



EDITORIAL

Leadership North and South, Old and New

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A recent series of broadcasts about Africa by the Australian Broadcasting Commission was welcome. The four programs of the series were well researched and informative and covered a broad range of topics, with the last, on leadership in Africa, encapsulating key themes of the series as a whole (Doogue 2019). We take the subject of ‘leadership’ as the motif for some remarks on the content of this issue of ARAS and, more generally, on the current state of affairs in Africa and beyond.

In the final broadcast Kingsley Okeke, managing editor of the London-based *African Leadership* magazine, made valid if orthodox points about the abundance of natural resources in the African continent and the potential for development contained in the youthfulness of the rapidly growing population of the continent. He then contrasted the ‘transformative’ leaders of the immediate post-colonial era with the ‘transactional’ leaders of the present to the disadvantage of the latter, and pointed to the need for new forms of leadership - not just in the political arena but across all sectors of national societies. He concluded that institutional support was needed for creative leadership, but he did not spell out what that might be. We might however suppose that both formal and informal conditions are required, including for example open competition in politics and a feeling of confidence and engagement in a citizenry.

In many such ways, the evidence is not reassuring within Africa and more generally in the South, or for that matter in the North. Recent reports from monitoring agencies Transparency International (Pring & Vrush 2019), Freedom House (2019) and Chatham House (Vines 2019) are consistent. All see progress towards sustainable democracy in some African nations, but decline in more. Not incidentally, the ‘scores’ for countries of the North -

notably the USA, the UK and Australia - are falling also. New Zealand appears to be an exception but globally confidence in democratic institutions is declining and cynicism about leaders, including those 'properly' elected, is rising (Diamond 2019). The experience of African nations, even in their negative aspects, may have some lessons for the North, the reverse of what is usually assumed.

Many international observers have reviewed the experience of African nations and peoples over the last year or two and only an indicative summary of leadership changes is possible here. Most commentators saw positive developments, at least initially, in Angola and Zimbabwe where presidential transitions took place, and in Mauritania's first democratic transfer of power. Ethiopia's prime minister received the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the historic rapprochement with Eritrea, though internal stability remains challenging. Sudan's former president surrendered power and a transitional government emerged, and gradually in South Sudan a renewed sense of national unity may develop as factional leaders negotiate their differences. The Southern African Development Community endorsed the disputed result in the long-troubled DRC that saw a new president inaugurated, though sporadic protests and other unresolved conflicts continue. Mozambique achieved a peace agreement between its warring parties but political leaders as elsewhere are still challenged by social protest and state fragility.

A number of the aging authoritarian leaders of the continent cling to power. Cameroon's Biya, 36 years in office, presided over deeply flawed elections for his seventh term. Uganda's Museveni, 34 years in power, removed a presidential age cap from the constitution and will run for a sixth term in 2021. In Togo, one of only two countries in West Africa without term limits, the president (whose family has been in power since 1967) resisted popular efforts to impose such a barrier (Freedom House 2019). And where leaders who had clung to power were finally removed, as in Zimbabwe probably above all, it seems clear that early optimism is being falsified by the new leadership.

Two common and intertwined characteristics can be extracted from recent experience: a democratic arousal at the grassroots that ignited most of the leadership transitions, even if disappointments have followed; and a continuing depression in the world economy that has encouraged populist or despotic "leadership" as seen in the nations of the North and South alike.

Thus institutional support for democracy in its political and economic forms is heavily conflicted. There seems every reason to believe that the nations of the North, not least the former colonial powers, will continue to extract what value they can from the South. African leaders will be able to

protect and advance their populations only to the extent that they achieve open and accountable government in support of national and continental interests rather than the personal interests of sometime leaders who grow rich in office. So much has for long been true but it is the intensification of coinciding internal and external tensions that raises the stakes ever higher for the mass of that famously growing population.

The articles in this issue of ARAS address important aspects of these dilemmas. In one way or another, all authors assesses the impact of investors and companies from the North upon the peoples of Africa and consider what appropriate responses from governments and civil society in Africa might be.

The articles of the symposium “Investment, Development and Sustainability in Contemporary Africa” were originally presented in July 2018 at a conference on “Foreign Direct Investment, the Right to Regulate and Sustainable Development in Africa” at the Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, organised by two of the present authors (Dr Dominic Dagbanja and Dr Olasupo Owoeye). All papers have been revised and updated for publication.

Between them, the authors address and answer the questions posed in the original conference. The orthodoxy is that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) leads to development and so African nations have opened their doors to it. But questions arise: is Africa receiving the investment it needs? What are the sources of investment attraction to Africa? Do International Investment Agreements (IIAs) attract foreign investment and does Africa need IIAs to protect foreign investment? What limitations do IIAs place on the right to regulate in the public interest? What are the impacts of FDI that can promote or impede sustainable development in Africa?

The different authors approach these and related questions in their own ways, and different answers and some further questions arise from the set as a whole. It seems fair to say, however, that whilst the present incidence and spread of FDI is not rejected outright by any author, all do question aspects of this form of investment and also the capacity of African governments to regulate and to benefit from the flows they seek. The implications, drawn here, are that the governments of Africa should certainly have stronger and more transparent roles in regulating capital inflows, but that the responsibilities of the North in curbing the exploitative tendencies of some of their investors is equally required. These are tough requirements for the political systems of either sphere to meet but the case seems well made for institutional reforms of this character.

The second section of this issue (Commentaries and Viewpoints) is a critical commentary on the roles of those who have investigated the activities

of the mining industry in a specific region of Zambia in recent years, including non-government organisations (NGOs) and researchers from the media and the universities. This is an uncommon perspective and may arouse comment in response, as this section of ARAS is indeed intended to stimulate.

As it happens, a prominent Australian NGO, ActionAid, has very recently released a report highly critical of certain Australian-based companies in South Africa, relating especially to the discriminatory outcomes of mining in Mpumalanga for women in that province (Hill et al. 2019). Among other recommendations, the report repeats an earlier recommendation directed at the Australian government that has not been acted on: to ensure “transparency of mining projects, including fossil fuel projects, by developing legislation that requires companies to report all their subsidiaries and all payments to governments at a country and project level” (p. 14). The need for accurate information to sustain an informed civil society is underlined yet again, as is the reluctance of governments to act when they serve and are supported by the vested interests that are the subject of such investigations.

It will be obvious to the reader that the paper in this issue refers to another country and to another period of time, but the issue of accuracy in reporting and in disseminating information remains critical in all spheres. The need for accurate reporting is self-evident and yet must be fought for. The role of a scholarly journal such as ARAS must be to present honest analysis and to encourage informed debate as a contribution to the necessary conditions for democracy everywhere.

In that spirit too, the review section covers three important publications, and we are glad to welcome as reviewers a mixture of established and emerging scholars. The reviews editor welcomes expressions of interest in joining the list of reviewers.

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