

Leadership is an Engine of Economic Development: The Covetousness of Pre, During, Post and Neo Colonialisms in Africa

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Abstract: *This paper provides a comprehensive examination of leadership as a central determinant in Africa's economic development, contextualized within the historical epochs of pre-colonial autonomy, colonial domination, and contemporary neo-colonial entanglements. Anchored in the theoretical frameworks of political economy and dependency theory, the study interrogates the multifaceted ways in which external interference, institutional erosion, and socio-cultural fragmentation have systematically debilitated indigenous leadership structures and obstructed pathways to sustainable development. While the continent possesses an abundance of natural resources, the persistence of weak and extractive leadership—often influenced or manipulated by global powers—has entrenched economic stagnation and social deprivation across much of Africa. Employing a qualitative, interpretivist methodology, the study analyzes historical governance legacies and structural constraints to illuminate the paradox of wealth amid poverty that characterizes many African states. The paper culminates in a set of transformative policy recommendations, advocating for a reorientation of leadership toward African-centered governance paradigms that prioritize self-determination, equitable resource management, and inclusive institutional reform.*

Keywords: *Leadership, Economic Development, Colonialism, Dependency, Governance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Africa's economic development narrative is deeply intertwined with its historical trajectory of exploitation, systemic subjugation, and distorted governance models. From pre-colonial communal leadership systems that prioritized collective welfare and resource stewardship, to the disruption brought by colonial conquest, the continent's developmental path has been shaped by external domination and internal contradictions (Rodney, 1972; Mamdani, 1996). The colonial legacy not only extracted resources and labor but also implanted foreign governance structures that were alien to African socio-political realities. These institutions, designed to serve imperial interests, undermined indigenous leadership and entrenched centralized authority devoid of accountability to the people (Young, 2004).

Post-independence, many African states inherited weak and fragmented institutions incapable of fostering inclusive economic development. Rather than reforming the colonial state apparatus, many post-colonial leaders replicated its coercive features to consolidate power, leading to elite-driven governance marked by clientelism, rent-seeking, and corruption (Ake, 1996; Ekeh, 1975). Although Africa is abundantly endowed with natural resources—including minerals, oil, arable land, and biodiversity—these have not translated into broad-based prosperity. Instead, the continent continues to grapple with poverty, unemployment, and socio-political instability. As Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) argue, extractive institutions and exclusionary leadership remain key barriers to Africa's transformation.

The persistence of underdevelopment, despite global integration and decades of donor-driven interventions, calls for a re-examination of the leadership question in Africa. This study thus revisits the complex intersection between leadership and economic development across pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence contexts to assess how historical and structural forces have shaped the continent's development outcomes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

More than sixty years since the wave of political independence swept across the African continent, economic liberation remains largely elusive. Africa continues to occupy a peripheral position in the global economic system, contributing minimally to global trade while remaining heavily dependent on aid, foreign direct investment, and imports of manufactured goods (Mkandawire, 2001; Ayittey, 2006). This paradox—where a continent rich in natural and human resources remains the epicenter of poverty, inequality, and weak institutions—reflects a deep-seated leadership crisis.

Leadership failures in Africa manifest through multiple pathways, including rampant corruption, poor fiscal management, limited policy coherence, and the erosion of public trust in governance institutions (Hope, 2000; van de Walle, 2001). Elite capture of state resources has not only reinforced socio-economic exclusion but also led to the personalization of power, where public institutions serve narrow political interests rather than national development objectives. Additionally, foreign interference through neo-colonial economic arrangements and structural adjustment policies has further constrained domestic policy autonomy (Bond, 2006).

This enduring state of economic underperformance and institutional dysfunction suggests that leadership—both in form and function—remains a critical, yet inadequately addressed, determinant of development. This study, therefore, seeks to interrogate how historical patterns of leadership, shaped by colonialism and perpetuated through neo-colonial dependency, continue to obstruct Africa's developmental aspirations.

1.3 Motivation of the Study

The motivation for this study is rooted in the pressing imperative to rethink the role of leadership in the African development context. While numerous studies have explored economic growth determinants, few have critically examined leadership as both a historical construct and a contemporary governance challenge. The failure of imported governance models and donor-prescribed reforms to deliver sustainable development outcomes has reignited interest in indigenous and Afrocentric approaches to leadership and statecraft (Nkrumah, 1965; Mkandawire, 2001).

This study is particularly inspired by the need to understand how colonial and neo-colonial institutions have structurally weakened Africa's leadership capacities, and how post-independence elites have either resisted or reinforced these dynamics. In the face of growing youth populations, increasing inequality, and the climate crisis, there is an urgent demand for visionary, accountable, and transformative leadership that can navigate Africa toward inclusive and sustainable development.

Thus, by situating leadership within Africa's broader political economy, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced and historically grounded understanding of the leadership-development nexus. It also seeks to inform future governance reforms by emphasizing context-specific leadership paradigms anchored in equity, participation, and long-term planning

1.4 Theory Underpinning the Study

This study is anchored in a dual theoretical framework combining Dependency Theory and Institutional Theory, both of which offer critical explanatory power for understanding Africa's persistent underdevelopment within the context of global and domestic structures.

Dependency Theory, as articulated by scholars such as Dos Santos (1970) and further developed by Cardoso and Faletto (1979), posits that the economic backwardness of countries in the Global South is not a natural state, but rather the outcome of a historically entrenched global system of exploitation. Within this framework, underdevelopment is viewed as a consequence of unequal economic relations between the industrialized North and the resource-rich but politically and economically subordinated South. The theory highlights how colonialism and subsequent neo-colonial arrangements—through mechanisms such as unequal trade, foreign debt dependency, and transnational corporate dominance—have systematically extracted surplus value from Africa, leaving it trapped in a subordinate position within the global capitalist economy (Frank, 1967).

In parallel, Institutional Theory—as advanced by North (1990) and Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001)—provides an internal lens by examining how the formal and informal rules of the game, inherited from colonial governance systems, have deeply shaped contemporary African political and economic behavior. Colonial rule not only imposed extractive institutions designed to serve imperial interests, but also introduced legal dualism, centralized authority, and coercive bureaucracies that failed to reflect indigenous socio-political realities (Mamdani, 1996). Post-independence African elites often preserved these institutional legacies, leading to the proliferation of rent-seeking, clientelism, and state capture. These entrenched norms have constrained innovation, discouraged productive investment, and weakened state legitimacy.

Together, Dependency and Institutional Theories reveal how external domination (through global systems of exploitation) and internal dysfunction (through entrenched institutional weaknesses) have operated symbiotically to derail Africa's quest for sustainable development. This integrative theoretical lens is particularly relevant for understanding leadership in Africa, where the interplay between inherited colonial structures and contemporary global pressures continues to define the scope and limitations of governance.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) of this study positions leadership as both a mediator of systemic pressures and an outcome of historical and institutional configurations. It draws on the interplay between structural, institutional, and cultural factors to explain the developmental impasse faced by many African countries.

At the structural level, the legacy of colonialism and the ongoing influence of global economic systems have entrenched patterns of dependency and marginalization. These include unfavorable trade relations, extractive investment practices, and debt cycles that reduce national policy autonomy (Rodney, 1972; Nkrumah, 1965). Leadership emerges within this externally constrained space, often compelled to respond to international economic dictates while managing domestic expectations.

At the institutional level, the model incorporates variables such as legal dualism, corruption, and bureaucratic inefficiency—all rooted in colonial administrative traditions and perpetuated through post-independence governance (Ekeh, 1975; van de Walle, 2001). These institutional dysfunctions shape the incentives and behaviors of political elites, fostering short-termism, patronage politics, and weak public accountability.

At the cultural level, the framework recognizes the role of ethnicity, elite behavior, and social fragmentation in shaping leadership dynamics. In many African states, political power is mediated through ethnically defined constituencies, leading to uneven development, contested legitimacy, and recurring political instability (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Young, 2004).

Within this framework, visionary and accountable leadership is conceptualized as a transformative force capable of disrupting these negative feedback loops. Such leadership is characterized by long-term planning, inclusive governance, institutional reform, and a commitment to national over parochial interests. Ultimately, the framework underscores that addressing Africa’s development challenges requires not only external realignment of global economic relations, but also internal transformation of leadership models rooted in the continent’s historical and cultural realities.

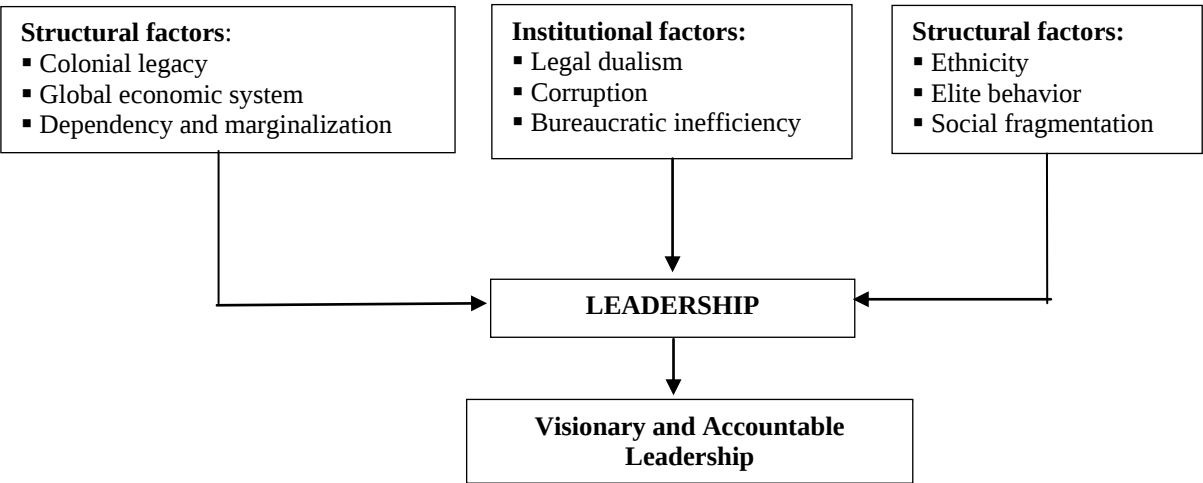


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Description of the Study Area

This study is situated within the geopolitical and socio-economic context of Sub-Saharan Africa, a region characterized by immense resource wealth juxtaposed with systemic development challenges. Specific focus is given to Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, and Liberia—countries that exemplify a shared legacy of colonial disruption, post-independence governance dilemmas, and entrenched developmental contradictions (Oritsejafor & Cooper, 2022). These nations not only represent diverse colonial experiences—British, German, and American protectorates—but also mirror continental struggles such as institutional fragility, political clientelism, ethnic polarization, and external economic dependency (Herbst, 2000; Chabal & Daloz, 1999).

Despite possessing abundant natural resources including oil (Nigeria), gold (Ghana), timber (Liberia), and agricultural and mineral wealth (Tanzania), these countries have experienced varying degrees of political instability, policy inconsistency, and leadership crises (Rodney, 1972; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). By analyzing leadership dynamics within these case studies, the research captures both the specificity of national experiences and the broader patterns of systemic underdevelopment across the region.

2.2 Research Philosophy

This study is grounded in the interpretivist research philosophy, which posits that reality is socially constructed and contextually situated (Creswell, 2014). Interpretivism is particularly relevant for studying leadership in Africa, as it allows the researcher to investigate not just observable actions, but also the deeper meanings, beliefs, and socio-political narratives that shape leadership behavior. This paradigm emphasizes historical consciousness, cultural interpretation, and contextual understanding—facilitating a nuanced exploration of how leadership has evolved under the constraints of colonial legacies, global capitalism, and internal political cultures (Bryman, 2016). Rather than seeking universally applicable laws, the interpretivist approach seeks to understand the subjective experiences and worldviews of actors embedded in complex political and historical systems. This makes it ideal for uncovering how African leaders navigate inherited institutions, ethnic divisions, and global economic pressures while attempting to formulate development strategies.

2.3 Research Approach

The study employs a qualitative research approach, which allows for a rich and detailed examination of leadership patterns, ideologies, and historical transformations across African contexts. Unlike quantitative approaches that prioritize measurement and statistical inference, the qualitative paradigm is better suited for capturing the complex interplay between leadership behavior, institutional development, and socio-historical forces (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Using content analysis of political speeches, national development policies, post-colonial constitutions, and secondary academic literature, the research seeks to identify the ideological underpinnings and structural influences shaping governance practices. This approach also facilitates the exploration of power dynamics, discursive constructions, and institutional continuity and change over time (Yin, 2014).

2.4 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design, intended to provide both contextual richness and analytical insight into the leadership-development nexus in Africa. A descriptive orientation enables the documentation of existing phenomena—such as leadership failures, institutional deficits, and governance practices—while the exploratory component seeks to uncover deeper causal relationships and previously underexplored theoretical links (Yin, 2014; Babbie, 2013). This dual-purpose design allows the researcher to systematically synthesize historical narratives, comparative case studies, and theoretical perspectives to better understand how structural and institutional forces shape leadership outcomes across different African states.

2.5 Target Population

The target population for this study encompasses a wide spectrum of stakeholders engaged in or affected by leadership and governance practices across the African continent. These include political leaders and policymakers responsible for designing and implementing development strategies; academics and scholars specializing in African history, development economics, and political science; historians and sociologists who document and analyze institutional transitions; governance institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, involved in shaping policy and institutional reforms; and think tanks and research organizations contributing to debates on leadership, state-building, and development. This diverse population ensures that the study captures a multiplicity of viewpoints and benefits from rich, cross-disciplinary insights into the historical and contemporary dimensions of African leadership.

2.6 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Given the study's qualitative and document-based nature, a non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed to select secondary sources most relevant to the themes of African leadership, institutional development, colonial legacy, and economic policy. The selection criteria emphasized the historical relevance of documents (e.g., independence constitutions, national development plans); the academic credibility and peer-reviewed nature of scholarly literature; and the inclusion of landmark theoretical texts and case-based analyses from key scholars (e.g., Ake, Nkrumah, Rodney, Mamdani). The final sample included 30+ core documents, encompassing foundational political speeches, post-independence charters, African Union policy frameworks, and critical academic contributions. This curated dataset enables the study to achieve theoretical saturation and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Silverman, 2013).

2.7 Data Collection Methods

The study adopted a comprehensive and systematic approach to data collection, exclusively utilizing secondary sources in alignment with its qualitative, historical, and document-based orientation. These sources were carefully selected from a variety of credible academic and institutional repositories to ensure both depth and scholarly relevance. Key sources included peer-reviewed academic journals that provided theoretical insights and empirical analyses on themes such as African leadership,

colonial legacies, and models of economic development. In addition, books and scholarly monographs authored by leading Africanists, political economists, and historians—such as Rodney (1972), Ake (1996), and Mamdani (1996)—offered critical perspectives on post-colonial state-building and governance.

The data collection also incorporated policy briefs and institutional reports published by major regional and international bodies, including the African Union (AU), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the World Bank. These documents provided policy-level context, developmental frameworks, and comparative insights across African states. Furthermore, archival materials and historical government records—such as national constitutions, presidential speeches, national development plans, and declassified colonial administration documents—were included to capture the institutional evolution and leadership trajectories of African states.

Selection criteria emphasized the thematic relevance of each source, particularly in relation to governance dynamics, institutional continuity, leadership behavior, and Africa's position within the global economic system. The triangulation of these diverse materials enhanced the credibility, richness, and analytical rigor of the dataset (Bowen, 2009).

2.8 Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data was conducted using thematic analysis, a qualitative technique well-suited for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns across complex textual materials (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method enabled the researcher to extract recurring concepts, narratives, and institutional patterns, which were then grouped into coherent analytical themes reflecting the study's theoretical framework and objectives.

The process followed the six established phases of thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and final report production (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Pre-determined coding categories were developed based on key constructs derived from the literature, including colonial legacies (e.g., extractive institutions, legal dualism), leadership traits (e.g., neopatrimonialism, elite capture, visionary governance), and governance outcomes (e.g., corruption, ethnic clientelism, policy failure, and institutional fragility). To support analytical consistency and enhance data organization, NVivo software was optionally considered. Themes and sub-themes were further validated through iterative cross-referencing of sources, ensuring coherence and alignment with the study's research questions and objectives.

2.9 Reliability and Validity of data

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings, a set of rigorous quality assurance measures was implemented. The principle of **triangulation** was applied, involving the use of multiple types of data—books, journal articles, archival documents, and institutional reports—to corroborate facts and minimize researcher bias (Denzin, 1978). This approach significantly enhanced the dependability and depth of the analysis.

Additionally, priority was given to peer-reviewed and authoritative publications, thereby ensuring the scholarly credibility of the dataset. The coding process was meticulously documented and conducted using a transparent and replicable framework, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This ensured a clear audit trail for the analytical procedures employed.

The research also adhered to the principle of **reflexivity**, where the researcher remained conscious of personal biases, assumptions, and theoretical predispositions throughout the study (Patton, 2015). By actively interrogating one's own interpretive lens, the researcher minimized subjective distortions and ensured that interpretations remained grounded in the data. These measures collectively reinforced the **trustworthiness** and **rigor** of the study's findings.

2.10 Ethical considerations

This study strictly complied with established ethical standards for social science research, especially in the context of non-interactive, document-based methodologies. Since the research did not involve human participants, ethical concerns typically associated with interviews, surveys, or focus groups—such as informed consent, privacy, and emotional risk were not applicable (Babbie, 2013). Nonetheless, ethical integrity was maintained through intellectual honesty and proper attribution. All sources, quotations, and ideas drawn from other scholars were clearly cited in accordance with APA 7th edition guidelines. The study was also transparent about its purpose, scope, and limitations, thereby safeguarding against any potential misrepresentation or misuse of findings.

Moreover, the study adhered to broader principles of academic integrity, including the avoidance of plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification of data. While exempt from formal institutional review board (IRB) oversight due to its reliance on secondary data, the study nonetheless followed widely recognized ethical frameworks, such as those outlined by the American Political Science Association (APSA, 2012) and the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2017). These practices ensured that the research met the highest standards of scholarly responsibility and ethical rigor.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the key findings of the study and discusses them within the broader theoretical and empirical contexts of African leadership and development. The analysis reveals that Africa's persistent developmental challenges are deeply rooted in historical institutional weaknesses, compounded by contemporary governance pathologies that undermine transformative leadership.

3.1 Colonial legacy and institutional inheritance

One of the core findings of this study is that colonial-era institutional structures continue to shape the leadership and governance frameworks of many African countries. During the colonial period, European powers established centralized, authoritarian administrative systems designed to extract resources and suppress dissent (Mamdani, 1996; Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2001). These systems were not intended to promote inclusive governance or participatory development but rather to maintain imperial control. Upon independence, most African states inherited these extractive and coercive structures, with minimal reforms aimed at democratization or institutional accountability. Instead of dismantling or transforming these institutions, post-colonial elites adapted them for their own political survival, thereby reinforcing systems of exclusion, centralization, and authoritarian rule (Herbst, 2000). The result has been a state apparatus that remains alienated from the public, poorly equipped for service delivery, and highly susceptible to abuse of power. The persistence of these colonial legacies has profoundly constrained the emergence of leadership models that prioritize national development over elite interests.

3.2 Elite capture and patron-client politics

Another dominant theme emerging from the findings is the entrenchment of elite-driven governance systems. Across many African states, political power remains concentrated in the hands of narrow ruling coalitions that manipulate state resources to maintain loyalty and control. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as elite capture, undermines meritocratic leadership and fosters the rise of rent-seeking behavior (van de Walle, 2001; Chabal & Daloz, 1999). This elite dominance is frequently facilitated through patron-client networks, where access to public goods, employment, and political favor is distributed based on personal loyalty rather than institutional competence. Such networks not only erode public trust in governance institutions but also stifle innovation, weaken policy implementation, and divert resources away from developmental objectives. Consequently, African leadership becomes more reactive—focused on political survival—than visionary or strategic in confronting long-term development challenges (Hope, 2000).

3.3 Ethnicity, legal pluralism, and fragmented authority

Ethnicity remains a powerful determinant of political behavior and governance structures in many African contexts. The study finds that ethnic divisions have been both exploited and institutionalized by political elites to consolidate power, often at the expense of national unity and inclusive development (Young, 2004; Ekeh, 1975). Electoral systems, administrative appointments, and resource allocations are frequently structured along ethnic lines, reinforcing divisions and perpetuating grievances. Moreover, the persistence of legal pluralism—the coexistence of formal statutory law and customary systems has created parallel governance structures that often conflict or compete with one another. While customary authorities retain legitimacy in many rural areas, their relationship with state institutions is frequently ambiguous, leading to inconsistent law enforcement and overlapping jurisdictions (Mamdani, 1996). This institutional fragmentation weakens the rule of law, undermines citizen trust, and limits the ability of leaders to implement coherent national policies.

3.4 The Hegemony of western-centric development models

The findings also highlight the continued dominance of Western-imposed development models that prioritize neoliberal macroeconomic policies, technocratic governance, and donor-driven reforms. These models, often introduced through structural adjustment programs and international financial institutions, have sidelined indigenous knowledge systems and locally grounded development strategies (Mkandawire, 2001; Rodney, 1972). As a result, African leaders are frequently constrained by external policy conditionalities that limit their ability to design and implement context-sensitive solutions. Development planning becomes more about satisfying donor benchmarks than addressing domestic socio-economic realities. This external dependency erodes policy autonomy and reduces leadership accountability to domestic constituencies, further distancing African leadership from the people it purports to serve.

3.5 Leadership deficits: from vision to strategy

Finally, the study finds that leadership across many African countries remains reactive, fragmented, and short-term in orientation. While there are occasional examples of visionary leadership, these are exceptions rather than the norm. Most leaders operate within systems that prioritize immediate political gain such as electoral success, patronage distribution, or regime preservation over long-term developmental planning (Ake, 1996; Hope, 2000). Institutional reforms, poverty alleviation strategies, and industrialization policies are often implemented inconsistently, with limited monitoring, public participation, or sustainability mechanisms. The absence of transformative leadership defined by strategic foresight, ethical governance, and inclusive policy-making continues to obstruct Africa's efforts to harness its vast potential for socio-economic transformation.

3.6 Summary of key findings

In summary, this study reveals five closely interrelated factors that collectively contribute to the enduring paralysis of Africa's development agenda. First, the continued dominance of colonial-era institutions characterized by centralized authority, extractive practices, and a lack of public accountability has severely restricted the evolution of participatory and inclusive governance systems. These inherited structures were not designed to serve citizen interests, and their persistence undermines democratic development and institutional legitimacy.

Second, the study highlights the prevalence of elite capture and patron-client politics across the continent. In many states, political and economic power remains concentrated within narrow elite circles who manipulate public resources for personal or political gain. This pattern of governance distorts state functions, breeds inefficiency, and inhibits the formulation and implementation of national development strategies.

Third, ethnic divisions and legal pluralism further fragment the socio-political landscape. Ethnicity continues to shape political affiliations and access to resources, fostering exclusion and inter-group tensions. Meanwhile, the coexistence of

customary and statutory legal systems creates overlapping jurisdictions and inconsistencies in governance, weakening state cohesion and the rule of law.

Fourth, the study finds that the widespread adoption of externally imposed development models often driven by international financial institutions and donor agencies—has compromised the sovereignty of African policymaking. These models frequently fail to align with local realities and have stifled the emergence of homegrown, context-sensitive solutions that are better suited to Africa's unique historical, cultural, and economic conditions.

Finally, the continent is confronted by a leadership deficit, marked by short-term political thinking, rampant corruption, and a general lack of strategic vision. Rather than fostering long-term national transformation, many leaders remain focused on regime preservation and immediate political gain, leaving developmental agendas fragmented and under-resourced.

Collectively, these findings reinforce the central argument of this study: that Africa's stalled development is not merely a result of economic constraints or external exploitation, but a consequence of a deeper crisis of leadership—one rooted in historical legacies and perpetuated by contemporary structural dysfunctions. Addressing these systemic issues requires a fundamental rethinking of governance, leadership accountability, and the political economy of development on the continent.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the crisis of development in Africa is fundamentally intertwined with a crisis of leadership. The continent's persistent underdevelopment cannot be fully understood without accounting for the enduring impact of colonial exploitation, the entrenchment of extractive institutions, and the complicity of post-independence elites in perpetuating systems of exclusion and inequality. The findings demonstrate that historical legacies combined with contemporary patterns of elite capture, weak governance, and externally driven policy agendas have created a leadership environment that prioritizes short-term political survival over long-term national transformation.

To address these challenges, the study offers four key recommendations. First, institutional reforms are imperative. There is an urgent need to decentralize governance structures and strengthen mechanisms of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Empowering local institutions and communities is essential to reversing the concentration of power that continues to fuel corruption and inefficiency.

Second, the development of transformative and ethical leadership must be prioritized. This involves investing in leadership training programs rooted in African philosophical and cultural values emphasizing integrity, inclusiveness, and service to the public. Future leaders must be equipped not only with technical knowledge, but also with a moral compass grounded in the historical realities and aspirations of their societies.

Third, Pan-African solidarity should be actively pursued. Regional integration and cooperation offer strategic advantages for African states in asserting collective interests within global political and economic negotiations. Strengthening institutions such as the African Union and advancing regional trade blocs can increase the continent's bargaining power and reduce dependency on external actors.

Finally, the study calls for a bold commitment to reclaiming resource sovereignty. African countries must renegotiate exploitative trade agreements and investment contracts that continue to extract wealth without equitable returns. Policies that promote local value addition, regulate foreign investments, and prioritize national interests over multinational gains are essential to restoring economic agency.

In sum, Africa's path to sustainable development lies in rejecting externally imposed paradigms and reclaiming indigenous leadership models that reflect the continent's values, histories, and development priorities. Without such a transformation, efforts to achieve inclusive growth and social justice will remain elusive.

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