

African “Big Men” and the Liberation of Africa’s Oppressed

Chloe Schwenke, Ph.D.
Creative Associates International
August 29, 2007

Abstract

To the poor and powerless of Africa, with little hope for a better life, the prospect of a new and ethical form of leadership may be the catalyst for a dramatic transformation leading to authentic development, or – despite lofty ideals and good intentions – the most ethical endeavors of leaders may become development’s greatest obstacles. The qualities of leadership, as judged by the people most affected by them on the basis both of the virtues of the individual leaders and by the results these leaders achieve, warrant a closer look. So too do the conflicting priorities facing a leader in a new nation or a nation recovering from conflict: does the new leadership first act to meet basic needs and only then approach the complex challenge of forging solidarity? In such vulnerable and turbulent conditions, do the people of that society look to strong and visionary leadership from the top, or do they place their hopes on leadership distributed through the institutions of that society, able and ready to engage with them in a collaborative endeavor to build the peace?

In the field of development ethics, Denis Goulet was both a philosopher and a practitioner. Much of his work was directed at the plight of oppressed peoples, and their efforts to achieve both authentic development and the bonds of solidarity. In 1978, Goulet wrote of development as liberation in a case study about the newly independent African nation of Guinea-Bissau. This paper reviews Goulet’s observations and hopes as expressed both in that case study and in his other writings, and compares his views to similarly vexing leadership challenges in countries familiar to the author: Uganda and Southern Sudan. The African “Big Men” who rose to leadership in each of these three countries – Amilcar Cabral, Yoweri Museveni, and John Garang – are profiled, and their leadership qualities and results evaluated.

This paper explores the ethical qualities of leadership, and the balance needed between pragmatism of meeting basic needs, and the ability to offer an inspirational, hopeful, even transformational vision of a better future. The author’s own experience as a practitioner and development ethicist living and working in Uganda and the Sudan are clarified by Goulet’s provocative and insightful thinking from his experiences in Guinea-Bissau, and by the broad sweep of Goulet’s concern for authentic development, the humanization of life, and the often urgent need of those enduring oppression simply to keep hope alive.

African “Big Men” and the Liberation of Africa’s Oppressed

Chloe Schwenke, Ph.D.

Creative Associates International

Washington, DC

ChloeS@caii.com

People do not fight for ideals or for notions inside men’s heads. The people fight and accept sacrifices demanded by the struggle to obtain material advantages so as to be able to live in peace and in better conditions, in order to see their lives progress and to guarantee their children’s future.

~ Amilcar Cabral¹

Who will liberate African societies from oppression and lead Africans to lives of peace, sufficiency, and meaning – to truly human lives? The simple fact that this question still has such traction long after the struggles for independence from colonial domination is disturbing. Today, so many Africans live in abject poverty under authoritarian regimes, or at least under the domination of regimes led by elite groups who have little interest in, or compassion for, the welfare and aspirations of nonelites.

This paper is about leadership of development in Africa, and particularly about the ethical character, practical effectiveness, and moral force of the leaders at the top – the “Big Men”.² In considering the ethical issues raised by the persistence of oppression in Africa, and the inability or unwillingness of most of Africa’s top political leadership to perceive of their nonelite fellow citizens as victims of oppression still awaiting liberation and development, I will make particular reference to the writings and work of the late Denis Goulet, a pioneer in the field of development ethics and a professor at Notre Dame University for 27 years. Throughout his long career Goulet was deeply concerned about oppression, liberation, and authentic development. The oppressed of Africa are clearly

¹ Goulet 1995, 191

² With the notable exception of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Africa’s first elected female head of state and currently president of Liberia, all of Africa’s former and current top political leaders are men.

and poignantly emblematic of Goulet's well-known *triple curse of underdevelopment*: poverty, powerlessness, and hopelessness.³

In addition to his writing, Goulet carried out field research in several developing countries, although the only African country that he studied and wrote about in any detail was Guinea-Bissau. This paper will therefore consider that country, as well as two countries in which the author has extensive experience: Uganda and the Sudan.

In evaluating the importance of ethical leadership, this paper questions whether virtuous, effective leadership at the apex of a state's political structure is a sufficient or necessary element in – or catalyst of – the transformation of the identity and values of a nation such that authentic development is pursued and achieved. Can the Big Men alone lead this transformation, or must ethical leadership exist not only at the top but also at multiple levels of a society, running deeply into the social, political, and cultural institutions, before authentic development is possible and sustainable?

This paper considers the ethical dimensions of these questions, acknowledging that important empirical research is needed to grasp and attribute the full impact of leadership on any specific results achieved by any particular nation's development struggle – particularly the character of distribution of benefits and opportunities for those most needy and most vulnerable.

Peanuts for the Portuguese

What is oppression? And what is “authentic” development?

Oppression is effectively portrayed by Goulet's case study of Guinea-Bissau in 1977, in which he describes the plight of the Guineans after prolonged Portuguese domination:

During five centuries of rule the Portuguese produced a total of fourteen university graduates in all of Guinea-Bissau. As recently as 1977 there existed in the entire country only three trained social workers and ten native doctors. At the

³ Goulet 2006, xvi

time of independence only one secondary school existed, and industrial infrastructure comprised little more than a few grain-grinding mills, a small ship-building firm, and a modern brewery inaugurated in 1974, largely to boost the morale of Portuguese troops by supplying them with canned beer... Groundnut production had been forcibly introduced by the Portuguese and simply superimposed on regimes of traditional subsistence agriculture... Predictably, since much labor had to be devoted to growing peanuts for the Portuguese, the nutritional needs of Guinea's rural masses were poorly met; and few other sources of agricultural wealth were encouraged. Thus pre-independence Guinea-Bissau was a colony whose productive capacity was exploited only minimally, mainly for the benefit of a tiny foreign minority.⁴

The Portuguese colonial administration denied the essential dignity of the people of Guinea-Bissau by treating them not as worthy people – inherently valuable and dignified in their own right – but only instrumentally, as a means to Portuguese enrichment. This colonial instrumental bias precluded serious consideration by those in power that the people of Guinea-Bissau would benefit from, and be entitled by rights of their humanity to pursue, their own national and individual development objectives. Not only were the people of Guinea-Bissau left poor, powerless, and without hope, through the neglect of their plight and their aspirations they were not even considered as fully human. Colonialism relegated them to the status of *objects* to be exploited, not *subjects* with their own needs and wants. Colonialism of this character was a moral affront of profound gravity, and a powerful form of oppression applied over a very long period of time.⁵

Why did the people of Guinea-Bissau, who greatly outnumbered their Portuguese masters, remain passive in the face of such inhumane treatment? Were they complicit in their own oppression due to their complacency? The answer to this question may be rooted more in psychology than in ethics as, surprisingly, oppression in its worst form becomes the adopted identity of its victims:

⁴ Goulet 1978, 10

⁵ The Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire, was a significant influence in Goulet's thinking. Freire believed that authentic development necessitated the transformation of people from *objects*, known and acted upon, to *subjects* – active agents of their own development. Yet as Goulet poignantly noted: "People who are oppressed or reduced to the culture of silence do not participate in their own humanization." (Goulet 1995, 91-92)

Many writers analyze the oppressed consciousness, whether its cause is traced to overt colonialism, economic exploitation, racial discrimination, or less overt forms of social control. One dismal conclusion common to all such analyses is that oppressed people acquire a vested interest in their own servitude. As a defense mechanism, they internalize the demeaning stereotypes thrust upon them by their master. Over time, this internalized image comes to identify their own identity; the stereotype becomes a crutch propping up their own fragile self-esteem. To expel the internalized self-image is a long and painful process. Because they understand this, revolutionary leaders assign a high priority to the psychological transformation of their people. A new self-image conferring a sense of worth must replace that of people who are weak, inferior, and worthless.⁶

An environment conducive to human well-being and “humanization” – individual human agents pursuing and achieving their own truly human lives – is the antithesis of oppression. The concept of the truly human life, and the conditions of freedom under which a human being becomes truly human through living such a life, is the foundation of the capabilities approach in modern development ethics. Central to this humanization process is the human being as autonomous moral agent, participating in the decisions that most affect him or her, and active in the organization of social and economic institutions that favor equitable distribution of development’s benefits. For Goulet, the degree to which nonelite people in any society have true decision-making power, free from manipulation, ignorance, or co-optation, is the degree to which their development and their participation is “authentic”. It is no simple undertaking:

The most difficult form of participation to elicit and sustain is also the most indispensable to genuine development. This is participation that starts at the bottom and reaches progressively upward into ever-widening arenas of decision-making.⁷

How could the oppressed people of Guinea-Bissau pursue such a form of genuine or authentic development, dependent as it is on bottom-up participation? Could a leader at the top, through a process of liberation, be a catalyst for such a groundswell and radical transformation?

It may be easiest to image an indigenous leader in such a capacity, forging a bond of solidarity with his or her fellow citizens, and then pricking their conscious to insist that

⁶ Goulet 1995,189

⁷ Ibid., 96

they claim – from a clearly identified and foreign oppressor – the dignity that is their birthright. While historically the requisite solidarity may have been easier to cultivate when the oppressors were foreigners and colonialists (aided to some extent by a co-opted indigenous elite), matters become rather more complicated in recent times when African elites step into the role of oppressors of their own people (now aided in a variety of ways by “foreign interests” such as foreign investors or geo-political “allies”). Such indigenous elites and their leaders obviously feel very little solidarity with the poor people whom they exploit and dominate, and very little need to pursue solidarity with them.

Solidarity remained a central interest during Goulet’s career. Goulet believed that development was only possible when a populace was “aroused to desire it and to sacrifice for it”.⁸ Goulet further argued that the longer-term viability of the society and the authenticity of its development rest on the degree to which this solidarity can be generated, made universal, and sustained:

Political viability rests on creating for all members of society a stake in its survival: this cannot be achieved unless all enjoy freedom, inviolable personal rights, and believe that the political system within which they live pursues some common good and not mere particular interests.⁹

While it is intuitive that a society is a strong and desirable form of society to the extent that its citizens show care and compassion for each other, tend to their least well off, and together seek to identify and apply a standard of access for all to resources, care, and opportunities, Goulet was under no misapprehensions as to humanity’s frequent failures in achieving such lofty standards:

Only rarely, however, do humans translate their existential solidarity into cooperative behavior; on the contrary, they consistently act as though they were not bound together in webs of solidarity... Classes and nations strive to dominate other classes and nations. Lip service is given to the “common good of humanity,” but global development problems continue to be defined through prisms of parochial mercantile, strategic, and ideological interests... Humans have not yet learned how to respond, institutionally or behaviorally, to the exigencies of solidarity.¹⁰

⁸ Goulet 1978, 13

⁹ Goulet 2006, 150-151

¹⁰ Goulet 1995, 64

Transforming any society into a cohesive society with strong social capital, demonstrated solidarity, and cultural resilience depends first on all of the members of that society – elites and nonelites – being offered that vision of themselves, and being persuaded to internalize and act upon such a vision. That is, first and foremost, a leadership challenge.

Goulet argues this point to its ultimate conclusion, pointing out that even for the oppressors, and those who reject solidarity, a truly meaningful and truly human life eludes them unless they re-examine their own patterns of exploitation:

Can rich individuals or affluent societies live worthy human lives in a world where masses lack essential goods?¹¹

Leadership, Liberation and Development through the Moral Lens

There is a currently a growing and vibrant literature on effective, ethical leadership, but Goulet addressed leadership issues well in advance of much of this current dialogue, particularly in the context of national liberation struggles. To Goulet, there are five attributes of effective, ethical leaders of liberation struggles and authentic development:

- First, the leader must appreciate the historical context, and the many historical issues that lie beneath the surface of local struggles.
- Second, the leader must be able to reconcile multiple class alliances, taking upon themselves the indignation of the treatment of the oppressed masses, while still navigating effectively among diverse classes and interests.
- Third, Goulet believed that leaders must possess and demonstrate moral and physical courage.
- Fourth, a leader must have a vision, and be able to communicate that vision to his or her followers in a way that they can grasp and own it, and come together to pursue it.

¹¹ This raises much deeper questions, addressed frequently by Goulet in his life, regarding the moral obligations and questionable moral justifications – if any – of those few who possess “superfluous wealth”. Goulet muses: “That absolute want co-exists alongside relative superfluity is an incontestable fact: over half of the human race lives in chronic deprivation while a small percentage of people wastes prodigiously.”(Goulet 1995, 58)

- Finally, Goulet argued that a leader must be sufficiently self-conscious and maintain sufficient humility that he or she can learn from mistakes made.

In the more recent literature on leadership, B.M. Bass and Paul Steidlmeier, along with others, argue that the ethics of effective and authentic moral leadership depend upon three key attributes: 1) the moral character of the leader, 2) the ethical values that characterize the leader's vision and program (as accepted or rejected by their followers), and 3) the moral qualities of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers collectively engage in. In short, authentic transformational leadership is characterized by its high moral and ethical standards.¹²

Bass and Steidlmeier further claim that the components of transformational leadership are four: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration:

If the leadership is transformational, its charisma or idealized influence is envisioning, confident, and sets high standards for emulation. Its inspirational motivation provides followers with challenges and meaning for engaging in shared goals and undertakings. Its intellectual stimulation helps followers to question assumptions and to generate more creative solutions to problems. Its individualized consideration treats each follower as an individual and provides coaching, mentoring and growth opportunities.¹³

Transformational leadership is commonly compared to the more common model of the transactional leader, who typically uses promises, praise, rewards – as well as threats, negative criticism, fear, and disciplinary actions – to achieve the desired actions and behavior from his followers. David Boje refers to these as modal values, or values of the means, contrasted to transformational leadership's focus on the end-values such as liberty, equality, justice, compassion, and human flourishing.¹⁴

In practical terms, leadership is usually both transactional and transformational, and the character and legitimacy of both aspects of leadership have deep roots in moral

¹² Steidlmeier 1998

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Boje 2000

theory and ethics. Leadership associated with liberation struggles, and with setting a nation on the course of authentic development, will of necessity involve leadership that is transformational and transactional, and leadership that satisfies the parameters established by Goulet, Bass, Steidlmeier, and Boje. As concluded by Goulet, on his own much shorter list of leadership qualifications: “Simply to list the qualities demanded of development leaders is to reveal how rarely such leaders are found.”¹⁵

This recognition of the scarcity of competent, ethical, and inspirational leadership might explain many of the reasons why so many of Africa’s Big Men fail to succeed in the objective of liberation and authentic development – the bar is set too high. Ethically, many are not “big” enough.

Profiles of Three “Big Men”

In considering the role and record of recognized African leaders, it is helpful to consider some examples. I therefore describe below three brief case studies – leadership at the top in Uganda, Sudan, and Guinea-Bissau – and follow this with an evaluation of the ethical performance of each, evaluated using the criteria established by Goulet, Bass, Steidlmeier, and Boje.

- Uganda

Oppression in Africa was once viewed as the inevitable and tragic consequence of colonialism. Many of the continent’s liberation struggles from colonial masters were violent and devastating, yet the lens of history now paints them in heroic hues. Yet by the time I arrived in Africa, for a stay that would end up spanning 14 years, oppression was no longer the stock in trade of foreigners. After settling in Kenya in 1979, my first visit to Uganda was in 1982, already four years since the overthrow of Amin. The evidence of Idi Amin’s brutal nine years of oppression and the chaos and destruction caused in the subsequent invasion by Tanzanians and rebel Ugandans were still everywhere to be seen. The liberation of Ugandans from the ills of the Amin era remained incomplete. There was no clear leader, no compelling leadership vision, and no one with the charisma and

¹⁵ Goulet 1995, 191

leadership qualities needed to push the ravaged nation to heal and unite in the solidarity needed to overcome the many lost years of anti-development, or to move on and pursue authentic development.

Uganda's political insecurity was exacerbated by rampant poverty and decay. The Ugandan currency was almost valueless due to runaway inflation – it took a thick stack of shillings to buy a loaf of bread. Besides experiencing the frequent sounds of gunfire, and having to negotiate with drugged and trigger-happy youth combatants manning the numerous roadblocks, I also saw everywhere around me the deteriorated physical infrastructure of a nation neglected and exploited by bad leadership. No resources were being directed to repair or revitalize Uganda's weak or dysfunctional social institutions. Instead, what few resources remained were largely being channeled by the Milton Obote regime to suppress an insurrection led by the National Resistance Army (NRA) of Yoweri Museveni. Amnesty International estimated that the Obote regime of 1980 to 1985 was responsible for more than 300,000 civilian deaths across Uganda.¹⁶ Abuses were particularly conspicuous in an area in the center of the country that for Ugandans is synonymous with suffering: the Luwero Triangle. The talk among Ugandans was not of development strategies, only of survival. Ugandans looked to their future with deep misgivings and vexing concerns. There was no decent, competent, and caring Big Man to save them.

Conditions in Uganda were dire, and heroes scarce. The liberating Tanzania forces that deposed Amin in 1978 had not been welcomed as saviors because they left an occupation force that participated in the looting of Kampala. Yusufu Lule was installed as president, then was quickly replaced by Godfrey Binaisa, followed by a five year return to power of the president whose abysmal governance had caused Ugandans to celebrate Amin's coup – Milton Obote. The National Resistance Army (NRA) carried out guerrilla campaigns throughout the country and, following the withdrawal of Tanzanian troops in 1981, attacked former Amin supporters. Many Ugandans fled the chaos and destruction in the early 1980s, with approximately 200,000 moving to neighboring Rwanda, Congo,

¹⁶ See <http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=UG&RegionCode=EAF>

and the Sudan. Then in 1985, another military coup ousted Milton Obote, and Lt. Gen. Tito Okello became head of state. In a major political blunder, Okello failed to offer a meaningful role to the leader of the only competent and powerful military force in the country – the NRA – and so its leader directed the guerrilla campaign to Kampala. Its leader was Yoweri Museveni, a man of humble origins whose views and vision had been formed in the chrysalis of Dar es Salaam University¹⁷, and in his own early leadership of Ugandan peasants to assert grazing rights for their cattle. In 1986, after years as a guerilla commander in the bush, Museveni removed Okello and became the new president of Uganda. Finally Uganda had its Big Man.

Museveni began his rule with a very tall mountain to climb – the reconstruction of the social, political, economic, physical, and moral infrastructure of the entire country. He approached this challenge with charisma, vision, energy, and a military standard of personal discipline. His political agenda was far-reaching and unlike anything ever seen in East Africa before. He presided over extensive decentralization of governance, vastly increasing public participation in decision-making, and raising political awareness throughout the country. He provided security and peace, reigned in the military's abuses of power, and demanded accountability from his officials. In his early years in power, he was known to take his ministers away on a two week annual retreat in which they all lived in simple peasant accommodation, doing their own laundry, fetching their own water, and cooking their own food, so that they would not lose touch with the lives of the commoner.

¹⁷ While the University of Dar es Salaam enabled students to become familiar with pan-Africanist and anti-colonialist ideas, many of its students found the professors and lecturers to be too conservative and narrow. This dissatisfaction led Museveni, Eriya Kategaya, James Wapakhabulo, Joseph Mulwanyamuli Ssemwogerere, John Kawanga, all from Uganda, Charles Kileo and Salim Msoma from Tanzania, Kapote Mwakasungura from Malawi, Adam Marwa and Patrick Quoro also from Tanzania, John Garang from Sudan, Andrew Shija from Tanzania, and many students from other African countries, to form a self-help ideological study and activist group known as the University Students African Revolutionary Front (USARF). Every Sunday they would hold a class, invite speakers of their choice, enrich their ideas about the evolution of society, and discuss topics dealing with the production and distribution of wealth. See http://www.ugandahighcommission.co.ke/yoweri_museveni.htm

Uganda's development progress was nothing short of spectacular, and nearly the entire country benefited from Museveni's leadership – with the prominent exception of the northern parts of the country, which were mired in a violent conflict with a ruthlessly brutal armed cult known as the Lords Resistance Army.

Museveni's presidency began with high hopes, and through his first decade in power his policies and accomplishments did much to earn his country's and the world's respect, and to cultivate a strong sense of solidarity within the country. Through his visionary leadership he introduced a decentralized form of governance beginning with 9-person elected Revolutionary Councils (RCs – later to become Local Councils or LCs) in each village. In so doing, Museveni generated enormous popular support across the nation and differentiated his regime from any that had come before. The RCs were linked within a five-tier hierarchical system of government, all described in Museveni's manifesto: *Ten Point Programme*. The reality of this participatory experiment in democracy was rather less genuine, as the government passed legislation in 1987 to bring the lower tiers of government under central control, including the power of the center to dissolve any lower level elected council, yet it is argued that this reassertion of power from the top was in line with Ugandan national values and expectations.¹⁸

Museveni's leadership over time has become less transformational and more transactional; he has done very little to cultivate leadership in others, and over his many years in power he has become more autocratic and authoritarian in his governance. Even Museveni's political commitment to decentralization weakened considerably over time, and many of his former key supporters defected to other parties. As he has become more isolated from Ugandan citizens, the rift between the governing elite and the rest of Uganda has widened, and the bonds of solidarity are now becoming frayed. Many Ugandans now argue that Museveni has become excessively arrogant, blind to his own failings, and hesitant to take advice. Increasingly, the ethical qualifications of Museveni's leadership are being questioned by his followers and other interested stakeholders.

¹⁸ Kasfir 2000, 66

Museveni now has achieved a reputation of being fixated on retaining power, by whatever means necessary, and of using this power to hold himself unaccountable and beyond serious reproach from political opponents. When the constitution's limitation of two terms became inconvenient to his ambitions, Museveni manipulated Uganda's parliament to remove term limits from the constitution, and he duly stood for and won a third term in March of 2006. Given that the 2001 election was fraught with electoral irregularities – including as many as 1.3 million “ghost voters” among the 7.5 million votes actually cast,¹⁹ it is not surprising that this most recent election seems to have been similarly troubled. Human Rights Watch announced its conviction that the 2006 election was neither free nor fair, due to the lack of a level playing field and widespread government harassment of opposition candidates.²⁰ After so many years in power, President Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) party have become an elite who have sacrificed national solidarity in their effort to retain the privileges, influence, and patronage networks that come with such well-entrenched power. Uganda is on the path to oppression once again.

- Guinea-Bissau

My examination of Uganda began with my first visit in 1982, well past the colonial era, which for that country ended in 1965. Only five years before I stepped foot in Uganda, on the other side of Africa, the final stages in the liberation struggle against a colonial power was still the preoccupation of African freedom fighters and intellectuals. In 1977 Denis Goulet celebrated his 46th birthday while visiting the small West African country of Guinea-Bissau, and despite the untimely assassination of its founding father, Amilcar Cabral, still the talk there was of a new day ahead with almost limitless possibilities. One year later, in 1978, Goulet published a booklet describing in a very positive light the alternative development strategy adopted by this new nation. While not quite euphoric, Goulet found much to praise and little to criticize in the Guinea-Bissau he encountered during his six-week stay. He drew particular attention to Guinea-Bissau's

¹⁹ Sunday Monitor Online, see <http://www.monitor.co.ug/sunday/news/news02121.php>

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, see <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uganda/>

Big Man, Cabral, who had successfully led an uprising against enormous odds to achieve the liberation of Guinea-Bissau.

Amilcar Cabral, assassinated in 1973 four years before Goulet arrived in Guinea-Bissau, was a charismatic intellectual, and in many ways shared a common path of many of Africa's Big Men: elite upbringing, foreign education, and Pan-African networking that bolstered his consciousness and effectiveness as a leader. Cabral was however distinctive in his resilient idealism and his genuine identification with the plight of the oppressed citizens of his small nation. Cabral's uplifting rhetoric was infectious, and even four years after his death, the legitimacy and commitment of Guinea-Bissau's liberation struggle impressed Goulet deeply:

The country's leaders, like the proponents of alternative development strategies, assign a high priority to distributing development's benefits equitably... Guinea-Bissau strives explicitly to achieve social justice in its development efforts.²¹

Cabral was born in Guinea-Bissau but spent his youth on the Cape Verde Islands, which were then joined with Guinea-Bissau as one Portuguese territory. Cabral pursued his university education in Portugal, but returned to Cape Verde during the years of World War II. Under the regime of Portuguese dictator António de Oliveira Salazar, the cost of living soared and goods and supplies became scarce in Cape Verde. In 1940, a particularly severe drought caused widespread starvation, resulting in the death of more than 20,000 Cape Verdeans, and disease and poverty were responsible for the deaths of 30,000 more between 1942 and 1948. During this time, the Portuguese military contingent on the islands grew considerably in size, resulting in frequent (and often racially tinged) conflicts and tension with the indigenous population. In this difficult setting, Cabral's political awakening was influenced by his father, who was active as an outspoken advocate for the plight of the Cape Verdeans in the 1940s. By his early 20s, Cabral was deeply aware of the impoverished and degrading conditions of the Cape Verdean people, but his characteristic idealism led him to believe that the future would be better, linked perhaps to a new world order arising out of the end of World War II.

²¹ Goulet 1978, 2

Cabral was noted for his charm, his intellectual prowess, and his athletic abilities – particularly in soccer. His soccer skills were so impressive that he was invited to play for Benfica, one of the top teams in Portugal – an offer he declined. Cabral was determined to return to Africa, to be reunited with his family, and to commit his energies to his concern that:

...millions of people need my contribution in the hard struggle against nature and against man, himself...There are, in Africa, in spite of the beautiful and modern cities on the coast, still thousands of human beings who live in the utmost darkness.²²

Cabral consciousness of his own relatively affluent upbringing, the good education he had received, and his many life experiences gave rise to a sense of mission – a calling. In 1949, he further wrote:

I live life intensely and from life I have extracted experiences that have given me a direction, a road that I must follow, whatever the personal losses that I might come to suffer. That is my reason for living.²³

Cabral made good on his idealism, returning to Cape Verde to teach agricultural skills to his countrymen. At this time, he also oriented his thinking about the role of the elite, arguing that a need existed for an intellectual vanguard to foster and support the development aspirations of Cape Verdeans. His attempts to reach out to his socio-economic peers by radio however were thwarted by the Portuguese authorities, who went so far as to forbid him even from teaching agriculture at night school.

Cabral returned to Lisbon, where he made connections with other students from the Portuguese colonies. This well educated and relatively affluent group was politically astute, and become active in the Portuguese democratic youth movement known as MUD Juvenil, the Movement for Peace. In 1952, at the age of 28, Cabral traveled back to Guinea-Bissau, under contract with the Agricultural and Forestry Services of Portuguese Guinea. His driving passion was not limited to the betterment of agriculture, however; he was committed to raising the political and social awareness of the Guinean people. He

²² http://www.vidaslusofonas.pt/amilcar_cabral_2.htm

²³ Ibid.

made extensive contacts in his official work capacity with many rural workers, while carrying out his political activities in parallel to his professional work.

The Portuguese then transferred Cabral to Angola, where he came into frequent contact with the founders of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), in time becoming a member of that group. On one of his visits to Guinea-Bissau, he used his new political knowledge and exposure to join with several others to form a new political party: the African Party for the Independence and Union of Guinea and Cape Verde (known by its Portuguese acronym PAIGC). Due to its liberation agenda, it remained for its first four years an underground organization.

Cabral's activism took new intensity in November 1957, when he attended a meeting in Paris to discuss and plan the struggle against Portuguese colonialism. Through networking with others fighting Portuguese colonialism, including meetings in Accra, Luanda, London, and Conakry, he gathered momentum. His approach however was consistently to seek a negotiated settlement with the Portuguese authorities, and to avoid unnecessary violence.

Between 1960 and 1962, the PAIGC operated out of the Republic of Guinea, and in time Cabral became convinced that the Portuguese would only respond to force. He therefore became the leader of PAIGC's armed insurrection. The PAIGC was deeply divided by ethnicity and class, however. When the PAIGC was formed, the top echelon was made up of Cape Verdeans, with the rank and file from Guinea-Bissau. Cabral, although born in Guinea-Bissau, was considered a Cape Verdean, due to his many years of residence there. By 1973, when Cabral's uprising was nearing victory, the PAIGC's political leaders were still Cape Verdeans, causing great resentment among those from Guinea-Bissau. This tension within the party is largely believed to have been the cause of Cabral's assassination on January 20, 1973. Cabral's brother-in-law, Luis, assumed control, ultimately becoming independent Guinea-Bissau's first head of state.

The Portuguese Army derived no benefits in Cabral's assassination, in fact the guerrilla insurrection intensified. Finally, in September 24, 1973, in the forests of Madina do Boé, the PAIGC unilaterally declared the independence of Guinea-Bissau. This independence was formally recognized by a vote of the UN General Assembly the following month. After a socialist military coup in Portugal in 1974, Portugal also formally joined in this recognition.

While Guinea-Bissau was now a formal nation, it lacked solidarity, and there was no leader able to generate this. In Nov. 1980, three years after Goulet's visit, a military coup deposed Luis Cabral, replacing him with João Bernardo Vieira. President Vieira maintained an oppressive grasp on power for 19 years, in a period noted for its widespread corruption, exploitation by the elites, and unrelieved poverty for the masses. In May 1999, Vieira was forced from office by an uprising, and in 2000 the people of Guinea-Bissau elected as president a former teacher and popular leader of the independence movement, Kumba Yalá. After a short but repressive rule, Yala was overthrown in another military coup in 2003. In 2005, former president Vieira returned from six years of exile in Portugal and won the presidency in the July 2005 elections. Guinea-Bissau's liberation from colonial oppression only led to oppression by a ruling African elite – certainly not the bright future envisioned by Goulet thirty years previously.

Solidarity had been important to Cabral, whose vision as leader of a guerrilla movement had been the establishment of a unified nation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. He believed that the requisite solidarity could be formed through the collaboration of the two peoples in their liberation struggle from their common oppressor. Luis Cabral shared this vision, but that vision died when Vieira overthrew him,. The PAIGC, which Amilcar Cabral had founded, was irremediably divided.

Denis Goulet's case study of Guinea-Bissau thirty years ago offers a moment of great promise that failed to materialize, which may be indicative of the enormity of the leadership challenge of transforming an oppressed population into active, effective agents

of their own development. The tragic unraveling of this potential liberation of the exploited and impoverished populace of Guinea-Bissau can be compared to the unexpected success in the rebuilding and flourishing of Uganda, although the seeds of a new oppression have sprung to life in that country too.

- Southern Sudan

In a visit to Juba, Sudan in July of 2007, I was astounded at the rapid growth of this unofficial capital of an unofficial nation. My last visit had been 25 years earlier, and the town had grown ten times larger. Despite the bustle, there were many indications of the severity of the two decades of civil war. There were also numerous large billboard style signs commemorating the founding father of Southern Sudan, Dr. John Garang de Mabior, consistently referred to as “the African warrior”. I could only wonder whether this set of qualifications and this role model – the heroic and successful warrior of a modern African civil war – were appropriate to building the peace in Southern Sudan.

Southern Sudan of today – effectively a nation awaiting birth – bears some similarities to Guinea-Bissau in 1974. While the official referendum on the secession and independence of Southern Sudan will not place until 2011, there is little doubt that the overwhelming majority of the population of Southern Sudan will vote to secede. The government of Southern Sudan already enjoys a significant degree of autonomy arising out of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed with the national government in Khartoum, and is already at work creating the laws and institutions that the new independent state will need.²⁴

Both Guinea-Bissau and Southern Sudan have their “Big Man” legacies. John Garang and Amilcar Cabral both were successful military leaders with enormous charisma, and both died before seeing the fruits of their labor.²⁵

²⁴ The Comprehensive Peace Agreement is a collection of agreements agreed to December 31, 2004 and signed, in a formal ceremony, on January 9, 2005. For complete details of these constituent agreements, see the US Institute of Peace website at http://www.usip.org/library/pa/sudan/pa_sudan.html

²⁵ The death of Dr. John Garang on August 1, 2005 in a helicopter crash occurred three weeks after he was sworn in Sudan’s First Vice President and eight days before he was due to form a new interim government with the ruling party.

John Garang was born in 1945, and was a member of the agro-pastoral Dinka group of tribes, which together constitute the largest ethnic group in the south of Sudan. Unlike the lighter-skinned Arab Sudanese of the north, the Dinka are dark Nilotic people who inhabit the wetlands and swamps of the Nile basin, in the Jonglei, southern Kordufan, and Upper Nile regions. While mostly animist, Garang's family was Christian. Unlike most of his fellow Dinkas, John Garang was of the elite; he widely traveled, and carried out undergraduate studies at Grinnell College in Iowa. He returned to Africa to continue studies at the University of Dar es Salaam, but abandoned these to join in an uprising in the south of Sudan. That uprising ended in 1972 with the Addis Ababa agreement, under the terms of which he and many of his fellow rebels were incorporated into the Sudanese national military. He remained with the Sudanese military for eleven years, rising to the rank of colonel, after taking the Infantry Officers' Advanced Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, in the USA. His attentions were not exclusively focused on military matters, however, as he was allowed a break of four years from his military obligations to complete a master's degree in agricultural economics and a Ph.D. in economics at Iowa State University.

In 1983, Garang was sent by his superiors to the southern town of Bor, with instructions to resolve a dispute involving southern soldiers who were resising orders to be posted to the north. Garang however had different intentions, as he was already immersed with fellow officers in a conspiracy which ultimately led to Garang's role in orchestrating the defection of over 3,000 soldiers to a safe haven in Ethiopia, where he formed the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M). This new movement advocated for autonomy from the imposed Islamic and military rule of Khartoum – a popular position in the south that quickly attracted many more recruits to Garang's movement. With Garang's intervention, the Second Sudanese Civil War had begun, and by the time it would end in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement 20 years later, more than one and half million people would have died.

Anyone would intuitively question whether the qualifications of a successful bush commander in a harsh, prolonged, and often brutal civil war were appropriate to the skills required for a founding leader of a new democracy. Garang's friend and colleague from days together at Dar es Salaam, Yoweri Museveni of neighboring Uganda, seemed to have managed the transition well, although historically Museveni is the exception, not the rule. Garang had no aptitude to be a democrat; as Jill Lusk (who interviewed him on several occasions notes): "John Garang did not tolerate dissent and anyone who disagreed with him was either imprisoned or killed."²⁶ He also had a dubious legacy from his years in the bush; both he and his Sudan Peoples Liberation Army are believed to have committed numerous and severe atrocities over the years of the insurrection.²⁷

Following Garang's death, leadership in the south (and the First Vice Presidency of the nation) passed to Garang's compatriot during the long civil war, Lt. General Salva Kiir Mayardit. Kiir, also a Dinka, most recently had been serving under Garang as the commander of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Unlike Garang, who favored a federal system with extensive autonomy for the south but not independence, Kiir has a long record of favoring complete secession.

It is much too early to know whether Southern Sudan's new "Big Man" will succeed in his new leadership role; he has scant political experience, yet he is popular in the south, and his abilities in dispute resolution, cool-headed thinking, and his embrace of dialogue have impressed many analysts and diplomats:

The man is no slouch intellectually, and he is a leader. He's his own man, a successful man, a well-liked man in the movement, he's got a broad following,

²⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2134220.stm>

²⁷ For example, in 1991 the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) split into two factions, one led by Garang. The other faction accused Garang of holding over 40 political prisoners, forcibly recruiting child soldiers, and of ruling the SPLA with unyielding authoritarianism. Human Rights Watch agreed with the substance of most of these allegations, noting that several thousand refugee children were abducted from a camp in northern Kenya to serve on Garang's front line. Fighting arising out of the split in the SPLA also led to the death of at least 5,000 civilians in the Bor-Kongor area, and the displacement of around 200,000 civilians, whose cattle were stolen and villages destroyed. As noted by Human Rights Watch: "In the villages of Pagerau and Adermuoth and the cattle camp of Wun Rit on January 21-22 alone, 189 civilians were killed, including leprosy patients, 20 to 30 women and children were abducted, and 4,000 cattle were stolen. The immediate consequence was widespread hunger throughout the area." See <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/WR93/Afw-10.htm>

he's got a different set of experiences . . . In spite of the fact that he's a military man, he's also got a reputation for being collegial in the way he does business. We all know that wasn't always Dr. John's (Garang's) trait.²⁸

The Ethical Leadership Scorecard

The evaluation of leadership raises challenges. Ought we to evaluate the character qualities and virtues of the leader, or the results that he or she achieved. The former requires close scrutiny of consistent behavior over an extended period to determine if these attributes were integrated into a virtuous and holistic character, while the latter begs the question of when the results should be assessed, and what standards should be applied. Some leaders generate radical reforms that may not be sustainable, while the influence of others may transform societies only over an extended time in subtle but ultimately profound ways.

The evaluation of a leader's virtuous (or vicious) character does allow one to avoid the trap of judging the goals achieved without due reflection on the means that the leader used. One needs to think no further than Idi Amin Dada or Robert Mugabe to realize that a leader's charisma, coupled with an ability to offer a persuasive and desirable vision of an alternative future, may mask many character flaws that would be evident through an examination of that leader's choice of means to achieve his or her goals. Those means can entail ethically impermissible measures, such as the forced recruitment and callous use of child soldiers, the use of extreme brutality and intimidation, the "strategic" sacrifice of innocent noncombatants, the targeted assassinations of opponents, or other grievous violations of human rights and dignity. While the leader who wins power may seek to rewrite the history of his or her ascent to that goal, the damage to the many victims cannot be undone.

The three African leaders profiled in this paper raise many of these evaluative quandaries. Two died before achieving their stated goals, so their leadership might best be evaluated at the time when their power had reached its greatest influence, while the

²⁸ Quote from Roger Winter, the U.S. special representative to Sudan. See http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?page=imprimable&id_article=11088

third continues in power to this day, having achieved remarkable results, yet now eroding those accomplishments by character flaws that may ultimately doom him to a historical place among Africa’s less successful leaders.

First, a brief assessment of the character attributes of each leader is appropriate, employing the eleven combined parameters of Goulet, Steidlmeier, Bass, and Boje:

1	Appreciates the historical context
2	Able to reconcile multiple class alliances
3	Possesses and demonstrates moral and physical courage
4	Learns from mistakes
5	Possesses a moral character
6	Has a vision characterized by ethical values
7	Demonstrates moral qualities of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers collectively engage in.
8	Has charisma
9	Demonstrates inspirational motivation
10	Is committed to the intellectual stimulation of followers
11	Exercises individualized consideration of followers

Amilcar Cabral scores well in this assessment. His only significant and ultimately fatal failing was his inability to reconcile multiple class and ethnic alliances between his Cape Verdean base, and his followers from Guinea-Bissau. His intellectual abilities, charisma, dedication to the welfare of his followers, and his grasp of history are all well documented, and contributed greatly to his effectiveness as a leader.

Dr. John Garang, to the contrary, scores rather poorly. While certainly courageous, charismatic, and an inspiration to many, Garang has been frequently accused of having been aloof, unable to reconcile opposing groups of followers, and removed from any individualized concern for the welfare of his followers. His willingness to adopt extreme and grossly immoral measures – the forced conscription and brutal use of child soldiers being but one example – raise profound questions as to his moral character and whether such an “ends justifies the means” example deserves to be revered and emulated by his followers.

When considering Museveni's leadership character, one must deal with the question of *when*. During the long years of his leadership in the liberation struggle, and in his early years of leadership as Uganda's head of state, Museveni exemplified remarkable courage, tenacity, charisma, vision, and an ability to learn from mistakes. His humility was evident when he requested that the World Bank provide him with a tutor in economics in his early years as president. More importantly, his ability and determination to reach across deep ethnic and cultural divides within Uganda through the creation of decentralized government everywhere, while simultaneously recognizing the dignity and value of the traditional tribal kings and reinstating them in a cultural role, were inspired and profoundly innovative.

Museveni has been the head of state since 1986, with nearly four more years remaining in his current term and no clear reason to believe that he will not deform the electoral process yet again to seek an indefinite tenure. An evaluation of his leadership in more recent times shows a significant increase in hubris, and an erosion of many of his best leadership qualities. He no longer offers Uganda a vision of a better future, nor does he appear to be open to learning from mistakes. Still charismatic and charming, his individualized concern for his followers has become progressively narrower, intolerant of any political critics. Museveni's willingness to undermine the political and judicial institutions of Uganda to frustrate political rivals and secure his personal hold on power indicates a significant and troubling decline in Museveni's moral stature, and a weakening of his solidarity with his fellow Ugandans.

Returning to results, the evaluation is similarly complex. Amilcar Cabral's leadership was unable to achieve his cherished goal of a united country combining Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, nor was his example sufficient to generate the requisite solidarity needed by Guinea-Bissau to generate a unified national identity and overcome oppression. The sad legacy of the greedy and self-serving leadership that followed him and his brother-in-law has left Guinea-Bissau still impoverished, and the majority of its citizenry still oppressed.

The results of John Garang's leadership may be too early to assess. Like Cabral, Garang's dream of a united but federal Sudan is almost certainly doomed to dissipate. Even the birth of an independent Southern Sudan ("New Sudan") hangs very much in the balance, as many question the commitment of the powers in Khartoum to honor the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The leadership abilities of Garang's successor, Salva Kiir, may have as much or more to do with the end of oppression in Southern Sudan than the leadership of John Garang.

As for Museveni, the success of his leadership remains an open question. No one can doubt his prodigious accomplishments to date, yet much of this legacy is being rapidly undone by his willingness to undermine the fragile institutions and solidarity of Uganda in order to retain power indefinitely.

Sufficiency of "Big Men" Leadership

In considering the character and results achieved by these three Big Men of Africa, the question of isolating the analysis of leadership only to the senior leader is pertinent. Does it not take leadership at multiple levels, and leadership in multiple institutions extending far beyond the political arena, for a state and a society to cohere into an environment under which authentic development can occur? If development is dependent on a cohesive, vibrant, and effective sense of cultural and social identity, has the leadership of the Big Men of Africa been adequate to this end?

Clearly in the cases of Guinea-Bissau and Southern Sudan, the Big Men failed to create the requisite solidarity upon which the well-being of each citizen would become a development priority. Yet in Uganda, where Museveni transformed the nation by the introduction of decentralized participation, it can be argued that one Big Man was the essential motivator of that newly generated national identity, upon which so much development has flourished.

Whether one or many leaders are required is the subject for further study, but one observation can be made. The people of a society must cohere first in solidarity with a

sense of a common destiny, common values, and the “common good” before they are able to act collaboratively to pursue their mutual and interdependent development needs and aspirations. Goulet certainly held this view:

Sound development ought to be grounded in traditional and indigenous values since ultimately both economic and social development are means to a larger end, the fostering of human development. Integral human development, however, rests on a secure sense of identity and cultural integrity, and on a system of meanings to which one can give enthusiastic allegiance.²⁹

Conclusion

The quest for solidarity and the generation of a national identity that expresses a genuine concern for the well-being of all citizens may seem a lofty ideal, and we have already been warned by Cabral that people do not fight and sacrifice for ideals. There is no doubt that in moral terms, the needs of security must first be satisfied – and this includes basic material resources as well as a stable peace – before the moral circle will grow in circumference to embrace a larger community, much less a nation.

The power of leadership to affirm the dignity and value of every human life, or callously to sacrifice the lives of others to pursue a “greater good”, may create the foundation for future solidarity or future factionalism. The motivation of leadership can be similarly divergent, propelled by a deep sense of compassion and identity with the plight of the impoverished, the, powerless, and the hopeless, yet it can also be driven by greed, hubris, and self-aggrandizement.

The affirming, compassionate, and visionary form of leadership opens the door of possibility, and rekindles hope. The power-hungry leadership that sacrifices the lives and destinies of the innocent and the vulnerable reinforces oppression and hopelessness. Yet the results of these two forms of leadership, due to the complexity of human nature and political intrigues, may be impossible to differentiate and attribute, at least in the short term. The brutal leader may provide security and a form of peace, and the economy may thrive. The visionary and compassionate leader may be unable to catalyze a change in

²⁹ Goulet 1995, 141

attitudes and expectations in people who have been oppressed for too long, and the vision may crumble into unrest and insecurity.

While Goulet eschews unethical leadership, oppression, and exploitation of the vulnerable, he also has little patience for overlooking basic needs in the pursuit of grand but unattainable visions of development. Leaders must therefore be pragmatic, addressing the poverty of material resources and the inequitable distribution of the benefits of development, without losing sight that the “good life” is everyone’s dream:

At any given time, humans are less than what they can become; and what they can become depends largely on what they can have. In order to become more, we must have “enough”...men and women need those goods without which they cannot gain secure sustenance, esteem and freedom. An even wider range of goods may be psychologically and socially necessary to live the “good life”.³⁰

Urgent basic needs must be satisfied in the short term so that people have the capability to express their autonomy and their agency. That is the first challenge of leadership, yet even that challenge goes unmet for many of the poor in Guinea-Bissau, among the internally displaced persons of northern Uganda, and among the impoverished refugees in Southern Sudan who now seek to resettle in their ancestral lands. The second challenge, however, cannot be deferred indefinitely, as leaders must engage with their followers in a mutual effort to forge solidarity, breaking down destructive social and ethnic cleavages, and reaching towards a common humanity. The longer-term viability of any society, and the authenticity of its development rests on the degree to which this solidarity can be generated and sustained.

³⁰ Goulet 1995, 55

Bibliography

Bass, B., Avolio, B. (1990). Manual for the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Palo Alto, California, Consulting Psychologist Press.

Boje, D. M. (2000). "Transform into Super Leaders: Transformational Leadership." from http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/teaching/338/transformational_leadership.htm

Goulet, Denis. (2006). Development Ethics at Work: Explorations 1960 – 2002. New York, Routledge.

Goulet, Denis. (1995). Development Ethics: A Guide to Theory and Practice. London, Zed Books Limited.

Goulet, Denis. (1978). Looking at Guinea-Bissau: A New Nation's Development Strategy. Washington, DC, Overseas Development Council, Occasional Paper no. 9.

Kasfir, Nelson. (2000). "'Movement' Democracy, Legitimacy and Power in Uganda," chapter in No-Party Democracy in Uganda: Myths and Realities, Mugaju, Justus and J. Oloka-Onyango, eds. Kampala, Uganda; Fountain Publishers Ltd.

Steidlmeier, B. M. B. a. P. (1998, 9/24/98). "Ethics, Character, and Authentic Transformational Leadership." 1998, from <http://cls.binghamton.edu/BassSteid.html>.