

THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION AND AFRICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND BEYOND: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

More than 50 years after the colonial domination of Africa, the continent still remains embroiled in political confusion, economic quagmire and stifled growth. There are those who blame the situation on the long-term effects of colonial rule. However, of recent, there has been a shift in focus to the leadership question in the post-colonial Africa. Clearly, Africa has been seen to be backward in terms of development because she has not been fortunate in getting the right leaders. In this work, therefore, we set out to assess the leadership effect(s) in Africa's political development with a view to logically justifying the claim of Africa's development with prospect of what can or may be done to improve the downward spiral in the 21st century and beyond. As a contribution to knowledge, the work recommends that Africa should go back to her pre-colonial past to adopt some valuable lessons. Speculative and analytical approaches are employed here and our major sources are library materials.

Keywords: Leadership, Africa, Development, Political philosophy, Philosophical assessment, African Leadership, Political development.

INTRODUCTION

From the title of this work, it is assumed that there is already a leadership question in Africa. It is also assumed that the said leadership issue has brought about certain political development(s) in Africa. Here, it must be noted that development can be positive and it can also be negative. Whatever the effect of such development might be, we intend to speculate into the future, as a way of contributing to the growing discourse on the continental progress or lack of it. For

us, Africa can make a headway, if only she can retrace her steps to the positive leadership values of the pre-colonial era.

To start with, leadership is a concept employed for effective organization, even among animals. That is because wherever there is a community or aggregation of beings, hierarchical order is supposed to allow for control and for peaceful coexistence; and by extension, expected advancement. For there to be order, direction and organization; for there to be an environment devoid of the Hobbesian state of confusion, selfishness and nihilistic tendencies, there must be leadership. According to John Maxwell (v), "everything rises and falls on leadership". He also adds that, "more than anything else, the leadership of any group or organization will determine its success or failure".

With the above in mind, it is germane to look back at Africa and ponder on the possible reason(s) for its current backward status. It is important to state from the outset that already, there is a preponderance of opinion that Africa's poor economic development, despite her vast wealth or resources, is as a result of weak leadership (Dartey-Baah, 204). But could it be that the problem of the continent is owing to the numerous years of inhuman exploitation and exploration by the colonial masters? This work, however, does not intend to pursue that line of argument. For us, we are convinced that after years of continental freedom from the colonial rule, if certain things were done rightly, Africa would have taken her rightful place in history. What that means is that we take the side of those who argue that the current Africa situation, good or bad, must be analyzed from the point African started holding sway in leadership. Thus, we would look at what leadership is, what it entails in Africa; we will also consider its effect on Africans and suggest what needs to be done in order to place it on stronger footings to face the 21st century and beyond. But first, some definitions of leadership.

THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Nothing, according to Maxwell, "is more important than leadership" (v). However, like most concepts, the word 'leadership' may not readily agree to one meaning or definition. There are those who see leadership as a circumstance where a person or group is entrusted with the responsibility of guiding others. For Warren Bennis, quoted by Kruse in an *Online* article: "What is Leadership", leadership goes beyond mere guiding of others. It must translate vision into reality. On the whole, the concept of leadership involves the other. In other words, the idea presupposes that there is a followership somewhere. According to Dartey-Baah (204), leadership construct, as a determining factor in realizing man's goal must be influenced by its environment as well as its interaction with

wide range of entities like individuals, assets, community, etc. All these have their respective demands and behaviours and must be considered, hence the dynamic nature of leadership.

For Norman Schwarzkopf (quoted in Reed, 2001), leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. A leader, therefore, is expected to demonstrate qualities, which embrace but no limited to good character, vision, tact, prudence and ability to lead by example (Ogbeidi, 4). Other experts like Kouzes and Posner (5) argue that leadership involves a clear vision, intimating others with the vision in order to guide them to follow willingly, working towards the realization of the vision and balancing the interests of the followers. Similarly, Kingsley Moghalu says "its core, real leadership means the ability to frame a vision of the future and mobilize countries or organizations to achieve it in a clear timeframe. The question of character also influences the leadership style" (*Online*) Cooper and Nirenberg define leadership as:

... the successful exercise of attempts at personal influence by one or more people that results in accomplishing organizational objectives congruent with a mission while earning the general approval of their constituencies (in the case of political leadership or stakeholders (in the case of business and civil society organizations) (1).

Where there is a leadership, there must be a leader. That is commonsensical. However, our concern here is not just about leadership or leader. The general notion of a leader might suggest someone "at the top", but it does not necessarily have something to do with age or title. A leader does not have to be a domineering personality. In this sense, a leader is supposed to embody three aspects – passion, purpose and people-orientedness. This implies that a leader should not have a negative side, for the very idea of a bad leader, for instance, suggests a paradox. Also expected of a leader, according to Suzy Kassem (*Online*), is that he "must serve the best interests of the people first ... There are no exceptions ... a leader should always be open to criticism, not silencing dissent". Such a leadership is then sure to deliver prudent public policy formulation and implementation culminating in a national performance of good public service delivery, to meet the needs and aspirations of the citizens. For instance, Dartey-Baah (207-208), quoting Sharma, et al, reports how a study revealed that leadership was perceived as imperative in promoting sustainable development by the rural Malaysia. It also identifies that effective leadership helped the villages to develop the capacity to overcome their social and community challenges in times of trouble and to meet the needs of the people.

However, in considering the leadership question, one is jolted to the realization that something is wrong. Ordinarily, it is when situations are unclear that questions are raised. In this case, the question is to throw more light to illuminate the discourse or situation. It could also mean that questions are raised to challenge certain actions of the leadership. Either way, the leadership question is aimed at enlightening towards a better understanding of issues in the polity.

AFRICAN LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL FAILURE

When we talk about African leadership, it is taken for granted here that we are focusing on the political leadership. This is because it is expected that social and economic leadership fall naturally under political leadership. Social and economic life of a people thrive under a political leadership and where the polity is not conducive, they stutter and suffer. The overall influence of political leadership over the other aspects of the people's life can never be overlooked. Here, we adopt Ogbeidi's view that political leadership refers to "not only to the government or to the leadership of an organized state, but embrace the totality of the political class that has the capacity to exert influence on the machineries of government even from behind the scene" (2).

Hence, quite often, when commentaries are made on leadership, it turns out the focus is on political leadership. For instance, when eminent writer, the late Chinua Achebe of Nigeria pondered about Nigeria's situation, he concluded that it must stem from political leadership problems. According to Achebe:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply a failure of leadership...The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (1984:1).

Indeed, Nigeria's political leadership class has been that of focusing on selfish and personal goals at the expense of the general masses. Like most African countries, Nigeria is still grappling with myriads of problems which bedevil the nation. For instance, Ogbeidi has identified corruption as largely responsible for Nigeria's "retarded social development, undermined economic growth, discouraged foreign investments and reduced resources available for infrastructural development, public service and poverty reduction programmes" (18). Specifically, it breaks the heart to see a nation that held so much hope going down the slope on top speed, without the prospect of a brake facility. The growing cycle of poverty as has been noted by various commentators with attendant consequences; the sky-rocketing level of unemployment, etc have combined to make Nigeria a paradox-nation: too rich to be poor; yet too poor to be rich!

In specific terms, a cursory look at Nigeria's fortunes draws tears in sympathy of the future generations. Since independence, Nigeria has been grappling with one problem. Successive governments lure the people into legitimatizing them by flaunting an agenda of fighting corruption. And since the people are aware that corruption is the bane of their development and are ever keen on getting rid of it, they often too quickly accept any such leadership that promises to eradicate corruption. But instead of eradication, corruption easily becomes hydra-headed. So far, it has been the failure of Nigeria's economy. Currently, Nigeria is in recession, all because of corruption. As cited by Ogbeidi (20), Nigeria is desperately poor such that its unadjusted Gross National Products (GNP) per capita of \$300 left it in 164th position among other countries as at 1999. It ranks 199th out of 209 countries in World Bank's 2000 World Development Report (*World Bank, 2001*). Nigeria's GDP per capita Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of \$2,365 saw the country in 138th position out of 180 countries in the world. And the GNI per capita (PPP) of \$2,160 left Nigeria in 172nd position out of 215 countries listed in World Development Indicators Database (*World Bank, 2011*). All these reflect political failure because with proper leadership, the reverse would have been the case as in the Asian countries, which once shared Africa's now perennial debilitating experience.

It is instructive to note that what Achebe says about Nigeria in *The Trouble with Nigeria*, can be extended to the experience in the entire continent of Africa. Indeed, for more than five decades after colonial independence, African nations have been wallowing in leadership failure culminating in collapse of social, cultural and economic institutions. That perhaps led to Achebe wondering whether or not African leaders have any vision. In his seminal work, Achebe ponders:

What do African leaders envision for their countries and their people?
I wondered yet again. Have they not heard that where there is no vision
the people perish? Does the judgment of history on their rule mean
anything to them? (3012:258).

Africa's development has been mostly influenced by the attitudes of political actors, which over time become seen as peculiar to the continent because of its frequency. We are talking about unconstitutional leadership behaviours like forceful seizure of power by the military; corruption; oppression; etc. As argued by Dartey-Baah (210), "Even though these weaknesses are common beyond African systems, the dimension in which they manifest themselves in Africa and the impact they have on the socio-economic and political evolution is not only peculiar but deplorable for the continent". However, Africa's leadership problem

does not mean that there is something ontologically wrong with the Africans. Contrary to what the likes of Hume, Levy-Bruhl, etc might think, the African has the same make up as his European counterpart. The only problem, as identified by Achebe, is the reluctance and/or failure of African leaders to rise to the responsibility of leadership.

As said earlier, most of the issues concerning Nigeria's political discourse, hold true in other African countries. Today, as a consequence of poor leadership in Africa, the healthcare delivery system and education have all collapsed. Instead of channeling funds into these and other similar vital areas that could easily impact on the lives of the masses, governments rather focus on white elephant projects which make it easier for them to syphon money into their private purses.

It is then easy to see where African political leaders have failed their people. Issues arising from failed African leadership mostly border on corruption, indiscipline, tribalism, lack of patriotism, illiteracy, greed, etc. Moreover, the increasing rate of conflict, poverty, political instability, social injustice, and some other socio-economic ills in Africa lay credence to the thesis of ineffective leadership in Africa.

Before now, it was convenient to blame Africa growth problem on the activities of the colonial masters. According to Omoruyi Aigbe, historians were quick to trace security challenges in most African nations, especially in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, and elsewhere "to colonial programs of division, discrimination, collective exclusion, and manipulation of ethnic identity envisioned to ensure power and control over vast natural resources" (*Online*).

But that thesis of the colonial masters being the bane of Africa's development has since been debunked. For instance, Stanley Igwe in *How Africans Underdeveloped Africa* has argued that rather than the foreigners being responsible for Africa's continuous underdevelopment, as argued by historian Walter Rodney, African leaders should share the blame. Rodney argues in the preface of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* that Europeans politically and economically exploited and oppressed Africa into impoverishment. He also insists that "in relations between peoples, the question of power determines maneuverability in bargaining, the extent to which a people survive as a physical and cultural entity. When one society finds itself forced to relinquish its power entirely, that is a form of underdevelopment" (115). We now turn our focus to the fact of African development or lack of it.

AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT: REAL OR IMAGINARY?

The Holy writ says, "Without wise leadership, a nation falls; with many counselors, there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14) (*New Living Translation*). And in Proverbs 29:2 as well as verse 4, it says respectively that, "A leader of good judgment gives stability" and that, "When good people run things, everyone is glad" (*The Message Translation*). Instructively, what that means is that leadership is a key factor in the stability, happiness and safety of not just the society but that of its citizens and their belongings. Of course, where there is peace, there is progress and development. Conversely, where there is poor leadership or a complete lack of it, there is mourning, tears, anguish, lamentation, insecurity, instability, etc. But what really do we understand as development?

As argued by Huntington (389), "all definitions are arbitrary". In this case, definition of "development" may not only be arbitrary, it would also be ambiguous. Even the Centre for Global Development (CGD) says the definition keeps changing. This is because, the word can be attached to virtually anything. Gunnar Myrdal (729), has stated *inter alia*: "By development, I mean the movement upward of the entire social system". For him, that is the only logically tenable definition because the social system encloses the economic factors, all noneconomic factors; educational and health facilities; the distribution of power in society; etc. In other words, development covers all the aspects of life, particularly, economic, political, social and environmental dimensions. This is supported by the CGD which asserts that development "conveys something about the capacity of economic, political and social systems" (*Online*). And, these circumstances can promote well-being on a sustainable, long-term basis.

Economic development is the process by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. Interestingly, all the sectors are interconnected. For instance, political development affects the social and economic status of the society; while economic development also has direct impact on the polity and the environment, etc.

Environmental development can be said to be the direct result of investment in infrastructure, scenic surroundings, green areas and public spaces. Where there are extensive investments in infrastructure and facility construction, property values rise, irrespective of whether the property is for investments or residential purposes – thus impacting on the economic scale. As for social development, focus is often on the need to "put people first" in development processes, according to the World Bank (*Online*). A key character of social development remains its ability to promote social inclusion of the poor and vulnerable "by empowering people, building cohesive and resilient societies, and making institutions accessible and accountable to citizens". One of the aspects identified with political development is, as Huntington puts it, that it is "intimately

connected with the broader processes of modernization in society as a whole" (*World Politics*, 386), which affects all aspects of the society.

Given the above perspectives on development, it is then germane to ask if Africa can be said to have presented its citizens with the right environment for sustainable well-being. Put another way, can Africa boast of achieving economic, political, social and environmental development? Some scholars are quick to answer in the negative. For instance, Joseph Omoregbe, drawing his conclusions from observable instances in individual countries of Africa, particularly Nigeria, writes:

How can there be development in a country in which public funds are embezzled by those who control them and who are supposed to use them for developmental projects? How can there be development in a country in which self-interest is the dominant rule of action? Nor can the economy of any country develop if its citizens lack a moral sense of duty, the right attitude to work and a sense of moral responsibility to the society. How can there be development in a country in which bribery and corruption break down law and order? It is simply an illusion to expect development in a society in which devotion to duty and efficiency yield to self-interest and the craving for self-enrichment. In his theory of the state of nature, Thomas Hobbes describes a society as that which the members were morally undeveloped, a society dominated by selfishness. Everybody simply sought the satisfaction of his appetites and in the course of doing so came into conflict with others. Hobbes tells us that there was no progress in, no development in that society (197-198).

Obviously, the sum of Omoregbe's position is that development in Africa is stagnated. Interestingly, scholars like Nasir (n.p) support that view, submitting that there have been some serious anomalies by post-colonial African leaders. Analyzing Nasir's position, Dartey-Baah writing in the *Journal of Global Responsibility* (208) said: "In his view, infrastructural development in many African counties has fallen into disrepair and currencies have grossly depreciated in the midst of high costs of living compounded with unemployment, poor healthcare, falling educational standards and lower life expectancies". Aremu (554), states that there can never be development in Africa in an environment riddled with all sorts of violence, instability and insecurity.

Indeed, Africa continues in an endless fall and it appears no leader is ready to take positive steps to check the slide. Shockingly, some of the countries, which held greater hope for the continent at some points in its history, are joining in the

downward spiral. Clearly, some of the factors identified as recurrent in the continuous decay of the continent include inept leadership, corruption, weak institutions, etc. Today, Africa's problems are getting compounded on daily bases with unemployment; poverty; conflicts and attendant refugees issues; etc. What then is the way forward for the continent in the 21st century and beyond?

EVALUATION: TOWARDS 21ST CENTURY AND BEYOND

So far, Africa's leadership has betrayed the hopes and legacies of the founding fathers of the continent, making nonsense of the pride and belief in Africa's cultural heritage (Igwe, 1) Today, the effects of the stated elements of failed leadership are everywhere in several African nations, all because our leaders insist on copying leadership models, which are alien to our culture. This paper then suggests that Africa has a lot to gain from going back to some of its relevant pre-colonial values. We are aware that one of the criticisms against this idea would be that it is anachronistic, but we make bold to say that had the continent not completely alienated itself from its ontology, the current experience would have been different. That is because, like Huntington would argue, "perhaps the most relevant ideas are the most ancient ones" (415).

Anyim (117), has cautioned that we look for the internal factor of post-colonial Africa's problem. In doing so, we would have to go back to the pre-colonial Africa for one lesson or two. The pre-colonial Africa was structured ontologically on the concepts of cooperation and shared values. Arising from her cultural beliefs that the African is a human whose potentials can only be realized in the midst of other humans. He is born into the human community (family, clan, village, etc), grows there and makes meaning within the community. This why Symphorien Ntibagirirwa submits thus:

...in African value system, the first value is the value of community. The ontological primacy of the community in the African value system may lead one to wonder what happens to individual agency. In effect, one may be made to believe that the individual is swallowed up by the community to the extent that one cannot have a freedom and responsibility of ones own...However, the African value system naturally accommodates both the individual as well as the community as ontologically interdependent without reducing the ontological density and the primacy of the community (306).

To the Bantu people of Africa, the above communal spirit is called "Ubuntu" and it is seen both as an ontology and a moral philosophy. Unless African leaders

link African affairs to her cultural beliefs, development will remain far-fetched. The fact as argued by Matthews (380) is that a project of economic development premised upon a set of values cannot succeed in the absence of those values. What this suggests is that as African leaders have erroneously based African developmental issues on western model, which is no longer operational here and unfortunately they have no firm grip on, real development will keep eluding the continent.

The Western economic model, in real contrast that the African, is based on individualism. Everyman to himself and God for us all. But the African proudly says "I am, because we are"! In effect the Western economic model of development merely merely harps on individual satisfaction. But Kebede (*Online*) has warned Africans not to copy the West unguardedly. According to him, "the depiction of development in terms of mere satisfaction of needs rather than validation of beliefs largely explains the underdevelopment of Africa. By not being a programme of corroboration of beliefs, development fails to be animated by the competitive, insatiable and creative spirit".

This calls for mental decolonization of African leaders, according to Kedebe (*Online*). Rather than continue in such pro-colonial maters' thought-line, African leaders ought to adopt leadership styles that engender a sense of shared responsibility towards the attainment of the ubuntu-typed development. The uncritical adoption of Western ideology as well ass economic and development policies can never work well for Africa because of her cultural and ontological experiences. At this point, we agree with John (293) that Africa has to work towards a continent-wide socio-political thesis. Our thinking is that the answer may lie in Africa's traditional leadership and governance model. Mkapa has this to say in that respect:

It is true that pre-colonial Africa is replete with examples of traditional leadership and governance that evolved over time, developing institutions and styles of leadership suited to the realities of the time ... For instance, pre-colonial Africa comprised largely nonmonetary, tribe based economies. The kind of preparation need to rule in such pre-colonial African economies had to be different from the realities of leadership skills needed for the African economies of the second half of the twentieth century. Political entities in Africa were mostly ethnically homogenous. The new leaders of Africa inherited, for the most part, an amalgam of diverse, sometimes antagonistic tribes that were forced into one geographic entity whose boundaries were decided by colonial powers in 1884-85 ... addressing this challenge

required a completely new set of leadership skills and governance systems for the newly independent nations (25-26).

While admitting that the circumstances and conditions of pre-colonial and 21st century Africa are different, there are a lot of lessons current African leaders can gain from African past (Poncian and Mgaya, *Intentional Journal of Social Science Studies*, 109).

Africa before the colonial domination was replete with instances of exemplary leaders who signified high level of vision and planning in order to take advantage of opportunities for their societal advancement. For instance, in West Africa, the the three major empires – Mali, Ghana and Songhai - experienced steady though rigorous rise in fame and fortune and reflected a classy and cultured institutional and leadership building. Their involvement and control of the trade activities within the region helped in small measure to develop the empires. As argued by Poncian and Mgaya (110), trade flourished in the empires because the leaders displayed crucial leadership skills and played decisive roles in creating enabling environment for trading activities and foreign traders to come and trade with them.

Opportunity for generating more income was further created through taxation of all the commodities that passed through the region. With the taxes, they were able to provide the necessary facilities for their people and even protecting the trade routes. All these came through high level philosophical discipline and pragmatic approaches. They did not need to be schooled in the western culture and style to be able to engage in complex rationality. This is one aspect that can put to test the argument that pre-colonial Africans had no capacity to think.

Yes, there are several enduring lessons 21st African leaders can learn from the pre-colonial leaders. Another instance was when some of the pre-colonial African leaders who had the opportunity of traveling out brought back what they saw as opportunities to improve their people. For instance, Poncian and Mgaya (quoting Craig, Graham, Kagan, Ozment and Turner, 2012) hold that leadership made it possible for the Muslims returning from Mecca, led by Mansa Musa, to bring back scholars, artists, scientists, and architects thus making Timbuktu famous for its madrasas and libraries. This marked the beginning of technological transfer.

Further, through careful planning, the leaders were able to diversify the economy from trading into other areas that helped to sustain the empires in times of war, consolidation and raising of stronger borders against external attacks. There were instances of serious engagement in livestock production, cotton weaving, cropping, fishing, metal works, etc. Arising from the above, Poncian and Mbaya, while arguing that the 21st century Africa has a lot to learn from her pre-colonial experience, have listed four key areas critical to Africa's development

thus: 1. Revenue collections and their proper use; 2. Economic diversification; 3. Effective knowledge and experience, and; 4. Intra-Africa trade (110-111).

1. *Revenue Collection and their Proper Use:* Revenue collected has become one of Africa's challenges today. However, it is noted that revenue is very crucial to government's effective delivery of the essential amenities to its citizens. Accordingly, that was why the pre-colonial Africa took revenue collection very serious and use all effective means to make it work. In some instances, as seen in Ghana Empire, even foreigners entering the empire were taxed. With the collected revenue, they were able to provide security and amenities for their people. However, to encourage the citizens to pay more taxes, the collected ones have to be put to proper use. When the citizens keep paying taxes but see nothing to convince them that the ones they paid before had been put to proper use, they would feel the leaders are short-changing them. The change in attitude would result in tax evasion. Besides, the government must be ready to provide both the jobs and the enabling environment for more private jobs to thrive in order for the citizens to have money to pay taxes. For, in a situation where there is either no money to pay or the paid taxes are wrongly used, the government would end up struggling with paucity of funds since the citizens would shy away from paying. Tax losses in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda, for instance, rise to as much as US\$ 2.8 billion annually (*Policy Forum*, 1-2). One of the reasons for such losses is the overgenerous tax exemptions given to companies and corporations in the name of attracting investors. Tanzania, for instance, lost about 1.8 trillion Tanzanian shillings (Tshs) in 2011/2012 financial year, with its tax exemption ratio amounting to 4.3% of GDP.

2. *Economic Diversification:* True, the successful pre-colonial African empires depended mainly on trade. But they had other supporting factors of the economy which they diversified into. Such quick and pragmatic leadership management led to economic consolidation and political expansion. Quoting Craig, Graham, Kagan, Ozment and Turner, Poncian and Mgaya report that in Mali empire, for instance, famine was evaded because the leaders diversified into farming, expanded food production, fishing, cotton weaving, metal work, etc. Thus, the empire expanded and developed economically and became able to feed its people (110). This is contrary to what obtains the 21st century Africa, where hunger, underdevelopment and recession have taken over as the consequence of overdependence on a mono economy. Even African nations which have been blessed by God with abundant natural resources have not been blessed with credible, pragmatic and competent leaders, the type who can think on their feet and bring development to their people. Today, Africa's supposedly leading countries like Nigeria, Angola, South Africa, etc are wallowing in poverty. Nigeria that once boasted of too much money from oil boom of the 70s, has in the

21st century gone into a recession because of poor leadership and overwhelming dependence on oil. Similarly, according to Andre (6), Angola's economy has also been solely dependent on oil revenue since the 70s for imports, consumer goods and equipment for oil companies. Barely 23 years after freedom from apartheid regime, the postcolonial South Africa is showing signs of ills as recession was recently reported in Nelson Mandela's country. At some point, South Africa was becoming the hope of African emancipation, even challenging Nigeria to the epithet of "giant of Africa". Now, the reality is that Nigeria and South Africa as well as others, which equally have other natural resources in abundance, have become the "sleeping giants of Africa" because of poor leadership. As noted earlier, it is important for the 21st century African leaders to now look back and learn from the pre-colonial economies and diversity away from dependence on natural resources.

3. *Effective Knowledge and Expatriates:* It is important to state here that we envision the positive use of knowledge gained from outside Africa and not just the use of knowledge for the sake of it. We are also not talking about the use of negative knowledge or knowledge used for negative purposes. As seen earlier, the pre-colonial Africa adopted or borrowed the positive sides of what they saw outside when they visited foreign land for the good of their people. One wonders what African leaders see or learn when they go outside. Our concern obviously borders on why the 21st century African leaders do not import positive knowledge from foreign countries, instead of the ones that tend to divide, corrupt or impoverish the continent. Knowledge and skills are readily available for any country which lacks such and is willing to learn. However, the political will as well as the mental and moral capacity of the leaders are important in acquiring not just the expertise but the right, necessary and positive ones. That was how the leaders of Mali empire became able to put their territory on the world history. On his return from pilgrimage, Mansa Musa reportedly brought back experts in the various fields and used them for the expansion and effective administration of his empire. It was also the same effort that led to the spread of Islamic religion and education in the empire, occasioning a strong bond among the people. It is expected that the 21st century African leaders would borrow a leaf from this great pre-colonial history for the development and advancement of their people.

4. *Intra-Africa Trade:* According to Poncian and Mgya (111), one of Africa's economic challenges in the 21st century is that there is little intra-African trade. Currently, Africa trades more with Americans, Europeans and even Asian emerging economies. The share of intra-African trade reportedly declined from 22.4% in 1997 to around 12% in 2011 and usual excuse is that it is more costly to do business with outsiders than within Africa because of poor infrastructure and high tariffs. But the 21st century leaders and beyond can look back and learn from history as pre-colonial Africa forged a common market within. According to Perbi (4), "All the West African States along the Atlantic coast were lined by a southern

trade route covering modern Senegal to modern Nigeria. Ghana, again because of its wealth in gold, exchanged gold for slaves, beads and cotton and palm oil from the Benin State in modern Nigeria. From Dahomey and Ivory Coast, Ghana exchanged gold for the famous *aquagua* cloth”.

In addition to lessons from the economic exploits of the pre-colonial African leaders, another enduring lesson is in the governance style. Politically, the traditional Africa had elements of democracy. The administrative powers resided with the kings or emperors but there were checks and balances as an erring king could be removed by the kingmakers. According to Ayittey (61), pre-colonial African leaders served their people in accordance with the unwritten codes of customs and traditions, short of which they could be removed by the same people they were leading

The traditional pre-colonial Africa had a political order that was to some extent democratic. The difference is that instead of say majority principle, the traditional Africa operated with consensus and unanimity principles. This creates an orientation for all-inclusion. It then means that to obtain a viable democratic alternative that would work in Africa some restructuring needs to be done on the current Western-styled liberal democracy by adapting and modernizing Africa’s traditional democratic system (Chimakonam, Agu and Agbo, 141).

The 21st century leaders of Africa need to understand that the pre-colonial Africa ran under a disciplined leadership structure that eschewed impunities, intolerance, oppression, tyranny.

Now, more than ever before, African leaders ought to know that strong institutions, peace and security, democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law (which were the commonly agreed and upheld but unwritten codes) were the vital conditions that helped to attract development to the pre-colonial Africa. Sadly, the reality on ground does not show that any lesson has yet been learnt. Neither is there any sign that African leaders are aware that the remedy may lie in our pre-colonial history, which is why we make this call that they return to learn and actually adopt some relevant aspects of the pre-colonial African leadership model. In this new age, it will be nonsensical to keep blaming colonial legacies for the poor developmental state of the continent, instead of adopting a likely solution that could help to reposition Africa. Our recommendations, we believe, if properly implemented, will go a long way to solve the debilitating African development problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having seen the myriads of factors responsible for Africa's current backwardness, we would like to make some recommendations, which we believe if implemented, could help to put Africa back on the path of recovery and sound development:

1. *Purposeful Leadership:* We believe that 21st century African leaders must be such that Plato envisaged in his Republic; those kind of leaders that will work for the good of the society (Africa, in this case), instead of focusing on personal deep pocket. They will have to be committed to the communal ideals; rather than the Western economic model of individual lifestyle. Africa needs leaders who will lead by example, rather than by rhetoric.
2. *Mental Decolonization:* The current African leaders need a change of attitude and orientation from the colonial mentality to Africanized mentality. For more than 50 years after the exit of the colonial masters, some African leaders still behave as if they are still under the control or spell of the colonialists. Their development, economic, social and political agenda are all still tilted towards the Western model of individualization; rather than African communal style. African leaders need to adopt an inclusive rather than exclusive methodology towards governance, leadership and development.
3. *Eradication of Corruption:* Clearly, corruption has taken its toll on the continent as most African countries have been driven to its current undeveloped state by it (corruption). Usually, it is occasioned by selfishness and greed of the leaders. So far, corruption has become a hydra-headed monster too difficult to exterminate. Although several African countries have made certain moves in the past to eradicate the scourge, corruption seems to possess a life of its own and like the phoenix, it always returns to life from the ashes. According to Nyerere, "the continent is not distinguished for its good governance of the people of Africa. But without good governance, we cannot eradicate poverty; for no corrupt government is interested in the eradication of poverty; on the contrary, and as we have seen in many parts of Africa and elsewhere, widespread corruption in high places breed poverty" (*Online*, para. 27).
4. *Even Distribution of Wealth:* Africans are known to share things in common as exhibition of their communal spirit. The African ontology is based on this shared humanity, shared ownership of resources and shared responsibility. To marginalize anyone or geo-political zone or an ethnic minority group is to deviate from the African way of life and this entails disequilibrium, disharmony and underdevelopment.

5. *Democratic and Strong Institutions:* Since the pre-colonial Africa has had a democratic experience, it behooves on our 21st century leaders to strengthen the institution. Certain structures need to be put in place that cannot be toyed with, displaced or replaced so easily with all manners of political experiments; in that circumstance, an enduring structure put in place for a seamless transfer of power from a president to his deputy, in event of sudden ailment is required. For instance, Nigeria's experience in the recent past with the late President Musa Yar'dua and President Muhammadu Buhari makes this case very important. Here, the idea of strong institutions is to say that people come and go but the country or continent remains. Hence, there must be laid down structures that should make it possible to run the continent effectively and efficiently even in a situation of sudden incapacitation of the leaders.

6. *Protection of Human Rights:* What concerns one should concern all. And no one should be victimized or condemned without an opportunity to defend himself. The rights to speech, association and religion should be guaranteed.

CONCLUSION

Africa's stunted or what some term as "arrested development" has been a source of worry to political scientists, philosophers, sociologists and other scholars alike. Identifying the main reason for the problem has generated copious volumes of discourse but we soon came to the realization that blaming the colonial masters can never lead us to an enduring solution. Rather, in trying to trace the source of the problem from the point Africans assumed the leadership of the continent provides us with a better understanding of what went wrong and when it went wrong.

Thus, it was not long before we identified that poor or ineffective (some say nonexistent) leadership has been the cause of Africa's stunted growth and development. As noted by Brady and Spence (20), today's discourse on Africa's development is increasingly focusing on the capacity for leadership and governance, as well as on its role in engendering economic growth, promoting development, and ensuring poverty reduction. But drawing from the experience of the African past, the leadership model that operated in the continent before the advent of the colonial masters, it became apparent that there were relevant and effective elements that could be borrowed to rejuvenate Africa's 21st century leadership. The idea behind such an exercise would position Africa for greatness in and beyond the 21st century.

The work has shown that it is better for African leaders to fall back to the pre-colonial leadership experience, which is replete with enduring lessons and

instance that helped to situate the continent in the world map of greatness. Though we do not claim that this work will provide a final solution to Africa's leadership and development problem, but we are however sure that if properly implemented, the recommendations arising from this project will certainly show the pathway to making Africa great again.

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