If not busy for writing then bussy for what?: an overview on why current African political leaders are neglecting writing

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the plight of the writing spirit among African ruling political elites. This plight is historically situated and it is subjected to a comparative perspective. While it is not the view of the author that writing is always the most effective means that can be used by political leaders to communicate with the public, communicating with the public through writing is one of the useful information transferring tools that ought not to be ignored. Through a trend analysis, the paper observes that unlike most of first African heads of state and governments who were keen to academic writing most of contemporary African leaders have lost interest in writing, with only a handful of leaders still involved in academic scholarship. Some of the factors that are attributed to this decline include; lack of ideological backing, the growing sense of insecurity among political leaders, the transformation of ruling parties and the influence of financial donors, just to mention some.

Introduction

In this paper we explore one of the areas that seem to have been neglected in academic discourse about the behaviour of African leaders. While there is a good stock of literature concerning other behavioural tendencies of African leaders, very little is said about their personal endeavours to communicate with their people through writing. The thrust of this paper is thus that while writing is not a constitutional obligation to political leaders, it is a very important means of communication through which those holding public offices can delineate their vision and mission to their societies. Despite its importance, the culture of writing among African leaders is declining tremendously.

In discussing this problem, this paper focuses on elected presidents from African countries. The paper groups these leaders into three generations namely the first generation, the second generation and the third generation. Situating African leadership into specific generations is a knotty exercise given the history this continent has passed through. For instance, while some countries such as Zambia, Ghana, Malawi and Senegal have witnessed peaceful transfer of power through competitive elections, others are still subjected to a one man rule. This is the case in Equatorial Guinea, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Cameroon. Yet in other countries such as Tanzania the ruling parties have survived the waves of political change and thus continue to exercise political power since the end of colonial rule.

Given the complexity of this classification, the generations identified above rest on the following premises; that the first generation of African leadership is that which constitutes the first African heads of state and governments who came into power immediately after their countries got political independence. The second generation in this context is meant to refer to those leaders who came into power during the time of political and economic liberalization. The third generation is comprised of post-liberalization presidents. From this classification it is clear that some heads of state in Africa belong to more than one generation and they are thus treated in this context as multi-character individuals. In the course of this analysis, this paper is divided into the following sections; the conceptualization of leadership; the evolution of leadership in Africa; the first generation of leadership; the second generation of leadership; scholarship in the third generation and the last part provides an overview of the reasons behind the decline of leadership among African leaders, followed by a brief conclusion.

The conceptualization of Leadership

Leadership is an ability to obtain the compliance of others to one's wishes, an ability which some persons occupying the role of leaders seem to lack even in relation to subordinates in a hierarchy, while the persons occupying no special role sometimes can win this compliance solely through the force of their personalities[i]. The role of personality in leadership was witnessed during the struggle for independence in Africa where most of the leaders of the liberation struggle started with no institutional base[ii]. Cartwright however cautions that not all cases of command-compliance constitute leadership, as a hijacker with a submachine gun is hardly exercising leadership over his/her victims. Citing Richard Neustadt, Cartwright maintains that leadership consists of getting others to do what the leader wants, for their own or for society's sake rather than for the sake of the leader himself/herself. Leadership thus is a non-coercive relationship perceived as beneficial by those who are led.[iii]

The concept of leadership is also discussed by Thomas who argues that a leader is the kind of person (with leadership qualities) who has the appropriate knowledge and skills to lead a group to achieve its ends willingly[iv]. He outlines seven generic leadership traits namely; enthusiasm, integrity, toughness, fairness, warmth, humility and confidence. On the other hand, Sternberg insists that the key components of leadership include wisdom, intelligence and creativity[v].

The term leadership can be well understood through the use of three approaches namely the qualities (traits) approach, the situational approach and functional approach[vi]. The traits approach is built on the view that leaders are born, not made.

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The subscribers to this approach insist that there are certain inborn qualities, such as initiative, courage, intelligence and humor which together predestine a person to be a leader. On the other hand, the situational approach states that leadership is a relationship that exists between persons in a social situation and that persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations[vii] . Explaining leadership using the functional approach focuses on three basic aspects namely group tasks, teams and individuals. Basing on these aspects, a leader is defined as a person with the qualities (personality and character) and the knowledge appropriate to his or her field, who is able to provide the necessary functions for a group or organization to achieve its task, work as a team and for the needs of the individuals to be met[viii]. This paper also subscribes to third conceptualization as it accommodates key attributes of other theoretical views of leadership highlighted above.

The evolution of Leadership in Africa

The invasion of Africa by outsiders is a significant historical landmark in the functioning of leadership in the continent. This is basically because while various ironies such as the civilizing mission, the expansion of free trade, evangelization and opening up the continent to the rest of the world have continued to feature in many of the literature about Africa's integration with the rest of the world, it is clear that these missions had a significant impact on leadership in the continent especially in key aspects such as decision making. While formal education especially in sub-Saharan Africa was yet to effectively set foot in most of African societies, informal education was however an order of the day. It was therefore clear that leaders during this period largely relied on oral communication to transmit information to the rest of the members of the society. It is on this basis that leaders (Kings and Chiefs) established administrative structures that could facilitate the exchange of information among members of the society. With these structures and spiritual powers, it was possible for the kings and chiefs to issue directives, orders and other forms of communication to other members of their societies with maximum obedience. For instance, all chiefs, even the minor ones, possessed a measure of magical and religious power such that it would be a very bold person who would dare to brave the socio-religious awe surrounding them by challenging their authority.[ix] Well-established administrative structures were thus evident in centralized states across the continent such as Asante and Mole - Dabgani of Ghana, Hehe and Nyamwezi kingdoms in Tanzania, Yorubaland of Nigeria, Zulus of South Africa, Barotse of Zambia and Baganda of Uganda. The same features were evident in Kuba Kingdom in Congo as it had one of central Africa's most sophisticated political systems[x].

These administrative systems were however to a great extent put to an end first by Arab slave traders and later on by the colonial imperialists from Europe who introduced their own forms of administration and management of socio-economic and political affairs. These new systems were accompanied by formalization as they were marked by the creation of administrative system bearing the features of Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy. The creation of the bureaucracy to serve the colonial state paved way for the dichotomy between politics and administration, a phenomenon that was largely absent during the pre-colonial Africa. This dichotomization enabled the functionaries of the colonial state to discharge their duties under the auspices of the governors and their assistants.

The attainment of political independence by many African states in 1960s marked a shift of decision making powers from the colonial state to new governments headed by African natives as new heads of state and governments. It is important to remember that the logic of colonial administration differed much with that of the newly formed African states. While the colonial diehards were preoccupied with meeting the domestic demands of their governments and people in Europe, the newly formed African states had a rather different, but compelling role to play. That role was to carter for the increasing demands for better social services from the public that was for many years sidelined by the colonial state. This role proved not only to be the rightful public demand, but also a challenge to the new governments in the making. The source of challenge was the inadequacy of both human and financial resources to assist in meeting public expectations.

As a response to such demands, these leaders opted for different paths as alternative solutions. For instance, some countries such as Kenya opted for the pursuance of a capitalist ideology whereas others like Tanzania embraced socialism. It could however be noted that most of the leaders of these states were in a state of confusion for they were not certain as to whether their ideological masters could indeed appear to be wholeheartedly benevolent do-gooders. They thus found themselves caged in the cold war encounter in which the choice to ally with a capitalist or socialist camp did not involve a rigorous study. Nonetheless, some leaders tried to adapt these ideologies to their domestic contexts. It is on this regard that leaders like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania introduced what was to be known as African socialism, with his counterpart Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia inventing humanism ideology. Notwithstanding their ideological divide, most of African leaders seemed to share one common element. This was a lust for academic scholarship especially in trying, through writing, to explicate what their devised courses of action, with specific ideological backing, meant. This is depicted in the next section below.

First generation leadership and scholarship predisposition

As already hinted out, there was a great desire among the leaders of newly independent African states to use writing as one of the effective means through which they could communicate with the public. This spirit of writing is clearly depicted by the fact that leaders such as Kaunda, Senghor, Nyerere and Nkrumah published extensively[xi].

The desire to write among these leaders, however, did not come from the vacuum. It was rather a reflection of various events that had taken place since the struggle for independence to the time of attaining that independence. It is important to remember that confronting the colonial states was a tough exercise that needed devotion and esteemed leadership. Anti-colonialist struggles thus needed individuals who were visionary enough to lead the masses in confronting the aggressors. It was thus not a coincidence that most of those who led the liberation struggles happened to be the first presidents of these countries. Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Leopold Senghor (Senegal) and Nkrumah (Ghana) fall under this category. Having led these movements, first generation African leaders developed a spirit of patriotism and had a clear vision over which direction their countries could take. With this vision, it was possible for them to draw a roadmap through writing that could guide the rest of the population towards prosperity. It was on this basis that there

were a lot of expectations from all walks of life that these new political elites were going to transform the political, economic, and social life of these states in the very near future[xii].

The desire to write was also motivated by the determination of these leaders to make their countries self sufficient as a mechanism to avoid influences from the former colonial masters. This inclination was prevalent especially in those countries that opted for socialism as their national ideologies. With the adoption of socialism, the political leaders of these countries advocated for the need of self reliance, a dream that could be made true through hard work and devotion among society members. This was reiterated by Nyerere in his appeal of education for self reliance in which he insisted that such education had to encourage the development of a proud, independent and free citizenry which relies upon itself for its own development[xiii].

The spirit of writing was also promoted by the presence of a balance between popularity and capability. Despite the fact that most of these leaders were charismatic, they also had both leadership and managerial qualities. They thoroughly knew what they stood for and what was to be done to achieve their goals. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sekou Toure of Guinea are some of early African leaders who stood firm to fight for the independence of their countries and total liberation of the African continent[xiv].

The propensity towards writing was also necessitated by the infancy of bureaucratic institutions at the eve of independence. Most of African countries got independence at the time when the administrative systems were still young. With this situation, they were compelled to inherit the colonial administrative structure that did not seem to tally with public demands. It is worth remembering that in some colonies the colonial states were not interested in preparing natives to acquire administration skills. For instance, the Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique did not pay attention to providing formal education to the natives. As a result, the education system was set in such a way that only few natives could get access to it[xv]. For instance, out of 321 university students in the country in 1965, only four (4) were natives[xvi]. It was only the Catholic Church that at least offered administrative posts to native Mozambicans. The tendency of sidelining natives put the new governments immediately after political independence in a very intricate position. This was mainly because they acquired political power with a very weak public bureaucracy. With this weakness of the administrative machinery, new African leaders found themselves with no strong bureaucracies to rely on and thus began acting as political administrators. It should however be remembered that it was not always the case that these political leaders were always in need of the advice from the public bureaucrats even if they were around. This was because the introduction of single party rule in many African countries immediately after independence was accompanied by dictatorial elements that in certain instances did not seem to accept any challenge to the government(s). It is on this regard that most of these leaders are sometimes referred to as autocratic and tyrannous. Irrespective of such critics against early African leaders, it can be noted that they tried to use writing as an effective tool to communicate with the rest of the population as compared with subsequent generations of leadership as the next discussion will try to suggest.

The Second Generation of Leadership

The above endeavours by the first African statesmen to lead their people towards development had mixed results. In one

hand, significant achievements were made especially in the provision of basic services such as education, health and water. For instance, the statistics for primary enrolment and adult literacy in the early eighties in Tanzania shows that by early 1980s Tanzania had the highest gross enrolment ratio (GER) in sub-Saharan Africa[xvii]. On the other hand, such achievements proved to be not sustainable as from late 1970s much of the progress that had already been made started to decline. Such decline was triggered by both the forces of nature such as drought and the international system, especially the oil crisis. It was during this period that most of African countries either willingly or begrudgingly were forced to look for external assistance, a situation which culminated to the introduction of IMF and World Bank-led liberalization policies under the banner of Structural Adjustment Programme. The adoption of these policies had significant implications on the anatomy of leadership in Africa. One of these implications was the end of an era of patriotic leadership as most of these leaders were made to succumb to the whims of global financial giants. Those who were unwilling to bow to financial donors such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania had to leave office hence paving way for the new leadership that could not cause trouble to the partners of development. With this philosophical and ideological transformation, being an African proper or a black skin wearing a white mask, as Frantz Fanon once argued, no longer was a debatable issue as all leaders were made to dance to the same tone. However, two issues are worth noting here. First, while African countries adopted liberalization policies, there were no efforts to adapt it to domestic settings. As a result, most of these leaders played much of an agency or echoing role in support of the implementation of these policies. It was therefore clear that when African leaders were told to open the doors for free market they meekly opened them wide. A careful liberalization process was therefore not thought of.

  Secondly, the forces of liberalization caught most of African states off guard as there seemed to be no contingent plans to go about such a compelling situation. African states had therefore to struggle for the rescue package that was engineered by world's economic giants. With this state of affair, African statesmen became coldblooded with no guts to challenge their benefactors or chart an alternative way through. This should nevertheless be treated as an excuse. While it is true that the 1980s liberalization was irresistible, African leaders still had the obligation to cogitate on the possible repercussions of these policies and how to minimize their negative effects. This was not the case though.

On the basis of the above observation, it can overtly be stated that one of the factors that distinguish the leaders in the first and second generations as far as the writing culture is concerned is the daring mentality. As pointed out earlier in this essay, most of the first African heads of state dared to propose alternative paths to socio-economic development[xviii]. This was a symbolic move to show that these newly independent countries aspired to get unchained from the confinement of the colonizers. With all such efforts, these leaders won the hearts of large segment of their societies. Most of the second generation of leaders lacked this attribute. It can aptly be stated that there was a transition fault as the successors of the first generation leaders did not really fit in the shoes of their predecessors. It is for instance difficult to dispute the fact that Nyerere was a figure that could not be compared with his successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, the then Tanzania's second president who is popularly

known as "Ruksa", the name which is a tribute to his hands-off embracement of free market economy.

The parallel factor that stands to distinguish between the first and second generations of African political leadership is the natural test. As Max Weber argues, being a charismatic leader is a natural phenomenon that is however nourished by the acts and deeds of that charismatic person. The postulate is therefore that apart from having charismatic elements, the charismatic leader has also to prove to the public that he/she can lead other members of the society to overcome various challenges. These challenges are the natural tests that a leader has to pass in order to prove his/her ability. As pointed out earlier in this essay, those who came to be first generation presidents had played a key role in struggling for political independence, a process which earned them allegiance from other society members. They were, to the rest of society members, the most capable persons. With this messianic stature, the public supported them both retrospectively and prospectively.

On the contrary, most of the second generation leaders were a bit alien to the rest of the population. This alienation is explainable by the continent's transition from traditionalism to liberalism. Liberalism is in this context antithesis to traditionalism. For instance, while the attainment of political independence in Africa involved an emphasis on free provision of social services to the poor, liberalism came with a notion of cost sharing whereby one at least pays for the services he/she gets from public bureaus. A related consequence of liberalism to African leadership is the perpetuation of individualism. While liberal arrangements such as the conduct of periodic elections were in place in pre-liberalization Africa, the bond between the leaders and the public was great. Nonetheless, the adoption of liberal policies with their individualistic characters destroyed these ties. With this detachment, the general public was deprived of the powers to scrutinize their leaders. Elections thus remained as the only means through which politicians could be controlled. However, given the controversies that surround the conduct of elections in the continent, the use of ballot papers could indeed not guarantee effective public control.

Basing on the attributes of second generation leaders, it can be established that while the first generation of leadership was organized on the basis of performance, trust and then leadership formulae [P+T=L], the principle during the second generation changed to be power, minus performance, then leadership [PO-P=L] formula. The P+T=L formulation means that one's performance determined his/her level of public trust and recognition as the leader. On the other hand, the PO-P=L formulae summarizes the expression that the second generation of African leadership relied much on the use of power and were less concerned about better performance. The implication of this change was that the level of moral and political accountability among most of second generation leaders dwindled significantly and the fear over public scrutiny disappeared.

Scholarship in the third generation

Like in the second generation, the culture of writing among many African presidents continues to be largely absent. While there have been a handful of some presidents who have tried, through writing, to suggest alternative ways through which Africa can attain development, the position of many of them remain unclear. Some of African leaders who have stood firmly in charting a development path include Thabo Mbeki with his idea of African renaissance and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal who is one of the founders of New Partnership for Africa's

Development (NEPAD). With this exception, the majority of the third generation of presidents seem to have abandoned serious writing at the expense of political comedy, sloganization and in some cases venturing into political confusion. For instance, given a series of unusual events such as president Museveni becoming a seasonal hip hop star with his "Do you want another rap" single during the 2011 Uganda's general elections it can be deduced that being a president in contemporary Africa does not sometimes require one to "think big" as what is of interest to them is just winning elections.

Apart from seasonal raps, Africa has as well witnessed a growing culture of developing unrealistic slogans. This was for instance the case in Tanzania, a phenomenon which is nonetheless ubiquitous across the continent. For instance, during the struggle for presidency, both Tanzania's third and fourth phase presidents Benjamin Mkapa and Jakaya Kikwete decorated their presidential campaigns with colourful slogans. While Mkapa's slogan was Uwazi na Ukweli (Truth and Transparency), Kikwete had at least three slogans namely; Tanzania yenye neema inawezekana (Tanzania full of blessings is possible); nguvu mpya, hari mpya na kasi mpya (New Vigour, New Zeal and New Pace) and Maisha bora kwa kila Mtanzania (Better life for every Tanzanian). While none of the three slogans worked properly in the first term of his presidency, Kikwete opted for reshaping his second slogan to nguvu zaidi, hari zaidi na kasi zaidi (more vigour, more zeal and more pace). However, all these have proved to be mere illusions.

While sloganisation is ubiquitous, political confusion has also been in ascendancy. This confusion seems to have taken roots especially in determining the destination the continent should take. There are at least three areas that seem to confuse African leaders. The first one is whether or not African countries should adopt a unilateral approach towards promoting the continent's socio-economic development. It is on this basis that the much debated gradualist and radical approaches to African unity as propounded by Nyerere and Nkrumah are not close to a conclusion. The second confusion emanates from the ill-conceived role of the continent's natural resources towards national development. While most of African countries are blessed with numerous natural resources ranging from timber, minerals and wildlife, there seems to be no commitment from African leaders in ensuring that these resources act as a catalyst to their national growth and development. On this regard, the populace lacks the leaders who can supervise and monitor the utilization of these resources for national development. To most of African leaders, foreign aid is still regarded as the best alternative. The third confusing aspect has to do with consistency. In most of African countries, power transition in ruling parties is in most cases not accompanied with the commitment to ensure that new leaders learn from their predecessors. Instead, the change of leadership is always characterized with a one person show whose aim is to portray to the public that he/she is not an agent of the previous government.

The working proposition is thus that in most of African countries leaders are more concerned with originality than the expected outputs/outcomes. As new governments struggle to create their own identities, they end up paralysing development initiatives which were put in place by previous government. This in turn results in total failure. It sounds more appealing that given the infant nature of most of African economies there ought to have been a common agreement on the courses of action for

national development that are not to be subjected to the change of leadership. This problem is indeed chronic in Africa and its genesis is associated with constitutionalism in which the general public has limited constitutional powers to control the politicians. As a result, the ruling elites use that opportunity to make alterations that suit their needs. For instance, one of the common weaknesses in most of African countries is the way the powers of organization and reorganization are exercised. African leaders use these powers in most cases to create or abolish administrative organs just for the sake of securing allegiance from their allies or for resolving political controversies. It is on this basis that new ministries and other bodies are always established. This was evident in Kenya as following the political conflict that ensued after the 2007 general election the size of the cabinet was expanded from 34 ministries in 2005 to 42. The consequence of this creation is that the formed institutions end up causing overlaps that hinder the implementation of development programs.

Why this crisis of writing? A general overview

As the above discussion has clearly indicated, the tradition of writing among African presidents is waning. This observation is also affirmed by the findings from a simple online survey that provides details of individuals' publication records[xix]. Although this survey might not be very comprehensive, it at least shows the current status of scholarship among African leaders. From table 1 below, it can be learnt that only three presidents (Abdoulaye Wade, Atta Mills and Fredrick Chiluba) have more than four publications. It should however be noted that even some of those with such publications seem to have mainly done so before they became presidents[xx]. Various factors are attributable to this impasse as the ensuing discussion below will try to suggest.

Table 1. Presidents' Publication Lists

Country	Phases of Leadership (elected) from 1980s	Leaders	Published works
Tanzania	Three	Hassan Mwinyi	None
		Benjamin Mkapa	None
		Jakaya Kikwete	None
Senegal	Two	Abdou Diouf	None
		Abdoulaye Wade	Four
Ghana	Three	Jerry Rawlings	Two
		John Kufuor	None
		Atta Mills	5
Zambia	Four	Fredrick Chiluba	6
		Levy Mwanawasa	None
		Rupiah Banda	None
		Michael Sata	None

Source: Author's compilation.

Unlike the first generation of African leadership whose adherence to ethical codes of conduct to public officials was at least high, the breach of ethics in the other two generations has been very high. While nonconformity to ethics is a phenomenon that is traceable since the first generation of leadership, it is comparatively true that the violation of ethical rules has been growing from one generation to the next. Different from their counterparts in the first generation, most of contemporary African leaders are blamed of being preoccupied with self

aggrandizement than playing a leadership role. This view was also reiterated by Fredrick Sumaye[xxi] who argued that with an exception of African presidents who fought for political independence, other generations of presidents have been using the presidency to further their personal ambitions and goals.[xxii] It is no wonder that the incidents of corruption continue to increase in most of African countries. Scandals such as Anglo Leasing in Kenya, the procurement of outdated ammunitions in Uganda and Richmond and EPA[xxiii] scandals in Tanzania attest to this observation. It can thus be deduced that while most of the first generation African presidents spent much of their time trying to write, a great number of current African presidents are busy making money either by themselves or through their agents.

Furthermore, as already argued in this paper, the increased influence of world's financial institutions in domestic affairs of African countries has deprived them of their autonomy in decision making. Most of African leaders have been made to play an agency role which makes it impossible for them to have independent thinking. The only option that seems be readily available for them is to think within the framework set by these financial sponsors. Those who try to resist the IMF and World Bank find themselves abandoning their stance within a short period. A good example is Nigeria where while initially Shangari and Buhari's governments attempted to object the Structural Adjustment programme by showing no inclination to abandon the economy to market forces, they later found themselves falling in the hands of these financial giants. These Nigerian leaders found themselves accepting a series of conditionalities such as the devaluation of the naira, massive reduction in capital expenditure and the reduction of budget deficit[xxiv]. Others who seem to challenge the west such as Robert Mugabe do not really challenge liberal policies but rather they are struggling to keep up their threatened survival in power.

The decline of scholarship among African presidents is also due to the lack of a clear ideological backing. It is worth noting that one of the constraints that affect the acceptability of the leader is his ideological choice which entails his/her ability to perceive what his/her people want.[xxv] History shows that in 1960s Africa was sharply divided along ideological lines. This division was instrumental in shaping the thinking and orientation of African leaders. Things have however changed especially following the end of cold war. Many countries in Africa are currently lacking a clear ideology. It is thus difficult to establish whether they are capitalist or socialist. A vivid example can be drawn from Tanzania. While the country has been since mid 1980s implementing liberal policies that are typically capitalist, Tanzania's constitution still recognizes the country to be pursuing socialist policies. Article 9 of the 1977 constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania provides that "the object of this constitution is to facilitate the building of the United Republic as a nation of equal and free individuals enjoying freedom, justice, fraternity and concord through the pursuit of socialism and self reliance which emphasizes the application of socialist principles while taking into account the conditions prevailing in the United republic". This ideological dilemma therefore does not give African leaders a leverage to engage in serious writing as they cannot write on the issues they are not confidently aware of.

The continuing decrease of scholarship among African leaders is also a result of the transformation of political parties, especially the ruling ones. History shows that most of political parties that were formed in Africa from 1950s to 1960s were

mass parties that emanated from popular movements that were initiated to challenge the colonial rule. The leaders of these parties who later became presidents stood for the mass and represented popular interests. There are three factors that paved way for the success of the nationalist African leaders. These include; a clear and very focused objective, that is, political independence; reliance on a political party organization whose structure and functioning emphasized mass mobilization and the third factor is visionary leadership and dedication[xxvi]. Parties such as the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG), Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), the Convention People's Party (CPP) of Ghana, and the Socialist Party of Senegal (PS) secured much support from the general public.

This mass element has been depreciating over time as most of these parties have undergone a tremendous transformation. Ake treats this change as betrayal and argues that ordinary people in the continent are fighting for the second liberation[xxvii]. It can thus be maintained that after the 1990s political liberalization in Africa, the newly elected leaders took the power away from the people and other arms of the government[xxviii]. Most of political parties in Africa (especially the ruling ones) are no longer representing popular interests but are instead the means to nourish the survival of few bureaucratic, political and business elites whom together form a perverted tripartite system. It is on this basis that some of these parties were defeated by opposition parties in elections while others continue to face stiff competition from opposition parties.

Some of the then ruling parties in Africa that lost to opposition parties include the Socialist Party of Senegal which lost to the Senegalese Democratic Party in 2001, Kenya African National Union (KANU) in Kenya which lost to the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in 2002,United National Independence Party (UNIP) which lost to Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) in Zambia in 1991[xxix]and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) which lost to United Democratic Front (UDF) in Malawi in 1994. The same is the case in Tanzania as following the growing public discontent against the ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), the leadership of the party introduced what is popularly known as skin-shedding operation as means to clean the party and win back popular support.

Whether this move will yield the expected results or not remains unclear. It can however be learnt that the move to reshape the party is elections- oriented and does not indeed suggest a possibility of a comprehensive behavioural change. The transformation of mass ruling parties into the parties of the few is exacerbated by the absence of "the cleans" at the top levels within the parties who can champion the purification process. The dilemma is therefore that those who are blamed of corruption are the very persons who are expected to lead the purification process.

The growing power and influence of public bureaucrats is also a factor behind the plight of scholarship among African leaders. As it can be noticed from across the continent, the size of bureaucracies has continued to grow, a phenomenon that is also accompanied by the rise of professionalism amongst the bureaucrats. It is on this basis that one of the objectives of the ongoing public/civil service reforms in Africa is to downsize the public bureaucracies. While most of civil servants in most of African countries were largely untrained at the eve of independence, current bureaucracies are composed of bureaucrats with knowledge power. With this development of bureaucracy, political leaders have abandoned their role of

thinking as they have developed a chronic reliance on public bureaucrats to think on their behalf. While this does not suggest a clear dichotomy between politics and administration, there is at least a growing sense of division of responsibilities in which complex issues are handled by public bureaucrats but under the auspices of political leaders. As figure 1 below shows, the tendency of political leaders to rely on public bureaucrats is denying them the opportunity to effectively communicate with the public. The consequence of this reliance is that even the speeches they make are sometimes not in consonance with the targeted audience. This problem was very common to Tanzania's third phase president, Benjamin William Mkapa. This retired president was always accused of being too formal such that in some cases one could not make a distinction whether he (Mkapa) was addressing the university community or a congregation of poor rural peasants.
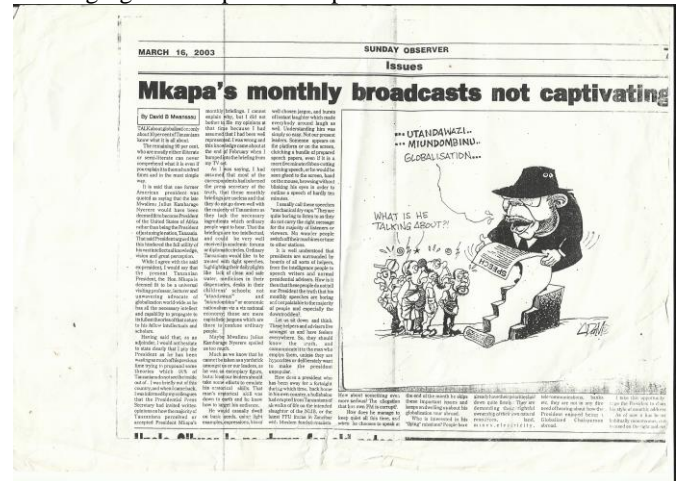

Figure 1. An excerpt from the Sunday Observer Newspaper challenging Mkapa's monthly speeches to the nation

The crisis of writing among African leaders is also associated with the fact that most of them are leaders by chance and not by merits. Unlike during the struggle for independence in which certain figures displayed their natural leadership traits such that they won the support of the majority, the contemporary Africa does not seem to have many such figures. Most of current African leaders have artificial popularity that is secured through various means ranging from marginalization, the use of force and sometimes voter buying. Of all the above mentioned means, marginalization and voter buying are the most predominant ones.

It is a typical phenomenon that the ruling parties especially in Africa South of the Sahara rely heavily on the support from rural areas in which the majority of people (the marginalized) who are politically incompetent live. This is for instance the case in Tanzania where CCM still enjoys rural support despite the party's neglect of subsistence farmers[xxx]. Similarly, the use of force to create artificial popularity was evident especially in northern Africa where for many years, leaders such as Libya' Gadaffi, Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak used coercive instruments to silence any elements of opposition before they were forced to quit following the outbreak of the Arab awakening. The use of force is not limited to North Africa as it is also widely applied throughout the continent. In explaining the use of force, Ake opines that this is due to poor leadership and structural constraints which have turned the high expectations of the independence movement into painful disappointment hence forcing many African leaders to rely more on coercion[xxxi].

In some instances where marginalization and force do not seem to work, votes buying is the preferred strategy as the ruling elites use various incentives which are typically corruption-related to seek for political support. The incidents of using money and other incentives to solicit for votes during elections are always reported across sub-Saharan Africa. There are however some few exceptions regarding charismatic leaders. While the continent is largely devoid of charismatic and visionary political leaders, there are some figures who can still be regarded as popular. South Africa's Jacob Zuma is one such figure. His popularity is however anchored on the past ANC's anti- apartheid struggles which put him in the likes of other freedom fighters such as Nelson Mandela. What is nonetheless uncertain is whether his profile presents a perfect balance between popularity and visionary capability, a phenomenon which was at least the case during the struggle for independence and immediately after independence in many African countries. What is nonetheless factual is that he is invisible in the scholarship milieu.

The continuing absence of a desire to get involved in scholarship is also a result of a sense of insecurity among political leaders. Most of political leaders in Africa have been struggling to ensure that they remain in office as they are always engulfed in a sense of fear for their tenure in office. The source of fear originates from the way they get into those offices. In most of African countries, leaders have been getting into offices through dubious ways that do not guarantee them a safe stay in power. For instance, the cries over vote rigging which result in post election violence are common in Africa. The recent post-election violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the ongoing post election mayhem in Uganda are clear illustrative cases.

The sense of insecurity has also been forcing African leaders to silence any elements of opposition to the incumbent governments as this is expressed through the control of the media, the civil society and the intimidation of opposition political parties. Other leaders have even opted for constitutional amendments to allow them seek a third term or unlimited terms. For example, nine African leaders attempted to amend their respective constitutions so that they could remain in power[xxxii]. However three of them namely Fredrick Chiluba of Zambia, Bakili Muluzi of Malawi and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria were unsuccessful. The lucky ones included Presidents Idriss Deby of Chad, Omar Bongo of Gabon, Lansana Conte of Guinea, Samuel Nujoma of Namibia, Gnassigbe Eyadema of Togo and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda[xxxiii]. A new entrant in this list is the 85 years old Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal who was recently cleared by the country's constitutional court to run for the third term but was defeated in the second round by Macky Sall. With this confusion, these busy politicians find no time to engage in other activities such as writing.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to discuss the plight of the culture of writing among the heads of state and governments in Africa. It has overtly indicated that while most of the first presidents in African countries were involved extensively in academic scholarship, their successors do not seem to have inherited this custom. Various factors such as political insecurity, lack of a clear ideological backing, the growing influence and power of public bureaucrats, the transformation of the ruling parties and the growing tendency of non adherence to ethics and codes of conduct among these leaders, are the treated as the main causes.

Basing on the orientation of most of current African presidents, it stands clear that the continent is in deep leadership crisis. Given the highest level of poverty across Africa, the continent needs visionary leaders who understand the problems their countries are facing and who have the capability to propose alternative courses of action. This decline of writing is thus an addition to other leadership pathologies that are attributed to the internalization of poverty in the continent. It is thus worth concluding that while there are numerous factors that account for poverty in Africa, limited leadership capability is one of the main causes.

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[ii] Ibid

[iii] Ibid:437.

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[x] Hochschild, Adam, King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998, pp 157-158

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Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation (1970), Class Struggle in Africa (1970), The Struggle Continues (1973), I Speak of Freedom (1973) and Revolutionary Path (1973).

[xii] Ademolekun, Ladipo, "Political Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa: From Giants to Dwarfs", International Political Science Review, 9,(2), 1988, pp 95-106.

[xiii] For more on Nyerere 's views on education for self reliance please visit: http://stmarys.ca/~wmills/course317/nyerere.pdf

[xiv] Ademolekun, "Political Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa: From Giants to Dwarfs", International Political Science Review, 9,(2), 1988, pp 96-99

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[xvi] Ibid:330

[xvii] Wedgwood, Ruth, 'Post-Basic Education and Poverty in Tanzania' Post- Basic Education and Training, Working Paper Series Number 1, 2005,University of Edinburgh: Center of African Studies, p 7

[xviii] For instance, contrary to the post-liberalization myth that development is impossible without foreign financial assistance, Nyerere had a belief that development required three basic things namely; people, land and good leadership.

[xix] Online sources that were visited include; amazon.com, taylorandfrancis.com, online.sagepub.com, jstor.org, doaj.org and wikipedia.org. The last date these online sites were visited is 2nd May 2012.

[xx] This is for instance the case with Atta Mills and Abdoulaye wade.

[xxi] Fredrick Sumaye was Tanzania's prime minister from 1995 to 2005.

[xxii] 'Sumaye atema cheche', Mwananchi Newspaper, January 4, 2012.

[xxiii] External Payments Account

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[xxv] Cartwright, John, "Some Constraints upon African Political Leadership", Canadian Journal of African Studies, 11(3), (1977), p 442

[xxvi] Ademolekun, "Political Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa: From Giants to Dwarfs", International Political Science Review, 9,(2), 1988, pp 96-99

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[xxviii] Joseph, Richard, 'Progress and Retreat in Africa: Challenges of a "frontier " Region,' Journal of Democracy, 19 (2), 2008, pp 94-108

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[xxxii] Posner, Daniel. N & Young Daniel .J, 'The institutionalization of Political Power in Africa', Journal of Democracy, 18 (3), 2007, pp 132-133

[xxxiii] Ibid:133