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DEVELOPMENTAL NEO-PATRIMONIALISM?

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Abstract

Developmental neo-patrimonialism is an argument brought forth by certain scholars who believe that a system of centralized long-horizon rent management can yield long-term development progress. In this system which reject the values attached to liberal democracy, patrimonial politics are held in check by a leader who enjoys tight control over the patronage networks. This paper using the case of Rwanda analyzes to what extent neo-patrimonialism can be developmental. The Rwanda case study demonstrates that the neo-patrimonial elements of governance the country has experienced post conflict have played a positive but also detrimental role in rebuilding the state. Though economic progress has been noted, the country has been regressing in terms of political freedoms thus rendering the achievements accomplished unsustainable.

Introduction

The African Politics discourse appears to be suffering from a form of democracy fatigue. With several scholars and development practitioners condemning the years of promotion of liberal democracy in literature and in practice. In response to this, different scholars have therefore proposed varying arguments and alternative methods to development. Some scholars have argued in favour of a form of developmental neo-patrimonialism. Attempting to de-root decades of beliefs which associate democracy with development, this argument finds traction amongst several thinkers. This paper will therefore attempt to analyze to what extent can neo-patrimonialism be developmental.

In order to conduct this analysis, the paper will present the literature surrounding the terms neo-patrimonialism and the concept of development, as well as the core pillars of the developmental neo-patrimonialism argument. Though this argument finds resonance with certain scholars, it has as many friends as foes. Others have called to caution the appraisal of such a socially hierarchical system bringing forth the possible harmful effects of such a mode of governance even as a means for development. The paper will therefore also present the critiques attributed to this argument.

To put the literature into context, the paper will take the case of Rwanda, a case often used by proponents of the developmental neo-patrimonialism argument. Categorized as a state operating under a governance riddled with elements of neo-patrimonialism, Rwanda will be analyzed in terms of the developmental progress it has achieved and its relationship with the regime in power. This analysis will hope to shed some light on the tenacity and feasibility of the core arguments presented by these scholars.

Neo-patrimonialism

Neo-patrimonialism is a term commonly used in political science, often to describe the state of governance of several African nations. The term habitually carrying a negative connotation describes something that appears to be in clear opposition with the modern liberal state and thus the concept of democracy and democratic leadership. Advertising such a form of governance therefore, clearly goes against norms established within development policy. In order to be able to adequately assess to what extent neo-patrimonialism can be developmental we must first define what it is meant by this concept. Taking root from the word patrimonialism, neo-patrimonialism signals a new form of ruling that is centralized around one person or one strong group, strengthening this one through the vertical distribution of resources¹.

Several scholars argue that this system, is a legacy of colonial rule that was founded around favouritism and particularism as well as an inherent lack of transparency and accountability². Once states gained their independence many therefore continued with such a similar system, and over the years it has done nothing but strengthened the group at the top of the pyramid. Neo-patrimonialism can be seen as having transcended the political sphere and having perverted even the systems in which the poorest operate. Neo-patrimonialism breeds patron-client relationships which infiltrates even the bottom of the political food chain. Even the lowest paid officer patrolling the streets of Yaoundé can exercise his form of power as ‘big man’ in relation to the civilian he stops. This system takes away the decision-making process from

¹ Francisco, A. H. (2010). “Neopatrimonialism in Contemporary African Politics. In *E-International Relations*.

² Cammack, D. (2007). The logic of African neopatrimonialism: What role for donors?. *Development policy review*, 25(5), 599-614.

formalized institutions and regulations and places it within the hands of a select few. Diana Cammack outlines that in states labelled as neo-patrimonial “decisions about resources are made by ‘big men’ and their cronies, who are linked by ‘informal’ (private and personal, patronage and clientelist) networks that exist outside (before, beyond and despite) the state structure, and who follow a logic of personal and particularist interest rather than national betterment”³. A neo-patrimonial form of governance therefore creates a centralization of power which is often used for the detriment of the population and the betterment and personal enrichment of those in power. In this form of governance, the distinction between private and public sphere is officially present but is often not observed in social and political life. Thus, breeding a system where there is an intermingling of patrimonial of personal relations with the bureaucratic of impersonal legal-rational relations. As defined by Erdmann and Engel neo-patrimonialism is “a mixture of two, partly interwoven, types of domination that co-exist: namely, patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination. Under patrimonialism, all power relations between ruler and ruled, political as well as administrative relations, are personal relations; there is no differentiation between the private and the public realm”⁴

Such a form of personalized politics is characterized by varying forms of clientelism - a system of patron–client ties that bind leaders and followers in relationships of assistance and support that are built on recognized and accepted inequality between ‘big men’ and ‘smaller men’⁵. A neo-patrimonialist state is therefore riddled with a constant exchange relationship between unequals, thus fostering excessive rent-seeking behaviors and high levels of corruption. Boas warns against such a system stating it turns politics into a business where political power

³ Ibid.

⁴ Erdmann, G., & Engel, U. (2006). Neopatrimonialism revisited: beyond a catch-all concept.

⁵ Bøås, M. (2001). Liberia and Sierra Leone—dead ringers? The logic of neopatrimonial rule. *Third world quarterly*, 22(5), 697-723.

gives access to economic resources and thus politics is found to be reduced to economics⁶.

Several leaders on the African continent are therefore criticized for using their position of power as a means to acquire wealth. In Equatorial Guinea as an example of some of the worst African cases, the Obiang family which holds both the positions of president and vice president of the nation, has constantly been criticized for theft of the nation's wealth through state apparatus. In 2017, an article published by the Guardian reported that Teodorin Obiang vice president and son of current president, was to go on trial for a wide array of cases across Europe concerning corruption and money laundering⁷. "In Europe, Dutch, Swiss and French authorities have seized property including Obiang's 76-metre yacht, the Ebony Shine, and a mansion in Paris estimated to be worth \$200m"⁸. All whilst the country currently ranks 141 on the Human Development index, having some of the highest ratings for poverty indicators, low literacy rate and high unemployment⁹. Transparency International therefore ranks the country in the top 10 most corrupt nations in the world¹⁰. Though prevalent in many African states, elements of neo-patrimonialism can be found across the globe in varying degrees. In Sub-Saharan Africa however, such a system can be witnessed in states like Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon and many more where the power is found to be centralized around those in power. In these states, most decisions that are to be institutionalized, instead are by executive decree.

The corrupt nature of neo-patrimonial rule is therefore one that comes in clear opposition to the values and norms ascribed to in a democratic society. Though democracy itself is a contested concept with varying definitions and models, the interpretation most widely attributed

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Burke, J. (2017). French trial reveals vast wealth of Equatorial Guinean president's son. The Guardian.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ United Nations Development Programme. (n.a). Human Development Reports. Equatorial Guinea.

¹⁰ Transparency International. (2017). Equatorial Guinea.

to this form of governance challenges neo-patrimonialism. “There is no clinical or scientific definition of liberal democracy, but some of the main features are free competition among political parties, periodic elections, and respect for the fundamental freedoms of thought, expression, and assembly. There is plenty of evidence that such a system of government has the potential to encourage political stability and accountability, and to help consolidate public institutions.”¹¹

Democracy, a form of governance that took the world by storm largely after the end of the cold war categorized by Huntington as the ‘third wave’¹² appears to ascribe to an opposing set of norms. Where neo-patrimonialism centralizes the power of the nation state in the hands of one or a few, democracy aims to distribute. Where neo-patrimonialism tends to associate political appointment to personal economic gain, democracy aims to separate personal wealth from state wealth. A democratic system is also one that attempts to promote an inclusive and participatory system. The United Nations General Assembly reaffirms that “democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives”¹³.

The concept of democracy therefore finds itself heavily entangled with the notion of freedom (in this case political and civil) which freedom house defines as the opportunity to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of the government and other centers of potential domination—according to two broad categories: political rights and civil liberties¹⁴. A

¹¹ Makinda, S. M. (1996). Democracy and multi-party politics in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34(4), 555-573.

¹² Huntington, S. P. (1991). Democracy's third wave. *Journal of democracy*, 2(2), 12-34.

¹³ United Nations. (2010). Resolution adopted by General Assembly on 18 December 2009

¹⁴ Freedom House. (2018). Methodology. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2012/methodology>

democratic form of governance is therefore one that ascribes to a functioning electoral process, political participation, freedom of expression, beliefs and more.

What is meant by developmental?

The developmental patrimonialism argument therefore advocates that a neo-patrimonial mode of governance is able to achieve better development results particularly in the African context. Development in this milieu meaning the achievement of growth and welfare by a state as set out by the human development index. The concept of development over the years has taken different forms and shapes, lending underdeveloped nations to various exercises in aims of achieving it.

For a long time, development was viewed as meaning economic growth and development only. After much revision by scholars and the international community, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) however, appears to take a different approach that looks at state development through the lenses of human development. During the late 20th century, there were growing concerns with using Gross Domestic Product (GDP) hence economic growth as a measure or indicator of national progress and development. These discussions therefore led to the human development approach. This approach according to UNDP “is about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is an approach that is focused on creating fair opportunities and choices for all people”¹⁵. Human development is therefore centered around improving people’s lives in a wholesome manner rather than letting economic growth lead, expecting there to be an outcome of equal

¹⁵ HDRO Outreach. (2015). What is Human Development? United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/what-human-development>

opportunity. This form of development focuses on giving people more “freedom and opportunities to live the lives the value”¹⁶.

The shift in understanding and defining development was therefore paralleled in development policy. As a reflection of the ever-changing definition of development, developing countries have been oriented towards different strategies for development often implemented through international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Around the 1980s a method of development centered on economic growth emerged. This method of development appeared to share similarities with Walt Rostow’s theory of growth of the 1960s. In this approach, international assistance organizations shifted their concerns to improving governments' efficiency in managing macroeconomic growth. Rostow’s theory of economic growth is one that is centered around 5 stages. It stipulates that for a country to attain maturity and hence development, it must leave what is called the traditional society which is viewed as primitive and encouraged to reach a stage of mass consumption. To attain this stage of mass consumption, the state must leave the traditional society and go through the preconditions for take-off, followed by the drive to maturity after which they finally arrive to the age of high mass consumption¹⁷.

This decade of intensive focus on economic growth as method of development therefore led to several economic reforms that were implemented throughout the developing world. These reforms such as the Washington consensus were characterized by an acute emphasis on free market polices, tax reforms, ‘fiscal discipline’ and trade liberalization and served as conditionalities to the several loans handed out¹⁸. Between 1980 and 1989, about 241 loans were

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Rostow, W. W. (1962). *The process of economic growth*. New York: Norton

¹⁸ Williamson, J. (2000). What should the World Bank think about the Washington Consensus?. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 15(2), 251-264.

applied for by Sub Saharan African countries to promote policies of economic stabilization and adjustment operations¹⁹. The ensuing structural adjustment programs that sought to stimulate the return to macroeconomic equilibrium in the short term and promote rapid sustainable growth did just about the opposite for African states. Governments in developing countries had to make rapid, and sometimes traumatic, economic reforms to maintain their access to international sources of capital²⁰. These reforms proven to be destabilizing and in many states, was viewed as political suicide. The combination of such economic policies and extreme currency devaluation brought the prices of consumption goods and basic necessities to an absurd height. In Tanzania for example, Julius Nyerere was said to have opposed to an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because it would result in riots in the streets of Dar es Salam²¹. Governments in these countries lost credibility and support from their populations due to the implementation of these reforms. “In the year following a devaluation, the responsible finance minister had a three times higher risk of being replaced and the government twice the risk of falling from power”²².

The incessant criticism of structural adjustment programs brought a new shift to the orientation of development policy. Triggered by the Cold war victory by the west, development theories became centered around market-oriented democratization. There was not only a push for western liberal democracy to become the worldwide standard by world leaders and international institutions but also internal pressure within countries themselves as populations began to

¹⁹ Van de Walle, N. (2001). *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge University Press.

²⁰ Rondinelli, D. A., & Montgomery, J. D. (1990). Managing economic reform: An alternative perspective on structural adjustment policies. *Policy Sciences*, 23(1), 73-93.

²¹ Van de Walle, N. (2001). *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge University Press.

²² Ibid.

demand democratic forms of governance. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall, British Prime minister Douglas Hurd in June of 1990, made a statement in which he claimed economic development and good governance go hand in hand “economic success depends extensively on the existence of an efficient and honest government, on political pluralism and, I would like to add, respect for the law and free and more open economies”²³. Shortly after, French President at the time François Mitterrand also made a statement at a meeting with African heads of states claiming that France would then forth be reluctant to provide assistance to countries with authoritarian rulers who are resistant to the move towards democracy²⁴. Democracy therefore appeared to be the only option for several African states, despite if the country appeared to be ready for the shift or not. Since this era, democracy has therefore been the standard. Viewed as the essential ingredient for a successful recipe of development.

Developmental Neo-patrimonialism

The term ‘developmental neo-patrimonialism’ therefore joins the understanding of both concepts and points to an idea that neo-patrimonialism as a form of governance could lead to more growth and development for a state compared to democracy. This section will aim to elaborate on the creation of the term ‘developmental neo-patrimonialism’. How do certain authors explain a neo-patrimonial form of governance can yield better development progress? This will be addressed in two sequences. First the why, which is authors argue this mode of governance to be more ‘realistic for Sub Saharan African countries’ and the ‘how’ which touches

²³ Olsen, G. R. (1998). Europe and the promotion of democracy in post Cold War Africa: how serious is Europe and for what reason?. *African Affairs*, 97(388), 343-367

²⁴ Ibid.

on the power holders' ability to yield more effective economic performances in a patrimonial society.

Despite the push for democracy as a global standard by the international community as outlined earlier, the resurgence in popularity amongst scholars of other methods of governance may be signaling towards a different shift. A shift where democracy may no longer be seen as a path to aspire. This trend can therefore be categorized as a form of democracy fatigue.

Researchers who have paved the way in this observed deviation are Tim Kelsall, Diana Cammack, David Booth and Frederick Galooba-Mutebi. In his paper, *Going with the Grain in African Development*, Kelsall attempts to demonstrate that the current focus of development policy on good governance is one that goes against the grain in the context of Africa. This sentiment of democracy fatigue is one that is fueled by the continent's lack of outstanding development achievements despite the recurrent rhetoric of good governance as a source of development. Since the mass promotion of democracy and good governance around the 1990s, African nations fail to record exceptional progress. In 2016, an article in *The Guardian* reports that a joint report from UNICEF and World Bank reveal that almost 385 million children, nearly half of all children in sub-Saharan Africa are still living in extreme poverty that is under \$1.90 a day, the world Bank international poverty line²⁵. This grim statistic only give a snapshot at the continent's state. World Bank data reports in 2018 that public debt in several African nations is rising and threatening debt sustainability, and the region's GDP per capita will remain insufficient to reduce poverty significantly²⁶.

²⁵ Hoda, K. (2016). Nearly half of all children in sub-Saharan Africa in extreme poverty, report warns. *The Guardian*.

²⁶ World Bank. (2018). *The World Bank in Africa*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/overview>

Authors like Tim Kelsall therefore argue that these disappointing reports of development regress instead of progress might in part be due to the continents' perceived attempt to align itself with prescribed policies of good governance. Good governance is also criticized for being an inadequate indicator of economic performance. Kelsall highlights that instead of good governance, indicators such as 'co-ordination capacity' and 'strategic vision' have been found to be more valuable²⁷. Due to the governance agenda not seeming to adequately address Africa's conundrum, development policy must therefore diversify its approach and look elsewhere. Such thinkers point to Asian governments that could be perceived as successful and underline their lack of adherence to the kinds of policies proposed through the good governance agenda.

Along with the idea of democracy fatigue, proponents of the developmental patrimonialism are also motivated by the belief that good governance and systems of modern democracy are not realistic for the African context. Policy prescriptions in Africa are said by Booth and Galooba-Mutebi as being out of touch with the true 'African reality'²⁸. This argument is also brought forth by Kelsall in his paper where he describes these policies as trying to go against the social fabric of African societies²⁹. It is argued that the set of best practices proposed by the narrative is one that does not fit the apparently inherent neo-patrimonial nature of African political society. What Kelsall describes as social fabric here infers a particular pattern or flow society tends to follow, it also subtly points to a possible particular culture or traditions. He

²⁷ Kelsall, T. (2011). Going with the grain in African development?. *Development Policy Review*, 29, s223-s251.

²⁸ Booth, D., & Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2012). Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 111(444), 379-403.

²⁹ Kelsall, T. (2011). Going with the grain in African development?. *Development Policy Review*, 29, s223-s251.

defines this fabric as “patterns of thought, organization, and accountability in Africa that have been both widely distributed in space and durable across time”³⁰.

This fabric for Africa according to Kelsall, is laced in patrilineal ways of society where lineage is found to be sacred and the way through which wealth is passed down. It is also a society where men and the father figure are often viewed as central. He attempts to draw links between this social fabric and the ways in which precolonial leaders obtained their power, thus arriving to the finding that, access to land and power was often held by what was considered to be ‘big men’ which ultimately gave them control over the economic resources of the land. Finally, Kelsall draws on the definition of the term leader in several African societies being linked to ‘divider’ of goods. All these Kelsall claims, come together to form Africa’s social fabric which he argues must be at the center of any development approach implemented in the region. These factors answering the ‘why’ certain believe neo-patrimonialism to be a more appropriate form of governance for the continent leaves us with the ‘how’ this is able to achieve developmental results.

Booth and Galooba-Mutebi in their article *Developmental Patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda* suggest that a neo-patrimonial ruling system where power is centralized allows the respective power holders to yield more effective economic performances³¹. This particular school of thought criticizes the idea of political competition for fueling rampant corruption which cannot be controlled by the state and thus hinders them from providing the necessary public goods to yield poverty reducing development. Central to the idea of neo-patrimonialism yielding economic benefits, is the belief that the ruling elite has the interest and ability to impose

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Booth, D., & Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2012). Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 111(444), 379-403.

a centralized management of rents collected as an unescapable byproduct of capitalism with long-term horizon for the betterment of its populations. “Rent management is centralized when there is a structure in place that allows a person or group at the apex of the state to determine the major rents that are created and to distribute them at will. It is long horizon when leaders have a vision that inspires them to create rents and discipline rent-seeking with a view to expanding income over the long term.”³²

The theory outlined here by the authors therefore rely entirely on the ability of the power holders to curb corruption to acceptable limits and manage the economic return from these practices with a long-term horizon. In their argument, Booth and Galooba-Mutebi state that there are numerous methods a regime or group of elites can utilize to centralized rent management. What is understood as rents is defined as “revenues accruing to a factor of production (land, labour or capital) in excess of normal trading profits in a competitive market”³³. For a ruling political organization to be able to achieve effective management of these rents, they must assume a certain character. This character is one that comprises state resilience which is described as a state that is able to accommodate the most powerful elites without violently repressing the non-elites. This state also establishes executive authority and possesses the power and resources to reward those who abide by the rules and reprimand those who don’t. Finally, it is able to establish this executive authority independently from particular individuals who hold important positions as well as manage to subject the frenzied system to some form of checks and balances³⁴.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Others who adhere to the belief of success in the centralized rent management system are Diana Cammack and Tim Kelsall. In their article *Neo-patrimonialism, Institutions and Economic Growth: The Case of Malawi, 1964 – 2009*, they state that a more effective form of governance for yielding economic benefits is one that is structured in an apex form with the person at the top being able to manage the major rents created and distribute them at their will without forgetting the need for a long-term horizon. These authors however, deem two dimensions to be primordial for the success of such a system. The first being, the necessity for a rather elevated degree to which the economic technocracy is responsive to vertical coordination - in order to assure reactivity in regards to policy directives emitting from the political leadership. Proposition which assumes that there is a technocratic body (experts) in place. The second outlined as technocratic integrity. Technocratic integrity in this case refers to a system where technocrats have the ability to provide vigorous and well informed advice to the politicians in power³⁵. Cammack and Kelsall warn that, where technocratic integrity lacks due to an inability or an unwillingness of this groups to provide sound advice, the state will suffer the ensuing policies. The idea of rent centralization and thus the resulting ‘developmental neo-patrimonialism’ is an idea that has gained much traction. Nevertheless, this concept has come under enormous critique as will be explored in the following section.

Critiques of Developmental Neo-patrimonialism

The concept of democracy fatigue and alternative forms of governance particularly in Africa is something that puts many political scholars on edge. The refute of democratization or political liberalization as a key component of development puts in question much of the work

³⁵ Cammack, D., & Kelsall, T. (2011). Neo-patrimonialism, Institutions and Economic Growth: The Case of Malawi, 1964–2009. *IDS Bulletin*, 42(2), 88-96.

and progress that has been achieved on the continent. Though many African nations have yet to attain the full extent of political liberalization and participatory politics known to the west, the progress that has been achieved since the independence of most around the 1960s till now cannot be ignored. As shown in Figure 1 below, a diagram produced by the Pew Research Center on the evolution of democracy around the world, Africa has made substantial progress. From 1976 to 2016 over 80% of the continent went from what was labelled as fully authoritarian to mixed or democratic³⁶. Though much progress remains, much has been accomplished. However, it is important to note that most of the countries on the continent do not record as full democracies, indicating progress but not achievement of what would be considered a liberal democracy.

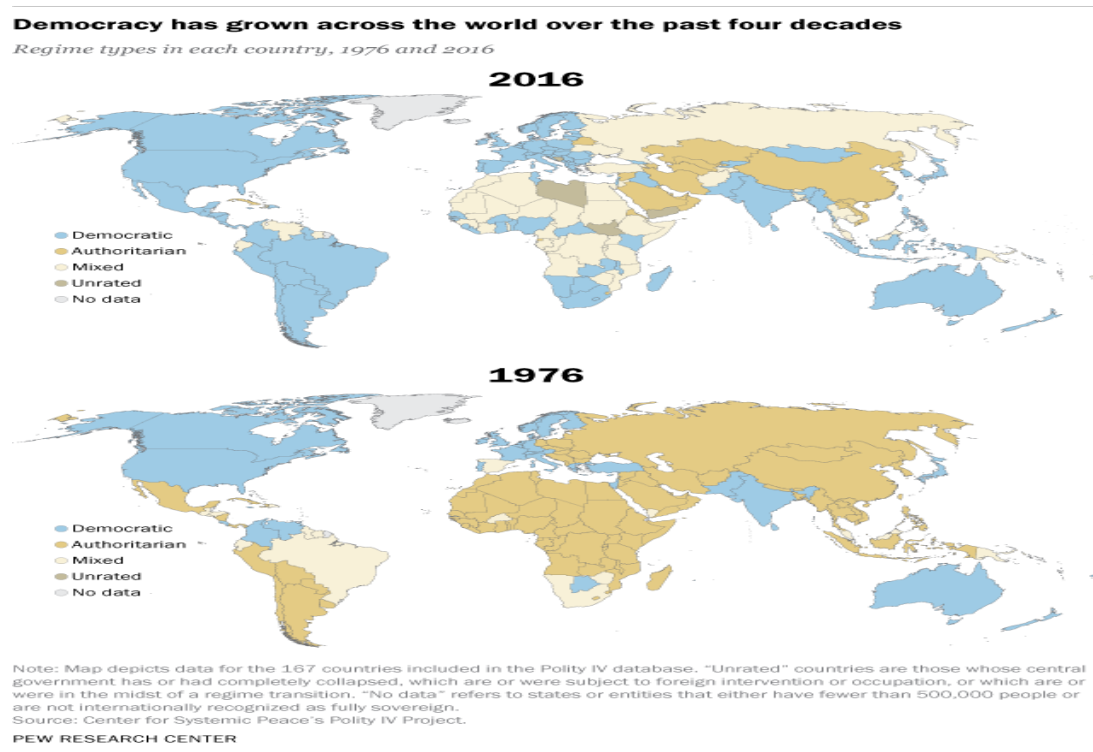


Figure 1. Democracy across the World 1976 vs 2016.

³⁶ Desilver, D. (2017). Despite concerns about global democracy, nearly six-in-ten countries are now democratic. Pew Research Center.

Source: Pew Research center

Authors like Van de Walle raise attention to a way of thinking that supplements the concept of democracy fatigue which is, the attribution of the ills of authoritarian rule or falsely labelled democratic countries to the failure of democracy and not the core of authoritarian practices³⁷. Anchoring disappointment in the promotion of democracy over the continent under the pretense of it being at the center of its failure or ‘lack of progression’ would therefore be of ill faith because most of these nations are not truly democratic. Many African countries though have progressed over the years at best can be labelled as “electoral autocracy in which multi-party elections are regularly scheduled and the regime adopts the language and rituals of democracy...with unaccountable executive branches of government, politicized judicial systems and various human rights abuses”³⁸.

What Van de Walle refers to as the authoritarian advantage in his paper ‘*Democracy fatigue and the ghost of modernization theory*’ can be viewed as the promotion of neo-patrimonial rule. In this article, he addresses some of the key claims and arguments promoted by this school of thought of which the last two are particularly pertinent. The first key argument he presents as being prevalent in developmental neo-patrimonialism is that which believes that that “the East Asian developmental state model can be exported to Africa”³⁹. This argument very much present in Galooba-Mutebi and Booth’s article, claims that Africa should turn to models of countries such as China and other East Asian states who appear to have achieved economic success with the presence of an authoritarian rule. From this model coined the ‘Beijing model’

³⁷ Van de Walle, N. (2016). Conclusion: democracy fatigue and the ghost of modernization theory. *Aid and Authoritarianism in Africa. Development without Democracy*, Hagmann T, Reyntjens F (eds). Zed Books: London, 161-178.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

scholars praise the presence of authoritarian state capitalism in China which can be paralleled in the long-horizon rent centralization by the state system that is found in developmental neo-patrimonialism.

Firstly, and naturally, Van de Walle highlights the peculiarity in the aspiration for replica of a model in two regions with completely different contexts. Varying contexts of cultural history, geographical location and demographics. For scholars that aspire to bring solutions that are context specific, better suited for Africa and avoid going ‘against the grain of the African fabric’, it appears to be rather unfitting.

Van de Walle also brings to light that this argument and proponents of this model make the assumptions that the populations living in these regions value economic prosperity more than they do governance. This presumption carries as much ignorance as all the strategies these authors appear to criticize. To reduce a people to wealth and deliberately advocate for a system of governance that promotes the oppression of voices and dissolution of liberties presents a problematic argument. Bratton and Mattes in their study on the support for democracy in Africa present that “the level of public commitment to democracy is much the same in Africa as in other regions of the world”⁴⁰. It is also important to note that this report also finds that there is a much smaller deviation in support for democracy in Africa than in certain parts of the world like Easter Europe or South America⁴¹. Thus meaning, even in regions where the commitment of democracy is not particularly high, citizens of Sub Saharan Africa do not romanticize any form of hardline or authoritarian rule. The demand for democracy and better governance within the continent is therefore present and should not be underestimated.

⁴⁰ Bratton, M., & Mattes, R. (2001). Support for Democracy in Africa: intrinsic or instrumental?. *British Journal of Political Science*, 31(3), 447-474.

⁴¹ Ibid.

The next argument Van de Walle presents in his article as prevalent in the developmental neo-patrimonialism literature is the belief that “good governance may delay structural transformation and economic growth, because rent seeking by the private sector with the help of the state can generate the excessive profits needed to generate endogenous growth”⁴². Particularly pervasive and present again in the Galooba-Mutebi and Booth article as they praise the Rwandan case of state owned institutions like Tri-Star Investments that manage rents in a centralized manner. These ones view rents as being an unavoidable byproduct of the system and therefore advocate that when managed by centrally stated state owned mechanisms they are able to generate more economic growth. Van de Walle outlines that this argument appears to rely on the implication that democratic states are simply unable to wield the economic profit margins that authoritarian states accomplish⁴³. Even if the argument is centralized to Africa, the case of Mauritius presents a clear contradiction to this argument.

Mauritius presents a case of long standing democracy where state elites have been able to positively but distantly interact with the business sector and produced growth. He also draws attention to the fact that there are several states who have spoon-fed businesses with general deals and nationalized key industries with the pretense of centralizing the state’s economy and generating greater profits that have nothing to show but an ineffective private sector⁴⁴. An example can be drawn from the Ghanaian case study as presented by Appiah-Kubi. Ghanaian privatization programme though it cannot be discredited for some of its achievements such as easing the financial crisis between 1987 and 1999 did not manage to accomplish its key

⁴² Van de Walle, N. (2016). Conclusion: democracy fatigue and the ghost of modernization theory. *Aid and Authoritarianism in Africa. Development without Democracy*, Hagmann T, Reyntjens F (eds). Zed Books: London, 161-178.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

objectives. These objectives including “public finance rationalization, domestic capital market development, resource mobilization and private sector investment activity enhancement”⁴⁵.

However, the case of Ghana and state owned enterprise did not manage to differ highly from that of the usual cases. This program in Ghana yielded mediocre direct revenues due to excessive outstanding credit sales and debts, benefits and severance awarded to employees. The article also pointed to the use of these state-owned enterprises as a “political patronage instrument to reward the regime's friends and political insiders”⁴⁶, all factors that recurrently play a detrimental role in the success of state owned firms and instead riddle it inefficiency. Van de Walle’s article also reminds that, rent-seeking in itself carries a negative legacy because of the numerous cases in which there is a display of the inefficiency and “far from optimal use of productive inputs that generate less than adequate economic growth”⁴⁷.

The argument developmental neo-patrimonialism presents of state centralization of rents as beneficial also assumes that corruption is beneficial for state growth. Though literature does not present harmonized results on the effects of corruption, van de Walle points to cross-national literature by Mauro and Kaufmann that present findings that indicate higher levels of corruption in low-income African economies⁴⁸.

Van de Walle therefore calls for caution in regards to the developmental patrimonialism ideology. It may present short term economic gains and growth spurts, but it does not produce long lasting sustainable development. He also raises another alarming observation. Most neo-

⁴⁵ Appiah-Kubi, K. (2001). State-owned enterprises and privatisation in Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39(2), 197-229.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Van de Walle, N. (2016). Conclusion: democracy fatigue and the ghost of modernization theory. *Aid and Authoritarianism in Africa. Development without Democracy*, Hagmann T, Reyntjens F (eds). Zed Books: London, 161-178.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

patrimonial rulers or authoritarian governments scholars of this school of thought use as examples, are regimes and systems that are reliant on a single 'strongman'⁴⁹. This therefore raises the question of political transition, calling to question what will be left of the positive spin on collecting rents when someone else comes into power. An event which is clearly inevitable as these strongmen will eventually be replaced no matter how many times they stretch and twist constitutional lines for their benefits. Unfortunately, it cannot be assured this system will be passed down.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Case Study: Rwanda

To help analyze to what extent neo-patrimonialism can truly be developmental, we will apply this concept to the case of Rwanda. Rwanda is often used as a case study for several reasons, including its dynamic and complex political sphere. It presents a particular form of governance not often found on the continent as well as a unique ability to have overcome a catastrophic event. This section will present a brief political history of Rwanda simply providing a contextual background to the forms of governance (though limited) the country has experienced. Followed by an explanation of why Rwanda's mode of governance and ruler today are considered to be neo-patrimonial. And finally, it will present the development progress the country has achieved – in relation to what was expressed in the literature. Thus, outlining if a direct correlation can be drawn between the form of governance and the development progress and whether neo-patrimonialism can indeed be regarded as developmental.

Rwanda's political history is one that appears to have continuously been entangled with ethnic stratification and violence. As the nation gained independence in 1962 from Belgium, large amounts of the Tutsi population fled to neighboring countries to avoid the violent coming into power of the Hutu community⁵⁰. This began the complex ethnic history of Rwanda which fueled by perpetual retaliation by both ethnic groups eventually led to the somber genocide of 1994. An event during which over 800 000 Rwandans were gruesomely murdered over the span of a 100 days⁵¹.

Following their colonial legacy from Belgium and Germany, Rwanda's political system is one of a Republic with an executive president, where by this one is both head of state and head

⁵⁰ Kuperman, A. J. (2000). Rwanda in retrospect. *Foreign Affairs*, 94-118.

⁵¹ BBC News. (2014). Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter. BBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506#>

of government⁵². Patrimonialism in Rwanda finds its roots as far back as colonial times with a prevalent history of patronage during which Belgium leaders often picked and favored one ethnic group over the other⁵³. The political landscape opens with leader of the struggle for the country's independence - Gregoire Kayibanda as the first president of the independent Republic in 1962. This one rules for 11 years until he is deposed during the coup d'état on July 5th 1973 by the next in power Juvenal Habyarimana. The coup of 1973 appears to forecast the ensuing militarized politics the nation continues to lead. Habyarimana who then then assumes office as the second president, was said to have ruled the nation in a dictatorial style throughout which several violations of human rights were reported⁵⁴. Under his rule, Rwanda had one official and legal political party – the National Revolutionary Movement for Democracy - from which came its leaders often of Hutu decent.

Following the external pressures of the international community and organizations particularly that of Belgium and France, Habyarimana finally adhered and agreed to end the one-party state system in June of 1991. With one party elections came a new constitution that allowed for now renamed ruling party – National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND) to be adequately challenged. This is said to have played a role in the shooting down of the plane carrying president Habyarimana at the time, acting as the catalyst event for the ensuing genocide. Following its military victory during the civil war in July of 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) assumed power over post genocidal Rwanda⁵⁵. The RPF then name Pastor Bizimungu as leader of the country after having held several senior

⁵² The Commonwealth. (n.a). Rwanda: Constitution and Politics. Commonwealth

⁵³ Makinda, S. M. (1996). Democracy and multi-party politics in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34(4), 555-573.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Reyntjens, F. (2004). Rwanda, ten years on: From genocide to dictatorship. *African affairs*, 103(411), 177-210

positions. This one is however criticized for simply being a puppet and figure for the regime with the real power lying within the hands of then Vice President Paul Kagame⁵⁶. Bizimungu later admitted he often felt marginalized by his opponents. Nevertheless, he remained as head of state for the following 5 years and finally relented power by resigning in 2000. Kagame therefore assumed power as interim president in 2000 with elections on the horizons. After postponing several times, Rwanda had its first post-genocide parliamentary and presidential elections in 2003⁵⁷. This delay is however criticized as being a period of time during which the RPF tightened its grip on power and made several changes that led to what can be considered a neo-patrimonial form of governance.

Neo-patrimonial Governance in Rwanda

The delay in decree of the first post-genocidal elections was ousted by scholars such as Skaar as being a time of 'RPF-isation'. Thus, meaning the party in power at the time (RPF) used this time to shape a new constitution and legal mechanisms that restricted and even completely eliminated space for opposition, freedom of speech and political activity at large⁵⁸. This is believed to be the turning point through which the regime at hand truly took on a neo-patrimonial form of governance.

On August 25th, 2003 Kagame won the elections with over 95 percent of the suffrages and the RPF took home victory in the parliamentary elections later that year with 40 of the 53 directly

⁵⁶ BBC News. (2000) Analysis: Why Bizimungu Mattered. BBC News. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/688587.stm>

⁵⁷ Skaar, E., Malca, C. G., & Eide, T. (2015). *After violence: Transitional justice, peace, and democracy*. Routledge.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

elected seats and 74 percent of votes⁵⁹. These elections however were criticized by several groups as being fraudulent and rigged. It is reported that the campaign leading up to these elections was soiled by disappearances, arrests and intimidation. “An EU observer mission witnessed irregularities and fraud, including through the stuffing of ballot boxes and faults in the counting procedure”⁶⁰. The RPF nevertheless has remained in power by recording huge majorities during presidential elections. In 2003, the RPF candidate Kagame won 95.05 percent of the vote and 93.08 percent during the 2010 elections⁶¹. As earlier described neo-patrimonial rule is one where power is centralized around one or a small group of individuals and where decisions are meant to be institutionalized instead they are made by this elite group. It is therefore argued that power in the Rwandan state is centralized around president Kagame. The state has displayed this power centralization in several ways, the first being the destruction of opposing voices as mentioned earlier. The threat of being labelled as appealing to divisionism between the currently co-existing ethnic groups living in the state dangled too many times in faces of figures of the opposition silenced these once entirely. It also bred a lack of objectivity from media, non-governmental organizations and killed civil society⁶². With there being no visible opposition, President Kagame and the ruling party RPF, therefore possess total control of what to do with the state, thus placing all decisions within their hands with no checks and balances or mechanism to restrict the perverse use of this power.

This centralization of power in the Rwandan state therefore led to a strong executive presidency framed with a consolidation of the RPF’s hold on power. To mask this hold on power

⁵⁹ The Commonwealth. (n.a). Rwanda: Constitution and Politics. Commonwealth

⁶⁰ Reyntjens, F. (2004). Rwanda, ten years on: From genocide to dictatorship. *African affairs*, 103(411), 177-210

⁶¹ Skaar, E., Malca, C. G., & Eide, T. (2015). *After violence: Transitional justice, peace, and democracy*. Routledge.

⁶² Ibid.

Reyntjens explains the RPF used undetected amendments to the states' fundamental law which saw a redrawing of the composition of parliament⁶³. Not only did this time see a destruction of such important arms in the political sphere, but those that remained or later emerged somehow appeared to have been morphed with the government. A human rights organization operating in the region Human Rights League in the Great Lakes Region (LDGL) reports to have observed a strange collusion between the government in Rwanda and important sections of civil society⁶⁴. It certainly does not need to be explained that impartiality cannot exactly be achieved when the person an organization is to respond to is the same one whom the organizations work might criticize. There was therefore a new form of merging between the state and all other groups that make up political life, thus centralizing the power even more around Kagame and his party. The Human Right Watch group reports "Civil society in Rwanda is very weak, due to many years of state intimidation and interference. The government remains hostile to criticism of its human rights record and strongly favors service-delivery over independent human rights reporting or advocacy"⁶⁵. The organization outlines that these groups are subdued and discouraged through outrageous administrative processes and bureaucratic obstacles, thus rendering them powerless to effectively carry out their work.

The second evidence of power centralization can be seen in the recent changes made to the country's constitution. Along with the first elections in 2003, Rwanda's constitution also came into force. The original 2003 document stated in Article 101 outlining the terms of office of the president of the Republic "The President of the Republic is elected for a term of seven

⁶³ Reyntjens, F. (2004). Rwanda, ten years on: From genocide to dictatorship. *African affairs*, 103(411), 177-210

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch. (n.a). Rwanda Events of 2016. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/rwanda>

years renewable only once. Under no circumstances shall a person hold the office of President of Republic for more than two terms.”⁶⁶. However, it now reads “The President of the Republic is elected for a five (5) year term. He or she may be re-elected once.”⁶⁷. This comes after a referendum in 2015 when President Kagame was completing his 15th year in power and 5th year of his second term. Having two years left before reaching the limit outlined by the 2003 constitution, a referendum was organized supported by a claim of a petition signed by 4 million people to allow his programme of economic development to be sustained⁶⁸. 6.16 million Rwandans which represent 98% of eligible voters in the country, voted in favor of the change in terms of presidency. This controversial referendum meant that incumbent Paul Kagame, could present himself in the 2017 elections for a third seven-year term as well as two more five year terms after that, thus meaning the potential of being in power till 2034⁶⁹. The Human Rights Watch however criticizes this vote as not having been fair considering the inability of voices within the country to oppose the move as well as for the fact that the referendum was conducted under tight restrictions⁷⁰. The guardian reported that others such as the US state department and the European Union condemned the vote saying Kagame should step down and “foster a new generation of leaders in Rwanda”⁷¹. This demonstrates that Kagame and the RPF have not only concentrated the power around them ensuring top down politics as prescribed in neopatrimonialism, but it has also ensured through this referendum that the power remains where it is for a very long time.

⁶⁶ The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda. 2003. Article 101.

⁶⁷ The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda. Amendment 2013. Article 101.

⁶⁸ McVeigh, T. (2015). Rwanda votes to give President Paul Kagame right to rule until 2034. The Guardian.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch. (n.a). Rwanda Events of 2016. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/rwanda>

⁷¹ McVeigh, T. (2015). Rwanda votes to give President Paul Kagame right to rule until 2034. The Guardian

Developmental Neo-patrimonialism in Rwanda

Developmental neo-patrimonialism as described by Galooba-Mutebi and Booth is a system where patrimonial politics are held in check by a leader who enjoys tight control over the patronage networks. The key aspect of this system being a “long-horizon rent centralization”⁷². These authors demonstrate the presence of rent centralization with a long-term horizon in the Rwandan case by pointing to the state-owned company Tri-Star Investments. Rents are said to have been extracted in a centralized manner by the company which is fully owned by the RPF.

Tri-Star did not always play a major role in the economic sphere of the country. It began as being a company meant to address material shortages in the post-war environment using RPF bases to import goods into the country⁷³. The company then expanded to addressing politically crucial needs and began investing in import substitution products such as bottled water and dairy products. It was later during the Congo wars when Rwandan owned company ran profitable operations in the region by buying resources and minerals from traders and selling them on the international market through a not so legal framework, that Tri-Star truly began to do business on behalf of the RPF⁷⁴. Some of the key successes Tri Star is said to have accomplished is bringing South African cellphone company MTN network to Rwanda. In all its endeavors however, Tri-Star is known to have immensely benefited from the lack of competition which has played a key role in its success. Though these authors attempt to showcase that the centralization of rents through these companies present an avenue for rents to be collected and then redistributed back for the benefit of the Rwandan public, this case does not seem to differ highly from other African

⁷² Booth, D., & Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2012). Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 111(444), 379-403.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

nations where politics in bed with economics breeds a blurred line between personal and state wealth.

The Economist reports that the RPF, ruling and dominating party in Rwanda does not only help business in the state – it runs it. Tri Star Investments renamed as Crystal Ventures and its main competitor Horizon, are reported as receiving cushy government deals which often mask the failures of these enterprises⁷⁵. It is said that these companies simply act as the business branch of the political elites of this party as it financed half of the party's election campaign back in 2010. The merging of political power and economic wealth is also present in the Rwandan case as the Economist reports that Crystal Ventures the state-owned company leases two private jets to president Kagame for 'business purposes'⁷⁶.

The Rwandan case therefore appears to mimic that of Ghana presented above, where the state-owned enterprises created at a time of need after the civil war and genocide of 1995⁷⁷, served a vital purpose. For a state that was starting afresh and from scrap with no real economy left standing, it was critical to stimulate the economy in any way possible. The company then still known as Tri-Star Investments Limited, was there to operate when the state could not afford to wait for a private sector to be formed as the country was attempting to rebuild. When no one was looking to invest in the country the RPF wanted to invest in themselves which is why with reported war funds and financial support mainly from the diaspora the company aimed to kick start the economy. Goal which it did manage to achieve for those ensuing years. However, the continuous involvement of the state in the business opportunities resulted in some adverse consequences.

⁷⁵ The Economist. (2017). The Rwandan Patriotic Front's Business Empire. The Economist.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Crystal Ventures. (n.a) About Us. Crystal Ventures. Accessed from <http://www.crystalventuresltd.com/>

The involvement of the Rwandan state is said to have supported practices that fostered a lack of appropriate competition and transparency within several sectors. State enterprises were also reported as being in support of the ruling party's interests. The favorable treatment they received was therefore particularly harmful for business entrepreneurs and any who presented viable competition to these state-owned enterprises. A report by Nilgün Gökğür demonstrates that the Rwandan Privatization strategy established in 1997 along with some of its development partners has "failed to produce any genuinely private sector-led development"⁷⁸. Instead it points to neighboring state such as Tanzania and Kenya who have managed to turn most of their state-owned enterprises into privatized commercial entities, thus fostering efficiency and positive growth in the private sector. The privatization programme and resulting companies have therefore not managed to achieve results regarding competition and regulation. An example given in this report points to the number of days needed to start a business – indicator of the ease of doing business as set by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) - in Rwanda having reduced but the process of obtaining permits for other investors whether domestic or international is still recorded as being arduous⁷⁹.

Gökğür also outlines that some of the effects of the privatization programme and SOEs has been the favored treatment allotted to these ones. The report states "Rwanda's private business owners have observed that the companies in which the GoR owns shares and those that have close ties to the government have benefitted from preferential treatment with regard to access to credit and tax-compliance enforcement"⁸⁰. State support has therefore played a direct role in the success of these companies by providing them key advantages not made available to

⁷⁸ Gökğür, N. (2012). *Rwanda's ruling party-owned enterprises: Do they enhance or impede development?* (No. 2012.03). Universiteit Antwerpen, Institute of Development Policy (IOB).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

other firms. These practices have participated in fighting off any well-equipped competitors. These advantages also appear to have played a role in the states attraction of foreign direct investments. A shortage of FDI influx in Rwanda is revealed to be related to the cajoling of its state enterprises. Investment promotion done by the state advertises for foreign investors to do business directly with party-statal⁸¹. This therefore may not appeal international competitors who are not looking for joint venture deals and recognize the unlevelled playing field the Rwandan market presents when in competition with an SOE.

The case made for Rwanda being a model state for developmental neo-patrimonialism relying on the successes of state owned companies (such as Tri-Star/Crystal Ventures) to present an avenue for long-horizon rent centralization appears to be reliant on flawed logic, as the successes of these enterprises can easily be put to questioning. Though state managed enterprises have been able to achieve some successes, they have not proved capable of reintegrating the private sector to ensure efficiency. They have also demonstrated that their aims cannot be viewed as objective and independent from that of the ruling party and political elites. The entanglement of the political arm and what is supposed to be an independent business arm does not warrant successes for the Rwandan population who might be at the bottom of the food chain.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Rwanda's Development

Development as addressed earlier, can find itself defined in a variety of ways. However, for the purpose of this analysis, within the context of this paper it will be analyzed through the scope of the human development approach. The developmental neo-patrimonialism argument emphasizes the ability of this approach to yield economic results as well as “positive implications for long-run development”⁸². Inspired heavily by Galooba-Mutebi and Booth’s ideas, Cammack and Kelsall explain that the system of rent centralization is one that yields to the expansion of income over time. To analyze the prophesied strong economic performance this approach claims to achieve, we take a look into the economic performance of Rwanda. After the devastating civil war and genocide of 1994, Rwanda’s post-conflict reconstruction has been impressive. It has made much undeniable leg way economically. The country was able to rebuild within a record breaking time span, and the advancements made economically have in some cases translated improvements in certain social indicators. An Ansom in her article *Rwanda’s Post-Genocide Economic Reconstruction*, notes that the “after an initial postwar boom, average annual growth remained high at 7.4 percent between 1997 and 2006...in 2008, GDP growth even reached 11.2 percent”⁸³. The accomplishment of such growth rates can therefore not be unrecognized as it represents significant economic progress. These growth rates have therefore resulted in Rwanda achieving a Gross domestic product of \$9.137 billion USD in 2017 as reported by the World Bank. This GDP, a stark increase from the \$1.2 billion USD of 1995⁸⁴. The growth demonstrated by these figures paralleled when assessing the country’s Gross

⁸² Booth, D., & Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2012). Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 111(444), 379-403

⁸³ Ansoms, A. (2011). Rwanda’s Post-Genocide Economic Reconstruction. *Remaking Rwanda. State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, 240-251.

⁸⁴ World Bank. (2017). GDP (current US\$). World Bank. Accessed from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2017&locations=RW&start=1993>

National Income per capita. Rising from \$210 USD in 1995 to \$720 USD in 2017⁸⁵. Figure 2 below presents a visualization of this peak and growth unprecedented in its region and in most post-conflict states.

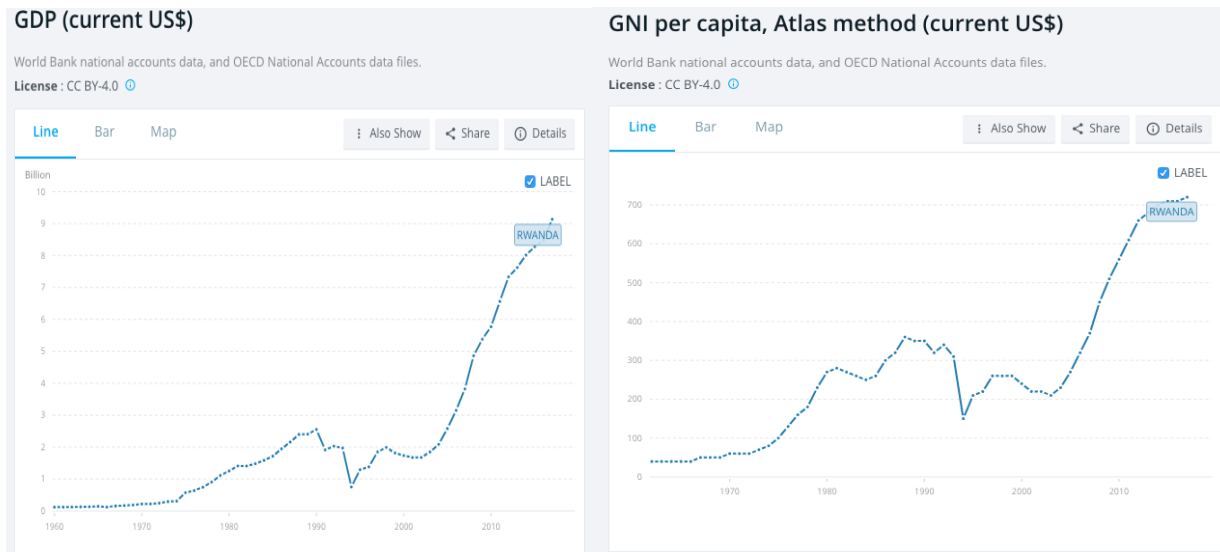


Figure 2: Rwanda’s GDP and GNI per Capita from 1960 – 2017
Source: World Bank Data

This brilliant economic performance however appears to not be equally distributed within the country and for the enjoyment of all. When analyzed using the GINI coefficient – a measure of income inequality and distribution – Rwanda does not fare well. Ansom’s article reports that inequality increased from a Gini coefficient of 0.47 in 2001 to 0.51 in 2006⁸⁶. Such soaring levels of inequality present an alarming narrative for post-conflict countries as they are often correlated with high risk of violence resurgence. In Rwanda, the economic progress that has been achieved has been selective and often limited in rural areas. The prosperity therefore appears to be concentrated at the hands of a select few.

⁸⁵ World Bank. (2017). GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$). World Bank. Accessed from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?locations=RW>

⁸⁶ Ansom, A. (2011). Rwanda’s Post-Genocide Economic Reconstruction. *Remaking Rwanda. State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, 240-251.

Though developmental neo-patrimonialism scholars point to this mode of governance as being able to produce significant economic growth, it also claims it to be developmental over the long run, and as we know, development does not simply equate economic improvements. Development as defined by the UNDP goes beyond enriching one's life through material means and includes the creation of equal opportunities as well as the freedom to live a life valued.

Rwanda unlike some other African nations appears to have a harmonized and well outlined strategy that has helped them achieve a lot of the progress it has thus far. However, despite the state's recognition of the need for an integrated development process as outlined in their progress and poverty reduction strategy, it has failed in achieving a very inclusive progress thus far. The overall aim of the strategy is transforming the country from "low human development to a medium human development country, as defined by the UNDP Human Development Index"⁸⁷.

The Human Development Index the country aims to climb is "a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living"⁸⁸. The health component is measured through the indicator of life expectancy at birth, the knowledge dimension through expected years of schooling for children of school entering age and mean years of schooling for adults and GNI per capita is used to measure a decent standard of living. As demonstrated above, the country is doing phenomenally in GNI advancement. Similar progress can also be seen in the categories of health and education. Rwanda records a life expectancy of 67years of age in 2016,

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ United Nations Development Programme. (2017). Human Development Index (HDI). Accessed from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

still low by global comparisons but not bad when compared to its regional counterparts⁸⁹. This is particularly an accomplishment when compared with the life expectancy of 31.9 years recorded in 1995. The indicator expected years of schooling, also reveals such positive trends. The country rating went from 6.2 years in 1995 to 11.2 years in 2017⁹⁰. All these therefore contribute to a very positive progression of Rwanda on the Human Development Index. The country has moved from a recorded score of 0.232 in 1995 right after the war to 0.524 in 2017. This progress has been witnessed through various international rankings. It has been in the top achievers of the Sustainable development goals on the continent and has moved up ranks to 46th of the World Bank's Doing business index⁹¹. The upwards trend of these indicators does point to positive development progress occurring within the country but unfortunately do not present a wholesome picture of the circumstance.

Though Rwanda is making substantial and impressive progress in development by the standards of the human development index, it is also worsening by other standards. As shown above, the country is increasing in inequality particularly in the rural areas and though poverty in percentage terms appears to have reduced from 60.3 percent to 56.9 percent between 2001 and 2006, it has actually increased in absolute terms. Over those same years, it went from 4.82 million to 5.38 million people living in poverty over the territory⁹².

Along with the income inequality causing key problems for the Rwandan growth, the mode of governance encouraged in the developmental neo-patrimonialism argument also appears

⁸⁹ World Bank. (2017). Life expectancy at birth, total (years). World Bank. Accessed from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=RW>

⁹⁰ World Bank. (2017). Life expectancy at birth, total (years). World Bank. Accessed from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=RW>

⁹¹ Reyntjens, F. (2015). Rwanda: Progress or powder keg?. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(3), 19-33.

⁹² Ansoms, A. (2011). Rwanda's Post-Genocide Economic Reconstruction. *Remaking Rwanda. State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, 240-251

to be costly for the Rwandan people. If as argued, patrimonial rule is the cause for the witnessed improvements, it appears the price for the economic development has been “eliminating political opposition and autonomous civil society, violating human rights, killing scores of its own citizens, and keeping tight control over the flow of information”⁹³. The repressive behavior of the regime and the main leader Kagame therefore come against the key component of the human development of approach which is the freedom to live a life that one values. Oppression of citizens certainly does not fall under the ‘free’ umbrella. Reyntjens reports in his article that “the spaces of free expression are almost all occupied or reduced to the minimum in order to prevent any contestation”⁹⁴. The closing in of the political space and freedom of expression can be seen in the world governance indicator of voice and accountability. The voice and accountability indicator in this index attempts to capture “perceptions of the extent to which a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association and free media”⁹⁵.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Reyntjens, F. (2004). Rwanda, ten years on: From genocide to dictatorship. *African affairs*, 103(411), 177-210

⁹⁵ World Governance Indicators. (n.a) Voice and Accountability. World Bank. Accessed from <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#doc>

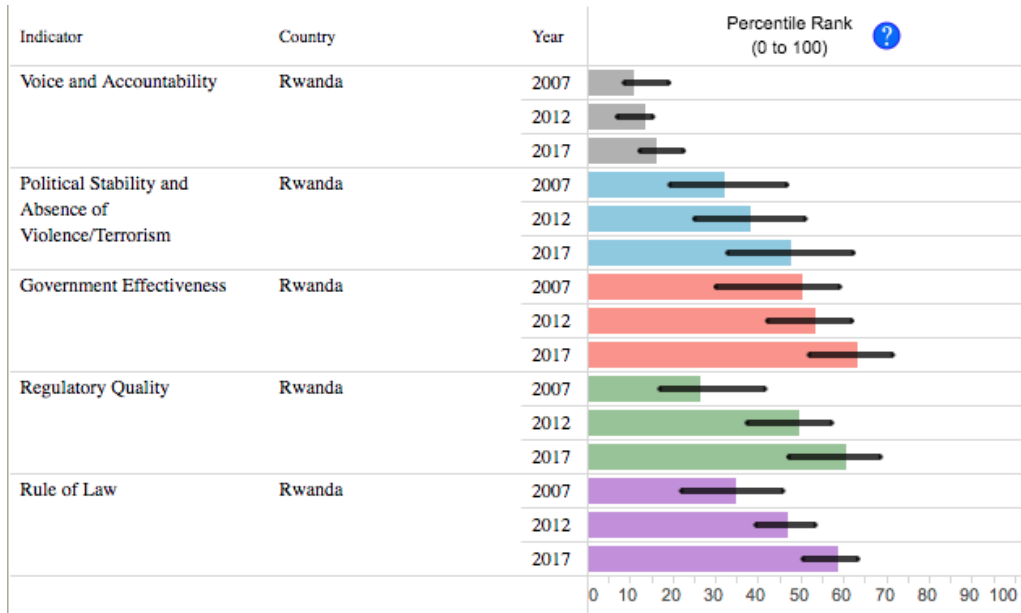


Figure 3: World Governance Indicator, Rwanda 2007-2017
Source: World Wide Governance Indicators

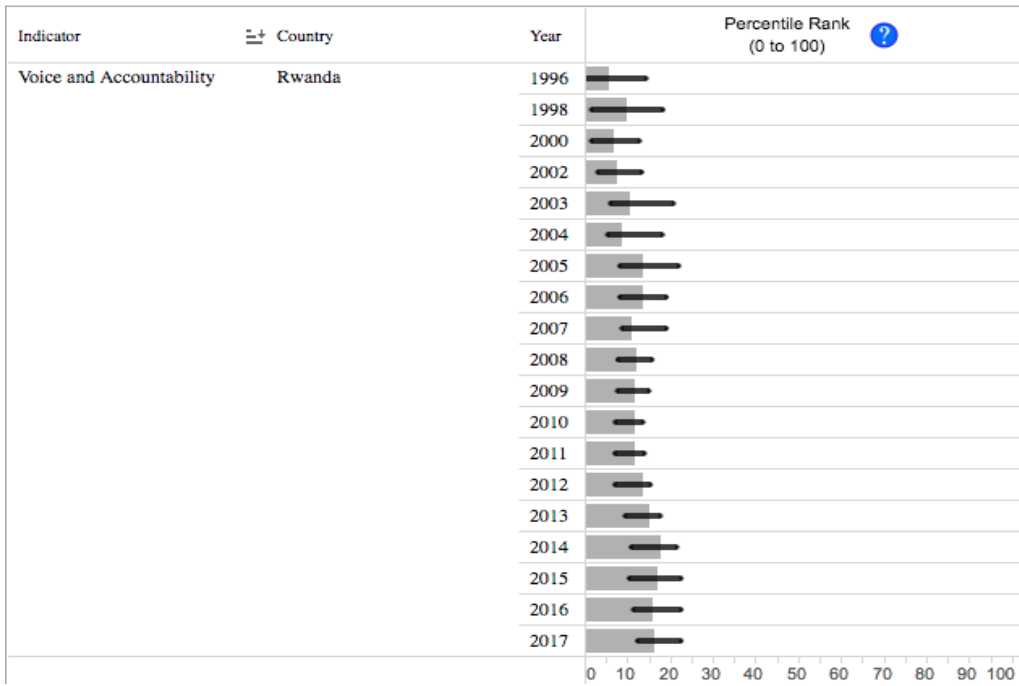


Figure 3: World Governance Indicator, Rwanda 2007-2017
Source: World Wide Governance Indicators

Figure 3 shows that compared to other indicators such as government effectiveness or Regulatory quality, or even rule of law, Rwanda has made close to no progress on voice and accountability. Respectively, these indicators over the years of 1996 to 2017 show an increase of 51 points, 52 points and 53 points, the voice and accountability indicator moves from 6 to 16, recording a meager increase of 10 points. The stagnation of this indicator appears to display the embodiment of what authors like Straus and Waldorf call a transition to “deft authoritarianism”⁹⁶. This form of governance - deft authoritarianism, is characterized by restrictions on political parties, civil society and the media as a pretense to prevent the recrudescence of ethnic violence⁹⁷. Figure 4, shows an even grimmer picture. This snapshot of the indicator over the years of 1996 to 2017 show that, though at first improvements were made, the indicator actually worsened at several points throughout those years. Between 1996 and 2005 it was consistently alternating between getting better and getting worse and finally in 2005, it saw a steady decline which though recovered declined again in 2014. The indicator began by recording a score of 6 post genocide in 1996, rose to a score of 13 in 2005 and then could not seem to get higher than a score of 12 for the next 6 years. Finally, in 2017 the country remains at a score of 16, this representing quite a low even when compared to some of its regional counterparts. Kenya records a score of 40 in 2017, Tanzania 37 and Uganda 31, all countries for which Rwanda boasts far better indicators for all the other five categories⁹⁸. The regression the country has therefore been experiencing in freedom of speech is noteworthy and calls for concern. It

⁹⁶ Straus, S., & Waldorf, L. (Eds.). (2011). *Remaking Rwanda: State building and human rights after mass violence*. Univ of Wisconsin Press.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ World Governance Indicators. (n.a) Voice and Accountability. World Bank. Accessed from <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#doc>

could be expected for popularity of current President Kagame to decline as he extends his terms beyond what was originally allowed in the 2003 mandate, thus yielding more repressive behavior to maintain stronghold on the power.

As it has been outlined, Rwanda has made immense progress but also regressions over the course of the past decades following the civil war. However, can these changes be attributed to the rule of the RPF and Kagame, and its neo-patrimonial ways? Based on the findings it is argued that the incumbent president and ruling party did play a key role in the country's trajectory. The government of Rwanda in several ways appears to have been a guiding hand that has yielded the country much success but also failures. They have managed to do this in three key ways;

- through the government of Rwanda's strategy for development
- by the leader's management of the international community and international aid
- by utilizing the fear of violence resurgence and key tactic of control

The Rwandan government has had a very clearly outlined strategy that has helped it achieve its developmental objectives as earlier mentioned in the poverty reduction strategy but also in Vision 2020. Vision 2020 calls for the attainment of the previously millennium development goals now – sustainable development goals as well as moving Rwanda out of underdevelopment. Some of the targets for 2020 include “a GDP per capita of \$900, an increase from \$230 in 2000; a reduction in the incidence of poverty from 60 percent to 25 percent; an increase in life expectancy from 49 years to 65 years; and an increase in adult literacy from 48 percent to 90 percent” as well as some more generic objectives of good political and economic governance, rural economic transformation, development of services and manufacturing, human resource development, development and promotion of the private sector, regional and

international economic integration and poverty reduction⁹⁹. Due to this clear strategy, the country was able better coordinate its rebuilding efforts in order to achieve the set-out goals.

Another important tool the RPF and president Kagame utilize to ensure that they are the key shaper of the Rwandan trajectory is the way it maintains its relationship with the international community and development aid. President Kagame, different from many of his African counterparts, holds very tight-lined diplomatic relations with the western world. Zoe Marriage refers to Kagame and his convictions as an “immovable post”¹⁰⁰. This characterization coming from his unwavering and uncompromising nature when it comes to domestic affairs and international relations¹⁰¹. An example of his uncompromising nature witnessed in the diplomatic relations entertained with France. In November of 2006 a French judge issued an international arrest warrant for Kagame, making allegations that the ruling party – RPF had played a role in the shooting down of the plane carrying former President Habyarimana in April 1994, Rwanda responded by breaking off all diplomatic relations with France¹⁰². And in response, in August of 2008 Rwanda released a report identifying over thirty French officials alleged to have played a role in the genocide. Rwanda and France resumed diplomatic relations in November 2009¹⁰³.

When it comes to development aid a similar approach is taken by the country. Rwanda often does not succumb to the ‘package deal’ nature of aid. A package deal made up of funds attached to a neoliberal agenda which is presented as “accountable and representative, espousing ‘universally acclaimed values’”. This strong stance led by Rwandan president, unwitnessed in

⁹⁹ United Nations Development Programme. (n.a). Assessment of Development Results: Rwanda Accessed from http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/ADR/ADR_Reports/Rwanda/ch2-ADR_Rwanda.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Marriage, Z. (2016). Aid to Rwanda—Unstoppable Rock, Immovable Post. *Development without Democracy: Foreign Aid and Authoritarian Regimes in Africa*, 44-66.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² The Commonwealth. (n.a). Rwanda: Constitution and Politics. Commonwealth. Retrieved from <http://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/rwanda/constitution-politics#top>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

many other aid receivers is what breeds Kagame the title of “the post”¹⁰⁴ in Marriage’s piece. Kagame has openly rejected the aid agenda and its air of superiority and has developed his own. Nevertheless, despite this attitude towards development funding, Rwanda has been able to attract enormous sources of development aid. Rwanda receives some of the highest development funding per capita and is the world’s fifth most aid-dependent country, receiving around a billion US dollars of aid per year¹⁰⁵. The top three donors are the United Kingdom, the United states and the United Nations. The aid received and the ability of the Rwandan leader to attract this aid has played an important role in the development trajectory of the country and the achievement of the goals set out in its domestic policy.

This relationship where Rwanda does not allow itself to be pushed around in the international community and refuses to adhere to the norms that often-direct interactions between developed and under developed countries can be praised for displaying an unwitnessed form of autonomous governance by an African ruler. It also allowed the country to achieve its development objectives instead of wavering to the possible demands of donors or the international community at large. However, it has also closed up the space for the international community to condemn the repression of freedom of speech in the country. Though some have tried to bring attention to the lack of freedom of expression, Rwanda remains a ‘donor darling’ despite their “dwindling democratic credentials and decreasing respect for human rights and political freedoms¹⁰⁶”.

¹⁰⁴ Marriage, Z. (2016). Aid to Rwanda—Unstoppable Rock, Immovable Post. *Development without Democracy: Foreign Aid and Authoritarian Regimes in Africa*, 44-66.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Abrahamsen, R. (2016). Discourses of Democracy, Practices of Autocracy: Shifting Meanings of Democracy in the Aid-Authoritarianism Nexus. *Aid and Authoritarianism in Africa. Development without Democracy*, 21-43.

Finally, another tool argued to have been instrumental more in the regression of freedom in Rwanda is the exploitation of the fear of reoccurring violence. After the genocide and the civil war ending in 1994, Rwanda had to find a way to reconcile the two main ethnicities that had partaken in the killings in order to be able to rebuild the country. To achieve this reconciliation, Kagame has made it illegal for people to identify as Hutu or Tutsi but only Rwandan. Kagame claims that the lack of acknowledgement of one's ethnic background is the only way the country can overcome and avoid a return to violence. Though questionable that is not the issue. How this idea has contributed to the closing in of freedoms is the main issue for the progression of the country. The Guardian reports that Kagame has passed several laws against the disseminating of "genocidal ideology"¹⁰⁷. However, what is considered as genocidal ideology is never outlined and can be interpreted in varying ways by enforcing authorities. For Victoire Ingabire, a Rwandan business woman and previous presidential candidate, promoting genocide ideology was a statement once made in an interview saying, "There is no shame in saying I am Hutu or am Tutsi; there's nothing wrong with that"¹⁰⁸. The banning of any speech that seems to appeal to increased tensions between the two ethnicities appears to not have been limited to avoiding the resurgence of violence but also destroy opposition. In 2003, parliament recommended the banning of min opposition party MDR based on allegations of spreading 'divisionism'. Divisionism in this case defined as "being in opposition to or even simply expressing disagreement with government policies"¹⁰⁹. Along with political parties, other forums where disagreement could be expressed concerning the regime in power has also been targeted.

¹⁰⁷ Kinzer, S. (2010). The limits of free speech in Rwanda. The Guardian. Accessed from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/libertycentral/2010/mar/02/rwanda-free-speech-genocide>

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Reyntjens, F. (2006). Post-1994 Politics in Rwanda: problematising 'liberation' and 'democratisation'. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(6), 1103-1117.

Newspapers have been reprimanded and censored based on accusations of divisionism and the only remaining independent newspaper is said to be Umeseo¹¹⁰.

The utilization of these three tools – a well formulated strategy for development, the relationship held with the international community and aid, and the instrumentalization of the fear of return to violence – by the ruling party and the leader demonstrate how the regime and its mode of governance has had a direct role in the progress and regression Rwanda has experienced. By these means the regime has been able to achieve tremendous growth but also cut back on freedoms and opened the space for human rights violations.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Conclusion

The Rwandan case study presents a very insightful case of neopatrimonialism. Though Booth and Galooba-Mutebi, present a very compelling argument regarding the ability of neopatrimonialism to be developmental, this case study still shows otherwise. Not only does this case study present the flaws in the argument put forth, it also points to alarming reasons why the case should not be made advocating for a mode of governance that abandons values associated with liberal democracy and promotes that of a neo-patrimonial form of governance.

The progress Rwanda has experienced cannot be refuted. As several indicators show, the country has been able to accomplish tremendous growth and recovery following a devastating event. Ranking second in the World Bank ease of doing business index amongst Sub-Saharan African countries¹¹¹. Economic indicators such as GDP and GNI are both on a steady incline as well as social indicators measuring health and education.

However, despite this progress, encouraging such a form of governance based on the Rwandan case study would be omitting key pieces to the analysis. Though Rwanda presents an excellent case study, it also has a very complex history, and one that is not homogenic throughout the continent. Arguments of developmental neo-patrimonialism based on the Rwandan case must take into account Rwanda's post-conflict context which makes it unique and puts into question the progress it has achieved as whether it can be sustainable. It therefore breeds a model that must be cautioned against replica.

The Rwandan case study also proves the argument of neopatrimonialism being beneficial based on the states ability to centralize rent management through state enterprises to be flawed.

¹¹¹ World Bank. (n.a) Ease of doing business index. World Bank. Accessed from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IC.BUS.EASE.XQ?locations=ZG&view=map&year_high_desc=false

In the Rwandan case, state owned enterprises do not present a story of undeniable success. Instead, the Rwandan SOEs have proven to be cradled by the state far too long resulting in the crippling of several markets and the inability of these companies to autonomously transition into the private sector.

The achievements the Rwandan state has been able to accomplish is also a testament to the centralization of power within the country. The developmental progress realized has been a result of the strong hold of power and the strict adherence to a vision disseminating from the top of the pyramid – in this case President Kagame. Both supporters and critics of neopatrimonialism agree that Kagame has “personally transformed much of what happens in Rwanda and that he is both visionary and determined to the point of ruthlessness”¹¹². The importance of such a powerful actor in the model advertised therefore makes it extremely fragile and reliant on the benevolence of the person in power. Thus, bringing back to the question of viability and reproduction posed in Van de Walles’ paper. A system that owes its success to the strong will and abilities of one person in that system presents a system that is unsustainable.

Finally, despite making such remarkable progress, Rwanda has also gotten worse. The centralization of power that results from a neo-patrimonial form of governance has contributed to the elimination of all political opposition, the eradication of spaces for freedom of expression and the disappearance of a functioning civil society. The disappearance of such freedoms therefore appears to be the price of the ensued economic growth and the maintenance of a system of centralized power. However, the end does not justify the means. Sacrificing freedom cannot be the requested currency for economic development because one without the other is void.

¹¹² Booth, D., & Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2012). Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 111(444), 379-403.

As said by Amartya Sen “The usefulness of wealth lies in the things that it allows us to do—the substantive freedoms it helps us to achieve...It is as important to recognize the crucial role of wealth in determining living conditions and quality of life as it is to understand the qualified and contingent nature of this relationship. An adequate conception of development must go much beyond the accumulation of wealth and the growth of gross national product and other income-related variables. Without ignoring the importance of economic growth, we must look well beyond it.¹¹³”

¹¹³ Sen, A. N. (1999). *Development as freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

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