
Africa's Troubled Leadership and What To Do About It

ROBERT I. ROTBERG

Nelson Mandela emerged from prison in 1990 to demonstrate the power for good and the best practices of democratic African leadership. His affirmation of inclusionary and participatory values, moreover, matched those that had been affirmed for decades in neighboring Botswana under Presidents Sir Seretse Khama and Sir Ketumile Masire. Until Mandela was freed, Khama's example had been the lodestar of democratic leadership in Africa. The sure manner in which he had articulated a clear political, social, and economic vision for his country, together with the straightforward way in which he had mobilized the people of Botswana behind democratic values, were exemplary. Mandela and Khama (followed by Masire and now by President Festus Mogae) demonstrated the striking facility with which very different states could be led with a strong emphasis on serving the commonwealth. Khama's and his successors' qualities of positive democratic leadership (in a land originally poor but now prosperous), together with Mandela's moral force as an iconic leader of a recently embattled country, suggest the power of individual agency for common good.

Unfortunately, models of distinctly poor leadership abound. President Robert Gabriel Mugabe of Zimbabwe is today's poster child for damaging, venal leadership. This article contrasts Mugabe's mayhem with the new surge in Africa for positive leadership. Effective, popular leadership can flourish in Africa; the paucity of first-rate models need not suggest that sub-Saharan Africa cannot cultivate good leaders.

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THE MIXED MESSAGE

A number of other original and more recent African presidents and prime ministers could claim to have led their countries charismatically, as founding fathers with unquestioned legitimacy, or as strong-minded visionaries capable of mobilizing swelling ranks of followers. Jomo Kenyatta, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere, Léopold Senghor, Félix Houphouët-Boigny,

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and Kwame Nkrumah come to mind. But, unlike Mandela, the Botswanans, and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam of Mauritius, each was an autocrat—even a president as sympathetic and personally appealing as Nyerere. A critical weapon in their troubled leadership arsenals was coercion, not persuasion. The single-party state flourished under them; so did tight central control, Afro-

socialism, mostly negative economic growth, and lip service to participatory values. No leader left his peoples better than he found them.

Both Sir Seretse Khama and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the founding prime minister of Mauritius, could have obtained support within their young nations for authoritarianism in the style of Nkrumah and Nyerere. But they chose a much more participatory path at a time when most of their peers favored the methods and prerequisites of party and personal dominance. Khama, especially, looked north—to Zambia and Tanzania, or even to the Congo—and found nothing but single-party rule and state-imposed socialism. A revered paramount chief, he clearly could have followed that lead. Instead, based on his own educational and personal training, and perhaps also on his understanding of the local political culture, Khama chose the strikingly different course of empowering his people, encouraging full participation and accountability, eschewing corruption (and setting an example), and approaching development incrementally and practically—unlike his neighbors and peers. When Botswana, 10 years later, had the good fortune to discover diamond wealth, he and his nation were in a good position to manage the bonanza for the nation, not for individuals or families, and thus to avoid Nigeria- and Congo-like versions of Dutch disease.

In an ethnically plural country that had known many race riots, Ramgoolam understood that he could privilege no particular group, especially not his Hindi-speaking majority, if Mauritius were to grow more peaceful and prosperous. He also understood the importance of relying on

a strong rule of law to give minorities confidence in achieving their goals peacefully. Mauritius, to this day, permits final legal appeals to Britain's Privy Council, thus ultimately taking disputes beyond Mauritian influence and thereby insulating the Mauritian courts from possible political interference (as occurs in mainland African countries). Moreover, Mauritians are permitted to speak and use their own native languages in all circumstances. But Ramgoolam's final stroke of leadership genius was to open his distant island to global commerce. He put no impediments on free trade, and he stimulated local development by creating export-processing zones—first for textiles and later for wool goods and manufactured products of all kinds. The tide of prosperity that followed lifted all minority and majority boats equally and contributed to a sense of shared nationality and to a broad attainment of democracy.

The mixed message of African leadership continues. As leaders, Presidents Mogae in Botswana, Benjamin Mkapa in Tanzania, Abdoulaye Wade in Senegal, and John Kufuor in Ghana largely follow or followed in the footsteps of Khama and Mandela. But there is the other strain of African leadership—the Nkrumah-Kenyatta model—that is far from democratic. It is typified in today's generation by brazen and unbridled corruption, subversion of participatory values, human rights abuses, and the conversion of states into personal holding companies. Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Frederick Chiluba of Zambia, the late Sani Abacha of Nigeria, and Daniel arap Moi of Kenya all personify and personified the ills of this dominant strain of, alas, still-contemporary African leadership.

LEADERSHIP EXCESSES

The Nkrumah-Kenyatta model has brought persistent economic and social suffering to millions of Africans. Those kinds of leaders, like the predatory Mobutu Sese Seko of Congo/Zaire, have visited untold evils on their citizens. They, and men like them, are responsible for the largely narcissistic wars that have so destroyed and are continuing to destroy Africa: the wars in Angola, the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, and elsewhere, not to mention the still-unresolved Ethiopian-Eritrean war, epitomize the consequences of *caudillo*-like rule in Africa. About 12 million Africans have lost their lives in these mostly internecine wars during the last quarter century. Another six to eight million Africans are homeless, displaced within their own countries, or driven into refugee status.¹ Their situation, like that of the victims of the Rwandan genocide, is the terrible result of massive state failure and severe leadership deficiencies.

The paramount example of leadership excesses in 2007 (and from 1998 onwards, at least) is Robert Mugabe. Initially, after 1980, Mugabe hammered his Ndebele-based opposition—massacring as many as 30,000 innocent, presumed followers of Ndebele leader Joshua Nkomo and other civilians between 1982 and 1984—and limited full democratic participation in politics.² However, he and his colleagues also expanded the educational and health infrastructures of the country and presided over economic growth. Moreover, Mugabe did nothing fundamental to deprive most Zimbabweans of their human rights, nor did he attack or threaten minority whites.

His regime's ruthlessness and corruption emerged openly and nakedly after 1998, and especially in 2000, 2002, and 2005, when a series of elections were rigged, black and white farmers were forced off their land, and presumed urban opponents were subject to eviction and harassment in a series of major raids. Massive corruption and official fraud transformed the country in that period. Inflation soared over 1,000 percent, unemployment hit 80 percent, emigration numbers became substantial, food and petrol shortages were omnipresent, and—by early 2007—once-rich Zimbabwe was a nation in tatters, destroyed by the overweening ambitions and choices of a dictator run amok.

Each of Mugabe's many strides down this path of failure was decisive, beginning in the late 1990s. After 15 to 18 years of reasonably effective governance, every vital sign in Zimbabwe descended headlong into tyranny. Mugabe, threatened by growing opposition and increasingly contemptuous of differing viewpoints, became ever more imperious and despotic. He and his state started to systematically prey on his and its subjects. The result, as the following analysis indicates, was the transformation of Zimbabwe over a remarkably few years into Africa's most malevolent state. The state's and the ruler's instruments of repression became finely honed. By 2007, the nation's once high levels of good governance had fallen decisively: educational and health services were in shambles; rule of law had largely vanished; crime rates had escalated; corruption was rife; economic growth was negative; inflation was at Weimar levels; unemployment rates were among the very highest in the world; food shortages and hunger were constant; infant and maternal mortality rates were extraordinarily high and life expectation correspondingly low; political freedoms were universally denied; and even the ruling political party had come to chafe under the exactions and Duvalier-like capriciousness of the nation's Pol Pot-like ruler.

Worst of all, as this article was written in March 2007, no uprising of the downtrodden masses, and no alliances between opposition politicians

and soldiers and police, appeared likely. Powerful neighbors were not going to intervene, as Tanzania had done so successfully in Idi Amin's Uganda and in Rwanda, and as others had done effectively in Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire. External sanctions seemed as ineffective as they had been against white Rhodesia in the 1960s and 1970s, and Mugabe, at the age of 83, appeared as strong and alert as before. Since the state was in shambles, even Mugabe's natural death would not necessarily result in more than cosmetic improvements. In 2007, the forces of repression and despotism ran roughshod over civility, tolerance, and human rights. How the tragedy developed and how it was created were easier questions to answer than predicting how and when Mugabe's reign would end and Zimbabwe would recover.

CORRUPTION AND THE INVASION OF THE CONGO

Mugabe and the associates who helped him to pillage the state became noticeably more high-handed, arrogant, and corrupt in the mid-1990s. Contracts for major new construction projects were routinely awarded to unqualified bidders, most of whom were part of or connected to Mugabe's family. Mugabe was aging, of course, and had a new second family.³ Both considerations—or simply the natural progression of Mugabe from authoritarian to omnipotent ruler—encouraged escalating levels of corruption. Then Laurent Kabila's Congo imploded when Rwandan troops invaded. In dispatching 11,000 Zimbabwean soldiers to defend Kabila, Mugabe acted without parliamentary, cabinet, or central committee approval and with no fiscal authority (the minister of finance was informed after the event). Under the guise of defending Kabila, the soldiers, in reality, appropriated loot for Mugabe and his generals: wealth from diamond mines; cobalt and cadmium tailings; and almost any portable mineral resources in and around the Mbuyi-Maji area of southern Congo.

While Mugabe and his associates enriched themselves, the hapless Zimbabwean taxpayer paid the costs—roughly \$5 million per week—of sending soldiers to the Congo and fueling their equipment. At the same time, at home, Mugabe had been compelled by a series of strategic demonstrations to promise expensive pensions to 39,000 supposed veterans of the 1971 to 1979 guerrilla war against Rhodesia. Those two extravagances, together with Mugabe's outright attack on his country's most productive export sectors, effectively bankrupted Zimbabwe. By mid-1999, Zimbabwe had consumed its foreign exchange reserves and was living month to month and petroleum shipment to petroleum shipment. Urban consumers began to notice shortages, first of gasoline and diesel, and then of basic staples—

even bread. To keep the national economy marginally operative, Mugabe and his associates had to cut special deals for petroleum with shady patrons. The government also changed domestic banking rules. It forced insurance companies to purchase bonds paying negative interest, and it maintained a fixed exchange rate that favored officials and Mugabe's cronies, who gained preferential access. The government also manipulated the proceeds of tobacco auctions and mineral sales and stashed their own cash skimmings in the British Virgin Islands and the Isle of Man. But the downward economic spiral continued, affecting the poorest of the poor most of all.

Corruption is fundamental to the transformation of Zimbabwe (and of other repressive states) from a weak democracy into a flamboyant tyranny. Whether greed moved Mugabe to become unalterably repressive is debatable. Nevertheless, patrimonial states are impossible to sustain with-

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out impressive flows of cash into ruling pockets. Mugabe's bankrupting of Zimbabwe in the late 1990s and his assault on the Democratic Republic of Congo from 1998 to 2002 were motivated in large part by the drive to self-aggrandize and keep *apparatchiks* loyal. No edifice of power can easily be sustained without regularly renewed coffers of enrichment. Transparency

International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index rated Zimbabwe 130 of 163 countries (together with Azerbaijan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Togo).⁴

DISCONTENT AND PROTEST

By 1998, urban Zimbabweans were demonstrably discontented. Whereas they and their rural compatriots (Sindebele speakers excepted) had always supported and believed in Mugabe as "the father of the nation" and tolerated his anachronistic retro-Marxism and constant use of the term "comrade," that complaisance ended sometime early that year. Their economic pain, their awareness of new heights of corruption, and the arrogance of the Congo caprice caused disaffection and even the rise of an aroused opposition. It emerged out of the strong and well-disciplined trade union movement.

Army helicopters sprayed tear gas on rioting trade unionists several times in 1998 and 1999. The demonstrators had taken to the streets of

Harare and Bulawayo, protesting against the collapse of the Zimbabwean dollar, wildly escalating food prices, and Mugabe's newly lavish lifestyle. He and his second wife had constructed a number of mansions locally, and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) mayor of Harare had outraged workers by building a \$1.5 million mansion for himself during a period when luxury houses cost \$130,000 and the municipality of Harare could not find \$685,000 to pay for a water pump. Consequently, the people of the country's capital went without water in their homes.

Given growing national concern regarding Mugabe's methods of governance—even among the upper ranks of the ZANU-PF—a national constitutional conference was convened in 1999. Stage-managed mostly by Mugabe and his henchmen, it gave him the power to take white-owned farms without compensation, thus overruling legal restrictions. It also recommended a few other alterations to the existing constitutional provisions and extended his ability to continue to contest the presidency without term or time limits.

The proposed new constitution had to be put to a national referendum. Mugabe's mistake was to demand approval of the new amendments, thus giving the electorate a real choice for the first time. The embryonic opposition, led by Morgan Tsvangirai of the trade union movement and what had now become the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), coalesced around a national "no" vote in the referendum of February 2000. Fifty-five percent of those who cast ballots voted "no." Mugabe had never before lost an electoral contest, which infuriated him and emboldened the MDC and its adherents.

The MDC was a truly multiracial, multiethnic party. It drew support from urban Shona and Ndebele speakers, professionals and workers, the Ndebele and eastern Shona rural areas (but not from Mugabe's central Zimbabwe Shona-speaking heartland), and from whites of all backgrounds, especially farmers. The MDC channeled and encouraged a sense of outrage and a national search for change.

RACISM AND THE LAND ISSUE

In the past, Mugabe had always played the race card when challenged. Doing so was easy, for Rhodesia had been uncompromisingly racist; whites had always exploited blacks. Beginning in the 1890s, powerful whites had heartlessly pushed Africans off the nascent nation's best lands. This process of expropriation continued through the 1920s and was confirmed, even sanctified, by a 1930 commission chaired by Sir Morris Carter. It

relegated Africans to the drier, stonier, and less loamy soils of the colony. After independence in 1980, that gross disparity was meant to be rectified by official purchases of white-owned farms and the resettlement of truly landless African peasants. Some of that shift in ownership occurred gradually, but much of the transferred farmland—especially the choicest segments—somehow found its way into the arms of Mugabe's close associates. The recovered estates were and still are used as patronage spoils. Moreover, in those few cases of genuine distribution to the land-poor, no state resources were provided to maintain irrigation facilities and other equipment. Compounding the problem, the government's agricultural extension services collapsed for want of funding, and the few new farmers had nowhere to turn for help. The 8.3 million acres that had been purchased during the 1980s were "grossly underutilized," declared the government's own auditor general in 1997.⁵

Mugabe failed to resettle the landless in the 1980s when he had access to British funds. Moreover, to boost Zimbabwe's prosperity during his first decade in office, Mugabe's regime approved the sale of several thousand farms from one white farmer to another. New buyers received specific approval for their purchases from the government. Very few of the farms that were subsequently confiscated between 2000 and 2004 had themselves been taken from Africans by original families or, indeed, by families that had entered the country before the 1950s.

Mugabe believed in 1998, 1999, and 2000 that he could undercut the MDC and its white supporters by declaring a pogrom on whites and white-owned farms. In early 1998, he began confiscating 12 million acres from 1,500 white farmers, and the country's currency promptly plummeted. Mugabe sent "war veterans" onto the targeted farms to take them back, theoretically in order to transfer the white-owned lands to landless peasants. Ninety-nine percent of the land, however, was given to cabinet ministers, wives, political cronies, relatives, and girlfriends of the Mugabe machine.⁶ Even when the nation's courts ruled that such actions were illegal, the attacks on white-owned farms continued. Mugabe unleashed a crusade designed to buttress his own control and maintain ZANU-PF hegemony, but instead he destroyed what was left of his country's once prosperous economy—one of the best breadbaskets of Africa.

STOLEN ELECTIONS

A parliamentary election had been scheduled for June 2000. No election had ever been seriously contested since 1980 and certainly not since

ZANU had forcibly merged with the Zimbabwe African People's Union in 1988 to form the Patriotic Front. The campaign between Mugabe's ZANU-PF and the MDC was vicious, with the police and ZANU-PF thugs breaking up MDC meetings, invading its offices, and intimidating rural chiefs and rural voters. Ultimately, by rigging the returns in several key constituencies, the ZANU-PF won 62 of the contested seats, the MDC won 57, and the Zimbabwe African National Union won one. Furthermore, out of 120 elected seats, another 30 were appointed by Mugabe. The MDC won all of the country's urban seats and a majority of all votes cast.

The election itself was in shambles, with doctored voter rolls and Mugabe-designed constituency boundaries finalized merely three weeks before the election and released to the opposition only by court order. The United Nations, which led an election-monitoring effort, learned that 10 to 25 percent of registered voters were in fact deceased (also true for the 2005 election). Other outside monitors were similarly discomfited by the results, leaving Mugabe's party hacks to oversee a campaign in which MDC candidates were beaten up and had their houses firebombed. A week before the election, the head of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum reported "a complete subversion of the democratic electoral process."⁷ European and other foreign observer teams, and even one group representing Africa, denounced the election as not free and not fair. Later the MDC took the ZANU-PF and electoral officials to court in 38 of the 62 constituencies won by the ZANU-PF, alleging fraud; of the 12 cases adjudicated in the high court before 2005, the MDC won seven and lost five. The latter were appealed, but only two were heard. Both were won by the MDC. Allegations regarding the other 26 constituencies were not heard by the court system before the 2005 election, when the parliament was dissolved and all of the cases stemming from 2000 became moot.

In 2002, after a stepped-up campaign to oust white farmers—during a period when Zimbabwe experienced great shortages and the economy worsened—the country again went to the polls. This time there was a straight contest for the presidency between Mugabe and Tsvangirai. Official intimidation was rife. Hoodlums regularly attacked MDC campaigners; in some areas, MDC campaigners had to go underground for fear of being killed. Tsvangirai himself was often ambushed on rural roads. The official result showed a Mugabe victory by 56 percent of the 3 million votes cast, but few independent local or foreign observers credited the results. The United States refused to recognize the outcome, terming it flawed. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said at the time that "Mr. Mugabe can claim victory, but not democratic legitimacy."⁸ Even a mission from the

Organization of African Unity, now the African Union, deprecated the results. The count had been falsified, especially in a number of constituencies that had cast many fewer ballots in 2000. One estimate suggested that purposeful congestion at urban polling stations (where Tsvangirai and the MDC were strong), and the reduction of the number of stations days before the poll, denied about 400,000 people the right to participate. It is also estimated that 800,000 extra shadow ballots were counted.⁹ Tsvangirai and his supporters cried foul, but the electoral commission and virtually all of the media were controlled by Mugabe.

The 2005 parliamentary election was less violent but still characterized by the usual tactics to ensure a ZANU-PF victory: Mugabe's regime limited public gatherings through a policy of demanding mandatory prior permission; allowed the police to detain suspects for weeks without bringing charges; put the already partial electoral commission under tighter state control; and continued to prohibit public scrutiny of voter registration lists. The voting rolls for 2005 were replete with false names and listings of deceased citizens; an independent audit calculated that 2 million of the 5.6 million names on the list were suspect. Of the 2 million suspect names, an estimated 800,000 were dead persons and 900,000 were names of persons no longer residing at the addresses where they originally had registered.¹⁰ Traditional constituency boundaries were manipulated to reduce the number of seats in urban areas and increase those in rural constituencies. Zimbabweans outside the country were prohibited from voting for fear that they would favor the MDC. Soldiers in uniform were permitted to vote in any constituency. Few objective external and internal observers were permitted to monitor the election; even teams from the South African-based Electoral Institute of Southern Africa and a Southern African Development Community (SADC) parliamentary forum were barred. Polling stations were more numerous and more effectively situated in areas favorable to the ZANU-PF. Government-run radio and television permitted MDC candidates derisory amounts of time to campaign while Mugabe and ZANU-PF candidates talked for hours. Independent radio broadcasts were jammed, the two independent weekly newspapers were harassed, and commercial printing establishments preparing MDC fliers were firebombed. Food, especially maize, was used to reward support for ZANU-PF candidates and was available to party members in ZANU-PF areas only. ZANU-PF candidates received official funding while the MDC was not allowed to accept overseas contributions and received no monies from the state. Registration fees for candidates rose 2,000 percent to discourage the MDC and independent candidates.

Until a few days before the election, police patrolled MDC rallies, intimidating potential voters.

On the eve of the election, Mugabe declared that anyone who voted for the MDC would be considered a traitor and that his party would win two-thirds of the total seats, 120 contested and 30 appointed.¹¹ After a lower than usual voter turnout (under 50 percent), Mugabe's assertion proved correct. The polls were organized and manned by ZANU-PF supporters and loyal security forces, while MDC observers were often locked out. Ballot boxes were stuffed. One MDC analyst suggested that there had been 500,000 false ballots, down from 800,000 in 2002.¹² Counting was manipulated and, according to observers,

in many constituencies, ZANU-PF officials walked off with ballot boxes and later announced counts that were inflated by more than the number of persons who had registered their votes. The MDC claimed its bedrock urban seats in Harare and Bulawayo and defeated Emmerson Mnangagwa (Mugabe's speaker of parliament and long-time henchman) in Kwekwe. But

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it lost key periurban constituencies and a number of supposedly secure rural ones as well. Mugabe's men and women racked up surprisingly one-sided victories in virtually all of the rural areas, even in MDC-dominated Chimanimani, emerging with 78 out of 120 seats. One independent candidate was victorious, leaving the MDC with 41 seats. Washington, London, and Brussels all condemned the result, declaring it false. Only governmental delegations from South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique, the SADC, and the African Union reported that the election was fully free and fair.

DAMAGING LEADERSHIP

Mugabe—like Mobutu, Idi Amin in Uganda, Siaka Stevens in Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor in Liberia, and a number of other deeply flawed African despots—has preyed on his fellow Zimbabweans, causing untold damage to his people, the nation, southern Africa, and the notion of democracy in Africa. Above all, Mugabe's mess and mayhem have demonstrated how essential it is to prevent damaging leadership from ever again taking hold in African countries.

Yet the problem of leadership in Africa is larger than the excesses of

several individuals and more enduring than a focus on the misdeeds of one or several miscreants would suggest. How to alter the unfortunate mold—how to make the Mandelan model the norm rather than the exception—is

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the central African question of this and succeeding eras. Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole needs a plan to address that question, but only Africans can diagnose the problem in all of its dimensions and weigh a series of potential remedies. Empowering the thoughtful consideration of leadership issues by a group of experienced African democratic leaders is and was essential, and

has occurred. At its heart was a disciplined series of hard-headed conversations with and about African leadership by contemporary younger cabinet officials and senior esteemed former heads of state and heads of government.

AFRICAN LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The result of these tough-minded talks in 2003 and 2004 was the establishment of the African Leadership Council in Mombasa in 2004. The Council's deliberations led to an African-sanctioned mechanism for building capacity and strengthening democratic tendencies and approaches among the next generation of African elected leaders. In addition to that ultimate goal, a clear-minded diagnosis of the salient issues and causes has also proved of ground-breaking value.

The Council is chaired by Sir Ketumile Masire, second president of Botswana, and includes among its founding members former Head of State Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria; Vice-President Moody Awori of Kenya; former Prime Minister Hage Geingob of Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary General James Jonah of Sierra Leone; Abdulrahman Kinana, recently speaker of the East African Assembly; and Mathews Chikaonda, former governor of Malawi's Central Bank, former finance minister, and now the chief executive of the dominant conglomerate in that country. The entire membership of the Council embodies and carries forward the leadership accomplishments of persons like Nelson Mandela, Sir Seretse Khama, and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

The African Leadership Council's Mombasa Declaration suggests that "positive leaders in Africa stand out because of their adherence to

participatory democratic principles and their clear-minded strength of character. . . . Africa seeks only the best and the most uplifting leadership. . . . We . . . believe strongly that future young African elected leaders should be initiated into the arts of leadership, not simply be given ministerial portfolios without the prior building of sufficient capacity.”¹³ The Council’s Code of African Leadership calls for adherence by African leaders to 23 proper practices, notably that they “recognize that they are accountable for their actions and that no one is above the law nationally and internationally.” The Code urges leaders to “promote transparency” and full accountability, demonstrate respect for human rights and civil liberties, “promote the separation of powers,” “adhere to a strong code of ethics,” and refrain from using their political office for personal gain.¹⁴ But the African Leadership Council’s most important role in ensuring Africa’s leadership renaissance will come through its plan to train young, elected, political leaders in the arts and skills of leadership and in the fundamentals of economics, governance, ethics, and communications.

The Council plans to train at least 20 emerging leaders each year for 10 years. In two years, 40 Africans will have received the proposed training; in five years, the number will have risen to 100, and in an additional 10 years, it will reach 200. If only a third of those numbers emerge as senior African leaders socialized with a broad view of leadership responsibilities and with the skill sets and ethical horizons of the leaders of Botswana and Mauritius—Africa’s longest prevailing democracies—then such training will have helped to alter the prevailing pattern of deficient African leadership in significant ways.

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CAPACITY BUILDING

The premise behind the capacity-building exercise is quite direct: most young African elected political leaders—women and men destined to run or help guide the futures of their countries—have too few positive role models on which they base their approaches to consummate political leadership. All around them in political life, they see their older colleagues devoted, in many cases, to enriching themselves, to providing advantageous access to jobs and contracts, and to lordship that access over their

constituencies. The motorcade's highway-clearing emphasis on the prerogatives of "big men," rather than the responsibility of politicians to work for nation-building, provides an effective metaphor for the arrogance of much of day-to-day politics as still practiced in many sections of Africa.

It might be possible to break this pattern if young elected political leaders were exposed early in their careers to different approaches, both African and global. Neither Botswana nor Mauritius operates in the traditional manner of African polities, and both countries have been unswervingly democratic since their respective independences in 1966 and 1969. Both countries are African development success stories. Both are well-governed and have always been well-led. The countries in Africa, such

Capacity Building for Elected African Leaders

MOMBASA, MARCH 20, 2004

PROPOSED CURRICULUM TOPICS:

- Nature and Theory of Leadership
- Leadership Best Practices
- Models of African Leadership for Good (Botswana, etc.)
- Governance and Good Governance
- Public Management for Public Officials
- Essentials of Democracy: Theory and Practice
- Constitutionalism and Elections and Electoral Laws
- Coalition Building: Various Methods
- Rule of Law Fundamentals
- Ethics and the Ethical Leader
- Accountability and its Uses
- Dealing with the Media: Strengthening Leadership
- Fundamentals of Macro- and Microeconomics
- Fundamentals of Good Fiscal Management
- Nature and Potentials of Internet Technology
- Science and Technological Knowledge: The New Frontier
- Nurturing Civil Society: Building Social Capital
- Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution
- Peacekeeping, Peace Enforcement, and Peace-building
- Security Issues: Armies and Police Forces
- The International Legal and Political System
- Medical Frontiers and Practices
- Educational Frontiers and Practices
- Environmental Frontiers and Practices
- Managing Diversity

as Ghana, that are today much better governed and more prosperous than they were under misguided demagogues are all attempting to emulate the Botswanan and Mauritian models.

The capacity-building exercise would attempt to build on those models and the best of the South African experience by exposing young African political leaders to the critical lessons of those models and to the impressive leadership and nation-building methods beyond Africa of Kemal Atatürk and Lee Kuan Yew, among others. Good leadership can be taught and possibly even learned. Thus, any capacity-building course would have to attempt to communicate “the nature and theory of leadership” and “leadership best practices.” It would expose young leaders to the meaning of good governance and to the many components of such governance. Other topics essential for young leaders would include public management, “essentials of democracy,” basic constitutionalism, “coalition building,” rule of law fundamentals, an imaginative approach to the meaning of ethics and accountability, the essentials of economics—so that issues like inflation, good fiscal management, and many more can readily be understood.¹⁵ (A full list is provided in a sidebar to this article.)

In its initial two years, the Council's capacity-building project will seek young elected political leaders each year from a number of Africa's countries. Potential trainees (self-designated future African political “Rhodes Scholars”) will be nominated in each country by the relevant political parties; by U.S., British, French, and other embassies; by international and local nongovernmental organizations; and by UN officials. From the nominations, a committee of the Council will choose successful applicants by visiting the countries concerned and holding Rhodes Scholar-type interviews. Those selected will have demonstrated political promise and, by definition, be persons of integrity and intelligence. Given Africa's dearth of senior women leaders, and the demonstrated quality of those few who have risen to the top, the nomination and selection procedures will ensure gender balance.

One compelling result of the capacity-building curriculum proposed here is that within each of the target countries, there will be a cadre of young leaders who have been exposed to the ideas and curriculum of the African Leadership Council and its training efforts, and who will be able to mutually reinforce the socialization that will presumably have been accomplished during the seminars. As the alumni numbers grow, this acculturation should prove a strong force, spreading across at least a part of Africa.

To alter the leadership profile of Africa, or even of a few countries, will not be easy. There are many roads to leadership success or failure, but this

proposal implicitly affirms that good leadership can be nurtured and that exposure to the examples of positive leadership in Africa and elsewhere will help gradually, but perceptibly, to shift Africa and young political leaders from self- and family-aggrandizement toward a more inclusive, Mandela-like appreciation of the responsibility of leadership. If such a capacity-building socialization scheme works, it will be possible—can we but hope?—to eradicate Mugabism and other retrogressive leadership from Africa. ■

ENDNOTES

- 1 Author's estimate based on a variety of sources: UN pronouncements, press reports, and in-country accounts.
- 2 Robert I. Rotberg, "Signs of Trouble Lurk in Zimbabwe," *Boston Globe*, April 18, 1983.
- 3 See Robert I. Rotberg, "Africa's Mess, Mugabe's Mayhem," *Foreign Affairs* 79 (September-October 2000): 47–61.
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