

## **Africa Needs Strong Institutions and Not Strong Men in Positions of Leadership**

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**Abstract:** This paper articulates the need for a paradigm shift from transactional to transformational leadership in Africa. Over the past 5 decades most of African countries have experienced a lot of political instability that has posed great danger to economic growth and development. There has been systematic violation of human rights by leaders occupying positions of power without thinking of the adverse effects to the African states. It's evident that in most countries in Africa that have had little or no democratic space due to existence of strong men in offices, they have consistently inconsistently been experiencing aggravating levels of poverty characterized by low standards of living, poor health and sanitation, poor housing and lack of access to social amenities. This kind of leadership that only serves the purpose of the status quo and not the public interest is mainly referred to as transactional leadership. Some African presidents have created tendencies of use of propaganda, blackmailing, threatening opposing forces as a tool to perpetually keep their regimes relevant through use of coercive powers. These strong men also exercise reward powers to reward their cronies and also make use of elite cooptation to silence the voice of the masses. Recently over 3 East Africa countries through use of instruments of power altered their constitutions so as to legitimate their perpetual greed of power to lead. Africa ought to rethink and replace strong men in office with creating a conducive and favorable political environment that facilitates the building of strong institutions through effective legislations in parliament that protects all independent institutions that have autonomy of exercising their powers in accordance with the constitution. This will nurture democracy and create confidence amongst the citizens of a given country and also ensure economic and development due to political stability and prevent abuse of power by greedy and selfish leaders.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership; Institutions; Governance; Transactional Leadership, Democracy.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the recent times governance as a management concept has progressively become a major concern for the success of any development initiative in any country or institution. In Africa, governance has been referenced to since the 1960s following the independence of some African countries. In the most recent time the concept of governance has been viewed from different perspectives by individuals, institutions, political leaders and national and international communities. It represents a key item in the major international agendas due to the fact that liberal democracy has been seen as a necessary component for protecting and promoting human rights. With emerging trends like globalization and regional integration good governance is key in setting standards of governing public offices.

It is worth noting that governance is linked to country specific contexts but it also evolves within the framework of international commitments, visions of development and continental plans of actions such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Poverty

Reduction Strategy, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and many other initiatives currently underway in Africa. In addition, intense lobbying and negotiations have taken place with the G8 countries and with various international organizations. These negotiations have a profound impact on the welfare of the African people. As a result, governments and their development partners have executed governance programmes, projects and other specific initiatives at national level, guided by appropriate policies that need to be in line with the development vision adopted by each African country. This has greatly contributed to the shaping of leadership in Africa leading to a paradigm shift from autocratic to a liberal democracy or democratic form of governance in most of African states.

However, Africa has experienced persistence political conflicts since attainment of independence hence there is a need for critical analysis of leadership and governance crises in Africa. Africa's failures have come about largely as a result of frequent leadership

change, lack of ideology, policy reversal and weak institutional patterns through existence of dictators or strong men in power for too long duration than the constitutional requirement. Leadership selection process in Africa is flawed and that African leaders have frequently come to their position without legitimate mandate from the electoral due to flawed election processes. Hence, the decline in moral and discipline caused by bad policies, eroded professional standards and ethics and weakened the system of governance leading to establishment of strong men in office and not strong institutions. There is need for emphasis on leadership and governance in African countries. It's observed that for Africa to overcome the crises of leadership and governance in the continent, those on whom the burden of leadership will fall in the future must fully comprehend their responsibilities, duties and obligation. They must also be exposed and be prepared to face the challenges of leadership in developing society. Since the long term salvation of developing countries depends on the quality of its future leaders. Only leadership that has maximum concern and care for the citizens can be relevant to the qualitative movement of Africa that can facilitate building up of strong institutions and promoting economic growth and development.

The focus on leadership and governance is timely, important and no doubt topical, reflecting the worldwide thrust toward political and economic liberalization. Throughout the whole world, there has been an urgent desire among various people and government for unity, justice, peace and stability. The resurgence of this desire is not only explicable through their political policies alone; but also it is reflected in the social and economic policies [4]. In fact, most constituted governments in Africa have been undergoing serious and deepening politico-economic crisis. These problems generated by political, social and economic instability and the prevalence of ethnic, communal and religious crises, which have bedeviled Africa, call our attention to the problems of leadership and governance in the continent. In other words, the staggering wave of violence, insecurity, increasing crime wave, economic recession, coupled with the break in law and order are the attributes to the problem of leadership and governance in Africa. Therefore, the quest for good leadership is the panacea for governance and sustainable development and this can only be attained through establishing strong institutions that offers good leadership and not just strong men occupying leadership positions.

The rampant use by the state of Africa elites through co-optation, and repressive measures and their inability to apply governmental regulations throughout the national territory is a sign of state weakness. This has led to perpetuating existence of strong men in

leadership and not strong institutions that respects the rule of law. Without effective leadership that embraces transformational leadership styles of inclusiveness, participation and openness then no nation can achieve meaningful development socially, politically or economically [4]. Most independent African states tries every means to consolidate power at the center of their autocratic inner circles by use of public resources either to reward their cronies or punish their opponents and yet it lacks the capacity to spur the country's development agenda. The numerous problems which have been bedeviling African states vis-à-vis ethnic and communal clashes, increasing crime wave, drug trafficking, advanced fee fraud etc., have been blamed on ineffective leadership due to existence of dictators in power. While it is true that there have been apparent leadership and governance crises in Africa, the last two decades has witnessed struggle to engender effective leadership and governance in Africa. Countries like Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Burkina Fasso are perfect examples of how African presidents have been willing to live a legacy after their terms in office by handing over peacefully to new regimes while others promising to shorten their presidential terms in office like the current president of Senegal who officially reduced his term from 7 to 5 years in office per term.

Although Africa has over fifty years of political independence, Africa's aspiration and hopes remain today largely unfulfilled as per the founding fathers spirit of panafrikanism. The leadership question has become a recurring issue in the discourse on the African project. Seteolu [5] pointed out that: the economic domain has been characterized by huge external debt overhang, net capital flight, disinvestments, collapse of social infrastructure, food crisis and insecurity, over-devalued national currency, pervasive poverty, unpopular, repressive and alienating economic policies. It was recognized that Africa's failures have come about largely as a result of among other things; progressive distancing of African from the masses of the people; inadequate preparation of the leadership that assumed the responsibility to govern their countries instead of building strong institutions that ensures inclusivity and good governance.

Most of African leaders have frequently come to their position of power with limited experience due to use of flawed election processes that undermine the doctrine of free and fair elections. Though most of them have battled on, confronting their awesome problems of development and nation building essentially not only unprepared but unaided, their efforts have been at best only a qualified success. There are no institutions in Africa devoted to preparing potential leaders with a global outlook, leaders who will be able to cooperate within and across national, regional and institutional boundaries. Furthermore, it is difficult if not impossible,

in many African countries to gain access to relevant and timely information on most national, regional and global issues. Bureaucratic leaders have been advancing personal interests at the expense of public interests.

### LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The problem in an intellectual discourse of this nature is usually concerned with the definition of terms. It is really very difficult to attempt a definition of leadership, or in other words it is difficult to define what makes certain persons to be “leader”. For example, some researchers define leadership in terms of personality and physical traits, while others believe leadership is represented by a set of prescribed behaviors. Indeed, Rost [6] found that there were 221 definitions of leadership published in books and articles between 1900 and 1990; a number that given the recent interest in leadership, has likely to doubled since his view. It is in light of this that Ubegbe [7] defines leadership in the following words; Leadership is the process of creating the subordinates’ identification with the group’s mission and creating their desires to achieve the group’s goal.

According to Craig [8] leadership is defined as a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organizational goals. While Robert *et al* [1] affirms that leadership involves a complex interaction among the leader, the followers, and the situation.

In the views of Aguda [9] a person may attain the position of leadership in one of several ways. The first method is self imposition, which is totally devoid of constitutionality. Secondly, a group of persons may forcefully impose a leader on the generality of people. Nigeria, for instance have of course become aware of this since 1966. A person may come to the position of leadership through a demonstration of leadership qualities over a long period of time. Examples of such are Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Sertse Khama of Botswana, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. From the above definitions of leaderships it’s evident that the quality of leaderships determines the ability of a government to build strong institutions that ensures and observes rule of law.

The concept of “Governance” on the other hand is not new. It has been around in both political and academic discourse for a long time, referring in a generic sense to the task of running a government or any other appropriate entity, for example a nation. More recently, it has gained particular significance in the literature on Africa development as a result, among other things, of the World Bank (1989) identifying the

crisis on the continent as one of governance. More specifically, the Bank refers to such phenomena as the extensive personalization of power, the denial of fundamental human rights, widespread of corruption, and the prevalence of unelected and unaccountable government. The concept of governance, in fact, is simple. It is seen as a set of values, policies and institutions through which the society manages economic, political as well as social processes at different levels, on the basis of interaction among the government, civil society and private sector. In essence, the concept of governance is not new and is probably as old as human civilization. It broadly means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. The concept of governance relates to the quality of relationship between the government and citizens whom it serves and protects. Governance could be define as one in which the concerned authority if any, exercises power, exerts influence and manages the country’s social as well as economic resources leading to better development. In a more precise manner we can say that governance is the way those with power, use the power. The extent to which individuals use power determines the capacity to build strong institutions or strong men in office. Thus; governance has social, political, and economic dimensions [10]. Governance is defined as the capacity to establish and sustain workable relations between individual actors in order to promote collective goals [11]. It was further defined by Galadima [12] as; a process of organizing and managing legitimate power structures, entrusted by the people, to provide law and order, protect fundamental human rights, ensure rule of law and due process of law, provide for the basic needs and welfare of the people and the pursuit of their happiness. Governance is the conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of public realm [2]. Governance consequently, is concerned with the uncovering viable regime forms as well as degree of stateless – the capacity to entrench the authority of the central state and to regularize its relations with society. World Bank (1989:60) defines governance quite narrowly as “the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs.” To Barkan [3], governance involves less in the way of administrative management and more in the way of political management; with its emphasis on developing networks of reciprocity and exchange, governance increases the possibilities of accomplishing more while spending less.

Although governance is practiced by political elites, it is manifest in the condition of citizenry. This implies that a strong state with strong institutions is unlikely to emerge in the absence of a vibrant civil society. It concerns the institutionalization of the normative values that can motivate and provide cohesion to the members of the society at large [2].

Hyden's efforts to operationalize "governance" inevitably lead to associate good governance with democratic values and procedures. Although Hyde's concept of a governance realm is applicable to all political system, it is addressed primarily to African polities because of breakdown of governance across the continent [3]. It is no coincidence that the diminution of the governance realm across Africa has accompanied the spread of personal rule. Hence governance and style of leadership determines the extent to which a particular country can ensure democratic governance through building of strong institutions.

Some leadership -focused theories attempt to describe leadership through the characteristics and behaviors of the leaders themselves. Early conceptions of leadership focus on these behaviors and characteristics and include trait approaches, leader skills, leadership style, and power [13]. Traits approaches to leadership represent the earliest attempts to understand why some people emerged as leaders and others did not. This school of thought is often referred to as the "great man" approach to leadership because it suggested that leaders had particular characteristics or traits that enabled them to emerge as leaders.

#### **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE MODELS.**

Transformational leadership is one of the most popular leadership theories in recent years. In general, a hallmark of transformational leadership is the extent to which the leader influences, or transforms, followers [14]. Theories in this new paradigm of leadership center on traits and behaviors of leaders, the situational context of leadership, and the relationships, between and among leaders and followers in the context. Scholars have device a number of models to guide the study of governance. These are; Monocratic and polycentric governance models. The Monocratic governance model hails from Hobbes theory of the state, which holds that supreme authority to govern rests in the Leviathan. In other words, monocratic governance implies a political system that is highly centralized in terms of centralization of powers at the center. In that type of political system, the principle of moonlighting takes preeminence as sub-units within the system only serve as administrative coordinate that function primarily to strengthen the center [15]. The main characteristics of the monocratic model according to them include the adoption of a one-party state or where one party is the dominant party signifies a monocratic order. The extent of a military regime is another indication of the existence of a monocratic political order. Excessive centralization is nevertheless the main index of monocentricism. This model perpetuates weak state formation through empowering of strong men in office.

Under this model, political centralization is one of the salient parameters to measure centralization. Political centralization is a situation where there is absence of competitive political parties. Only one political party dominates the political scene. The civic capacity to react against policy decisions or influence are greatly minimized or out rightly absent. In political sense, centralization manifest in military regimes with their policies of unity of command and unity of control. This kind model of governance promotes systematic abuse of the rule of law and undermines the existence of strong institutions while enhancing capacity of dictators or strong men in office.

The Polycentric model on the other hand recognizes that within a metropolitan area, there exist multiplicities of jurisdictions and arenas, which can be appropriately conceived and described as a polycentric political system. This model comprises diverse independent units that are formally autonomous of each other and operate in a manner that recognizes the jurisdiction and functions of other centres [16].

The polycentric model according to Oladoyin, [15] is democratic and favors popular participation. It is permissive of a multiplicity of decisions and authority centres. It actually promotes a situation that is congenial for peace, cooperation and institutional integration. Under this model government ceases to be the main actor in governance. Instead, the shift is unto the people. The government only exists and functioning as an umpire. It is important to state that the features of monocratic order still pervades the political system in Africa, albeit the practice of democratic governance. Therefore, for effective leadership and governance in Africa, polycentric model should be applied to Africa's political system to enhance establishing of strong institutions.

#### **Challenges To Effective Leadership And Governance In Africa By Existence Of Strong Men In Office**

African countries still face inconsistencies between governance concepts and implementation of good governance strategies. A daunting task is that of having the State and public sector institutions working inclusively in a holistic manner with the private sector institutions, the civil society, the citizens, the funding agencies and the others development partners to address priority issues following the same guiding principles. All actors need to improve the convergence of their actions which need to complement each other and align with agreed priorities and aim at achieving development goals focused on the public interest and the common good of all citizens.

Perception surveys and desk studies recently conducted in Africa by various institutions, including



UNECA and the World Bank; point out several areas of challenge confronting the continent. These challenges include:

#### ***Democracy and Electoral system***

Several reforms have been adopted by African governments in the direction of abolishing one-party rule and allowing multi-party competition as well as conducting presidential and legislative elections. Shortfalls however still remain with regards increasing the independence of electoral commissions and the liberalization of registration procedures. Several constraints still exist in terms of giving full freedom to opposition parties to compete on the same grounds as the established parties. The culture of political party needs also to be nurtured, establishing internal democracy values alongside the need for accountability to constituencies. In addition, party funding mechanisms need also to be enhanced to ensure greater transparency and democratic processes.

#### ***Leadership building***

It is clear that principles and actions geared to good governance cannot be generated under poor leadership. Great challenges are faced in terms of building adequate capacities for policy development, visionary leadership, financial and information resource management, improved public service delivery and managing complexities in rapidly changing environments. These capacities are required for leaders to be able to build consensus on strategies aimed at achieving NEPAD and the millennium development goals.

#### ***Parliamentary systems***

Parliaments can play a central oversight role on government action, attack corruption and promote good governance. However to effectively perform this role, parliaments need to be more independent from the executive and increase their operational effectiveness by also strengthening human and institutional capacity. Parliamentary efficiency needs to be strengthened through the rationalization of internal organization and procedures (parliamentary structures and commissions, investigative capacity, financial independence, etc.). Training opportunities for members of parliament need to be provided and minimum literacy standards need to be set. In addition there is a strong need for providing additional institutional resources in support of parliamentary activities, including the availability of adequate documentation centers.

#### ***Civil society empowerment***

As African countries seek to embrace participation of the people in their governance, there is a need to emphasize the role played by civil society organizations. There is a tendency to believe that governance will be better when the State is

strengthened. The reality is that without a strong and vibrant civil society to demand accountability from public sector leadership, governance will always remain slippery. Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen mechanisms allowing a greater freedom and involvement of civil society in development by increasing its participation in the sociopolitical life and strengthening its role of voicing grassroots needs. An increased participation requires however an increased level of credibility, accountability and efficiency of civil society organizations.

#### ***Communication, press and media***

The role of media is crucial in terms of allowing citizens to be exposed to opinions reflecting different political views and to act as a watchdog of public sector leaders. However, great challenges remain in fostering media freedom of expression combined with professionalism, credibility, capacity and accountability. There is also the difficult issue of independence of media from public control and funding. In general private media ownership remains limited.

#### ***Decentralization***

The policy of devolution of power and authority to sub-national governments is viewed as a way of re-establishing the African State and “rebuilding its legitimacy from bottom up”. This process, increasingly implemented in Africa, is however hindered by several constraints including the lack of capacity of local administrations, the level of participation in local electoral and political processes and, overcoming societal fragmentation, ensuring a representation and voicing of population needs towards legitimate local governance. Other constraining elements are the level of accountability of local government institutions and the need for improving the quality of service delivered eliminating inefficiencies and “clientelism”.

#### ***Peace and stability***

Various conflicts and natural crises have paralyzed for years the development of democratic systems and good governance policies in some African countries. In addition, wars, civil strife and proliferation of light weapons impede the efforts made by many African countries to establish sustainable development. Some countries are still suffering from current conflicts others are recovering following the end of the conflicts they faced. Hence, addressing the challenges posed by conflicts to governance still remains a challenge in many parts of Africa. This includes the strengthening of national capacities for preventing governance crises, conflict and natural emergencies as well as for undertaking peace-building actions and addressing the inter-relationship between social integration and peace-building. In addition to national security issues,

capacity needs to be strengthened on managing cross-border population movements and addressing drug and small arms trafficking, transnational movements of mercenaries, epidemics, human trafficking and transnational crime.

#### **Public administration**

This area includes the challenges to the reform process initiated by African countries as emerged in several other categories examined under this section. Among the latter we underscore the enhancement of public service capacity, the provision of adequate incentives to public servants for retaining high qualified and motivated staff, increasing performance and accountability as well as reducing corruption. Capable and effective institutions need not be undermined by right-sizing efforts. The use of ICT in government needs to be further encouraged, and service delivery improved. Another challenge is that of promoting the contribution offered by traditional forms of governance.

#### **Rule of law and human rights**

Increasing the centrality of constitutional rules as “ground norms and ensuring their respect by leaders and citizens alike is the central pillar of the rule of law. The lack of this respect often poses a great challenge to stability. The independence, integrity and performance of the judiciary, needs also improvements which can also reduce structural constraints including inadequate funding and remuneration, modernizing facilities, increasing professional personnel and training, etc. The impact of laws and enforcement mechanisms needs also to be strengthened. Another key element is improving the protection of people’s rights including those of vulnerable and minority groups.

#### **Socio-economic management**

This category includes challenges to the economic and social policy-making processes that are inclusive and aimed at improving the welfare of populations, support economic stabilization and reduce socio-economic marginalization. There is a need for promotion and retention of private savings and investment as well as for creating an enabling environment to private enterprise. This requires eliminating business uncertainties, protecting, property rights, improving access to investment capital and banking services, as well as administrative and legal procedures affecting the participation of the private sector and procedures for enforcing contracts. One of the greatest socioeconomic management challenges is that of addressing the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic by decreasing population morbidity. With regard the management of external resources, challenges are posed by enhancing aid coordination and effectiveness and reducing conditionality affecting governance.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Good governance is key in understanding the role of independent institutions in advancing and protecting the needs of citizens in Africa. The 8 key tenets of good governance (participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability) forms the basis of building a sustainable leadership model that African leaders can use as a tool to promote peace and stability in Africa. This creates a conducive environment for economic growth and development since a conducive political environment is paramount for a country to be successful. It is worth noting that countries that have embraced tenets of good governance have well established social systems that promote liberal democracy and strengthening of independent institutions established by their constitutions.

Governance as a holistic and dynamic management process, aiming at channeling the action of all the development partners towards a positive impact on the welfare of citizens helps to locate the current governance trends versus the major challenges in Africa and this helps to correct leaders who tend to be corrupted by power since power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Experiences in the world show that the achievement of a lasting impact requires a visionary leadership with sound management systems and tools in place instead of strong men in office so as to translate principles into concrete actions which at the end generate expected results.

This implies that mechanisms like capacity building of public servants in public administration is key in building strong institutions in Africa since the strong men in office will be forced by circumstances to change approach to administrative issues from a transactional perspective to a transformative perspective. Hence capacity building can be done through the following ways:

- ❖ Promoting visionary leadership in all levels of management.
- ❖ Cultivating good governance culture and principles within societies.
- ❖ Improving and strengthening the rule of law as well as the voice and participation of all citizens through legislation.
- ❖ Providing and establishing mechanism that enhances transparency as well as peace and security.
- ❖ Provision of services aimed at fulfilling citizens’ basic needs (MDGs & SDGs).
- ❖ Putting in place prevention measures in line with monitoring system to avoid any failure in the area of governance.

If broadly and consistently utilized by all governance actors, these tools would enhance

governance monitoring and evaluation in a participative and transparent manner. They would also allow for a greater coherence between governance principles, actions and progress towards achieving the goal of having strong institutions in Africa with leadership that has commitment to the principles of good governance. It is worth noting that good governance promotes liberal democracy that ensures effective thriving of strong institutions that provide checks and balances to the various arms of government. Existence of strong men in office is a recipe for chaos as it has been witnessed in some of African countries through attempted coups to ascend into power leading to political instability and consequently loss of innocent lives and displacement of people.

For Africa to ensure political stability, we must promote visionary leadership that cultivates the values of good governance at all levels of administration and management contrarily to use of military forces, coercion, intimidation and blackmailing to silence the opposing forces.

Last but not least African governments must work towards improving and strengthening the rule of law as well as the voice and participation of all citizens through legislation. This will promote the spirit of inclusiveness that makes every citizen to be part and parcel of the system. Therefore it is ensuring conducive environment for strong institutions to thrive well than keeping strong men in office that Africa needs to make the African continent a better place to live.

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