Leaders for a New Africa

Democrats, Autocrats, and Development

edited by Giovanni Carbone

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Introduction

The wind of change keeps blowing south of the Sahara. With an estimated population of 1.2 billion people, expected to keep growing steadily in the next decades and largely below the age of 15, Africa is the continent of an ever-closer future. It is true that many sub-regions are still riven by conflicts and political violence. This is the case of western Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, where insurgent and jihadi armed groups' activities increase community vulnerabilities and fuel inter-ethnic tensions. Or of the Great Lakes region, made unstable by militias interested in profiting from natural resources. Yet, social, political and economic transformations are changing the face of Africa. Today's enormous challenges are addressed by regional and continental integration as in the case of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which brings together all African countries – Eritrea is the only exception – with the aim of reducing the structural fragilities of the national economies and increasing the capacity to speak with one voice.

Against this backdrop, the rise of new leaders promises to accelerate and steer change in the continent's political scenario. All too easily associated with authoritarian and long-lasting regimes, Africa has seen a gradual strengthening of democratic processes – albeit still fragile and far from problem-free – as shown recently by elections in Nigeria and Mauritania. The opening of wider and more relevant spaces for political participation and electoral turnovers contribute to dismantle the foundations of a widespread discourse describing Africa

as a continent continuously going backwards on democracy. Grassroots pressures that triggered the collapse of Omar al-Bashir's regime in Sudan and the launch of a political transition based on a power-sharing deal between military actors and civil society organisations speak volumes about the continent's efforts to open up politics and reduce the room for personalistic and autocratic rule. While the road ahead remains a long one, substantial progress has been made.

This ISPI Report builds on these premises and focuses on leadership transitions and development prospects in Africa. The rise of new leaders, coming to power within a few months of each other in some of the most strategically relevant states in the continent, fosters expectations for a change in contexts of deep economic, political and social crisis. It also provides the opportunity to analyse the linkage between political leaderships and socio-economic development.

The volume looks at these issues from different angles. First, it addresses the topic of leadership change by arguing that African leaders – and particularly the way they reach power – do contribute to shaping their country's progress and achievements. Second, it zooms in on some of the most influential African leaders, following their personal trajectories and the path that brought them to power while reflecting on the political prospects of their government action. The picture that comes out tells of an Africa where leaders more often than not contribute to fostering broad changes.

In the opening chapter Giovanni Carbone provides a general overview of the leadership-development nexus. He investigates the historical evolution of political regimes and African leaderships looking back to the post-independence authoritarian turns in the '60s and the widespread changes that occurred in the continent during the '90s. The chapter shows how the decline of one-party military rule coincided with the launch of democratic processes, although in many cases the latter were abruptly hindered due to further autocratic regress. The distinction between democracies, authoritarian states and hegemonic

systems that defines the current African political scenario provides an essential lens to interpret Africa's steps towards electoral turnovers and democratic leadership changes. Mentioned in the chapter, ISPI African Leadership Change dataset including all power handovers since 1960 to 2018 is an innovative tool to account for the way in which leaders take office and to examine their impact on development.

The following chapters cover particular case studies of emerging (in South Africa, Angola, Ethiopia, and Democratic Republic of the Congo) and consolidated leaderships (in Rwanda), outlining the political and development challenges lying ahead for African leaders. Jonathan Fisher looks at the most prominent and iconic among the new power-holders: Abiy Ahmed Ali, who was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The author traces Abiy's "surprising" rise in Ethiopia, describing his ambitious reform plans in a political system closed in on itself and yet tremendously focused on acquiring a growing centrality at the regional and international level. Abiy's political and economic pledges to open the system and reform the polity are counterbalanced by enduring hurdles at the domestic level, where deep-rooted ethnic unrests feed instability and pose delicate challenges to the new prime minister.

Steven Friedman examines Cyril Ramaphosa's return to the forefront of South African politics. Jacob Zuma's years in office fuelled a severe political crisis in Pretoria, due to the creation of patronage networks and abuses of power that weakened the legitimacy of political institutions in a country once deemed a model of democratic achievements. Ramaphosa's public figure stood out as a symbol of struggle for good governance and against corruption. His rise to the top of the ruling ANC and the state presidency aims at restoring the proper functioning of South Africa's constitutional democracy. Time will tell if he will be up to the task.

Alex Vines analyzes João Lourenço's leadership in Angola. Having come to power following José Eduardo dos Santos's resignation after some forty years in office, Lourenço was initially

considered as a compromise candidate that would allow the former President and his family to keep wielding power for the pursuit of their pervasive economic and political interests. However, Lourenço displayed an unforeseen independence in power, working to ensure a real change in the Angolan polity by modernising the country and diversifying the fragile national economy, still highly dependent on oil exports. He also encouraged the dismantling of dos Santos-linked networks of interest and the purge of corrupted officials and businessmen close to the previous regime. In short, Lourenço fostered expectations of deeper change in Angola, although the tightening of his hold on power risks reproducing the same power imbalances of the dos Santos era.

Filip Reyntjens and Kris Berwouts put the spotlight on Félix Tshisekedi's historical (yet contentious) election in Congo-Kinshasa, which almost ended Joseph Kabila's regime. Alleged fraud in the electoral process, as well as a confidential agreement between Tshisekedi and the former head of state – meant to preserve Kabila's interests – raise questions on whether real prospects for change do exist in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The authors stress the need for the newly-elected Congolese leader to reconstruct the grounds of legitimacy and restore the basic state functions throughout the country as a precondition for development, thus shedding light on the danger of a renewal of the kleptocratic practices at the roots of the post-colonial state in Congo.

The last chapter focuses on Paul Kagame, probably the most controversial leader in the continental landscape, who polarises international public opinion. Fred Golooba-Mutebi investigates Kagame's "assertive leadership", tracing Rwanda's breakthrough on the path to sustainable growth and development. The author points out that, though far from being a conventional or mature democracy, Rwandan politics is actually based on participation and consensus-building more than is normally conceded. The combination of such decision-making processes with strong leadership and a steady sense of urgency lie at the heart of Rwanda's development model.

Looking at the connections between democratic leadership and development, evidence shows that democratically-elected leaders have the capacity to better address the socio-economic challenges in their countries. Political incentives encourage them to adopt policies and initiatives that foster development performances, as much as the political systems are competitive and open to democratic leadership handovers. The focus on key African leaders in this Report helps the reader understand if and to what extent they can be drivers of change in their countries and beyond. As Ramaphosa put it "there are times when leadership needs to take a bold move forward". Across much of Africa, this is one of those times.

Paolo Magri
ISPI Executive Vice President and Director

1. African Leaders. A Changing Landscape and Its Implications

Giovanni Carbone

Africa's Evolving Leadership Scenario

Leaders and leadership turnovers have been in the spotlight more than ever over the last few years in Africa. Across the region, some longstanding rulers were unexpectedly ousted. Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and the Gambia's Yahya Jammeh, for example, were rather abruptly replaced in 2017 – if in very different ways – as had been Burkina Faso's Blaise Compaoré earlier and Sudan's Omar al-Bashir much more recently. The four had been in office for an average of some thirty years each. For the large majority of Zimbabweans, Gambians, Burkinabè and Sudanese, this was the first time they saw someone new at the top.

A number of other countries joined in. The departure of Mauritania's Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, also in 2019, was the result of the former coup-maker's surprising decision to retire at the end of his second and last constitutionally-allowed mandate. Joseph Kabila similarly abode by presidential term limits in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, if only reluctantly and after a three-year delay. Both in Mauritania and in the Congo outgoing leaders made sure they would be succeeded by palatable figures. Nigerians, meanwhile, renewed their mandate to Muhammadu Buhari, who had made history in 2015 as the

country's first president elected from the ranks of an opposition party.

The power handovers that drew the most attention and anticipation, however, were those that brought new faces at the helm in Ethiopia, Angola and South Africa. The largely unforeseen rise of Abiy Ahmed led to the swift adoption of wide-ranging initiatives, sending shockwaves both within Ethiopia and across the Horn. National and regional actors are still struggling to find new equilibria in an unfolding scenario. Compared to Ethiopia, the challenges faced by new leaders in Luanda and Pretoria may appear somewhat less complex, and certainly more domestically-oriented. João Lourenço followed in the footsteps of José Eduardo dos Santos in Angola, as the latter resolved to pass on power after a hefty thirty-eight years in office. The new President quickly proved far more autonomous and forceful than many had anticipated as he tried to dismantle the personal and patrimonial networks of the dos Santos regime and to reinvigorate the economy. In South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa was entrusted with somewhat similar goals as he successfully manoeuvred from within the ANC to oust Jacob Zuma from the presidency and to unravel his contentious power system.

At the head of the continent's most advanced economy, Ramaphosa well exemplifies how the rise of some new leaders galvanised expectations in Africa and beyond. An influential global magazine devoted its cover to him as "South Africa's best bet", and went on to task the new President with "stopping the rot" and even "saving the nation"[1]. Another major outlet broadened the spotlight to include "the five leaders who could transform the region" (Ramaphosa himself, but also the aforesaid Lourenço, Abiy, Buhari as well as Félix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo)[2].

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[1] "To stop the rot in South Africa, back Cyril Ramaphosa", *The Economist*, 25 April 2019.

[2] J. Devermont and J. Temin, "Africa's democratic moment? The five leaders who could transform the region", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 98, no. 4, July/August 2019, pp. 131-143.

The current emphasis on the new wave of sub-Saharan rulers – and the great hopes they generated – is reminiscent of at least two past periods the region went through. One is the independence era, between the late 1950s and the early 1960s. At that time, it was the founding fathers of newly-sovereign African states who embodied the promise of change and rapid social and economic progress. From Sekou Touré (Guinea) to Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), from Modibo Keïta (Mali) to Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) and many others, the new heads of African polities were almost as revered as monarchs – indeed, a number of them notoriously went on to adopt "President-for-life" titles. While the primary concern of this first generation of leaders was arguably more political than economic – with a central focus on establishing new states and forging new nations – their achievements in terms of development were on the whole largely disappointing. By the late-1990s, a second group of "new leaders" – this time heading a much more limited number of countries – were celebrated by some international observers as charismatic and innovative figures that, following the violent overthrow of governments by the guerrilla movements they led, appeared to be re-shaping the development trajectories of Uganda (Yoweri Museveni), Ethiopia (Meles Zenawi), Eritrea (Isaias Afwerki), Rwanda (Paul Kagame) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Laurent-Désiré Kabila)[3]. A majority of them are still in office today (Museveni, Isaias and Kagame), while the remainder were likely only prevented to stay on by death, whether the result of murder (Kabila) or of natural causes (Meles). In three cases out of five – Uganda, but more recently especially Ethiopia and Rwanda – development outcomes have indeed been quite impressive. While the Kigali and Addis Ababa regimes are at times presented as models of African-style "developmental states", some observers warn that "both records are

[3] D. Connell, Dan and F. Smyth, "Africa's new bloc", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 2, 1998, pp. 95-106; M. Ottaway, *Africa's new leaders. Democracy or state reconstruction?*, Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999.

exceedingly dependent on the leaderships of single men, and one wonders what happens after they have been, inevitably, replaced. Indeed, Ethiopia now faces this question, directly"[4]. Ultimately, one may add, rulers emerging from guerrilla insurgencies have been a rarity rather than standard practice in Africa. In spite of the many armed conflicts that have historically plagued the region, their number does not extend much beyond the few abovementioned examples. The prevailing modes of leadership change south of the Sahara have taken an entirely different route.

For the better part of three decades after independence – in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s – African countries were dominated by one-party and military rulers. The pluralistic arrangements originally adopted in many new states as European colonial authorities handed over power to African elites were soon dismantled by leaders who hastened to make opposition parties illegal or were themselves ousted by coups d'état. By the 1990s, domestic and international pressures for political change were felt across the region, as country after country embarked upon introducing elections and opening politics, at least formally, to opposition parties. A blunt divide thus separates the first half of Africa's sixty years of independence (1960s-1980s), during which multiparty experiences were rendered marginal, from the second half (1990s-2010s), when they became the norm. The region as a whole shifted from rule by unelected leaders (as a matter of fact, many of them were elected unopposed under single-party voting) to elected leaders who typically reached office and/or where confirmed in office via multiparty contests. Beyond the surface, however, wildly diverse degrees of "democracy" separated the relatively open and lively politics of countries such as Ghana, Senegal or even Kenya, from hegemonic systems that *de facto* remain under the overwhelming and blatant dominance of the same political elite in places such as

[4] N. van de Walle, "Conclusion: democracy fatigue and ghost of modernization theory", in T. Hagmann and F. Reyntjens, *Aid and authoritarianism in Africa: development without democracy*, London, Zed Books, 2016, p. 174.

Congo-Brazzaville, Chad or Gabon. Indeed, as it was recently pointed out: "the modal African country is not democratic so much as an electoral autocracy in which multi-party elections are regularly scheduled and the regime adopts the language and rituals of democracy, but remains profoundly authoritarian, with unaccountable executive branches of government, politicised judicial systems and various human rights abuses"[5].

Leaders and Development

Surviving in office for as long as possible is often thought to be the primary concern of political leaders. The latter's true success, however, arguably lies not so much in the ability to stay on, but rather in their ability to guide a country and its people towards progress and development. Indeed, with the exception of national independence or international war, a country's social and economic advancement is usually the main criterion a political leader is assessed against. This implies the common if often overlooked assumption that leadership does matter for development; that, while it certainly has to contend with a wide array of other factors, leadership can make a difference, for good or for bad.

The issue has been little delved into by researchers[6]. A rare and early investigation brought into the open the aforementioned conjecture by asking whether "*new* leaders make a difference" in terms of "policy priorities"[7]:

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[5] Ibid., p. 165.

[6] For some recent exceptions, see B. Jones and B. Olken, "Do leaders matter? National leadership and growth since World War II", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 120, no. 3, 2005, pp. 835-864; D. Brady and M. Spence, "Leadership and Politics: A Perspective from the Commission on Growth and Development", in D. Brady and M. Spence (eds.), *Leadership and Growth*, World Bank Publications, Washington DC, 2010; W. Easterly and S. Pennings, *Shrinking dictators: assessing the growth contribution of individual national leaders*, mimeo, October 2018; C. Berry and A. Fowler, *Leadership or luck? Randomization inference for leader effects*, mimeo, April 2018.

[7] V. Bunce, *Do new leaders make a difference? Executive succession and public policy under*

> leadership succession is the most visible and salient aspect of the political process … whether through election or *coup d'état*, [it] is considered important not only because it concerns power and the powerful but also because of its implications for change. New leaders may mean new policies … or a change in government performance […] Thus […] the central importance of leadership succession is not the process itself, but rather its expected impact[8].

Bunce's empirical findings confirmed that – regardless of the politico-institutional gulf separating Western democracies from socialist states – in both sets of countries "leadership change mean[t] policy change"[9]. Contrary to the claim that chief executives were largely inconsequential, "dispensable actors"[10], they turned out to be key players shaping policy processes, notably in terms of a government's budgetary priorities[11].

Thirty years later, Brady and Spence (2010b) adopted a similar perspective, if with a more specific focus on economic development, pointing at what high-growth stories across world regions teach us:

> leadership plays a role in generating sustained growth … There is no one style of leadership […] nor is leadership the only input […] [Yet] practitioners and observers and a wide range of scholars are right in believing that, at least at times, leadership makes a difference in terms of altering the trajectory of a developing economy […] The obvious first stage is where the leadership chooses an economic model or strategy […] The second stage […] concerns how leaders adjust strategies and choices to changing circumstances[12].

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capitalism and socialism, Princeton, Princeton, University Press, 1981, p. 44.

[8] V. Bunce, "Changing leaders and changing policies. The impact of elite succession on budgetary priorities in democratic countries", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1980, p. 373.

[9] Ibid., p. 384.

[10] F. Greenstein, *Personality and Politics*, Markham Publishing Company, Chicago, 1969, p. 47.

[11] V. Bunce, (1980), p. 391.

[12] D. Brady and M. Spence, (eds.), *Leadership and Growth*…, cit., pp. 2-5.

While leaders are not unconstrained, it is thus argued, they do have significant room for shaping a country's development path and progress. Yet not all of them succeed. What is it, then, that explains which leaders exploit the leverage they potentially hold – and strive for their nation's advance – as opposed to adopting behaviours and measures that are detrimental to that very goal?

The key political and institutional changes observed across Africa – as briefly summed up in the previous section – offer good ground for a comparative scrutiny and understanding of the broader implications of leadership dynamics. On the one hand, the elected leaders of the current multiparty era can be contrasted with their predecessors during the one-party/military epoch to examine which of the two groups was associated with better development achievements, if any. On the other hand, the progress and performances attained by today's democratically-elected rulers can be set against those of their current authoritarian peers – also now typically elected – to learn whether contemporary Africa is a place for reaping the fruits of a democratic dividend or, on the contrary, of an authoritarian advantage.

Towards a Comprehensive Analysis

To fully account for the development impact of sub-Saharan leaders, an entirely new collection of data, called the Africa Leadership Change (ALC) dataset, was recently built[13]. For all countries on the continent from 1960 – or subsequent year of independence – to 2018, the dataset includes all handovers of the top political office. This most typically implies a presidential turnover, but at times, or for specific countries, it may take the form of a power transfer involving prime ministers, monarchs

[13] G. Carbone and A. Pellegata, *Political leadership in Africa. Leaders and development South of the Sahara,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020 (forthcoming). The ALC dataset and related Codebook can be freely downloaded from the ISPI website at https://www.ispionline.it/en/africa-leadership-change-project, where a number of interactive visualisation tools are also available.

or heads of military juntas. The ALC data comprehensively account for the way leaders take office and how they leave it (e.g. via a popular vote or through a *coup d'état* or an armed guerrilla, handpicked by their predecessors or defeated by the opposition, etc.), how much time they spend in power, the changing nature of their power base and legitimacy during their stay (for example, when elections are introduced by a coup-maker), as well as several other aspects of their rule.

The overall picture that emerges from the ALC project shows how deeply leadership dynamics have transformed across the region between the pre- and post-1990 periods. Duration in office, for a start, declined significantly. Eighty per cent of Africa's "twentennials" – i.e. the 36 leaders who remained in power for two decades or more – reached office in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s; only a minority did so after that. Meanwhile, coups d'état have become rarer and rarer (although removals such as Compaoré's and al-Bashir's remind us that military interventions – in these specific cases ignited by popular protests – are still an option, particularly with presidents who overstay in office), whereas holding elections with multiple parties has now turned into an established practice with few exceptions. It is true that a number of African power-holders – from Guinea's late Lansana Conté to Chad's Idriss Déby, from Uganda's Museveni to Djibouti's Ismaïl Guelleh, and others – managed to alter or by-pass presidential term limits so that they could remain in office longer than allowed by existing norms. But many others were unsuccessful in their attempts – from Frederick Chiluba in Zambia to Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria – or they desisted for a variety of reasons, either way helping consolidate somewhat constitutional rule. The current scenario, therefore, increasingly consists of shorter average stays in office, as pointed out, and much more frequent power handovers, in the form of both electoral "successions" (i.e. where the incoming and outgoing power-holders belong to the same political force) as well as electoral "alternations" (i.e. where an opposition leader wins office, bringing about a government turnover).

What Kind of Rulers?

Political reforms thus ushered in a post-1990 landscape that requires updating our understanding of African power-holders and leadership trends. A highly influential study of leaders across the continent, for example, had framed them as "personal rulers"[14]. While the authors did draw some distinctions among national strongmen – and famously labelled them "princes", "prophets", "autocrats" or "tyrants" – they stressed the prevalence of an underlying, common leadership style from Malawi to Liberia, from Côte d'Ivoire to Swaziland and beyond. The latter revolved around the centrality of authoritarian and neopatrimonial practices as political survival strategies, to the detriment of formal political processes, rule of law and open politics. After independence, public institutions had quickly weakened in most sub-Saharan polities and now hardly offered alternative centres of power to counter the individual at the top.

While there is certainly no shortage of corruption and autocratic rule in contemporary Africa, the analytical value of Jackson and Rosberg's framework has gradually declined. The constitutional changes that were undertaken since the latter decade of the twentieth century set the background for the growing relevance of institutions in shaping African politics[15].

The changing leadership trends can be illustrated with help from a new typology based on the three criteria laid out in Figure 1, namely: duration in office, openness to multipartism, and degree of democracy[16]. First, the typology sets apart the

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[14] R.H. Jackson and C.G. Rosberg, *Personal rule in black Africa. Prince, autocrat, prophet, tyrant*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1982; R.H. Jackson and C.G. Rosberg, "Personal rule: theory and practice in Africa", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1984, pp. 421-442.

[15] D. Posner and D. Young, "The institutionalization of political power in Africa", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2007, pp. 126-140; D. Posner and D. Young, "Term limits: leadership, political competition and the transfer of power", in N. Cheeseman, (ed.), *Institutions and democracy in Africa. How the rules of the game shape political developments*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 260-277.

[16] G. Carbone and A. Pellegata (2020) (forthcoming).

numerous leaders who only held sway in an African capital for a very short spell – that is, less than one year – whether because they were abruptly or even violently ousted or because from the very beginning they were simply meant to bridge over a transition period. Colonel Christophe Soglo's three-month tenure in Benin (1963-1964) or Kgalema Motlanthe's eight-month spell in South Africa (2008-2009), for example, fall in this category. Overall, there were some 92 such interim office-holders, or "transients", out of the 360 leaders who served in office between 1960 and 2018. They represent a hefty 25.5% of all rulers, but only governed for a combined 28 years, or 1% of all country-years for the entire period (see Table 1). About one third of transients remained in power for no longer than three months. Some did occasionally play important functions – for instance, by favouring regime transitions or peace deals – but, one may argue, a few months hardly offered them the opportunity to shape their country's social and economic progress (or failure) in a more direct way.

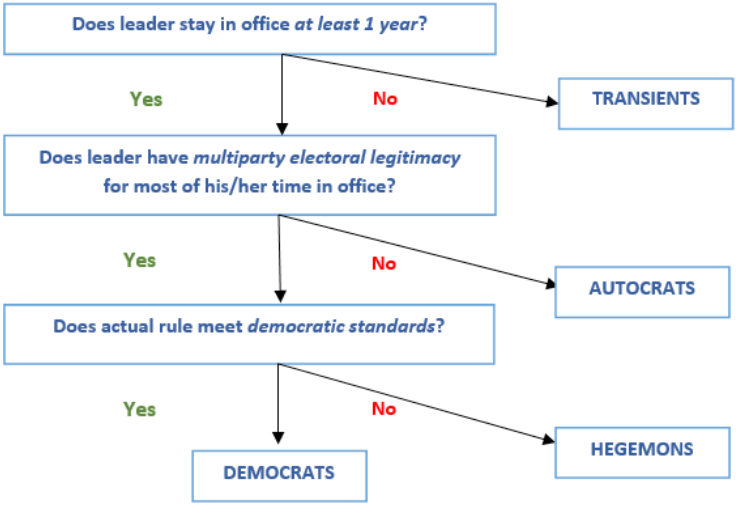
As a second criteria, leaders who were elected via multiparty voting are separated from those who were not (some who were formally entrusted with popular mandates are still deemed 'unelected' when they run unopposed). The latter group are labelled "autocrats". Because many African leaders started off as elected presidents or prime ministers only to subsequently eliminate open elections (especially in the 1960s), while a number of others initially gained office as unelected rulers, but went on to allow multiparty competition (especially since the 1990s), each of them is categorised as elected or unelected depending on whether or not he or she had a multiparty electoral mandate for the better part of his/her stay in office. The 119 autocrats thus identified represent by far the largest of our groups. Moreover, with an average eleven years in office, they ruled independent African countries for virtually half of all country-years (i.e. 1,276 out of 2,577). All but one of the post-independence 'personal rulers' that Jackson and Rosberg (1982) scrutinised in their work fall in this category, including

the likes of Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire), Ahmadou Ahidjo (Cameroon), Hastings Banda (Malawi), Ahmed Sékou Touré (Guinea), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) and Idi Amin Dada (Uganda).

Finally, we divide elected leaders depending on whether or not minimal standards for open and pluralist politics were met for the better part of their tenure (i.e. as indicated by a Polity 2 country score averaging 6 or more during their entire stay)[17]. Leaders satisfying this last criterion are labelled "democrats" – they are 84 and account for 23.4% of all leaders (for example Yayi Boni in Benin, John Kufuor in Ghana or Mwai Kibaki in Kenya) – while those stopping short of it are deemed "hegemons", a group comprising 65, or 18.1% of all rulers (Joaquim Chissano, Armando Guebuza and Filipe Nyusi of Mozambique all fall into this group, as do Benjamin Mkapa, Jakaya Kikwete and John Magufuli of Tanzania). While hegemons are less numerous, however, they are prevalent when we turn to average stays in office (almost twelve years against democrats' six) and overall number of years they ruled the region (i.e. 755 country-years against democrats' 518).

[17] The Polity2 score assigned to a country for 2017 – the last year currently covered by the Polity Project – were extended to 2018. For details on the Polity2 measure of democracy see http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html.

Fig. 1.1 – Criteria for a new typology of African leaders



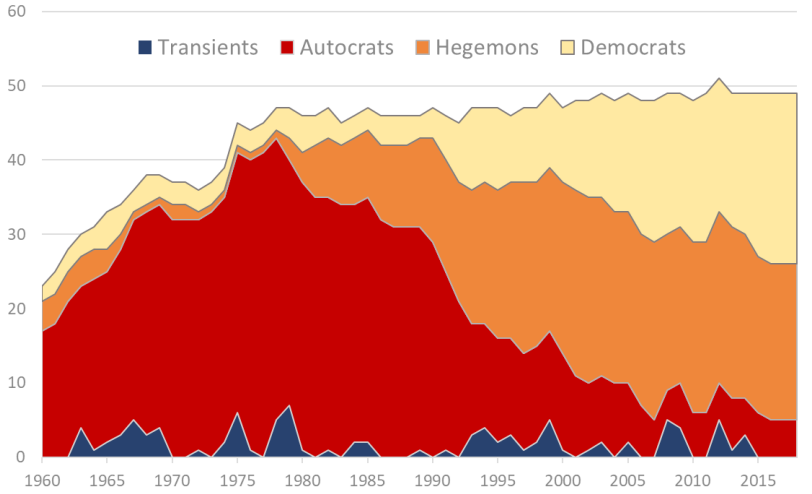
Source: G. Carbone and A. Pellegata (2020).
Note: elected leaders include those who constitutionally "inherit" an electoral mandate following resignation or death of an elected incumbent.

Tab. 1 – The distribution of African leaders across leadership types

	N of leaders		Country-years in office		Avg. years in office
	N	%	N	%	
Transients	92	25.5 %	28	1 %	0.3
Autocrats	119	33 %	1,276	49.5 %	10.7
Hegemons	65	18.1 %	755	29.4 %	11.6
Democrats	84	23.4 %	518	20.1 %	6.2
	360	*100 %*	*2,577*	*100 %*	*7.2*

Source: G. Carbone and A. Pellegata (2020).

Fig. 2 - Types of leaders in Africa, 1960-2018



Source: G. Carbone and A. Pellegata (2020).

Since the aim of this classification is to help understand Africa's evolving leadership scenario, what is most revealing is the overtime trend in the prevalence of different types of leaders. Drawing on the ALC data, Figure 2 displays the changing incidence of autocrats, hegemons, democrats and transients from 1960 to 2018[18]. The resulting picture is largely self-explaining, with the often long-serving autocrats taking the largest share of the left-hand side of the graph – peaking in 1977, when they numbered 41 in 45 then-independent states – but declining progressively afterwards. Hegemons and democrats follow a somewhat symmetrical course, as they expand their ranks, respectively, starting from the 1980s and the 1990s. The increase of hegemons begins earlier largely because they include leaders

[18] Note that in the figure the total number of leaders is at times higher than that of independent countries in the region as a result of there being years in which a single country had one or more transient leaders.

who were already in office prior to the reforms of the 1990s but eventually spent a longer time in power with an electoral mandate (for example, Paul Biya in Cameroon, Blaise Compaoré in Burkina Faso, Omar Al-Bashir in Sudan or even Joaquim Chissano in Mozambique). While the annual number of hegemons stabilises at around twenty-something from 1995 on (with a peak of 25 in 2000-2001), democrats take time to catch up but ultimately become the largest group, if only marginally, from 2015 on. Across the entire period, the presence of transient leaders remains a more regular and limited phenomenon, only marginally entering the overall picture. As of mid-2019, sub-Saharan Africa counted 23 democrats, 20 hegemons and 6 autocrats (including Sudan's Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman Burhan, who might eventually turn out a transient leader, alongside eSwatini's Mswati III, Eritrea's Isaias Afwerki, South Sudan's Salva Kiir, Somalia's Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo", and Uganda's Yoweri Museveni[19]).

Life under more democratic rulers – as opposed to life under hegemons and autocrats – differs, by definition, in terms of the extent to which liberties and rights are respected or trampled upon. But do the differences leaders are associated with also extend to a country's development prospects?

Leading for Development in Africa

When Africans began demanding political changes across the region, during the 1980s, the notion that they needed to get rid of rulers and elites who had often proved inept at improving their living conditions – and in many cases had overseen the latter's deterioration and the spread of malfeasance – was a key motive in their mobilisation. They wanted new leaders under new political arrangements as a pre-condition for resetting their

[19] Uganda is currently an electoral authoritarian regime like many others in Africa. Yet Museveni ruled for two decades in the absence of multiparty elections, only introducing them over the subsequent, shorter period of his time in office.

countries' failing quest for development. On the whole – as shown above – the political reforms they obtained did substantially alter the way African power-holders access, remain in, and ultimately leave office. New leaders thus emerged, alongside better regularised turnovers. But have contemporary Africa's elected rulers improved their countries' progress better than the previous, mostly unelected ones?

The country-year structure of the ALC data allows for an easy combination with performance indicators covering distinct development dimensions, such as economic growth, welfare measures and many others, thus favouring the use of econometric analysis for assessing the impact of different leaders – and types of leaders – on the advancement of the nations they head.

Empirical evidence is largely supportive of the notion that African elected power-holders – particularly but not only when electoral competition is democratic – are incentivised to adopt behaviours and initiatives that favour a variety of development achievements[20]. In general, elected office-holders are more successful developers than coup-makers, overstaying leaders, and unelected dictators: voting processes prove to be a plus not just on moral ground (i.e. in terms of freedom, political equality or justice), but they are also a tool towards a broader social and economic impact – particularly when popular votes are more open, narrowly contested and cyclically reiterated. Electoral successions and alternations – that is, rotation in office via elections, both when occurring in the context of ruling party continuity and when resulting from an opposition victory – are further ingredients that appear to spur social and economic performances.

When we turn specifically to the leadership types identified above, and look at their growth performances, it is not just sub-Saharan democrats but also elected hegemons who

[20] G. Carbone and A. Pellegata (2020) (forthcoming).

outperform autocrats (interim office-holders are excluded)[21]. Similarly, both democrats and hegemons appear to do somewhat better than autocrats in improving citizens' wellbeing, particularly when measured through indicators such as life expectancy increases or child mortality reductions. Finally, while elected rulers are not systematically associated with reduced corruption, both democrats and hegemons (particularly the former) are empirically linked to the strengthening and amelioration of the administrative and extractive capacities of African polities. Thus, what type of leader is at the helm – the way he or she has achieved office, how he or she maintains the position, and the modes in which he or she can be replaced – counts not only from a political survival perspective, but also from a developmental point of view.

Conclusion

Leaders remain central to contemporary African politics. But their position has changed inasmuch as they typically now operate in political settings that are significantly different from those prevailing in the past. Today, institutions have increasingly come to bear upon their actions, if imperfectly and incompletely. This in turn affects the "leader effect" on development, or on the lack thereof. Overall, the presence of electoral incentives tends to improve a leader's performance and achievements, and partly so even when a country's political regime is not truly democratic. Some three decades ago, sub-Saharan Africa adopted new mechanisms for selecting and replacing its leaders. It now appears that these very leaders are increasingly contributing to shaping new trajectories for Africa.

[21] Ibid.

2. A Shining Example for the Horn? Abiy Ahmed's Surprising Leadership in Ethiopia

Jonathan Fisher

In February 2018, in the midst of ongoing political turmoil and the second declaration of a state of emergency in as many years, few could have predicted the radical political change of direction Ethiopia would experience within a matter of weeks and, seemingly, courtesy of just one man. The election in March 2018 of Abiy Ahmed as Chairman of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and consequently the country's Prime Minister[1] heralded – to the surprise of many – the beginning of a major shift in leadership style and approach in one of Africa's most authoritarian polities.

Within his first 100 days Abiy[2] had released and offered amnesty to thousands of political prisoners, liberalised harsh press and freedom of speech controls, legalised various once-criminalised opposition groups, placed his own stamp on Ethiopia's sprawling and fearsome military-security complex, committed the country to genuine multi-party democracy and, perhaps most impressive of all, ended 18 years of latent conflict with neighbouring Eritrea. As many observers had expected, Abiy,

[1] Abiy was elected chairman of the EPRDF on 27 March 2018, elected as Prime Minister of Ethiopia by the House of Representatives on 2 April 2018 and sworn in on the same day.

[2] By convention, Ethiopians are known by a single, personal name, while also possessing a separate patronymic and, in most cases, an avonymic.

who at 42 is the continent's youngest leader, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in late 2019. The first aim of this chapter is to examine and account for this extraordinary rise. How could someone like Abiy emerge as the leader of a political system such as Ethiopia's, and what are the prospects for his reform agenda?

In that regard, a degree of analytical caution and tempered optimism is advised. Abiy has unleashed and benefited from forces beyond his control. His ascendancy resulted from centrifugal ethno-political forces tearing apart the country and the ruling coalition, forces which Abiy's actions have done little to alleviate and a fair amount to exacerbate. Moreover, his leadership style has been – perhaps by necessity – unashamedly personalised, with major policy decisions and *volte-faces* decided upon with little reference to ruling party structures. This means that not only are critical Abiy-era successes – notably peace with Eritrea – built on somewhat shaky ground but also that popular expectations of radical change rest very firmly on his shoulders alone. As the general election of 2020 approaches, Ethiopians are likely to begin reflecting more critically on how far their leader has delivered on his promises.

More broadly, Abiy remains something of an unknown quantity. Many of the continent's other "new leaders", such as Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa or João Lourenço of Angola, had long served as party leaders or senior Cabinet ministers before their eventual elevation to the presidency. By contrast, Abiy was a relative newcomer until shortly before becoming Prime Minister. A technocrat within the then Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO, one of the four members of the EPRDF coalition), he was appointed Deputy President of the Oromia region in October 2016 and became eligible for the premiership only five weeks before his election, after being selected as OPDO Chairman in February 2018. In addition, what is known about his professional history sits somewhat incongruously alongside his statements and actions as Prime Minister, particularly in relation to freedom of expression. An

intelligence officer by training, Abiy was co-founder and eventually acting Director of Ethiopia's Information Network and Security Agency during a period when state control over online space and debate was at its most acute and uncompromising.

The second aim of this chapter is therefore to situate Abiy and his leadership more clearly within the Ethiopian political context. Abiy is not someone who "came from nowhere"; he owes his position to groups within as well as outside the ruling coalition. Understanding his rise and considering what the future holds for Ethiopia under his premiership require critical reflection on what has shaped his leadership, as well as the countervailing forces that it must contend with.

Ethiopia's Gathering Storm: Ethnic Federalism and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi

Abiy's election as EPRDF Chairman occurred at a time of paralysis and political crisis for Ethiopia's ruling coalition. The authoritarian regime was in its third year of facing down major protests, and was deeply divided over how best to tackle this unprecedented threat to its hold on power. Some voices within the coalition argued for political reform, democratisation and compromise, while others pressed for a continuation and strengthening of the hard-line crackdowns which had been the cornerstone of EPRDF public security practice since the mid-2000s. In October 2016 Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn declared a state of emergency, and by February 2018 hundreds had lost their lives in brutal clashes between the security forces and protesters. Hailemariam, by his own admission a leader with little room for manoeuvre[3], failed to agree a *modus vivendi* among the warring factions within the EPRDF and was left with little option but to tender his resignation, which he did on 15 February. "I believed that there had to be a new person

[3] G. Mills, "Ethiopia's Need for "Deep Renewal", *Daily Maverick*, 14 August 2018, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

with a dominant force who could save the country", reflected the former Prime Minister six months later[4]. That person, ultimately, would be Abiy Ahmed.

Abiy's emergence owed much to two key interlinked elements of the polity built by the EPRDF since coming to power in May 1991. The first was ethnic federalism. The EPRDF was born in 1988 as a somewhat artificial union of three rebel movements, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the OPDO and what would eventually become the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM). The armed coalition was assembled and dominated by the TPLF, a self-styled liberation movement founded in 1975 in Tigray, Ethiopia's most northerly region, and led since 1989 by the shrewd political operator and intellectual Meles Zenawi. The TPLF, and the wider EPRDF, identified ethno-political chauvinism as the central injustice of the socialist *Derg* regime – in power since 1974 – and its imperial predecessors. Both, they argued, had been dominated by members of Ethiopia's Amharic ethnic group and had constructed and reinforced a socio-political and economic system which embedded Amharic privilege and systematically discriminated against Ethiopia's many other nations and peoples[5]. The latter included Tigrayans – whose region was among the poorest in 1970s Ethiopia – but also Oromos, the largest ethnic group in the country and the ethnicity of around one in every three Ethiopians. In 2018 Abiy Ahmed became the first Oromo leader of Ethiopia in modern times.

After wresting control of Tigray from the *Derg* army in 1988, the TPLF helped to found the OPDO and the future ANDM from prisoners of war and offshoots of previously vanquished rebel groups. This was an effort to assemble a future Ethiopian government with a more credible claim to represent the country's diverse ethnic groups than one drawn solely from Tigray.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] G. Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2009; J. Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975-1991*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

After taking Addis Ababa itself in 1991, the new EPRDF government sponsored the creation of similar ethno-nationalist parties across the country, and one of these – the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) – eventually became the fourth member of the EPRDF coalition[6]. The four coalition parties, together with their nascent satellite parties, became the building blocks of a major constitutional restructuring under the EPRDF: ethnic federalism.

The rationale behind ethnic federalism was to devise a political system that would embed the rights of different ethnic groups and peoples within the state itself and prevent a single ethnic group dominating the rest. To that end, the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia provided for a federal political system based on nine regions whose shapes and boundaries derived from the ethnicity of the majority of citizens living there. Each Regional State would possess its own elected legislature and entrenched rights, up to and including the right of secession from the federation itself. As an effort to dilute Ethiopia's long history of centralised government, however, ethnic federalism would do little in practice to alter the relationship between Addis Ababa and the regions, at least until the mid-2010s.

One of the main factors behind this – and the second key element – was the leadership style of one of Abiy's predecessors, Meles Zenawi, Ethiopia's President and later Prime Minister from 1991 until his death in August 2012. Meles was not a founding member of the TPLF but slowly climbed the movement's ranks securing influence and power as a leading intellectual and a canny, ruthless politician. It would not, however, be until 2001 – after thirteen years as EPRDF Chairman and a decade as Ethiopia's leader – that Meles would turn from *primus inter pares* (the default posture of the TPLF's Marxist-Leninist collective leadership) into an authoritarian strongman – at least as portrayed by his detractors.

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[6] J. Fisher, *East Africa After Liberation: Conflict, Security and the State since the 1980s*, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming 2019.

In the aftermath of a punishing war with onetime ally Eritrea (see below), a powerful faction within the TPLF challenged Meles' record, accusing him of despotism and betrayal at the height of a national emergency. This prompted a damaging split within the TPLF and greatly imperilled Meles' position. Meles eventually won, emerging stronger than ever by manipulating party procedures and, crucially, leveraging support from the other three coalition members which had until that point been largely silent partners in the TPLF-dominated government. Subsequently, to secure his position, Meles and his allies purged the TPLF of critics and detractors, and forced out figures in the other three parties (notably the OPDO) who had sided with his opponents during the crisis[7]. In doing so Meles re-shaped the EPRDF coalition into a body whose leaders owed their loyalties directly to him.

Beyond the centre, the post-2001 Meles government also sought to impose stricter and more personalised control over state and party machinery nationwide[8]. Regional Presidents – notionally chosen by elected Regional Assemblies – would be dismissed at will when perceived to be going against the centre. More broadly, state and party mobilisation structures linking Meles' leadership to the smallest units of government were expanded and enhanced by accommodating formerly-eschewed community leaders within local governance mechanisms. This process was accelerated after the EPRDF's unexpectedly poor performance in the 2005 general election. The coalition and its satellite parties lost 154 of their 481 seats[9], prompting both soul-searching within the EPRDF and a major crackdown on

[7] P. Milkias, "Ethiopia, the TPLF and the Roots of the 2001 Political Tremor", International Conference on African Development Archives, Paper 4, 2001, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

[8] S. Vaughan, "Revolutionary Democratic State-Building: Party, State and People in the EPRDF's Ethiopia", *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2011, pp. 619-640.

[9] There are 547 seats in Ethiopia's House of Representatives. 274 seats are required for a parliamentary majority.

opposition and on freedom of speech and assembly. Within a few years the Meles regime had gained firm control, and the EPRDF won 499 seats out of 547 in the 2010 election. A year before Meles' death the academic commentator Jon Abbink observed that "the actual power and interference of the federal government in regional and local affairs has become stronger than under any previous regime"[10].

Crisis

The maturing of ethnic federalism and the incorporation of formerly-shunned local leaders into state and party machinery would nonetheless begin to gather its own momentum during the 2000s[11]. Regional Presidents who enjoyed Meles' support – such as the Somali Regional State's Abdi Mohamoud Omar ("Abdi Iley") – could increasingly act as they pleased, while the integrity of regional state boundaries – where Amhara Regional State ends and Tigray Regional State begins, for example – would become an ever-growing point of contention as associations between ethnicity and political and developmental resources solidified. Emerging tensions across these areas were largely held in check under Meles by means of his personal hold over the party, the security forces and the wider polity.

Meles died, however, in August 2012, leaving a vacuum. With no anointed successor and plenty of rival candidates, a power struggle ensued within the TPLF and the wider EPRDF. A stop-gap measure – and compromise – saw the SEPDM chair Hailemariam Desalegn, viewed within the movement as a political "neutral", elected Prime Minister as the various factions plotted their next move[12]. Without a strongman directing from the centre, regional administrations and power-brokers saw an

[10] J. Abbink, "Ethnic-Based Federalism and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing the Experiment after 20 Years", *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 5, no, 4, 2011, p.604.

[11] Y. Tesfaye Fessha, "The Original Sin of Ethiopian Federalism", *Ethnopolitics*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2017, pp. 232-245.

[12] G. Mills (2018).

opportunity to flex their muscles; the Somali Region's Abdi Iley worked with military officials based in his state to block federal attempts to remove him only months after Meles' death[13].

This growing free-for-all also opened up new space for regional leaders and citizens to reassess their relationships with one another and with the TPLF-dominated government. Increasingly, the rights and grievances of non-Tigrayan ethnic groups against the federal state would become a key point of mobilisation, leveraged successfully by some EPRDF satellite parties to secure greater independence and power, and catching others unawares, including the OPDO and ANDM. Several critical flashpoints emerged in this regard during 2015 and 2016 in Ethiopia's two most populous regions, Amhara and Oromia. In Amhara, the arrest of activists agitating for a reallocation of territory from Tigray to Amhara led to mass protests in mid-2016. Six months earlier, in Oromia, a federal "master plan" to expand the Ethiopian capital – Addis Ababa, a chartered city – into Oromia state had produced a similar result. Over time, and partly in response to the government's heavy-handed and violent response, the protests spread and shifted from being about the integrity of the country's internal state boundaries to wider opposition to perceived political and economic marginalisation and human rights abuses by an authoritarian TPLF-controlled system[14]. It was in this context that Hailemariam eventually resigned in February 2018.

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[13] T. Hagmann, *Talking Peace in the Ogaden: The Search for an End to Conflict in the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia*, Nairobi, Rift Valley Institute, 2014, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

[14] J. Fisher and M.T. Gebrewahd, "'Game Over?' Abiy Ahmed, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front and Ethiopia's Political Crisis", *African Affairs*, vol. 118, no. 470, 2018, pp. 194-206.

Abiy's Triumph: Politicking and Transition in Ethiopia's Ruling Coalition

Abiy was not a core player in the Oromia protests. The so-called *Qeerroo* ("bachelor" in Oromo) movement at the heart of the phenomenon emerged semi-organically from Oromia's (largely male) youth, many of whom felt their economic aspirations were being blocked by a Tigrayan-dominated polity and their grievances rejected by an aggressive security state. The movement combined Oromo nationalists, long-standing critics and opponents of the EPRDF and youth groups, students and labourers. It mobilised against both the EPRDF and its representative in Oromia, the OPDO. A similar scenario developed in the Amhara region, and while the two movements emerged and developed separately they increasingly came to associate themselves with one another. "We are all Oromos", for example, became a popular slogan in the Amhara protests from mid-2016.

Faced with this situation, the OPDO and ANDM were confronted with a difficult choice. One option would have been to uphold and defend the policies and approaches of the EPRDF government – their government – but risk losing yet more ground to forces beyond their control (both parties had already long been viewed by many in their regions as TPLF puppets). Alternatively, they could distance themselves from the TPLF and realign themselves with the protesters, repositioning themselves as defenders of Oromo or Amhara rights. Ultimately, both parties selected this latter option.

In Oromia, though, it was not Abiy – Deputy President of the region and OPDO Deputy Chair – who initiated and oversaw this reversal, but rather his immediate superior, the head of OPDO and President of Oromia, Lemma Megersa. A popular and charismatic politician, Lemma positioned himself during 2016-2017 as a leading critic of the Addis Ababa expansion "master plan" and of the brutal response by the federal government and the military to the protests. "Team Lemma" – of

which Abiy was a member – gradually won the support of the protest movement, and by the time of Hailemariam's resignation Lemma had emerged, in the words of *The Economist*, as Ethiopia's "most popular politician" and a strong candidate for the premiership itself[15].

Lemma was not, however, technically eligible for the post since he lacked a seat in the Ethiopian Parliament. By contrast, Abiy had been a member of the country's House of Representatives since 2010. Consequently, and at Lemma's urging, a week after Hailemariam's announcement the OPDO Central Committee voted for Lemma and Abiy to change places, the former becoming Deputy Chairman of OPDO and the latter its Chairman. The OPDO had chosen to field Abiy as its candidate for Chairman of the EPRDF – and national premier – albeit as much by default as by conviction.

An Abiy victory in the March 2018 EPRDF politburo vote was by no means assured, however. Given the nature of the protests and Ethiopia's wider ethno-political crisis, most politburo members accepted that a Tigrayan candidate was probably a non-starter and that Hailemariam's successor should be an Amhara or an Oromo, and indeed Demeke Mekonnen, the ANDM Chair, was at least an equally strong candidate in this regard. His administration had attempted a political realignment in the Amhara region similar to that which Team Lemma had achieved in Oromia, albeit with slightly more ambivalence. Demeke also had the support of senior TPLF figures who felt that the Amhara chief would probably be more pliable than his Oromo counterpart. As EPRDF rules dictated that there could only be three candidates for its Chair, the TPLF nominated Demeke. The two other candidates nominated were Abiy (by the OPDO) and Shiferaw Shigute (the SEPDM Chair, nominated by his party).

[15] *The Economist*, "Ethiopia's Regime Flirts with Letting Dissidents Speak without Locking them up", 27 January 2018, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

To the surprise and consternation of many in the TPLF, however, Demeke declined the nomination – citing his desire to remain as EPRDF Deputy Chair, and, thus, Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia. The TPLF was then obliged to nominate its own leader – Debretsion Gebremichael – and transfer their support to him or to Shiferaw if they wanted to block an Abiy win. With ANDM support, however, Abiy would be difficult to defeat and, indeed, he emerged as victor with 108 votes to Shiferaw's 58 and Debretsion's two[16].

Abiy's rise can be explained to some extent, then, by his work in Oromia realigning the OPDO with Oromo aspirations and acting, as part of Team Lemma, to tackle Oromo grievances against a federal government perceived to be oppressive, anti-Oromo and chauvinistic. Ultimately, though, his ascent to the premiership owed as much to circumstance and the machinations of colleagues as it did to his own ambition and stratagems. Had Lemma been a Member of Parliament, Abiy would probably not have been a candidate. Had Demeke accepted the nomination he might well have emerged triumphant as the choice of at least two of the four coalition parties. Indeed, it was the ANDM's decision to support rather than challenge a potential OPDO premiership which ultimately made the difference. Outmanoeuvred, senior TPLF cadres would later argue that Demeke's decision and therefore Abiy's election had been engineered by a "conspiracy" between the OPDO and ANDM[17].

Who is Abiy Ahmed?

Abiy's premiership was not anticipated, therefore, and before becoming Prime Minister Abiy himself was little known as a leader as opposed to an administrator. He had played a significant, though ultimately secondary, role in OPDO/Oromia politics as Lemma's deputy between 2016-2018, but by and

[16] J. Fisher and M.T. Gebrewahd (2018).
[17] Ibid.

large his career had been that of a fairly traditional EPRDF securocrat.

Born in Jimma in what is now Oromia Regional State in August 1976 he reportedly joined the EPRDF struggle in its final months as a member – at the age of fifteen – of the nascent OPDO. He enlisted in the Ethiopian military in 1993, focusing primarily on intelligence, and fought in the 1998-2000 war with Eritrea, commanding an intelligence unit. While a military officer – rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel before leaving the army in 2010 – he studied for an undergraduate degree in computer engineering at Addis Ababa University and a Masters degree in transformational leadership from the UK's Greenwich University. He also co-founded Ethiopia's Information Network and Security Agency (INSA) in 2008, stepping down as acting Director in 2010 when he was elected to Parliament. INSA during Abiy's tenure, according to Iginio Gagliardone and Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, was a "central component" of the government's online censorship and surveillance efforts, aimed in particular at opposition actors and websites[18].

After his election to Parliament Abiy became particularly active in Oromia and OPDO politics, being elected to the OPDO politburo in 2015 and appointed Deputy President of Oromia in October 2016. During the mid-2010s he held various other posts including – briefly – Federal Minister for Science and Technology (2015-2016) and Director General of the (state-run) Science and Technology Information Center. He also completed a PhD on Conflict Resolution in Jimma at Addis Ababa's Institute for Peace and Security Studies in 2017.

Little emerges from this picture that would suggest a reformer and iconoclast. Abiy followed a path well trodden by many other Meles-era technocrats and political apparatchiks, and gave little indication that an Abiy premiership would be

[18] I. Gagliardone and F. Golooba-Mutebi, "The Evolution of the Internet in Ethiopia and Rwanda: Towards a 'Developmental' Model?", *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2016, p. 17.

transformative. One biographical narrative favoured by Abiy supporters traces a personal commitment to inter-ethnic and religious reconciliation throughout his life – as an academic (degrees in leadership and conflict resolution), a soldier (a former peacekeeper in post-genocide Rwanda), and a politician (as a Member of Parliament and OPDO bureaucrat he oversaw a number of inter-religious forums and dialogues following clashes between Muslims and Christians). Indeed, the fact that Abiy's father was an Oromo Muslim and mother an Amharic Christian demonstrates for many of his adherents how far the Ethiopian leader actually embodies reconciliation and peaceful co-existence.

Abiy's promotion of unity and reconciliation pre-dates his time as Prime Minister, and appears to have been developed in particular during his period with Team Lemma. In an October 2017 speech, for example, he argued that "We have only one option, and that is to be united […] our option should be to trust one another, heal our wounds together and work together to develop our country"[19]. Such rhetoric has become a familiar part of Abiy's public addresses as premier and, indeed, has been developed into a governing philosophy – *medemer* ("addition" or "summation" in Amharic) – which he summarised to Ethiopian legislators in June 2018 as "tender love instead of abject cruelty, peace instead of conflict, love over hate, forgiveness over holding a grudge, pulling instead of pushing"[20]. The official letterhead of documents issued by his office reads "A new horizon of hope"[21].

But Abiy's leadership style has not simply been characterised by warm words and sentiments. He has taken significant risks – some of which have paid off, some of which are increasingly backfiring. He has also shown himself to be a leader with

[19] "Abiy Ahmed: Ethiopia's Prime Minister", *BBC News Online*, 14 September 2018, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

[20] J. Fisher and M.T. Gebrewahd (2018).

[21] L. Schadomsky, "Is "Emperor Abiy" at the Gates in Ethiopia?", *DW.Com (Deutsche Welle)*, 24 June 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

mettle – facing off against some of the most embedded vested interests in the EPRDF state within months of taking office. He has not, however, demonstrated significant interest in building wider alliances to secure a more stable political trajectory for his government, preferring to rely on his own image and message as a mobiliser. This comes with considerable risks as different groups and parties muster in advance of next year's election.

Iconoclast and man of the future

A major criticism levelled at Abiy by some of his opponents (including some factions within the EPRDF) is that he is "all talk". While there is some truth to this, the Ethiopian leader has generally proved decisive and iconoclastic when necessary. At times this has been more symbolic than anything else – condemning his predecessors, within weeks of becoming premier, of "terrorist acts […] and using force just to stay in power", changing the name of the OPDO to Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) in September 2018[22], appointing a gender-balanced Cabinet and inaugurating a "Ministry for Peace" including, *inter alia*, Abiy's creation INSA[23]. At other times, though, this has involved critical decisions which have profoundly disrupted the *status quo*. Within weeks of taking office, for example, Abiy dispatched the two most fearsome TPLF securocrats in the nation – the army chief of staff (Samora Yunis) and, much less ceremoniously, the national intelligence chief (Getachew Assefa). Two of Meles' most longstanding and effective enforcers, these figures were spoken of in hushed tones by even Hailemariam's closest aides during his tenure. Their swift removal by Abiy indicated not only a changing of the guard but a Prime Minister who was prepared to enforce a new order where his predecessor had felt his hands tied.

[22] The ANDM did the same, becoming the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP).

[23] Y. Gedamu, "How Change Happened in Ethiopia: A Review of How Abiy Rose to Power", *The Conversation*, 3 February 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

Moreover, Abiy has shown himself magnanimous, releasing thousands of political prisoners (with unintended consequences, as discussed below) and decriminalising opposition parties and armed groups once labelled terrorists, including one movement – the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) – with a far more historic claim to represent Oromo nationalism than the OPDO/ODP. His record with individuals, however – particularly those most strongly associated with the Meles era – is somewhat more ambiguous and in line with the more traditional EPRDF approach. Within months of his election Abiy oversaw the forceful removal of Abdi Iley in Somali Regional State, sending in heavy artillery to neutralise the powerful Regional President in an operation which significantly, and crudely, damaged relations between Addis Ababa and the Somali Regional State leadership.

Abdi Iley was subsequently arrested, as was Bereket Simon – a senior ANDM figure closely tied to Meles, and forced out of the party's leadership in January 2019[24]. Getachew Assefa was also charged with human rights abuses after his dismissal, evading arrest only because the TPLF refused to hand him over to federal forces. This is not to say that any of these charges or arrests lack merit. They have, however, been seen by several constituencies – particularly Tigrayans – as selective, vindictive and mainly designed to scapegoat the TPLF and those most closely associated with it for Ethiopia's current, complex political challenges. These perceptions have been exacerbated by claims that under Abiy Tigrayan military officers and civil servants have been singled out for dismissal.

Indeed, Abiy's *medemer* posture has not been built only upon uplifting words, progressive acts and reformist pledges, not least the holding of genuinely multi-party elections in 2020. It has also rested upon a more cynical and somewhat irresponsible positioning of itself as the un-doer and opposite of everything EPRDF that had come before – from federal-state relations to

[24] A.R.A. Shaban, "Ethiopia Arrests Ex-Govt Minister Bereket Simon Over Corruption", *africanews*, 23 January 2019 (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

political rights to the "developmental state" beloved of Ethiopia's Western development partners.

Cynical, because Abiy was himself a part of the EPRDF machinery throughout the 2000s and a senior figure in an intelligence agency. Irresponsible, because in some of his speeches he has deliberately blurred critiques of the Meles/Hailemariam regimes with attacks on the TPLF and, most significantly, slurs on Tigrayans themselves. This has served not only to stoke further tensions between Tigrayans and their Amharic and Afar neighbours but – ironically – to strengthen the TPLF's legitimacy and support in Tigray at a time when the party's popularity had been in terminal decline in the region[25]. In effect, Abiy has helped the TPLF to reconnect with its base and to reposition itself as a champion of Tigrayan rights against an oppressive centre. Ultimately, this is not a sustainable situation for an Ethiopian leader looking to unite a deeply divided country, and a revitalised TPLF is not an opponent any Ethiopian leader would wish for.

"Emperor Abiy"?

Indeed, Abiy has demonstrated much less interest in building coalitions and networks with the multitude of power players inside and outside the EPRDF than he has in appealing over their heads directly to the people. In the latter regard, he has managed to cultivate – in a very short time – genuine affection and support from wide and diverse populations. Shortly after taking office Abiy undertook a tour of the country, where his appeals for unity, reconciliation and change resonated widely and inspired many. Weary of insecurity and a heavy-handed and uncaring state, thousands have attended Abiy's frequent rallies, and thousands more have placed their hopes and aspirations in him as the man to transform their futures and temper the centrifugal forces tearing the country apart. For months after Abiy's inauguration the country was in the grip of what many analysts described as "Abiymania", an almost messianic

[25] *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, "TPLF Worried About Tigray", 9 May 2014.

phenomenon where the Prime Minister's image or words could be seen everywhere.

Abiy and his advisers have done much to promote and foster such feelings, including carefully-coordinated international engagements with foreign leaders and, in particular, the Ethiopian diaspora. The love of the crowd alone is, however, an unstable foundation for genuine progressive change in a country as split and multi-faceted as Ethiopia. This is particularly so as Abiy's honeymoon period comes to a close and citizens begin to judge him by his achievements as well as his rhetoric[26]. Moreover, ever since a rally in Addis Ababa was targeted by Abiy's opponents with grenades in June 2018, with one death and over 100 injuries, these affairs have been more and more tightly policed and uneasy. Increasingly, the Ethiopian leader appears in public behind bullet-proof glass.

Indeed, the grenade attacks highlight a particular challenge to Abiy's populist leadership approach, especially in the run-up to an election. Those accused of the crime were Oromo youths who claimed that they had acted against the Prime Minister because they did not feel that he would deliver on his promises to the Oromo and that the OLF (now no longer banned) would be a more reliable champion[27]. Regardless of popular sentiment around Abiy the man, he remains the candidate of the EPRDF and OPDO/ODP, and must rely on their structures and – often unpopular – local officials to reach the citizenry outside of rallies, as he will to fight the next election. As noted above, Abiy's elevation owed more to the savvy politicking – or misjudgements – of colleagues than it did to his own political manoeuvring; widening and deepening his coalition is critical to his longer-term survival.

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[26] M. Fick and T. Negeri, "A Problem for Ethiopia's Leader: The Young Men who Helped him to Power", *Reuters*, 2 November 2018, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

[27] "Ethiopia Attack: Five Charged for Trying to Kill PM Abiy Ahmed", *BBC News Online*, 28 September 2018, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

Rather than attempting this, however, Abiy appears to have increasingly retreated into a highly personalised approach to government. Some of his most significant policy decisions – including the release of political prisoners – were made without reference to wider government stakeholders and were implemented through informal or *ad hoc* mechanisms, to the chagrin of coalition partners. Following the assassination of the Amhara Regional State President Ambachew Mekonnen in June 2019 Abiy replaced him with one of his own closest security aides, Temesgen Tiruneh, while EPRDF officials have openly speculated that the Prime Minister will either transform the EPRDF into a unitary, pan-Ethiopian party, or run in the next election as head of a new party altogether[28]. "Is "Emperor Abiy" at the gates in Ethiopia?" queried one commentator following Ambachew's assassination[29]. Certainly the next phase of Abiy's premiership will require more institutionalisation of "Abiymania" if it is to produce sustainable results.

Peace with Eritrea and a Changing International Context

The same is true for Abiy's leadership in foreign policy, the arena where he has undoubtedly achieved the most in the shortest amount of time. Securing peace with neighbouring Eritrea after an 18-year cold war between the two onetime bitter enemies was a major triumph for the Abiy government, and has profound, and positive, implications for regional security, stability and cooperation. Like Abiy's rise itself, peace with Eritrea was not anticipated by even the most seasoned analysts. The Eritrean regime of Isaias Afwerki made little comment on Abiy's election and initially made no response to Abiy's olive branch – an announcement by the EPRDF politburo on 5 June 2018 that it

[28] "Ethiopia Premier's Aide Named to Lead Restive Amhara Region", *Reuters*, 15 July 2019 (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).
[29] L. Schadomsky (2019).

would finally accept and fully implement the 2002 ruling of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission.

Both the Meles and Hailemariam governments had refused to accept the Commission's decision; doing so would have obliged Ethiopia to hand over various disputed territories on the Eritrea-Ethiopia/Tigray boundary, including the town of Badme, control over which had been the *casus belli* between the two states between 1998 and 2000. TPLF officials in particular baulked at Abiy's decision and condemned his reasoning as "fundamentally flawed". It was in demonstrating his preparedness to challenge the TPLF position, though, that Abiy ultimately won the confidence of Isaias, and paved the way for a summit in Asmara on 9 July where the two leaders formally ended the conflict between their countries and enthusiastically re-established diplomatic relations.

The origins of the conflict can be located within the deeply complex and ambiguous relationship between the TPLF and Isaias' former Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) when both were fighting as rebel movements against the *Derg* regime; at that point, Eritrea remained annexed to Ethiopia. For twenty years the relationship veered between fraternal closeness and bitter rivalry, ultimately spilling over into seemingly irreversible decline and, in 1998, open conflict when the two former insurgencies failed to find a *modus vivendi* as the governments of separate sovereign states. According to one senior Eritrean official it was Abiy's removal of Samora and Getachew – both TPLF heavyweights – that persuaded Isaias that Abiy had sidelined the TPLF and that peace with Ethiopia could therefore be contemplated[30]. Indeed, in explaining his decision to pursue peace with Abiy's Ethiopia to Eritreans, Isaias referred to "the end of the TPLF's shenanigans, which was aptly described as "game over"[31].

[30] Author interview with senior Eritrean official, Asmara, 20 June 2018.

[31] J. Fisher and M.T. Gebrewahd (2018).

The normalisation of Ethiopian-Eritrean relations has nonetheless relied heavily on the maintenance of friendly personal relations between Abiy and Isaias, who have undertaken numerous trips to each other's capitals and beyond, exuding warmth and intimacy. The changed relationship between the two states remains, however, largely bound up with this personal relationship, rather than in a more formal, bilateral arrangement. Despite a declaration of intent signed in Asmara and Jeddah in 2018, numerous key issues including trade, tariffs, currency, security and citizenship remain outside any formal legal arrangement, as Kjetil Tronvoll has observed[32]. While perhaps unfair to expect such things to come into being so soon after one of the most significant *rapprochements* in the modern history of the Horn, it is crucial to remember that it was precisely this issue – an Ethiopia-Eritrea relationship founded on elite personal ties with no framework for regulating economic and citizenship issues – which led to the 1998-2000 conflict itself[33].

More generally, a resurgent Eritrea – and an Isaias returned to the heart of regional diplomacy after decades of ostracism – carries both opportunities and risks for Ethiopia, particularly given the growing significance of Gulf powers in the Horn. Isaias with his EPLF was the senior partner in the EPLF-TPLF wartime relationship, and the Eritrean leader has struggled to come to terms with his status as the ruler of a much smaller and less powerful country than his onetime juniors. While Isaias and Abiy have successfully supported one another's economic and diplomatic ambitions in the region to date – in Somalia, for example – there is no guarantee that this mutually beneficial arrangement will last, particularly without a more formal legal basis for the two states' relationship.

Divergences are currently apparent, for example, in the two leaders' approaches to the political crisis in Sudan after the

[32] "Is Ethiopian PM Abiy's Reform Drive Running Out of Steam", *DW.Com (Deutsche Welle)*, 1 April 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

[33] J. Fisher (2019); M. Woldemariam, "The Eritrea-Ethiopia Thaw and Its Regional Impact", *Current History*, vol. 118, no. 808, 2019, pp. 181-187.

deposing of Omar al-Bashir. Abiy has been tasked by the African Union (AU) with mediating the conflict between the Khartoum military regime and protesters, while Isaias has argued that the AU should stay out of the matter altogether[34]. Eritrea also has a coastline, which Ethiopia does not, and Asmara has leveraged this very successfully in cultivating ties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, offering them airstrips and ports as staging posts for their war in Yemen. Ethiopia also has aspirations to strengthen and expand its economic and political networks in the Gulf, but will require Eritrean cooperation to access the Red Sea[35].

Unlike Isaias, though, Abiy enjoys the support and confidence of Western aid donors, who continue to finance a significant part of Ethiopia's national budget, and its security complex. While to some extent he inherited these ties from his predecessors – Meles cannily positioned Ethiopia as a crucial security ally of Washington, London and Brussels in particular – they are also founded on a genuine optimism in Western capitals regarding the Ethiopian leader. For decades, Western donors to Ethiopia have awkwardly balanced a stated foreign policy commitment to promoting democratisation and respect for human rights with unfailing support to authoritarian regimes in the name of security and stability. Abiy represents an opportunity for donors to support a reformer *and* a force for regional stability. The Ethiopian leader has perhaps demonstrated his political acumen most clearly of all in his engagement with this constituency, conscious perhaps of its ability to provide political cover for him should his domestic position deteriorate, or should he come to the view that the 2020 election needs to be delayed.

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[34] M. Plaut, "The Glow of the Historic Accord Between Ethiopia and Eritrea Has Faded", *Quartz Africa*, 9 July 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

[35] J. Mosley, "Eritrea-Ethiopia Rapprochement and Wider Dynamics of Regional Trade, Politics and Security", *Life and Peace Institute*, 3 October 2018, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

The End of the Honeymoon: Challenges Ahead for Abiy Ahmed

A critical appraisal of Abiy's leadership must also take into account the immense challenges of governing a state as diverse and complex as modern Ethiopia. Since the 1930s every Ethiopian leader but one has been forced from office, while insecurity and conflict have rarely been absent from many communities' everyday lives. That said, Ethiopia today faces an acute political and humanitarian crisis: the ethno-political tensions discussed above have led to a range of local conflicts – sustained by the organising of local militias and revenge attacks – which have made Ethiopia the country with the largest number of internally-displaced persons on the planet. To what extent is Abiy Ahmed's leadership what is required to address these challenges?

In my view the jury is still out. The Ethiopian leader's hopeful rhetoric and progressive policies provide much-needed hope and optimism for the future following years of authoritarian drift and paralysis. Abiy's early successes as a regional trouble-shooter are impressive, and his preparedness to challenge and overturn some of the most vicious and problematic features of the EPRDF polity shows courage and decisiveness. That being said, a review of his record cannot help but leave one with the impression that he is contending with forces the magnitude and shape of which he has yet to fully grasp. The assassination of Ambachew Mekonnen mentioned above, for example, was part of a wider Amhara nationalist assault on the EPRDF in which the military chief Se'are Mekonnen was murdered in Addis Ababa at the same time as the head of security in Amhara Regional State was leading an attempted *coup d'état* in its capital, Bahir Dar. The security chief in question, Asaminew Tsige, was among the political prisoners released on Abiy's orders in his 2018 amnesty[36].

[36] N. Manek, "Abiy Ahmed's Reforms Have Unleashed Forces He Can No Longer Control", *Foreign Policy*, 4 July 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

This implies that rather than tempering ethno-political radicalism, Abiy's tenure to date has – whether through naiveté, unintended consequence, rashness or deliberate stoking – done little to arrest a worrying trajectory. We also know little about how the Ethiopian Prime Minister responds to pressure. As noted, Abiy came to power through a combination of circumstance and EPRDF politicking, and he has enjoyed a political honeymoon based on hopeful rhetoric and a decisive changing of the guard. The attempted Amhara coup was perhaps the first major test of his character as a leader since he stepped onto the national stage. Abiy's initial reaction was telling; appearing on national television in army fatigues, he countenanced a nationwide internet shutdown which lasted for days – the traditional default mode of his maligned predecessors[37]. Hundreds were arrested, also, under the very anti-terrorism legislation that Abiy had previously condemned. In many respects Abiy is a leader caught between two postures – that of a traditional, EPRDF securocrat and that of an inspirational reformer. It is not clear yet which will prevail in the longer term.

There are pressing issues, however, which will force the matter. The first is the ongoing ethnic violence and the wider political crisis – the rise of radical ethnic nationalism and calls in some regions of the country (notably Sidama in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Regions) for statehood[38] or, in the case of Tigray, even secession[39]. The second is the forthcoming election, due to be held in 2020. This will be a

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[37] F. Mbah, "Outrage Over Ethiopia's Continuing Internet Blackout", *Al-Jazeera*, 25 June 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019); M. Mumo/CPJ Sub-Saharan Africa Representative, "In Era of Reform, Ethiopia Still Reverts to Old Tactics to Censor Press", *CPJ (Committee to Protect Journalists)*, 9 July 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

[38] "Time for Ethiopia to Bargain with Sidama over Statehood", *Crisis Group*, 4 July 2019, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/b146-time-ethiopia-bargain-sidama-over-statehood (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

[39] "People of Tigray Have Developed Sentiment for Secession", Debretsion", *Borkena.Com*,12 June 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

major test of Abiy's leadership, if indeed it is not delayed[40]. In that regard, Abiy will need to take a difficult decision. On the one hand virtually no substantive changes have been made to the country's democratic machinery since Abiy's election, and mounting violence could render polls both impractical and dangerous. On the other hand Abiy has staked his leadership on bringing genuine multi-party democracy to Ethiopia, and many opposition movements have already spoken out against calls to delay the election. There are fewer and fewer easy decisions left for Abiy Ahmed to take.

[40] A. Soliman and Abel Abate Demissie, "Can Abiy Ahmed Continue to Remodel Ethiopia?", *Chatham House*, 12 April 2019, (last retrieved on 20 July 2019).

3. Cyril Ramaphosa and South Africa's Development Path: A Creation of Circumstance

Steven Friedman

In December 2017, South Africa's governing African National Congress elected as its President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, a former trade unionist and businessman. Weeks later, President Jacob Zuma was forced to resign and Ramaphosa became State President, a post he still holds. While Ramaphosa was serving as Deputy President to Zuma the two led opposing factions: Zuma's presidency was associated in the minds of many with misuse of public office for personal gain, and Ramaphosa was widely seen as a champion of clean government. This chapter will argue that Ramaphosa's leadership, throughout his career in public life, can best be understood as a reflection of South Africa's development path in the period immediately before democracy was achieved in 1994 and during the democratic era. This also enables us to understand the likely impact of his presidency on society and the economy.

It is common to see leadership as both the source of Africa's problems and their solution. The continent's problem is repeatedly said to be "bad leadership" and its solution the replacement of bad leaders by good ones[1].

[1] S. Adeyemi "Africa doesn't need charity, it needs good leadership", *World Economic Forum*, 4 May 2017; R. Rotberg, "Good leadership is Africa's missing ingredient", *Globe and Mail*, 4 March 2013.

This has become so common that it is rarely challenged, despite the fact that it is questionable. The most obvious problem is that "bad" and "good" are highly subjective terms, and people inevitably hold different opinions on which of the labels to apply to any particular leader. But even if we were somehow to agree on which leaders are good and which are bad, why do African countries almost always produce leaders we judge negatively? Unless we cling to notions of racial inferiority (for which no evidence exists), or imagine (also without evidence) that there is something in Africa's air or water which produces particular kinds of leaders, there must be an explanation for constant disappointment with leadership on the continent. Similarly, if "good" leadership is the solution, how is it most likely to emerge? Do citizens simply wait and hope that it will happen, or can they do something about it? Reducing the continent's prospects to the chance emergence of leaders who are considered fit for the task looks more like an attempt to avoid analysing constraints and possibilities than a diagnosis. Leaders, bad or good, do not magically appear out of thin air. They are products of circumstance: they emerge because concrete conditions in society make particular types of leadership more likely and other kinds less likely. South Africa's change of leadership in early 2018 illustrates the point.

In most writing on South Africa, the replacement of President Jacob Zuma with Cyril Ramaphosa illustrated perfectly the problem of leadership. In the minds of many Zuma was a prime example of the sort of leadership which is said to have created Africa's difficulties, Ramaphosa a clear example of the type of leader who is needed. Zuma was widely associated with the abuse of public trust and misuse of resources. Ramaphosa seemed almost the polar opposite; his popularity greatly surpassed that of his party, the African National Congress[2], which has governed since democracy was achieved in 1994. But closer

[2] I. Mahlangu and N. Goba, "Party crasher: Cyril is more popular than the ANC", *The Times*, 10 May 2019.

inspection reveals a more complicated story. Both Zuma and Ramaphosa are products of the economic path which South Africa has pursued since 1994, which is itself in many ways a continuation of its path under the white minority. While Zuma's leadership, which concerns us here only as a point of comparison, reflects one side of this story, Ramaphosa's reflects the other. There are many parallels between South Africa's development over the past three decades and Ramaphosa's career in public life – so much so that we might almost see him as a personal embodiment of this history. This does much to explain the transition from Zuma to Ramaphosa, and the possibilities South Africa faces now.

Ramaphosa – A Brief History

Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa was born in 1952 in Soweto, the segregated Johannesburg township for black people which became known around the world primarily for the 1976 uprising against minority rule[3]. Unlike many other ANC (African National Congress) leaders he was a child of the cities – apartheid laws denied most blacks the right to live permanently in cities, so many other ANC figures have rural backgrounds. This will be very important later in explaining his political appeal.

In 1972, Ramaphosa registered as a student at the University of the North (at that stage the only university which people of his ethnic origin could attend) and became involved in student politics, which at that stage were dominated by the Black Consciousness (BC) movement led by Steve Biko. While BC was never formally opposed to the ANC – at the time it remained independent of all the resistance movements – it was not usually the choice of ANC supporters; later on there was violent conflict between activists sympathetic to the ANC and

[3] Biographical details are drawn from "Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa", *South African History Online*.

those who supported BC[4]. Like many BC activists, Ramaphosa was arrested after the movement staged rallies to celebrate the victory of the Mozambican freedom movement Frelimo in 1974 – he spent eleven months in detention without trial. On his release he joined – and held office in – the Black People's Convention, a key BC movement at the time. He was detained again in 1976 after the Soweto uprising mentioned earlier.

The path which was to lead him to the Presidency began in 1981 when Ramaphosa, who had obtained a law degree by correspondence, joined the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), the trade union federation which supported the BC movement, as an advisor in its legal department. When CUSA formed a mineworkers' union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), Ramaphosa was chosen to become its first general secretary. Unlike other unions for black workers at the time, the NUM did not need to fight a long battle to secure recognition from employers; it was established in December 1982 and was recognised by the Chamber of Mines, which represented mine owners, only months later – before it began recruiting members[5]. So while other unions recruited members – often despite resistance from employers – and then pressed for recognition, which they often won because the strength of their organisation could not be ignored, the NUM won recognition before building a significant membership. Its rationale for relying on persuading employers rather than building worker support was that mineworkers, living on mine property which could not be entered without permission, were largely cut off from the rest of the world; but it meant that recognition depended on Ramaphosa's powers of persuasion, not the support and commitment of its members. These beginnings, though, did not prevent the NUM becoming the country's largest trade union for a time, nor stop its members embarking on mass strikes.

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[4] "Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report - Volume 3", *South African History Online*, 29 October 1998.

[5] National Union of Mineworkers 'NUM commemorates 35th year of existence today' 4 December 2017

The NUM may have been the creation of CUSA, but it did not remain in its fold for long. In 1985, Ramaphosa and the union played a role in the formation of the Congress of SA Trade Union (COSATU) which is now a formal ally of the ANC. This was a substantial change of political allegiance, because black resistance to apartheid was then divided into two main camps, the "charterists" who supported the ideology of the ANC and the Africanists and BC adherents who favoured a more militant black nationalism. CUSA was aligned with the Africanist and BC position; so the NUM was changing sides politically by joining COSATU. Ironically, given the NUM's origins in the BC movement, it was to produce three Secretaries General of the ANC – Ramaphosa, Kgalema Motlanthe and Gwede Mantashe.

One effect of the NUM's move to COSATU was to propel Ramaphosa rapidly to the top echelon of ANC-aligned politics. In late 1989, when the first batch of ANC leaders was released from prison by the apartheid state, Ramaphosa became chair of the national reception committee convened to welcome them back into public life. His committee was also in charge of arrangements for receiving the ANC leader Nelson Mandela when he was released in February 1990 – a photograph of Ramaphosa holding a microphone for Mandela as he delivered his first speech after his release became one of the symbols of the new era. His status as an ANC leader was confirmed in July 1991 when he was elected the movement's first Secretary General since the ban on it was lifted in early 1990.

It was Ramaphosa's position as Secretary General which led him to play a key role in the negotiations which ended apartheid. He replaced Thabo Mbeki (who was later to become the second President of democratic South Africa) as head of the ANC's negotiation team, a task for which his trade union experience had equipped him. He established a rapport with the apartheid government's key negotiator, Roelf Meyer, when the latter replaced Tertius Delport, who was considered unable to match Ramaphosa's negotiating skills. Histories of the

time stress the personal chemistry between the two, and credit it with a pivotal role in making possible the negotiated settlement which ended apartheid[6]. While some accounts tend to imply that the two were the only reason why a negotiated settlement was achieved, despite the fact that they both represented constituencies whose approval was needed for a settlement, their partnership did make a negotiated compromise quicker and easier than it might otherwise have been. One product of Ramaphosa's role was his election, in 1994, as chair of the Constituent Assembly which negotiated the final version of the constitution.

For a time, it appeared as if his swift rise to the top would catapult him into the presidency of both the ANC and the country at a very early age. Mandela, who insisted from early in his presidency that he would only serve one term, favoured Ramaphosa to succeed him[7], at least partly because he was concerned about complaints that the ANC was dominated by Xhosa-speakers, the majority ethnic group among black people in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces: Ramaphosa, a Venda-speaker, is a member of one of the smaller ethnic groups. But Mbeki, who had been elected Deputy President of the country in 1994, successfully mobilised ANC constituencies in his support – the movement's youth league in particular[8]. So effectively did Mbeki consolidate his support that it became clear to Ramaphosa well before the ANC was due to elect a new President that Mbeki would win comfortably. Not relishing the humiliation of a defeat, Ramaphosa opted to leave active politics rather than serve under Mbeki. In mid-1996 he resigned as ANC General Secretary and as chair of the Constitutional Assembly[9]. He remained a member of the ANC

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[6] A. Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution*, Sandton, Struik, 1995.

[7] C. Twala *The African National Congress Youth League's (ANCYL's) Role as the "Kingmaker": A Moment of Post-Polokwane Blues?*, 2009, pp.153-171, p. 161.

[8] Ibid.

[9] "Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa"…, cit.

national executive committee, but opted to become a businessman. Ramaphosa later insisted that Mandela had encouraged him to make this move because he felt that it would help to deracialise business leadership, then almost exclusively white[10].

In the event, the turn to business did no harm to his personal fortunes. Though he had no prior business experience his political profile made him particularly attractive to white-owned businesses. By the 1990s, businesses began to realise that all-white boards and senior managements (the norm at the time) would seriously damage their credibility once democracy was established. Later, the post-1994 government introduced laws which made black participation a condition for receiving government contracts[11]. Including high-profile black politicians on company boards or forming partnerships with them offered a double benefit – not only would the company be eligible for more business, it would enjoy access to government decision-makers. Ramaphosa was soon appointed to the boards of major corporations, and in 2001 he formed Shanduka, an investment company which bought a wide collection of businesses[12]. He amassed considerable wealth and a wide network of contacts which later made him the preferred candidate of business.

Although Ramaphosa was destined to remain a businessman for the next decade and a half, he had another opportunity in 2007 to make a bid for the presidency. Then President Thabo Mbeki decided to run for a third term as ANC President even though he was not eligible for a third term as President of the country. This prompted resistance within the ANC: it was widely assumed that Mbeki wanted to use the ANC presidency

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[10] G. Nicolson, "ANC Leadership Race: Cyril Ramaphosa – five years after his return, the prodigal son might finally get to be king", *Daily Maverick*, 14 December 2017.

[11] P. Benjamin, M. Taylor and T. Raditapole, *Black Economic Empowerment: Commentary, Legislation and Charters (BEE)* Cape Town, Juta, 2005

[12] Phembani History of Shanduka, http://www.phembani.com/index.php/history-of-shanduka/

to ensure that the next State President did his bidding – by this time he had alienated a wide spectrum of ANC members. Jacob Zuma emerged as the candidate of Mbeki's opponents, not because he was popular but because, as Deputy President of the ANC, he seemed well placed to beat Mbeki. Ramaphosa, too, was repeatedly mentioned as a candidate, and according to people close to him considered standing; but he thought better of it, insisting that he could not oppose Mbeki in an election[13]. This prompted some in the ANC to call him indecisive and lacking in political courage.

He returned to active politics at the end of 2012 when he became Deputy President of the ANC – probably by accident! The then Deputy President of both the ANC and the country, Kgalema Motlanthe, accepted nomination for the presidency. Zuma and his supporters seem to have assumed that they could dissuade him from standing by signalling to him that unless he withdrew his candidacy he would not be kept on as Deputy President. That tactic could not work without a credible candidate for the post, and Ramaphosa was probably asked to stand in order to frighten Motlanthe into not opposing Zuma for the presidency. But Motlanthe refused to co-operate. It became clear that he was not bargaining for a position – he had become convinced, earlier than most in the ANC, that Zuma and his faction were abusing public trust; and he had decided to stand for election as a protest. He knew he would lose, but did not want to continue serving in the ANC leadership under Zuma anyway. Now Ramaphosa was obliged to contest the position, and to take office if he won. It has been claimed that the entire episode was engineered by Motlanthe to ensure that Ramaphosa became Deputy President; on this view, he was looking for an antidote to Zuma's patronage politics and thought Ramaphosa was the strongest choice[14]. If this is true – and it is by no means certain – Ramaphosa was not party to the plan; he certainly did

[13] S'Thembiso Msomi, "I won't fight Mbeki", *News 24* 11 November 2007.

[14] A. Butler, "Ramaphosa's rise to power was a well-planned affair", *Business Day*, 22 May 2019.

not jump at the chance to become Deputy President, and spent hours deciding whether to give up his business career in order to stand. Eventually he agreed, and was elected comfortably as a candidate for the Zuma slate, which was elected with a large majority. Shortly afterwards he also became Deputy President of the country.

New Office, New Factions

Ramaphosa's prominent position on the Zuma slate may seem confusing since he later became President by opposing Zuma's candidate. But in 2012 the lines of division within the ANC were very different to those five years later. The coalition which defeated Mbeki was still largely intact, and although Ramaphosa refused to campaign against Mbeki he was a member of the ANC national executive which voted to remove him as State President in 2008[15]. The faction which opposed Zuma's candidates did not campaign on an anti-corruption platform, but seemed to be calling for a more militant racial nationalism. (Motlanthe was not party to this – he agreed to the faction's request to oppose Zuma because he saw him as a threat to the ANC and the country).

During Zuma's second term of office, the alignments changed. The dividing line among ANC politicians became their attitude towards the patronage politics of Zuma and his faction, which would later be labelled "state capture"[16], meaning a process in which business people close to governing party politicians use their wealth to buy influence which they use to turn government into a vehicle for their business interests. The six leaders elected on Zuma's slate in 2012 were split equally, three supporting him and three opposing. The battle lines crystallised in December

[15] African National Congress, *Statement by the National Executive Committee of the ANC*, 20 September 2008

[16] Public Protector of South Africa, *State of Capture – A Report of the Public Protector 14 October 2016*.

2015 when Zuma dismissed the Minister of Finance, Nhlanhla Nene, because he refused to release money for projects favoured by Zuma's group and their business backers. Zuma replaced him with a junior politician who was clearly ill-equipped for the job but would give Zuma and his backers what they wanted. The decision prompted intense public resistance, which was effective because it was supported by Ramaphosa and two others in the top six. Zuma was forced to back down, and the appointment was revoked in less than a week[17].

From that incident until the ANC conference in December 2017 the ANC was divided by intense factional strife. Ramaphosa, as Deputy President, was the natural leader of those opposing "state capture". He and others in the group were later blamed for not leaving the ANC leadership in protest at state capture, but they calculated that the ANC would remain the party of government: if they wanted to stop Zuma they would need to defeat him and his faction in the conference of the governing party. So they stayed in their posts and began mobilising support within the ANC. It was initially unclear whether Ramaphosa would agree to become his faction's candidate: his refusal to oppose Zuma in 2007 raised doubts about whether he was willing to risk losing to Zuma's candidate.

His reputation was also dented by evidence at a Commission of Inquiry into the killing of miners by police at Marikana in the North West province during a strike[18]. Ramaphosa was a director of the company where the strike occurred. In the period before the police shootings, company security guards were killed, allegedly by striking miners. The company asked Ramaphosa to use his access to the relevant minister to ask for police to be deployed to end the violence, which he did. The strikers' union and Ramaphosa's political opponents insisted that he was personally responsible for the police shootings – by asking the

[17] A. Areff, "TIMELINE: How South Africa got three finance ministers in four days", *News24*, 14 December 2015.

[18] T. Head, "Marikana: What was Cyril Ramaphosa's role?", *The South African*, 16 August 2018.

police minister to impose order, they said, he was signalling that greater force should be used against the strikers. The commission, headed by a retired judge, found that Ramaphosa was not responsible for the police action – there was no evidence, it said, that he was asking the police to do anything more than simply enforce the law[19]. But this finding did not convince his opponents, who continue to use the incident to support their claim that he is simply a puppet of white business interests.

Nevertheless, Ramaphosa was persuaded to become a candidate for ANC President. In contrast to past ANC elections, in which candidates were expected to pretend they were not running for office, the 2017 contest was highly public, with candidates actively campaigning. Ramaphosa narrowly defeated Zuma's candidate, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, by 149 votes – but only because one of the ANC's regional power brokers, David "DD" Mabuza, premier of Mpumalanga province, became convinced that the ANC would not win more than 50% of the vote in the next general election if its candidate was a Zuma faction politician. Mabuza, who is now both Deputy President of South Africa and of the ANC, promised Zuma he would deliver all the province's votes to his candidate, but then told his delegates they were free to vote as they saw fit, and enough of them voted for Ramaphosa to win him the election. Within weeks the ANC had forced Zuma to resign the presidency (he was told that if he stayed the ANC's Members of Parliament would support a vote of no confidence in him), and Ramaphosa became President.

Ramaphosa inherited an ANC whose leadership was evenly balanced between his own supporters and Zuma's[20], and was therefore obliged to largely ignore public pressure to remove Zuma supporters from the Cabinet and other government jobs. But he has pursued an energetic campaign to undo the effects of state capture. He has appointed the first national

[19] Ibid.

[20] A. Winning and E. Stoddard, "No clean sweep for South Africa's Ramaphosa in ANC race", *Reuters*, 21 December 2017.

public prosecutor in the country's history with no party-political connections or commitments; he has enhanced the capacity of the national prosecuting authority; and he has made sweeping changes to the boards and senior managements of state-owned enterprises, a key target of state capture. In an attempt to strengthen democratic institutions he has widened the selection process for some government appointments, including professional associations and other citizens' groups in decision-making[21]. In May 2018 he led the ANC to victory in national elections, and although its majority was smaller than in the previous general election, it seems more than likely that his presence at the top of the ANC's slate of candidates prevented a far worse showing – indeed, it might have lost its majority.

Making Sense of the History

Perhaps the chief reason for Ramaphosa's popularity is that he is seen as an antidote to Zuma. It is hard to imagine two more sharply contrasting politicians. Ramaphosa is a child of the cities, Zuma of the countryside. Ramaphosa has a professional qualification; Zuma only learned to read and write as an adult. Ramaphosa began his political life in a movement other than the ANC; Zuma's generation joined the ANC as teenagers and have stayed in it all their lives. Zuma is associated with patronage politics, "state capture" and, in the minds of many, corruption. He has never seemed entirely comfortable in a constitutional democracy: when President, he tended to say what he really felt only when he was addressing traditional leaders, a constituency with whom he has a natural rapport. In these speeches he sometimes expressed doubts about an independent judiciary and about democracy itself[22]. Ramaphosa

[21] S. Ngqakamba, "NDPP appointment process a step in the right direction – Pikoli", *Mail and Guardian*, 23 October 2018.

[22] S'thembiso Msomi, "Populist Zuma rubbishes constitutional democracy he and ANC signed up for", *Sowetan*, 14 September 2018.

has championed clean government and is steeped in the ethos of constitutionalism – he is, after all, the politician most closely associated with the constitution.

But while these differences are real, they are symptoms of a wider gulf. To understand the essential political difference between Ramaphosa and Zuma it is necessary to describe briefly the country's development path since democracy was achieved in 1994. At that time, South Africa was a racial oligarchy, its political system, economy and social institutions monopolised by the white minority. The economy was highly concentrated – a handful of corporations controlled most of the country's assets[23]. In the period immediately before 1994 corporate leaders began to realise that a racial minority would no longer be able to monopolise control of the economy under majority rule, and they began to take some black people into leading positions in the economy, although its structure and way of functioning remained largely unchanged. Instead of seeking to build a more open, competitive, economy in which people with talent and energy would find it easy to make headway, they mostly chose to co-opt black people into the concentrated economy. The inevitable result was that, as in the pre-1994 period, millions were unable to gain enough access to the market economy's benefits, so the divide between "insiders" and "outsiders" persisted. Before 1994, the insiders were white and the outsiders black; now, after 25 years of democracy, some black South Africans have joined the whites as insiders while most black people remain outside[24]. (The new black entrants to the economy and social elite have many advantages denied to all black people in the past, but they still feel that they are discriminated against by the white elite).

This division between insiders and outsiders runs through the ANC and largely shapes its politics. As this account suggests, Ramaphosa is clearly an insider. When he worked as

[23] S. Roberts, "South Africa's economy is badly skewed to the big guys: how it can be changed", *The Conversation*, 13 March 2018.

[24] D. Lipton, Bridging South Africa's Economic Divide, Witwatersrand University, International Monetary Fund, Johannesburg, 19 July 2016.

a trade unionist the members he represented were of course wage-earners, while many South Africans are unable to work in waged or salaried posts and must make a living in the informal economy[25]. As a businessman, he was again an insider. The faction he heads is also made up of insiders, defined as such by the fact that they are active in and reliant on the formal economy. Zuma's faction does not represent the outsiders – who are mostly unorganised and not represented at all in national debate – but it does see them as an opportunity.

One option available to people who are excluded from the market's benefits is to attach themselves to politics and politicians in the hope that this will provide an avenue into the middle class which is not available to them through the market. If politicians gain access to resources, they can not only ensure their own entry into the middle class – they can also offer this to others in exchange for their political support. This can be achieved either by using political office to gain access to public money or by forming relationships with business people who are willing to pay for political influence. That is the strategy of the politicians in Zuma's faction. They are far less concerned about the health of the market economy, because their prospects depend on public or private funds which are not immediately sensitive to changes in the market.

The way in which these differences express themselves politically is best summed up by the removal of the Minister of Finance in December 2015, which severely threatened the health of the market economy – as shown by the sharp fall in the Rand as soon as the Minister was dismissed[26]. Within hours, therefore, a coalition stretching from Marxists in the trade union movement to the chief executives of the major banks was formed which forced an about-turn[27]. The patronage politicians

[25] V. Ranchhod, "Why is South Africa's unemployment rate so high?", *GroundUP*, 4 February 2019.

[26] "South Africa's rand falls after Finance Minister Nene sacked", *Newsday*, 10 December 2015.

[27] A. Areff (2014).

had made a bid to control the bulk of public resources, and because this threatened the market economy the "insiders" forgot their differences and united to defeat them.

The change from Zuma to Ramaphosa, therefore, was not simply a move from one type of politician to another: it was a victory for those dependant on the market economy over those who use the state as a means to resources and influence. Ramaphosa's popularity owes far more to the fact that he heads the former faction than to his personality or leadership style. There is, ironically, an important parallel between his elevation to the Presidency and Zuma's. Zuma won the ANC presidency twice almost by default – he was probably not the first choice of those who voted for him either time. The first time, in 2007, he was elected by a coalition united only in its opposition to his predecessor, Mbeki; some, as noted above, would have preferred Ramaphosa. The left of the ANC alliance, a key element in the anti-Mbeki coalition, wanted a left-wing candidate[28] but supported Zuma because, as ANC Deputy President, he seemed most likely to win. The second time, in 2012, Zuma was elected as head of a slate of candidates for the top six positions – he received the lowest vote of any of the slate's candidates[29], illustrating that support for the slate was greater than support for him. While Ramaphosa was the clear choice of his faction in 2017, many of those who supported him did so because, as ANC Deputy President, he again seemed the likeliest candidate to defeat the Zuma slate.

Perception and Reality

Ramaphosa's undoubted support outside the ANC, particularly in business, also owes far more to social and economic realities than personality or leadership skills.

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[28] "Vavi: We'll take over the ANC", *Mail and Guardian*, 9 March 2007.

[29] D. Subramany, "Mangaung: The ANC's newly elected top six", *Mail and Guardian*, 18 December 2012.

Business perceptions of Ramaphosa – shared by some in the media – are often quite at odds with reality. These admirers see Ramaphosa as a strong-willed leader who will act decisively to change anything which stands in the way of his goals. They assumed that on taking over the governing party he would move swiftly to root out anyone associated with corruption and state capture. Many also assumed that because of his business career he could be relied on to make unpopular changes to economic policy and improve the environment for business. Since taking office he has moved, as indicated earlier, to restore institutions weakened by the Zuma years; but he has not met these expectations, and this has prompted repeated criticism in some of the media. Key Zuma supporters remain in his Cabinet, and several were re-elected to Parliament in May 2019. The Zuma faction still controls several provinces – only in one, Northwest province, has it lost control since December, 2017. Its candidate was selected as Premier of KwaZulu Natal province, Zuma's home, which is also the country's second biggest. Despite a push to drum up investment, few of the economic reforms for which some business people hoped have been introduced.

None of this should be surprising to anyone who has studied Ramaphosa's career. His critics within the ANC point to his refusal to run against Mbeki as an example of his indecision – they claim that he agonised about whether to stand, before finally deciding not to. Similar struggles before accepting the deputy presidency also fuelled suggestions that he was averse to taking political risks. His role in the Marikana shootings, mentioned earlier, could also be seen as a sign that he is a follower, not a leader. There is no evidence that Ramaphosa approved of the police shootings, let alone that he encouraged them; but the email correspondence presented to the commission does suggest that he was willing to act as the company's messenger to government. This is not uncommon – many white-owned companies appoint black board members not because they respect their talents but because they open doors to government; but Ramaphosa's willingness to play the part suggested that he

was a follower rather than a shaper of events – that he was willing to go along with white power in the economy rather than seeking to challenge it.

Even if these views are rejected, the common image of Ramaphosa is contradicted by the nature of his career in public life. He began as a trade union negotiator, and an unusual one at that – one who won recognition from employers before recruiting members. He went on to become a negotiator in the constitutional forum and then a businessman, a role which also requires fairly constant negotiation. The pattern is clear: Ramaphosa is a negotiator and conciliator; his inclination is to deal with conflict by trying to find common ground. This does not mean he is always conciliatory – parties negotiate to increase their power, and they also use power during the negotiation process. In the constitutional talks Ramaphosa forced the apartheid government to replace its first negotiator, Delport, by consistently refusing to make any concessions to him: Delport was an excitable and aggressive negotiator and reacted with anger, whereupon Ramaphosa would appeal to the chair to ask Delport to control his emotions[30]. But he uses power in a particular way, one which seeks progress through compromise rather than confrontation; this has been his style throughout his career, and there was no compelling evidence for the expectation that he would confront opponents and obstacles rather than seeking to negotiate a way round them.

Why then did much of business and a section of the media form an opinion of Ramaphosa so obviously at variance with the facts? One reason is wishful thinking: they project onto him what they would like him to be, not what he is. But there is another, which places his popularity among elites in its social context. Ramaphosa is the first ANC leader who was not exiled and who did not serve a long prison term for ANC activities (as noted earlier, he was twice detained but never convicted of

[30] R. Hartley, *Ramaphosa: The Man Who Would Be King*, Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 2017.

a political "crime"). He is a child of the cities who has spent a decade and a half in business. Culturally this makes him much more compatible with business people and professionals than other ANC leaders have been (with the exception of Mandela who, in a sense, made it his business to become compatible).

There is a significant cultural gap between those who were exiled and jailed and those who were not. In exile, most ANC activists were largely cut off from the market: they relied on allowances from the movement (which were invariably small) or sometimes donor support, if they were fortunate enough to be living in Western countries. Political prisoners develop their own political sub-culture – inevitably, it is built on heated political debate rather than the daily routine of economic activity[31]. And so, however adaptable they were and however quickly they learned, there was almost always a difference between what they had been taught to value and the assumptions of the marketplace. Ramaphosa, by contrast, was born into the world of the urban market and never really left it: trade unionists and business people are both creatures of the marketplace. This made him the only ANC leader who mainstream business people, middle class journalists and professionals could see to some extent as "one of us". And so they are inclined to assume (often incorrectly) that he sees the world as they do and will tend to act like a CEO rather than as the President of a nationalist movement.

A Creature of Circumstance

This background has been given in order to clarify the point made at the outset, that Ramaphosa is more a product of economic and political realities than their shaper.

He was a competent and effective trade unionist who led his union during the period when it became, in a short time, the

[31] F. Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2003.

largest in the country[32]. He was also its General Secretary in 1987 when it launched the longest and biggest strike in South African history[33]. But the union and its growth were a product of the South African situation at the time. As pressure on apartheid began to build, government and businesses moved to contain change by granting black trade unions the bargaining rights they had been denied for five decades[34]: that is why the mines recognised Ramaphosa's union even before it had recruited members. Joining unions and winning improvements in their conditions convinced black workers that they were not powerless, and that by acting together they could force greater and greater change[35]: that is why the union grew and was able to mobilise as many workers as it did. During the 1980s the ANC emerged as the dominant movement against apartheid, and trade unions which had been reluctant to ally themselves with it began to revise their stance; so Ramaphosa's decision to move the union to COSATU and thus into a new political camp may have opened new opportunities for him and the union, but it was nevertheless very much a product of the times.

Ramaphosa was a skilled and effective negotiator in the constitutional discussions, and his working relationship with Meyer smoothed the process. But those talks – and their aftermath – were the product of two decades of change as apartheid came under increasing pressure which the government tried to deflect by making concessions. Because apartheid could survive only by force of arms and could never, even with reforms, win significant black support, the process of change was bound to end in a recognition of civil rights, at least in principle[36]. Ramaphosa

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[32] "The National Union of Mineworkers start South Africa's longest wage strike", *South African History Online*.

[33] Ibid.

[34] S. Friedman *Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions, 1970-1984*, Johannesburg, Ravan, 1987

[35] Ibid.

[36] S.C. Nolutshungu, *Changing South Africa: Political Considerations* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1982.

may well have smoothed that process, but he did not create it. It is also worth asking whether his rapport with Meyer was perhaps made much more likely by the cultural factor mentioned above. Despite his role in the resistance movement and his time in detention, Ramaphosa was surely a child of changes that were already well under way, at a time when black people who lived in cities and were steeped in urban culture were beginning to acquire at least some of what had always been denied them – such as a university education and the opportunity to work as a professional. This must have made it far easier for him and Meyer to find each other and to create the dynamic which enabled the negotiations to progress.

As the leader of a business, Ramaphosa accumulated wealth and prestige; but even if he played the part with Mandela's blessing (as he later insisted), it was in this role that he was most clearly a consequence rather than a cause of change. As a former ANC Secretary General and still a member of its National Executive Committee he was, given white businesses' need to find black strategic partners, an ideal candidate for positions on the boards of major companies. And his role at Marikana showed that he and other former activists who turned to business were expected not to change corporate South Africa but to oil its wheels by facilitating contact with the government. As noted earlier, the South African economy has developed since 1994 in such a way that black people have become participants, but have not really changed it. Ramaphosa's business activities illustrate this. He was a product of this pattern, and had no impact on it.

It was this career, too, which enabled him, after reluctantly becoming Deputy President of the ANC and of the country, to emerge as the leader of the anti-Zuma faction. Given his trade union and business career, he exemplified those black people who had been absorbed into the market economy. Nor does he represent this strand within the ANC only – as the reaction to the firing of the Finance Minister in 2015 showed, he is the product of a coalition which stretches beyond the governing

party into business and the professions. Ramaphosa's defeat of Zuma may go down in history as a crucial victory for the institutions of constitutional democracy, one which set the country on a more democratic path; but it is also the product of a pattern of economic development of which he is a product, not an architect.

In a sense, the history of Cyril Ramaphosa is also that of his society during the last years of apartheid and the first decades after its demise. This does not mean that he was merely a passive pawn in that history; but it does put into perspective the view of leadership which denies that leaders are a product of their societies or that their ability to shape destiny is greatly constrained by circumstances. Ramaphosa has made a difference to South Africa. But South Africa has made a great difference to him.

What Now?

The link between Ramaphosa's role and current realities in South Africa is particularly important when we consider his options as the country steers a course away from the Zuma era and the patronage politics which defined it.

When, in May 2019, Ramaphosa led the ANC to the election victory which gave his presidency its popular mandate, he had been in office for a year and a half. During that time, his government had introduced changes which enjoy broad support throughout the insider coalition. These reforms, mentioned earlier, were in a sense designed to take the country back to 2009, before Zuma became President. This means restoring public institutions to the way in which they functioned then, but it does not mean tackling the economic development path which continues to exclude many from the market's benefits. Mbeki may have had doubts about the course of that development – he feared that incorporating black people in existing economic arrangements encouraged a culture of consumption

which he found distasteful[37]. But the growth path itself was central to his administration's programme[38].

If all Ramaphosa is willing and able to do is to go back to 2009 then he will inevitably remain a product of his times: for though recapturing public institutions is important, he may find his changes only temporarily effective. Economic exclusion not only limits the growth of the economy: it also makes state capture and corruption far more likely. While corruption is a problem in all democracies, it is exacerbated when ambitious people are denied the pathway to middle class status usually offered by the market and come to see politics as the only possible means of advancement. Businesses and politicians who see advantages in working with each other to further their interests at the expense of everyone else's will continue to find opportunities which would not exist if the economy was more accessible. The road to change must therefore include significant reform to the way the economy operates[39].

Race, South African society's key faultline, also remains an obstacle to progress. While (some) black people have been absorbed into the economic elite, they are not equal members. Habits of racial domination do not wear off in 25 years, so black professionals and business people continue to face prejudice which restricts their progress. This has prompted much anger among middle-class black people, who are willing to support demands for radical economic change not because this is important to them in its own right but because it enables them to express anger at the way things are. Demands such as that for the expropriation of land without compensation, which was at the centre of the national debate for much of Ramaphosa's

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[37] T. Mbeki, Nelson Mandela Memorial Lecture by President Thabo Mbeki: University of Witwatersrand, July 29, 2006, International relations and cooperation.

[38] S. Friedman, "Seeing Ourselves as Others see Us: Racism, technique and the Mbeki administration", in D. Glaser (ed.), *Mbeki and After: Reflections on the Legacy of Thabo Mbeki*, Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2010, pp.163-186

[39] D. Lipton (2016).

pre-election term, are supported primarily by middle-class people who are able to make themselves heard. Because they emanate from the middle class, these demands always end in compromises which do not damage the market; but they unsettle and hamper the economy[40]. And so Ramaphosa's first term as a President elected by voters rather than party delegates will need to see progress in dealing with racial division.

Both issues call for a process ideally suited to Ramaphosa's strength – his ability to negotiate and conciliate. Because none of the economic actors can force their wishes on everyone else, the only way these issues can be addressed is through a negotiation process like the constitutional bargain in which Ramaphosa played a vital role, this time over the economy and social institutions. But, while he is suited to the task, it was not clear at the time he won his first elected term whether he was willing to begin negotiating these changes. The answer to this question will determine not only South Africa's immediate history but the degree to which Ramaphosa is remembered as a shaper of the realities which shaped him.

[40] "Land talks send SA business confidence to lowest point in 2018", *Bloomberg*, 11 September 2018.

4. Regenerating Angola. João Lourenço and the Legacy of the Dos Santos Regime

Alex Vines

At the opening of the Extraordinary Congress of his party the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) in Luanda, in June 2019, President João Lourenço (widely known as JLo) emphasised that a fight against corruption was needed to end nepotism in political office and other spheres of public service. Members of Angola's political and economic elites are to blame for illicitly enriching themselves and plunging the country deeper into external debt, he suggested: "if the government achieves this, more citizens will be taken out of poverty. The responsibility we have is urgent and needs to be expedited". The private sector, he added, would become the engine for growing the economy[1]. Lourenço's targets for his new administration were ambitious.

After nearly four decades as President, José Eduardo dos Santos had decided not to stand for re-election but to step aside in late September 2017 for the MPLA's chosen successor. João Lourenço was inaugurated after the MPLA won just over 61% of votes in the multiparty election of August 2017[2], but lost

[1] "João Lourenço arrasa os anos de presidência de José Eduardo dos Santos", *SIC Notícias*, 16 June 2019.

[2] M. de Alancastro, "Angola under Lourenço: Towards a Negociated Hegemony", *Notes de Ifri*, February 2018; J. Pearce, D. Péclard, and R. Soares de Oliveira, "Angola's Elections and the Politics of Presidential Succession", *African Affairs*, vol. 117, no. 466, January 2018.

seats to the opposition. Many Angolans assumed that the dos Santos family would continue to pull the strings – JLo had been the compromise candidate of the MPLA. But six months later the puppet had become an action hero, and change has been quicker than many expected[3].

This chapter charts Lourenço's transitional politics following nearly 38 years of dos Santos rule, and assesses how far the new President has really changed Angola's political and economic landscape[4]. Are Lourenço's reforms mere window-dressing for the new MPLA elite, or a serious effort to renew the party, modernise the state and transform the economy[5]?

Who Is João Lourenço?

João Lourenço, born on 5 March 1954 in Lobito, had humble origins: his father was a medical practitioner and his mother was a seamstress. He joined the MPLA before independence from Portugal in 1975, and soon afterwards went into the army and received Cuban training. In 1978 he travelled to the Soviet Union and studied at the Vladimir Ilyich Lenin military academy. After returning to Angola he rose to the rank of General, married into a key MPLA family and became governor of several provinces. Always the party loyalist, he was responsible for propaganda in the MPLA's Bureau Político from 1992 to 1997 and later became General Secretary, a post he lost in 2003 when President dos Santos hinted that he was considering retirement and Lourenço signalled interest in succeeding him. In fact Dos Santos was smoking out potential competitors, and

[3] Reform in Angola occurs during economic crisis, see, A. Vines, "Review article: Continuity and change in Angola: insights from modern history", *International Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 5, September 2016.

[4] This paper draws on interviews by the author with government, opposition, oil industry, banking and mining and civil society and meetings held at Chatham House from June 2017 to June 2019 – some of which are referenced below.

[5] A. Vines, "Lourenço's First Year: Angola's Transitional Politics", *African Center for Strategic Studies*, 20 September 2018.

promptly demoted him. Learning from this tactical mistake, João Lourenço rebuilt his relationship with the President and was rewarded in 2014 by being made Minister of Defence. He enjoyed the reputation of an efficient technocrat, as did his wife, Ana Dias Lourenço, an ex-Minister who has also been Angola's representative to the World Bank[6].

Over his 38 years in office dos Santos sought to weaken the MPLA and centralise power in himself through a vast system of political patronage, but as his health gradually weakened the party began to reassert itself. Lourenço's strong party and military credentials made him a popular candidate with many in the MPLA, and in 2017 the party forced the President to accept JLo, then a 63-year-old army general untainted by major corruption allegations, as a compromise candidate[7].

The Tug-of-War Between Jlo and Dos Santos

The power transfer was not straightforward, for dos Santos had not originally intended to step down as President until 2019 at the earliest, and planned to remain head of the MPLA for longer still. Ill health, fatigue after nearly four decades in power, and an economic crisis made such aspirations unrealistic, but dos Santos was not ready to relinquish power rapidly.

A tug-of-war arose over the date for the Extraordinary Congress of the MPLA. In early 2018 the former leader,

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[6] Ana Dias Lourenço has been active in the MPLA since her youth (she was detained under suspicion and mistreated during the Nito Alves coup attempt of May 1977), had a good technocratic reputation as Minister of Planning and was well-liked by the business community. As First Lady, she is discreet but has significant influence over her husbands' thinking. She fell out badly with President dos Santos in 2012 and some observers credit her for influencing her husband in moving quickly against dos Santos' interests. The couple have six children, all active in the MPLA and also have a family house in Bethesda, Maryland, United States (bought in 2013).

[7] Dos Santos' favoured candidate to replace him was Bornito de Sousa, who became the Vice President of the Republic after the 2017 elections.

encouraged by his family and allies, said the congress should be in December that year or in April 2019[8], but the move failed and the new President continued to build up his support base by, for instance, appointing General Fernando Garcia Miala as head of the Serviço de Inteligência e Segurança de Estado (SINSE, the state intelligence and security service). Miala's appointment ensured the support of the intelligence community and further weakened dos Santos' grip on power, as did a number of other appointments of his more dissident followers.

By his first anniversary as President of Angola Lourenço was riding high, having just consolidated his power base at the MPLA party congress held in Luanda in September, where he stood unopposed and secured 98.6% of the votes, formally replacing dos Santos as party leader.

This ended the division of power between the presidents of state (Lourenço) and party (dos Santos), producing a situation unknown in Angola since 1979, for the separation between party and state had long been blurred. The relationship between the two individuals, also, had deteriorated after late 2017 as Lourenço's increasingly assertive reforms began to have an impact on dos Santos, his family and his allies. At times they have communicated only through go-betweens, and even the engagement of the President's daughter Cristina Giovanna Dias Lourenço to the ex-President's son Jovel Avelino Gourgel dos Santos in April 2019 has not improved relations between the two families.

Consolidating Power Through the MPLA

The 7th Extraordinary Congress of the MPLA on 15 and 16 June 2019 in Luanda further strengthened Lourenço's hold on

[8] In 2017, the dos Santos family were increasingly nervous of the upcoming transition. To her credit, Isabel dos Santos convinced her father to step down at the elections in August 2017. A. Vines, "Angola's Transition to Technocracy Won't Be Victimless", *Foreign Policy*, 25 August 2017.

power. The party's Comité Central (CC, Central Committee) was enlarged from 366 to 497 members while the Bureau Político (BP, political bureau) now has 72 members against 52 previously, bringing in additional new blood not associated with the dos Santos era and signalling also the preparation of a new generation to provide JLo's successor in 2027. As many as 61% of the new Central Committee members (134) are under the age of 45, and 15% (21) are female[9].

This Extraordinary Congress was attended by 2,448 delegates. It elected Paulo Pombolo as the new MPLA General Secretary to replace Álvaro de Boavida Neto (a close ally of dos Santos appointed to the post by Lourenço).

Key supporters of ex-President dos Santos stayed away, such as the former Information Minister Manuel Rabelais and the party's former spokesperson Norberto Garcia. Rabelais is barred from foreign travel as he has been charged with corruption, while Garcia was recently acquitted of similar charges. A week before the congress, dos Santos' daughter Welwitschia (Tchizé) dos Santos had her MPLA and CC memberships suspended for absenteeism. Tchizé stayed away from the congress and has regularly accused Lourenço on social media of muzzling state institutions and seeking to obliterate her father's legacy and promote the political careers of his associates under a pretence of fighting corruption[10].

Former President dos Santos was invited to attend the congress but was in Spain for medical treatment and his absence was noted by Lourenço in his opening speech. As mentioned above, Lourenço had been elected President of the MPLA at the party's 6th Extraordinary Congress on 8 September 2018 in Luanda, ending 38 years of dos Santos' leadership of the party. At that congress the former President had admitted that he had made mistakes while in office, but he pointedly omitted to compliment Lourenço.

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[9] "Discurso do líder do MPLA no VII Congresso Extraordinário do partido", *Angop*, 16 June 2019.

[10] "Quem é ditador José Eduardo dos Santos ou João Lourenço ?", *RFI*, 8 June 2019.

Having got a firmer grip on the party presidency, JLo immediately overhauled its Bureau Político: nearly half its members were replaced by younger people, many of them not linked to dos Santos. Those released from the BP read like a *Who's Who* of the dos Santos era – including Francisco Higino Lopes Carneiro, a one-time Minister of Public Works; Manuel Vicente, a former Chief Executive of Sonangol and Angola's previous Vice-President; Juilão Mateus Paulo "Dino Matrosse", a veteran of the liberation struggle and long-term MPLA General Secretary; and Kundi Paihama, a former Defence Minister and majority shareholder in Banco Angola de Negócios e Comércio. Some allies of Dos Santos were also retained, such as the lawyer Carlos Feijó and Rui Luís Falcão Pinto de Andrade, a one-time MPLA spokesman.

Women were openly promoted as agents of change in Lourenço's drive to reform the party and the government. The appointments of Carolina Cerqueira as Minister of State for the Social Area and Maria da Piedade de Jesus as Culture Minister in June 2019 were part of this move[11]. The economist Vera Esperança dos Santos Daves de Sousa, Minister of State for Finance and the Treasury, was also being groomed for more responsibility, having been brought into the BP, and her fellow BP member, the Environment Minister Paula Cristina Coelho, was likewise seen to be growing in influence. With 40 members (including four Ministers of State) the new government was also bigger than that of the dos Santos era, and JLo seemed to be trying to leap-frog over a generation. This was somewhat visionary, but was bound to create jealousy and resistance to some of his reforms. If he proved unable to turn the economy around, this could create further problems.

[11] "Carolina Cerqueira e Maria da Piedade de Jesus têm novos cargos no Executivo", *Jornal de Angola*, 21 June 2019.

Dismantling Dos Santos Era Networks

According to the Banco Nacional de Angola (BNA) some $30bn of Angolan money was held outside the country, around half in personal accounts[12]. New legislation approved in May 2018 requires the return of illicitly-exported capital over $100,000, with an amnesty until December 2018.

Lourenço has overseen a purge of dos Santos-era family, friends and allies from key governmental and quasi-governmental jobs. While Lourenço was in New York in October 2018 touting his economic reforms and the war on corruption, dos Santos' son José Filomeno (known as Zenú) was taken into custody in Luanda with his friend and business partner Jean Claude Bastos de Morais. The younger dos Santos was accused of trying to siphon off $1.5bn from the National Bank of Angola, but both men were released from jail in March 2019 as prosecutors announced that they had recovered "all the financial and non-financial assets of the Angolan Sovereign Fund, which was under the control of Quantum Global", or $2.3bn domiciled in British and Mauritian banks and another $1.0bn in other assets[13]. Their release and the dropping of charges indicated that for the cash-strapped Lourenço administration the prime objective was getting the money back but it wasn't the only judicial case Zenú faced. He and a former central bank governor Valter Felipe da Silva are to go on trial in late 2019 for the irregular transfer of $500 million from the Banco Nacional de Angola to a British bank.

In August 2019, former Transportation Minister Augusto Tomás was jailed for 14 years. He has been made an example: his pleas of hardship have drawn little sympathy from the average Angolan although former dos Santos allies are keeping their heads down[14].

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[12] See, meeting summary of BNA Governor, José de Lima Massano, speaking on "Economic Reforms in Angola", Chatham House, 8 October 2018.

[13] "Former Angolan president's son freed from prison", *Mail and Guardian*, 25 March 2019.

[14] "Augusto Tomás nega pela terceira vez responsabilidades financeiras", *Jornal de*

The arrests continued: just one day after the MPLA's Extraordinary Congress in June 2019 General José Maria, the army's former head of information and security who had held the position for more than 30 years under dos Santos, was placed under house arrest and charged in the Supreme Military Tribunal (STM) with insubordination and embezzlement of military equipment and classified documents.

This has played well among Angola's middle class and has also weakened resistance to Lourenço's reforms of the MPLA. JLo has firmly consolidated his grip on power and ended the duopoly of power between state and party. Dos Santos loyalists increasingly hoped that if they kept a low profile they would be left to enjoy some of the assets they had accumulated in the past.

Opposition parties and anti-corruption activists welcomed the new anti-corruption drive, but pointed out that certain people close to Lourenço, too, have large fortunes which they have not been made to explain as should.

Reforming the Angolan Economy

Lourenço inherited an economy in deep crisis, in recession for each of the previous three years and in urgent need of sustained reform. Angola was ranked 165th out of 180 countries in the 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International and also scored poorly in the World Bank's report *Doing Business* (in 173rd place out of 190 in 2018). The country's oil-dependent finances were not sustainable, and reform was necessary and unavoidable. Lourenço's first eighteen months in office saw some key actions against the family, confidants and allies of former President dos Santos, many of whom had prospered substantially during the later years of his rule when his political grip was weakening. Any serious reform would have to confront this situation immediately.

Angola, 7 June 2019.

In April 2019, Lourenço ordered the renegotiation of two new contracts, cutting out two firms, Ubinveste and Landscape, owned by dos Santos' daughter Isabel: in January 2016 a dos Santos decree had awarded them contracts worth $1.3bn in all[15]. This was not the first time Lourenço terminated contracts awarded by his predecessor to firms linked to the dos Santos family or allies: in July 2018 the President repealed a state guarantee worth US$1.5bn and a 30 year-concession for a new port at Barra do Dande to another firm linked to Isabel (Atlantic Ventures[16]).

Also in April 2019, Angola's Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology cancelled the tender process for a fourth mobile phone operator's licence. It had previously announced that the winner was Telstar, an Angolan firm formed in January 2018 with a share capital of just 200,000 kwanza ($1,200), but quickly backtracked after complaints. Telstar is majority-owned (90%) by Manuel João Carneiro, a general linked to another Angolan telecoms firm, Mundo Telecomunicações, whose owners included the former Transport Minister August Tomás (detained last year on corruption charges), José Pedro de Morais (twice Finance Minister under dos Santos) and Higino Carneiro, a former Minister of Public Works and Governor of the capital, Luanda, who is currently under investigation for alleged graft[17].

The re-election in March 2019 of Isabel dos Santos, Africa's richest woman, to the Chair of the Board of Angola's biggest telecommunications company UNITEL did not go unchallenged: the four shareholders still cannot agree, as PT Ventures and Sonangol refuse to accept her.

These examples show that the reform process is messy, and

[15] "Ministério retira direito de superfície à Urbinvest", *Jornal de Angola*, 25 April 2019.

[16] "Angola's President announces launch of international public tenders in New York", *Macauhub*, 26 September 2018.

[17] "Angola launches a new public tender for fourth mobile phone license", *Macauhub*, 23 April 2019.

that reforming an opaque and nepotistic system of connections and entitlement requires a generational break and will continue long after Lourenço has left office. A key question for the future is whether the new President will become more equitable in his reform efforts during his first term or will mainly focus on the dos Santos family and its allies.

Protecting the "Golden Goose" While Diversifying Away from Oil

Angola has one of the most oil-dependent economies in Africa. Crude oil production, which had already fallen to 1.48m barrels per day (bpd) in 2018 from 1.63m bpd in 2017, continued to decline in the first half of 2019 (1.37m bpd in March, the lowest for 12 years) because of a combination of maturing oilfields, production issues and reduced investment[18]. Production is projected to further decline by over one third, to as little as one million barrels a day by 2023[19]. Higher crude prices will not significantly compensate for such a sharp decline[20].

In 2019 oil represented 95% of Angola's foreign exchange earnings and more than 40% of its GDP. President Lourenço is fully aware that the country needs a robust and predictable cash flow from oil – he described the industry as the nation's "Golden Goose" – while he works out how to diversify the economy beyond hydrocarbons. The official ambition is to steady production at around 1.6m bpd, although a level of 1.45m may be more realistic.

The new administration has been working with international oil companies to slow the decline, removing obstacles to the

[18] "Angola's oil output fell in 2018 due to ageing fields – Sonangol", *Reuters*, 25 February 2019. In mid-2017 there were only eight active rigs (compared with 25 in 2014) and seismic activity fell by 80%.

[19] "Angolan President Brings Reform to Critical Oil Industry", *Bloomberg*, 12 June 2019.

[20] A. Vines, "Oil is Angola's Trump Card for International Success, and the New President Must Bring About Reform", *Newsweek*, 23 August 2017.

development of new fields. One of Lourenço's first actions as President, in late 2017, was to meet senior officials from Chevron, Total, BP, ENI, Exxon and Statoil (now Equinor) to discuss the industry's future. An immediate result was the setting up of a working group, soon followed by the firing of dos Santos' daughter, Isabel dos Santos, as head of the national oil company Sonangol, along with most of her Board. Reforms have followed, such as draft legislation providing for companies to explore and produce natural gas in Angola and ensuring that the Ministry of Finance is responsible for the accounts of the oil and gas industry. The monopoly on fuel imports is also to be ended. A series of presidential decrees has signalled intentions for further reform, but actual progress has been slow, and few tangible investments have materialised[21].

A broader overhaul of Angola's oil and gas industry is in fact under way. By the end of 2020 a new agency, the Agência Nacional de Petróleos e Gás (ANGP) will fully take over the role of concessionaire from Sonangol. The latter will focus just on hydrocarbon exploration, production, refining and distribution, and will sell off non-core subsidiaries as well as its equity in some oil blocks. In late 2018 the state company secured $1bn of finance for restructuring from a consortium of banks including Standard Chartered and African Export-Import Bank. The Ministério dos Recursos Minerais e Petróleos (Ministry of Mineral Resources and Petroleum, MMRP), which will remain in charge of policy, revealed that there could also be an IPO to sell off a stake in Sonangol itself, although no decision has been made on when and where to list the shares. After operating for decades with little accountability, Sonangol would suddenly become subject to shareholder scrutiny.

These reforms are also meant to raise investors' interest in the country's oil industry. Positive developments for that industry

[21] "Angola: Total launches full-field production on Kaombo with the start-up of the second FPSO", *Total*, 2 April 2019; "Eni announces the start-up of a new production well in the Vandumbu field in Block 15/06, offshore Angola", *Eni.com*, 24 January 2019.

since mid-2018 include new agreements with ExxonMobil, BP and Total. An auction licensing round for ten on-shore and off-shore oil exploration blocks in the country's Kwanza, Benguela and Cunene basins, planned for late 2019, will be Angola's first since an offering of pre-salt blocks in 2011. The ANPG said it will offer as many as 55 blocks: 31 through public bidding over the next five years and the rest through direct negotiation by 2025[22].

Attracting new investment into the oil and gas industry is critical, but the government does not expect the huge signature bonus payments of the past. It also understands that global competition for investment is fierce: indeed, this has driven the reform programme to offer more favourable terms and support cost-cutting, although the pressure to create Angolan jobs (local content) is still significant.

These efforts should help stabilise oil production over the next decade. The country's transition from a single focus on oil to include gas will also help to offset the decline in oil production and to develop opportunities for domestic energy supply. With a limited domestic market for natural gas beyond a solitary LNG train, limited effort has so far been put into developing gas fields, exploring for gas or appraising the size of existing gas finds.

Historically, most of Angola's production-sharing contracts have related only to oil and not gas, leaving Sonangol in theoretical control of gas finds. This is now changing, and upstream investors have been offered control of all hydrocarbons discovered on their blocks. Angola is also planning to join the Gas Exporting Countries Forum[23]. In addition to providing additional supply for a new gas consortium for Angola LNG out of Soyo, the government has this year signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a US-based group backed by private equity (New Fortress Energy) to build the country's first

[22] "Angola to offer 10 blocks in bid round", *Oil and Gas Journal*, 5 June 2019.
[23] "Reform at last for Angolan oil", *Macauhub*, 4 January 2019.

LNG terminal. Luanda also intends to build as many as three refineries to reduce dependence on fuel imports.

Despite this progress in reform, Lourenço fired Sonangol's Chief Executive Carlos Saturnino in May 2019, together with its Board, following a countrywide fuel shortage caused by a strain on the company's liquidity and other supply-side issues. Saturnino was replaced by Sebastião Pai Querido Martins, then a non-executive director but previously head of the company's production subsidiary P&P for ten years under the then Chief Executive and former Vice-President of Sonangol, Manuel Vicente. Martins' experience will be valued, but his apparent connections to Vicente and his recent spell (2015-17) as Chairman of the Board of Somoil, Angola's largest indigenous oil company, may also raise questions about Lourenço's real commitment to reform. Saturnino's sacking may have been politically expedient, but it will slow down the reform process, as Martins is more risk-averse and less decisive than Saturnino.

President Lourenço recognises the urgent need to diversify away from oil in order to ensure greater resilience in coping with commodity price cycles and to create new jobs. His administration has also started to reform the mining industry. In late 2018 Anglo American confirmed that it was applying for a prospecting licence, and Rio Tinto is in talks with the government. Angola also plans to privatise around 74 state companies over the next few years, including the state diamond company Endiama, while some key infrastructure projects have been reviewed. A Chatham House study of Angola's non-oil infrastructure showed significant graft and poor oversight in projects up to 2016[24]. A recent Deloitte assessment indicates that Angolan banking, too, urgently needs thorough reform[25].

According to analysis by the China Africa Research Initiative, Luanda received $21.2bn or 23% of the $89.6bn loaned by

[24] S.K. Jensen, *Angola's Infrastructure Ambitions through Booms and Busts: Policy, Governance and Reform*, Chatham House Research Paper, 14 September 2018.

[25] "Angola's banking sector grows by 16% in 2016, Deloitte say", *Macauhub* , 20 October 2017.

China to African countries between 2000 and 2014. Much of this was for infrastructure. The country's biggest Chinese lender was the CDB, with $11.3bn, followed by the Export-Import Bank of China with $7.36bn. Almost half of all Chinese loans were guaranteed by Angolan oil[26].

With Chinese construction sites spread across Angola and tens of thousands of Chinese workers in the country (down from an acknowledged peak of over 250,000 four years ago), there is no doubt that China is a strategic partner. It is the leading destination for Angolan crude, and a prime source of loans and critical infrastructure[27].

The CDB loan of $2bn in October 2018 was agreed on condition that some of it was used by the Angolan government to pay outstanding debts to Chinese contractors. There is a long list of large-scale infrastructure projects, new and old, including completion of Luanda's new international airport, power transmission lines, the Luanda water supply system and a new naval academy in Kwanza Sul province. The Aeroporto Internacional de Angola (an alternative to Luanda's existing Quatro de Fevereiro International Airport) is controversial: it is typical of "old Angola", its completion badly behind schedule and over budget, and much of it being constructed by an opaque private company listed in Hong Kong, the China International Fund (CIF)[28]. With new finance, the Angolan government hopes it can be completed by 2020. CIF is led by Sam Pa (also known as Xu Jinghua), named by an American Congressional report as head of the "88 Queensway Group" of businesses that also includes China Sonangol which holds oil equity in Angola. China Sonangol has a joint venture with Sinopec (China's

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[26] China Africa Research Initiative, http://www.sais-cari.org/research-chinese-loans-to-africa

[27] A. Vines, "Angolan agency and Chinese and US oil politics, 1975-2014", in D. Zweig and Y. Hao (eds.), *Sino-US Energy Triangles: Resource diplomacy under hegemony*, Routledge, 2015, pp.129-148.

[28] A. Vines, "How Different Is the 'New Angola' Under Lourenco?", *World Politics Review*, 16 October 2018.

second-biggest oil and gas producer) in Sonangol Sinopec International, which holds 50% of Block 18 in Angola. Apart from Block 18, China Sonangol also has an equity interest in eight other oil blocks in Angola[29].

Sam Pa seems to have survived the scrutiny of Lourenço's anti-graft campaign for now because he is closely associated with former Vice President Manuel Vicente, who was instrumental in setting up Sonangol's partnership with China and remains a confidant of Lourenço (and close to Sonangol's, Sebastião Pai Querido Martins). In May 2018, a Portuguese court ruled that Vicente, charged with graft and money-laundering by Portuguese prosecutors, can be tried in Angola under Angolan law (because it is a Community of Portuguese Language Country, CPLP). This resulted in a political rapprochement between the former colonial power Portugal and Angola, as the case had chilled diplomatic relations. Lourenço made an official visit to Portugal towards the end of 2018.

That Vicente and Pa feature as they do in the "new Angola" suggests there are limits to Lourenço's reforms. His anti-graft drive is as much about Angola's domestic transition and cleaning up the image of the ruling party as it is about modernising the country. Targeting the dos Santos family and their friends was always going to be the easier part of reform. Comprehensive and deep structural change is complicated, slower, and requires more serious compromises.

There are also signs that Lourenço maintains some old-style family-linked business and political networks. His sister Edith do Sacramento Gonçalves Lourenço Catraio, a career diplomat based in Brussels, this year became a shareholder in the diamond company Dicorp[30]. In early 2018, Lourenço promoted his brother General Sequeira João Lourenço to become deputy head of the President's Intelligence Bureau, which oversees the military,

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[29] A. Vines, L. Wong, M. Weimer, and I. Campos, *Thirst for African Oil:* Asian National Oil Companies in Nigeria and Angola, Chatham House, August 2009.
[30] "Irmã de João Lourenço envolvida no negócio de diamantes", *Rádio Angola*, 26 April 2019.

the police and the intelligence services. Two months earlier, he allegedly sold a state-owned aircraft to his brother's aviation company without a public tender and at an undisclosed price[31]. It is a reminder that, whatever the sector, Lourenço's reforms will not do away entirely with deep-seated nepotistic habits.

Addressing the Debt Burden

The economy has remained fragile, with only modest growth, high debt and high inflation. After an impressive annual expansion of 7.6% in 2000-2014[32], growth slowed markedly in 2015. The recession of the next three years was expected to continue in 2019, the government slashing its annual growth forecast from 2.8 to 0.4%[33]. Angola's medium-term debt strategy, the Estratégia de Endividamento de Médio Prazo (2019-2021), entails a 2.2% contraction in oil sector GDP in 2019, with 1.5% growth in the non-oil sector. The IMF predicts that real GDP will contract by 4.5% in 2019. This outlook highlights the continuing weaknesses of the economy, but the debt burden is now projected to steadily decline to 66% by 2024 if current commodity prices hold.

Debt servicing is the country's single largest expenditure item and 2018 was also a year of debt maturities for Angola. The country's total debt – excluding that of the state oil company Sonangol – was projected to reach $77.3bn or 70.8% of GDP by the end of 2018. In fact, the ratio of debt service to revenue reached 89% in 2017, and public debt as a share of GDP has more than doubled since 2014, from 39% to 84% at the end of 2018.

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[31] "Angola: President Lourenço's grace period is over", *Mail and Guardian*, 16 January 2019.

[32] IMF, World Economic Outlook database, April 2019 (last retrieved on 2 July 2019).

[33] See meeting summary of Vera Daves, Secretary of State for the Treasury, "Economic Reform and Financial Management in Angola", Chatham House, 28 January 2019.

Angola's current debt to China amounts to $ 23bn, or 56.1% of its external debt[34]. To remedy this, Lourenço and a high-level ministerial delegation went to China for a state visit in October 2018, hoping to negotiate up to $11bn of new credit facilities for infrastructure development. The deal they struck in the end was for $2bn in funding from the China Development Bank (CDB). In addition to China, Angola has oil-backed loans from Brazil and Israel. There is now little room for manoeuvre, and the government has been forced to turn to commercial borrowing.

This is did successfully by issuing about $3bn of Eurobonds[35]. Around the same time (in late 2018) the country re-engaged with the IMF and entered a financial service support programme (an Extended Fund Facility, EFF) with access to loans, aimed at restoring investor confidence and facilitating much-needed private-sector growth outside the oil industry. The IMF engagement is a positive development, helping Angola's international reputation and encouraging control of expenditure and long-term debt rescheduling. But it may also restrict fiscal and monetary policy and have some social impact in the short term in terms of unemployment and lower real incomes. Other conditions of the EFF include targets for improved governance and credit-risk management at public banks and new anti-money-laundering legislation.

In mid-2019 the IMF completed its first evaluation of Angola's $3.7bn EFF and released a second tranche of financing worth $248m. The IMF noted that the government had "demonstrated strong commitment to policies under the Fund-supported program", but it observed that a "weakened external environment" and volatility of oil prices was "posing challenges to their reform efforts"[36]. There was also praise for

[34] P.C. Roque, "Angola's Foreign Policy", *Egmont Paper 98*, October 2017.

[35] "Angola plans to issue another US$2 billion in Eurobonds", *Macauhub*, 4 February 2019.

[36] "IMF Executive Board Completes the First Review Under Angola's Extended Arrangement and Approves US$248.15 Million Disbursement", IMF Press

the government's adjusted 2019 budget, though with calls for a "prudent fiscal stance" and a reiteration of the importance of ensuring debt sustainability. In private the IMF was concerned that the Angolan government's economic reforms – particularly the planned ending of fuel subsidies and the introduction of VAT in October – might be too abrupt and lead to social consequences.

The Angola currency, the kwanza, has fallen by more than 40% since a dollar peg was abandoned at the beginning of 2018 for a floating foreign exchange regime. This has eased pressure on international reserves, which had fallen from $28bn in 2014 to a ten-year low of $12.8bn in February 2018. A lack of foreign currency and concerns about corruption had forced foreign companies to restrict operations. This has made nurturing the oil and gas industry a top priority for Lourenço's government until it can work out how to sustainably diversify away from hydrocarbons.

Changing the Security Sector and Neutralising the Opposition

Given his military record and background as Minister of Defence, Lourenço is well placed to begin serious reform of the security sector. On paper, at up to 100,000 personnel Angola's armed forces (the Forças Armadas Angolanas, FAA) are among the largest in Africa. Since the civil war ended in 2002 the military has played a key role in facilitating post-conflict reconciliation within the elite and job creation. Maintaining such a large military is unsustainable in the long term, and changes appear to be under way: while, for example, 21% of the national budget was allocated for defence as against 11.3% for education and 7.4% for health in 2018, these allocations were revised the following year and defence was cut by 5.1%[37].

Release 19/212, 12 June 2019.

[37] "Orçamento angolano reforça verba para Educação", *África 21 Digital*, 6 June

A package of three laws reforming the armed forces was also approved by the National Assembly in July 2018, and paves the way for significant downsizing. The plan was to halve the size of the armed forces and to professionalise and depoliticise many posts.

Meanwhile, the FAA Chief of Staff, General Geraldo Sachipengo Nunda, was fired in April 2018 because of corruption allegations against him, along with the external intelligence chief, André de Oliveira Sango, a long time dos Santos loyalist. Nunda (an ex-UNITA guerrilla fighter) had been a technocratic appointment but did not have the necessary political support to continue. He was replaced by General António Egídio de Sousa Santos "Disciplina" (previously the FAA's head of education), an appointment that strengthened the President's grip on the military in preparation for structural reform.

Over a couple of years, Lourenço also appointed some 130 new generals and admirals to the defence and security services and retired about 150 others. These reforms continued into the following year with the sacking of 61 commissioners of the National Police and the appointment of Domingos André Tchikanda as Secretary of State for former combatants and veterans of the homeland[38].

Lourenço's reforms also have little to do with rooting democracy or political pluralism more firmly in Angola. With a firm grip on the party and a stabilising economy, the President's priority will be to stimulate growth, create jobs and improve government delivery. The reforms are all aimed at rebuilding support for the MPLA in anticipation of Angola's first ever municipal elections, whenever they are held, as the party fears it could lose control of some parts of the country[39]. By bringing

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2019.

[38] "PR reformula chefias militares das Forças Armadas e da Polícia Nacional", *VerAngola*, 17 May 2019.

[39] There remains a debate over when these will be held. Scheduled currently as a selective electoral exercise in 2020 or 2021 or even merged with the national elections of 2022 to cost save.

young people onto the MPLA's Central Committee Lourenço trying to make his party more attractive to voters in the upcoming local elections. He is also manoeuvring for an increased MPLA majority in the next general election in 2022 (the party secured just over 61% of the parliamentary vote in 2017), and a second term for himself.

This strategy is causing problems for the opposition: both UNITA and the CASA-CE coalition are finding that the MPLA is stealing their ideas and proving better at internal leadership renewal[40]. Lourenço has reached out to opposition and other activists in a way that never occurred during the dos Santos era. He has also sought to heal the scars of past conflicts, for example giving permission for the reburial on 1 June 2019 of the former UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi at a ceremony in his home village of Lopitanga 17 years after his death, a powerful gesture of reconciliation. Development and wildlife conservation projects, including some in UNITA strongholds, are also partly designed to weaken the opposition's grip on those areas so as to offset the fickle and unpredictable support of urban and suburban voters along the coast (especially in Luanda), who have high expectations of what the state should deliver[41]. The actions against the Dos Santos family should also be seen as partly aimed at winning the support of disenfranchised urban voters for the MPLA. These initiatives are popular, but many Angolans still want to see convictions. At times, the President has also shown himself overly influenced by public opinion: the sacking in 2019 of Carlos Saturnino from Sonangol was probably a panic response, to placate a hostile press and a public angry over fuel shortages which were not of his making.

[40] See meeting summary of Angola cross-party meeting, *Political Reform in Angola: Challenges and Priorities for Elected Officials*, Chatham House, 31 October 2018.

[41] See speech by Minister for the Environment, P. Coelho, *Mine Clearance, Conservation and Economic Development in Angola*, Chatham House, 17 June 2019.

Conclusion

Lourenço's reform agenda is a balancing act. The IMF-encouraged economic strategy – including the introduction of VAT in October 2019 – will hit the lower and middle classes hardest. Fuel shortages (and the end of subsidies) and the depreciation of the kwanza have also revealed the fragility of the reform efforts and the need for quick results. The President's anti-corruption campaign has frightened away some existing business and is slow to attract new investment. It always had two wider objectives: to tighten Lourenço's hold on power by rebuilding support for the MPLA in the forthcoming municipal and then national elections, and to turn around the fragile economy by diversifying it away from its addiction to oil rents. What is not new in Lourenço's Angola is that he is ensuring that the next generation of leaders are also from the MPLA.

The President now controls the party, the executive and the armed forces and intelligence apparatus. He is also responsible for appointing senior members of the judiciary and the leadership of the parastatals. This concentration of power in the presidency could pose a longer-term risk for the country, particularly if Lourenço's reforms fail to deliver. Angola currently lacks credible institutions to restrain its executive with checks and balances, and after the last two party congresses the ruling MPLA is more tightly controlled by the President than ever.

5. Rebuilding the Congo: After the Kabilas

Kris Berwouts, Filip Reyntjens

This chapter begins with an historical moment in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)'s post-independence history, when a new president took over from his predecessor in a peaceful fashion. This event can only be understood by looking at the sixty years that preceded it. We first look at the Mobutist years, marked by steady state decay after a brief period of reconstruction. The current situation must be seen in light of decades-long pervasive kleptocratic rule. This profoundly rotten system was overthrown by a formidable regional coalition that brought Laurent Kabila to power. His rise was an accident of history, as was his son Joseph's accession to power after his father's assassination. Neither Laurent nor Joseph Kabila were able or even willing to break with Congo's flawed governance. After Joseph Kabila succeeded in hanging on to power for two years after the end of his constitutional second term, he was forced to abandon his ambition to run for a third one. Although opponent Félix Tshisekedi won the presidential election, Kabila managed to retain crucial levers of power. The chapter concludes by looking at the challenges and constraints Tshisekedi will be facing.

The 2018 Elections: Breaking Away from the Past?

The outcome of the presidential election held on 30 December 2018 has been hailed as "the first peaceful transition since independence". Peaceful it has been, at least for the time being, but it was all but democratic, and the longer-term consequence may well be a dangerous stalemate.

At the end of 2016, Joseph Kabila's second and last constitutional term came to an end, but he managed to hang on for another two years through what the Congolese refer to as *le glissement* or "sliding". After failing to have the constitution and the electoral law amended, Kabila used the electoral commission (*Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante*, CENI) to postpone the poll. An agreement with the opposition struck under the auspices of the Catholic Church at the end of 2016 provided for polls in December 2017, but that deadline again passed as a result of instability in certain parts of the country and alleged logistical and financial difficulties.

Under the pressure of both the international community and Congolese civil society, and the Episcopal Conference CENCO (*Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo*) in particular, Kabila was forced to abandon his ambitions for a third term, and he could no longer postpone the polls. So throughout 2018 the stage was set for presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections to be organised on 23 December. The road was replete with incidents and contestations. In a country without properly functioning population registers, the identification and registration of voters was not only difficult, but it also gave rise to suspicion and accusations of fraud. A series of representative nationwide opinion polls in 2017 and 2018 (the latest in January-February 2018) returned a strong negative opinion of Kabila, but at the same time showed a scattered vote for the opposition. Distrust in the ability or willingness of CENI to organise free and fair elections was widespread[1]. Later on, CENI's

[1] Fondation Berci and Congo Research Group, *A Political Opinion Poll. An Update*

introduction of so-called "voting machines", meant to print ballot papers in the voting stations, caused new controversy. They were seen as technically unreliable and raised concerns over fraud and the secrecy of the vote[2].

An unforeseen event had a potentially major impact on the campaign. On 8 June, former Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba, a fierce opponent of Kabila, was acquitted by the ICC's appeal chamber, after having been sentenced to 18 years in prison for war crimes and crimes against humanity. His release was a major threat for Kabila, but it also made the opposition's attempts to mount a common front behind a single presidential candidate more complex[3]. This quest was complicated further in October, when a new opinion poll gave Félix Tshisekedi – chairman of the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS) party – the lead with 36%, well ahead of the pack, including Kabila's anointed successor Ramazani Shadary who scored 16%[4]. This not only meant that the scale of fraud would need to be massive if Shadary was to be declared the winner, but also that, in the single-round voting system in place since 2011, Tshisekedi would win the election directly, thus making the opposition's rallying behind a common candidate even more difficult.

This was borne out in November 2018, six weeks before the elections, when the main political families of the opposition met in Geneva. They united on a platform called *Lamuka* ("Awake" in Lingala) and, encouraged by international players, agreed on a single presidential candidate: Martin Fayulu. Yet, 24 hours after Fayulu's designation, Félix Tshisekedi and Vital Kamerhe reneged on their promises, left Lamuka and set

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on A Contentious Political Process, Pulse Poll Report, no. 3, March 2018.

[2] International Crisis Group, Electoral Poker in DR Congo, Africa, Report no. 259, Brussels, 4 April 2018, pp. 3-4.

[3] International Crisis Group, DR Congo: The Bemba Earthquake, Briefing no. 140, 15 June 2018.

[4] T. Kibangula, "Présidentielle en RDC: un sondage contesté par le camp Kabila donne Félix Tshisekedi favori", *Jeune Afrique*, 30 October 2018.

up a new coalition called Cach (*Cap pour le changement*). So it seemed the main contenders were to be Fayulu, Tshisekedi and Shadary.

After incidents such as a fire that gutted a CENI warehouse in Kinshasa and widespread violence in Yumbi, Beni and Butembo in mid-December, the polls were delayed for a week, and they eventually took place on 30 December. On 10 January 2019, the final results of the presidential election were announced by CENI: Félix Tshisekedi was the winner with 38.5%, Martin Fayulu obtained 34.7% and Shadary was credited with 23.8%. Turnout was a mere 47.6%. Although an opposition candidate ostensibly won, this was an elaborate hoax. According to two sets of data, one leaked from CENI itself and the other based on voting results collected by 40,000 CENCO observers, Martin Fayulu had won the election with between 59.4 and 62.8% of the votes; both Shadary and Tshisekedi scored well under 20%[5]. Several sources claim that, when the Fayulu victory became clear, this was seen by Kabila as a major threat because Fayulu was supported by two barred candidates, Jean-Pierre Bemba and Moïse Katumbi, who were powerful and popular opponents. To keep Fayulu out of power, Kabila then struck a deal with Tshisekedi who eagerly accepted this electoral "victory"[6].

Given the official outcome of the parliamentary elections, this will in all likelihood prove to be a poisoned gift. Indeed, Kabila's *Front Commun pour le Congo* (FCC) won an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly, and is thus in the position to impose a government on Tshisekedi. In addition, it captured the majority in all 26 provincial assemblies. This is not only important at the decentralised level, but also nationally,

[5] "Congo voting data reveal huge fraud in poll to replace Kabila", *The Financial Times*, 15 January 2019; Congo Research Group, *Congo Election Leaks*, 15 January 2019; CENCO, "Transmission du rapport intermédiaire", sent by CENCO to CENI on 15 January 2019.

[6] K. Berwouts, "President-on-a-Leash Tshisekedi and the DRC's paradoxical new politics", *African Arguments*, 24 January 2019.

as the Senate is indirectly elected by the provincial lawmakers. The senatorial elections were marred by corruption, with candidates paying tens of thousands of dollars for each vote. In the end, the FCC captured 90% of the seats. Tshisekedi thus faces an overwhelming opposition in both Houses of Parliament. Of course, the parliamentary elections have been as fraudulent as the presidential poll. Even accepting the official outcome, it cannot be explained how the FCC presidential candidate obtained around 24% of the vote while the FCC captured almost 75% of the seats in the National Assembly and a majority in all provincial legislatures. However, in the case of these elections, the CENCO observers were unable to independently verify the outcome as the results were not displayed at the compilation centres, contrary to what happened with those of the presidential poll[7].

Tshisekedi will thus be a "President-on-a-Leash"[8], and Kabila will retain his hold on power. So the Congolese elections of December 2018 have been all but a democratic exercise. Rather they have ignored the choice of the people and may well lead to dangerous stalemate. This may even contribute to further violence. For instance, former warlord Mbusa Nyamwisi said he was ready to mobilise his forces in North Kivu where many registered voters were barred from participating in the polls[9]. No wonder Mo Ibrahim and Alan Doss stated that "the result of the presidential election in the DRC is a defeat for democracy", and expressed fear that "the Congolese people could resort to other methods to reverse the unbearable status quo"[10]. Africa and the West have sent out a signal that may be disastrous for Africa

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[7] More details on this "electoral robbery" can be found in K. Berwouts and F. Reyntjens, *The Democratic Republic of Congo: The Great Electoral Robbery (and how and why Kabila got away with it)*, Brussels, Egmont Institute, Africa Policy Brief, no. 25, 19 April 2019.

[8] K. Berwouts (2019).

[9] "As Tshisekedi takes over in DRC, he faces legitimacy hurdles", *The East African*, 26 January 2019.

[10] M. Ibrahim and A. Doss, "Le résultat de la présidentielle en RDC est une défaite pour la démocratie", *Le Monde*, 1 February 2019.

and the world. While claiming to support genuine democracy, they have accepted an outcome they knew was everything but democratic, and in so doing have betrayed the right of the Congolese people to elect their leaders. This signal strongly discredits their own alleged commitment to democracy and the exercise of political rights. This ambiguous policy is not just addressed to the Congolese, but to people elsewhere who struggle against fraudulent dictatorships that cling to power, no matter what the price.

Mobutu's Zaire: The Institutionalisation of Bad Governance

The Congolese state had a very difficult start at independence. The country had gone through an extremely harsh period of predatory exploitation under one of the worst regimes in terms of human rights in history, Leopold II's personal rule over the Congo Free State (1885-1908). Under pressure of international criticism, Belgium took over control of the country which officially became a colony in 1908[11]. Belgium developed a paternalistic regime without contemplating Congolese independence until the late 1950s. The colonial model was infantilising: a huge number of Congolese children had access to primary school, a much smaller group received training to the level of lower civil servants, but only a handful of students obtained university degrees. After an improvised decolonisation process that lasted just 18 months (4 January 1959 – 30 June 1960), Congo became independent without an intellectual elite, a political tradition or managerial capacity to take control over the state and the economy.

The take-over took place in an emerging political landscape crystallising around a basic cleavage. On the left, there was a group of radical nationalists, influenced by the movement of non-aligned countries which started to take shape after the

[11] A. Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Boston-New York, Mariner Books, 1998.

Bandung Conference in 1955. They were inspired by Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-African ideology and considered independence as a first step to a totally new social order, offering better chances to the masses. Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba spearheaded this group. In 1958 he had founded the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC), which became the only truly national party able to mobilise people beyond ethnic and regional constituencies. On the right were leaders considered by the Belgians as much more moderate, less critical of the existing order and interested first and foremost in occupying the top echelons of the colonial pyramid as Congolese *évolués*. Their organisations, often based on region or ethnicity, transformed themselves in the late 1950s into political parties, of which Joseph Kasa-Vubu's Abako (*Association des BaKongo*) was the best organised and the most powerful. For this group, Congo's future was to be federal, with strong provinces. The financial and economic lobbies in Western Europe and in North America obviously were in favour of Kasa-Vubu's vision, and the Eisenhower administration in Washington was afraid that Lumumba could become an African counterpart of Fidel Castro, who had recently come to power in Cuba[12].

The first months of independence were particularly chaotic. The country experienced its first implosion in its first week of existence, with the secession of the provinces of Katanga and South Kasai, both endowed with abundant mineral resources. In September 1960, after ten weeks in office, elected Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was politically neutralised by President Kasa-Vubu, arrested by commander-in-chief Joseph-Désiré Mobutu and eventually assassinated in Katanga on 17 January 1961 by troops loyal to secessionist President Moïse Tshombe[13]. After five years of political upheaval, violent conflicts and unstable governments, Mobutu took power through a *coup d'état* on 25 November 1965.

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[12] K. Berwouts, *Congo's violent peace; Conflict and struggle since the Great African War*, London, Zed Books, 2017, p. 9.

[13] L. De Witte, *The assassination of Lumumba*, London-New York, Verso, 2001.

Congo went through thirty-two years of neo-colonial dictatorship under Mobutu, supported by Western Europe and the United States to safeguard Western economic interests in the mining sector and as a bastion against communism in Africa on the geo-strategic chessboard of the Cold War. This happened at a time when a number of African heads of state declared themselves adepts of African or Arab socialism.

In the first years of his presidency, Mobutu managed to incarnate optimism after years of chaos. His rule enjoyed broad support, the country stabilised and a relatively effective administration was put in place. Mobutu "pacified" Congo (at least he killed or "bought" rebel leaders and defeated their insurrections) in 1968 and started to demilitarise his regime. He began to wear civilian clothes for public appearances and introduced the accessories of traditional chiefdom like the leopard-skin hat and the carved ebony walking stick[14]. He created the feeling that a better economic future was waiting just around the corner, even if a lot of money was spent and lost on the so-called "white elephants": extremely expensive large-scale prestige projects that never functioned as planned or brought any benefits to the ordinary citizen[15]. But his economic stabilisation programme managed to bring inflation under control, and import and export taxes were introduced. By 1968, the previously high inflation had fallen to 2.5%, while growth rates had increased to 8%. Price stability and wage increases were felt positively, and growth continued to be significant during the early 1970s[16].

The main instrument for Mobutu to exercise his rule became the political party he had founded in 1967, the MPR (*Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution*), which soon became the

[14] D. Van Reybrouck, *Congo. The epic history of a people*, New York, Harper Collins, 2014, p. 341.

[15] Including the Inga-Shaba power line, the Makulu steel mill and the Tenge-Fungurume copper mines.

[16] G. Hesselbein, The rise and decline of the Congolese state. An analytical narrative on state-making, Crisis States Research Centre, Working Paper no. 21, November 2007, p. 25.

only party allowed in Congo. The MPR became the engine of the patrimonial system Mobutu set up to manage the extensive patronage networks which covered all areas of public life, and corruption was the fuel to keep it running. But in the mid-1970s the machinery started to sputter because copper prices collapsed and oil prices skyrocketed. Meanwhile, the debt burden rose dramatically because of the prestige projects built by foreign companies and equipped with the most sophisticated materials and technology. They were conceived as beacons for Zaire's triumphant entry into modernity but in practice turned out to be total disasters because the economic output never came close to expectations.

For many people in Africa and beyond, Mobutu represented a new type of African leadership: successful, flamboyant, autocratic, with a leadership rooted in African tradition and steeped in local symbols. Mobutu increased the personality cult around his regime and invested in an international status as one of the inspiring personalities in what was then known as the Third World. In 1971, he tried to give his reign its own ideological content through *zaïrisation*, an authenticity campaign which was meant to be a kind of cultural upgrading of African pre-colonial identity as an attractive alternative to African socialism. Congo became Zaïre, many cities and even the citizens were given new names, supposedly rooted in local history. But the main, and dramatic impact of the *zaïrisation* campaign was economic: the expropriation of European-owned industries and other enterprises was to become economic suicide for Mobutism in the medium term, because the means of production were distributed among the elite of the regime, often people without the vision, competence or will to manage in a responsible or sustainable way what had been entrusted to them[17]. By the time Mobutu organised a high mass to celebrate his access to the Pan-African pantheon by hosting the "rumble in the jungle", the fight for the heavyweight boxing championship between

[17] K. Berwouts (2017), p. 13.

Muhammad Ali and George Forman in Kinshasa in October 1974, greed and incompetence had already destroyed most of Zaire's economy[18]. By the end of the 1970s, former architect of Mobutism Etienne Tshisekedi and other prominent members of Mobutu's MPR founded an opposition party, the UDPS which continued to grow in the eighties and nineties.

Very soon mismanagement had assumed such endemic proportions that Congo-watchers had to create the word kleptocracy and started to define the process as "self-cannibalisation of the Congolese state"[19], the dismantling of the state because its assets were eaten by its agents. Beyond this turning point, the second half of Mobutu's reign has been presented by scholars as a classic example of state failure, with its often deadly cocktail of violence, dictatorship and corruption resulting in the complete failure of the economy and the total destruction of the state. Increasingly during the 1980s, Mobutu got stuck between the international creditors who started to realise that Zaire would never be able to repay its debt and growing protest within the population against the social impact of IMF-imposed austerity measures. The long decline of the bureaucratic state in favour of networks of patronage was triggered through economic decay[20]. Mobutu was very much a product of the Cold War and his days were numbered when it finally came to an end in the late 1980s.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, Mobutu and many of his fellow presidents in Africa lost their relevance for the West. With the June 1990 speech of French President François Mitterand during the Summit of the French-speaking countries in La Baule as an important milestone, Western countries pressurised their African allies to democratise and respect human rights. In several African countries,

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[18] M. Deibert, *The Democratic Republic of Congo. Between hope and despair*, London, Zed Books, 2014, pp. 31-34.

[19] R. Rotberg, *State failure and state weakness in a time of terror*, Washington DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2003.

[20] G. Hesselbein (2007), pp. 36-37.

the result was an accelerated democratisation process which in some cases led to the implosion of the state. In Central Africa, complex regional dynamics made local cleavages and national conflicts spill over national borders. Each country in the region has a complex internal situation and a violent recent history, where local contradictions polarised and entangled with those of neighbouring countries. Following the end of the Cold War and throughout the 1990s these regional dynamics developed into an avalanche of military conflicts, massive killings and far-reaching destruction. The DRC's natural resource wealth has been an important factor in fuelling conflict as warring factions competed for control of parallel networks engaged in the illegal flow of resources from the DRC onto international markets. The result was a collapsed state, a crisis of impunity and, most of all, profoundly victimised populations.

Laurent-Désiré Kabila: The Hour of the Rebels

After the genocide in Rwanda (April - July 1994), a massive exodus of Hutu refugees fled to neighbouring countries, including two million to the Zairean Kivu provinces. Most of them ended up in huge refugee camps, which became a base for hit-and-run actions to destabilise the new RPF (*Rwanda Patriotic Front*) regime in Kigali. In October 1996, Rwanda, with the support of Uganda, invaded eastern Zaire to stop these infiltrations. To give their campaign a local façade, the Rwandans and Ugandans handpicked an old Zairean rebel, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, as one of the leaders of a new coalition against Mobutu, the AFDL (*Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre*). In the first months of the rebellion, Kabila's PRP (People's Revolutionary Party) managed to impose itself upon the three other, even smaller members of the coalition. At independence, Kabila, born in 1939, was a young politician from northern Katanga's Luba-speaking community (the *Balubakat*) who had supported Lumumba's regime. He was a rebel leader in the sixties and the seventies, and was a footnote

in the country's history as the only insurgent of his generation who was never defeated or bought off by Mobutu. From the late 1970s, his interests seemed to shift away from his political struggle and he acquired considerable wealth through gold and timber trade on Lake Tanganyika and real estate in Tanzania.

Kabila's rebellion was supported by a broad range of African countries and the insurrection could be read as an attempt by a new generation of African leaders to get rid of Mobutu's reign. They saw it as a classical neo-colonial dictatorship which had become an anachronism of an evaporated state led by a moribund leader. As such, two years after Nelson Mandela's installation as the first post-apartheid President of South Africa, Kabila's rapidly advancing conquest was considered by a part of Western public and political opinion as a second liberation struggle of Congo[21]. The man himself was, at least for a while, seen as part of the new leaders of the "African Renaissance", like Rwanda's Paul Kagame, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi or Eritrea's Isaias Afwerki. Now that the Cold War and apartheid had disappeared, the broader international community saw a momentum for such an African Renaissance without Mobutu's Zaire[22].

It took the rebels and their allies seven months to kick out Mobutu. Terminally ill, he left Zaire, and on 17 May 1997 the AFDL soldiers walked into Kinshasa. Kabila, who in all these months never had come anywhere close to a frontline, arrived in the capital on 20 May and swore in as President on 29 May. Zaire became the Democratic Republic of the Congo again. On 7 September the man who had sworn that he would never be referred to as "the ex-President of Zaire" died in exile in Morocco[23].

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[21] P. Roessler and H. Verhoeven, *Why comrades go to war: liberation politics and the outbreak of Africa's deadliest conflict*, London, Hurst & Co, 2016.

[22] G. Prunier, *From genocide to continental war. The 'Congolese' conflict and the crisis of contemporary Africa*, London, Hurst & Company, 2009, pp. 113-149.

[23] K. Berwouts (2017), p. 17.

The new President developed a policy very much in line with his Maoist antecedents, with a focus on "democracy without parties" through a grassroots structure of popular people's committees, a centrally managed state economy, the development of the rural areas and a firm rejection of Western influence. Laurent Kabila sought closer cooperation with countries like Libya, China, Zimbabwe and North Korea[24]. The people of Congo were very relieved with the departure of Mobutu's ruling class and enthusiastic about Mzee's[25] announcement of radical change, but President Kabila was unable to hold on to this momentum for more than a few months. He could not materialise Congo's renaissance, develop a vision or deploy a plan to rehabilitate the state, did not succeed in channelling the initial enthusiasm and never connected to other forces in society, such as the militant civil society or the lively scene of opposition parties against Mobutu, still spearheaded by Étienne Tshisekedi. He failed to respond to the huge expectations of the Congolese.

Eventually, Kabila turned out to be what Prunier has called "a political Rip van Winkle whose conspiratorial political style had been frozen at some point back in the 1960s and who still lived in a world seen strategically as a deadly struggle against imperialism and tactically as a mixture of conspiracies and informal economics"[26]. His government was a medley of people with different backgrounds, half of them from the diaspora, some technocrats and some ideologues, some labelled as progressive and others as conservative, some experienced and others new, but all of them overshadowed by the overwhelming personality of Mzee, who "seemed to think that pitting these various men (and groups they represented) against each other would enable him to remain in full control of what one hesitates to call the

[24] E. Kennes, "Laurent-Désiré Kabila, of de schaduwzijde van de Congolese geschiedenis", *Mo*, April 2000.

[25] Laurent-Désiré Kabila was often refered to as "Mzee", a very respectful Swahili term meaning "old man".

[26] G. Prunier (2009), p. 149.

'state apparatus'"[27]. He governed the country in a way not very different from how the "liberated zones" were governed at the time of his first rebellion[28].

Parallel to the disappearing belief (in Congo and internationally) in Kabila's capacity to put the country back on track and embody a new order of peace and stability, relations between the regime and its most important partner, Rwanda, started to sour and eventually collapsed. This happened in part because Congolese public opinion saw that the role of Rwanda after its overwhelming contribution to the military operations against Mobutu did not decrease, and that Rwandan officials occupied strategic positions in the Congolese government and army. Many concluded that Kabila was not much more than the puppet of his ally. On 27 July 1998, seventeen months after Mobutu's fall, Kabila ordered all Rwandan and Ugandan troops to leave the country[29]. One week later, both countries started a new military campaign with the objective to replace Laurent Kabila as soon as possible.

This triggered an avalanche of violence which was soon labelled "The Great African War" because, in addition to a high number of Congolese and neighbouring countries' nonstate armed groups on the ground in eastern Congo, the regular armies of nine African countries got involved in the conflict. This not only caused massive destruction and tremendous human suffering, it accelerated two devastating processes: from a culture of violence towards total impunity, and from an informal towards a militarised economy[30]. At some point during the war, the systematic plundering of Congo's natural resources became an objective in itself for all belligerent parties.

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[27] Ibid., p.151.

[28] Between 1967 and 1988, Laurent-Désiré Kabila's PRP controlled a small zone in the mountainous area around Fizi-Baraka.

[29] F. Reyntjens, *The Great African War: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996-2006*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 157-158.

[30] K. Berwouts (2017).

This second war created the opportunity for Kabila to take up his legitimacy as a fighter and a rebel leader, but it pushed him in even greater isolation, since he was not able to maintain himself on the international chessboard and was rapidly seen as the main obstacle to diplomatic initiatives to end the violence. On 16 January 2001, he was shot and killed in his presidential palace under circumstances which, nearly two decades later, still are not clear.

Joseph Kabila: Old-School Warlordism in Times of Globalisation

On 26 January 2001, Joseph Kabila, not yet thirty years old, took the oath as the new President of Congo as successor to his father. He became President of a war-torn country, with millions of people dying and devastated local economies, infrastructure and social cohesion, and with an extremely complex connection between conflict at grassroots level and conflicts with provincial, national and regional dimensions.

The young President was not only timid and politically inexperienced, he was barely known even in his own country. Many local and international observers considered him a compromise figure put in place to give his father's regime, after Mzee's unexpected death, the time to decide which direction to take[31]. But in the first months of his presidency, he replaced the hawks of his father's inner circle with technocrats and people with a civil society background, and he managed to put the peace agreement, signed in 1999 but never implemented, back on track[32]. This led to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and the withdrawal of the foreign troops in 2002, a difficult transition (2003-2006) with the legendary 1+4 government[33], and eventually

[31] G. Prunier (2009), pp. 249-254.

[32] F. Reyntjens (2009), pp. 223-226.

[33] 30 June 2003 was the day the transition started, as a result of the negotiations since the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. The country was governed by a large

the historical elections of 2006, which he won with Jean-Pierre Bemba as his main challenger. Étienne Tshisekedi's UDPS boycotted the elections.

Joseph Kabila, who enjoyed support in the provinces of Katanga (where his father was born), Maniema (where his mother was born) and South Kivu (where he was born himself), owed his electoral victory to his popularity in the east of the country, where Swahili is the vehicular language and where the war had raged for a decade. For the people in the affected areas, he was the man who had managed to put an end to the hostilities and to the presence of foreign troops in Kivu. His electoral campaign had focused on "*les cinq chantiers*", the five construction sites, areas where his presidency would make the difference. Through better access to health care, education, water, electricity and work, the life of the simple Congolese citizen would look completely different by the end of his first term.

The 2006 victory boosted his confidence and his ego. He was no longer the son of the murdered arch-rebel who was thrown into the presidency by the tides of history and his mighty allies, nor the *primus inter pares* of an unworkable transitional government. He had won the first more or less free elections since time immemorial. However, not much progress could be seen on the ground. The government led by Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga (2006-2008) and later Adolphe Muzito (2008-2012) never managed to create the impression that it would go in an efficient operational modus any time soon, mainly because the old demon of corruption continued to rule the system. The insecurity in the east persisted. Although the open war had come to an official end in 2002, the low-intensity conflicts in the eastern provinces continued to expose the civilian populations to the gravest violations of human rights. Nevertheless, Kabila's position was strengthened when he brought in a new and strong partner by signing an important cooperation contract

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coalition government, led by President Kabila and four Vice Presidents. The government was referred to as "1+4".

with China. During this period, the Congolese franc remained quite stable. In 2009, GNP per capita was $200, much higher than the $80 of 2000, but far under the $450 of 1960[34].

However, the most important evolution took place in the wings of power. The way of governing and decision making changed. The semi-presidential system set out in the Constitution was steadily replaced by a more presidential system. More importantly, the political inner circle that surrounded Kabila since the beginning of the transition, and that had made the major decisions with him, started to disintegrate in the years after the elections. Already in 2007, his adviser Samba Kaputo died. His close collaborator, former spokesperson and then Speaker of Parliament Vital Kamerhe broke with Kabila in 2009 and became an opposition leader in 2010. In the same year, police chief John Numbi was suspended from office for his involvement in the assassination of human rights pioneer Floribert Chebeya. In February 2012, three months after the 2011 elections, Kabila's own Rasputin, the organiser of the system and the man with the keys to the cash box, Augustin Katumba Mwanke, died in a plane crash.

Kabila won his second term in elections that had not been held to consolidate democracy but to consolidate power. Despite the fact that the elections had been anything but free and fair, and the refusal of his main challenger Étienne Tshisekedi to acknowledge defeat, Kabila remained strongly in office but he had lost the people who had coached him for a decade. Since then, insiders of the regime called him a "ship without a compass" whom nobody dared to contradict. After the death of Katumba Mwanke, Kabila increasingly fell back on himself and a handful of family members[35].

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[34] D. Van Reybrouck (2014), pp. 509-510.

[35] This and some other quotes in this chapter come from confidential interviews with key players on Congo's political scene, including people working in the heart of decision-making. For obvious reasons, it is not possible to mention their names.

From 2014 onwards, the political class and public opinion in general were obsessed by the question of whether Kabila would be prepared to leave office after his second and constitutionally last term. Or would he attempt to create the conditions for extending his presidency beyond its constitutional limit? The regime envisaged options to revise the constitution, but did not find the necessary political support to achieve that aim[36]. An attempt to amend the electoral law so that Kabila could remain in office for at least three more years was blocked by demonstrations and street violence[37]. The only strategy that did work for some time was to simply not organise elections. The uncertainties about the plans of the President on the political future of the country after 2016 had a devastating impact on governance within the regime, described by someone inside the system as "a Titanic feeling": the panic that arises when you know that you will sink. The *fin de régime* atmosphere encouraged many within the regime to grab as much as possible while the opportunity was still there[38].

Joseph Kabila did not manage to reinvent the Congolese state. Neither the transition nor the elections brought peace back to eastern Congo. After the withdrawal of foreign troops at the end of 2002, armed violence remained a part of everyday life, committed by groups whose origins, structure, vision (if any) and objectives were very locally rooted, but whose impact remained global by the fact that they were one of the factors impeding the renaissance of the Congolese state and the return of the rule of law.

Like his predecessors, Joseph Kabila governed through a patrimonial system, relying on "an extremely narrow circle of trusted individuals and a network of international alliances to keep itself at the top of those scrambling for control over Congo. It is a power structure that has built a patronage system rather than a political base on which it can draw. It has not created

[36] K. Berwouts (2017), p. 147.
[37] Ibid., pp.148-149.
[38] Ibid., p. 147.

institutional structures that will resolve Congo's underlying issues"[39]. As a result, the Congolese state remained very weak. Many observers considered this a deliberate choice of its rulers, because the weakness of the state offered the best opportunities for illegal accumulation.

After two elections, Congo formally had state institutions and a system of governance very similar to those in the West, with an elected President, a legislature, a government, a constitution, an army and an administration. All were framed in terms of democracy and development, which is a condition for a regime to be accepted at international negotiation tables. But underneath the surface, patrimonial and predatory governance continued to be the norm. Clientelism had shaped the democratisation process in its own image much more than democracy had managed to reign in the logic and rigour of clientelism. Indeed public assets continued to be rerouted to those in power who desperately needed them to retain their clients[40].

After a short passage in the hands of his father, Kabila inherited the state of Mobutu's Zaire where governance had been so bad that the world had to invent the word kleptocracy for it. One of the key questions had been: will he succeed in improving that legendary bad governance? Eighteen years later, the conclusion is that he did not. Many observers suggest he didn't even try. Joseph Kabila's government remained a polished version of his father's[41]. He sophisticated the system and adapted it smoothly to the globalised world order where new and much more diverse economic key players set the rules. But the main reason for the anger and frustration of people in Congo's villages and suburbs is that, after Mobutu's death and despite all the talk of democracy, *cinq chantiers* and the Third Republic, their daily living conditions have deteriorated rather than improved.

[39] M. Deibert (2014), p. 202.
[40] G. Prunier (2009), pp. 333-338.
[41] M. Deibert (2014), p. 202.

Félix Tshisekedi and the Chances for a New Dawn

We have seen earlier that the new regime started under extremely adverse circumstances, with Kabila remaining at the centre of the parallel kleptocratic networks which have governed the country since Mobutu's days. The challenges facing the DRC are daunting, and the observations made by the International Crisis Group in 2007, after Joseph Kabila was first elected, remain relevant today: "To rebuild the state and augment its authority, the government must strengthen democracy or risk being paralysed by recurrent unrest, structural impotence and renewed instability in ever more parts of the country. Only a change of governance can provide the legitimacy and capacity to raise the revenues necessary to distribute peace dividends to all sectors of society"[42].

For decades, the DRC has ceased to be an empirical state. And yet, reconstructing a polity which can perform minimal state functions is an essential condition for both national development and regional stability. In light of the extent of state decay, the sheer size of the country, the degree of fragmentation, and indeed the nature of the political leadership and of the political culture more generally, this is a colossal task. Obviously, a collapsed state cannot be entirely reconstructed overnight. The cost will be immense and the effort will take many years. Therefore, putting Humpty Dumpty together again will have to happen sequentially, starting with the main functions of sovereignty.

First, the state must regain control over its territory and re-establish links with its population. Territorial control means physical control, together with the presence of an effective administration. Physical control requires the rebuilding of a truly national army and police force. The Congolese military mirrors the failed state. The *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique*

[42] International Crisis Group, Congo: Consolidating the Peace, Africa Report no. 128, Kinshasa-Brussels, 5 July 2007.

du Congo (FARDC) often behave like a militia and perpetuate the practices of their predecessors: violence against civilians, racketeering and plunder. They are a source of insecurity rather than of security. Realising that security sector reform was failing, Amnesty International warned over ten years ago that it is a precondition for peace and stability[43]. Physical control also requires overseeing borders, including effective customs and immigration services both at land/river crossings and at airports and airstrips. Beyond physical security, territorial control means creating an effective administration as a way of establishing a link between the state and its citizens, a link that is now very weak, even in the capital city Kinshasa.

Second, the state must simultaneously recover its funding capacity. The DRC is often depicted as a "geological scandal" and as a potentially rich country that has the means of funding its own development. This is true, but one does not buy much with "potential". Therefore, the fiscal capacity of the state must be rebuilt, with revenues collected and spent in a transparent, efficient and honest fashion, and resources (mines, forests, hydro-power and agriculture) harnessed as public goods. This presupposes that the criminalisation and privatisation of the state and the economy come to an end, again a matter of state capacity. A vicious circle needs to be broken: while the "de-privatisation" of natural resources will prove an essential element of state reconstruction, only a reconstructed state can garner these assets as public goods.

A third priority is legal security and the rule of law, essential not only for the protection of the Congolese people's fundamental rights and for the fight against impunity, but also because considerable domestic and international investments will be needed for Congo's reconstruction. However, venture capital will be attracted only if, for instance, contracts are honoured, and, when they are not, if contract parties can rely on

[43] Amnesty International, DRC: Stability threatened as country fails to reform army, London, 25 January 2007.

a well-functioning, predictable and honest judicial system to offer relief. In a similar vein, entrepreneurs will need a reliable judiciary in their dealings with the state, e.g. in the areas of tenders, taxation and investment incentives.

Finally, if the regime is to gain the legitimacy its predecessors have lacked, credible democratic institutions need to be built. For this, ensuring the integrity of electoral processes and substantive popular representation will prove essential, also in light of the aspirations consistently expressed by Congolese citizens.

While the rebuilding of state capacity is crucial, a number of other lessons can be learned. One is that impunity and international tolerance of aggressive and criminal behaviour can only encourage the perpetrators. They test the limits of that tolerance, and – when realising there are none – they cross one Rubicon after the other. They must be reined in at an early stage. Second, local and regional engineers of violence are constantly engaged in a rational calculation of costs and benefits, knowing that war, instability and state decay are more profitable than peace, stability and state reconstruction. In these conditions the only way to come to terms with the spoilers is to make conflict more expensive and peace more attractive. Third, lessons one and two can only be applied if the so-called international community is minimally united and coherent. The opposite has happened, and the consequences of division have been disastrous for millions of people in the Great Lakes region. Recently, the way in which Africa and the West have accepted the electoral robbery of December 2018 for the sake of short-term stability at the expense of structural change may have dire consequences in the longer term. Fourth, the question is how far the residual legacy of the Mobutist state, continued under the Kabilas, will remain an obstacle to the promotion of political stability and development.

It remains to be seen how Tshisekedi will face these many and difficult challenges in the extremely adverse and constraining environment described earlier. His political experience is limited, although he is seconded by his chief of cabinet Vital

Kamerhe who is an astute veteran of Congolese politics. A former ally of Kabila, he knows the inner workings of the system very well. Tshisekedi spent most of his adult life in Belgium, where he worked in occasional jobs and was active in the UDPS branch. After having been the party's national secretary for international relations from 2008 to 2016 and deputy secretary general from 2016 to 2018, he became chairman in 2018, a year after his father Étienne's death. Despite, or perhaps because of, his lack of intimate knowledge of Congolese political culture, barely one month after his inauguration, Tshisekedi published a "programme of urgency" for the first 100 days of his tenure[44]. This document contains rather technical interventions in areas such as roads, health, education, housing, energy, labour, transport and agriculture. The amount needed for the initial phase is estimated at 304 million USD, money that is to come from the treasury, the road maintenance fund (*Fond national d'entretien routier*, FONER) and the industrial promotion fund (*Fonds de Promotion de l'Industrie*, FPI). It is unclear how all this could be implemented in just three months. However, the document also includes a one page outline of crucial "sectoral actions" in the areas of justice (release of political prisoners), security (disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups), politics (return of exiled opponents), fight against corruption (through the justice system and other structures), good governance (code of institutional ethics), diplomacy (political cooperation based on openness and respects for national sovereignty) and mines (creation of a focal point in the president's office). While this ambitious project will obviously take years to implement, this list does address many of the ills of Congolese politics. If steps can be made towards the realisation of these sectoral actions, perspectives of state reconstruction could become more real than they have been during decades of decay.

[44] République démocratique du Congo, Présidence de la République, "Programme d'urgence pour les 100 premiers jours du chef de l'Etat", 27 February 2019 (last retrieved on 14 April 2019).

It is unclear whether Tshisekedi will be able to pursue that path. Article 166 of the constitution provides that the two Houses of Parliament, assembled in a joint session, can decide to prosecute the president by a two-thirds majority. The FCC have the majority needed to put this provision in practice in case of a political stalemate or even as blackmail if Tshisekedi embarks on policies, e.g. in the area of fighting corruption, seen by FCC leaders as threatening their privileges. On the other side, if he doesn't deliver on his promises, Tshisekedi may rapidly lose the support of his UDPS constituency and the Congolese population more generally. At the regional level, the skirmishes between Rwanda and Uganda and between Rwanda and Burundi, just across Congo's porous borders, could render efforts to restore state authority in the east of the country even more difficult than it is today.

Conclusion

The challenges the new President is facing are daunting and the political environment in which he will function is very constraining. Rebuilding the state almost from scratch, harnessing the country's assets, tackling a deeply corrupt political culture, meeting the expectations of the Congolese people: all this will require considerable political skills. At the time of writing, it is impossible to predict whether Tshisekedi will be able to deliver on his promises, particularly in the context of a political dispensation in which those intent on maintaining the status quo retain considerable power. For both the development of the DRC and regional stability, this uphill struggle must succeed. For this to happen, Félix Tshisekedi will need all the support he can muster.

6. Rwanda under Kagame: Political Leadership and Developmentalism

Frederick Golooba-Mutebi

Rwanda is among the most talked-about countries in sub-Saharan Africa today in terms of the progress it has made on many fronts since the violence that engulfed it and the tragedy that struck it in the early 1990s. Its President, Paul Kagame, is as talked-about and admired as he is controversial outside Rwanda, and popular as well as revered inside the country. This chapter examines the trajectory that the country has followed since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, and the role Kagame has played in its evolution. Of key interest are the strategies Rwanda adopted and the results it has achieved, and whether these qualify it for the label "developmental state".

The "New" Rwanda: A Star Is Born – or Not?

Had Rwanda been a human being it would be someone who literally died and came back from the dead. At the end of the civil war and the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, it had, for all intents and purposes, been destroyed, the social fabric of Rwandan society torn to shreds. Hardly anyone, even those who had won the war, expected the country to recover, let alone prosper as fast as it has done. Few believed it would recover at all. Nor did they believe that what they saw as an illegitimate power grab by an unpopular minority would last. Rwanda did

recover, however, courtesy in no small measure of the leadership of, and firm steering by, its widely-acclaimed and maligned President, Paul Kagame.

Under his leadership, the small east-central African nation has posted an economic growth rate averaging 7.5% between 2008 and 2018 (with per capita income up by some 4.7% a year). Economic growth has been accompanied by equally impressive social performance and achievements, including an increase in life expectancy at birth from 48 years in 1980 to 67 in 2016[1]; a two-thirds drop in child mortality; a 77% reduction in maternal mortality between 2000 and 2013[2]; near-universal primary school enrolment; a decline in poverty rates from 77.2% in 2000 to 55.5% in 2016[3]; and a health insurance coverage reaching over 90%[4]. In addition, Rwanda boasts the highest percentage of women parliamentarians in the world, at 64%, and is the second easiest country in Africa to do business in, behind Mauritius[5].

In spite of the country's many achievements, however, Kagame remains the subject of far more debate and controversy than any other leader in the Great Lakes region of East and Central Africa. There are several specific points of controversy, but he is primarily accused of authoritarianism, with Rwanda designated a dictatorship. The country is evidently not home to competitive multi-party politics, let alone a liberal democracy. It thus does not have the kind of official opposition which in democracies is meant to hold the ruling party in check. There

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[1] "Rwanda - Life expectancy at birth", Countryeconomy.com, (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

[2] H. Worley, "Rwanda's Success In Improving Maternal Health", PRB, 24 February 2015, (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

[3] Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population), World Bank, World Development Indicators, (last retrieved on 11 June 2019).

[4] "Progress towards Universal Health Coverage", Rwanda, Social Protection in Action: Building Social Protection Floors, International Labour Office, April 2016, (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

[5] "Rwanda", World Bank, DOINGBUSINESS Measuring Business Regulations (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

are no public displays of dissent: no demonstrations or other forms of mass action. Kagame is also criticised for violating human rights, jailing opponents and critics, and forcing others to flee into exile – even killing some. Elsewhere he is said to preside over a power monopoly by the minority Tutsi group, in the same way previous leaders presided over power monopoly by Hutus[6]. A related criticism focuses on his longevity in power. According to detractors, Kagame is power-hungry and has refused to step down in much the same way as a number of other African leaders[7]. Then there is lack of freedom of the press, speech and expression. Here the government of Rwanda and sometimes Kagame himself are accused of intolerance of criticism and castigated for imprisoning, exiling and killing journalists[8].

There are many things a long-term observer of post-genocide Rwanda could say about these negative assessments. Here I restrict myself to two broad comments. One is that such reproaches have shaped the way large numbers of people across the world perceive Rwanda and Kagame. The other is that, even as to varying degrees several of the criticisms contain elements of truth, in general terms they paint an inaccurate picture of the country and its President.

There was a time when some of the criticism levelled at post-genocide Rwanda would have been largely accurate. That was when Rwanda was still at war, when the government was battling insurgents operating inside the country and from outside its borders, in the early stages of its efforts to establish and

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[6] See, for example, F. Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Rwanda*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015. On power monopoly under previous regimes, see S. Strauss, *The Order of Genocide. Race, Power and War in Rwanda*, Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press, 2006.

[7] T. Mhaka, 2018. "Like Mafia Dons, African Leaders Never Leave Office Voluntarily or Peacefully", *The Huffington Post*, 15 May 2018 (last retrieved on 18 June 2019). Also, P.A., 2015. 'Rwanda's Leader Must Step Down", *The New York Times*, 17 December 2015 (last retrieved on 18 June 2019).

[8] See, for example, A. Sundaram, *Bad News: Last Journalists in a Dictatorship*, London & New York, Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 2017.

consolidate its authority and power. During that time, pacification, stabilisation and re-establishment of security across the country's entire territory were far higher priorities than securing and guaranteeing individual rights and freedoms and creating or opening up political space for dissent or competition among different groups vying for power[9]. Also, there were grounds for arguing that, for a country emerging from a genocide and thirty years during which successive governments systematically divided the population[10], allowing freedoms – such as media freedom and freedom of speech – without limits would have endangered efforts for reconciliation and national unity. Indeed, the more the government has consolidated its power, the more security has been established, and the more the country has stabilised, the more space has been opened up for greater – if not completely unrestrained – exercise of various rights and freedoms, including freedom for individuals and groups to organise politically.

This gradual opening up can be seen in the government's decision to stop regulating the media and to leave that responsibility to the media fraternity itself via a semi-autonomous body, the Media High Council (MHC)[11]. In addition, it can be seen in the tremendous growth in the number of private media outlets, especially radio and television networks which enjoy far higher consumption internally than print or online media[12]. There is still some degree of self-censorship linked to Rwanda's violent history and the role media have played in it[13], as well

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[9] See, for example, *Rwanda: The Insurgency in the Northwest*, London, Africa Rights, 1998.

[10] G. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis. History of a Genocide*, London, Hurst & Company, 1998.

[11] See: "Promoting Freedom, Responsability And Professionalism of the Media", Media High Council (MHC).

[12] There are 12 television stations, only one of which is state controlled, more than 20 radio stations, only a handful of which, all affiliates of the government's Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA), are state-controlled, and more than 50 print and online publications.

[13] See, for example, A. Thomson, *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, London &

as to the government maintaining a strong line against hate speech and divisionism[14]. Nonetheless, electronic media outlets routinely hold talk shows on a wide range of subjects. Invited panellists, including those that style themselves "opposition" or that are not supporters of the government or the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), speak freely as do members of the public who call in or send comments via social media.

In politics, Kigali has very exacting rules for registering political parties and for regulating their activities. Rwanda is not a democracy in the conventional sense. Inter-party competition is restricted by legislation. Campaigning for office is limited to short periods of time. As a result of an "elite pact" arrived at via inter-party negotiations during and after the war and genocide, under which the national constitution guarantees formal power-sharing, the official approach to politics is to prioritise consensus-building over winner-takes-all adversarial contestation[15].

Political groups that seek to operate outside this pact, such as the Europe-based FDU-Inkingi, which the government perceives as sectarian and promoting a genocidal ideology, have so far not been able to register and operate in the country. However, there are 11 recognised political parties. All of them are members of the National Consultative Forum of Political Organisations (NFPO). Membership used to be mandatory but is now voluntary. Each political party, regardless of size, is represented by four members, of whom two must be women. It is within the NFPO that inter-party consensus-building on potentially divisive issues happens. This is why it is rare for political disagreements among political parties to spill into the public domain. In principle, all decisions are arrived at on the basis of

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Ann Arbor, Pluto Press. 2007.

[14] See, for instance, local human rights lawyer, Thierry Gatete's blog: "For the respect of mankind: My reaction to the indefinite closure of BBC-Kinyarwanda service", Gatete Views (last retrieved on 18 June 2019).

[15] F. Golooba-Mutebi and D. Booth, *Bilateral Cooperation and Local Power Dynamics: The Case of Rwanda*, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Reports and Studies, 2013 (last retrieved on 18 June 2019).

complete consensus. The NFPO is funded by the state, and in turn finances activities such as capacity-building for individual political parties without discrimination[16].

The arrest of some prominent politicians, particularly Victoire Umuhoza Ingabire and Diane Rwigara, coincided with their declarations that they intended to stand for the presidency against Kagame. While the media portrayed these cases as straightforward evidence of political persecution, they ignored or paid scant attention to information suggesting that the individuals concerned combined legitimate political ambitions with activities that provided the police with justification for detaining and prosecuting them[17].

Similarly, a number of people have left the country over the years proclaiming themselves political opponents of the government (though some had served in that government themselves at one point or another), and have sought political asylum across the world. The claims that their lives were in danger because they had fallen out with Kagame have often been taken at face value by commentators, with no effort made to verify them. In a number of cases, however, it appears that those who flee do so for a wide range of reasons, some of them unrelated to politics[18]. At least two exiles, former intelligence chief Patrick Karegeya and Former Minister Seth Sendashonga, have been killed and the government accused of the murders. Needless

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[16] National Consultative Forum of Political Organizations, http://forumfp.org.rw/index.php?id=2&-About-FPP-(last retrieved on 19 June 2019).

[17] Interviews with investigators and law enforcement officers. See, also, A. Mukuralinda, *Qui Manipule Qui? Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, des Pays Bas au Pays de Mille Collines*, Marcinelle, Editions du CEP, 2017. Also, J. Busingye, "Impunity? Not in Rwanda, that's why Diane Rwigara is behind bars", *The East African*, 4 September 2018 (last retrieved on 22 June 2019).

[18] Several interviews with several officials, civilian and military (since 2007). For a typically critical media report that is uninformed – as shown by research in Rwanda about the victim's career history - but categorical in its claims, see C. Du Plessis, "Shooting death of Rwandan exile in Cape Town could be Pandor's first big diplomatic test", The Daily Maverick, 3 June 2019 (last retrieved on 18 June 2019).

to say, these are extremely serious allegations. To provide a full picture of the political situation inside the country, however, one should also note that a number of people who once fled have returned and continue to return and to settle down again, some forging new careers in politics[19]. The media show limited interest in these cases, probably because they do not fit the established narrative of people fleeing from persecution.

Within the limits of the current system there are achievements that render Kigali's political environment far more favourable to a future evolution into a fully-fledged democracy than those of neighbouring countries which are today regarded as practising more competitive multi-party politics. Rwanda's election campaigns, for example, are without violence, verbal or physical, among candidates running for office as well as among their supporters. It is not common for voters' names to be missed off the electoral register. All those who wish to vote are therefore able to vote on election day, something that is not always the case elsewhere. Late delivery or non-delivery of voting materials, both of which have often disenfranchised voters in some of Rwanda's neighbours, are also not normally a problem. The efficiency with which voting materials are delivered ensures that voting starts on time, is orderly, and does not take place amidst heavy deployment of troops, police or military. It also helps make sure that before polling stations close everybody who wants to vote has done so. Also, all competing candidates are by law accorded specified amounts of coverage by state media, and no political party or candidate for office has gone to court to contest the outcome of an election, arguably testifying to the high regard in which the National Electoral Commission is generally held. Rwanda is the only country in the Great Lakes region where citizens living outside its borders,

[19] Among prominent returnees are Dr. Frank Habineza, Member of Parliament and President of the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda; Evode Uwizeyimana, Minister of State for constitutional and legal affairs; and Pierre-Celestin Rwigema, former post-genocide Prime Minister and currently one of Rwanda's 9 representatives to the East African Legislative Assembly.

anywhere in the world, are able to vote. Voting is voluntary, and both inside and outside the country voter turnout is very high, in many cases well over 90%[20], suggesting that, among eligible voters, elections enjoy a high degree of legitimacy[21].

The criticisms levelled at the government, and at the Rwandan Patriotic Front and Kagame personally, ultimately seem to contain significant exaggerations. Both in-country observations and some non-mainstream publications suggest a more nuanced picture. Yet the power of established narratives is such that publications offering a different view do not draw as much attention as those that perpetuate the image of Rwanda as a country that has done well on the economic front but not in matters of governance[22]. Whatever one's view, however, Paul Kagame's centrality in Rwanda's post-genocide evolution is beyond dispute.

Who Is Paul Kagame?

Kagame was born in Rwanda, which he fled with his parents in 1961 at the age of 4, ending up as a refugee in Uganda where he spent thirty years of his life. He left school early because he couldn't raise the necessary fees to continue. As a young man, Rwanda and the plight of Rwandan refugees became a constant preoccupation, as did the yearning to one day return to live in

[20] C. Mwai, "Presidential Election: Over 96% voter turnout recorded", *The New Times*, 6 August 2017, (last retrieved on 19 June 2019).

[21] For a fitting contrast among different countries in the Great Lakes region, see F. Golooba-Mutebi, 2017. "Make a point to enjoy and celebrate campaigns and elections", *The East African*, 13 August 2017 (last retrieved on 17 June 2019).

[22] For alternative views, see, for example, J.-P. Kimonyo, *Transforming Rwanda. Challenges on the Road to Reconstruction*, Boulder & London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2019; P. Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010; R. Johnson, "The Travesty of Human Rights Watch on Rwanda", 2013 (last retrieved on 18 June 2019). Also, S. Gody Nshimiyimana, "Fabrications and distortions", *The Rwanda Focus*, 12 January 2016 (last retrieved on 18 June 2019).

his homeland. In his early 20s he joined the National Resistance Army, a guerrilla outfit that brought Uganda's President, Yoweri Museveni, to power in 1986. He was one of thousands of young Rwandan refugees who participated in Uganda's five-year civil war and eventually decided to fight their way back home[23]. Kagame led this war after the tragic death of the first rebel leader, Major-General Fred Gisa Rwigema.

Paul Kagame became President of Rwanda in 2000, when he was chosen by the RPF to replace his predecessor Pasteur Bizimungu. Until then he had been Vice-President and Minister of Defence. After the RPF seized power in 1994, the party leadership and members – as well as other parties – had wanted him to be President and applied some pressure on him. He declined. He is said to have preferred to be in charge of security, the one domain in which he was most specialised and in which he felt he would be most useful. Also, it is understood that sections of the RPF leadership felt it inappropriate, given the circumstances – specifically the deep suspicion and fear with which the returnees were viewed by the Hutu majority – for a Tutsi returnee to immediately occupy that position. They believed that a period of "settling down" and confidence-building was necessary, and here the role of the Hutu political elite who had embraced the RPF's ideology of non-sectarianism would be critical[24].

Both Gregoire Kayibanda's First Republic (1962-1973) and Juvenal Habyarimana's Second Republic (1973-1994) had spent the entire post-colonial period demonising the Tutsi minority and sowing fear in the minds of the majority Hutu that were the Tutsis to take power they would be persecuted, enslaved and dispossessed. It was therefore essential that the post-genocide government be constituted in ways that would

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[23] For a comprehensive history, see: National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, *History of Rwanda: From the beginning to the end of the twentieth century*. Kigali, NURC, 2016. For a detailed biography of Paul Kagame, see S. Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It*, Hobken, NJ, John Wiley and Sons, 2008.

[24] Interviews with RPF veterans.

reassure a potentially restive majority, not feed the fears planted in their minds during three decades of poisonous indoctrination[25]. However, Bizimungu's performance had proved unsatisfactory. Tensions within the RPF stemming from dissatisfaction with his performance eventually led to his resignation[26].

Kagame, who was elected to the presidency by the National Assembly by 81 votes to 5, was no random choice. He had been among the founders of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, an organisation whose over-riding objective was to ensure that exiled Rwandans who wanted to return to the land of their ancestors could do so, and of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), its armed wing that was created to ensure that the return happened by force of arms if necessary. He had therefore been at the forefront of keeping alive the dream that one day those Rwandans who had been forced to live outside their country and who wanted to regain their rights as citizens would do so[27]. To understand the importance of the right to return, it is essential to recall that the Habyarimana government had made clear its position on the matter: Rwanda was full, and therefore had no land to accommodate the exiles. They had therefore been advised to seek citizenship in the countries where they lived, and promised support for their endeavours[28].

Also, Kagame had proved his leadership talents and capabilities during the civil war. At the time he took over leadership of the RPA it had virtually disintegrated owing to the shock, panic, and demoralisation that the death of its first leader, Fred Rwigema, had caused among the fighters only a day after they had invaded Rwanda from Uganda – namely, 2 October 1990[29].

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[25] S. Strauss, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and the War in Rwanda*, Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press, 2006. Also, A. Wallis, *Stepp'd in Blood: Akazu and the Architects of the Rwandan Genocide Against the Tutsi*, London, Zero books. 2019.

[26] J.-P. Kimonyo (2019).

[27] S. Kinzer (2008).

[28] A. Wallis (2019).

[29] J.-P. Kimonyo (2019), p. 85.

Kagame, abandoning a military course in the United States, headed to Rwanda, re-organised and rebuilt the RPA and led it to eventual victory against a much larger and better-equipped national army, the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR), and its French and Zairian allies[30]. He had again shown his capabilities when, as the first post-genocide Minister of Defence, he had guided the RPA's successful tackling of the insecurity that had threatened to derail the new government when insurgents from inside the country and from across the border in Zaire, supported by external actors, mounted determined attacks[31].

All that said, just as it was by happenstance that he became leader of the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) after the death of his predecessor, Kagame became President of Rwanda without actively seeking the position. In both instances he took over at a time when there was a great need for strong, capable and focused leadership. In the first instance, he had found the RPA in disarray and facing total defeat. In the second instance, by 1999 a significant number of the RPF's membership felt that their Movement had veered from the values on which it had been founded, of "sacrifice, selflessness, integrity, and service beyond the call of duty"[32]. Those values had enabled it to triumph against a larger, better-equipped military force that enjoyed the support of powerful external actors.

As commander of the RPA he distinguished himself as a leader of exceptional talent and ability. As President of Rwanda, the vast majority of Rwandans and many outsiders, some albeit grudgingly, agree that he has done the same. Even allowing for weaknesses and failures of which there are many, the gains cited above leave no doubt about how well the country has done in terms of social and economic progress in the last two decades. What are the drivers behind them? What has Kagame's role been?

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[30] Interviews with numerous RPF and RPA veterans since 2007.

[31] Rakiya Omar…. Insurgency in the North….

[32] Interview with a senior RPF cadre and war veteran, 3 January 2013.

Leadership, Politics and Stability in Rwanda under Kagame

The leader and the party

There is no doubt that Kagame towers over the rest of the country's leadership. However, in their efforts to explain the country's post-genocide evolution to the world, analysts and watchers of Rwanda tend to focus too much on him. One effect of this is to disregard the very important fact that Kagame works within a framework set by the highly organised and effective political organisation, the RPF, of which he is the Chairman. When analysing Rwanda's evolution since 1994 it is important to bear in mind one peculiarity of power distribution and management among and by the country's political elite.

There are countries in Africa where the political organisation or party in power was founded by the incumbent who recruited other people into it, and where, therefore, it is regarded as "his party". Members and supporters pay allegiance to him. In some instances, where the "founding father", as they tend to designate themselves, has died, such parties have then come under the leadership of those founders' progeny. Kagame is not the founder of the RPF. The party is therefore not regarded as "Kagame's party". Members do not pay allegiance to the Chairman, but upon joining the party new members must swear an oath of allegiance to the organisation and familiarise themselves with its very strict code of conduct, to which they must adhere at all times. Violating the code of conduct invites sanctions, regardless of the rank or status of the violator. The RPF works in very particular ways, and plays a pivotal role in governing Rwanda and providing the necessary leadership alongside its Chairman, the President.

Political leadership

To best appreciate the issue of leadership in Rwanda, it is important to revisit certain key features of the country's current

political system. One is the restricted nature of political competition. Soon after the war the country's post-genocide political elite agreed that unrestrained adversarial political competition, given what the country had just been through, risked derailing the long-term collective effort to turn it away from its bad post-colonial history. As a result, in Rwanda there are limitations on political competition. Political parties are subject to strict rules regulating their activities, including recruitment of members. Above all else, restrictions prohibit parties that violate rules against sectarianism. This has meant that political parties do not seek to grow their support bases on ethnic or even regional identity, as was the case before the genocide.

The other essential feature of the present political set-up is the sharing of power and responsibility. The RPF formally shares power – and responsibility for ensuring that never again should the country descend into destructive conflict and another genocide – with other legally registered political parties which obtain a certain share of the vote in parliamentary elections. These arrangements are often dismissed by critics as some kind of ruse by the RPF to co-opt and dominate potential opponents. Given that the RPF is the largest, most organised and wealthiest party in the country, this is probably not far-fetched.

However, over the last two decades and a half these arrangements have contributed to preserving peace and stability in Rwanda. Peace and stability have in turn allowed the country's collective leadership to concentrate on developing the country rather than incentivising political groups to focus on efforts to win power for themselves. Since winner-takes-all constitutional arrangements arguably play a role in undermining political stability and the quality of policy-making in a number of African countries[33], given Rwanda's history of division there are grounds for arguing that, while the choice may not tally with what is considered "best practice", it passes the test of "best fit".

[33] See, for example, P. Collier, 2010. Wars, *Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, London, Vintage, 2010.

On a separation-of-powers principle, under the 2003 constitution ministerial posts cannot be held by MPs. However, they are shared among the legal parties that qualify under the specified rules. The largest party, in this case the RPF, holds no more than 50% of the portfolios[34]. By convention, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament, the President of the Senate, and the President of the Supreme Court usually come from a different party or tendency from that of the President[35]. These arrangements soften the sense of exclusion among losing parties. In addition, they enable cabinets to work co-operatively in pursuit of collective long-term aspirations and interests.

For these reasons Rwanda does not have a conventional opposition in Parliament. This reduces the need for the ruling party to buy off its opponents to secure support for its positions, as is often seen in some neighbouring countries. Proceedings in Parliament are guided by consensus-building, not adversarial contestation. Under normal circumstances, therefore, criticism of policies tends to be channelled into policy adjustments, not political horse-trading in search of support. Where and how does President Kagame feature in all this?

The Kagame Factor

The idea underlying the portrayal of post-genocide Rwanda as some kind of "one-man show" is that this is a country where the President is everything, cast in the mould of the famed "African big man"[36]. Kagame's dominance in Rwanda as well as his power and influence within both the government and the RPF are uncontested. However, his rather common portrayal as some

[34] National Constitution 2003 (Article 116).

[35] Interviews with Rwandan Government Minister, Permanent Secretary, and high-ranking security official, Kigali, December 2007 and March 2009.

[36] See, for example Gerard Prunier's blog, "Portrait of Paul Kagame – President of the Republic of Rwanda" (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

kind of typical African "big man" is misleading[37]. Close examination of the way Rwanda works in practice provides a more nuanced picture. For a start, it is important to look at how policy-making happens. According to a former Senior Minister, policy does not arise from Kagame waking up and saying "let us make a law on agriculture". The official emphasises that policies are generated within the party through multi-level consultations throughout the country, through party structures, and directly between officials and ordinary citizens[38].

In addition, a key factor in Rwanda's recovery from the effects of the war and genocide against the Tutsi has been the commitment with which many government officials have applied themselves to the task of reconstruction. A pointer to this is the speed with which policies are formulated, implemented, and revised or changed altogether when they are deemed not to produce the expected results. Things tend to happen very quickly. This is why Rwanda has been dubbed "a country in a hurry" by some, including its development partners who usually find themselves unable to keep up with the pace of change[39]. Here, Kagame's exhortation to government officials that "where others can afford to walk, we must run" is important. As a Senior Cabinet Minister summed up: "President Kagame often says that while there are people who can afford to fail, he has no room for failure in his mind. His approach to discipline in all public life motivates those around him. You are judged and you progress in your career on the basis of self-application and success at what you do"[40].

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[37] For an informative description of "big man politics", see, for example, M. Berger, 2018. "Big man Politics", Politics Web, 3 July 2018 (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

[38] Interview 7 February 2007.

[39] E. Littlefield, "A country in a hurry: On the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, this small African country looks forward", The Opic Blog, 9 April 2014 (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

[40] Interview 20 September 2010.

Over and above the pressure he exerts on officials and the encouragement that accompanies it, however, is a deeper underlying source of motivation. Another official explains:

> It is the desire to create a Rwanda which is different from the old one. Kagame has always urged us not to forget where we have come from, and to strive to build a country in which our children will never have to be victims in the same way that our generation was. Our generation is sacrificing itself for the sake of the future. I do not want my children to grow up in a Rwanda which is like the old Rwanda. Nearly every Rwandan lost a relative during the genocide. That history drives our determination to move on completely from the Rwanda of old[41].

Moving on from the old Rwanda has two strands. One was the liberation of the country from leaders under whom the country had been mired in social division and institutionalised discrimination against whole sections of society. The other is freeing society from poverty and deprivation.

Beyond Kagame: Other Drivers of the Transformation Process

Besides Kagame's personal authority and influence, and his single-minded determination to remake Rwanda which is underlain by "a permanent sense of urgency"[42], there are also features of the overall political economy that play equally significant roles. They include top-down implementation incentives, and the detection and correction of implementation failures and abuses. These are supported and enforced by specific institutional arrangements. One is the Annual National Dialogue, one of a number of accountability mechanisms that are inspired by traditional practices which had been devalued by colonialism.

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[41] Ibid.

[42] F. Soudan, *Kagame: Conversations with the President of Rwanda*, Paris, Nouveau Monde Editions, 2015.

Officials, including Ministers, are called to account on a regular basis and are sometimes removed from office for poor performance in relation to set targets. Then there is the *imihigo* system. *Imihigo* are performance contracts. Some officials sign these with the President while others sign with their immediate supervisors. Assessment for promotion focuses on their outcomes. As a result they are a source of top-down pressure to deliver on agreed targets and commitments.

Equally important is the local government system, which serves as a policy implementation mechanism. As with other developing countries, Rwanda was not spared by the donor-inspired wave of reforms in governance that sought to transfer major responsibilities from central governments to local authorities constituted on the basis of the popular will via democratic elections. In the countries where it has happened, decentralisation has produced a complex division of labour between line ministries and public agencies on the one hand and local authorities on the other. Ministries set policies and monitor. Agencies implement at the national level. Meanwhile local authorities are responsible for providing a wide range of public services. This, however, is the end of similarities between Rwanda and other countries which have embraced democratic decentralisation.

Local authorities in Rwanda, unlike other countries, have limited autonomy. They are subject to a fairly high degree of control and direction by the central government. Another difference is that while local elections in other countries entail competition among candidates sponsored by political parties, in Rwanda although the political affiliations or leanings of aspiring mayors or councillors are known they stand not as the candidates of political parties but as individuals on their personal merits. As with Ministers and other public servants at the national level, mayors and local civil servants sign performance contracts (the above-mentioned *imihigo)* which specify the targets they are to achieve.

One advantage of the limited autonomy of local authorities is that the central government is able to get them to prioritise what it considers to be most important in terms of implementation. This, of course, does not guarantee that local authorities are an efficient delivery instrument. As with other organs of the state, local authorities have significant weaknesses, some of which are related to the constant pressure for performance. For example, some local authorities have taken to misrepresenting their achievements in order not to be seen to fail. However, the top-down, centrally-driven performance culture ensures that there are strong incentives to minimise poor delivery.

External Relations: Kagame, International Donors and Regional Powers

Kagame's Rwanda is a highly assertive country, seen by some in the region and beyond as excessively so. It is rather unusual for African governments to be so bold, certainly not with Western (donor) counterparts, let alone "the big powers". Two examples that come to mind as notable exceptions are Eritrea and Ethiopia. This assertiveness on the part of the small and would-be insignificant east-central African country has earned it both friends and detractors. Kagame's Rwanda has a clear view of its interests and of how to advance and protect them, of the position it currently occupies in the world and of the one it would like to occupy[43].

In Kigali's efforts to advance and protect its interests, it usually does not matter who the adversary is, or how big and powerful or small and weak they are. Although very much a Kagame personal trait according to people who know him personally[44], this assertiveness and willingness to take on any adversary seems to be ingrained in the DNA of the Rwandan

[43] See, for example, F. Soudan (2015).

[44] Interviews with several current and former advisors and officials, civilian and military.

Patriotic Front as a liberation movement. When the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) attacked Juvénal Habyarimana's regime it had only a few thousand fighters to face a government army several times its size. Towards the end of the war the RPA had about 12,000 fighters battling the 80,000-strong FAR together with its French and Zairian allies and several militias[45].

There have been several manifestations of this assertiveness. Soon after the war and the genocide in Rwanda, the new government came under attack from insurgents operating inside the country and from across the border in Zaire, where large numbers of veterans of the former national army, the Forces Armées Rwandaises, had fled together with fighters from its allied militias. These armed elements were living and organising their activities in the same refugee camps as ordinary civilians, and were being fed and sustained by international NGOs which were in turn funded by Western governments and multilateral organisations to look after the refugees. The Kigali government wanted the international community to separate ordinary refugees from armed elements who, it argued, should be held to account for the crimes they had committed in Rwanda.

The international community dithered for a long time as cross-border attacks on Rwandan territory intensified. Kagame, who at the time was Vice President and Minister of Defence, warned that Rwanda would find its own solution if the international community did not act within a specified period of time. They failed to act. Rwandan troops moved in, dismantled the camps, forced the refugees to return to Rwanda and the insurgents to flee. The decision to dismantle the camps drew much condemnation from across the world. For Rwanda, however, it went some way towards addressing its internal security problems arising from the insurgents' use of the camps as safe havens[46].

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[45] Interviews with General James Kabarebe, former Kagame Aide de Camp; Chief of Staff; Army Commander; and Minister of Defence, currently Senior Security Advisor, Office of the President – 25 May 2019.

[46] See, for instance, F. Reyntjens, *The Great African War: Congo and Regional*

In 2006, forty senior Rwandan military and civilian officials were indicted by a French investigating judge on charges of being responsible for shooting down the plane in which President Juvénal Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira were travelling from the Tanzanian town of Arusha on 6 April 1994, an event some argue was the "trigger" for the genocide against the Tutsi. The government of Rwanda interpreted the indictment as part of a campaign of harassment waged on the country by the government of France since the end of the war[47]. Kigali reacted by expelling the French ambassador and withdrawing its own ambassador from Paris. It then shut down every organisation associated with France, including the French school and the French cultural organisation, *Alliance Française*, in Rwanda.

As far as the government of Rwanda was concerned the time had come to bring out into the open a conflict which had hitherto been raging behind the scenes. Even when one of the indicted officials, retired Colonel Rose Kabuye, was arrested in Germany on an Interpol warrant issued by the government of France and was given the option of being tried in Germany instead of extradited to France, she was encouraged by the Rwandan government to choose to be tried in France[48].

That French trial, seen by some as a fast-track to conviction, was taken by the government of Rwanda as a suitable opportunity for exposing the French government's machinations. It asserted that the French authorities had no evidence on the basis of which a successful trial could be conducted; and the trial did indeed eventually collapse for lack of evidence. It took several years for the two countries to restore diplomatic relations, after the French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited Kigali and expressed regret at the "grave errors of judgement" committed in and against Rwanda by his country[49].

Geopolitics, 1996-2006, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[47] Interview with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Charles Muligande.

[48] Interview with Colonel Rose Kabuye, 2008.

[49] "On Visit to Rwanda, Sarkozy Admits 'Grave Errors' in 1994 Genocide", *The*

In 2016 the East African Community (EAC) countries of Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania agreed to reduce the importation of used clothes as a measure intended to boost their local textile industries. The US, which is a major exporter of used clothes to the EAC, reacted to these plans by accusing the four countries of interfering with free trade. It threatened to withdraw the benefits of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a piece of legislation that allows certain countries to export a range of products to the US duty-free. Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya backed down and dropped the proposed measures. Rwanda, even after much back-and-forth engagement and pressure from the US, maintained the policy and has continued to pursue its aspirations of trying to grow a domestic apparel and textile industry.

This assertiveness is just as evident in Rwanda's relationship with its development partners on matters related to development aid. The starting point for assessing Rwanda's relationship with donors is the fact that the country still receives ample foreign aid, currently standing at 16% of the national budget, down from 30% to 40% only a few years ago[50]. Kigali has been the beneficiary of great generosity mainly on the part of Western donors, the key contributors being the US and the UK. It is unlikely that the country would have made as much progress as it has in improving service delivery in the health, education and agricultural sectors, and in rebuilding its economy generally, without donor support.

Despite the significant dependence on aid over the years, however, and the country's embrace of major international initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and more recently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the government of Rwanda insists on taking the lead in deciding the priority areas to which resources should be directed. Its attitude here can best be summed up as: "don't tell us what to

New York Times, 25 February 2010, (last retrieved on 19 June 2019).

[50] R. Hutt, "5 things to know about Rwanda's economy", World Economic Forum, 7 April 2016 (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

do; help us to do what we want to do". The government is said to prefer to delay its plans because of lack of resources rather than to be deflected from what it wants to do by the diktats or the subtle pressures that traditionally accompany aid[51].

At the regional level Rwanda has been keen to cultivate cordial relations with its neighbours and others in its neighbourhood. It really has no other choice: being landlocked, with all that this implies in terms of dependence on its neighbours for access to the sea, co-operation is a key imperative. At continental level Rwanda has been punching above its weight, playing key roles in championing freedom of movement, the liberalisation of Africa's skies to allow the African airline industry to grow, and greater trade among African countries.

Elsewhere, as a result of the achievements Rwanda has registered on the home front, Kagame has been chosen by his peers to spearhead the reform of the African Union and its institutions. All this has seen both Kagame and Rwanda grow in stature and influence. Indeed, the President has become one of the most influential leaders on the continent, and Rwanda is increasingly an example for many Africans in terms of the progress it has made since 1994.

Here, too, in its relations with its immediate neighbours and other countries on the continent, it remains as assertive of its interests and aspirations as it is with its development partners and other actors. This forwardness explains why it has tended to conflict with its neighbours and countries farther afield, such as South Africa. For example, some commentators are wont to regard Rwanda's incursions into the Democratic Republic of Congo as motivated by a desire to loot that country's vast mineral wealth, but in fact it is debatable whether Rwanda would have sent its troops in had its security not been threatened because of the insurgents who had sought refuge there, whom neither the government of the DRC nor international actors had proved able to restrain. Also, during the presidency of Jakaya

[51] Interview with a former Senior Cabinet Minister (4 February 2009).

Kikwete in Tanzania, relations between the two countries were tense because of his government's alleged support for the *Forces Démocratiques Pour la Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), the insurgents whose leaders and some of whose rank and file had participated in the genocide against the Tutsi[52]. Kikwete believed that the Kagame government should engage in dialogue with them, and publicly urged them to do so.

Laudable as the call for dialogue might be, the FDLR had repeatedly stated its determination to return to Rwanda and "complete the work" – i.e. exterminating the Tutsi – which they had not been able to complete because of the defeat they suffered at the hands of the Rwanda Patriotic Army. Given the FDLR's ambitions, it was hardly surprising that the government of Rwanda, whose preoccupation with the insurgents' genocidal ideology is no secret, reacted angrily to Kikwete's insistence on dialogue. There were other underlying issues[53], but this, in the eyes of the Rwandan government, amounted to crossing a red line of sorts[54]. Relations with Uganda and South Africa have also been rocked by those two countries' active support for individuals and groups with declared agendas for regime change in Rwanda. Kigali has accused both Pretoria and Kampala of not taking Rwanda's security concerns seriously[55].

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[52] See, for example, M.-F. Cros, 2019. "Rwanda/RDCongo: L'histoire des FDLR, a partir des documents de justice", *La Libre Afrique*, 21 June 2019 (last retrieved on 21 June 2019)

[53] See F. Golooba-Mutebi, "Analysis: Powers behind Rwanda-Tanzania ailing relations", *The East African*, 11 September 2013a.

[54] For an elaboration of the context in which the row broke out, see F. Golooba-Mutebi, "Kikwete in trouble over FDLR, but does he really know who they are?", *African Arguments*, 2013b.

[55] For an insight into the specific issues that Rwanda has raised with Uganda, see, for example: "Rwanda's twelve warnings to Uganda", *The New Times*, 29 May 2019 (last retrieved on 29 May 2019). For some of the issues rocking relations with South Africa, see: M. Frikberg, "How Rwanda's Paul Kagame's bad relations could cause destabilisation", IOL, 16 May 2019 (last retrieved on 29 May 2019). Also, F. Golooba-Mutebi, 2014. "Rwanda and South Africa should not sever relations over Nyamwasa/Karegeya row", *African Arguments*, 11 March 2014 (last retrieved on 29 May 2019).

Rwanda's relations with development partners, neighbours, regional powers and external actors are therefore driven by its leadership's particular understanding of its national interests and its determination to pursue and safeguard them with a level of assertiveness that is unusual for a small, poor African country still significantly aid-dependent and vulnerable to destabilisation from within and without because of its very complex history of internecine conflict.

Developmentalism: Rwanda as a Developmental State

Rwanda has been referred to by various commentators as a developmental state, or at least as one in the making. According to scholars working on the "Developmental Regimes in Africa" project at the Overseas Development Institute[56], the definition of a "developmental state" in the context of contemporary Africa focuses on three key things in any particular country: economic policy content, approach to policy-making, and the prevailing political settlement. Regarding policy content, a regime qualifies as developmental on the basis of its economic and social policies. It ought to be actively promoting and supporting a productivity revolution in agriculture and/or pursuing a deliberate industrial policy in order to build capabilities and acquire new comparative advantages for exploitation within regional or global markets. The reason for approaching the definition in this way is because policy differences explain most of the post-independence divergence in economic performance between Africa and Southeast Asia[57].

[56] D. Booth, T. Kelsall, et al., "Developmental regimes in Africa", Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Research reports and studies, January 2015 (last retrieved on 19 June 2019).

[57] See D. Henley and J. Kees van Donge, "Policy for Development in Africa: Learning from Southeast Asia", Policy Brief 01, Developmental Regimes in Africa , 2012 (last retrieved on 19 June 2019).

The key question regarding the policy process is whether or not it is of a problem-solving and iterative learning kind, focused on finding solutions to identified problems. According to another research project, Tracking Development[58], a developmental regime must practice problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) in choosing and implementing policies. The feasibility of PDIA depends on how politics in a country works or, put differently, on the nature of the prevailing political settlement. There is a common thread running through the various definitions of "political settlement": the idea of agreement, formal or informal, among the most powerful members of a society, as we have seen for Rwanda, about the conditions under which they are prepared to engage in some form of peaceful political competition rather than resort to violence[59]. Crucially, there is no presumption that the more progressive types of policy process and political settlement are dependent on adopting formal institutions of a particular type or complying with liberal democratic norms and practices.

On these criteria Rwanda qualifies as a developmental state. As with most of East and Southeast Asia, the country's leadership believes that economic and social transformation is a must if a repetition of its ugly post-colonial history is to be avoided in the future. This belief is well articulated in the document *Rwanda Vision 2020*. The document serves as a key reference point for political leaders and public servants at national and local level[60]. This belief is underlain by the assumption, strongly contested by some analysts[61], that rapid economic and social

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[58] D. Henley, *Asia-Africa development divergence; A question of intent*, London: Zed Books, 2015, https://www.kitlv.nl/publication-research-project-tracking-development/ (last retrieved on 19 June 2019).

[59] E. Laws, "Political Settlements, elite pacts, and governments of national unity", Background Paper 10, Development Leadership Programme, University of Birmingham, 2012.

[60] This finding is based in part on direct observation of several Annual National Dialogue sessions and the testimony provided by participants in ministerial retreats.

[61] F. Reyntjens, "Rwanda, Ten Years On: From Genocide To Dictatorship", *African Affairs*, vol. 103, no. 411, April 2004, pp. 177–210; S. Straus and L. Waldorf (eds.),

progress will ensure that a new generation emerges whose identity as Rwandans will not focus on their belonging to this or that social group as it had in the past. This orientation can best be understood in the light of the implicit threat to long-term political stability and national reconciliation posed by the legacy of violent conflict, a threat in which poverty and deprivation have been factors[62].

Since it came to power the Kagame government has had great ambitions for projects to drive the economy forward. In its very early days the leadership had the idea of leap-frogging agriculture and aiming for services as the key driver of economic growth. This had nothing to do with either the traditional neglect of agriculture by African governments or the political/economic context. Rather, it was because at the time, given the lack of land and the high population growth, the government did not think smallholder agriculture could possibly be the engine that would drive the economy forward. Eventually, however, this changed, and the government embarked on reforms in the sector geared at raising productivity to ensure food security and production for export[63]. Elsewhere great efforts have gone into pursuing ambitions to make Rwanda the regional ICT[64] and logistics hub[65] and to promote manufacturing[66].

Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence, Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 2011.

[62] J.-P. Kimonyo, *Rwanda's Popular Genocide: A Perfect Storm*, Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2016.

[63] D. Booth and F. Golooba-Mutebi, *Policy for Agriculture and Horticulture in Rwanda: A Different Political Economy?*, Working Paper 038. London, Future Agricultures Consortium/PEAPA, 2012.

[64] I. Gagliardone and F. Golooba-Mutebi, "The Evolution of the Internet in Ethiopia and Rwanda: Towards a "Developmental" Model?", *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2016, pp. 8.

[65] K. Esiara, "Rwanda aims to be East Africa's logistics hub", *The East African*, 23 January 2016.

[66] See, for example, B. Shepherd and A. Twum, *Review of Industrial policy in Rwanda. Data review, comparative assessment, and discussion points*, Paper F-38426-RWA-1, International Growth Centre. November 2018 (last retrieved on 19 June 2019).

There are also other initiatives seen as complementing ambitions in agriculture and industrialisation. These "pillars needed to hold up the economy" include a new airport[67] and a railway connecting Rwanda to Tanzania, through which more than 80% of its exports and imports transit, and to the Democratic Republic of Congo, a potential large market for its goods and services[68]. These initiatives are strongly driven by Kagame who, as we mentioned, constantly exhibits a sense of urgency, one factor to which rapid change in the developmental states of Southeast Asia is attributed[69]. According to a senior Minister: "Kagame tells us that we should always be ahead of our own plans. He does not believe in waiting to do things for when they were planned. For him, it is a question of mindset. He urges us to develop a mindset that drives us to seek to achieve our objectives quickly"[70].

Overall, there is no doubt that over the last 25 years Paul Kagame has been a central actor in post-genocide Rwanda's evolution into a country that is jealously protective of its interests; where systematic discrimination, marginalisation and violence towards whole sections of society have been ended; where political competition is carefully managed in a context allowing for the gradual expansion of political inclusion and popular participation; where the rule of law and human rights are increasingly respected – however imperfectly – and particularly when compared to the low points reached in the past; and where the government pursues its agenda for transforming society with a single-minded determination and a sense of urgency characteristic of the "developmental state" model as successfully implemented in other parts of the world.

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[67] L. Leardi, "Rwanda's Bugesera International Aiport to Set Records for Sustainability", *Arch Daily*, 20 February 2019 (last retrieved on 21 June 2019).

[68] The Citizen, "Rwanda seeks $1.3bn to finance standard gauge railway linking Tanzania", *Rwanda Today*, 23 May 2019 (last retrieved on 22 June 2019).

[69] D. Henley (2015).

[70] Interview 20 September 2010, cit.

7. Conclusions and Policy Implications

Giovanni Carbone, Camillo Casola

Politics in sub-Saharan Africa has long revolved heavily around individual leaders, arguably more so than is normally the case in some other areas of the world. Today, leadership dynamics remain crucially important for the unfolding of the region's political scenarios and development prospects. Yet some fundamental changes have taken place since multiparty politics was introduced across the region in the 1990s. For a start, despite mainstream media attention indulging on long-serving power-holders, Africa has become less and less a place for overstaying rulers. While a 53% majority of the leaders in office in 1990 had been there for ten years or more (i.e. 25 out of 47), as of mid-2019 this share had dropped to a less abnormal 22% (i.e. 9 out of 49). Crucially, electoral mechanisms have been adopted and have taken roots across African regimes, albeit with a wildly diverse spectrum of situations in terms of actual respect of political and civil freedoms. In many countries, such mechanisms helped regularize periodic leadership handovers, and sometimes even allowed turnovers between political adversaries to take place.

In what remains the world's poorest region, however, a key question is whether leaders do make a difference in terms of their impact on the social and economic progress of the countries they rule. One way of addressing this question is by looking at the general picture and asking what types of leaders have proved most successful, south of the Sahara, since independence in the 1960s. This requires investigating some 360 leaders

across 60 years and 49 countries. We carried out this kind of analysis based on our original Africa Leadership Change (ALC) dataset[1] and summed up the results in chapter one of this volume. Development progress in Africa generally benefited from the shift to pluralist arrangements and electoral incentives, partly also where the new practices did not truly amount to democratic advances. This, however, should not be taken as a one-size-fits-all finding. Rather, it is a broad trend that still allows for a variety of real-life trajectories and the presence of a number of outliers. The region's pre-multiparty history includes some unelected autocrats who were somehow able to pursue their countries' economic growth, for example, cases that range from monarchic Burundi to one-party Malawi in the mid-1960s, from Jerry Rawlings in 1980s military Ghana to Yoweri Museveni in 1990s no-party Uganda. Even during the subsequent era of pluralist politics, the fastest growing countries in post-2000 Africa comprise the likes of Ethiopia and Rwanda, both ruled by strongmen who were only elected under clearly non-democratic conditions. These countries owe a large part of their recent successes to their single-minded leaders, however, which makes the recipe difficult to replicate when such out-of-the-ordinary individuals depart from office. Electoral institutions as a mechanism for selecting leaders and exerting a degree of pressure on the way they behave – on the other hand – can be a helpful, transferable, replicable and adaptable tool that more often than not supports development efforts.

Universal suffrage and multiple parties are formally granted across the region, with only a few countries still somehow resisting or delaying their introduction. As pointed out, however, Africa's electoral regimes display a high degree of variation in terms of their actual "democratic substance". Several among them remain deeply authoritarian. A number are relatively apt at granting significant political and civil freedoms. Others have

[1] G. Carbone and A. Pellegata, *Political leadership in Africa. Leaders and development South of the Sahara,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020 (forthcoming).

proven open to actual contestation and alternation in office.

The new leaders that over the past couple of years emerged in key countries across the region reflect this diversity. The country studies presented in this volume allowed us to zoom in on the new faces at the helm in Angola, Congo-Kinshasa, Ethiopia and South Africa, while also accounting for Rwanda's example of enduring and developmentally-successful leadership.

The advent of these new leaders tells different stories, each one specific to the politics and society of the nations they rule. They are also told from somewhat different perspectives, including with concern to power-holders' potentials. Yet such stories do share some commonalities. Key among them is that the rise and early steps of these leaders came as a reaction to the prevailing circumstances, an effort to try and sort out some major challenges facing the country. Digging into individual cases also sheds light on the shifting political alliances and consensus building processes, particularly within the ruling parties, as crucial determinants of who eventually emerged victorious in the fight for the country's top job. It similarly warns us of the unpredictable road ahead, during which former office-holders who have been ousted from power, and their networks, strive not to be fully marginalized.

Ethiopia's leadership handover represents arguably the most dramatic, fragile and consequential case. Abiy Ahmed's appointment as Prime Minister must be traced back to the country's growing instability and the related dynamics unfolding within the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). While the country's economy kept growing at an impressive pace, the political path defined by the EPRDF under Meles Zenawi's stewardship had gradually come to a standstill after his death in 2012. Amidst growing social unrest and ethno-political tensions, his successor, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, resigned to allow opening a novel phase. But Abiy's surprising rise went beyond expectations and ushered in an entirely new season – promoting both political and economic changes, with wide-ranging implications at the

domestic as well as the regional level – if a frail one whose outcome remains highly uncertain.

In South Africa, Ramaphosa's rise was strictly intertwined with the crisis of governance ('state capture', in the expression chosen by South Africans) observed during the years of Jacob Zuma, whose presidency was associated with the spread and deepening of questionable practices. An 'insider' fully integrated in the national political and economic system – and the person Mandela reportedly wanted to fill his own shoes once he retired – Ramaphosa was deemed by many the country's safest bet to fight the misuse of public resources and institutions and to restore the rule of law. The African National Congress thus demonstrated a capacity to respond to a profound leadership failure and offer a degree of renewal at the top, albeit the Zuma network still retains influence within the party as well as the government. The new president will need all his credibility and negotiating skills to untie the knots that cost Pretoria major economic and political setbacks and to restore the country on a more virtuous path.

The reforms that are required to "regenerate" Angola after nearly forty years of uninterrupted rule by one single individual are even deeper and more far-reaching. Upon taking office in 2017, João Lourenço displayed an unforeseen assertiveness as he began head on to dismantle key elements of José dos Santos's power networks and huge business interests, including the purge of personalities belonging or linked to the former president's inner circle. This surprised observers who had expected that the dos Santos family would keep pulling the strings. A former Ministry of Defence, Lourenço swiftly moved to ensure fuller control of the ruling Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola and made the need to differentiate the economy away from oil a priority in his reform agenda. Lourenço represents an unforeseen case of change within continuity.

A historic leadership handover – the country's first ever taking place through an election, albeit an extremely controversial one – also came about in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Notwithstanding Joseph Kabila's effort to cling on to power, after a two-year delay a presidential vote was eventually held which set the stage for a government turnover. Félix Tshisekedi was sworn in as the country's new head of state, but observers reported widespread irregularities and tampering with the vote. A backroom deal purportedly led to the candidate less hostile to the outgoing president being declared victorious. Much like the Tigrayan elite in Abiy's Ethiopia, the Zuma faction in Ramaphosa's South Africa and the dos Santos family in Angola, Kabila's inner circle is trying to resist a diminished role. Control of a large parliamentary majority will be the main asset for the former president to retain political influence. Yet in spite of several adverse starting conditions (lack of political experience, an undemocratic and divisive election, a non-aligned legislature), some of Tshisekedi's moves seem to hint that he is trying to be his own man. He will need that if he is to address the innumerable challenges faced by one of Africa's most complex and troubled countries.

The true outsider among our case studies is actually very much an insider of contemporary African politics. Having ruled Rwanda for over two decades, Paul Kagame has long won his battle for political survival – a battle that, of course, no leader wins once and for all. With the Rwandan Patriotic Front, he first restored stability to a country devastated by genocide and war, and then went on to bring about impressive social and economic progress and transformations, turning Rwanda into a model of Africa's so-called developmental states. The one key area in which Kagame-*ism* stirred controversy and continues to draw strong criticism, however, is the political realm: a leadership style and a political set up that, in spite of electoral procedures, only allows for political openings at the margins. Yet not all observers agree with the prevailing narrative. Dissenting voices stress how, under the dramatic and divisive circumstances left by the genocide in a small, poor and landlocked country, some gradual political openings have actually been allowed – including a decision-making process that involves a broader

number of participants and intermediary bodies than is normally conceded, if only around Kagame's uncontested authority and towering figure – and represent the safest way forward for this tiny nation in the middle of the region.

The ascension of these and other new leaders in today's Africa has fed great expectations. Their room for manoeuvre, true goals and actual impact – like the regimes and societies they operate in – will vary greatly. Yet many of them will likely contribute to defining not only the political horizons of the continent, but also its development prospects.

Policy implications

The following broad guidelines can be drawn for Europe's approach to sub-Saharan Africa from the study of political leadership and leadership transitions, and of their broader impact, examined in this volume:

- the adoption and deepening of electoral institutions and practices should be supported and protected as, in spite of the many obstacles and failures, they have gradually opened up political space across the region;
- electoral mechanisms and habits can also play a role in sustaining the social and economic development of African countries, particularly when supplemented by additional components of democratic politics, by making national leaders increasingly accountable to their citizenry, if often in flawed manners, and by favouring a degree of rotation in office. The preservation of such practices and the improvement of their actual functioning should thus be a high priority;
- in nondemocratic polities where starting conditions appear unpromising and continuity seems to prevail, leadership successions can at times create a momentum for broader political and economic change. In such cases, international partners should carefully consider supporting the reform agenda of incoming leaders;

- where authoritarian rulers have been successful in the pursuit of development, international partners should strike a delicate balance between supporting such progress and promoting a medium-term goal of making political and social space more open, free and contestable.

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