Resolving the African Leadership Challenge

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Resolving the African Leadership Challenge: Insight From History

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2023

Editorial matter and selection © 2023 Okechukwu Ethelbert Amah.
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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80262-678-0 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-80262-677-3 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-80262-679-7 (Epub)

ISOQAR certified Management System, awarded to Emerald for adherence to Environmental standard ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

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List of Acronyms

AD	Anno Domini
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BC	Before Christ
Commoner	Occupant of a level of authority below the Kgosi in Precolonial Botswana
Emirs	Traditional Ruler in the Northern Nigeria
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IIGA	Mo Ibrahim Index for Governance in Africa
Kgosi	Precolonial ruler in Botswana
Kgotla	Precolonial community parliament in Botswana
Oba	Traditional Ruler in the Southern Nigeria
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PM	Prime Minister
Royal ones	Occupant of a level of authority below the Kgosi in Precolonial Botswana
TPFL	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNIP	United National Independence Party
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic
WGI	World Governance Indicators

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Preface

Two sources provided the drive for this book. The first was about how leaders in Africa reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic. The second was the search for answers to some questions arising from the review of leadership behaviors observed in the COVID-19 reactions of African leaders. The Western world locked down its economy, took care of its people and industries, opened up its economies again, introduced COVID-19 regulations, developed vaccines, and vaccinated its people. African countries followed the same sequence but with some inadequacies. Africa could not take care of its people and industries and waited for the world to develop vaccines and supply them to the continent. Africa was again on the street with its begging bowls. When the vaccine was discovered, the world developed a plan to vaccinate their people within a short period; Africa could not make such plans because, like beggars, we were unsure when the vaccines would be available to the continent. Questions that kept coming to me were: Did colonization make Africa a perpetual follower of the paths of the West? How did Africa get to the position of waiting on others? Is this hereditary, or it began at some point in our history? When did this happen? Can it be found in the understanding of leadership in the history of Africa across various eras? Can we be visionary and craft a path for our development? What would this entail?

I decided to look at the challenges from the leadership journey in Africa across the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial eras. I know that much has been written about Africa's underdevelopment and whether the marks of colonialism were permanent or not. Still, I decided to go through the journey following another route. The route was to compare leadership effectiveness across precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras in some countries in all the regions of Africa. The book made valuable contributions but is not likely the final on leadership challenges in Africa.

Okechukwu Ethelbert Amah

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Acknowledgment

The book is dedicated to God Almighty, my wife and three children, and others who gave me the inspiration for the book.

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Prologue

Researchers across the precolonial and postcolonial eras of the African continent have insinuated that the persistent leadership failure in the political setting is the primary cause of the continent's underdevelopment (Chaves & Robinson, 2011; Jallow, 2014; Johnson, 2010; Kumuyi, 2007). These authors have made recommendations on the way forward in resolving the crisis. Unfortunately, knowing and discussing these challenges across the entire life spectrum of the continent has not yielded the expected outcomes; instead, the continent has witnessed a continuous deterioration of the quality of leadership. A "popular accomplishment" that has gained ground and is expanding in Africa is the prevalence of long-serving leaders who leave their countries divided and in economic woes when they exit the office. For example, the civil wars in the horn of Africa and some countries in West Africa have their origin in the exit of a long-serving leader who did not prepare a successor to the throne. A mistake that cuts across all the long-serving leaders is their inability or unwillingness to appoint and train a successor to themselves. Hence, their exit usually leaves behind a vacuum whose filling gives rise to wars between rival groups.

It is not debatable that Africa is one of the world's least developed continents. However, researchers have not articulated the origin of the challenge and the factors responsible for it (Austin, 2010; Thovoethin & Ewalefon, 2019). The history of Africa has traversed various eras ranging from primitive, slavery, precolonialism, colonialism, and the controversial neocolonialism (Olanrewaju, 2015). What is clear is that Africa had some of the well-managed and economically prosperous empires in precolonial Africa (Gumede, 2015; Hoffmann & Nolte, 2013). Something must have happened during the colonial era that destroyed the wealth of the precolonial era and left the postcolonial continent underdeveloped. Hence, the current book assumed that the underdevelopment of Africa could be traced to the abandonment of the precolonial leadership model and the adoption of the foreign leadership model. The precolonial leadership model had its foundation in the continent's customs, culture, values, and history. In contrast, the postcolonial leadership model did not conform to what the continent expected from its leaders.

Incidentally, certain books have discussed governance in each of the eras in the history of Africa (Boone, 1994; Cheeseman, 2015; Davidson, 1994; Dube, 2020; Englebert, 2000; Farah, Kiamba, & Mazongo, 2011; Jallow, 2014; Johnson, 2010; Kasongo, 2010; Okafor, 2009; Rodney, 1972; Thovoethin & Ewalefon, 2019). These books highlighted governance's effectiveness (and otherwise) in these eras.

Some analyzed the causes of the African leadership challenges in the postcolonial period and advocated specific leadership behaviors to remedy the situation (Amah, 2018; Azikiwe, 1970; Eme, 2013; Kumuyi, 2007). However, these books did not align the suggested styles to the continent's customs, values, history, and culture.

The current book addresses four definite areas that existing books did not cover. Firstly, several prevailing books concentrated on specific African regions; however, this book will cover the entire continent. This is necessary since scholars have discovered that differences across Africa must be recognized despite the homogeneous nature of some cultural values (Awoniyi, 2015; Diller, 2013; Eyong, 2017; Idang, 2015; van den Berghe, 1983). Secondly, this book will use information from the various eras to identify the origin of Africa's leadership challenge. For example, Robinson and Parson (2006) and Chaves and Robinson (2011) stated that since the people saw the postcolonial governance of Botswana as a continuation of the effective and popular precolonial governance, this led to the success experienced, while in Sierra Leone, where such continuity was absent development was not as much. This means that comparing leadership styles and success across eras in several regions of Africa will be a better way of understanding the leadership challenges and underdevelopment of the continent. Thirdly, this book will identify issues that can point to a resolution of the leadership challenge. Lastly, this book will use the first three objectives to craft a possible leadership behavioral change to achieve effectiveness. The various chapters in the book will cover leadership in the different eras across the regions of Africa. After that, the epilogue will collate and analyze the inputs from these chapters to address the leadership challenges and the way forward.

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