

## A Leadership Crisis Composed of Populism and Narcissism

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Over the past half-century, we have witnessed "faceless, fearless, and fierce dictators" throughout the world, notably in Africa, which is tied to and aggravated by populism and narcissism. A number of social, political, and economic difficulties have plagued postcolonial Africa, casting a negative light on the continent internationally in terms of its poor level of governance. The African political leaders' role and the measures they have taken are at the heart of these encounters.

It is essential for me to emphasise that the criticism is not intended to grossly represent African leaders at any level with a poor image or portray them in a particular manner. Many African leaders have sacrificed their lives and shed blood and tears in order to serve the public and stand up for their beliefs. In a similar vein, there are leaders that go against the will of the people to pursue their own personal interests.

Nevertheless, this article aims to draw attention to the significant difficulty posed by the rise of populist and narcissistic leadership in Africa. Hence, it is essential to define populist and egocentric leadership clearly so that we can examine their defining features. This is not a theoretical exercise; rather, it is meant to pinpoint a real problem with African governments' ability to provide effective leadership.

What traits do populist leaders display in their leadership? Politicians that subscribe to the populist ideology generally pit "the people" against "the elite" in an attempt to acquire power for themselves. It is frequently interpreted as an expression of disapproval toward the existing political order and the establishment.

There is no one definition of populism that can accurately characterise all populists in a way that is universally applicable. Cas Mudde argues that populism, like fascism, is an ideology that prescribes a grand scheme for the organisation of government, the economy, and society at large.

As a result, populism is typically combined with "thicker" left- or right-wing ideologies like socialism or nationalism because it does not explain what should replace the political system. Populists make and use political groups they can control independently, without checks or balances. While populist leaders' ties to their followers are direct, their structures are murky.

Narcissistic leaders are self-centred and possess entitlement views, a sense of personal superiority, hostility when challenged, and a desire for adoration and attention. Some others may view them as abusive because of how aggressively they react to criticism and how often they try to boost their own sense of value by demeaning others.

Rosenthal and Pittinsky demonstrate that narcissistic leaders possess the charm and expansive vision essential for effective leadership. In contrast, they have an inflated ego and a lack of empathy for the pain and death of others, especially if their authority and safety are not threatened by anguish. The defining characteristic of narcissism, and the one that is frequently most apparent to others, is arrogance and the belief that they are self-appointed saints.

Given the numerous notorious cases of narcissism in leaders, it's natural to question how a positive case may be made for narcissistic leaders. Narcissistic leaders are familiar with politics, business, and other fields; therefore, they must have redeeming qualities. Interestingly, as various academics have pointed out, a narcissist's aura of absolute confidence and domination can be precisely what inspires a group of followers.

Productive narcissists are admirable and capable of completing any or all mega-projects within the allotted time frame since they desire to consider themselves as the beneficiaries of the project's success. The ability to influence public and private agendas requires not just doers prepared to take risks but also orators who can win over the masses with their words.

Narcissistic leaders always have their eyes on the big picture, but they usually not delegate tasks requiring analysis and attention to detail to other people. When they disagree with the rules, they choose to disregard them or even alter them. Their ambitions are lofty because they are driven by a deep-seated desire to leave behind a name that will be remembered for greatness.

A balanced perspective is required when analysing narcissism and leadership, which is typically restricted to choosing sides in a good vs evil discussion. The majority of what is currently known about narcissism and leadership lends support to the idea that a more nuanced assessment of its impacts is appropriate.

I contend that "violent tyrants, populism, and narcissism" have a direct relationship with one another and are the root causes of violations of human rights, dishonesty, maladministration, clientelism, and unfairness. There has been a rise in dictators, populists, and narcissists in Africa as the economic and political situations in many states have worsened, infuriating various segments of their polity and provoking widespread opposition.

Most populist and narcissistic political leaders who rose to power using dubious voting procedures did so because they had internalised the wrong democratic norms. As they become experts in manipulation, undemocratic activities, such as party election practice and rigging the national electoral process, will become the norm.

Such as arbitrarily extending their own terms in office and rewriting their countries' constitutions. For dictators and populist leaders, elections are the only measure of democracy, and the

quality of those elections, how free and fair they are and how legitimate their results are of secondary importance.

### **What Characteristics Do Populist and Narcissistic Political Leaders Exhibit?**

How should we classify the many varieties of populism based on the organisational and personal characteristics of the various populist movements? Personalised populist leaders, populist political parties, and populist social movements are the ideal varieties of populism that may be identified throughout different instances of populism across time and location.

Each populist ideology has its own expressions, but it is difficult to convey in this brief analysis. However, several sources criticised populist characters for beginning their projects with restricted concepts and expanding them over time. The first thing that comes to mind is the emergence of personalist leaders who employ populist ideology to portray themselves as the sole legitimate representatives of the people.

Premeditated populist leaders frequently argue that they are just active in politics as a short-term solution to a crisis; this is the strategy they employ until they seize control of the government. Primarily, the emergence of populist leaders in a political context is marked by an ongoing process of party breakdown in well-established political party systems. Especially in nations with significant economic disparities when there are no outsider candidates.

It does not appear that populist leaders will emerge as viable alternatives to the existing political order and the institutionalised political party systems. However, they instead substitute themselves in the absence of institutionalised political party institutions, turning the situation into a one-man show that lacks distinct ideas and frameworks.

Populist leaders are easily identifiable by their lack of respect for democratic procedures and the accountability of government institutions. Suppose the populist leader in charge of the government is intent on ruling without any restrictions.

In that case, the institutions that are able to hold the executive power accountable for its arbitrary decisions will come under attack. The people and their destinies are misrepresented and misinterpreted by populist actors. The majority of development projects are conceived, planned, and carried out without adequate consultation with local residents.

Concerns about being left out of society and economic insecurity may also motivate advocates of socioeconomic populism. However, cultural and socioeconomic populism diverges in how their respective leaders characterise the most pressing threats to the nation and the deepest fault lines between their base and the opposition. The expanding income gap not only inside but also between

areas is a significant factor stimulating modern populism, and other economic factors include stagnant growth, high unemployment, and poor wages.

Many cases of populism that have arisen in semi-democratic or authoritarian situations are left out if countries must reach a particular level of democracy to be included. Many examples of populism, for instance, may be seen in the developing world, especially in Africa, which is left out.

Also, there have been numerous cases when populism has been highly prominent without ever rising to the level of ruling the executive branch. Still, these are overlooked if we only look at issues where the populist leader or party has gained the highest executive post.

It separates people into two groups and even accomplishes *this binarily, into the 'us' and the 'them.'* One of the most concerning aspects of populism is that it almost always results in the dissemination of a message that is divisive. This is the characteristic that links all forms of populism together. The former is the honest, upstanding members of society, whereas the latter are members of a venal and self-interested elite.

There is a compelling connection between populist leaders' narcissism and their populism. Words are merely tools for political manipulation, to win public admiration, and a political analysis of a narcissist's mentality makes it easy to find contradictions in their utterances. In contrast to administrative pragmatism and vision, their politics is grounded primarily in empty rhetoric. Individualism and populism share many common traits.

### **How Africa's Nations and Citizens Can Avoid Becoming Victims**

A populist or narcissistic personality in a position of leadership can cause severe harm to the economy of the nation if there is not a robust political framework in place that includes checks and balances. A narcissist uses ideology simply as a tool to advance his or her position, in contrast to a compulsive personality, who places high value on logical thinking, ideas, and belief system.

Leaders who strive to establish their superiority by grabbing all the credit for their accomplishments and blaming others for their failings almost always have dire results. On the other hand, citizens in those countries wouldn't see as much radical progress or social change. Populist and narcissist leaders could not be able to deliver, so far, the promised changes.

However, there is no consensus on how to characterise populism and narcissism, and there are obstacles regarding the relationship between these traits and leadership. Consequently, it seems pointless to argue over whether populist and narcissistic leaders are beneficial or detrimental. Because their "I know everything" attitude makes it hard for them to accept constructive criticism and admit

they don't know everything. Every other trait pales in comparison to their propensity to make everything about themselves and to link their interests with the country's interests.

Last but not least, Africa is facing a crucial juncture defined by the rapprochement of significant population shifts and socioeconomic disparities. The leaders of populist movements in Africa have adapted to the changing political landscape by bringing together traditional techniques of political mobilisation, such as individualism, with a heightened understanding of the issues that affect their constituents.

Some populist ideals have even caught hold among elites. Given that populism is a relatively new movement in Africa that is spreading rapidly, it must be determined whether or not these populists can live up to its populist connotations. Incorporating urban poor dwellers' issues into political discourse, on the other hand, may assist in transforming political parties from individuals into more respectable representatives of the public's most pressing concerns.

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