

African Renaissance

Published consistently since 2004
ISSN: 1744-2532 (Print) ISSN: 2516-5305 (Online)

Indexed by: SCOPUS, IBSS, EBSCO, COPERNICUS, ERIH PLUS,
ProQuest, J-Gate and Sabinet

Vol. 21, (No. 4), December 2024
pp 113-136

Understanding Leadership Dynamics in Post-Colonial Africa: Exploring the Impact of Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2024/21n4a6>

Noah Ariel Mutongoreni¹, Innocent Chirisa², Gibson Muridzi³ and Shepherd Dhliwayo⁴

¹*Quality Assurance, Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences,
noah.mutongoreni@staff.msuas.ac.zw*, ORCID: 0000-0002-6039-6241

²*Department of Urban & Regional Planning, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa,
ORCID: 0000-0002-9485-7616*

³*Business Management, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa,
ORCID: 0000-0002-2362-8496,
email address gmuridzi@uj.ac.za*

⁴*Business Management, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa,
ORCID: 0000-0001-7653-2466, email address sdhliwayo@uj.ac.za*

Abstract

This article aims to provide an understanding of the phenomenon of Dark Triadic Leadership within the context of the first generation of African leaders in the post-colonial era. Drawing insights from psychological literature, the Dark Triad framework encompasses narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism- traits associated with self-absorption, lack of empathy, manipulation, and a thirst for power. The study aims to investigate Dark

Triadic Leadership traits among African leaders and evaluate their influence on the contemporary challenges faced by African nations. Through meticulous document and content analysis, the research uncovers compelling examples of the prevalence and consequences of Dark Triadic Leadership traits among post-colonial African leaders. Leaders like Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) exhibited narcissistic tendencies through extravagant displays of wealth, contrasting starkly with the poverty experienced by the population. Idi Amin of Uganda demonstrated psychopathic behaviour through brutal and arbitrary acts of violence against his own people. Additionally, figures like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya employed Machiavellian tactics to maintain power through manipulation and suppression of dissent. These instances highlight how Dark Triadic Leadership traits manifested in the governance of various African nations, resulting in corruption scandals, prolonged civil conflicts, economic stagnation, high unemployment rates, and authoritarian rule. In addition to individual traits, broader structural influences significantly shape leadership behaviours and governance outcomes in African nations. The findings of this study establish that factors such as historical colonial legacies, weak institutional frameworks, uneven distribution of resources, and external interference have profound effects on leadership dynamics. In addition, the legacy of colonialism often left behind fragmented societies, artificial borders, and systems that favoured control over inclusion, setting the stage for power struggles and authoritarian tendencies among post-colonial leaders. Therefore, this study recommends the establishment of democratic systems to mitigate the potential negative effects of Dark Triadic Leadership traits in African governance. It also emphasises the importance of leadership training programs to promote ethical leadership practices and incentivise leaders to prioritise the well-being and development of their nations over personal gain.

Keywords: *Dark Triadic Leadership, Post-independence, Leadership traits, Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy*

Introduction

The attainment of independence in Africa during the 1960s was a momentous occasion that was celebrated with great enthusiasm (Cooper, 2019). Nationalist leaders, who were hailed as heroes, assumed power with overwhelming support and were highly revered (Mboya, 1986; Kirk-Greene, 1991). However, the post-colonial era brought about unforeseen challenges that hindered the realisation of the promised peace and development for the African masses (Fawole, 2018). Democratic institutions and robust economies, exemplified by countries

like Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Africa, have also faced challenges (Mackatiani, Imbovah, & Imbova, 2014; Lake, 2018). Zimbabwe, under the leadership of Robert Mugabe, experienced a significant decline due to corruption, mismanagement, and political instability (Joseph, 2014; Mokoena, 2020). Despite its democratic institutions, South Africa has been plagued by corruption scandals under leaders like Jacob Zuma, leading to economic stagnation and social unrest (Jones & Pillay, 2022). Similarly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has struggled with governance issues, corruption, and conflicts under leaders like Mobutu Sese Seko and Joseph Kabilu, resulting in increasing poverty, inequality, and economic decline (Phimister & Raftopoulos, 2004; Brownell, 2004). Consequently, Africa became fertile ground for despotic regimes, perpetuating a cycle of dependence on foreign aid and international financial institutions (IFIs), abuse of public office, and a failure to address critical issues, such as unemployment and illiteracy (Tom, 2011).

Despite the adoption of democratic constitutions and institutions, the African continent continues to grapple with deteriorating social welfare, dilapidated public institutions, a low standard of living, legitimacy crises, uneven wealth distribution, and a failure to provide essential public goods and services (Nganje, 2015). These challenges persist despite the democratic system of governance that was intended to be inclusive and transformative. Zimbabwe serves as a poignant example of a once-peaceful breadbasket descending into a malnourished autocracy (Ploch, 2011). As citizens witnessed leadership patterns reminiscent of their former colonial masters, concerns were raised, only to be met with severe reprisals. The disillusionment with the nationalist leaders who had promised freedom and development was succinctly expressed by Ayittey (1999), who referred to them as "crocodile liberators, Swiss bank socialists, quack revolutionaries, and grasping kleptocrats." The change in leadership orientation that figures like Mugabe exemplified created a climate where maintaining power through violence became the norm, with limited international intervention (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009).

The post-colonial African narrative can be profoundly illuminated through the prism of John Locke's concept of tyranny, elucidated in his seminal work 'Two Treatises on Government' (1689). Locke's philosophy emphasised the social covenant between the government and its people, stressing the protection of individual liberties, the

promotion of the common good, and the prevention of despotism through transparent governance (Tordoff, 2002; Biney, 2011). While troubled leadership has been evident in post-independence Africa, there have been instances where despotic leaders have contributed significantly to sustainable economic development. During the era of military governance in Nigeria from 1967 to 1978, centralised national development plans prioritising economic expansion and infrastructure improvement were implemented (Mackatiani, Imbovah&Imbova, 2014). These regimes, characterised by authoritative leadership, effectively executed policies without the constraints of democratic processes, leading to periods of stability and economic growth in contrast to subsequent democratic administrations plagued by corruption and inefficiencies (Lake, 2018).

Similarly, Rwanda's journey from the devastation of the 1994 genocide to a symbol of progress and stability stands as a remarkable African narrative. Under President Paul Kagame's leadership, Rwanda has witnessed advancements in governance, economic prosperity, and social cohesion (Rwigema, 2022). The government's focus on reconciliation, institution-building, and long-term planning has been instrumental in Rwanda's remarkable transformation, positioning it as one of Africa's fastest-growing economies (Rwigema, 2023). Likewise, Morocco's development under King Mohammed VI has seen economic and social reforms aimed at modernising the nation and improving living standards for its citizens (Naguib, 2020). Strategic initiatives in infrastructure development, attracting foreign investments, and enhancing social welfare programs have underscored Morocco's progress and the importance of visionary leadership and sustainable development strategies (Cardarelli & Koranchelian, 2023).

Effective governance under select military administrations, Rwanda's post-genocide revival, and Morocco's ongoing transformation highlight the intricacies of post-colonial African governance (Naguib, 2020). These successes emphasise the importance of transparent governance, human rights protection, and sustainable development to prevent tyranny and ensure enduring stability and prosperity across the continent. This underscores the critical role of leaders' personalities in fostering an environment conducive to peace and development in post-colonial Africa. However, it is critical to note that leaders exhibiting dark triadic traits are not limited to those in Africa (Smith, 2024). In Western democracies, leaders such as Trump (Jones, 2023), Bush Jr., and Regan

exhibited dark leadership traits. This underscores the global nature of these characteristics, which can manifest irrespective of geographical boundaries and political ideologies (McMahon, 2024). Despite existing literature on the leadership challenges faced by the globe or region, there is a notable gap in understanding how leaders' personalities impact peace and sustainable development (Tordoff, 2002). Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring Africa's pursuit of peace and sustainable development through the lens of the dark triad leadership construct, comprising Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, which can profoundly shape leadership behaviours (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

The Dark Triad Leadership Construct

The dark triad construct, which encompasses the personality traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, was first conceptualised Paulhus and Williams (2002). They introduced the idea that these three distinct yet interrelated traits can exist as non-pathological personality characteristics (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Individuals exhibiting high levels of these traits can function and even thrive in everyday society, often assuming leadership roles without the need for incarceration or clinical supervision (Wissing & Reinhard, 2019). Research has demonstrated that dark triad traits predict a wide range of behaviours across various domains, including the workplace, education, interpersonal relationships, and even antisocial activities (Diller et al., 2021). Leaders with elevated levels of dark triad traits can have a profoundly destructive impact on their teams, subordinates, and organisations as a whole. This underscores the critical role that a leader's personality plays in organisational performance and outcomes, illustrating how the darker aspects of leadership can contribute to failures (Tourish, 2013).

While the dark triad traits are typically linked to negative outcomes, scholars suggest that certain characteristics within this framework could contribute to effective leadership in specific circumstances (Cesinger et al., 2023). In diverse cultural and national contexts, variations in trait expression may exist, impacting leadership styles differently (Pilch, Lathia, & Wieseback, 2020). For example, in Egypt, notable figures like Nasser and Sadat exemplify contrasting approaches to leadership. Nasser's charismatic and visionary leadership style, potentially influenced

by a degree of narcissism, mobilised followers and shaped the country's trajectory (Dangreau, 2012). Conversely, Sadat's more diplomatic and strategic approach, possibly influenced by Machiavellian tendencies, navigated Egypt through complex geopolitical challenges (Lalancette, 2020). Beyond Egypt, figures like Bokassa in the Central African Republic and leaders across Africa exhibit varying degrees of these traits, showcasing a spectrum of leadership styles and outcomes (Mazrui, 2014). In the Western world, leaders such as Trump, Bush Jr., and Regan, among others exhibited dark triad leadership traits (Acharya, 2024). Therefore, it implies that dark leadership traits among leaders transcend national, regional, and continental boundaries.

Narcissism

Narcissism, a concept introduced by Freud (1914) and defined as behaviours characterised by grandiosity, the need for admiration, and a lack of empathy. Narcissistic individuals often display traits like superiority, dominance, assertiveness, and a thirst for power and attention (Diller et al., 2021). They may lack genuine empathy, take credit for others' work, shift blame onto others, and demand unwavering loyalty from their followers. Criticisms or negative feedback can trigger aggressive responses from narcissistic individuals (Schmid et al., 2021). Despite traits like competitiveness, entitlement, and charm, narcissistic leaders can exhibit harmful behaviours such as bullying, fraud, or risky decision-making (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021).

Psychopathy

On the other hand, psychopathy is characterised by impulsivity, a lack of empathy, and potential aggression (Cain & Boussi, 2020). Psychopathic individuals may be praised for their passion and innovation but criticised for mistreating others, lacking empathy, and displaying arrogance. They tend to be impulsive, thrill-seeking, and show low levels of empathy, guilt, and anxiety (Kets de Vries, Sexton & Ellen, 2016). Their behaviours can include aggression driven by a desire for excitement (Diller et al., 2021). Psychopathic leaders may lack regard for others, exhibit decreased empathy, and show a lack of guilt or conscience. Psychopathy is marked by impulsivity, callousness, manipulation, exploitation, and stimulation-seeking, with low levels of empathy, anxiety, and remorse.

(Boldt, 2007; Palmer et al., 2020) Psychopathic individuals often display antisocial tendencies and negativity towards others. While some narcissistic and psychopathic individuals may find success in leadership roles, it is essential to consider the negative effects they can have on organisations and their members (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Their behaviours, including arrogance, a lack of empathy, and impulsivity, can lead to detrimental outcomes within the workplace and beyond (Joshanloo, 2021).

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism, rooted in Niccolò Machiavelli's seminal work "The Prince" from 1513, embodies a philosophy where the ends justify the means (Smith, 2024). This ideology advocates that leaders should employ any necessary tactics, including manipulation and deceit, to secure and retain political power (Ramsay, 2012). Christie and Geis (2013) further refined the concept by characterising Machiavellianism as manipulation, exploitation, cunning, a lack of genuineness, and ethical detachment (Boddy, 2023). Individuals high in Machiavellianism often exhibit reduced levels of honesty and humility, resorting to deception and disregarding others' welfare to advance their interests (Fennimore, 2017). This trait involves exploiting others, prioritising self-gain, displaying scant regard for moral considerations, and using deceitful manoeuvres to surpass competitors (Greenbaum et al., 2017). Machiavellians prioritise personal benefits and individual objectives, perceiving others primarily as means to further their agendas (Boddy, 2023). They are willing to pay any cost for success based on a relentless pursuit of achievement (Ramsay, 2012). There is a correlation between Machiavellianism and authoritarianism, rooted in their shared disdain for outgroups. Machiavellians excel in settings with decision-making autonomy and minimal oversight but may struggle in highly structured organisational environments (Fennimore, 2017). Machiavellians differ from narcissists in their pursuit of power in that while both seek authority, narcissists aim for personal acclaim and admiration, whereas Machiavellians pursue power for its sake alone (Boddy, 2023).

Integrating narcissism, Psychopathy, and Machiavellianism

The dark triad personality traits-narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism-exhibit significant commonalities as subclinical traits. Narcissism is characterised by an exaggerated self-image, Machiavellianism by an intense drive for power, and psychopathy by impulsivity and a penchant for thrill-seeking in milder manifestations. An intriguing intersection between narcissism and Machiavellianism lies in their shared tendency to avoid overt displays of aggression in social settings (Boddy, 2023). For narcissists, such behaviour could tarnish their self-image and create negative perceptions, while Machiavellians often opt for calculated and manipulative interpersonal tactics, echoing the cunning and manipulative traits associated with psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Despite being distinct constructs, the dark triad traits converge in various aspects. They demonstrate a decrease in moral and social emotions and frequently employ self-centred interpersonal strategies (Joshanloo, 2021). Dark triad leaders may initially present as charismatic, inspiring, and trustworthy individuals but harbour socially malevolent traits such as self-aggrandisement, emotional detachment, deceitfulness, and aggression. The overlaps between Machiavellianism and psychopathy, narcissism and psychopathy, and Machiavellianism and narcissism, albeit theoretically compelling, lack empirical substantiation based on existing research. However, the theoretical synergies between these dark triad traits offer valuable insights into the complex and often manipulative nature of individuals who exhibit these characteristics (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Dark Triadic Leadership Traits in African Leaders

A common feature of African leaders with dark triadic leadership traits is the consolidation of power through personalised leadership, characterised by a limited regard for ethical principles and a disregard for honour. This is often accompanied by the effective checks and balances, the monopolisation of coercive force, the privatisation of state resources in the hands of a few individuals, and the utilisation of symbolic forms of domination to justify and legitimise the dictator's hegemony and absolute authority (Tchouaffe, 2014). Examples abound of leaders in

post-colonial Africa who displayed narcissist, psychopathic, and Machiavellian traits are discussed below.

Narcissism Behaviour exhibited by African Leaders

A close analysis of the behaviours of African leaders depicts evidence of narcissism. In other words, evidence abounds showcasing narcissistic traits in African leaders (Nai & Toros, 2020). The late President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe is one example of a leader who displayed narcissist traits. He exhibited a grandiose sense of self-importance and a strong desire for power and control (Kets de Vries, Sexton & Ellen, 2016). His leadership style was characterised by a cult of personality, with extensive propaganda campaigns and efforts to maintain an image of infallibility. Mugabe's policies often revolved around consolidating his own power rather than prioritising the welfare of the Zimbabwean people, leading to economic decline and political repression (Compagnon, 2011).

Another example of an African leader who falls within the category of narcissism is former President Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia (Ayittey, 2020). Jammeh exhibited narcissistic tendencies, showcasing an inflated sense of self-worth and a belief in his exceptionalism. He portrayed himself as a visionary leader and marketed his regime as indispensable for the development and progress of the nation (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). Jammeh's leadership was marked by authoritarianism, human rights abuses, and a disregard for democratic processes (Saine, 2020). Furthermore, the late President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) is often cited as another example of a leader with narcissistic traits (Orji, 2022). Mobutu built a highly personalised regime centred around himself, adopting grandiose titles and symbols of power (Zack-Williams, 2017). He amassed vast personal wealth while neglecting the development of the country and suppressing dissent through a repressive security apparatus (Ayittey, 2020).

Psychopathic Behaviour Exhibited by Africa Leaders

Research on psychopathy in leadership within the African context unveils compelling instances of leaders exhibiting psychopathic traits, profoundly impacting their nations. Idi Amin, the former President of Uganda, exemplifies such behaviour, noted for his extreme brutality,

violence, and severe human rights abuses during his rule (Venter, 1979). Amin's evident lack of empathy, demonstrated through arbitrary arrests, torture, and executions to consolidate power, aligns with core psychopathic characteristics (Ayittey, 2020). Scholars such as Leopold (2020) have pointed to Amin's erratic and impulsive actions as indicative of psychopathic tendencies, emphasising the destructive consequences of such traits in leadership.

Similarly, former Liberian President Charles Taylor provides another poignant illustration of psychopathic leadership in Africa. Taylor's regime was marred by a flagrant disregard for human life and a willingness to exploit individuals for personal gain, exemplified by his involvement in war crimes, including the recruitment of child soldiers and engagement in mass atrocities and illicit activities like diamond smuggling (Ellis, 1995). Scholarly analyses by Wyszomierski (2016) and Burgis (2016) underscore Taylor's manipulative and exploitative behaviours, characteristic of psychopathy, emphasising the detrimental impact of such traits on governance and society.

Machiavellian Behaviours Exhibited by African Leaders

While not all African leaders exhibit Machiavellian traits, there have been instances where certain leaders have displayed behaviours aligned with Machiavellianism. Former President Muammar Gaddafi of Libya exhibited Machiavellian traits (Senoussi, 2023). As leader, Gaddafi employed Machiavellian tactics to consolidate his power and maintain control over the country (Burgis, 2016). He created a cult of personality, utilised propaganda, and suppressed dissent through a pervasive security apparatus. Gaddafi strategically manipulated tribal and ethnic divisions to secure loyalty and played a significant role in regional politics through alliances and support for armed groups (Ayittey, 2020).

Apart from Gaddafi, former President Sani Abacha of Nigeria stands out as a leader who employed Machiavellian strategies (Okorie, 2006). Abacha, as former military dictator of Nigeria, employed a combination of repression and co-optation to maintain control, using state resources for personal gain (Leopold, 2020). Abacha stifled political opposition, silenced the media, and engaged in widespread corruption, embezzling billions of dollars from the nation's treasury (Burgis, 2016).

Former President Gnassingb   Eyad  ma of Togo is also a typical example of a leader who employed Machiavellian tactics (Kohnert,

2022). Eyadéma ruled the country for nearly four decades with a Machiavellian approach (Ayittey, 2020). He employed a combination of repression and manipulation to retain power, suppressing opposition parties, controlling the military, and implementing constitutional changes to extend his presidency (Kohnert, 2022). Eyadéma effectively employed divide-and-rule strategies to weaken opposition and maintain his dominance (Burgis, 2016).

Furthermore, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, former President of Algeria, stands out as a Machiavellian leader. Bouteflika utilised Machiavellian tactics to cling to power for two decades (Harchaoui, 2018). He manipulated the political landscape by co-opting key elites and controlling state institutions (Burgis, 2016). Bouteflika employed a mix of repression and limited political reforms to maintain stability while consolidating his authority (Harchaoui, 2018).

Lastly, Yahya Jammeh, former President of Gambia, also stands out as a leader who utilised Machiavellian strategies to remain in power (Burgis, 2016). He employed tactics such as intimidation, repression, and manipulation to maintain control (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). Jammeh utilised state institutions, including the judiciary and security forces, to suppress opposition and consolidate his power (Senoussi, 2023).

Dark Triad Leadership Implications for Peace, Development, and Society in Africa

The implications of leaders exhibiting Dark Triad traits—narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism—are profound for peace and development in post-colonial Africa (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). These traits significantly influence peace, societal cohesion, and development trajectories across the continent in several ways. Senoussi (2023) argued that leaders with Dark Triad traits prioritise their personal interests and the consolidation of power, undermining the development of strong and independent institutions. This can result in weakened governance structures, compromised rule of law, and diminished accountability mechanisms (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). Such erosion of institutions hampers peacebuilding efforts and impedes sustainable development. Under the leadership of President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, the erosion of institutions was evident (Kets de Vries, Sexton & Ellen, 2016). Mugabe's authoritarian rule resulted in weakened governance structures, compromised judiciary, and a lack of accountability, which

contributed to economic decline and political instability (Compagnon, 2011). The leadership of President Yoweri Museveni in Uganda demonstrates the erosion of democratic institutions. Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, has exhibited narcissistic tendencies by extending his rule through constitutional amendments and suppressing opposition voices (Khisa, 2019). This erosion of democratic institutions has led to limited political freedoms, compromised rule of law, and weakened checks and balances in the country (Omeje & Omeje, 2021).

Dark triad traits in leaders not only erode democratic institutions but also significantly contribute to political instability and social unrest. Narcissistic tendencies, focusing on personal glory and self-promotion, can lead to divisive politics and a polarised society, exacerbating tensions and undermining cohesive governance (Compagnon, 2011). Psychopathic behaviours, like human rights abuses and a disregard for ethics, fuel grievances and resistance among the population (Senoussi, 2023). Machiavellian tactics, involving manipulation and the suppression of dissent, create an atmosphere of fear and discontent, heightening the potential for conflict (Kohnert, 2022). The leadership of figures like Charles Taylor in Liberia serves as a stark example of the implications of dark triad traits (Senoussi, 2023). Taylor's psychopathic behaviour, involvement in war crimes, and manipulation of ethnic tensions sparked a prolonged civil war, political instability, and immense suffering for the population (Wyszomierski, 2016). Similarly, the leadership of President Omar al-Bashir in Sudan underscores the correlation between dark triadic leadership and political instability. Al-Bashir's rule for three decades, marked by psychopathic behaviours involving human rights abuses and violence, fuelled widespread discontent and social unrest, culminating in his ousting due to popular protests and a military coup (Smeulders, 2023).

Leaders with dark triad traits, as highlighted by Kohnert (2022), often exhibit a tendency to prioritise personal wealth and enrichment at the expense of their nations' economic development. This self-serving behaviour can lead to detrimental outcomes such as corruption, embezzlement, and resource mismanagement, as outlined by Smeulders (2023), ultimately impeding economic growth and thwarting efforts aimed at reducing poverty within these nations. The diversion of public funds for personal gain exacerbates inequalities and undermines the potential for sustainable development (Kohnert, 2022). The case of President Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of

the Congo) showcased the economic consequences of dark triad leadership. Mobutu's corrupt practices, embezzlement of public funds, and mismanagement of resources severely hindered economic development, thereby contributing to the country's prolonged state of poverty and underdevelopment (Zack-Williams, 2017). The leadership of President Joseph Kabila in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) showcases the economic challenges associated with Dark Triadic leadership. Kabila's Machiavellian tactics, including corruption and mismanagement of resources, undermined the country's economic development (Smeulers, 2023). The DRC, despite its abundant natural resources, has faced persistent poverty, underdevelopment, and a lack of basic services due to the diversion of funds for personal gain.

Moreover, dark triad leadership can erode social cohesion and trust among citizens. Narcissistic leaders may foster divisions and cultivate a culture of loyalty based on personal allegiances rather than shared values (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). Psychopathic tendencies, such as manipulation and exploitation, can breed distrust and disillusionment among the population (Zack-Williams, 2017). Machiavellian tactics can further exacerbate social divisions by pitting groups against each other for the leader's advantage (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). The leadership of Yahya Jammeh in The Gambia affects social cohesion and trust. Jammeh's authoritarian and manipulative tactics created a climate of fear and mistrust, leading to divisions within society and a lack of trust in state institutions (Omeje & Omeje, 2021).

Prolonged leadership tenure associated with Dark Triadic traits has been detrimental to the progress and development of nations (Kamata, 2019). When leaders remain in power for extended periods, it often leads to a concentration of power and a lack of checks and balances (Ayittey, 1999). Over time, this can foster a culture of impunity, where leaders feel immune to accountability and are less inclined to prioritise the needs and aspirations of the people (Ayittey, 2020). Prolonged leadership tenure hampers the growth of new leadership and stifles the emergence of fresh ideas and perspectives, hindering innovation and progress. Paul Biya in Cameroon: Paul Biya has been the President of Cameroon since 1982, making him one of Africa's longest-serving leaders (Hooks, 2023). During his tenure, Cameroon has faced numerous challenges, including political repression, human rights abuses, and a stagnant economy. Prolonged leadership tenure has contributed to a lack of political pluralism, limited democratic reforms,

and a concentration of power in the hands of a few (Ayittey, 2020). The country has experienced social unrest and separatist movements due to perceived marginalisation and grievances against the government (Hooks, 2023).

Dark Triadic leadership traits, such as psychopathy and Machiavellianism, have been associated with oppressive and undemocratic practices (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). Leaders with these traits may suppress dissent, curtail freedom of speech, and violate human rights to maintain their grip on power. Their manipulative tendencies can lead to a culture of corruption, where public resources are misappropriated for personal gain (Hooks, 2023). These undemocratic practices undermine the principles of good governance, erode trust in institutions, and create a climate of fear and repression among the population (Ayittey, 2020). For example, Isaias Afwerki has been the President of Eritrea since its independence in 1993. Under his leadership, Eritrea has been characterised by severe political repression, limited civil liberties, and a lack of freedom of speech (Yohannes, 2017). The government exercises tight control over the media and civil society, and there have been widespread reports of human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests and indefinite military conscription. Corruption allegations have also emerged, with limited transparency and accountability within the government (Connell, 2001).

Dark Triadic leadership can exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities within nations (Ayittey, 2020). Leaders influenced by narcissistic tendencies may prioritise personal wealth accumulation over tackling systemic inequalities, leading to corruption and embezzlement that diverts public funds away from essential services and social welfare programs (Burgis, 2015). This diversion widens the gap between the rich and the poor, depriving a significant portion of the population of basic necessities, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Ayittey, 2020). Such inequality impedes social mobility, fosters unrest, and undermines long-term stability and development (Zack-Williams, 2017). Joseph Kabila's presidency in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2001 to 2019 exemplifies this issue, as economic challenges and widespread poverty persisted despite the country's rich natural resources (Yigzaw, 2019). The majority did not benefit from resource extraction wealth due to corruption and resource mismanagement, hindering social and economic progress. Similarly, Robert Mugabe's leadership in Zimbabwe led to a widening wealth gap (Biney, 2011). Policies like

controversial land reforms disrupted the agricultural sector, causing economic decline and food shortages. While the populace suffered, Mugabe and his loyalists amassed wealth, intensifying wealth disparities (Kets de Vries, Sexton & Ellen, 2016).

Furthermore, dark triadic leadership traits have also shown positive impacts in African leadership. Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first president, demonstrated assertiveness and strategic thinking during the independence struggle, mobilising the population and unifying diverse ethnic groups under a common national identity (Biney, 2011). Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's first President, utilised assertiveness and strategic planning to promote social stability and unity through policies such as Ujamaa, emphasising collective rural development and self-reliance to reduce ethnic divisions (Ayittey, 2020). Similarly, Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso's former President, exhibited assertiveness and charisma in emphasising national unity, self-reliance, and anti-imperialism. His policies focused on social equality, women's rights, and rural development, fostering a strong national identity and empowerment (Mentan, 2013). Sankara's leadership style contributed to initial stability and a sense of purpose in Burkina Faso (Ayittey, 2020). These leaders' traits, when used positively, played pivotal roles in shaping their nations' identities and fostering unity and progress.

Addressing Dark Triadic Leadership in Africa

As the dark triadic leadership is a serious challenge in Africa, there is a need to proffer strategies for addressing challenges associated with it. There are some strategies that could be used to address dark triadic leadership in Africa (Kets de Vries, Sexton & Ellen, 2016).

Firstly, dark triadic leadership challenges in Africa could be addressed through establishing and reinforcing strong democratic institutions, including an independent judiciary, a free and vibrant media, and robust civil society organisations (Ayittey, 2020). These institutions provide checks and balances, ensuring accountability and transparency in governance, fostering ethical, inclusive, and accountable leadership in post-colonial Africa (Hooks, 2023). It involves strengthening democratic institutions, promoting transparency and accountability, and supporting initiatives that focus on peacebuilding, social cohesion, and sustainable development (Yigzaw, 2019).

Secondly, developing and implementing electoral reforms could also go a long way in addressing leadership challenges in Africa (Ayittey, 2020). This entails undertaking deliberate efforts to implement fair and transparent electoral processes, including voter education, independent election commissions, and mechanisms to prevent voter intimidation and manipulation (Ojo, 2021).

Thirdly, apart from implementing electoral reforms, deliberate efforts for civic participation and education could also go a long way in fostering democratic ethos (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). Citizens are empowered to understand their rights, engage in political processes through civic education promotion programmes, and hold leaders accountable (Ojo, 2021). Participation could be done through platforms such as town hall meetings, public consultations, and feedback mechanisms (Hooks, 2023).

Fourthly, a culture that embraces a respect for human rights is also a panacea for dark triadic leadership (Omeje & Omeje, 2021). This entails upholding and protecting fundamental human rights, including freedom of speech, assembly, and association. An environment that encourages open dialogue, dissent, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts should be created (Hooks, 2023).

Fifthly, leaders could be transformed through leadership training programs focusing on emerging best practices (Ojo, 2021). Such training should incorporate modules on ethical leadership, emphasising integrity, transparency, and accountability as core values for effective governance. It should also provide training on democratic principles, such as respect for human rights, rule of law, and inclusive decision-making, to cultivate leaders who promote and uphold democratic values (Hudalah, 2023). Leaders should be equipped with skills in conflict resolution, negotiation, and consensus-building to facilitate peaceful and constructive dialogue in diverse and challenging situations (Ayittey, 1999). Training should be focused on effective governance practices, including financial management, anti-corruption strategies, and mechanisms for ensuring transparency and accountability (Hooks, 2023).

Sixthly, deliberate effort should be made towards providing incentives to leaders for a smooth transition out of political office (Hudalah, 2023). A regime of retirement benefits and support should be established that provide financial security and assistance to former leaders. This can include pensions, healthcare coverage, and job placement services to help them transition to a post-political life (Hooks,

2023). The leaders could transition from their political roles through taking diplomatic roles and advisory positions regionally and globally. This include offering opportunities for former leaders to engage in diplomatic roles, mediation processes, or advisory positions where they can contribute their experience and expertise to national and international affairs (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

Seventhly, recognition and honours could also act as an incentive for leaders to follow democratic ethos (Hudalah, 2023). Former leaders could be recognised and honoured through awards, honorary titles, or positions in academic institutions, think tanks, or international organisations. This can help maintain their sense of purpose and significance beyond their political careers (Hooks, 2023).

Lastly, there could be deliberate efforts to design legacy projects (Watson & Ripley, 2013). Through these projects, former leaders could be encouraged to undertake meaningful legacy projects that focus on social development, education, healthcare, or other areas aligned with their interests. This allows them to continue making a positive impact and leave a lasting legacy (Hudalah, 2023). They could also be encouraged to embrace leadership qualities such as empathy, integrity, and a commitment to the common good, which can contribute to long-term peace and development in the region (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

Conclusion

In examining Dark Triadic Leadership in post-colonial Africa, a plethora of adverse consequences have surfaced, impeding sustainable peace and development across the continent. Prolonged leadership tenures have entrenched power, stifled fresh perspectives, and nurtured a culture of impunity. Practices such as oppression, corruption, and anti-democratic tendencies have eroded human rights, shattered trust in institutions, and perpetuated social and economic disparities. This widening wealth gap has marginalised swathes of the population, hindering social mobility and fuelling unrest and instability.

To combat Dark Triadic Leadership's detrimental effects, Africa must prioritise strategies fostering democratic principles, strong institutions, and civic engagement. Reforms in electoral processes and citizen participation can promote transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment. Leadership training initiatives emphasising ethical conduct, democratic values, conflict resolution, and good governance

can cultivate a new cadre of leaders attuned to the people's needs and aspirations.

Implementing a system of incentives to ease leaders out of power, such as retirement benefits, diplomatic roles, and recognition, can encourage a positive and enduring legacy beyond their terms. By confronting dark triadic leadership, Africa can pave the way for inclusive and sustainable development, fostering democratic governance that upholds human rights, lawfulness, and transparency, thus fostering trust and stability.

Africa can create an environment conducive to economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation by combating corruption and narrowing inequality gaps. Empowering citizens, nurturing ethical leadership, and promoting good governance can unlock the continent's vast potential and steer it towards a prosperous and harmonious future. Nations must acknowledge the pernicious impacts of Dark Triadic Leadership and take proactive steps to mitigate its effects, fostering an inclusive, equitable continent where all voices are heard and valued.

While Rwanda and South Africa stand as examples of nations that have navigated complex post-colonial challenges and demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity, their experiences could serve as empirical evidence supporting the imperative of addressing Dark Triadic Leadership for sustainable progress and peace in Africa. Efforts towards collective action and reform can lay the groundwork for a brighter future, where the continent flourishes through unity, empowerment, and effective governance.

Reference

Acharya, M. (2024). *'Mark My Words': Measuring Personality of Global Leaders* (Doctoral thesis, The University of Mississippi).

Amulega, S. (2021). *Presidential Public Address as Power Maintenance: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Speeches by President Uhuru Kenyatta* (Doctoral thesis, Howard University).

Ayittey, G. (1999). Africa in Chaos, New York: St Martins Griffin.

Ayittey, G. B. (2020). Post-independence African scholars and the second liberation struggle. *African Scholars and Intellectuals in North American Academies*, 153-169.

Biney, A. (2011). The concept of tyranny in John Locke's political thought. *Journal of Politics and Law*, 4(2), 118-128.

Boddy, C. R. (2023). *Machiavelli*. In *Encyclopaedia of Business and Professional Ethics*, Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Boldt, R. M. (2007). Who feeds the narcissism? *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 63(2).

Brownell, R. E. (2004). Robert Mugabe and the Decline and Fall of Zimbabwe [Review of Degrees in Violence: Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe; Robert Mugabe: Life of Power and Violence; Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe, by D. Blair, S. Chan, & M. Meredith]. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30(2), 393-399. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4133842>).

Burgis, T. (2016). The Looting Machine: warlords, oligarchs, corporations, smugglers, and the theft of Africa's wealth. *PublicAffairs*. New York.

Cain, N. M., & Boussi, A. (2020). Narcissistic personality disorder. *Encyclopaedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, 3088-3096.

Cardarelli, M. R., & Koranchelian, M. T. (Ed.). (2023). *Morocco's Quest for Stronger and Inclusive Growth*. International Monetary Fund.

Cesinger, B., Gundolf, K., Hughes, M., Khedhaouria, A., & Montani, F. (2023). The bright and dark sides of the Dark Triad traits among senior managers: effects on organizational commitment. *Review of Managerial Science*, 17(5), 1731-1763.

Compagnon, D. (2011). *A predictable tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the collapse of Zimbabwe*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Connell, D. (2001). Inside the EPLF: the origins of the people's party'& its role in the liberation of Eritrea. *Review of African Political Economy*, 28(89), 345-364.

Cooper, F. (2019). *Africa since 1940: the past of the present*. Cambridge University Press.

Christie, R., & Geis, F. L. (2013). *Studies in Machiavellianism*. Academic Press.

Dangreau, F. (2012). How a leader turns to dictator: Analysis of Kaddafi's life through leadership theories. (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Linnaeus University).

DeLisi, M., Drury, A. J., & Elbert, M. J. (2021). Psychopathy and pathological violence in a criminal career: A forensic case report. *Aggression and violent behaviour*, 60, 101521.

DeLisi, M., Pechorro, P., Maroco, J., & Simões, M. (2021). Overlapping measures or constructs? An empirical study of the overlap between

self-control, psychopathy, Machiavellianism and narcissism. *Forensic science international: synergy*, 3, 100141.

Diller, S. J., Frey, D., Jonas, E., & Diller, S. J. (2021). Coach me if you can! Dark triad clients , their effect on coaches , and how coaches deal with them and how coaches deal with them. doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2020.1784973

Ellis, S. (1995). Liberia 1989-1994: A study of ethnic and spiritual violence. *African Affairs*, 94(375), 165-197.

Fawole, W. A. (2018). *The illusion of the post-colonial State: Governance and security challenges in Africa*: Rowman & Littlefield.

Fennimore, A. (2017). Natural born opportunists. *Management Decision*, 55(8), 1629-1644.

Folarin, S. F. (2023). *Rwanda's Radical Transformation Since the End of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi*: Palgrave Macmillan.

Freud, S. (1914). On narcissism: An introduction. In Strachey, J. (Ed.).*The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. Hogarth Press.

Greenbaum, R. L., Hill, A., Mawritz, M. B., & Quade, M. J. (2017). Employee Machiavellianism to unethical behaviour: The role of abusive supervision as a trait activator. *Journal of Management*, 43(2), 585-609.

Harchaoui, J. (2018). Too Close for Comfort. How Algeria Faces the Libyan Conflict. *SANA Briefing Paper* July 2018.

Hooks, K. K. (2023). Natural Resource Monopolies, Power Consolidation and Regime Longevity in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. Master's Thesis. Charles University.

Hudalah, D. (2023). Building a capital city, carving out a megaproject legacy? *Habitat International*, 141, 102933.

Jones, C., & Pillay, P. (2022). *Moral Leadership and Corruption: A South African Perspective with Reference to Jacob Zuma's Presidency. Lessons from Political Leadership in Africa: Towards Inspirational and Transformational Leaders*: Routledge.

Jones, L. Y. (2023). *Celebrity Nation: How America Evolved Into a Culture of Fans and Followers*: Beacon Press.

Joseph, R. (2014). Growth, security, and democracy in Africa. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(4), 61-75.

Joshanloo, M. (2021). Conceptions of Happiness Mediate the Relationship Between the Dark Triad and Well-Being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 1-9.

Kamata, N. W. (2019). Julius Nyerere: from a Territorial Nationalist to a Pan African Nationalist. *The African Review*, 46(2), 309-332.

Kets de Vries, M. F., Sexton, J. C., & Ellen III, B. P. (2016). Destructive and transformational leadership in Africa. *Africa Journal of Management*, 2(2), 166-187.

Khisa, M. (2019). Shrinking democratic space? Crisis of consensus and contentious politics in Uganda. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 57(3), 343-362.

Kirk-Greene, A. H. (1991). His Eternity, his eccentricity, or his exemplarity? A further contribution to the study of HE the African head of state. *African Affairs*, 90(359), 163-187.

Kohnert, D. (2022). 'Enlightened' West African Dictatorship Challenged by State Capture? Insights from Benin, Togo, and Senegal. West African Dictatorship Challenged by State Capture. Retrieved from SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4242515> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4242515>

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2006). *A leader's legacy*: John Wiley & Sons.

Lake, M. (2018). *Strong NGOs and weak states: pursuing gender justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa*: Cambridge University Press.

Lalancette, J.R. (2020). Conflict, Cooperation, and the Creation of the Postcolonial African Regional Order, 1957-1963. doi.org/10.17863/CAM.73569

Leopold, M. (2020). *Idi Amin: the story of Africa's icon of evil*: Yale University Press.

Mackatiani, C., Imbovah, M., & Imbova, N. (2014). Peace and development in Africa: prospects and challenges. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, 21.

Mazrui, A. A. (Ed.). (2014). *African thought in comparative perspective*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Mboya, T. (1986). Freedom and after: East African Publishers.

Mentan, T. (2013). Democracy for Breakfast? Unveiling Mirage Democracy in Contemporary Africa: African Books Collective.

Mokoena, E. (2020). *The role of Southern African Development Community (SADC) in promoting democracy and good governance in Zimbabwe* (Unpublished master's thesis, University of the Free State).

Naguib, R. (2020). Legitimacy and “transitional continuity” in a monarchical regime: Case of Morocco. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 43(5), 404-424.

Nai, A., & Toros, E. (2020). The peculiar personality of strongmen: comparing the Big Five and Dark Triad traits of autocrats and non-autocrats. *Political Research Exchange*, 2(1), 1707697.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2009). Making sense of Mugabeism in local and global politics: ‘So Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe’. *Third World Quarterly*, 30(6), 1139-1158.

Nganje, F. (2015). Moving beyond Africa's crisis of institutions. South African Institute of International Affairs.Occasional Paper, 222.

Ojo, E. O. (2021). Dimensions of electoral reforms in Nigeria. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Africanos*, 6(11).

Oko, O. (2008). The challenges of democratic consolidation in Africa. *New Eng. L. Rev.*, 43, 165.

Okorie, O. (2006). The Ethical Implication of Separating Morality From Politics: Taking Cue From Machiavellian Political Ideas and The Nigerian Political Experience.Master's Thesis. Linkopings Universitet

OMEJE, K. (2021). Dysfunctional Versions of Capitalism and the Political Economy of “Eating”. In: The Failure and Feasibility of Capitalism in Africa. International Political Economy Series. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham

Orji, C. (2022). *Unmasking the African Ghost: Theology, Politics, and the Nightmare of Failed States*: Fortress Press

Palmer, J. C., Holmes Jr, R. M., & Perrewé, P. L. (2020). The Cascading Effects of CEO Dark Triad Personality on Subordinate Behaviour and Firm Performance: A Multilevel Theoretical Model. *Group and Organization Management*, 1059601120905728.

Paulhus, D. L., & Williams, K. M. (2002). The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 36(6), 556–563. doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00505-6

Phimister, I., & Raftopoulos, B. (2004). Mugabe, Mbeki & the politics of anti-imperialism. *Review of African Political Economy*, 31(101), 385-400.

Pilch, I., Lathia, N., & Wieseback, K. (2020). The Dark Triad of personality and momentary affective states: an experience sampling study. *Current Issues in Personality Psychology*, 8(1), 10-17.

Ploch, L. (2010). Zimbabwe: Background. *CRS Report for Congress*. Congressional Research Service.

Ramsay, G. (2012). Targeting, rhetoric and the failure of grassroots jihad. *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 3(1), 27-38.

Rwigema, P. C. (2022). Leadership and governance for economic development. Case of Rwanda. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 9(2), 1177-1192.

Rwigema, P. C. (2023). Historical development of governance in Rwanda and how the development shaped the landscape of its institutions. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 10(2), 485-528.

Saine, A. (2020). Commissioned Report to The Gambia's Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission: 1994-2017. *Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission*. (<http://www.trrc.gm/updates>).

Schmid, E. A., Knipfer, K., Peus, C. V., & Reilly, C. O. (2021). Narcissistic Leaders Promise or Peril? The Patterns of Narcissistic Leaders ' Behaviors and Their Relation to Team Performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.660452>

Senoussi, M. (2023). The Psychology of Dictatorship: A Journey into Muammar Gaddafi's Mind in Yasmina Khadra's The Dictator's Last Night. *Critique. Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 64(2), 241-256.

Smeulers, A. (2023). *Perpetrators of Mass Atrocities: Terribly and Terrifyingly Normal*: Taylor & Francis.

Smith, M. J. (2024). *The Dark Triad and the Dark Tetrad. In Understanding and Dealing with Controlling, Intimidating and Manipulative Personalities*. Switzerland:Springer Nature.

Tchouaffe, O.J. (2014). Between the Sublime and the Subliminal: Economic Modernity, Desire, and Political Fictions in Cameroon. In: Falola, T., Abidogun, J. (ed.). *Education, Creativity, and Economic Empowerment in Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan,doi.org/10.1057/9781137438508_9

Tom, P. (2011). *The liberal peace and post-conflict peacebuilding in Africa: Sierra Leone* (Doctoral dissertation, University of St Andrews).

Tordoff, W. (2002). *Government and politics in Africa*: Palgrave Macmillan

Tourish, D. (2013). *The dark side of transformational leadership: A critical perspective*: Routledge

Venter, A. J. (1979). State Research Centre-Amin's chamber of horrors. *Africa Insight*, 9(2), 104-110.

Yigzaw, G. S. (2019). Challenges of democratization in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). *Jurnal Studi Pemerintahan*, 84-108.

Yohannes, H. (2017). Understanding Eritrea: inside Africa's most repressive state. *Review of African Political Economy*, 44(151), 165–169

Watson, K. W., & Ripley, R. A. (2013). Sustainable Legacy Leadership. *OD Practitioner*, 45(3), 20.

Wissing, B. G., & Reinhard, M. A. (2019). The dark triad and deception perceptions. *Frontiers in Psychology*. doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01811.

Wyszomierski, L. (2016). “*He Killed My Ma, He Killed My Pa... I'll Vote for Him*”: *The Narratives of Liberia's Warlords, and Where the World Stopped Listening* (Doctoral thesis).

Zack-Williams, A. B. (2017). *Africa beyond the post-colonial: political and socio-cultural identities*: Taylor & Francis.

Zeigler-Hill, V., Sauls, D., Ochoa, V., Kopitz, J., & Besser, A. (2021). Narcissism and motives to pursue status through the use of dominance-based strategies, prestige-based strategies, and leadership-based strategies. *Evolutionary Psychological Science*, 7, 254–272.