Resolving the African Leadership Challenge
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Resolving the African Leadership Challenge: Insight From History

OKECHUKWU ETHELBERT AMAH
Pan Atlantic University, Nigeria
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# List of Acronyms

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

**Okechukwu Ethelbert Amah** is a faculty member of the Organizational Behavior and Human Resources Management Department of Lagos Business School, Pan Atlantic University, Nigeria. He doubles as the Research Director for the school. Having studied business administration and petroleum engineering, he has published many internationally peer-reviewed papers and case studies. He is the author of two books, *Globalization and Leadership in Africa: Developments and Challenges for the Future* and *Work-Life Integration in Africa: A Multidimensional Approach to Achieving Balance*. Before joining academia, Okechukwu worked for 31 years in a multinational oil company and held various managerial positions.

**Bella L. Galperin, PhD** is Dana Professor of Management and Senior Associate Director of the TECO Energy Center for Leadership at the Sykes College of Business at the University of Tampa. Her interests include leadership (in Africa and the African diaspora), ethics, and workplace deviance. She has published in the *Journal of Business Ethics, International Journal of Human Resource Management, Journal of African Business, Leadership Quarterly*, and other journals. She coauthored a book, *LEAD: Leadership Effectiveness in Africa and the African Diaspora*. She has worked as a consultant to telecommunications, pharmaceutical, and clothing firms.

**Lemayon L. Melyoki, PhD** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam, where he has been Deputy Director of Finance, Investment, and Resource Mobilization, the Coordinator of the Entrepreneurship Center. He has published in the areas of entrepreneurship, leadership/management, and governance with publications appearing in the *Journals of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Journal of International Cross-Cultural Management, Journal of Extractives and Society, Journal of Rural and Community Development, Ambio*, and other journals. He has recently coauthored a book on *Essentials of General Management in Africa* published by Taylor and Francis, Group, New York, NY 10017: USA; Dr. Melyoki has also been closely involved in the development of governance of the extractive sector in Tanzania through the benchmarking exercise supported by the Natural Resources Governance Institute (NRGI) and supported large public sector projects as Technical Advisor – Finance (Legal sector reforms program) and Operations Research Advisor (PS3 & PS3+ projects).
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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.
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, Kambah, & 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.

References


