




Chapter 6

African Union and the Leadership Conundrum

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Prologue: The institutional leadership of the African Union rests on the leader of any of the member states who are appointed by the African Union's institutional mechanisms for the purpose of guiding the Union through its fundamental principles and directing the regional body towards a desired future.

Introduction

This chapter attempts a discourse of the African Union (AU) within the context of leadership on the African continent. Doing it essentially requires a delve into history, especially on the evolution of the union and its current trajectory. Indeed, “history helps us understand and grapple with complex questions and dilemmas by examining how the past has shaped (and continues to shape) global, national, and local relationships between societies and people. Historians use a wide range of sources to weave individual lives and collective actions into narratives that bring critical perspectives on both our past and our present” (Department of History 2023). The subsequent section interrogates the complex questions and dilemmas of leadership, otherwise termed the “leadership conundrum” in Africa.

The OAU Dispensation

The AU emerged in 2002 from the then 39-year-old Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established in 1963 and subsequently replaced by the AU. Thirty-two states of Africa represented by their governments had signed the treaty that established the OAU as a regional institution for confronting both the existing and anticipated problems that were common to its member states, which had just attained statehood after decades of colonial subjugations. Hitherto, there had been three separately operating ideological blocs in Africa: the Monrovia Bloc led by Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria, the radical Casablanca Group led by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and the Brazzaville Group led by Cameroonian political elites. The leader of each of the groups agreed to the formation of the Pan-African organisation based on a loose association of states.

The idea of forming an intergovernmental institution was favoured by Monrovia and supported by the Casablanca Group (Amate 1986). The OAU Charter was signed by 30 out of the 32 African countries, with the exception of Morocco and Togo, which later joined in July and September 1963, respectively. The idea, in a sense, was to promote unity and co-operation among members in such a way that could give Africa one voice against imperialism and neocolonialism. In specific terms, the articles in the organisation's charter present its objectives, which were to promote unity and solidarity of the African states, co-ordinate and intensify their co-operation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa, defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa, promote international co-operation, and have due regard to the Charter of the United Nations (UN) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Elias 1965).

While the above background relates to the OAU, a discussion of its successor – the AU – within the context of its leadership becomes imperative. It is important to note that membership of the OAU was limited to only independent countries in Africa, and this explains the later admission of 21 other states, with South Africa becoming the last to join (Edo & Olanrewaju 2012).

The structures of OAU included the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments, which acted as the supreme organ and met annually for policy formulation and direction. There was also the Council of Ministers which was made up of foreign ministers of each member state, who met biannually to prepare matters of concern for discussions at the General Assembly. The Secretariat was headed by a Secretary-General who was expected to be objective and accountable to the organisation, its member states, and their governments. The Commission of Mediation, Conciliation, and Arbitration was also established to undertake dispute resolution among member states. Specialised commissions, which included the Economic and Social Commission as well as the Educational, Scientific, Cultural, Health and Defence Commissions, were also established through the General Assembly.

To some extent, the organisation was still able to achieve its core aim of liberating all African countries from the claw of colonial rules and apartheid regimes. This is despite the foreign ideological persuasions that flooded the region during the Cold War era. They successfully mediated in several border disputes, including the dispute between Algeria and Morocco (1963–64) and Kenya and Somalia (1965–67). The organisation monitored events in South Africa and advocated international economic sanctions against that country during apartheid. In 1993, the OAU created a mechanism to engage in peacemaking and peacekeeping on the African continent. In 1998, the institution sponsored an international panel headed by former Botswanan president Ketumile Masire to investigate the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994. Its report was released in 2000.

However, the regional institution failed to address a whole lot of issues. The inability of some of the member states to completely dissociate themselves from foreign ideological persuasions impeded the OAU's attempt at resolving most of African problems. Seen from this latter point, most African leaders during OAU remained tools in the hands of the foreign powers, thereby often compromising on some general ideals of the organisation. Other states and their leaders allegedly became so powerful that they stalled some of the peaceful negotiations of the regional body. Of particular note during the OAU era was the sit-

tight syndrome of most rulers of African states, and this became a cog in the wheel of political stability and socio-economic development of the concerned states. Consequently, there was a decline in the socio-economic conditions of most of the member states, which then had to rely on foreign aid for survival because of their lack of resources to meet their financial obligations. This subsequently left a huge vacuum in the OAU and created illegitimacy problems, as many of these rulers were regional actors. Towards the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s, it had become apparent that the internal structures, ideas, and workings of the organisation were no longer in tandem with contemporary Africa; thus, it needed a major transformation.

The Establishment of the African Union

Therefore, in 2000, the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, and South African president Thabo Mbeki, spearheaded the move to replace the OAU with a new body, the AU. The proposed union was to be more economic and driven by the ideals of regional integration, similar to the European Union (EU), with regional structures such as a central bank, a court of justice, and a Pan-African parliament. A Constitutive Act, which provided for the establishment of the union, was later ratified by two-thirds of the OAU's members and came into force on 26 May 2001. After a transition period, the AU formally replaced the OAU in July 2002. Moreover, the African Standby Force (ASF) was created with the intention of establishing consistently trained reserve forces across the five African regions: north, east, central, west, and south. The comprehensive framework aims to include 25 000 personnel from three regional economic communities (RECs) and two regional mechanisms (RMs), collectively representing the entire continent's five regions (Tchie & Ani 2022:2).

On 9 September 1999, Gaddafi initiated the process by inviting the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to an Extra-Ordinary Summit to amend the OAU charter for efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, the Sirte Declaration set the tone for the transformation of the OAU into the AU, and the secretariat was tasked with the working out of the legal documents and modality for the new organisation. The document was submitted at the

36th Heads of State and Government Summit, which was held in Lome between 10-12 July 2000, and signed by member states between 11-27 July 2000, with the exception of Egypt. The treaty was ratified during the Lusaka 2001 Summit, where the Secretary-General of the OAU was mandated to fine-tune the modalities for the launching of the union and its organs, as well as prepare the draft rules. The rules governing the organs of the organisation, the Assembly, the Executive Council, the Commission, and the permanent representatives, were developed before the inaugural summit of the new union in July 2002.

A significant difference between the OAU and the AU is that, while the former was focused on eliminating what Lisk (2012:1) describes as “the last vestiges of colonialism in Africa”, the latter extended its focus to “propelling African states towards peace and prosperity as the basis for achieving the ultimate goal of the political and economic integration of its member states”. Lisk (2012:2) adds:

The AU was modelled on the European Union with structures that included an Assembly of heads of state/government, an Executive in which countries were represented by their foreign ministers, and the AU Commission which is the administrative branch made up of 10 commissioners and headed by a President. The transition from OAU to AU was clearly intended to transform the institutional framework for realizing the pan-African vision and mission from what some critics regarded as a mere ‘talking shop’ to an action-oriented forum.

The AU, in its first decade, and from a broad perspective, recorded an array of achievements. It resolved conflicts in some of Africa’s trouble spots, through both soft and hard power. The AU intervened in Sudan, Cote d’Ivoire, and Kenya where, at different points, it resolved conflicts and restored political power to democratically elected administrations where military regimes had taken over, and also resolved electoral disputes, particularly where the incumbents had attempted to upturn results in their favour and engage in illegitimate power consolidation. These were achieved in collaboration with states and non-state actors

within the international community. In other words, the AU did not operate with the doctrine of 'non-interference' in the internal affairs of member states, as against the extreme adherence to this doctrine by its predecessor, the OAU. Rather, it technically interfered, when necessary, in member states' affairs, to promote peace, address humanitarian concerns, and protect democracy. Efforts in this direction included deploying military force in situations that were categorised as genocide and crimes against humanity. This was made possible through the AU structures such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC), while its Peer Review Mechanism, spearheaded by its agency, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), allowed it to engage with member states on issues around governance, electioneering, peace, and security. As Lisk further maintains, the AU initiated working mechanisms in which each member was subjected to governance reviews by a team of experts, drawn from other member states, to encourage and deepen democracy and good governance. Lisk (2012: 2) notes that:

AU observer missions are now sent as a matter of routine to cover elections in all member states, in accordance with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007). Judging from the drastic fall in conflicts and coups, and the increasing number of successful elections in the region in the past decade, it can be inferred that on balance actions by the AU have added value to Africa's 'political performance'.

The AU has invested in efforts to promote and garner support for economic integration in its first ten years. Better co-ordination permeated the 54 member states, and this raised optimism across the continent for national and regional sustainable development. The regional economic communities (RECs), such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), in collaboration with the AU, international partners, and the UN, began to activate internal and external economic programmes that focused on Africa. The AU took a notable step by proposing the establishment of an African

Central Bank and an African monetary union at the continental level. Similarly, it played a significant role in how the election dispute in Zambia was resolved, ensuring political stability, peace, and security in the country. As the AU advanced toward its 20th anniversary, the COVID-19 pandemic struck. During the pandemic, the union lobbied the international community for vaccines and debt forgiveness as palliatives to members who were hit hard economically by the highly disruptive and destructive disease.

Over the years, the AU and regional leaders have faced several challenges. Twenty years after its establishment, the Pan-African agency has been unable to realise the economic and political objectives of the union's mandate, although, with optimism, one would submit that the AU can be revitalised to subdue its problems and take its rightful position within the regional and global space. However, achieving this objective requires deeper reforms, renewed ideas, and reinstitutionalising of the current institutional arrangements and behavioural changes of African leadership. Leadership is the main issue because the series of problems confronting the institution have culminated in distrust among the member states, thereby creating some impression of a loose, unfocused organisation. In other words, the major challenge of the AU is its leadership conundrum.

On Leadership: Conceptual and Theoretical Understandings

It is important to explore the concept of leadership before locating it within the context of the AU. Although the objective is linked to the AU as an organisation, the institution itself is made up of individual member states, whose leaders are the major actors, thereby setting the agenda for its activities. Thus, this chapter approaches the discourse of leadership, based on the above caveat, thematically eclectic, and encompassing the use of the theme leadership in all the senses it could possibly take.

It is most desirable to start from a simplistic definition of leadership. Leadership involves the exhibition of power, wisdom, and popularity, usually directed towards the accomplishment

of some set goals, usually through the involvement of human assistants. This suggests that a leader is someone who successfully marshals his human collaborators to achieve particular ends. This is leadership at the individual level, and it can connote chairpersons, statements, and even some drivers who work with or through others. In line with this, it is asserted that leadership takes both monomorphic and polymorphic forms (Lin & Boh 2020). From this line of thought, polymorphic leadership deals with a range of different issues and sets of goals, and must use other subleaders to achieve its aims. A president or prime minister, for instance, must deal with diverse issues of politics, health, war, education, environment and agriculture, infrastructure, and technology, locating their leadership from a polymorphic standpoint. A military leader, on the other hand, provides monomorphic leadership, because the group being led falls under just one career. However, even within a monomorphic leadership like the military, leaders still need to deal with different issues. Thus, the dichotomy between monomorphic and polymorphic leadership may just be a matter of nomenclature.

Theoretically, leadership is the ability to influence the actions of others towards the realisation of a particular objective. This involves different conceptual and theoretical postulations, particularly at the level of the individual (Novak 2020). This chapter explores a few theoretical positions that attempt to analyse the concept of leadership. The trait theory, for instance, explains leadership from the biological composition of the individual or group of people involved, as well as those selected to lead others. According to this theory, leaders are born, not made (Novikova 2013). Another theory, contingency theory, engages leadership from the perspective of styles, roles, and situations. That is, there are different leadership styles under the contingency approach or theory. One is the activator leadership, which represents a leader that involves other people in the decisionmaking process. The controller leadership employs the use of the 'stick and carrot' when necessary. This type of leadership employs the use of punishment and reward mechanisms. The martyr leadership plays the pity card to achieve the desired results.

Furthermore, the cavalier is interested in the approval of others, while the analytical leadership style employs the use of thorough research before critical decisions are taken. Servant leadership theory explains leadership from the perspective of leaders having the motivation to serve for the improvement of others. The emphasis here is servitude or service. On its part, transactional leadership leads through social exchange, while transformational leadership helps in the empowerment of the followers and greatly impacts their environment. These are examples of leadership theorised from the point of view of individuals.

Additionally, especially because the focus of this chapter is on the AU, the idea of institutional leadership becomes very important. Institutional leadership explains, for instance, how an executive changes or is transmogrified from being a leader to a statesman. It involves setting out to achieve certain objectives through a set of designs and ensuring that such becomes a reality. In the view of Smeets and Beach (2023), the function of institutional leadership is majorly political, and this explains the interdependence of administration and politics and policy nexus. Institutional leadership addresses the internal bearing. It uses the external environment to generate acceptance and works against external enemies. However, this is affected by the institutional behaviour.

Zaccariah (2023) goes further to draw attention to the difference between institutional leadership and institutional leaders. The former addresses the legal framework binding both the leaders and member states within the national, regional, or international organisations, structures, processes, and the people that are involved in the decisionmaking process of the organisation. The latter, however, comprises those appointed by the institutional mechanisms to direct and guide policy frameworks, including during periods of crisis.

From the foregoing, locating the meaning of leadership in extant literature is difficult. This is because most authors and analysts of the concept usually premise their thoughts upon popularity, showmanship, power deployment, wisdom, and

charisma, from both corporate and individual perspectives. Confessedly, leadership in its generic sense involves all the above postulation, including those appointed by the institutional mechanisms (of the AU) to direct and guide policy frameworks. The AU suffers from an institutional leadership crisis, as some of the established organs and agencies are in crisis and enmeshed in leadership tussles. The union has also had to deal with other issues that affect the legitimacy of its leaders, particularly on the issues around rivalry between regional powers, and the seeming hostility between the francophone and anglophone countries. These conflicts are reflected in the divisions that marred the establishment and functioning of the Pan-African Parliament (a forum where the opposition parties in Africa can air their voices). The issue of rotation of powers within the AU architecture along regional or sub-regional lines has also been one of the burning issues tearing the organisation apart. Indeed, if the AU aimed at maintaining unity in the continent, the seeming ideological divides must be handled carefully.

Thus, the problems confronting Africa have been closely linked to the leadership question. The ineffective control and management of resources at the national levels and other challenges of the 21st century have exacerbated leadership failures and endangered the continent. The political instability that arises from civilian dictatorship, abuse of constitutions, and the manipulations of electoral systems, including the rising popularity of unconstitutional governments, have produced sit-tight leaders that are oftentimes bereft of ideas on how to promote effective governance and develop Africa. This lack of ideas often leads to dependency on foreign and Western governments in the quest to develop Africa, a situation that has further deepened poverty and increased foreign debts (Tieku 2019). While the AU is not directly responsible for the inept leadership in several countries on the continent, it has the responsibility to enhance the quality of leadership through its involvement in the institutionalisation of credible elections and enhancement of government performances through its agencies, such as the APRM.

Furthermore, the AU was established to correct the inadequacies of OAU, by providing leadership for Africa as it

pertains to other areas, such as improvement in intra-African trade, that would reduce dependency on Western governments. It would also drastically promote economic growth in Africa, with the focus expected to shift from the state control of the economy to the involvement of private sectors. This attempt to foster more co-operation between state and non-state actors is directed at limiting the overbearing power of the states on the protection of the interest of the citizens, which was neglected during the OAU years. African states are to subject themselves to the peer review mechanism, to allow for more scrutiny of their records and performances in comparison with the benchmark set (Nwanolue 2017).

The AU has pledged its commitment to the entrenchment of democratic values and tried to discourage one-party rule, autocratic democracy, and military intervention in politics. The realisation by the union that civil wars and bloody conflicts needed to be halted for the continent to harness the benefits of development imposed a greater responsibility on the AU peace and security actors to intervene in countries such as Somalia and Sudan. Intervention in Sierra Leone, Sudan and Liberia, as well as dispute resolution in Côte d'Ivoire and Chad, all prove to the world that Africa has grown enough to proffer African solutions to African problems.

A review of the agenda of the AU in the last 20 years proves that the organisation has demonstrated its leadership in peace and security on the continent. However, the lack of resources to fund its operations, especially peacekeeping, has left the union at the mercy of its foreign sponsors. The difficulties in reaching a consensus due to the diversity and rivalry between some regional powers have done a lot of harm to the functioning of the AU. Despite putting the necessary framework in place to ensure compliance with the union resolutions, it is still finding it difficult to compel member states into accepting its resolutions. There is a compelling perception that the AU is being used by powerful African leaders to advance their interests. This was evident in the way the AU shielded leaders of both Kenya and Sudan from prosecution at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the

roles they played in the killing of thousands of civilians and the genocide in Darfur (Bachmann & Sowate-Adjei 2020).

The inability of the AU to fund its specialised commissions through voluntary donations and payment of dues by the member states is undermining the performance of the organisation and affecting its leadership roles in matters that concern Africa. The adoption of a new financial rule that allowed the EU to bypass the AU when funding national projects in Africa has not only questioned its leadership role but has also undermined the national security of member states (Luursema 2023). Though the AU has made tremendous efforts at keeping peace in Africa, such efforts have not translated into economic growth. Other efforts at continental integration are taking off at a slower pace. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), which was a homegrown attempt at promoting growth and integrating Africa into the global economy in order to reduce poverty, has not yielded the desired positive result because of the low volume of trade among member states. For instance, the volume of trade among the member states was around 15%, while the volume with Europe was estimated at 68% (Agupusi 2022). The free trade initiative, under AfCFTA, is expected to address this dilemma.

The lack of trust by the citizens of member states because of its inability to consult with civil society has contributed to the stunted growth of the body, particularly in terms of accountability and a sense of belonging by the citizens of member states. The AU has not been able to satisfy the concerns of the majority of ordinary Africans, who require public goods and service delivery. The AU is facing challenges of leadership that have burdened the organisation in its last two decades of existence, with poor governance and dependency on foreign assistance. However, these problems are a result of the institutional makeup of the institution itself, as leaders across the continent do not have a uniform understanding of development. While a leader could have a good grasp of the structure and dynamics of governance needed for development and of the major internal and external factors that shape events, implementation of the ideas has become problematic. Based on the current reality in many states, one may argue that many African leaders have no understanding

of the diverse problems confronting their citizens and are not too enthusiastic in implementing developmental policies in their national boundaries. The critical question is even deeper. For instance, while agreeing that the leadership problem is the root behind of the AU's unconvincing performance, do we mean institutional leadership or institutional leaders?

History has acknowledged the leadership effectiveness of a few people in Africa, and beyond. These individuals serve as leaders in various states, transitioning to different roles either directly or through influential and hegemonic methods. For instance, before the administration of Rwandan president Paul Kagame, Rwanda was known as a war-torn country, and noted for poverty and bad governance. However, with the strong and transformational leadership style of President Kagame, Rwanda has recorded tremendous economic growth. In terms of women in leadership positions and education, Rwanda is ranked amongst the best (Halidu *et al* 2022). Former president of Mozambique Samora Machel, one of the leaders of the *Frente de Libertação Moçambique* (Mozambique Liberation Front – FRELIMO), fought for the independence of Mozambique and became its first president in 1975. His leadership style was based on the principle of contingency and transformational leadership style amongst others. His leadership strategies include the need for the emancipation of women, the dismantling of capitalist structures by delinking with the imperialists, and the abolition of exploitative and capitalist structures and practices of forced labour through nationalism (Daniel 2016).

Fidel Castro's pragmatic leadership style endeared him to many Cubans. First, through his idea of revolutionary struggle and the ideology of socialism, he fought against the Baptista government. Second, through his pragmatic efforts, Cuba gained independence under his auspices and became one of the best-performing societies, particularly in terms of education, health, and general level of development (Garcia 2020).

In Europe, German Angela Merkel's leadership was based on inclusive governance, through clear policy directives. Her leadership style was equally based on using a non-compromise

posture to achieve the necessary results. With this, Merkel can be described as a non-conformist leader, who remained steadfast on issues such as migration, environment, and climate change (Tirmizi 2023). The European Union was faced with the problem of ameliorating the condition of the member states during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had ravaged Spain and Italy, leading some of the member states to question the financial capacity of these states and their capacity to recover. While there was a plan by the EU through the COVID-19 Recovery Fund, the idea of political leadership and the institutional rancour between and among member states showed the problem between institutional capacity and crisis management. Drawing from Article 133 of the EU Treaty, member states first engaged in polemics as to the legality of loans and grants. The EU eventually earmarked 750 billion to strengthen states' capacity to ameliorate COVID-19 fatalities, as against the initially suggested 500 billion by Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron. The fund could not solve the crisis of COVID-19 or the post-COVID-related issues.

Conclusion: Addressing the Leadership Conundrum

Certainly, there are pressing leadership challenges within the AU that require immediate attention. While the AU serves as an institutional leadership platform for Africa, its effectiveness relies heavily on the leaders of member states. In other words, the institutions within the organisation can only function optimally when guided by strong leadership from the member states' leaders. Quality leadership of the AU is a function of leadership of the member states. Is there an individual leader of any of the member states who can provide institutional leadership for the AU? The forgoing issues, along with the questions that follow them, constitute the leadership conundrum in the AU which, along with the subsequent questions, embody the leadership dilemma faced by the AU.

By July 2002, when the AU officially came into being in Durban, South Africa, the African leaders who met were quite convinced that they had built a bespoke architecture that would respond effectively to the plight of contemporary Africa, as stipulated in its mandate. While the promotion of peace,

security, and stability on the continent are some aspects of its core mandates, others include the economic development of the region. Upon constant interrogations, there are certain aspects of the mandate that demand emergency attention if the AU is to retain its status in Africa and around the globe as the most decisive Pan-African agency. In the immediate realm, these include securing a ceasefire in troubled countries, such as Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique's Cabo Delgado, the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo DRC), and Cameroon.

The AU must, without delay, intervene in the conflicts in the Sahel region, and restore democratic governance to those countries under the siege of military regimes. Indeed, the West African region is becoming a coup belt, and the AU must be pragmatic in tackling the rising incidences of unconstitutional changes of government on the continent. These issues, which are all linked to governance failures, must be addressed urgently. The AU must redress the entrenched impunity by the political elites and their disregard for the rule of law and national justice institutions. In the long run, the AU should actively address the human rights problems and humanitarian concerns, including those related to climate change in countries like Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Chad.

Agenda 2063 is a summary of what and where African countries want to be in 2063. It is a blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is a manifestation of the Pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress, and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. Unity, resilience, and ambition are needed amongst African leaders to lift their people out of poverty. To meet this agenda, there is a need for every African leader to, in their state, accelerate joint efforts by giving priority to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at all levels. They must also align their national policies and strategies with the regional and global templates for development: SDG 2030 and Agenda 2063. This will first restore the mutual trust that has been lost, as a prelude to bridging the gap between the citizens and the AU, and

ensure societal harmony. Further reforms are necessary for the effective functioning and delivery of the expectations of Africans.

For every social formation where leaders exist, there are always some set goals. These set goals define leadership in particular situations and highlight their responsibilities. Thus, the idea of leadership in the AU is best hypothesised and discussed within the context of the set goals of the AU. Since leadership is egalitarian and rotated yearly at the level of the AU, national leaders must deliver on the AU agenda and be committed to aligning them with national priorities. This will ensure that such leaders have implemented policies in support of the collective African Dream, with the assurance that they will not deviate when it is their turn to lead the AU.

This chapter has delved into history by claiming that the AU was founded upon the pillars of the OAU. While these two organisations had different objectives, they were both established to protect the interests of Africa. However, the AU is a better-focused and more inclusive organisation than the OAU. While few African leaders have worked assiduously to make the AU a reality, the current leadership and national political elites must make sure that the gains of 20 years will not be lost to military coups and democratic backsliding. As has been observed by International Crisis Group (2022:1), “the year 2021 was tumultuous in Africa, with coups in Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan, an orchestrated power grab in Tunisia, protracted fighting in Ethiopia, and a rising threat from transnational Islamist militancy. The AU’s response to these crises has been mixed”.

This difficult question of leadership and the leadership conundrum within the AU rests on the character of the leaders of the individual member states, who are expected to provide institutional leadership for the regional organisation. Institutions are made of individuals; thus, institutional leadership is dependent on the disposition of these leaders. Located within the context of the AU are the leaders of member states, who thereby become key figures within the AU institutional mechanisms. Such leaders must be capable of interrogating existing structures constantly and visualising how to effectively improve them.

Does the mechanism exist in the AU to address this leadership conundrum? This remains a future research theme.

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