The Imperatives of Democracy, Governance and Leadership in the Fight against Corruption in Africa: A South African Perspective

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Democracy "is especially important in Africa, and South Africa's concerns will be fixed upon securing an ethos of good governance throughout the continent. There cannot be one system of democracy for Africa and another for the rest of the world. If there is a single lesson to be drawn from Africa's post-colonial history, it is that accountable government is good government" --- former South African President Nelson Mandela. (1993). In South Africa's future foreign policy. *Foreign Affairs, 72, 5, November-December*: 88.

For Africa to prosper, "good governance, the rule of law, and systems of accountability are essential to ensure that resources are subject to public scrutiny and used effectively and efficiently". For this, the continent needs "determined political leadership to set and drive plans for equitable growth and poverty reduction …. Good, even visionary agendas have been formulated by African leaders and policy-makers in every field …. [But] technical management and institutional capacity are vital if policies are to be implemented …. [However, the lack of] political will … is *the* issue …" --- former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Africa Day, 25 May 2010.

"Corruption is the enemy of development and of good governance" --- the President of India, Pratibha Patil. In *The Times of India*. (2011). New Delhi. 26 January.

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As Africa is well into the second decade of the new millennium of what is euphorically called "Africa's century", there is still a profound sense of hope being frustrated, of stereotypes being reaffirmed --- once again, of particular countries embarrassing the African continent. The most common perception about Africa remains that of democratic government under siege, of constitutional governance being undermined, and of the rule of law being flagrantly disregarded. This situation presents itself not because of biased media coverage, racial prejudice, the arrogance of Western powers, or an un-African response to a particular problem, but because there is no binding commitment by African leaders to democratic governance, and the consequences that flow from such a commitment. Clearly, in many African countries the fundamental principles of democratic governance are consistently, deliberately, and openly being violated (see Slabbert, 2000).

Democracy: A Compelling Necessity

Democracy in Africa should be focused on two critical elements: the political will to uphold the basic principles of democracy, and concerted efforts to create an economically enabling environment for democracy to thrive (Hutchful, 1991, p. 55). Efforts to build institutional, administrative and other capacities will be wasted if the political context is not favourable (Herbst, 1990, p. 957). Indeed, democracy has to be carefully nurtured, because democratic values (especially, political tolerance) cannot be inculcated in, and internalised by, African societies overnight. In addition, relatively sound economies (to provide basic human needs) are essential ingredients for the ultimate success of a democratic order. Economic growth and

sustained development are of the essence in supporting Africa's fledgling democracies and preventing further tragic relapse into despotism and authoritarianism (see Venter, 1995, pp. 184-185).

The dismal record of democracy on the continent raises the question of whether there is anything about Africa that makes it inherently difficult to sustain reasonably fair and enduring multiparty democracies. The popular argument against democracy suggests that, in what are essentially artificial African states, democracy must inevitably lead to the mobilisation of ethnic identities, which will then, in turn, split the state into its constituent ethnic communities and render impossible any form of government based on popular consent. Evidence, however, strongly indicates that multiparty democracy is much more likely to promote national unity than destroy it. By contrast, those regimes that have nearly destroyed the unity, or even the very existence, of their states have all been autocratic (see Clapham, 1995, pp. 1 & 2).

How democracy is visualised and defined varies from situation to situation, and nowhere is this more of a truism than in Africa. However, in almost all circumstances, democracy involves social justice, governmental accountability, and human freedoms. Certainly, democracy involves the procedural minimum of contestation for political office and policy choices, of popular participation in elections and other elements of political decision-making, and of the accountability of elected public officials under the rule of law. All this must take place within a culture in which fundamental human rights and political freedoms are guaranteed (Keller, 1995, p. 225). However, democracy should be made, and should be seen to work --- particularly where there is, as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum acknowledged in 2000, "inadequate commitment to multiparty democracy and politics among …

leaders and politicians … [who] talk democracy, but use undemocratic means to remain in power" (see *Summary of World Broadcasts*, 2000, p. AL/3973 A/4).

The contention by some African leaders that there is an "African variant of democracy" is quite disconcerting, especially in a context where, throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, there has been a disturbing phenomenon in international life: the rise of *illiberal* democracy. As Fareed Zakaria contends in his seminal article in *Foreign Affairs*, beyond any doubt the values inherent in democracy are universal. Democracy is *liberal* because it emphasises individual liberty; it is *constitutional* because it rests on the rule of law (see Zakaria, 1997, pp. 22 & 26). Clearly, the time has come to acknowledge that the values of liberal democracy have spread universally, especially among the growing ranks of the educated middle classes. Prominent African intellectuals such as Claude Ake (1990) and Peter Anyang'Nyong'o (1987) vigorously espouse the advantages of core democratic principles over the indeterminate, and possibly second-best, forms of governance based on so-called "authentic culture" (Bratton & Rothchild, 1992, p. 269; Hyden, 1997, p. 238).

As a political system, democracy is marked not only by "free and fair", multiparty elections (which is a rather mechanistic conception, so prevalent in the pseudo-democracies in Africa, and fuelled by the fad of event-focused election monitoring and observation) but, extremely important, also by what might be called *constitutional liberalism*: by the rule of law, by a separation of powers (between the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary), and by protection of the basic civil liberties of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion, as well as the right to property (see Zakaria, 1997, pp. 22 & 26). Indeed, there is far more to a free society than multiparty elections (Hawkins, 1990, p. 207). But, more often than not, the arduous task of inculcating and internalising democratic values in society is widely being

neglected. And today, the two strands of liberal democracy are coming apart: democracy, seen in the context of multiparty elections and rule by the majority (what might be called "brute majoritarianism"), is flourishing, while constitutional liberalism is not. It is, perhaps, salutary to note that constitutional liberalism is about the *limitation of power* --- democracy, in its over-simplified form, about the *accumulation and use, or misuse (even abuse) of power*. One should be mindful of the Actonian dictum that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely". Therefore, democracy stripped of constitutional liberalism is not simply inadequate, but dangerous (see Zakaria, 1997, pp. 23, 30 & 42). To paraphrase Woodrow Wilson in a different context: the challenge for the twenty-first century is not "to make the world safe for democracy", but "to make democracy safe for the world".

In contemporary Africa, therefore, liberal or "libertarian" democracy remains a *compelling necessity*.

Good Governance: An Elusive Commodity

Governance is the practice of good government (Bratton & Rothchild, 1992, p. 267) and it remains, essentially, a fragile process that depends on "the restraint of the ruler" and "the tolerance of the ruled" (see Barkan, 1992, pp. 189-190). The concept of governance refers in a generic sense to the task of running a government (or any other appropriate entity, like a business) and, since the late 1980s, the crisis on the African continent has been identified as one of governance (see World Bank, 1989). This finds expression in at least four major shortcomings that are the cause of bad governance (see Hyden, 1992, pp. 5, 6 & 22-24). First, the extensive *personalisation of power* encourages clientelist relations on a two-person or dyadic basis, but discourages the growth of wider forms of trust and reciprocity (see Callaghy, 1984; Jackson & Rosberg, 1982; Joseph, 1987). Second, following *the denial and often widespread abuse of*

fundamental human rights by errant rulers, Africans gradually began to realise the significance of individual human rights (see An-na'im & Deng, 1990) after previously regarding them as merely communitarian or group-based. However, human rights abuses cause many citizens to withdraw from politics, or evade rather than engage political authorities. Generally, they have been reluctant to speak out for fear of being jailed or maltreated and, instead, have increasingly exercised the option "to vote with their feet" in order to escape repressive political control (see Hirschman, 1970). Third, the prominence and *prevalence of unelected and unaccountable government* manifests itself in a reluctance to decentralise or delegate authority and a tendency to curb any independent political activity outside an institutional network controlled by the ruling party-state (see Chabal, 1986). And fourth: a situation in which the apparatus of the state primarily becomes the means for an elite to acquire wealth, rather than serving as a corrective mechanism to promote social justice and sustainable economic development, has led to *widespread and even endemic corruption*.

Conversely, at least three conditions facilitate what is known as *good governance* and, by implication, effective problem-solving (see Hyden, 1992, pp. 15 & 16). First, *citizen influence and oversight*: the means by which citizens can participate in the political process and thereby express their preferences about public policy; how well these preferences are aggregated for effective policy-making; and what means exist of holding the leadership accountable for their decisions and actions. Second, *responsive and responsible leadership*: the attitudes of political leaders towards their role as public trustees (respect for the sanctity of what is known as the "civic public realm"), the openness of public policy-making or the readiness to share information with citizens, and adherence to the rule of law. Third, and extremely important, what is known as *social reciprocity* or inter-group tolerance: how far groups demonstrate tolerance of one another

in the pursuit of politics, and how far voluntary associations are capable of transcending the boundaries of kinship, ethnicity, or race.

Certainly, "governance" is a more useful concept than "government" or "leadership" mainly because it does not prejudge the locus or character of real decision-making (see Lofchie, 1989). For example, governance does not imply, as government does, that real political authority is vested somewhere within the formal-legal institutions of the state. Nor does governance imply, as the term leadership does, that political control necessarily rests with the head of state and government, or official political elites. As Goran Hyden asserts, "a governance realm is grounded in an effective, rules-based leadership, which is perceived to be legitimate, and from which authority or power is derived". Moreover, it is a concept which, through the prerequisite condition of mutual trust or compliance, is based on reciprocity or the voluntary acceptance of an asymmetrical relationship between the rulers and the ruled (see Hyden, 1992, pp. 5, 6, 9-10 & 12-14).

Of particular significance is that African governments, for budgetary reasons, have been forced to contract their activities: the state simply does not reach out into society as it used to do. Some believe that this vacuum creates opportunities for civil society to grow (see Diamond, 1988) and state contraction may, therefore, pave the way for stronger governance structures (Hyden, 1992, p. 25). So, ultimately, better governance requires political reform and renewal, and a concerted attack on corruption. This can be done only by strengthening the transparency and accountability of representative bodies, by free elections in a multiparty system, by encouraging public debate, by nurturing press freedom, by developing civil society organisations (CSOs), and by maintaining the rule of law and an independent judiciary (Herbst, 1990, p. 957).

In the African context, however, more often than not good governance has proved to be an *elusive commodity*.

The Promotion of Democracy and Good Governance in Africa: A Commitment Delayed or a Commitment Derailed?

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) provides for a development partnership between Africa and the world's richer nations, the G-8, with the condition that countries on the continent root out corruption and practice good governance (*Pretoria News*, 2002a; see also Hope, 2002; Kanbur, 2002). Nepad argues that Africa needs to involve itself much more closely in the global economy. Under this partnership, as an integral component of the African Union (AU), in return for global assistance for increased aid and investment, external debt relief, and improved trade with the developed world, African governments will commit themselves to standards of good governance and democracy through a system of peer review (*Pretoria News*, 2002b). Crucial to this endeavour is the nurturing of a "democracy and governance culture", as opposed to simply putting down guidelines, which must also involve civil society, and "a sophisticated, not a sycophantic media" (see *Pretoria News*, 2002d; *Pretoria News*, 2002e; Uys & Myburgh, 2002, pp. 9 & 10). Moreover, business and civil society have a key role to play in holding African leaderships to these promises, though their relationship with African governments is typically too close or too contested (see *Pretoria News*, 2002a; Uys & Myburgh, 2002, pp. 2-3; Yoh, 2002, pp. 6-7 & 26).

African leaders do acknowledge that the continent faces grave challenges, of which the most urgent are the *eradication of poverty*, and the fostering of *socio-economic development* (Nepad, 2002, pp. 3 & 4). It is to the achievement of these twin objectives that the Nepad process is principally directed. The backers of Nepad also believe that these objectives can only be effectively tackled through the promotion of democracy and good governance (as well as peace

and security), the development of human and physical resources, gender equality, wider respect for human rights, openness to international trade and investment, the allocation of appropriate funds to the social sector, and the forging of new partnerships between government and the private sector (including civil society) --- with the private sector providing the engine for economic growth, and government concentrating on the development of infrastructure and the creation of a conducive, macro-economic environment (Nepad, 2002, p. 7). Quite pointedly, Nepad reaffirms the conviction that the development of Africa is ultimately the responsibility of Africans themselves. African governments have made a commitment, therefore, to also enter into their own partnerships and utilise their own resources, however limited, to implement the Nepad agenda (see Mbeki, 2002a).

In reviewing the report on Nepad at the inaugural summit of the heads of state and government of the AU in Durban, South Africa in July 2002, and in accepting the "Durban Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance", African leaders reaffirmed their commitment to "the promotion of democracy, good governance and human rights", and their belief in "transparent, accountable and participatory government" (Nepad, 2002, p. 4). They, therefore, made a wide-ranging democracy and politically-orientated undertaking: (a) to ensure that national constitutions reflect the democratic ethos and provide for demonstrably accountable governance; (b) to promote political representation, thus providing for all citizens to participate in the political process in a free and fair political environment; (c) to acknowledge the inalienable right of the individual to participate, by means of free, credible and democratic processes, in periodically electing leaders for a fixed term of office; (d) to enforce strict adherence to the position of the AU on unconstitutional changes of government and other AU decisions aimed at promoting democracy, good governance, and peace and security; (e) to

strengthen and, where necessary, establish an appropriate electoral administration and oversight body (or electoral commission), and provide the necessary resources and capacity to conduct elections which are free, fair, and credible; (f) to safeguard individual liberties and collective freedoms, including the right to form and join political parties and trade unions; (g) to reassess and, where necessary, strengthen the AU and sub-regional election-monitoring mechanisms and procedures; (h) to adopt clear codes, standards and indicators of good governance at the national, sub-regional and continental levels; (i) to adhere to a governmental separation of powers, including an independent judiciary and an effective parliament; (j) to ensure the effective functioning of parliaments and other accountability institutions, including parliamentary oversight committees and anti-corruption bodies; (k) to facilitate the development of vibrant CSOs, including strengthening human rights institutions; (l) to safeguard the independence of the judicial system in order to prevent corruption and the abuse of power; (m) to uphold the rule of law; (n) to promote the equality of all citizens before the law; and (o) to ensure responsible free expression, including freedom of the press (see Nepad, 2002, pp. 4 & 5).

The Scourge of Corruption

Although Nepad is founded on a business-like assessment of the political and socio-economic realities in Africa today, it does not underestimate the challenges involved in achieving its objectives (Nepad, 2002, p. 7). An extremely important challenge is combating *the scourge of corruption*. The post-independence state in Africa is important not only for *what it can do* (in the form of growth and development), but also for *what can be done with it* --- as a mechanism for ensuring upward mobility or patronage, and private access to public resources or corruption (Szeftel, 2000, pp. 208 & 209). In circumstances like these, the apparatus of the state becomes the means for an elite to acquire wealth, rather than serving as a corrective mechanism to

promote social justice and economic development (Jafferji, 2000, p. 15). Politics in Africa has always been concerned, to quite a significant degree, with the management of spoils. But, if anything, liberalisation may have had the "unintended consequence" of increasing rather than decreasing the scope of corruption: clientelism has proved difficult to eradicate, the regulatory capacity of the state has been weakened, privatisation has afforded opportunities for the political elite to acquire public assets cheaply or fraudulently, and market forces have not measurably reduced the charging of gate-keeping rents or bribes. Development policy remains, too often, contingent upon how government plans overlap with personal enrichment projects --- and, in such circumstances, clientelism, factional competition, and corruption flourish. There is therefore a need to develop strategies that uncouple private accumulation through corruption from access to public office through politics (Szeftel, 2000, pp. 208, 221 & 222).

Corruption is defined by Transparency International (TI) as "the abuse of public office [or entrusted power] for private gain" (for example, bribe-taking by public officials in public procurement) and it reflects perceptions of business people and country risk analysts of levels of corruption among politicians and public officials (see TI, 2003, pp. 2, 3 & 6). A total of 182 countries worldwide were ranked in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2011 (see TI, 2011, p. 3). The main international backers of Nepad, the G-8 countries --- with the exception of Italy (69th at 3.9) and Russia (143rd at 2.4) --- score *above 5* out of a clean score of 10 in the rankings: Canada (10th at 8.7), Germany (14th at 8.0), Japan (14th at 8.0), the United Kingdom (16th at 7.8), the United States (24th at 7.1), and France (25th at 7.0); while all the main African Nepad sponsor countries score *below 5* in the rankings --- South Africa (64th at 4.1), Egypt (112th at 2.9), Senegal (112th at 2.9), Algeria (112th at 2.9), and Nigeria (143rd at 2.4). Of the African countries listed in the CPI 2011, no less than 49 out of 53 score *below 5* in the rankings; only

Botswana (32nd at 6.1), Cape Verde (41st at 5.5), Mauritius (46th at 5.1), and Rwanda (49th at 5.0) score *5 and above* on the index. It is significant that out of 53 African countries, 24 score *2.5 and below* in the rankings --- if not an indication of endemic corruption, then on a fast-track towards achieving that dubious distinction; Somalia (182nd at 1.0) have the "honour" of bringing up the rear. Clearly, it is self-evident that Africa has a great deal to do as far as fighting corruption is concerned. Interestingly, and as a caveat: the CPI 2011 lists the three countries of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) grouping of emerging powers not mentioned here: Brazil (73rd at 3.8), China (75th at 3.6), and India (95th at 3.1). Surely, this provides some fruit for thought.

How does South Africa feature in this equation? According to Vuyiseka Dubula, chairperson of Corruption Watch, the "disease of corruption has permeated … [South African] society …. [its] corrosive effect …. [being] felt [everywhere] …. Increasingly … [it] defines the rules of the game in the public sector" (Dubula, 2012). It is, therefore, quite instructive that, in his 2010-11 General Report on National Audit Outcomes, Auditor-General Terence Nombembe found that there were "unauthorised and irregular expenditure" of close to R40bn by state and provincial departments and public institutions, mainly due to uncompetitive and unfair procurement practices. (If one adds to this the evils of "tenderpreneurship" and blatant corruption, this figure could well be in the order of R80bn and more.) During a media briefing, Nombembe requested the government to address the problem of "fruitless and wasteful expenditure" by appointing "experienced officials with appropriate skills" (see *Beeld*, 2012); in other words on merit --- and, clearly, a side-swipe at the sometimes unintended consequences of "affirmative action". In the same context, the Federation of Unions of South Africa (Fedusa) expressed the opinion that "cadre deployment, appointment on the grounds of [party political]

affiliation, and large-scale nepotism, instead of focusing on appropriate skills and merit, has transformed government departments and public entities into mediocre institutions and political [African National Congress, ANC factional] battle grounds" (*Beeld*, 2012).

Public Protector Thuli Madonsela is convinced that the strengthening of compliance and best practice are central to "an effective fight against corruption and maladministration …. Poor compliance enforcement not only breeds systemic maladministration but also fosters impunity, which is a major factor behind systemic corruption." But, tragically, as the battle for political power and control of resources is raging unabated in many African countries, "an enabling environment" was created in which "corruption, underdevelopment, poverty, and a disregard for human rights" are thriving. Thus, "corruption has played an important role not only in sabotaging Africa's quest for economic growth and development, but … also [in undermining] … efforts aimed at the consolidation of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law" (Madonsela, 2012, pp. 1 & 2). She lists some of the factors that have emerged from discourses on combating corruption and promoting good governance --- there must be: (a) the requisite political will, (b) good leadership, (c) a functional democracy based on diffused state power (the separation of powers between the executive, legislature, and judiciary, including the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary), (d) effective and efficient governance systems, (e) strong constitutional institutions (such as the Human Rights Commission, the Independent Electoral Commission, the Auditor-General, and the Public Protector), (f) a sound legal and policy framework, (g) strong synergies between enforcement agencies or mechanisms, (h) openness and transparency (underpinned by freedom of expression, freedom of the media, and good service-delivery standards), (i) the safeguarding of human rights, and (j) the protection of whistle-blowers (Madonsela, 2012, p. 3). Clearly, a united front (including public participation) is

fundamental in addressing corruption and ensuring good governance; and this must be supported by "a sound integrity framework, incorporating the rule of law, freedom of expression, [and] an unwavering commitment to public accountability and transparency" (*Press Release*, 2012).

However, corruption in South Africa is not only systemic; it is fast becoming endemic --- and it is, to paraphrase political commentator Max du Preez (2009), "beginning to move beyond the tipping point". Even a high-ranking governing ANC figure like Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan now acknowledges that "corruption has reached very serious proportions". Indeed, corruption is tearing the country's social fabric apart, it has morphed into a cancerous growth, and it has become a crippling scourge. The leadership of the ANC, by silently condoning a post-1994 culture of entitlement, should ask itself what role it has played in creating the rot that's eating away at the moral and ethical fibre of South African society. ANC leaders have unstintingly and unquestioningly defended the new black oligarchs (the *nouveau riche*) and the beneficiaries of black economic empowerment (BEE). But BEE and preferential tendering in government procurement (through what has become known as "tenderpreneurship") has become nothing more, nothing less than legislated and institutionalised corruption (see Venter, 2009). Today, as political commentator Allister Sparks (2009) contends, being a member of the ANC is "the gateway to opportunity, to power, and to status and wealth". Even Kader Asmal (2010), a stalwart of the ANC, warned that "political activism is becoming synonymous with, or an excuse for, personal position, access to connected people, and wealth; this is corruption of the most corrosive kind". Clearly, there is a turning away from democratic values towards a much narrower and more predatory conception of empowerment (Pithouse, 2010), leading to what has become known in political science literature as the "predatory state" or the "vampire state".

The lessons for South Africa are clear: risk factors such as government secrecy (in the multi-billion rand arms deal scandal), inappropriate influence peddling by elite groups --- the entanglement of public utility Eskom (Electricity Supply Commission) with the ANC's investment arm, Chancellor House, in the R38.5bn contract for the Medupi and Kusile power stations --- and distorted and corruption-induced party-political funding to the ANC (the oilgate scandal involving another public utility, PetroSA) contribute to muddying the waters (see Venter, 2009). The infamous arms deal was the ANC's original sin, with highly placed politicians and government apparatchiks creaming off large kickbacks from arms manufacturers desperate to secure contracts for the supply of weaponry to the air and naval forces of the new South African National Defence Force (SANDF). But the real crime was the cover-up which began when the scandal became public knowledge --- and it has continued ever since. A judicial inquiry (requested by opposition parties at the time) should have been instituted immediately and, as Allister Sparks (2010) puts it so eloquently, "the primary cancer should have been surgically removed early. The failure to do so has allowed this malignant tumour to grow uncontrollably and to metastasise to the point where the whole body politic is now riddled with its infectious suppuration. Eradicating it now is so much more difficult, for South Africa has reached a kind of corruption gridlock." Indeed, the virus of corruption is coursing through the varicose veins of South African society. Self-interest overrides the national interest --- right and wrong are defined as profit and loss, not good and evil. South Africa is at the crossroads: "… dangerous men and women are making wrongdoing [look] normal, alienating the population from democratic institutions, and instilling a culture of mediocrity", as political commentator Mondli Makhanya (2010) so aptly puts it. Instructive is that Global Financial Integrity, a non-profit research group which monitors cross-border flows of illicit cash around the world, has reported that South

Africa has suffered a staggering outflow of at least R175bn in illegal funds since 1994 due to corruption in the private and public sectors (*The Times*, 2010).

But why has corruption become so widespread? "The answer lies in what might be called the 'Law of Creeping Corruption'. If corruption, verbal or monetary, is not dealt with the moment it manifests itself, the corrosion will spread. And the more it spreads, the harder it becomes to stop …. When so many people in high places … [may implicate] each other, no-one dares blow the whistle" (Sparks, 2010). Although President Jacob Zuma (once again, in his 2010 and 2011 State of the Nation addresses) promised that the fight on corruption would be intensified, his record in this regard is extremely chequered. Political commentator Justice Malala (2010) refers to Zuma's "intellectual, ethical and moral laxity" and says it is becoming increasingly clear that the President does not have the will to fight corruption or uphold high standards. Clearly, he will have to do more than mouth platitudes about cracking down on corruption; he will have to be seen to be doing so without fear or favour. And when he himself has managed to get off the hook on a major arms-deal related corruption charge --- the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) providing him with the "political solution to a judicial problem" his tripartite alliance supporters in the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) so ardently clamoured for --- how can he crack down on corruption anywhere else in his administration and in the civil service? Zuma has no moral authority; indeed, he is morally and ethically unfit to occupy any public position, least of all the Presidency. In the final analysis, "it all boils down to a question of leadership --- good leaders lead by example: uphold principles and the rest will follow; condone and cover up and things fall apart" (Sparks, 2010).

So, what needs to be done? As a start all those in government and in the public *and* private sectors should work hard to establish a climate of integrity; and leaders should go beyond mere lip service and make good on their promises to provide the commitment and resources to improve governance, transparency, and accountability. Only then can corruption begin to be defeated (see Venter, 2009).

**Peer Review: The Litmus Test for African Credibility
on Democracy and Governance**

The 2002 G-8 meeting in Kananaskis, Canada, ended with world leaders signing an African development deal, known as the "Africa Action Plan": through Nepad, African governments were to benefit from US$64bn annually in global assistance for investment and trade, predicated on a promise by its leaders to break with the past record of economic decline, corruption, and authoritarianism, and making a collective commitment to clean government, multiparty democracy, and the rule of law (Uys & Myburgh, 2002, p. 2). Consequently, at the 2002 AU summit meeting in Durban, African leaders agreed to establish an *African Peer Review Mechanism* (APRM), "voluntarily acceded to" by any member state of the continental organisation as a self-monitoring instrument. The peer review process also had to spur countries "to consider seriously the impact of domestic policies, not only on internal political stability and economic growth, but also on neighbouring countries". By so doing, they were to promote "mutual accountability", as well as "compliance with best practice" (Nepad, 2002, p. 10). However, the AU is a collective, an all-inclusive body of African governments that were members of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU); their leaders include some unsavoury characters and their countries became members by default, not by qualification. Nepad should not become another club of all-African leaders, but must only include those who meet the criteria

of clean and democratic government. It must be the home of leaders who buy into the philosophy of peer review (see Tsedu, 2002).

The voluntary nature of accession to the APRM and the weak enforcement regime suggested by the wording that the heads of state and government "may wish to put … [an offending] government on notice", has led to the emasculation of the peer review system almost from inception. Clearly, the peer review mechanism should be about African leaders telling each other where one of them is in breach of mutually agreed standards and principles (see Tsedu, 2002). But the word 'peer' already gives any errant leader an advantage: it raises him or her to the same level as his or her putative accusers. Likewise, 'review' places any action firmly in the aftermath of a hypothetical abuse of power. Moreover, most politicians prefer that their own sort, with similar ambitions, worldviews and Machiavellian desires judge their actions (see Pienaar, 2002). As a result, African leaders backed away from independent review of their political performance record almost immediately. This despite former South African President Thabo Mbeki believing that there is "definite progress towards democratic systems" in Africa, and arguing that the AU's Constitutive Act already "binds all member states of the … [continental organisation on] matters relating to political governance … [to the promotion of] democratic principles and institutions, popular participation, and good governance" (Mbeki, 2002b, pp. 1 & 2).

However, the track record of African states over a period of nearly 50 years of OAU and AU history suggests that African leaders honour any commitment of this kind in the breach, rather than otherwise. Also, the drivers of Nepad and other advocates of an African renewal have been sharply criticised for not excluding from the start leaders who represent values that run counter to Nepad principles and the AU Constitutive Act --- leaders who rule over failed and

essentially dysfunctional states, who peddle creative interpretations of what democracy really means, and who symbolise systems of unaccountability and rule by impulse (see Battersby, 2002). Although African governments have "committed" themselves to standards of good governance and democracy, translating governance buzzwords into reality requires considerable institutional capacity (which is still poorly developed), and the sort of political will hitherto lacking (Uys & Myburgh, 2002, pp. 2 & 3; see also *Pretoria News*, 2002a; Yoh, 2002). And, quite pointedly, the era of democratic consensus in Africa ended when President Robert Mugabe stunted the struggle for freedom in Zimbabwe through massive electoral rigging and brutal repression in 2002 (and again in 2008), negating all the tenets of democracy, good governance, and human rights (see Beinart, 2002). Amid Zimbabwe's slide into political and economic oblivion, the brethren leaders of the African continent without fail closed ranks in solidarity (often massaging Mugabe's overblown ego as a liberation hero), sometimes attempting to cajole him, maybe half-heartedly cautioning him in private, but publicly defending their virtual complicity in the systematic retrogression of that country into an Orwellian-style, totalitarian state (Venter, 2003a, p. 27). The decision by SADC leaders to condone his actions through the expression of solidarity, demolished the pretence that Africa's governments view democracy as the continent's ultimate aspiration. It mocked the compact that African governments will dedicate themselves to democracy and good governance in return for foreign assistance through Nepad. In fact, it revealed that the only compact that really matters is that which African leaders have been making with one another since independence: "We won't criticise your tyranny, if you don't criticise ours" (see Beinart, 2002). One should be mindful of the admonition that "all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing".

Mugabe's mantra is that Zimbabwe should have its own definition of democracy and that autocracy can be described as "the will of the people". So compromised by years of abuse of power, he and his security chiefs can only continue to hang on at any cost, even if it means bringing down the country with them. To paraphrase a Somali writer in a different context: he has indeed put Zimbabwe on "the road to zero". Clearly, it is not within Mugabe's psyche to relinquish power (Mukonoweshuro, 2002). The personality cult built around him and his entire personality make-up (of which vanity, or a grandiose sense of self, is but one characteristic) argues against national reconciliation. The man is the epitome of arrogance --- observe the body language, the swagger (Venter, 2008). A psychometric study by the Unit for the Study of Personality in Politics at the University of Minnesota, St John's, using Theodore Millon's inventory of diagnostic criteria, found that Mugabe is suffering from what is known as a "bureaucratic-compulsive syndrome"; "he has become more and more dogmatic (self-righteous and impervious to correction), inflexible (thick-skinned and vengeful), and paranoid (increasingly suspicious)". Leaders with this type of syndrome are also noted for their "officious, high-handed bearing; intrusive, meddlesome interpersonal conduct; unimaginative, closed-minded cognitive style; and grim, imperturbable mood" (see *Mail & Guardian*, 2002). Indeed, Mugabe "has not a single redeeming defect" --- as Benjamin Disraeli so aptly said of William Gladstone many decades ago.

One should heed the warning: the most dangerous moment for a democracy is not the founding elections of the state, but when the incumbent government experiences a crisis in leadership and is defeated at the polls (Slabbert, 2000). Clearly, the ultimate test for democracy is the willingness of the vanquished incumbent to cede power to his or her victorious opponent, not to cling stubbornly to the reins of power. One only has to look at the recent examples of

Kenya, Zimbabwe and, now also, Côte d'Ivoire to realise that "democracy" in Africa is in very serious trouble.

Leadership: A Sought-After Property

Politics in a very real sense is about leadership (Brotherson, 1993, p. 99; see also Burns, 1978; Rustow, 1970). Leaders must have the charisma to provide their people with a national vision and purpose, as well as the ability to galvanise the efforts of their people towards, and to sustain their enthusiasm in, the pursuit of those stated objectives (Aire, 1990, p. 210). Strong, dedicated, self-confident, skilful, visionary and capable leadership is the key to the reforms Africa need and the policy actions that are required for the development of the continent (Babangida, 1990, p. 21). A true leader must have the courage and ability to communicate these realities to his or her followers (Aire, 1990, p. 214). The role and function of leadership is always of vital importance, never marginal. However, not all leaders are concerned with development --- some are purely focused on survival. Furthermore, political leadership in Africa operates in a context where direct leadership interaction with the people is critical not only for garnering immediate support, but also for keeping track with the temper, tone, spirit and pulse of dominant sentiments in a fragmented society --- sentiments subject to mercurial, unpredictable change. Therefore, political leadership can imbue hope by excellent performance, or sow despair and precipitate more hardship by ineptitude, corruption, and brutality. It can unite societies and move peoples to positive action, or it can engender apathy and phlegmaticism, hinder the pursuit of development and change, and trigger further crises (see Brotherson, 1993, pp. 108 & 113).

Many observers believe that only drastic measures and radical changes in leadership can arrest the deteriorating economic and social conditions in Africa. Moreover, the political economy in most African countries has come to be increasingly characterised by high levels of

political, bureaucratic, and economic corruption (see Mbaku, 1998, pp. vii & xi). Political leadership in the African context is, therefore, more often than not marked by an absence of legitimacy, stability, the rule of law, and social conduct enshrined in venerated institutional arrangements and practices (Brotherson, 1993, p. 115). While leadership is a challenge at the best of times, it is much easier to be a leader when all is going well. It is when things turn awry that leadership becomes an even bigger challenge, when those around the leader look up to him or her for guidance (see Nyatsumba, 2002). But, in difficult times, courageous leadership is usually in short supply: leaders often do what is expedient, not what is right. In a crisis situation, citizens look to leaders not for all the answers but for pillars of assurance, for certainty of direction. Clarity of purpose is fundamental to strong leadership: do what people do not expect. Regardless of what it finally accomplishes, the prime factor in leadership is the need to interact with people: to set, pursue, and achieve goals, and to offer committed performance, yielding clear benefits (Brotherson, 1993, p. 113). Also, by and of themselves, external events do not determine what happens in individual countries; it is how political leaders respond to those events that matters. The conduct of leaders is crucial: how they receive, process, and respond to outside pressure can make a difference in both the pace and outcome of democratisation (Gros, 1998, p. 104).

The role of a progressive leader is "to push the envelope", not to take his or her country back in time (Morna, 2010). Part of the late Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere's talent as a leader was that he anticipated events and sought to stay one step ahead of them, even if that put him at odds with members of his own party. This did not make him a master opportunist in the mould of the late Omar Bongo of Gabon. Instead, Nyerere was someone who held very strong beliefs, but was not incapable of admitting failure and changing course even if this meant going

against his party. The essence of leadership, therefore, is the ability of the leader to see what followers cannot yet see, and the willingness to take them where they do not yet want to go. Nyerere's interpersonal skills, his integrity, articulateness, down-to-earth demeanour, strength of character, and political cunning made him an excellent leader. He was that rare political specimen who had all the powers necessary to be a dictator, yet did not become one. In this, he resembled the late Léopold Senghor of Senegal and former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. These giants of late twentieth century African politics owed their success not to charisma, which is by nature messianic, uncompromising and thaumaturgical, but to the strength of their intellect and the clarity with which they expressed their views. They evinced an admixture of courage, intellectual profundity, and personal charm. It is a pity that few other African leaders were gracious and wise enough to leave office under conditions that would have allowed them to play a constructive role in the affairs of their countries and of the African continent (see Gros, 1998, pp. 104 & 109).

The chronicles of humankind are littered with cases of leaders whose initial, seemingly harmless, antics have later led to great heartbreak and destruction: the likes of Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, Francisco Macías Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, Sani Abacha of Nigeria, Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, Siyad Barre of Somalia, Daniel arap Moi of Kenya, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, P.W. Botha of South Africa, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Omar Bongo of Gabon, Paul Biya of Cameroon, Samuel Doe of Liberia, self-proclaimed Emperor Jean-Bédel Bokassa of the Central African Republic (Empire), Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and the Great Brother Leader Muammar Gaddafi of Libya have all given African leadership a bad name. Collectively, they and others became the laughing

stock of the world and were lampooned unmercifully for their banana republic-style tactics and behaviour. But there was nothing funny about the treatment they meted out to anyone who dared cross their path (*Pretoria News*, 2002c). Today, with self-centred leaders such as Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, to name but one, what hope is there that Africa will make steady progress towards greater democracy and better governance? He represents the embodiment of just about everything that African leaders have committed themselves to move away from: flagrant disregard for human rights, lack of respect for the rule of law, and harassment of political opponents. Indeed, what hope is there that *true democracy* (not the *sham* or *pseudo* variety) can be established and consolidated in, at least, some African countries? The problem with leadership in Africa is the big ego: the arrogance, the pretence to omniscience, and the extreme sensitivity to criticism. Unfortunately, all these characteristics could be discerned in the personality make-up of South Africa's former President Thabo Mbeki. Inter-communal and interpersonal harmony were not helped along by his political leadership style which constantly played the race card when he came under pressure, thereby amplifying racial stereotypes rather than breaking them down.

Nedbank chairman Reuel Khoza has warned that democracy and good governance in South Africa is under increasing threat. Although South Africa "is widely recognised for its liberal and enlightened Constitution", there is "the emergence of a strange breed of leaders who are determined to undermine the rule of law and override the Constitution". He called on South Africans to hold to account those who, "due to sheer incapacity to deal with the complexity of twenty-first century governance and leadership, cannot lead". In fact, the "political leadership's moral quotient is degenerating and … [the country is] fast losing the checks and balances that are necessary to prevent a recurrence of the past" (*Business Day*, 2012a). Indeed, President Jacob

Zuma has gravely weakened key public institutions in a bid to protect himself and further the careers of his protégés. The selection of top judges, prosecutors and police commissioners have become hopelessly tied to the political whims of the President and have often led to blunder and controversy (*Business Day*, 2012b): Mogoeng Mogoeng as Chief Justice (until then a non-performing, non-entity on the Constitutional Court, passing over the more obviously qualified candidate, Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke); Menzi Simelane as Director of the NPA, after the Ginwala Commission found him "not fit and proper" to occupy any management position); and Bheki Cele as National Police Commissioner (another cadre deployment from Zuma's own KwaZulu-Natal heartland, later found guilty of maladministration by the Moloi Commission of Inquiry). Moreover, the Public Protector and other Chapter 9 institutions (for not being acquiescent to government wishes), as well as the judiciary (under the guise of "transformation", and a threat to "review" decisions of the Constitutional Court), have come under constant attack from the governing ANC; while the Protection of State Information Bill (if it does not include a "public interest" clause) is bound to make the exposure of malpractice and corruption by government officials and politicians extremely difficult, if not impossible, with serious consequences for freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Some ANC leaders are even calling for amendments to the Constitution (there have already been 16), as the compromises made in 1996 "hindered social and economic transformation".

So, in South Africa (as *the* example of so-called "African democracy" that its leadership wishes to portray) reality is very often obscured by imagery. Behind the façade of democracy, reconciliation, accountability, and transparency lurk the ugly gremlins of authoritarianism and centralist control, political intolerance and retribution, patronage, cronyism, nepotism, and corruption. If South Africa, as one of the leading proponents of Nepad, cannot even set a proper

example, what hope is there for the rest of the continent to comply with the well-formulated principles, codes and standards of democracy and good governance enunciated in the AU "Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance"?

Conclusion: Towards an African Renewal

How should an African renewal, revival, regeneration or revitalisation be given substance, so that the much-vaunted renaissance of the continent does not become "a dream derailed", but merely "a dream delayed"? A renewal is about making African economies competitive in the global context, over and above the need to encourage leadership to create conditions, systems, and institutions of governance conducive to democracy and the revival of foreign direct investment (FDI). Moreover, ongoing instability on the African continent has highlighted the importance of civil institutions for effective democratic governance. An African renewal stresses the need for visionary, selfless leaders, and necessitates a shift in focus from personalities to policies --- policies which are firmly grounded in principle and moral authority (see Mills, 2000, pp. 318-319). Clearly, in the light of current global and regional trends, Africa has no choice but to galvanise and marshal all positive forces, and take its destiny into its own hands. Individually and collectively, African countries need to set in motion, without further delay, their own agenda for socio-economic and political regeneration. As Sadig Rasheed so aptly points out, "progress [in Africa] will be reinforced by entrenching democracy, fostering popular participation in development, establishing peace and stability at the national level, and introducing mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution at the regional level" (see Rasheed, 1993, pp. 56-58).

Besides Nepad, at least part of the road map towards an African renewal seems to lie in the *Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Co-operation in Africa* (CSSDCA), which could serve as a blueprint for continental revitalisation. In essence, the CSSDCA is a carefully

constructed showcase for a concept which in recent years has steadily advanced to the centre of African political thought and strategy --- that without democracy, human rights, and popular participation, and without an end to cross-border and civil wars, there can be neither stability nor economic growth in Africa and, therefore, no release for the continent from the tightening grip of violence, famine, and debt. Moreover, without that release, Africa as a bloc will become politically and economically even more marginalised in a new global order where success is determined by economic strength rather than military power and ideological affiliation (Bell, 1991, p. 9). The CSSDCA initiative stresses that security, stability, development, and co-operation are inextricably linked, each component dependent on the others for its realisation. More pointedly, it is argued that a sound national economy is the only durable foundation for national security and political stability, and that democracy, pluralism, and human rights are, in turn, prerequisites (or necessary preconditions) for socio-economic development and co-operation (see Adedeji, 1991, p. 54; Nathan, 1992, p. 212; Obasanjo, 1990, pp. 27-28).

Imageries are important not because they portray reality, but because they are capable of masking reality and giving it a sense of normality. This is a truism in the case of quite a number of African political systems: the incongruence between their perceived *image* as guardians of democratic values and good governance principles, and their *reality* as instruments of civil dictatorship. As this presentation has demonstrated, the significance of the role that democracy and good governance should play, the values and ideals they represent, and the functions they perform in the political life of citizens have either been misconstrued, even perverted, or negated by often corrupt political leaderships --- leaderships interested neither in democracy and good governance, nor in the pluralistic dividends multiparty systems are supposed to deliver. The prospects for transforming African political systems into functioning, rather than imageries of

virtual, democracies is an uphill struggle that requires the emergence of new leaderships better placed to meet present-day challenges --- challenges confronting the very core values that inform their current styles of governance (see Venter, 2003b, p. 346).

Despite the odds against responsible and accountable governance (particularly, its potential for institutionalising majoritarian tyranny under the pretext of democratic rule) these constraints are, nevertheless, surmountable. The central role given to democracy and good governance principles, codes and standards in Nepad, and the voluntary accession of African political leaderships to peer review through the African Peer Review Mechanism is not only well formulated but also well intentioned. Moreover, together with Nepad, the acknowledgement of the crucial interrelatedness between the four core elements of the CSSDCA process serve as a road map to the realisation of an African renewal or renaissance. However, the bottom line remains the same. Whether Nepad and the CSSDCA ever get off the ground, and whether they succeed in meeting their truly challenging objectives, ultimately depends on the one critical ingredient missing in previous, similar endeavours: the political will to translate good intentions and lofty ideals into requisite action. Without such action, the futures of African countries are bleak, to say the least, and the sustainability of fledgling democratic systems less secure than what the imageries tend to portray.

But it would be foolishly naïve to think that the problems of Africa will be swept away by the emergence of more responsive, politically liberal, and economically sound societies. The global community is suffering from the hangovers not only of donor fatigue but also of Afro-pessimism, and the challenges of drought, famine, and HIV/Aids in Africa will persist --- similarly, the issues of rapid population growth, and environmental degradation. However, an Africa with a degree of security and stability, and a realistic option for eventual and sustainable,

internally-led growth, can take its rightful place in a world groping towards new alignments. A

productive, competitive and revitalised Africa is, in the final analysis, a matter of profound

global importance.

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