Leadership and the impact of the emerging concept of firm-hand leadership on economic growth and democracy in Africa

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ABSTRACT

During the past few decades, debate surrounding the role of a firm-hand leadership style (command-and-control, authoritarian leadership or dictatorship) to bolster rapid economic growth took place in some East-Asian Tiger countries, such as Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea. Western development partners, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's African Governance Initiative (AGI), as well as leaders like President Bill Clinton and Tony Blair praised this type of leadership. These institutions, initiatives and individuals praise this approach, as it led to economic growth in some African countries. Rwanda and Ethiopia are often identified as two prominent performers in this regard. Western donors and international financial institutions (IFIs) are now arguing that the rest of Africa should replicate the East-Asian Tigers' Developmental State model to achieve economic development.

However, literature on leadership styles rejects firm-hand leadership outright as a "debilitating style" (Weir 2011:1). Literature in this regard states that Africa has been under authoritarian regimes since time immemorial and the very leadership style that is currently believed to lead to economic growth in the East-Asian Tiger countries and certain African countries was also blamed for having contributed to Africa's under-development.

This contradictory state of affairs leads to an important question: What did previous African firm-hand *leaders in Rwanda and Ethiopia do, or fail to do compared to their counterparts' current initiatives to achieve the same economic growth? This article aims to explore and contextualise the concept of firm-hand leadership within the broader leadership framework. Furthermore, it sets out to uncover in what way post-independence African leaders, who were described in the literature as* dictators *and* authoritarian, *ruined their countries' economies. The*

article also uncovers and reports on contemporary firm-hand leaders in Africa's alternative approach to develop their countries' economies. Finally, the article attempts to unpack the theoretical intricacies that surround the concept in order to delineate critical success factors for this type of leadership on the African context.

INTRODUCTION

There is a perception that firm-hand-style leadership served as a catalyst for the economic development certain Asian Tiger countries have experienced during the past 30 years. Vines (2015:1) conducted an analysis of why coercive rule is no longer popular in Singapore. The author argues that, "The call for firm leadership is appealing, especially in a place where political paralysis is the order of the day". He describes firm-hand leaders, such as the Singaporean patriarch, Lee Kuan Yew, as leaders who "operate without the constraints of an independent judiciary, without the right to express opposition, without a free media". Furthermore, the author states that these leaders "apply the draconian powers that keep criticism to a bare minimum" (Vines 2015:1).

Most of Africa's 54 countries that gained independence in the early 1950s and 1960s, largely remain poor. "Calls for better, stronger, more visionary, and bolder leadership" (Bensimon, Newmann and Birnbaum 1989:5) for African countries intensified after the Asian-Tiger countries had managed to pull themselves out of poverty by achieving higher economic development post-World War II. The perception exists that to get out of the poverty conundrum, "Africa has to adopt the Asian Tigers' economic models if it wants to grow its economy" (Auriacombe 2015:104).

This article starts by discussing the conceptual and theoretical intricacies surrounding the concept of leadership. The authors proceed by exploring and contextualising the concept of firm-hand leadership within the broader leadership framework. Hereafter, the notion is postulated that Africa has had *firm* or authoritarian leaders for many years without experiencing economic growth. Firstly, the article explores how authoritarian leaders of post-independence African states have destabilised their countries' economies. Secondly, the article explores selected examples of current African firm-hand leaders who follow a different direction to grow their economies. The article concludes by delineating certain critical success factors for this type of leadership to succeed within an African context.

LEADERSHIP

Literature shows that, "systematic attempts to define and classify the different kinds of leadership can only be traced in the 20th century". However, despite this recent history; 65 different classification systems and dimensions of leadership have been formulated in the past 50 years (Choi 2007:244), as an increasing number of people have explored the concept. According to Fox, Schwella and Wissink (1991:92) "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define it".

This demonstrates the fact that the concept means different things to different people (Pietersen 2006:1).

In the article, the definitions used by Baron (1989), Fox, *et al.* (1991) and Choi (2007) are adopted to form a working definition. According to Choi (2007:244), a leader is "a person within a group who exerts most influence". A leader has the ability to influence another person or group members in any manner to comply with his/her requests – "willingly or not" (Fox *et al.* 1991:93). Someone with leadership qualities is said to have specific traits or characteristics. This includes the ability to "adapt to various situations". Furthermore, a leader is "alert to social environment(s), ambitious and achievement oriented, assertive, cooperative, decisive, dependable, dominant, energetic, persistent, self-confident, tolerant of stress". Moreover, a true leader expresses "willingness or drive to assume responsibility" (Baron 1989:691).The next section explores how the concept firm-hand leadership fits into the broader theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

FIRM-HAND LEADERSHIP

Neither dictionaries nor literature provides a direct definition of the term firm-hand leadership. Instead, most documents use terms such as *command and control*, *authoritarian* and *dictator* to describe a firm-hand leadership style (Weir 2011:1). For example, Weir (2011:1) argues that while Steve Jobs was often called the *CEO of the century*, he was, in fact, one of the most dictatorial leaders of corporate America. Here, Weir (2011:1) implies that firm-hand leadership is closely related to dictatorship style leadership. Firm-hand leadership is also referred to as *hands-on leadership*, *command and control leadership* or *strongman leadership* (Perez and Colfax 2008:270). Other terms used in the media and literature to describe firm-hand leadership and characterise this type of leadership style include authoritarianism and dictatorship. Examples of authoritarian leaders include Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, Saddam Hussein and Kim Jong-Un (Aust 2012:5).

Recently, Rwandan and Ethiopian leaders have been in the spotlight due to the perceived similarities between their leadership styles and leaders of the East-Asian Tiger countries, such as the Singaporean patriarch, Lee Kuan-Yew. According to Grant (2010:1), Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda adopted an ambitious economic model that was pioneered in the East-Asian Tiger countries such as Singapore.

Notably, East-Asian Tiger states' economic models are authoritarian and tightly controlled (Friedman 2012:276). According to Friedman (2012:276), "Rwanda has thrived despite an authoritarian government that is devoid of respect for human and political rights and opposition". Friedman (2012:276) further argues that the authoritarian blueprint of the Rwandan government has "played an important role in the country's economic emergence". Thus, the common denominator among the firm-hand leaders is lack of democracy.

For the purpose of this analysis, democracy is described as "Government of the people, for the people, by the people" (Beetham 2005:102). According to US President Barack Obama (2015:3),"[The] ingredients of [real] democracy include free and fair elections, but also freedom of speech and the press, and freedom of assembly. These rights are universal. They're written into African constitutions. Yet at this very moment, these same freedoms are denied to many Africans. And I have to proclaim, democracy is not just formal elections.

When journalists are put behind bars for doing their jobs, or activists are threatened as governments crack down on civil society – then you may have democracy in name, but not in substance. And I'm convinced that nations cannot realize the full promise of independence until they fully protect the rights of their people" (Obama 2015:3).

Firm-hand leadership and its associated terms imply that, "the principle of separation of powers, free elections, rule of law, and freedom of opinion, speech and association are not generally accepted" (Elliott 1973:123). If firm-hand leadership stands in opposition to democracy, then firm-hand leadership could be explained as an authoritarian and dictatorial leadership style (Matlou 2015:13). This definition is a good fit when considering the following analysis of the forces behind the rapid economic growth of the East-Asian Tiger countries that Rwanda and Ethiopia have already started replicating.

THE FORCES BEHIND THE SUCCESS STORIES OF THE EAST-ASIAN TIGERS

The East-Asian Tiger countries were peasant societies as late as the 1960s, but have now become "high-tech leaders and joined the rich world in little more than a generation" (Rosen 2010:1). These states are often presented as prototypes of developmental states. According to Gumede (2009:1), a developmental state generally refers to the model many of the East-Asian Tigers pursued after World War II to modernise their economies as speedily as possible. The basic framework of the East-Asian developmental state is one in which the state (at national level) sets specific development goals and then mobilises society to achieve industrial modernisation. As developmental states, the East-Asian Tigers have "active development strategies": in particular, industrial policies. Furthermore, they have set "clear policies and goals for the economy in terms of export promotion, investment in human capital and credit allocation via development banks" (Auriacombe 2015:104). Most authors suggest that African countries' developmental failure could be corrected if the continent's leaders were to adopt the East-Asian Tiger countries' economic model. However, the authors in question fail to explain the forces behind that economic development model.

Liddle's (1996:248) *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics* provides a more appropriate framework for explaining the connections between the types of leadership, political processes and policy outcomes across the Asian Tiger countries. According to Liddle (1996:248) conventional wisdom, which is based predominantly on the Asian Tigers' experience, contends that, "democracy is incompatible with rapid economic development, particularly in the export-led variety". Liddle (1996:248) cites Robert Wade's *Governing the Market* (1990) to make the case, mainly based on data from Taiwan that "a prime cause of development success in East Asia has been the presence of an interventionist or activist state as opposed to a passive-policeman state". Liddle (1996:248) argues that for a country to become an interventionist state, it must first be "both authoritarian and corporatist", as was the case with the Asian Tigers.

Furthermore, Liddle (1996:248) uses the example of the Asian Tiger countries to criticise Stephan Haggard (1990), who rejects the notion that "authoritarianism is a prerequisite for successful export-led economic growth" while simultaneously claiming that the state must be *insulated* from societal pressures to facilitate rapid economic growth. The main problem

with Haggard's (1990) claim is that it fails to explain how a state can be insulated from public scrutiny and still be democratic, or how a democratic state can be insulated from its people.

Liddle (1996:248) asserts that Haggard's (1990) concept of "insulation" that the East-Asian Tiger countries used to achieve rapid economic growth is a euphemism for authoritarianism. The fact that the developmental state model applied in the East-Asian Tiger countries requires the state to be authoritarian explains why democratic countries such as South Africa are finding it difficult to implement the same model (Mathebula 2016:49). Liddle's (1996) argument is supported by Terry (1998:193), who states that Asian Tiger countries adopted "market-driven management" or "neo-managerialism", but were not democratic.

Liddle (1996:249) posits that politicians in all political systems, whether democratic or authoritarian, usually accumulate and deploy coercive, normative and utilitarian resources in a plethora of ways to remove any obstacle or opposition. Furthermore, Liddle (1996:249) argues that, "coercive resources [such as the military, the police, hit squads, prisons, torture and harassment], in an authoritarian regime, are the principal stuff of insulation". When a country possesses sufficient "coercive resources", it is able to mobilise and deploy them efficiently. This enables ruling government officials to deny and repress popular opinion (Liddle 1996:249) and to coerce the unwilling population to comply with the status quo.

Importantly, Liddle's argument should not exclude the fact that democratic governments could also use coercion against their citizens. To a certain degree, both democratic and non-democratic states use coercion. In democratic societies, it is often used as "an instrument of policy enforcement and of protection for officials from individuals and groups who are willing to use illegal and unconstitutional violence to achieve political ends". Conversely, in non-democratic states, coercion is used as "an uncontrolled weapon in the hands of the executives" (Liddle 1996:249).

The second category of political resources Asian Tiger countries use is "normative resources" (Liddle 1996:249). These include "the recognition of a state's or government's legitimacy and identification of state policy with popular ideology, or the respect accorded to a strong or charismatic leader" (Liddle 1996:249). Thus, a strong (firm-hand) leader and a charismatic leader (also known as a transformational leader) can achieve the same outcome. However, in transformational/charismatic leadership, people (followers) follow their leaders of their own volition (because they want to; not because they have to), while the firm-hand leader gets people to follow because they have no choice.

The final area of political resources authoritarian leaders within the Asian Tigers paradigm use is *utilitarian resources*. Liddle (1996:249) argues that utilitarian resources were more tangible, material ingredients of exchange and included "the policies, programmes, appointments, contracts, and awards" given by the ruling elite to potential opponents in return for political support. The following section explores how the concept of firm-hand leadership fits into the major framework of leadership.

FIRM-HAND LEADERSHIP IN THE BROADER THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

According to Baron (1998:693), not all leaders are alike. "They differ greatly in terms of personal style or approach to leadership". Baron (1998:693) adds that, "while there are

Figure 1: Key Dimensions of Leader Behaviour
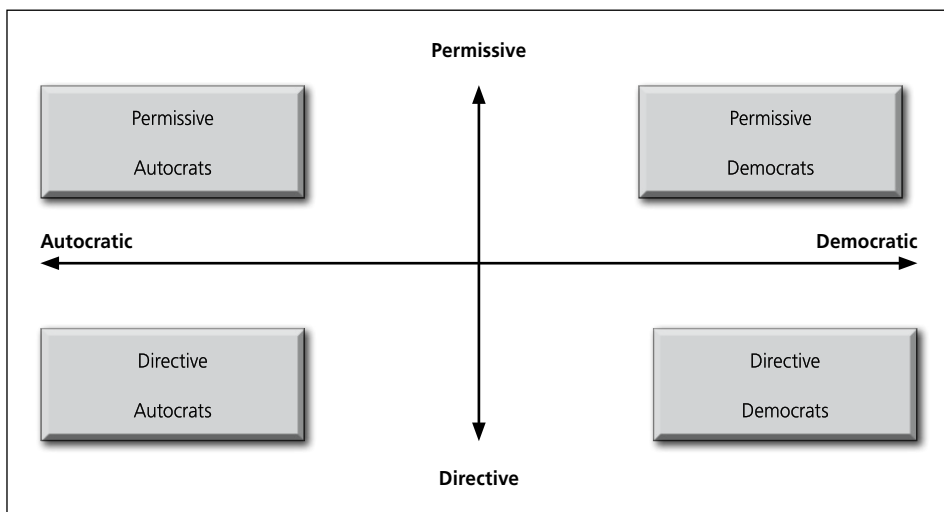
probably as many different leadership styles as there are leaders, research on leadership behaviour suggests that in fact a relatively small number of dimensions play a key role in shaping the kind of relationships leaders have with their followers".

One of these leadership dimensions pertains to the extent to which leaders permit their followers to have any say in decision-making – the autocratic-democratic leadership dimension. Autocratic leaders make decisions unilaterally, whereas democratic leaders encourage participation and encourage followers to provide input (Baron 1989:693). Furthermore, Baron (1989:693) argues that, "another important key leadership dimension involves the extent to which leaders dictate how the followers should carry out their assigned tasks vs. giving them the freedom to work in any way they wish". This is expressed in the directive-permissive leadership dimension (Baron 1998:693).

Finally, leadership styles also differ with respect to two other pivotal leadership dimensions, namely task and person orientation (Baron 1998:693). Task orientation is "the extent to which a given leader focuses on getting the task done," while person orientation is concerned with the extent to which the leader "is interested in maintaining good, friendly relations with the followers" (Baron 1998:693). Baron (1998:693) argues that it is possible to have autocratic-permissive and autocratic-directive leadership dimensions, as well as a combination of democratic-permissive and democratic-directive dimensions. The intricacy of these combinations is presented in Figure 1 (Baron 1998:694).

The following section explores how the above key leadership dimensions manifest in the main leadership styles that are generally found in public and private organisations.

FOUR BASIC ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP TYPES

Petersen (2006) delineates leadership-based literature into four main styles in relation to organisational settings, as represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Basic organisational leadership types

Type I Visionary Leader	Type II System Leader
Type III Relationship Leader	Type IV Transformational (or Charismatic) Leader

Type I (Visionary) and Type II (System) Leaders

According to Petersen (2006:11), the top half of Table 2 represents the Type I (Visionary) and Type II (System) leaders. These two leadership types are generally based on "task-focussed and impersonal approaches of leadership". Leaders who identify with visionary and system leadership are likely to be "more interested in and very much more comfortable with aspects of the economic growth and financial well-being of the organisation" (Petersen 2006:11). 'People' concerns (such as high salaries, good working conditions) and feelings (such as whether people are happy with what they are doing, their human suffering) are not top of Visionary and Systems leaders' agendas (Petersen 2006:11).

As such, Visionary and Systems leaders correspond with task-orientated leaders in Baron's (1998:694) conceptual framework. Furthermore, their leadership style is in line with the firm-hand leadership model discussed above, in the sense that they apply the "end justifies the means" principle.

Type III (Relationship) and Type IV (Transformational leaders)

Type III (Relationship) and the (Type IV) (Transformational/Charismatic) leaders correspond with *person-oriented* leaders in Baron's (1998:694) description. Relationship and transformational leaders (who lead through vision and charisma) both pay greater attention to the "human side of the organisation" (Pietersen 2006:11). Coercion and intimidation, which are typical of firm-hand leadership, do not form part of Relationship and Transformational leadership styles.

The next section of this article focuses on the history of firm-hand (autocratic) leadership in Africa and its earlier effects on the economies of post-independence African governments.

HISTORY OF FIRM-HAND LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA

Matlou (2015:2) argues that, "Democracy… originates from Africa …the tenets of modern democracy such as education; freedom of movement; justice, life; participation in decision-making and community wellbeing; and work, as rights, existed in Africa from time immemorial…". Matlou (2015:2) adds that, "[It] is conveniently forgotten that the great lawgiver Solon, the forefather of Athenian democracy visited Egypt to learn about the tenets of the system there which he subsequently introduced to Greece, and that the Mande people under Mansa (Emperor) Sundiata Keita (Mali) created the 44 articles of the Kurukan Fuga Charter in 1236, 15 years after the Magna Carta (1215) in England".

However, Matlou does not explain how the absolute monarchic system under which most African communities (and in this case, the Malian people) were ruled at the time of the Kurukan Fuga Charter in 1236 could possibly have been democratic. While it is true that monarchs often consulted with their entourage, these advisors were generally the king's relatives and family members. Generally, ordinary citizens were not consulted during the monarchic era (Uwizeyimana 2012:140). Undeniably, an important ingredient to democracy is consulting ordinary people on matters that affect their lives, whether organised or not.

Even if Matlou's claims were to be believed for the sake of argument, evidence suggests that Africa's post-independence leadership was unable to build on their ancestors' proud democratic history. In fact, available literature suggests that most post-independence African leaders (except in Botswana) refuted multi-party democracy. Their argument was that multi-party politics was not congruent with African culture and tradition (Ahluwalia 2001:56).

An analysis of statements made by these leaders confirms Weissenbach's (2010:1225) claim that the one-party state "came to mean one-man rule". For example, when President Bourguiba was asked about the type of government system in Tunisia, he replied "What system? I am the system" (Meredith 2014:598). Malawi's former president, Dr Kamuzu Banda also stated: "Everything is my business … anything I say is law. Literally law. It is a fact in this country. If, to maintain the political stability and efficient administration, I have to detain ten thousand or one hundred thousands, I will do it" (Banda 1965 in Meredith 2014:598).

The one-party system is often accredited to Kwame Nkrumah's (1909–1972) call to all leaders of the newly independent African states to guard against "insidious dogma propaganda propagated by the imperialists". Nkrumah stated that, "Western democracy and parliamentary system are the only valid ways of governing" and that these "constitute the only worthwhile model for the training of indigenous elite by the colonial power" (Sappor 2012:15).

Most African leaders followed Nkrumah in rejecting liberal democracy. Subsequently, a new form of dictatorship, which came to be known as African democracy became common in almost all newly independent African states. This includes Gamal Abdel Nasser (in power 1956–70) in Egypt (Meredith 2014:598), former Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko (in power from 1965–1997) and Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe (in power from 1980 to date) (Uwizeyimana 2011:150).

According to Ahluwalia (2002:51), the African democracy envisaged by post-independence firm-hand leaders dismissed multi-party democracy – a fundamental principle of liberal democracy – as not being in line with African traditions. These leaders claimed that, "a system of one-party government is African and an essential part of the African tradition" (Ahluwalia (2002:51). "Opposition parties may exist nominally–but may not freely organise political activities in opposition to the ruling elite" (Uwizeyimana 2012:140). The so-called African tradition that existed at the time of independence is still commonplace in most African countries. This is especially the case in countries that have adopted the Asian Tiger developmental model. As such, ordinary citizens should obey and not challenge their leaders. Mubita (2015:1) states that failing or not being given the opportunity "to challenge the policies of leadership is to engage in passive tyranny".

Ironically, as this article will demonstrate in the following sections, these same non-democratic characters of the so-called African democracies or passive tyranny are behind the rapid economic development in countries such as Rwanda. Finally, high levels of corruption and economic stagnation are believed to have caused the military coups and dictatorships that developed post-independence in many African countries, as discussed below.

MILITARY COUPS IN POST-INDEPENDENCE AFRICA

Matlou (2015:9) argues that, "the waves of change blowing across Africa from the 1950s, sweeping out colonialism and ushering in independence were short-lived". Meredith (2014:613) states that, because of high levels of corruption, economic mismanagement and an unwillingness to give up power peacefully and democratically, most civilian leaders of the post-independence era were overthrown in military coups, or killed. According to Matlou (2015:9), 86 coups took place across Africa between 1961 and 2010. In a period of 10 years, Dahomey (Benin) underwent six coups, had five different constitutions and 10 heads of state (Meredith 2014:609).

CORRUPTION AND ECONOMIC MISMANAGEMENT

Meredith (2014:593) notes that, "Africa entered the independence era on a surge of optimism and goodwill". The author adds that: "The lavish promises made by African politicians during their campaigns for independence included providing education, housing, medical care, employment, land and other things aroused a mood of euphoria" (Meredith 2014:594). For example, Kwame Nkrumah told his Ghanaian followers to "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else will follow" (Meredith 2014:594). These promises were generally not fulfilled.

Conversely, as Sappor (2012:14) points out, the post-independence socio-economic conditions were worsened immeasurably by internal factors. These include "misguided leadership, systemic corruption, capital flight, economic mismanagement, senseless civil wars, political tyranny, flagrant violation of human rights and military vandalism among many others". For example, a certain amount of capital was generated by the good price of commodities and the increase in foreign aid that followed the departure of colonial masters. However, instead of using this capital to develop the national economy, most civil servants insisted on being paid the same salaries as the colonial masters they had just replaced (Meredith 2014:594). Also, many engaged in wholesale corruption instead of serving their people.

In Ghana, for example, "Nkrumah's ministers were well known for pushing through contracts with foreign corporations for a 10% fee" (Meredith 2014:599). In Congo Kinshasa and Nigeria: "It was the order of the day for every minister connected with a government contract… to take a cut for himself" (Meredith 2014:599). Nigeria was the poster child for military coups and corruption and "the practice of corruption, bribery and embezzlement spread from top to bottom" (Meredith 2014:599). One Nigerian public official remarked that, "Here you bribe to get your child into school. You pay to secure your job and also continue to pay in some cases to keep it. You pay 10% of any contract you obtain. You bribe the tax officer to avoid paying taxes. You pay a hospital doctor or a nurse to get proper attention. You pay the policeman to evade arrest" (Meredith 2014:599).

Meredith (2014:599) adds: "Most of the post-independence officials were not ashamed of displaying the wealth they had acquired through bribes and other malpractices … [in their] grand houses, luxury cars and lavish lifestyles". In the Ivory Coast's capital, Abidjan, they called it the "platinum life" (Meredith 2014:599). In Ghana, Krobo Edusei, a minister in Nkrumah's government, claimed that, "Socialism does not mean that if you have made a lot of money you cannot keep it" (Meredith 2014:599). He made this statement in 1963

after his wife had "imported a £3-million gold-plated bed from a London store" (Meredith 2014:599). In Kenya, a new tribe of public officials were known as "*Wa Benzi*", a reference to the fleet of Mercedes Benz cars that became the hallmark of most Kenyan public officials after Kenya's independence (Meredith 2014:599).

The aforementioned validates the fear visionary leaders such as Chris Hani had harboured. On 29 October 1992, just prior to the advent of the new democratic South Africa, Hani stated that: "What I fear is that the liberators emerge as elitists who drive around in Mercedes Benzes and use the resources of this country to live in palaces and to gather riches at the expense of ordinary people" (Chris Hani, 29 October 1992:17).

While the leaders of the newly independent states were spending their countries' resources on luxuries from Europe, little or nothing was being done to improve their citizens' well-being. For example, a study of the 1964 trade figures of 14 francophone countries found that the amount spent on alcohol imported from Western countries was six times higher than the budget these countries spent on the most basic necessities, such as medicine and fertiliser (Meredith 2014:600). "More money was also spent on perfume and cosmetics and other western produced goodies than on agricultural machinery" (Meredith 2014:600).

In his speech at the 2015 African Union (AU) summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, President Obama summarised the consequences of most post-colonial African rulers' actions as follows: "Corruption is everywhere…. But here in Africa, corruption drains billions of dollars from economies that can't afford to lose billions of dollars… that's money that could be used to create jobs and build hospitals and schools. And when someone has to pay a bribe just to start a business, get medical attention or go to school, or get an official to do the job they're supposed to be doing anyway – that's not the African way. It undermines the dignity of the people you represent" (Obama 2015:3).The question arises: What are current firm-hand leaders doing differently to correct their predecessors' mistakes?

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CURRENT AND PAST AFRICAN FIRM-HAND LEADERS

There is an equal measure of similarities and differences between firm-hand leaders of the post-independence era and those of the 21st century. Given the limited space in this article, the analysis will focus on a few selected issues, namely autocratic rule, developmental paths and corruption.

Autocratic rule

One of the main similarities between the past and present firm-hand leaders is that none of them is democratic. It has been stated above that almost all post-independent African leaders despised democracy and chose one-party systems for their states. Prior to the rapid post-WWII economic development of China and the East-Asian Tiger countries, it was assumed that a lack of democracy was behind the lack of development (continued underdevelopment) in most developing countries. At that stage, it was argued that democracy and human rights are linked to economic development. According to paragraph 120 of the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Development 1994, "Democracy provides the only long-term basis for

managing competing ethnic, religious and cultural interests in a way that minimizes the risk of violent internal conflict". Furthermore, it was argued that these elements are interlinked because "people's participation in the decision-making processes which affect their lives and human rights are basic tenets of development" (Uvin 2002:7).

However, those who associate with the Asian Tigers' rapid development and firm-hand leadership style should reject this line of argument. The fact that undemocratic rulers have been able to bring about sustained economic growth in countries such as China and Singapore, has led Ahmed (2015:2) to argue that, "Contrary to the old assumptions that Jeffersonian liberal democracy and market capitalism have a monopoly on economic progress, many nations in the world had progressed without following the western model". Firm-hand leaders might allow some opposition parties to form and, in fact, might help to create them. However, they will not allow these minority parties to become strong enough to challenge the ruling party during an election. In reality, they allow weaker political parties to exist to deflect Western donors' criticism. This explains why most firm-hand leaders always win elections with almost 100% of the votes (Misra 2014:1). For example, during the 1970 presidential elections in Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko was elected with 100% votes – all 10 131 669 registered voters voted for Mobutu. Ethiopia's Hailemariam Desalegn Boshe was re-elected as prime minister with 100% of Parliament's vote (*Agence France-Presse* 2015:1), while "no real opposition party was running against Paul Kagame in both the 2003 and 2010 Rwandan elections".

A lack of functional multi-party democracy explains why Kagame received 95.5% of the votes in 2003 and 93.08% of the votes in 2010 (*The New York Times* 2011). Insufficient functional multi-party democracy also explains why Kagame was able to change the country's constitution, so that he could continue to rule the country after two seven-year terms in office. His tenure ends in 2017, but he will most probably remain president until his death. In its annual *Freedom in the World 2016* study, the international human rights organisation, Freedom House, declared Rwanda and Ethiopia as "Not free and trending downwards due to a severe crackdown and harassment, arrests, torture and prosecutions of opposition figures and journalists" (Freedom House 2016:1).

The Asian Tigers' developmental state model

Following independence, most African countries undertook large-scale industrialisation projects; most projects were directly under government control. The fact that the state in post-independence Africa assumed a primary role in economic development is consistent with the central role the respective states played in the Asian Tiger countries' developmental state model. Unlike post-independence African leaders who undertook large-scale industrialisation projects with most state-owned enterprises directly under government control, firm-hand leaders adopted capitalism with strong state involvement in economic planning. In addition, there was strong private sector involvement in the implementation. Subsequently, the loathing of colonialism developed into an ideological aversion to capitalism. Current firm-hand leaders seem to take 'colonisers' as development partners and have adopted state-controlled capitalism as a means to grow the economy.

Previous firm-hand leaders adopted state-controlled socialism, where the state was almost the main actor. In turn, current firm-hand leaders have adopted *state capitalism* where the state plays a key role in terms of central planning, but allows the private sector

to play a more significant role in terms of implementation. Current firm-hand leaders have adopted capitalism in the same way the Asian Tigers had accepted that, "the materialistic competitiveness and self-assertive individualism which characterises the Western capitalist societies is the only way they will achieve economic development" (Auriacombe 2015:89).

This is exemplified by the fact that Rwandan and Ethiopian leaders have allowed direct and unrestricted involvement of Western experts in the policy planning and implementation of their governments. Tony Blair's AGI is one of the foreign institutions that is involved directly in the planning and implementation of Vision 2020 and Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) (2015:1). Many former and current British senior officials, including Blair, lauded the partnership between the Rwandan and British governments. Tony Blair, for example, described Rwanda's president Paul Kagame as a "visionary leader and a good friend" (McGreal 2010:1).

The AGI's *modus operandi* includes "placing officials hired by Tony Blair in all strategic Rwandan institutions such as the president's policy unit, in the office of the President, the Prime Minister's office, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Rwanda Development Board, to assist with administration" (McGreal 2010:1). While some argue that Blair's initiative is "promoting a model that pressures African states to surrender political and economic autonomy" to another foreign government and institution which is not accountable to the Rwandan people, Blair argues that his model will benefit Rwanda through "a combination of on-the-job coaching and support and formal and informal training" (McGreal 2010:2).

As mentioned, firm-hand leaders in both the Asian Tiger countries and non-Asian countries, including Rwanda and Ethiopia have adopted the East-Asian developmental state model. This requires the state to adopt and play a dictatorship role to force the market to drive the national developmental agenda through predetermined goals and at a certain pace. Using the Asian Tiger countries' model to explain firm-hand leadership roles in Rwanda and Ethiopia's economic development was supported by Kagame's objective to turn Rwanda into the *African Singapore* (Chothia 2010:3). In a news article, William Wallis, Africa editor of the London-based *Financial Times* writes: "Mr Kagame … who sees Singapore and South Korea as model states believes the key to reconciliation is continued economic development" (Wallis 2010 in Chothia 2010:3). Because of Kagame's belief in the East-Asian developmental state model and his desire to replicate it, "he has pursued it with single-minded determination… and deals ruthlessly with his adversaries" (Wallis 2010 in Chothia 2010:3).

Mathebula (2016) argues that the East-Asian Tigers' developmental model is "not meant to serve as a template towards a developmental state" in Africa. Conversely, Mbabazi and Taylor (2005:5) postulate that an East-Asian developmental state model may seem perfect, as it was shaped in different contexts. Oni (1991:13 in Mbabazi and Taylor 2005:5) argues that, "The developmental state model is an ideology only applicable to the East-Asian Tiger countries and nowhere else". Botswana, Ethiopia and Rwanda's cases could serve as proof that the model could be applied successfully in Africa.

According to Molla (2005:1), there is also documented evidence that Tony Blair's AGI is helping the Ethiopian government. Hence, Molla argues that: "Mr. Blair's hands will be stained with Ethiopian blood due to his close association with Meles Zenawi. Prime Minister Tony Blair has for the last fourteen years stood shoulder to shoulder with and swore by Zenawi (co-commissioner for Africa, ally in Iraqi war). It seems that there has been and still is a web of links between the two comrades" (Molla 2005:1).

Referred to as the *Strongman*, Sinai died in 2012 (AFT 2015:1) but Age's support is continuing. Like his Rwandan counterpart, since 1995, "Ethiopia's prime minister achieved impressive gains by taking development into his own (occasionally bloodstained) hands" (August 2013:3). In 2010, the Human Rights Watch Report argued that, "Ethiopia has achieved development without democracy and freedom and that foreign aid donor countries have used aid to underwrite repression in Ethiopia" (Human Rights Watch Report 2010:1). Rwanda is subject to a similar scenario. Ahmed (2015:2) argues that, "The Ethiopian economic success has been achieved through well-coordinated efforts across the country, progress monitoring, welcoming outside advice and adjusting their programme on the advice of experts. But the most compelling underlying factor in the Ethiopian success is their impressive and admirable culture of high ethics and intolerance for corruption" (Ahmed 2015:2).

Setting clear development vision and fighting corruption

A closer look at most African countries shows that they have developed visions that they would like to achieve, such as Rwanda's Vision 2020. Since 2000, all development efforts in Rwanda have been implemented within the context of Vision 2020. As such, it has set a longer-term perspective and objectives for Rwanda. Vision 2020's aim is "to transform the country into a lower middle income nation in 2020" (Republic of Rwanda 2012:i). According to Rosen (2010:1), "this Vision 2020, along with a firm commitment to stamp out corruption, has won Kagame a cadre of friends in high places. Figures from Britain's Tony Blair to American evangelical pastor Rick Warren… have lauded him for his drive and efficiency – a rarity on a continent still known for its serial kleptocrats" (Rosen 2010:1).

Certain former world leaders such as Tony Blair have seen President Kagame as "a visionary leader" (Blair 2009:1) and according to Former US President, Bill Clinton, "Kagame is one of the greatest leaders of our time" (Clinton in McGreal 2013:1). Both Clinton and Blair believe that Kagame has helped make Rwanda "one of Africa's top investment destinations" (McGreal 2013:1). Accordingly, Sir David King, formerly Blair's chief scientific advisor and now a consultant in the Rwandan government presidency, comments: "President Kagame is a man of tremendous long vision… You can give advice to Kagame and his Cabinet and he follows it through. To be honest, it's quite difficult to find that anywhere" (King, in Rosen 2010:1). Kamuzinzi (2015:1) also refers to Tony Blair's description of Kagame as a *visionary leader,* as well as Blair's Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, who describes him as *a sweetie.*

Friedman (2012:260) argues that, "The second facet of the implementation of economic policies in Rwanda has been aggressive anti-corruption actions along with top-down coordination efforts to ensure the optimal use of scarce resources". According to Friedman (2012:252), there is a direct comparison between Singapore and Rwanda's ability to fight the scourge of corruption. This comparison includes that, "Both states have questionable democratic credentials and that lack of accountability transcends economics". He also argues that, "the economic models of both states are authoritarian and tightly controlled" (Friedman 2012:252).

August (2013:10) summarises the similarities between Rwanda and Ethiopia as follows: "The Ethiopians are … more competent at running a big state than … the Soviets were". August (2013:10) argues that in the late 1990s, the Ethiopian leaders "methodically set out their

goals and have been implementing them with great discipline ever since. They co-ordinate efforts across the country and among departments. Officials monitor progress and change course if necessary. They seek outside advice and manage to keep corruption remarkably subdued for such a centralised system. This has produced impressive development gains" (August 2013:10).

CONCLUSION AND CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR FIRM-HAND LEADERSHIP TO SUCCEED WITHIN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

One of the main findings of this research is that both the current and post-independence firm-hand leadership styles are authoritarian and undemocratic and are exclusively based on one-party state systems. However, while firm-hand leadership brought about economic decline post- independence, the current adoption of the Asian Tiger countries' economic model is bolstering economic growth in both Asian and African countries. After exploring and contextualising the concept of firm-hand leadership within the broader leadership framework, it could be concluded that the concept of firm-hand leadership is closely associated with Visionary Leadership (Type I) but also with System Leadership (Type II). Some of the characteristics that make firm-hand leadership successful include:

- Strong political will, commitment and support by the national government, especially the president, for speeding up public sector reforms.
- The ability to source and coordinate foreign aid and other funding from all sources to implement the economic programme that central government has prepared.
- Willingness to adopt and adapt best practices to the specific context in the country.
- A firm commitment to stamp out corruption.
- Seeing the former colonisers as friends and development partners. This is in direct contrast to post-independence African leaders who were suspicious of their former masters.
- Embracing *state capitalism*, which is in direct contrast to post-independence African leaders who thought *state socialism*, led to economic development.
- Hatred of liberal multi-party democracy (both former and current African firm-hand leaders).
- Current firm-hand leaders use the one-party system to fast-track economic reforms, while former firm-hand leaders used it to increase corruption and maladministration.
- Both former and current firm-hand leaders use coercion to remove anyone who opposes them. Most of the former and current firm-hand leaders, such as in Malawi, Ethiopia and Rwanda, have had their most prominent political opponents murdered, imprisoned or exiled.

There is ample evidence to suggest that Africa has been under authoritarian regimes since time immemorial. This authoritarian leadership, which was blamed for having contributed to Africa's under-development in the past, is now being praised for bolstering economic growth in the East-Asian Tiger countries and a few African countries such as Rwanda and Ethiopia in recent decades. This contradictory state of affairs confirms the idea that democracy is not

a prerequisite for economic growth. However, most developed countries in the West are democratic and most undemocratic countries in the developing world remain impoverished. Therefore, while this article rejects the notion that democracy is a prerequisite for Africa's economic growth, it also warns of the negative consequences firm-hand leadership may have on democracy in Africa.

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