

# On Political Leadership and Development in Africa: A Case Study of Kenya

By Mumo Nzau

## Abstract

This article seeks to examine intricacies and dynamics of political leadership in Africa's development experience since independence in the 1960s. Using examples from various African countries from East and West, to Central and Southern Africa, the article interrogates the role of colonial legacy and post-colonial mishandling of state affairs in African states. The article suggests that the failure of statecraft visible in structural and institutional failure in African states can be explained through examination of performance by post colonial leaders. In this discourse, the conceptual frameworks of the politics-development nexus in Africa as well as Africa's post-independence leadership traditions are revisited. The article seeks to underscore the fact that during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first ten years of the 21<sup>st</sup>, African leadership seems to have taken a path of political orthodoxy that appeared quite different from earlier traditions. The main argument in this article is centered on the contention that good political leadership is a universal phenomenon that is not tied to prevailing and/or fashionable development traditions such as capitalism and socialism or both. What it suggests is that what a country's political leaders want to achieve for their citizens is what counts and not structures or institutions. Under sincere and visionary political leaders, few African countries such as Libya, Ghana and Botswana have been able to achieve impressive levels of socio-economic development. Notwithstanding the excesses of late Dictator Muamar Gaddafi's excesses, the focus of the article is socio-economic development rather than issues of transparency, accountability and the whole gamut of democratic practice. Thus, the focus is development. The article also examines the contrary scenarios of underperforming governments in Africa, including Kenya which is one of the case studies that form the focus of this article.

**Key terms:** Political Leadership; Africa; Social and Economic Development; Kenya; Ghana

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## Introduction

Politics is the activity in which individuals seek to influence decision-making in society either for their own personal gain or to the advantage of group interests they represent. Harold Lasswell's old aphorism that politics is about who "who gets what, when and how" in society defines it even more succinctly (Lawson, 2006: 4). A political leader is that person who holds

public office with the mandate of making authoritative and binding decisions on behalf of those who bestow upon him/her such privilege (Duverger, 1972:5-6). Since the emergence of the modern nation-state system, political leadership has evolved rapidly to become a highly advanced, institutionalised and sophisticated activity in many parts of the world (Heywood, 1997). However in other parts, it may be difficult for one to make a clear rationale for the existence of political leadership, let alone make sense of its mandate in society.

Perhaps accounting for these disparities may better explain why some societies are more socio-economically advanced than others. Development is defined as the process in which any human society strives to reach self-sufficiency, self-reliance, technological advancement, justice and equity. In the modern sense, it focuses on “human development”; measured by the wellbeing and living standards of people in reference to access to basic needs, per capita income, literacy levels, mortality rates and poverty indices among other factors (Hulme & Turner, 1997:11-12). This chapter seeks to critically assess the relationship between political leadership and development in Africa, with specific reference to Kenya.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In broad terms, the conceptual framework for understand African politics and development has revolved around several well-defined approaches (Chazan, et al 2000:3-24). The first approach is centred on the concept of modernization that emerged in the 1960s. The second approach- dependency- came to the fore in the 1970s. As economic conditions in Africa reached crisis proportions especially in the 1980s, a third approach- statist- gained currency. Lately, an integrative tendency is taking shape that seeks to bring together within a broader societal framework what has been proven to be useful in the modernization, dependency and statist conceptual frameworks.

The basic premise behind the modernisation approach was that African societies were in the process of becoming “modern” rational entities in which efficacy and scientific logic replaced traditional values and belief systems. In economic terms, modernization meant rapid industrialization and growth (Rostow, 1971). In social terms, its goals were defined as increasing individual mobility and establishing procedures for equitable resource allocation. In political terms modernization implied expansion and rationalization of the government apparatus, power concentration, some measure of political participation, and an augmentation of capacities in order to meet growing demands. Modernization was seen as providing a foundation for African countries to achieve, first, a measure of stability and autonomy and ultimately, a pattern of convergence with the Western industrialized world. In the modernization perspective, the task of politics was to create the conditions for equitable growth by ensuring social quiescence and stable government. If African countries faltered on this path, then these shortcomings could be attributed either to poor judgments, mistaken ideologies, conflict between competing goals, or an inability to overcome cultural impediments deeply rooted in African societies. In the eyes of this approach which is Western in origin; the task of the African political leader is to guide his country diligently in this path.

In contrast to the modernization approach, the dependency and underdevelopment school focused not on the process of development but on the roots of underdevelopment in Africa. They shunned what they claimed to be empty objectivity and seeming benevolence that underlay the idea of modernization. They asserted that Africa remained impoverished- a condition that was as a result of circumstances that enabled other countries to benefit at her expense (Frank, 1972). To

them, the beginnings of Africa's systematic impoverishment were linked historically to European imperialism which, not only brought Africa into the global economy but did so in a structurally unequal manner (Rodney, 1979). Colonial economic policies perpetuated this institutionalized vulnerability to external economic forces and constrained the political latitude of new African leaders on the eve of independence. In contrast, with the modernization approach, the dependency and underdevelopment theorists present politics in terms of resources and control rather than management (Amin, 1977).

The theory is Marxist in emphasis on class struggle. It is Leninist in its emphasis on imperialism. The analytic structure of dependency theory is relatively simple and straightforward. The capitalist world consists of four interrelated classes: the Capitalist Centre which comprises of Western Europe, Japan and North America; the Periphery of the Centre, that is, the exploited under classes of the advanced capitalist world; the Centre of the Periphery who are the Dependent Bourgeoisie (the political leadership) in Third World countries; and the Periphery of the Periphery that is, the masses of poor peasants and lumpens in the Developing Countries- the scum of the earth. The former (Centre) granted political independence to the latter (Periphery) in the knowledge that these Dependent/National Bourgeoisie- in this case the African Political leadership- who came in to acquire a large measure of political power in the at independence could maintain the existing patterns of trade and industrial dependency to the benefit of the Centre- the more advanced economies of Europe and North America (Rush, 1992: 219-236). Hence, the bulk of the surplus continued to be extracted for use in the metropolitan countries which enjoyed a monopoly in industrial technology as well as international commodity markets. In other words most African leaders are puppets of the Western powers because they remain conduits for extraction and impoverishment of their own peoples. In the thinking of the dependency and underdevelopment theorists, there is no way African countries can develop following the path (modernization) set by countries that impoverished her historically through slavery and imperialism. The only solution was that offered by neo-Marxist tradition, the adoption of Socialism (Wilber, 1973: 65-114).

In the statist approach, the state is viewed as a primary force behind social and economic occurrences on the continent and state leaders are held responsible for the political and economic deterioration in their countries. Unlike its predecessors, the modernization and dependency schools; it broke out of existing models and placed intra-African political factors at the centre of investigation and analysis. For scholars working within this framework, state structures are vital in coming to grips with contemporary African political processes (Sandbrook, 1999). They presumed that the state is more than a descriptive entity: that it is an actor with interests, capacities, and achievements and of course, frailties. These analysts see the Africa post-independence state as autonomous, at least to some extent, and hence as a separate entity in its own right.

The concept of politics that emerges from the statist argument is extremely instrumental to understanding the place of political leadership in the African development debate. Power holders, it is claimed, have created structures of domination that have enabled them to misuse their offices to reap personal gains at the expense of the pressing needs of the bulk of the population. If Africa is undergoing a process of impoverishment, then the leaders of the new states bear much of the blame for this state of affairs. The food crises of 1980s; the debt crisis of the mid- 1980s and 1990s; the civil wars of the 1990s and the ensuing crises of governance are the outcome of an extractive approach to politics that guided African ruling classes for over a generation (Nzau, 2007). Perhaps the statist approach is best placed in an examination of the

place of political leadership in Africa's development discourse. This is because; half a century of political independence is long enough to hold them accountable for their conduct as far as the economic development of their countries is concerned.

### **Three Post-Independence Leadership Traditions**

According to Mazrui & Tidy, the Westminster style of democratic leadership is based on open debate and electoral processes (Mazrui & Tidy, 1984). Although there is nothing that can be said to be democratic about colonialism, this style of leadership is supposedly what the African leaders inherited from the more developed political systems of their colonial masters at independence. Nevertheless, this style of leadership seemed to have disappeared almost everywhere in Africa in the first decade of political independence, giving way to different and often less democratic patterns of leadership. The political leaders of Africa's new nations over the years displayed various patterns of leadership which appeared to be revolutionary or at least radical. It is notable that these leadership patterns in Africa were not necessarily new and in a way, they followed the ways of leadership traditions of Africa's pre-colonial past. Further, Mazrui and Tidy identified and discussed three such patterns: the elder, sage and warrior leadership traditions.

The 'elder' tradition is heavily paternalistic (fatherly). It is particularly strong where there still is the original first president of an African state. It goes with the notion of 'the founding father' who had prerogatives not only in politics but also in opinion formation. This kind of figure may, prefer to withdraw from involvement in the "nitty-gritty" affairs of the nation but instead, dominate the scene from a God-like position in the background. He does not act as a participating politician but would delegate duties to lesser colleagues. These patriarchal leaders can be profoundly African especially when it combines with the African reverence for age and wisdom. A good example is Mzee Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Houphet Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire and most recently, Nelson Mandela of South Africa who is fondly called *Madiba* (Tordoff, 2003).

The other tradition is the "Sage". The president here is the ultimate teacher of the nation. Under this tradition, ideology becomes a monopoly of the centre and an effort is made to ensure substantive responsiveness to the ideas that emanate from the centre takes place. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt in his work "The Philosophy of Revolution" attempted to show how Egypt was the centre of the world; centre of the 'three circles' which Egypt must lead-the Arab world, the Muslim world and Africa. Kwame Nkrumah wrote several books to educate not only Ghanaians but also other African's in his vision of the new African society. Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere is perhaps the example per excellence of the sage ruler and foremost exponent of the use of ideological radicalism to impact a leader's teaching on his people of Tanzania (Nyerere, 1970).

Finally there is the Warrior Tradition. It is historically linked to the 'primary resistance' to colonial intrusion such as the *Nandi* Revolt in Kenya of 1903 and the 1906 *Maji Maji* Rebellion in Tanzania. However the warrior tradition declined sharply due to the forces of colonialism- the colonial administrator's gunfire and the Christian priest's hellfire. Yet the warrior tradition revived just before the colonial period was over. For example the 1948-1963 *Mau Mau* Rebellion of Kenya overcame the conditioning of "turning the other cheek" and "terror of external damnation" to marshal armed force against the British colonialism (Birmingham D., 1995:41-47). In essence, the seemingly revolutionary military regimes of the late 1960s through to the 1980s perhaps carried the mantle of pre-colonial warriorhood- marking the beginning of a

new warrior tradition of African leadership. The struggles against dependency and also a reaction to misrule in the hands of Founding Fathers as exemplified by certain military regimes in post-independence Africa represented a reactivation of the ancestral assertiveness of warrior culture. A good example is Samora Machel's Mozambique, Gama Abdel Nasser's Egypt, Jerry Rawlings's Ghana, Mengistu Haille Mariam's Ethiopia, Thomas Sankara's Burkina Faso, Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe and Muammar Gadaffi's Libya (Keith & Agbese, 2004: 1-17).

### **Restoration of the Westminster Model versus an Orthodox Model**

Mazrui and Tidy were of course writing on the 'three traditions of African leadership' at a time - 1980s- when the continent was somewhat transiting from its better days (1960s and 1970s) towards its worst times (1990s) as far as political leadership is concerned. Leadership under the elders, sages and warriors had just waxed and was soon to wane; giving way to an age of African political leadership that witnessed limited clamour towards a restoration of the Westminster Model of democratic leadership on one hand, and (what the author now calls) an Orthodox Style of political leadership on the continent- one characterised by oscillations from total regime collapse through toxic misrule to some mundane imitations of the Westminster Model. In short, most of these leaders are certainly not warriors like Gaddafi, Thomas Sankara and Jerry Rawlings; neither sages like Nyerere and Nkrumah, nor elders like Jomo Kenyatta and Felix Houghphout-Boigny.

A discussion of the re-emergence of the Westminster Model is perhaps straight-forward though not without difficulty. Very few countries fall in this category. These include at most; Botswana, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania and Ghana. In these countries, political consistency, on the part of political leaders: in the direction of open debate, free flow of public information, a free press, a guarantee of civil rights and liberties entrenched in Constitutions and regular, free and fair elections; coupled with responsive and responsible governments was exhibited. These countries remained stable under visionary leaders who adopted moderately open market economies and upheld democratic ideals; setting their countries for further sustainable growth and socio-economic development.

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of an age in which many of Africa's "elders, sages and warriors" seemed to have outlived their usefulness at least in ideological terms. Their "milking cows" (Cold War Super Powers) finally kicked the pale, accompanied by changes in the international body politique, in which US-led liberalism stepped-in to fill the ideological vacuum left behind by the Cold War. Furthermore, ideologies that informed the struggle for independence and the consolidation of political legitimacy for the elders, sages and warriors; such as African nationalism, African socialism and anti-imperialism were no longer appealing to the masses- they were nothing more than stale slogans in the wrong mouthpieces.

This state of things slowly culminated in the overthrow of authoritarian regimes in countries like Ethiopia (1991), Somalia (1991), Liberia (1990) and Sierra Leone (1990) and; as well as the adoption of multiparty systems in Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mauritania, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Burundi among others, soon thereafter. This was the so-called 'second liberation'- liberation meant to rid Africa of its own, home-grown colonialists (Thomson, 2004:232-238). But this second liberation for many countries never materialized. Instead the long awaited restoration of the Westminster style was replaced by an orthodox style of political leadership. In these countries, there was total lack of consistency from

one country to another in terms of free, fair and regular elections; significant turnover of national leadership; better and accountable governance records and responsive and responsive leadership. Worse still, Africa was characterised by a crisis of legitimacy, regime collapse, civil war, mass internal displacements and genocide in the hands of sitting presidents and rebel leaders (Gupta, 1996: 1-13).

At the extreme of this orthodoxy are Africa's rebel leaders- who unfortunately carry a lot of political clout among their followers- the likes of the late Foday Sankor in Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor in Liberia, Joseph Kony in Uganda and Jean Pierre Bemba in Congo DRC among others; whose idea of leadership is maiming, murder, mutilation, rape, torture and other forms of terror on civilian populations (Pumphrey, et al, 2003:11). It is courtesy of such "extraordinary leaders" that an extraordinary court- the International Criminal Court (ICC) had to be established by the world, to deal with such political toxicity. Most recently a poor imitation of the Westminster style of democratic leadership seems to have emerged; starting with Kenya's experience in 2007. Under the guidance of national and party leaders: violent and corrupt party nominations took place; followed by the disputed December 2007 General Elections in which, nation-wide voting was followed by nation-wide vote rigging and other forms of electoral blackmail which then culminated into nation-wide ethnic violence, crime and near civil war (Commission on the 2007 General Elections *Kriegler Report*, 2008).

The final result was an African Union-led mediation process led by the former UN Secretary General Koffi Annan among other eminent figures on the continent such as Graca Machel and Benjamin Mkapa the retired President of Tanzania; that settled on a compromised mix in the name of Coalition Government. A replica of the same was soon to take place in Zimbabwe. It is the same kind of orthodoxy that saw the rise to power of military juntas in Mauritania in August 2008 led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz; in Guinea under Captain Moussa Daddis Camara who captured power after the death of President Lansana Conte in 2008; and in Madagascar where the army installed a puppet regime led by Rajoelina following the ouster of President Mark Ravalomanana. One striking feature of these leaders is their resilient belief that they are Africa's "long-awaited for democratic political leaders". This is far from true. But what is democratic about Africa's political leadership? A discussion of the background of political leadership in Africa attempts to answer this question.

### **Political Leadership in Africa: A Brief Background**

If it is true that "society deserves the leadership it gets" then it may be argued that the African political leader is a product of certain ecological factors prevailing in the society to which he/she belongs (Hegel, 1770-1830). Back in the pre-colonial African societies, there were two kinds of political systems: those that had centralised political authority on one hand, and those that had uncentralised political authority on the other. Centralised political systems had leaders who enjoyed a monopoly of decision-making and policy execution over their subjects and these subjects mostly owed total allegiance to them. These systems were invariably monarchies in which the King ruled either absolutely or by association with non-royal clans or tribes. On the other hand, the uncentralised political systems were those in which there wasn't any form of central authority or a central figure who enjoyed a monopoly of policy-making. Such decision-making was vested in Councils of Elders, Clan Elders or Religious Figures who were revered by society (Evans-Pritchard, 1962:66-86). Such leaders made decisions that had authoritative implications upon their peoples. Nonetheless, it is agreeable that such leaders; whether in the

centralised or un-centralised systems enjoyed rights and privileges associated with their positions in society. Sometimes these rights and privileges may have been either misused or utilised for the good of society. Of course, these pre-colonial leadership traits had a bearing on the nature and dynamics of politics in the post-independence era (Potholm, 1979:11-24).

It is noteworthy that abuse of political authority is not a benign concern in Political Theory. Baron de Montesquieu in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748); said that ‘any person vested with power is bound to abuse it if that power is not checked’. Lord Acton said that ‘power corrupts, but absolute power corrupts absolutely’. The import of these statements is that they explain these pre-colonial settings quite succinctly- that; in societies where there were institutionalised mechanisms to hold leaders accountable for their actions, it was highly unlikely that such leaders would abuse the rights and privileges associated with their high positions in society; while in those where such mechanisms lacked institutional value, then the contrary occurred- abuse of power. One may argue that; were it not for colonial expediency on the continent, perhaps African political leadership institutions would have taken some “natural path” either for better, or worse. But what did colonialism exactly do to change and/or alter this setting?

The most far reaching political impact of colonialism was the imposition of the European nation-state into the extremely rich and varied African political systems that existed during pre-colonial time. When the European state system was grafted onto Africa, sovereignty remained in the hands of the occupying colonial powers. The imposition of the European nation-state system created a series of artificial states that unlike those in Europe did not evolve gradually according to the wishes of indigenous African peoples. They were ‘nation-states’ that did not belong to the African peoples; the Africans did not create them, nor did they enjoy the rights and obligations of that came with the same. The primary objective of the colonial state, however, was to achieve and maintain European domination. A coercive apparatus of police and military force was created in every colony with the intention of ensuring local compliance with colonial rules and regulations. Success was achieved through a conscious policy of divide-and-rule. Sadly, after independence, many political leaders at the national level in many African countries continued to use the same colonial divide-and-rule tactics among their populations in order to sustain themselves in power (Shraeder, 2004:28). In Kenya for example; the ruling elite in one tribe point to the ruling elite in the other tribe as the only “few rich and corrupt” thereby pitting tribe against tribe; yet in the real sense there are no differences between them but common political and economic interests and realities (Ochieng, 1998).

With the creation of new colonial states, various African ethnic groups found themselves scattered into different states. The Somali people of the Horn of Africa are a notable example. Previously united by a common culture but lacking a centralized authority the Somali territory was divided among four imperial powers: Britain, Italy, France and Ethiopia. Indeed, these historical facts partly account for the crisis of legitimacy and total regime collapse that has befallen the Somali nation since 1991 to present. Also, the incorporation of previously separate and highly diverse African peoples into one colonial state negatively shaped the institutions of political leadership. The most notable challenge associated with the creation of these colonial states was the potential clash between highly diverse political cultures (Mann, 2004:55-69). The armed rebellions and secessionist movements such as the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, the Oromo National Liberation Front (ONLF) and United Western Somali Liberation Front (UWSLF) both in Ethiopia, as well as the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in the Western Darfur region in Sudan

are partly explained by the incompatibility of leadership between potentially diverse cultures lumped together, courtesy of colonial occupation (Gordon & Gordon, 1996).

The colonial administration dismantled the traditional checks-and-balances that regulated political systems during the pre-colonial independence era. Whereas traditional leaders answered to the political norms and customs of their individual societies during the pre-colonial independence era, the creation of the colonial state meant that the ultimate source of power became the European colonial administrator (Robinson R. and Gallagher, 1968). In many countries around Africa today, particularly where the colonizing power totally destroyed the indigenous socio-political institutions, traditional leadership values have since lost meaning. Today, in many societies, the idea of respect for age and elder hood, which was rooted in a sense of service to the gods and society in pre-colonial Africa, does not matter anymore. Only money counts. It is common knowledge that to secure victory in an election in Kenya, one has to bribe supporters, sabotage opponents and bribe election officials.

Further, though pre-colonial systems were highly patriarchal, colonialism further enforced this patriarchy to the detriment of women: this was particularly so in the case of matrilineal societies where women played a number of informal and formal roles, including serving as the political leaders in several African societies (Parpart, 1988:210). With the advent of European colonialism African women increasingly found themselves politically marginalized in their respective political systems, where politics was the sole preserve of men. Although the African men suffered under colonialism, new opportunities eventually appeared for them at independence, while African women's economic and political rights often diminished (Gordon & Gordon, 1996:251-161). It is no surprise therefore that in most of Africa today, women are lagging behind in political leadership. They are mostly relegated to the domestic sphere and the few who have made it politically do so through male-dominated patronage lines and affirmative action arrangements.

Finally, the introduction of formal education through missionary schools was deliberately meant to create a situation in which Africa depended on Europe culturally- and hence economically and politically. European colonization did not introduce education into Africa, instead; it provided new types of educational institutions and fostered new types of educational, cultural and social values. These values were meant to Europeanize and de-Africanize Africa. In colonial Africa, religious education was accorded high priority and was based on western religious values. Christian Churches in Africa during the colonial times had a role which was not just to spread the gospel but also to uphold the political, social and economic order- which was essentially imperial (Mondlane, 1943:66).

Perhaps this explains many political leaders in post-independence Africa- though they were instrumental in fighting for independence using the same formal education and exposure- are largely either consciously or unconsciously caught-up in the trap of unresponsiveness and responsibility towards their own impoverished peoples. Perhaps many were culturally colonized to the point of blindly turning their countries into economic enclaves for former colonial powers through unequal trade and Foreign Direct Investment concessions to the detriment of their own countries' development. Many others like particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa seemed to admire the power wealth and manipulative tendencies of colonial Lords, Settlers and Land Barons. At independence, they unduly took advantage of the easy access they had to financial resources and state machinery to buy huge tracts of land where they operated large commercial enterprises and tended to treat their own African workers just like their colonial masters did, if not worse.

In the case of Kenya, the colonial government as elsewhere in Africa was quite authoritarian. It performed the functions of maintaining the colonial status quo by safeguarding the privileges and interests of the colonial state and the settler population. Its most outstanding duty was to maintain law and order for the sole purpose of pacifying the local population in order to further ensure total submission and not challenging colonial rule. The other major function was to keep the native populations away from areas of economic and strategic interest to the colonial government and the settler. It was for this reasons that the colonial Identity Card (*kipande*) was introduced in order to ensure that the distribution, settlement and activity of native populations was controlled by the colonial power. This explains the establishment of the so called “reserve lands” where the indigenous populations were contained (Hyden, et al: 1970).

Another major function of the colonial government was to sustain wealth creation for the colonial state. It was supposed to facilitate and create a favourable environment through infrastructure and social amenities in order to sustain the colonial economy. It also imposed taxes -head tax and hut tax- as a way of keeping track of the indigenous economy and raising some revenue out of it. This was not necessarily for the sake of the native population but for the benefit of the colonial state. Over and above these features, it is also possible to argue that the colonial administration itself was quite centralized because although there was Provincial Administration, all policy directives that come from the government were themselves channelled from the Colonial Office in London headed by the Secretary to the Colonies. It is against this background that on the eve of independence many Africans argued in favour of reducing the central government’s powers (Tordoff, 2003:137-150).

In a nutshell, colonialism was quite racist, exploitative and in many cases, brutally callous. It destroyed many African indigenous political systems and their leadership institutions. A lot of positive leadership qualities that these societies enjoyed were replaced with others for the sole benefit of the colonizing power- Britain. The African nationalists who led the struggles for independence were themselves educated in colonial schools and had gone abroad for further studies in the same countries that colonised them. It is difficult to tell to what extent this education impacted on the cultural outlook of these later-to-be African political leaders. Maybe these leaders had been transformed into Europeans, who represented European values and interests in their own countries- “black skins with white masks” (Fanon, 1970:34).

All in all, African countries did attain political independence and had the legitimacy to chart out their own destiny. A decade or so after the end of Second World War most African countries attained political independence from the colonial powers of Western Europe. These new independent countries were grossly underdeveloped, characterised by widespread poverty, disease and lack of formal education. African leaders at the time were not quite certain which developmental path was most suitable to deliver their peoples out of this state of socio-economic malaise and hopefully catch-up with the living standards of the more advanced economies of Western Europe and North America (Seddon & Seddon-Daines, 2005). Yet five decades later, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, many African countries are not any better if not worse in terms of macro-economic performance and life standards (Mazrui, 1996). The question(s) to pose at this juncture is: How does one then account for this state of affairs? Better still, what was the meaning of “development” to the African founding fathers in the first place? On what premises was it informed- in other words, were African countries founded by leaders who wanted to build great and progressive societies for the good of all citizens? Where did the African leadership go wrong?

## **A Critical Analysis of the Political Leadership- Development Nexus**

At independence African political leaders were faced with several important challenges. First; they differed on the best strategy to promote development in their countries. However, they agreed substantially over methods. The “instrument of both diagnosis and remedy was the development Plan”. There were three options as far as development planning was concerned. The first one was the western model of development planning (also known as the Indicative Model) This essentially Western Model allowed for the political economy to be shaped by market forces with limited state interference. The second was the Socialist Model of development planning (also known as Centralized or Imperative Model). The third was a model that adopted what appeared like a merger of the capitalist and socialist models; hence, most African leaders choose to adopt centrally controlled development planning that was to operate within a mixed economy- one in which the public and private sectors played a substantial role. Some countries however choose to follow a purely socialist model in which the state controlled the economy in terms of who produces what and in what quantities. This was applied in countries like Tanzania under Dr. Nyerere, Mozambique under Samora Machel, Libya under Gaddafi and Guinea under Sekou Toure (Thomson, 2004: 1-23).

At the same time, African political leaders were faced with the great challenge of uplifting the standards of life of their peoples through the provision of basic needs and the creation of a favourable environment by government- one that would engender economic growth and the creation of national wealth. Another challenge was associated with the ideological path that was to guide the development process. African countries attained political independence at a time when the international political system was strongly shaped, conditioned and divided by the Cold War. They had to choose whether to adopt the socialist ideology or adopt the capitalist ideology or even declare their support for the non-aligned movement. Most African countries choose to be non-aligned and evolved their own ideological style under the rubric of African socialism (Tordoff, 2003:140-150).

In reality however, African heads of state traded one super power against another depending on which one suited them best and ensured their continued stay in power. Africa became a battlefield for proxy wars between the Socialist Eastern Bloc and the Capitalist Western Bloc. In Western leaning systems, dissidents and/or belligerent groups were branded socialist/Marxist; while in Eastern leaning systems dissidents and/or opposition groups and individuals were branded imperialist elements and agents of neo-colonialism. The sad reality however was that as struggles for power control and influence took place in Africa in the name of “weeding out” either socialist or imperialist elements, the noble aspects of politics and national development were lost. In essence, Cold War politics catalyzed bloody civil wars and forms of totalitarian regimes regardless of which side of the ideological divide these countries belonged- it bred African totalitarian dictators such as Jean Bedal Bokassa in the Central African Republic, Mobutu of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Somalia under Siad Barre and Ethiopia under Mengistu Haile Mariam (Tangri, 1985).

In another line of argument; at independence, African countries inherited an economy that was mostly not indigenous to them and at the same time this economy (almost in every sector was dominated by foreign companies or firms which had operated in the colonial economy). This meant that there was a very small domestic private sector of the indigenous kind. The local populations could not raise enough financial capital to support the economy. This small domestic industrial and financial base drove African governments to seek alternatives that

took two forms. The first alternative was to set up state owned and controlled enterprises to run the economy- commonly known Parastatals. These enterprises were supposed to jump-start industrialization in the newly independent countries. Such ventures included banking, transport and telecommunication manufacturing as well as marketing. Unfortunately, the management of these organizations was interfered with by regime members, turning the top management positions into objects of reward for individuals who were “politically correct”- the political financiers, advisors and sycophants of the ruling president and his party. It is no wonder that such public enterprises had collapsed due to heavy losses by the early 1980s.

The second option that was open to the African countries in their quest for industrialization was that of supplementing their fiscal budgets through economic aid and Official Development Assistance (Mboya, 1968:27-41). This was done with the view of accessing the much needed foreign exchange, and further, with the view of off-setting balance of payments deficits. African countries reached out to various bilateral and multilateral donors and lenders (World Bank, IMF among other International Financial Institutions). This was thus driven by the need raise more liquid capital that was crucial for the purchasing of capital goods necessary for industrial activity in these early years of independence. Yet in many countries, the regimes in power used these monies fraudulently and in some cases with blatant impunity- leading to the accumulation of national debts, which reached crisis proportions in what became the Africa Debt Crisis of the 1980s and 1990s (Aseka, 1996:29-37).

Finally perhaps the greatest challenge to African leaders in the early years of independence was purely political. Perhaps this had to do with the question of regime survival and the intrigue of state formation. Whilst new states were formed at independence, the regimes that were in power got lured into the trap of popularizing and perpetuating themselves. Subsequently, they adopted authoritarian styles or governance and soon towards- the late 1960s and early 1970s- most African countries were either faced with civil wars and rebellions, personal dictatorships and unconstitutional power take-over through the barrel of the gun. It may be argued that the challenges facing African leaders at independence were many and to tackle them, political leaders needed both vision and informed objectivity (Hyden & Cohen, 1992).

Perhaps, how best African leaders handled these challenges was perhaps the distinguishing factor between good and bad and/or irresponsible political leadership. It is not easy to tell who among these leaders truly wished to form governments for the good of all citizens. Nonetheless some countries in Africa can be said to have been formed by great leaders who had foresight and extra-ordinary cognitive endowments- no matter if they were liberal-democratic or totalitarian; capitalist, socialist or both (Nzau, 2010). For practical purposes Libya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Botswana can be discussed, each representing Northern, Western, Eastern, and Southern Africa respectively.

Muammar Gaddafi of Libya captured power in 1969 as part of a popular reaction to the amassing of national wealth by the then absolute monarch and founding father of Libya, King Idris, who had led Libya since independence in 1951. Gaddafi adopted a purely socialist political-economy for his country. He sure had autocratic tendencies and clung to power for 40 years (Gawdat, 2005). But his style of leadership rid Libya of foreign imperial multinationals before declaring the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Great Jamahiriya. Libya is considered a de-facto dictatorship by several international definitions and analogies. In theory, there are two branches of government in Libya. The “revolutionary sector” comprises Revolutionary Leader the late Gaddafi, the Revolutionary Committees and the remaining members of the 12-person Revolutionary Command Council, which was established in 1969. The historical revolutionary

leadership is not elected and cannot be voted out of office; they are in power by virtue of their involvement in the revolution.

The second tier constitutive the legislative branch of government, which has all the qualities of a representative democracy. This sector comprises Local People's Congresses in each of the 1,500 urban wards, 32 Sha'biyat People's Congresses for the regions, and the National General People's Congress. These legislative bodies are represented by corresponding executive bodies (Local People's Committees, Sha'biyat People's Committees and the National General People's Committee/Cabinet). Every four years, the membership of the Local People's Congresses elects their own leaders and the secretaries for the People's Committees, sometimes after many debates and a critical vote. The leadership of the Local People's Congress represents the local congress at the People's Congress of the next level. The members of the National General People's Congress elect the members of the National General People's Committee (the Cabinet at their annual meeting (Blanchard, 2006).

The World Bank defines Libya as an 'Upper Middle Income Economy', along with only seven other African countries. In the early 1980s, Libya was one of the wealthiest countries in the world; its GNP per capita was higher than that of countries such as Italy, Singapore, South Korea, Spain and New Zealand. Today, high oil revenues and a small population give Libya one of the highest GDPs per person in Africa and have allowed the Libyan state to provide an extensive level of social security, particularly in the fields of health, housing and education (World Bank: 2010). Col. Muammar Gaddafi Libya's leader was killed by rebels in the City of Sirte in Libya on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2011 following a wave of rebellions in North Africa that began in Tunisia and later in Egypt early 2011. Although Gaddafi had ruled Libya as a dictator: to say that Gaddafi was a totally irresponsible leader would be a product of poor judgement shrouded in subjectivity. In the 1970s, through to the 1990s, he was true representation of the warrior tradition of leadership though on his late though in his latter years in power, Gaddafi seemed to lose grips with reality and to accept change. He had lost favour among Arab leaders and the West alike (Vandewall, 2011:11-21).

Nigeria, as opposed to Libya not only enjoys the abundance of oil but also abundance in terms of good climate, soils and people. Yet under these circumstances, its political leadership record leaves a lot to be desired. Nigeria attained its independence in 1960 under the leadership of Nnamdi Azikiwe (an Igbo) as President and Sir Abubakar Tefawa Balewa (a Northerner) as Prime Minister. They adopted an economic model that largely exhibited state capitalism- a capitalist model, but one that has strong government presence through fiscal planning and public enterprises. Nigeria's leadership seemed unable to overcome the problems associated with state formation prevailing in Africa at the time. Nigeria is composed of over 250 different ethnic groups. Three major ethnic groups comprise roughly 66 percent of the total population and primarily reside in three geographical regions: the Igbo in the south east, the Yoruba in the south west and Hausa/Fulani in the North (Lowe, 1997:460-463).

Differences and incompatibilities between these communities played out between 1964 and 1966, with political leaders from the three major tribes blaming each other for the unemployment and sharp inflation prevailing in the country at the time. In January 1966, there was a military coup carried out by mainly Igbo officers, in which Balewa and other leading politicians such as Ahmadu Bello and Akintola were killed. In the ensuing retaliation, a Northerner, Colonel Yakubu Gowon emerged supreme. A civil war broke out and lasted between 1967 and 1970, in which the main target was the Igbo tribe, which had earlier declared that their region, Biafra, had seceded from the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Biafra lost and the "unity" of

Nigeria was restored but her leadership problem was far from over (Ekwe-Ekwe, 1990:115-127). From the 1970s, 1980s through 1990s, Nigeria remained mainly under military rule. Most of these military rulers were irresponsible and unresponsive oligarchs who stashed millions of dollars accruing from corrupt oil deals in foreign accounts.

The product of this misrule and poor governance is a country that did not hold democratic elections for more than 30 years of her post-independence life; characterised by skewed development, corruption, tribalism, nepotism and mass poverty amidst colossal wealth in the hands of a few (Osaghae, 1998). Nonetheless, Nigeria did hold multiparty elections in 1999 in which Olusegun Obasanjo became President. He was re-elected in 2005 and was succeeded by President Umaru Yar'Adua who won the 2007 national elections. Umaru Yar'Adua's rule was a spectacle or at least peculiar through not strange in African standards. He unfortunately fell ill to the point of being incapacitated but clung on to power. For several months in which he was in a comma in hospital in Saudi Arabia, he remained Head of State and Government- a thing that sparked protests and uncertainty in and around Nigeria before his demise in May 5<sup>th</sup> 2010. Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as Yar'Adua's replacement on May 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, becoming Nigeria's 14th Head of State. He would serve as President until the next election. Upon taking office, Jonathan cited anti-corruption, power and electoral reform as likely focuses of his administration. He stated that he came to office under "very sad and unusual circumstances."

In contrast to Nigeria, Tanzania is not a wealthy African country but it seemed to have had a potentially good leadership. At independence in 1961, it was ranked one of the poorest countries in the world. It was ruled by Julius Nyerere. His approach was different from that of other African rulers. He began conventionally enough by expanding the economy: during the first ten years of independence, production of coffee and cotton doubled and sugar production trebled, while health services and education expanded. His proposed solution to the problem was set out in a remarkable document known as the Arusha Declaration, published in 1967- *Ujamaa*. The country was to be run in socialist lines; stressing equality, state control over the means of production and intervention in economic life, elimination of poverty and disease, bribery and corruption (Thomson, 2004:50-56).

Although Tanzania still remained relatively poor, its leadership had succeeded in many ways than one in ensuring national unity and tolerance among dozens of ethnic communities. Nyerere's brand of socialism meant a one party state run by Tanzania African National Union (TANU) and later Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) but elections were still held. It seemed that some elements of genuine democracy existed, since in every General Election a large proportion of Members of Parliament would lose their seats. Nyerere himself provided defined leadership, and with his simple lifestyle and complete indifference to wealth, he set the perfect example for the party and the country to follow. It was a fascinating experiment which tried to combine socialist policies centred on African traditions and local decision-making (Lowe, 1997:463-463). It tried to prove an alternative to western capitalist society and its pursuit of profit, which most other African states seemed to be copying. Perhaps Tanzania is one of the few peaceful and united African countries that were truly founded by a leader who wanted to build a society for the good of all citizens. Tanzania has since adopted a free market economy and she has held successful General Elections that saw Presidents Ali Hassan Mwinyi, Benjamin Mkapa and currently Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete rise to power. It sure is in the right direction towards economic take-off.

The last example in this category is Botswana- a landlocked country in Southern Africa which gained independence in September 1966 from the British. It has held free and fair

democratic elections since independence. Seretse Khama, a leader in the independence movement and the legitimate claimant to the Ngwato Chiefship, was elected as the first President, re-elected twice. The presidency passed to the sitting Vice President, Quett Masire, who was elected in his own right to become President in 1984 and re-elected in 1989 and 1994. Masire retired from office in 1998. The presidency passed to the Festus Mogae, who was elected in his own right in 1999 and re-elected in 2004 (Thomson, 2004:100-104). The presidency passed in 2008 to Ian Khama, who resigned his position as leader of the Botswana Defense Force to take up this civilian role. Botswana is perhaps the most democratic country in Africa and its excellent economic record exhibits a direct relationship between good political leadership and development.

Botswana is a regional leader in economic prosperity and freedom. Macro-economic competitiveness and flexibility are promoted by a sensible business regulatory environment, openness to foreign investment and trade, and relatively flexible employment regulations. The financial sector remains relatively well developed, with an independent central bank and little government intervention. The independent judiciary provides strong protection of property rights. Botswana was one of the most impoverished countries in Africa when it became independent in 1966. Today, it is home to a relatively stable political system and a rapidly developing market economy. Being closely tied with the economy of South Africa, the country's economy is one of the most successful in Africa and is dominated by the fast-growing service sector, world-renowned diamond industry, tourism, and manufacturing. Botswana's economic growth rate has outpaced the economic growth of even the Asian Tigers, and the World Bank cites Botswana as one of the world's great development success stories.

These examples (particularly Libya and Botswana) have come to show that it doesn't really matter which model- Socialist, Capitalist, or a mixture of both- a country's political leadership adopts; but most important is what its leaders want to achieve for their people, guided by sincerity, openness and true nationalism. Under such political leaders, their countries have been able to set development policies and implement them as planned; more often than not managing to lift the quality of life of their citizens and ensuring stable political and macro-economic systems (Akeya, 1997).

## **A Case Study of Kenya**

Kenya's political leadership can be analysed at two levels: the National or Government level on one hand and the Political Party level at the other. Kenya attained independence in 1963 with Jomo Kenyatta as its leader. Given the instability of the political alliances formed immediately before and after independence, the first KANU government was unwilling to operate under the then Majimbo Constitution- which was essentially regional. Instead it tried to create a strong central authority- an intention that was confirmed in 1964 with the adoption of a Unitary Constitution, one that Kenya still follows to this date (Waruhiu, 1994:2-12). There seemed to be a move right from independence to introduce a strongly centralized governance structure. Two important aspects characterized the Kenyatta regime as far as development planning was concerned. First is that it supported- at least in principle- the ideas of African socialism; and second it was guided by highly centralized development planning which took a top-bottom approach that adopted what would be termed state capitalism; some kind of socialism with capitalist tendencies (Maxon, 2000:6).

In 1965 Tom Mboya tabled in Parliament Sessional Paper No.10- a blueprint for development in Kenya that was guided by the ideas of African socialism. It was further augmented by the *harambee* spirit which was a national motto that was meant to encourage participatory development. It was directed from Central Government; from the Office of the President, through to the Provincial Administration. Frankly put however, in reality there was nothing socialist about Kenya's development and its leadership at independence (Leys C.:1975). Parallel to this set up was a development planning strategy that was guided by the western capitalist model. This is the kind of development planning that was more formalized and was undertaken particularly by the Ministry of Planning and National Development in conjunction with all the other ministries particularly the Ministry for Rural Development and at the Office of the President (Amutabi, 2006). The most outstanding feature of this planning was the Five Year Development Plans, which were used to guide national development at all levels since independence. The Provincial Administration was supposed to be the central instrument in planning and application of these policies (Hyden, 1975:1-13).

Cold War politics had a big role to play in shaping Kenya's national leadership in the years following independence. Though Kenya was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement- at least in principle- the Kenyatta administration seemed keener to forge relations with countries of the Western Bloc particularly Great Britain, the United States and West Germany. She worked closely with these countries with the strategic aim of receiving economic military aid against what appeared to be "hostile neighbours" (Adar & Ngunyi, 1995:395-428). Tanzania was socialist while Uganda was increasingly becoming a bad neighbour especially under Idi Amin, the Ugandan military ruler, who in mid 1975 had declared most of Kenya's western region to be part of Uganda's territory. Meanwhile, there was change of guard in Ethiopia following the deposition of Haile Sellasie by the Marxist Military Junta (the *Dirge*) of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1974.

Across in Somalia Siad Barre had captured power through a military coup in 1969 and immediately declared his Scientific Socialism and Somali irredentism. Given this state of things the Kenyatta administration continued to work closely with the West. She was accused of taking an appeasement policy towards Great Britain on the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)- an unpopular move by the minority white settler population led by Ian Smith to introduce "another apartheid South Africa" in the then British colony (Oginga Odinga:1968). Kenya was further accused of maintaining ties with Apartheid South Africa which was globally ostracised by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity as well as the Commonwealth of Nations for its racist and separatist rule (Mazrui A. 1978:22).

Domestic political factors were also part and parcel of the Cold War political chessboard. Starting 1965, the ruling party Kenya African National Union (KANU) began to be faced with internal opposition. By 1966 Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Bildad Kaggia, Pio Gama Pinto and Achieng Onyango among others, had fallen out with the likes of Kenyatta, Tom Mboya and Daniel Moi who constituted the KANU's top brass. In fact Odinga went ahead to form another party, Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) that was later banned in 1969. It so happened that people who were opposed to the ruling party were easily branded "socialist elements" out to destabilize the government and their activities were closely curtailed by the government. In line with the Elder Tradition, Kenyatta was basically a patriarchal leader. His massive presence in terms of national authority was not interventionist except when it was really needed- projecting an air of solidity and stability in spite of old age. The affectionate use of the title '*Mzee*' for Kenyatta was a

manifestation of his patriarchal status and the filial example he represented. However, the father-figure at times developed profound distrust for dissent and is sometimes hostile to intellectual political criticism (Nation Media Group, *Makers of a Nation*, 2008).

On several occasions individuals who opposed his government such as Oginga Odinga, Martin Shikuku, Achieng Oneko, Jean Marie Seroney, George Anyona, Gideon Mutiso and Kiogi Wa Wamwere among others were either put under house arrest or detained without trial, while others like Ngugi Wa Thiongo took flight to exile. Several political assassinations- Pio Gama Pinto 1965, Tom Mboya 1969 and J.M Kariuki 1975- were carried out under his administration. Many times the Executive interfered with the conduct and outcome of General elections, bequeathing the people leaders they did not deserve. These autocratic tendencies constricted political space, civil liberties and consciously opened the way for illegal amassing of wealth especially through misappropriation of public resources on the part of public officials. Nonetheless, under Kenyatta's rule, Kenya's economic performance improved immensely, though this good performance was only on paper. The gap between the rich and the poor grew even wider. Critics called Kenya a country of 'ten millionaires and ten million beggars' (Nation Media Group, 2008).

With the demise of President Kenyatta, the Moi administration took over and followed in the footsteps of his predecessor through the *Nyayo* philosophy of "peace, love and unity." At the same time the public service under President Moi introduced fresh ideas with the implementation of the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD). This was an invention of central government to ensure that it was within the reach of the people and it was run by the Provincial Administration through District Development Committees, Divisional Development Committees- all of which were answerable to the Provincial Commissioner who then reported directly to the Head of Public Service and/or the President. Another major instrument of development in Kenya was the Parastatal Sector. These institutions were numerous in the first and second decade of independence and were created through Acts of Parliament in order to produce and distribute public goods and service. The performance of these institutions as far as socio-economic development in Kenya is concerned left a lot to be desired. This is because their performance was dismal and wrought with nepotism and grand corruption; especially in agriculture, transport and communication, commerce and industry which are crucial for the socio-economic development of the country (Okondo, 1995:8-21).

During the Moi regime the country witnessed a lot of the Kenyatta-style of running government. However, Moi developed a tendency to strengthen his grip on power especially following a failed attempt to topple his government in August 1982. Kenya became a *de jure* one party system following the amendments of section 2(A) of the Kenya Constitution in 1983. Subsequently, amendments were made to section 111 of the Constitution of Kenya which gave the president absolute power over all civil servants including holders of Constitutional Offices- he was above the law. This state of affairs enhanced the role of the Civil Service particularly the Provincial Administration and other forms of state coercive apparatus as instruments of regime control rather than national development. The state and the ruling party the Kenya African National Union (KANU) became one and the Party Politburo became more superior, in practical terms, to Cabinet and Parliament. Perceived dissidents, the likes of Raila Odinga, George Anyona, Mirugi Kariuki, Oginga Ogego, Willy Mutunga, Edward Oyugi, Prof Katama Mkangi, Kiogi Wa Wamwere, Wanyiri Hihoro and many others were detained without trial (Amutabi, 2007).

The assassination of Foreign Affairs Minister Robert Ouko in early 1990 and the mystery surrounding his death was also a dark spot in President Moi's leadership (Kibwana K. et al, 1995:25). His harsh style of dealing with perceived or imagined dissidents started to put his government in bad books with the Western powers Kenya had consistently supported at throughout the Cold War period. Economic aid from these countries- United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Canada and France- reduced drastically especially in the latter years of Moi's rule, though not to the point of total cessation of diplomatic relations (except for Norway which Kenya had accused of harbouring treasonous elements in the late 1980s). Subsequently, Kenya's economic performance deteriorated immensely in the decade of the 1990s (Munene, 1995:47-92). However, the clamour for multiparty politics did yield fruits when in 1991, Section 2(A) of the Kenya Constitution was repealed and Kenya after a long time adopted multiparty politics. President Moi did win the 1992 and 1997 General Elections by easily dividing an already grossly divided (Oyugi, 2004).

Nonetheless, the 2002 successful General Elections marked a new beginning for the country and in its relations with key allies both regionally and internationally. One would argue that the popularly elected National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government -one that rose to power through a platform change, transparency, accountability and rule of law- the country was now in the hands of an inspired and genuine political leadership. The NARC government led by President Mwai Kibaki appeared to present some degree of economic nationalism by seeking to go beyond the traditional trade and economic aid ties with Great Britain and United States among other key allies; to "looking East" to China and Japan for closer trade and development cooperation- a state of things that made Britain particularly, seemingly edgy on Kenya's conduct of international trade and economic affairs (Nasong'o, 2006: 27).

Kenya under the NARC dispensation did seem to have gotten back on the democratic course after replacing the 40 year old KANU regime: her economic growth rate per annum was headed for 6% and domestic revenue collection seemed sufficient to cover the fiscal budget (Central Bank of Kenya, 2008:114-117). Yet barely a year or two later, cracks began to appear on the political landscape. A Constitutional Referendum fuelled by elitist trajectories for power; amid serious accusations of grand corruption on the part of top leaders in government appeared to kill the spirit of the 2002 "moment of change" (Murunga & Nasong'o, 2007: 9-11). This culminated in the December 2007 elections, the disputed results of which opened the country's "horrific closet"- elite engineered ethnic violence that led to mass deaths, hatred and destruction among rural and urban impoverished populations(The Commission of Inquiry into the Post-election Violence -CIPEV- *Waki Commission Report*: 2009).

Kenya's image regionally and internationally remained immensely dented. At the national level, Kenya's experience of political leadership is perhaps a misrepresentation of the ethos of democracy (Nasongo, 2009:321-354). To put it metaphorically: If it is true that Kenyatta closed the doors to democracy in Kenya; and then his political son Moi put a padlock on it; then the Coalition leadership(s) - that was supposed to sustain the so called "Second Liberation"- maybe unlocked the padlock and opened the door, but shut the windows by failing to institutionalize democracy; denying the country political oxygen, hence further weakening its development potential.

At this juncture one can ask; is political party leadership in Kenya a formidable foundation for democratization and development? Since political parties are the main channels for interest identification, articulation and aggregation, they ought to be the "pools" from where the "waters" of good governance and democratic practice are drawn. Sadly, many parties in Kenya

only seek to placate the support of the people with the narrow view of winning parliamentary positions and to merely form governments following General Elections. Their accountability to their membership is short-lived and by extension so is the accountability to the greater interests of the country once they are in government. These political parties are poorly organized, poorly resourced and lack distinct ideological grounding (Wanjohi, 1997).

In the same token, many parties in Kenya lack institutionalized channels to guide their internal process of choosing leaders. In recent times, political commentators and analysts on Kenya tend to concentrate on national elections and their results. More often than not, they fail to scrutinize internal party processes before General elections. For instance, how do they arrive at the final candidates for parliamentary and presidential positions? One common process in Kenya is through nominations. Parties will normally select representatives who are delegated to Party Conventions at designated places, where they choose the leadership either by acclamation or through the secret ballot. The most interesting thing about these nomination exercises is the bribery, violence, deceit, sabotage and general orthodoxy that characterize them. In fact, the party nominations in the run-up to the 2007 General Elections in Kenya were so uncivilized and disorderly that it was only foolhardy for anyone to expect free and fair elections thereafter- they should have been declared the “Eight Wonder of the World” instead of the Wilder Beast Crossing on the dying Mara River, thanks to bad governance.

Voter bribery was also rampant during the exercise especially in the stronghold of the three main parties. In total political parties and candidates spent nearly Kshs. 1 billion in voter bribery during the nominations. A survey conducted by the Coalition for Accountable Political Finance found that politicians and their parties spent more than Kshs. 5 million in each of the 210 constituencies by the end of the party nominations week. The findings painted a damaging picture of party nominations outcome: it showed that effectively all party nominations exercises were about vote buying and voter bribery as four out of every five voters were bribed to participate in party nominations. The chaos that prevailed in the three main parties’ nominations resulted to last minute defections from major parties to the fringe parties which is a further indictment of the lack of institutionalization. Arising from the foregoing it is evident that political party leadership in Kenya has failed the ‘internal democracy’ test. They for the most part do not adhere to their own laid out operational procedures. Party Constitutions and Manifestoes which contain rules and regulations for conducting the affairs of parties exist on paper, but are never adhered to (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2007:25-36).

Many political parties in Kenya can pass to be private clubs that only seek to meet the minimum legal requirements for registration; only to remain moribund and/or dead only to resurrect for purposes of general elections. They rarely have a wide funding base save for membership fees. Only few rich and powerful individuals actually fund parties and this happens for very personal, self-conceited reasons. Most of such people will attend the “one million plate fundraising dinners” so that if such a party forms government they will automatically secure highly paying jobs in government agencies, and easily canvass to win tenders, contracts and special concessions from which they break-even by making huge sums of money along with their friends in government. Corruption and nepotism in the conduct of governance becomes a direct consequence of the ways parties raise moneys to finance their budgets (Chege, 1995).

This makes the parties dependent on the whims and ambitions of party leaders. Such is the case that Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Asili (FORD-A) took a downslide after Kenneth Matiba withdrew his patronage. On the other hand, other parties came to life when they

were taken over by financially well-endowed politicians, for example, Raila's takeover of the National Development Party (NDP) and Nyachae's takeover of Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-People (FORD-P). The patron-client tradition that bestows upon certain individuals who control the parties the power and authority to overrule and flout members' decisions suggests that members have no stake in their respective parties. This lack of space for membership interventions is clear evidence of the general lack of internal democracy in most parties. This casts doubt about the ability of party leaders in Kenya to institutionalize democracy at the national level when they themselves cannot achieve internal democracy (Oloo, 2007:90-123).

Following the advent of multipartism in Kenya in 1992; the ambitions of opposition politicians to be leaders of their respective parties and hence contest the presidency was first experienced in the original Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD). First, FORD split into FORD-Asili, led by Kenneth Matiba, and FORD-Kenya, led by Oginga Odinga. Subsequently, Raila Odinga left FORD-Kenya to lead the National Development Party (NDP), and Kenneth Matiba left FORD-Asili to form Saba Saba-Asili. The result is that the original multi-ethnic FORD, which had a substantial following in virtually all parts of the country, gave an offshoot to at least four parties whose support was largely confined to the ethnic communities of their leaders. Another offshoot of the original FORD was Ford-People, which was originally meant to accommodate Matiba after he differed with Martin Shikuku in Ford-Asili but later came to be associated with Kimani Wanyoike and currently with Simeon Nyachae (Oloo, 2007: 90-123).

The degree to which parties in Kenya actually turn mere rhetoric into pragmatic action is quite meagre. Many "hung their principles on the wall" immediately after elections; where losing parties' leadership ditch their parties to join the party in power- defeating the purpose of Official Opposition, which is very crucial in parliamentary democracy. Others simply defect to other parties once their own personal interests seem to be at stake. This leaves one wondering? Do party manifestoes mean anything to their members? More often than not the answer is "no".

Furthermore, although party constitutions and manifestoes outline relative democratic practices and progressive ideals, virtually all parties have failed to hold fully democratic elections for party officials. Party leaders and top party organs seem to be bent on interfering in internal elections. In most parties particular posts are assigned to popular individuals in specific regions in an effort to retain their ethnic constituencies in the party; 'competition' if any is thus confined to the region in question. All political parties have in theory, the laid down procedures for identifying candidates for the various elective positions. These procedures and the rules governing them are however rarely adhered to. There have also been cases where winners have been ignored and direct nominations made by the party leadership. In some cases figures are tempered with and the winners' voters are given to the losing contestant (Oloo, 2007:90-123).

In summary, leadership of political parties in Kenya has been conditioned largely by the ambitions of leaders and by ethnic loyalties centred on these leaders. Many of the parties rely on a handful of patrons, usually also their leaders/founders, for the finances needed for maintaining their activities; they increasingly became susceptible to attempts at building cults of personality and internal structures of patronage. Party leadership in Kenya is poorly institutionalised, grossly tribal and corrupt. Perhaps the greatest reason behind the 2008 post-election violence was rigging of elections. At the centre of this rigging were the three leading parties Party of National Unity (PNU), the Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K) and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) which bought and stole votes, incited violence and bribed the officials of the disbanded

Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK), (The Commission of Inquiry into the Post-election Violence -CIPEV- *Waki Commission Report: 2009*).

Perhaps elections do not mean the same thing to Kenyans- thanks to their political leadership. To these political leaders, elections are no more than exercises to rubber-stamp illegitimacy, and poor governance; tailor-made tickets to Parliament, “the house that lays golden eggs”: if one is outside this house, they are doomed to squalor; but once they are in- it’s their turn to feast- a spoils system of leadership that stifled national development in the country since independence (Commission of Inquiry into the 2007 General Elections, *Kriegler Commission Report: 2008*). It was not surprising therefore, that following the same electoral experience as that of Kenya in Robert Mugabe’s bankrupt Zimbabwe; she settled on a Coalition Government, following in Kenya’s footsteps- a disgraceful legacy indeed. Kenya’s 2008 Coalition Government, which was a concoction of political blackmail, illegitimacy and banality, is a poor representation of democracy on the African continent. It has to its name, one of the most bloated, spendthrift and expensive governments in the developing world- particularly the Executive; in one of the world’s highly taxed nations. Kenya’s June 2010 National Budget was projected to clock the 1 Trillion Shillings mark, with almost two thirds of it going to governmental expenditure. Yet close to fifty years since independence, she continues to chronically suffer from immense poverty, corruption, dependency on foreign aid and lack of a national sense of direction.

## **Conclusion**

This article has attempted to shed light on the place of political leadership in Africa’s development experience since independence in the 1960s. It has tried to articulate the connection between politics and development in Africa. It has also revisited the question of Africa’s post-independence leadership traditions. The article has underscored the fact that during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first of the 21<sup>st</sup>, African leadership seems to have taken a path of political orthodoxy that appeared quite different from earlier traditions. The article has demonstrated that good political leadership is a universal phenomenon that is not tied to prevailing and/or fashionable development traditions such as capitalism and socialism or both. In essence, what a country’s political leaders want to achieve for their citizens is what counts.

The argument that this article has made is that under sincere and visionary political leaders, few African countries such as Libya, Ghana and Botswana were able to achieve impressive levels of socio-economic development. The same cannot be said of the rest of the countries in Africa, including Kenya which was the point of focus in the discussion. In a nutshell: the ability of society to produce political leaders who are dedicated to build a country for the good of all citizens through widely agreed methods; and the ability of such leaders to turn Constitutions into living documents by holding-on religiously to the belief that their mandate to form governments is founded on their willingness to uphold the country’s values, its constitutionalism and promises made to the people while seeking public office; all determine the ability of such as a society to set development objectives and implement them as planned thereby uplifting the quality of life and human security of its citizens and further ensuring stable political and macroeconomic systems.

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