair share of brutal leaders. Chile witnessed the brutal excesses of the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, who came to power after overthrowing the democratically elected government of President Salvador Allende Gossens in the notorious 11 September 1973 military putsch. Former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic orchestrated 'ethnic cleansing' first in Bosnia in 1995 and then in Kosovo in 1999 before the intervention of NATO forced him to withdraw (Hinman, 2007).

The conduct of certain African leaders has not been encouraging to say the least. Although political leaders are elected to serve, Ebegbulem (2012) opines that the major problem engulfing Nigeria is the insincerity and insensitivity of her leaders to the needs of the citizens. Several leaders have been embroiled in scandals with their names closely associated with one scandal after the other such that people can be forgiven to think that scandal is their middle name. One such leader is former South African President Jacob Zuma. When High Court Judge Hilary Squires delivered his judgement in 2005 in the Schabir Shaik case, Zuma's former financial advisor, he claimed that the two had 'a generally corrupt relationship'. During the trial, it had been revealed that Shaik had made payments totaling \$178 000 to Zuma, in contravention of anti-corruption regulations and that Zuma knew of his advisor's efforts to secure his bribes from a French arms dealer (NewsAfrica, 2005, p. 16).

Just before becoming president, Mr. Zuma was tried and acquitted on a charge of raping the HIV-positive daughter of his friend. Zuma, already married to more than one wife did not deny having sexual intercourse with the woman but claimed that it was consensual. During the trial, Zuma was shocked all and sundry when he alleged that he had taken a shower after intercourse to avoid contracting the virus. This is a country with the highest recorded statistics of rape and one of the highest HIV prevalence in the world leaving many people dumbfounded.

South Africa's then Public Protector Thuli Madonsela ruled in 2014 that Zuma had unduly benefited from the upgrades that were done at his rural home in Nkandla costing

taxpayers around 215 million rands. Although the constitutional court later ruled that 7.8 million rands (\$587, 800) should be paid back to the government, Nkandlagate, as it became affectionately known, had devastating political effects on both Mr. Zuma and the ruling African National Congress (ANC).

Zuma has also been in hot soup over alleged influence-peddling involving the Gupta family. The family has been accused of unfairly securing government tenders and even influencing ministerial appointments. The family was also at the centre of a storm when their chartered commercial flight transporting family members for the wedding of Vega Gupta and Indian-born Aakash Jahajgarhia at Sun City landed at Waterkloof Air Force Base allegedly without the knowledge of the South African Defense Force (e NCA, 2013). It was also reported that the family members were escorted by South African Police Services (SAPS) VIP protection officers, who turned on their blue lights and sirens as they left the base. However, it is worth noting that the Guptas asserted that the air force base was used with full permission of the authorities to receive foreign dignitaries, including some ministers. In January 2018 the then President, Jacob Zuma announced the appointment of a commission of inquiry into state capture. This was after the Pretoria high court had ordered him to appoint a commission within 30 days to be presided over by a judge chosen by the Chief Justice. At the time of concluding the research, Mr. Zuma had given testimony before the Zondo Commission on state capture, chaired by South African deputy chief justice Raymond Zondo.

Weeks before Mr. Zuma was elected the president of South Africa by the country's Parliament, the world was skeptical of his leadership. This skepticism was echoed by the Economist magazine which stated that "That the revered Nelson Mandela's rainbow nation is now turning to a man of Mr. Zuma's stamp may sharpen prejudices about Africa. It is for Mr. Zuma to prove these doubters wrong" (The Economist, 2009, p. 13). Sadly, for all the years that Mr. Zuma was in office, he failed to prove the naysayers wrong and unfortunately became a caricature of African leadership. At the time of writing the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) had reinstated more than 700 charges of corruption, racketeering, money laundering, and fraud that had been abruptly withdrawn on the eve of the former president's ascendancy to power in April 2009.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation established by Sudanese-born telecoms magnate Mohammed Ibrahim has failed on numerous occasions to award outstanding leadership excellence by a former African Head of State or Government. Since its establishment in 2006, the annual award has been given only five times; Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique (2007), Festus Mogae of Botswana (2008), Pedro Pires of Cape Verde (2011), Hifikepunye Pohamba of Namibia (2014), and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia (2017). Nelson Mandela was made the inaugural Honorary Laureate in 2007. Some scholars have argued that the fact that the selection committee has failed to find suitable laureates is a condemnation of the overall quality of African presidential leadership.

However, if the truth should be told, the continent has started seeing some rays of light, pointing to much light even before the end of the tunnel is reached. We have of late seen leaders losing elections and surrendering power without any incident. The following names easily come to mind; Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, John Kufuor and John Mahama of Ghana, Joyce Banda of Malawi, Rupiah Banda of Zambia, and Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria. Although the continent still makes headlines regarding leaders who after serving their constitutional terms cling to power by hook or crook, some have left without any incident. Quett Ketumile Joni Masire, Festus Mogae and Seretse Ian Khama of Botswana, Benjamin William Mkapa and Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, Mwai Kibaki of Kenya, Hifikepunye Pohamba of Namibia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia are some of the leaders who have tried to set a good example in this regard.

We have had other notable luminaries and icons who have flown the continent's flag high when it comes to leadership excellence, to an extent that the entire world has celebrated and honoured them. Of note is the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. In 1998 Harvard University called a special assembly to award him an honorary doctorate. This was only the third time that the prestigious university had called such an assembly since its establishment 400 years back (Mancu, 2014). The first time was to honour the first US President George Washington while the second was to honour the former UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill. At that ceremony, the institution announced the establishment of a new programme – the Nelson Mandela Fellows – in honour of the African icon whom the Western world had branded a terrorist a couple of years back.

Eckert and Rweyongoza (2013) concluded that when it comes to West Africa, Southern Africa, and Egypt, leaders are good at three things; putting other people at ease, being fast and agile learners, and leading in diverse environments. They also found the leaders to “be resourceful, focused and good at problem-solving which demanded creativity” (African Business, 2013). In an interview with the African Business, academic Romie Littrell asserted that successful African leaders were experienced in balancing incompatible demands from varied constituents because of the training they receive from dealing with differing demands and expectations of family, clan, and tribe (African Business, 2013, p. 20).

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

It is the writer’s humble conclusion and submission that Africa is where it is today because of leadership. While other continents have managed to uplift their citizens from abject poverty, Africa has failed because of leadership deficiencies. Although the continent has a great capacity to grow and develop beyond its current state, the dearth of leadership has continued to hold it back. The paucity of sound and effective leadership cannot be solely blamed on the continent alone. Although the continent should shoulder much of the blame, especially six decades after the first African country gained independence, colonialism, post-colonial exploitation and the machinations of white monopoly capital cannot be absolved.

What Africa requires at the present moment are leaders who are not afraid to speak their minds and take bold, difficult, and unpopular decisions. Leaders have the spine to question their peers when they feel they are stepping out of the line. Without taking anything from quiet diplomacy, there are instances that requisite instances require to borrow from the film *Kiss of the Dragon* by legendary actor Jet Lee, ‘there is a time for diplomacy and a time for action’. A lot of lives have been lost while leaders are engaged in diplomatic engagements that fail to yield any meaningful outcomes. African leaders for a long time have been wary of constructively criticizing each other fearing that they will also be criticised to an extent that their relationship has been described as “a trade union of mutual back-scratchers”.

At one point after former Nigerian military ruler Sani Abacha had hanged Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni environmental activists on 21 November 1995, Mandela broke ranks and openly criticised Abacha, calling him a “brutal dictator”, who had set up a kangaroo court to murder the activists. He went as far as committing an unforgivable sin in African corridors of power by “urging the Nigerian opposition to intensify their efforts to get rid of Abacha” (New African, 2014). Our prayer as Africans should be for God to raise many Mandelas around the continent.

Leaders are not leaders without followers. There is a Malawian proverb that says that “he who thinks is leading and has no one following him is only taking a walk”. Leadership success involves taking followers from one level to another level. To do that, leaders need to listen to their followers and do everything in their best interest. Surely it should not take the self-immolation of young and promising citizens like what happened to Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 for leaders to see that the people they are leading are not happy. When leaders make mistakes, they should take responsibility graciously rather than pretend as if they are superhuman. Whether you are a king or a president, you are not a demigod; you put on your trousers one leg after another just like the rest of us, ordinary mortals. Unfortunately, the quagmire of bad leadership cannot be solely blamed on the leaders themselves. Followers should squarely shoulder part of the blame, especially in Africa where Poncian and Mgaya (2015) opined that they are passive when it comes to holding their leaders accountable.

When dealing with Africa, it is highly ineffective to make generalizations about the whole continent because it is not one place. Littrell opined that leadership strengths and weaknesses that you find in South Africa are not necessarily the same as you can find in Kenya or Tanzania (African Business, 2013). In the research done by Eckert and Rweyongoza (2013), the scholars found that whereas being straightforward and decisive were seen as strengths within Southern African countries, it was not the same in West Africa. This should come as a wake-up call to all those trying to push a one size fits all approach to Africa when it comes to leadership matters.

Poncian and Mgaya (2015) argued against continuously importing Western models that do not necessarily fit into the unique African features. They propose a journey back to the

pre-colonial era where good leadership lessons can be learnt and adopted. It is not that there are no models of effective leadership that we can learn as a continent from the pre-colonial past but as Du Preez (2011) succinctly asserts, Africans are hesitant to embrace leadership models from their past. There is a need of developing inimitable African leadership that is based on the principles of Ubuntu (Khoza, 2011). This is the only way of making sure that the continent sheds the unfortunate tag of being the net importer of leadership theory and practice (Nkomo, 2006).

Relying on the West exclusively, which has shown the propensity to always adopt a patriarchal approach where they see Africa as a perpetual minor in need of guidance and chastisement rather than engaging the continent as an equal partner might not be in the best interest of Africans. We need leaders in the mould of Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X, who are prepared to take the front seat in making black people proud of their race. In a world where black is silently despised, we need leaders who are not shy to shout at the top of their voices and through their impeccable deeds that black is beautiful.

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