

Good Governance, Democracy and Leadership styles in Africa

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Abstract: *Issues of constitutionalism, good governance and democracy are determined by the type of leadership in a country and/or continent. Despite colonial legacy, leadership in Africa has struggled to promote pro-people policies that accommodate the needs of the populace. Leadership deficiency is a cause for concern in African countries in terms of progressive and visionary leadership. Perspectives on political leadership in Africa vary from the “criminalisation” of the state to political leadership as “dispensing patrimony”, the “recycling” of elites and the use of state power and resources to consolidate political and economic power as stated by Van Wyk (2007). African states and their leaders have exploited and monopolized internal sovereignty to mean absolute power, personalisation of state-like services and have monopoly of and over organised violence.*

This paper attempt to review and analyze the type and styles of political leadership in Africa in an effort to promote democracy and good governance. Leaders play a pivotal role in political agenda setting, the distribution of resources and political actions. The contemporary state in Africa is a remnant of a colonially imposed system. At the time of independence, elites attempted to transform this but only succeeded in entrenching their interests. This paper therefore seeks to unpack why African countries are no better than they were under colonial rule. Of what value then is the hard won independence that African countries commemorate on a yearly basis? African politicians need to provide good leadership qualities so as to consolidate democracy and good governance

KeyWords: *Democracy, Democratic Consolidation Leadership, leader, Governance and Human Rights*

I. Introduction

Nearly everyone today professes to be a democrat. Political regimes of all kinds throughout the world describe themselves as democracies, yet what these regimes say and do is often substantially different from one another. Political leaders that brought independence in Africa such as Mugabe and other departed Nationalistic leaders boasted of being patriots and democrats in their own right. They have rhetorically manipulated their subjects by their emphasis on issues of sovereignty, independence, self determination and patriotism only for their own interest. They talk populist while they are capitalist. There is extensive personalization of power that discourages the growth of wider forms of trust and reciprocity Venter (2011) for example Kamuzu Banda of Malawi during his reign had the audacity to ask why there is political opposition in Malawi when God has no opposition in heaven. In Africa there widespread abuse of fundamental human rights by errant rulers, and human rights abuses cause many citizens to withdraw from politics, or evade rather than engage political authorities Ananim et al (1990). Generally, they have been reluctant to speak out for fear of being jailed or mistreated and, instead, have increasingly exercised the option “to vote with their feet” in order to escape repressive political persecution even if the constitutions guarantees freedom of expression. Africa is home to unelected and unaccountable government that manifest themselves in a reluctance to decentralise or delegate authority and a tendency to curb any independent political activity outside an institutional network controlled by the ruling party, Chabal (1999). This lead to a situation in which the apparatus of the state primarily becomes the means for the elite to acquire wealth, rather than serving as a corrective mechanism to promote social justice and sustainable economic development. This has led to widespread and even endemic corruption. The continent needs to answer Ugandan President’s questio in his published article, *what is Africa’s problem?*, but for the purposes of this paper, leadership is the precise answer. Africa needs leaders that respect and follow the provisions of their constitutions and who cultivate a culture of constitutionalism, democracy and good governance in the continent, since political leaders are the primary holders, controllers and distributors of power and resources in a particular institution (i.e. institutional power) and/or territory (i.e. geo-political power).

II. Conceptualization of terms

The term "democracy" means different things to different people. Indeed, there is a wide range of perspectives as to the meaning and content of democracy as well as to the conditions of its realization; all of which vary depending on the philosophical, ideological, political, cultural, social, and economic perspectives.