



Good Governance, Aid Modalities and Poverty Reduction: Linkages to the Millennium Development Goals and Implications for Irish Aid

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Background Note 2

‘Big Men’, Governance and Development in Neopatrimonial States*

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* This paper was written during the preparation of Working Paper 2. It deals with issues that are tangential to the analysis contained in the final version of that paper, but which are of interest within the wider framework of the programme.

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List of acronyms

DPP	Democratic People's Party (Malawi)
MEP&D	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (Malawi)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda)
UP	United Party (Malawi)

1. Introduction

Well-governed, developed countries are characterised by democratic institutions, capable public services, a rule of law, a regulatory environment, watch-dog organisations and other attributes that contribute to the states' functionality, prosperity and stability. In such countries when a leader is elected who is unwilling to, or incapable of, ruling well – honestly, fairly, and competently – political structures and well-articulated rules come into play to limit his actions and minimise the damage he can do. At the most extreme, impeachment is used, but in most cases other 'checks and balances' are utilised, e.g., commissions of inquiry, public hearings, grand juries, parliamentary oversight committees, and the like. When the situation has not deteriorated to the extent that such extreme measures are required, constitutional provisions, regulations, public oversight, and the law – used by the police, courts, the media, political parties, and the people – restrict the behaviour of a bad leader. Thus such states can generally contain and 'digest' the excesses of limited-term, poor leadership.

To combat imposed restrictions in such situations these leaders may strike back and attempt to change the rules of the game, and to use powers outside those described by the law and good practice. Thus we have seen such men ignore social norms, regulations, constitutional guarantees and international law to establish legal and administrative regimes that undermine the rights of citizens and others, that aim to generate space enough to perform acts that are harmful to the nation and to individuals, and to put into place subordinates that are poorly qualified and injurious to the state and society. In such situations a palpable tension arises between the leader and the way he uses power and rule-bound institutions and individuals aiming to rein him in.

In 'hybrid' states where neopatrimonial politics are the norm there is by definition a weak legal regime. In such states the constitution, rules, laws, and behavioural norms may be well-articulated, even written down, but they are weakly applied. The institutions normally responsible for their application are themselves weak – judiciaries, watch-dog institutions, parliaments, police, media, civic organisations, etc. They are sometimes 'captured' by the leader through his control of the appointment (and dismissal) process, or through patronage and clientelist practices. States such as these are invariably poor and unproductive – because the weak regulatory environment makes them risky environments for investment and corrupt. Also, because they are unproductive, individuals are unlikely to have outside sources of income, or alternative economic prospects, and are therefore reliant on the leader (or one of his subordinates) for employment and income. When he uses the same techniques to get his way, there are few who can rein him in and no institutions to call upon to limit his excesses.

In other words, in underdeveloped and poorly governed states the regulatory environment is often incapable of controlling the leader, and, if his leadership is poor, he has the space and freedom to do great damage. It is also for this reason that poor leaders in such states over-extend. This space and discretion means that exploring the personalities of leaders in hybrid regimes is extremely important. How they behave, what drives them, how they work with others, what their goals are – these and other traits, and how they change over time, are more important to understand than if these same men governed states where rules and institutions function.

The following are short studies of two leaders of hybrid regimes – Uganda and Malawi. The material is drawn from public sources and interviews with key informants (during November and December 2006), some close to the two presidents. Informants' names have not been cited because of the sensitive nature of this material.

2. 'Big Man' Mutharika

Observing Bingu wa Mutharika at a public ceremony is like watching Dr Banda in his heyday. Mutharika sits rigidly in an overly large chair on a raised dais, his cabinet spread out on either side of him. In front of him are musicians and dancing women, the latter wrapped in *chitenges* with the President's face printed on them. He looks down his nose, neither smiling nor acknowledging the audience, while a favoured minister stands in front of a microphone, claps hands and leads a song praising the President. All that is missing is the fly-whisk that Banda used to flick about to demonstrate the same level of arrogance and disdain.

Bingu wa Mutharika (born Brightson Thom) was already 70 when he became president.¹ As a young man he worked in Dr Banda's Ministry of Finance for a couple years in the early 60s, and later in government in Zambia after fleeing Malawi (reputedly because his wife was overly vocal in her political opinions of Banda). He studied economics in India and later received a PhD in development economics from Pacific Western University in California. From 1978-1990 he worked for the UN, rising to the post of director for trade and development finance for Africa. Soon after he joined Comesa, the Common Market for East and Southern Africa, as Secretary General (the executive officer of the secretariat). While there he was active in exile politics and helped establish the United Democratic Front; he reportedly had a hand in writing the party's manifesto, for instance. He contested against Bakili Muluzi for the presidency of the UDF in the run-up to the 1994 elections but lost and fell out with him over economic policy. He turned his attention back to Comesa, where he remained until 1997, when he was fired.

His dismissal from Comesa provides us with an opportunity to understand what motivates the man, for the report on his conduct, written by a special committee of members drawn from Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, Zaire and Zimbabwe, details his management style and personality (Special Committee of Eminent Persons, 1997).²

First, the committee collected evidence of Mutharika's 'strained' working relations with various internal groups. These were put down to his desire 'to control the activities of the institutions and [to] his determination to influence who becomes the chief executives subservient to him'. He was said to have misused the facilities of the institutions 'by issuance of the directives that flout financial regulations...' For instance, though he had no executive authority over the Clearing House, he attempted to install his own man as its Executive Secretary by ignoring the laid-down procedure for appointments, insisted that payments were made for items not covered by regulations and interfered in the day-to-day running of the institution.

Relations between Comesa and the PTA bank were particularly strained because Mutharika apparently felt he had been slighted during the installation of the bank president. 'The Secretary General felt and bitterly complained that the facilities made available to him ... were inferior and demeaning ... and has ever since not forgiven the management' of the Bank. Later tension increased when Mutharika insisted that the chief executives of various institutions, including the Bank, were subordinated to Comesa, and a 'heated argument' ensued. A memo of understanding sent by the Bank to Comesa went unanswered for years. These strains naturally resulted in 'lack of co-ordination and co-operation' between Comesa and the Bank, and were blamed by the committee on Mutharika's 'demeanour and management style'. The head of the PTA's Re-insurance company told the investigating committee that Mutharika was 'generally arrogant and intolerant of criticism'.

Secondly, with regard to staff management, the committee found people of low calibre in well-paid positions and highly intelligent people in non-management posts. Staff performance procedures

¹ Drawn in part from the *New African* (2004).

² The following quotes are from this report.

had not been followed, there was no instrument to determine career paths or salary increments and staff morale was low. On the other hand, some consultancy staff were being retained on overly long contracts awarded by Mutharika.

The committee reported there was 'no formal organisational structure at Comesa'. Instead, there were 'informal arrangements' that were 'fluid, erratic and operate at the whims of the Secretary General'. This lack of structure therefore allowed Mutharika to 'scrap internal audit thereby undermining internal audit controls', to 'create and fill posts with inexperienced close associates as consultants', to shift the emphasis of posts by altering their titles and functions, and to 'change staff from place to place without justification'. Meanwhile, directors of units within Comesa found Mutharika 'inaccessible whenever he is in the office'. He rarely had meetings with them; nor did he have them help make decisions. He summoned them 'to lecture them, rebuke or impose his will on them'. Directors had become 'implementers of his directives, which by and large breach[ed] the existing legal instruments' of Comesa. He 'used' the directors to 'rubber-stamp his decisions'. Meanwhile, when he was gone from the office, he left an officer-in-charge who had no authority to make any management decision without reference to him. 'There is no delegation, resulting in a one-man show', they concluded.

Thirdly, the failure to establish effective financial administration and budgetary controls, and the reduction of the functions performed by the finance section at Comesa to 'information process' allowed for weak fiscal oversight, record keeping and operations. Delayed billing was one consequence, contributing to Comesa's under-funding (which grew worse under Mutharika's stewardship). Financial dealings with the donors were also complicated by a lack of systems, oversight and 'commitment' by the secretary general. One set of donor projects, for instance, failed because of 'petty internal feuds between the Secretary General and the Director in charge of the department'.

Rather than formal financial systems, Mutharika

authorise[d] all the transactions irrespective of the amount involved. No staff in the organisation has the authority to question any transaction initiated by the Secretary General even if that transaction is contrary to the financial rules and regulations of Comesa. This state of affairs created an environment for the Secretary General to abuse his office.

For instance, without any oversight or questions, he advanced himself US\$30,000 and \$20,000 (the former amount to his wife's account in Harare). He also used funds for travel and entertainment allowances, without giving account of his expenses or writing reports summarising meetings held while travelling. He failed to 'promptly retire advances taken in contravention of staff rules and regulations', totalling over \$20,000. He established daily subsistence allowances unilaterally and drew over \$50,000. He ignored procurement procedures, customs rules and refunded his unauthorised expenses with impunity.

In conclusion the committee noted that the functioning of Comesa began to deteriorate with the arrival of Mutharika. He apparently refused to meet the investigative committee, giving rise to the charge of 'obstinacy and unparallel arrogance reminiscent of his bloated belief that he is at the level of Heads of State and Government and therefore not subject to the decisions of the [Comesa] Council, whose Ministers he considers inferior to him. It is a mark of contempt and disrespect to the Committee's appointing authority'. He was accused of misusing funds 'on unproductive, irrelevant and unrelated missions' by dispensing with the internal audit section and 'emasculating' external audit. Many of these funds were spent on travel home to Malawi or Zimbabwe. 'Hefty rewards' were given to those who agreed to his demands while other staff resigned or remained to suffer from low morale. His 'demeanour and arrogance' were blamed for 'misunderstanding and hatred' within Comesa and between it and other institutions. He passed rules to cover up and 'retroactively validate' 'illegal' spending. All in all, this hampered Comesa implementation of its development projects. The committee recommended he be fired for lacking 'the vision to take Comesa into the next century'.

In 1997 Mutharika returned to Malawi where he formed the United Party (UP) and ran for president of Malawi on the UP ticket in 1999. It was an acrimonious campaign,³ marred by misuse of government resources to support the UDF; Mutharika won only 0.5% of the vote (Article 19, 2000). He had no role in government until he was plucked from obscurity in 2001 by Muluzi, who appointed him to be deputy governor of the Central Bank – at which time he dissolved his UP. He entered politics in 2003, when Muluzi appointed him to head up the newly (re)established Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEP&D). When Muluzi's bid to amend the Constitution and run for a third term failed, he selected Mutharika to contest the presidency as the UDF candidate (while Muluzi remained head of the party). Mutharika's nemesis Cassim Chilumpha was chosen by Muluzi to be Vice President.⁴ There was speculation at the time that Muluzi intended to run again for president in 2009, and that Mutharika would stand in his place until then. As Mutharika was 70 years old already, if he died in office, Chilumpha, another Muslim and widely seen as Muluzi's man, would then assume office for the remainder of the 5 year term – an equally satisfactory outcome for Muluzi and the UDF (CHRR Updates).⁵

A few months after the election Muluzi and Mutharika fell out. The two proud men expected the other to recognise him as the more powerful – Muluzi wanted Mutharika to 'remember who put him where he is' while the new president wanted Muluzi to treat him as a head of state rather than a placeholder set there to take instructions.⁶ In the months that followed, Mutharika created his own party, the Democratic People's Party (DPP); set Malawi upon a new (and relatively successful) economic course, guided by Minister of Finance Goodall Gondwe, formerly of the IMF; and used the state's anti-corruption machinery and other instruments to go after those who opposed him. At one point Muluzi was even caught in the web, but charges of corruption were not formally brought. Also in this period a deep animosity between Mutharika and parliament emerged. It was based in part on party politics generally – the UDF and allied parties vs. DPP, fighting over control of the Assembly. But it also appears that parliament had begun to take its role more seriously and used this opportunity to begin to try to hold the executive to account. On more than one occasion it threatened to impeach Mutharika, but without wide public support this has failed.

By 2005 Mutharika's personal style of governing was becoming known. He was accused of 'flouting ... rules and procedures in the execution of his policies and functions', threatening 'people's rights and freedoms,' and implementing policies in a way that resulted in a 'pattern of inconsistencies and contradictions between the promise and the reality on the ground [which] is not a recipe for a truly open and democratic governance' ((CHRR Updates). One close observer noted that

he is increasingly displaying Banda's intolerance ... His administration is making many decisions influenced by small cliques; he has not used the full potential power of his cabinet. His recent appointments to the diplomatic service seem as patronage-based as Muluzi's ever were. A number of recent appointments are reminiscent of Muluzi and [his ally] Mpinganjira's early days when they were building the UDF patronage machine with 'foundations, institutions and donations' and key personnel were placed in critical diplomatic and parastatal posts. Appointments at the civil service, parastatal and

³ One of the charges against Mutharika is that he had his secretary at Comesa type his manuscript, *Malawi: A Shared Vision*, which the committee found 'seditious'. It was particularly strong on corruption and governance: 'The future belongs to the people who are prepared to accept change. I also believe that the new leader must be ready to meet the challenge of good governance and should be the one who did not take part in the corruption and mismanagement of our country. He should be the one who did not steal public funds to buy himself farms, houses or shares in various companies in Malawi and abroad.' (*New African*, 2004).

⁴ Muluzi claimed he was selected by the cabinet, not himself personally, because Mutharika had had 'a very distinguished career in both economics and politics' (*New African*, 2004). His appointment angered many of Muluzi's cronies, some who left the UDF (temporarily at least).

⁵ The question remains whether the Constitution allows ex-presidents to run again, after skipping a term. The issue is being forced by a senior politician (Chakuamba) who has said he will not run in 2009 if Muluzi does (*Daily Times*, 2007).

⁶ Muluzi, like Chiluba in Zambia before him, had a lesson to learn: 'It is impossible to predict a successor's intentions and a leader can never tell how he will be treated once out of office. A subdued cat could turn into a tiger once it is freed and assumes the throne of the tiger!' (Agyeman-Duah, 2003).

diplomatic level have also recycled people who have served in the Banda and Muluzi administrations, as well as some who are supposedly being investigated by the Anti-Corruption Bureau ... Because President Mutharika has been so busy ... his regime's developmental activities have largely been delegated to the finance minister Goodall Gondwe, a technocrat, rather than a political visionary. Gondwe now becomes a full time politician as DPP 'economic affairs director'. Policy initiation and implementation will suffer because Mutharika, though busy, like Banda before him, has a hands-on approach. As Gondwe himself becomes busy with party matters his 'economic independence' will be compromised. (Lwanda, 2004).

Another echoed those views: His attempts to bring experienced leaders into government have failed because he has lost 'credibility'. 'It will take a hell of an MOU to get anyone to work with him as you can't trust him.' As such, he must rely upon Gondwe, and even he is periodically threatened with dismissal. The influence of people such as Dr Ntaba comes and goes, so its not clear to outsiders at any one time who Mutharika is relying upon or who his 'gatekeepers' are (key informant interview, 23 Nov 2006). Some have noted his tendency to rely on female advisors and people with Zimbabwean connections, but the validity of this observation requires deeper in-country study.

Within a year of coming to office Mutharika had become a true Malawian leader, though in a new mould: he was displaying a number of 'big man' characteristics – some reminiscent of Banda, such as a 'hands-on' approach, arrogance and intolerance – and some more like Muluzi, with his increased reliance on patronage networks and non-meritorious appointments. He is like both in that he has a tendency to use the public purse as his own.⁷ He accepted into his DPP, with few questions asked (because of the need for numbers), a wide variety of politicians from various parties. But this has apparently created a party that is now 'riven with personality-based factions' (Lwanda, 2004) (which requires a charismatic leader to unify), and is greased by state resources (in the form of a new rural development fund and fertilizer subsidies). He (like Muluzi in the '90s) has been consistently distracted by parliamentary and party politics, and by the need to gain control of his own people. But he shows no signs of being the consummate politician that Muluzi is, and so he has gone through a host of individual advisors, ministers and factotums, has made plenty of enemies, and has made a string of political mistakes. He is also known for his extravagant spending.⁸

One MP and ex-cabinet minister provided us with a closer look at the man – a man 'obsessed with a fear of parliament' taking over from him, and an authoritarian whose ministers are 'in competition to be [acknowledged by him to be] "the good boy"' (key informant interview, 27 Nov 2006). Key to understanding him and the situation in which he finds himself, is that he behaves as though he is in the Banda era. When Mutharika speaks,

no one should question. He has reached the point that the cabinet has to clap hands and sing. The same songs we sang for Kamuzu [Banda], we sing for him. This is a human being living in a different era and this era is not good for him because it requires that you have to listen and compromise ... When he makes a statement in cabinet, everyone has to agree. When you don't, you are seen as a barrier (ibid.).

An MCP official also compared the President with Banda: 'He is just like Banda, but without the grassroots support and the professional link between himself and how things are moving. He is distant. Banda had a structure and a strong [national] intelligence system that made him aware. Mutharika is a distant fellow with a weak intelligence system' (key informant interview, 23 Nov 2006). Another observer agreed – he 'is quite autocratic in his approach to governance'. For

⁷ An outsider noted with amusement: 'When former President Muluzi accuses current President Mutharika of paying school fees for his children and grandchildren from a public fund, the only defence of Mutharika is that Muluzi did the same when he was president' (Berge, nd.).

⁸ He was accused of 'wasting state resources on luxury items, including a \$545,000 limousine and – allegedly – \$800,000 worth of official portraiture. Mutharika's decision to move into the opulent presidential palace originally built by former president ... Banda also provoked outrage' (Freedom House, 2006).

instance, 'there is no political dialogue' between him and the chairmen of parliamentary parties who belong to opposition parties, so no 'ground' is laid to get his reforms or appointments through parliament (key informant interview, 22 Nov 2006).

Over the nearly 3 years he's been in power he has lost many supporters who were once close to him.

Other than [Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Dr G.] Chaponda and [Minister of Finance, G.] Gondwe, he doesn't have anyone close. The new appointments are not so good. He doesn't like independent-minded people. He wants to be surrounded by fools ... He is a difficult man to work with. He is a 'know it all', he doesn't listen and there is no debate. Banda would have his way, but if you sent someone later on to say there was another way, he would listen. But this one doesn't. He has a closed mind. He uses people and discards them. He doesn't stand by you when you are in trouble. The humane part of him as a person doesn't exist ... For the peace of Malawi we should have compromise and discussion ... The people who were key to his success have all gone. [Attorney General] Kasambara, the Chief of Staff, the Director of the ACB – all have been fired. So at the moment ... most of them are there to eat because it is difficult [for them] to find alternative sources of income (ibid.).

Other observers also see the resemblance with Banda and note his arrogance. When he was at Comesa, a newspaper man recalled, he 'thought of himself as a head of state. He insisted his wife was called "first lady". And now he can say and do anything. He doesn't have to keep his word with anybody' (key informant interview, 23 Nov 2006).

While Mutharika reportedly has a grasp of what is going on generally, 'he doesn't make all of the decisions. But [he] guides them.' Those who have worked with him say he pays 'attention to detail like Banda', likes intellectual debate, but 'once committed he always follows through'. If a policy is prioritised, like rural growth centres, this is because it reflects his views (key informant interviews, 21 and 23 Nov 2006).⁹ As for his 'gatekeepers', they come and go 'because no one has secure tenure. The President can be good with someone today, but that doesn't guarantee anything tomorrow' (key informant interview, 23 Nov 2006). Reportedly the civil service is different than when Muluzi was in power, but there is a vacuum at the top – there is a 'strong president but not a strong cabinet and MPs, and this is working against Mutharika' (key informant interview, 21 Nov 2006).¹⁰ By late 2006 then, he was quite isolated, and surrounded by weak and inexperienced advisors/ministers. Tensions between Minister Gondwe and Mutharika were also being reported, and it was no longer clear whom he was getting his advice from. His intention to have a 'tight and transparent' management style was breaking down and he wasn't talking to donors much (key informant interviews, 20 and 22 Nov 2006).¹¹

Thus, with Mutharika it is as though we are watching Dr Banda trying to govern in a democratic era and having to deal with political forces and dynamics that were not evident before 1994.¹² Thus he cannot utilise the repressive methods that Banda did. His arrogance, style of working, his insistence on maintaining his 'vision',¹³ and a number of other personal traits are having an impact on his regime in various ways – there is constant turmoil because he is not a politician who is able to negotiate with opponents (which may not be a bad thing, for example, when it comes to corrupt politicians). He has been unable to obtain and retain sound advisors, or to debate policies easily.

⁹ This was 'unlike Muluzi, who would sign documents but not read them or follow through.'

¹⁰ Muluzi had a 'strong pool' of ministers, some with Ph.D.s when he pulled AFORD people into cabinet, but he was weak academically. 'So strong government but weak at top'.

¹¹ One noted that, since the beginning of 2005, there has not been any donor-government development coordination meetings, even at a technical level. 'Mutharika is being selective about who he meets'.

¹² One former senior civil servant put it this way: 'Bingu's folly is to conduct business as usual! His motto is "if HKB did this, I can do it! If Muluzi did this I can do it!" But things change' and there are new regulations and systems he has to live within (email correspondence with Cammack, 6 Feb 2007).

¹³ See the Office of the President and Cabinet website for the 'shared vision' of OPC (www.malawi.gov.mw/OPC/OPC%20Main.htm).

On the other hand, he has promoted economic reforms, anti-corruption policies¹⁴ and periodically, he has reached out to civil society. These initiatives may go some way toward mending the damage that Muluzi's government did. But in many ways, he fits within the Malawian 'big man' presidential mould.

3. 'Big man' Museveni

All who know him well, even those whom he would now call enemies,¹⁵ concede that Museveni is charismatic, persuasive, courageous, intelligent, knowledgeable, industrious – indeed a 'workaholic' – and a politician to his core.¹⁶ Some remark on his story-telling abilities – though some call this 'lying' – and on his longstanding 'weakness for women and money' (Augustine Ruzindana, MP and ex-Inspector General of Government, *Weekly Observer*, 2005).

Old colleagues state that in the early years he was consultative – willing to listen, negotiate and create consensus around issues – though one old friend argues that his current tendency to command obedience and to follow his own path are deeply rooted. For instance, when he was involved in exile politics in Dar es Salaam Museveni and a group of people 'arrested' what they considered a CIA agent, after the organisation to which they belong had opposed the action.

That is when I came to know that Museveni does not operate within democratic structures; where necessary he takes his own decisions and acts outside institutions ... showing that Museveni has always tended to pursue a militaristic line and that his claims to democratic credentials were not genuine. (Director of the Africa Study Centre at Mbale, *ibid.*)¹⁷

By and large, those who have worked with him for two or three decades remember the length of time he would spend in the old days discussing issues before reaching positions.

At this point [1989], I had started reporting directly to Museveni. At the beginning there was a lot of flexibility in meetings with the President. That is where we drew our strength. You never had a situation where you would be clamped down upon because of coming up with contrary views to any of the senior members; including the President's proposals. That created confidence in [army] commanders whether junior or senior. We developed a feeling that we were participating in something that all of us were shaping. This was quite motivating and it made us overcome very many challenges. (Mugisha Muntu Former Army Commander, *ibid.*)

Others note that this openness influenced the President's overall management style.

At the beginning he would take your point. If your point of view won, he would accept it. At the beginning, also, his appointments were not exactly personal. Before, there was an instituted appointments committee, there were also some groups which he consulted on appointments ... In meetings, decisions were [made] as a result of consultation. (Augustine Ruzindana, *ibid.*)

¹⁴ Close observers doubt the efficacy or indeed the sincerity of his anti-corruption programme, and suggest 'drip-feeding' aid based on real measured progress rather than rhetoric.

¹⁵ For a series of interviews with old friends, warrior-colleagues and senior officials in Museveni's government, most of whom broke with Museveni over his third-term bid, see *Weekly Observer* (2005). The following citations are drawn from that series of interviews unless otherwise noted.

¹⁶ According to long-time friend, Eriya Tukahirwa Kategaya, in *Senior Five*, Museveni led students on a protest march to drink the prefects' tea, complaining that 'everybody should have tea'. One minister explained that Museveni 'has concentrated on the politics and affairs of Uganda right from [his] youth. He has this long-term vision of what he would want Uganda to be, the region to be, Africa to be. He is more than Ugandan in his thinking.' He studied Politics and Economics at university in Dar es Salaam.

¹⁷ A similar story was told by a one-time associate: when Museveni and members of the party presented the idea of going to the bush to the executive committee of the Uganda Patriotic Movement, which he had led into the 1980 general elections, they rejected it, whereupon he and a few others defied the party decision and launched the guerrilla war that brought him to power.

As for Museveni's weaknesses, some former colleagues call him a tribalist. One sees this as a motive for the war.

Museveni's orientation to the liberation of Uganda was ethnic. Going to the bush in Luwero was intended to fight the northerners and that is why the alliance with Lule was made – to have Lule as a Muganda so that he would get support in Luwero to fight northerners ... The way the forces that took over Kampala treated the northerners demonstrated that. And so it has continued to be ethnic and the people in the North seem to see their persecution as being ethnic (Prof. Dani W. Nabudere and Maj. (Rtd) Rubaramira Ruranga, Security Officer, *ibid.*).

All agree he has a strong sense of self and an abundance of self confidence. One calls him 'very egoistic'.

When you hear him speak to the international community, you will realise he is a man who is not going to co-operate. There is no human being who has got absolute knowledge about everything from culture to politics. Museveni portrays himself as the alpha and omega of knowledge ... Industrialising a country cannot come from one man. I do not think he has enough ideas to be able to do it alone. Museveni is a self-centred person who wants to [take credit] for everything that happens. That is why he uses statements such as, 'I am the only one with a vision'. (Maj (Ret) Rubaramira Ruranga, *ibid.*)

Museveni's arrogance now affects his management style in a number of ways. According to Augustine Ruzindana, former Inspector General of Government, 'people [are] complaining that if they were giving opinions contrary to his then he would shout, "are you now trying to defy me?" And so the transformation perhaps is now complete, from being a leader who was consulting to a leader who no longer consults and who no longer discusses' (*ibid.*).

Others, who have openly disagreed with him, make similar complaints.

You know he is a person who doesn't want to be opposed. Even when you come to see him in his office, he positions himself far away from you and makes himself a kind of an unreachable, untouchable individual. When you go there, it is as if you have to prostrate ... He has a kind of sadism; trying to create a situation that in any case, he will do what he wants and he will create some kind of hard condition so that you are eventually broken. (Maj. (Rtd) Rubaramira Ruranga, *ibid.*)

Another ex-Minister stated that 'somewhere down the road around 1997, he started to be less tolerant. Because I remember telling him many times privately that this Movement is no longer the Movement it was. You could see that he was no longer listening; no longer interested in openness'.

'Museveni,' she says, now

uses people as instruments of achieving his aim. The moment he thinks you have served that purpose and you come to disagree with him, you must be discarded. You can continue working with him as long as you tow the same line. When you are discarded, he picks people who do not know him. By the time they get to know who he is, then he will discard them and get new ones. (Miria Matembe, Former Ethics And Integrity Minister, *ibid.*)

A former army commander agrees:

The problem with Museveni is deception and manipulation. We used to have internal democratic methods of work in our [Movement]; that is what created our strength. That is what created confidence and trust within [NRM]. This was abandoned; deception and manipulation were brought on board as the main methods of work. And the moment you use deception and manipulation, you undermine cohesion and you create weakness and undermine confidence and you break down trust. That is exactly what has happened. (Mugisha Muntu, *ibid.*)

The former deputy prime minister, Paul Kawanga Ssemogerere, now calls Museveni an 'authoritarian'.

He thinks he is right all the time. He wants to give orders all the time – although this emerged much later on. Initially he never used to order me around. But then eventually you would see it. Even his rejecting of the pluralistic model is about his desire to control everything. It is a totalitarian kind of model. That is what struck me. His model of governance is totalitarian. And he uses it everywhere to undermine institutions. He does not want any centre of power other than him (ibid.).

Critics now claim his arrogance and management style have undermined his willingness to hand over the reins of power to other, younger leaders, and has driven old colleagues away. More generous observers see these traits driven by the weak capacity of people around Museveni, who displays impatience, an unwillingness to debate issues to consensus, and a tendency to command obedience rather than allow these people to take the lead. He is now a micro-manager, unable to leave the work of running the country to others.

His style of management suited a major period of the struggle. It was suitable in the sense that it makes him a micro manager, especially during the struggle. This was very important to maintain cohesion and ... because he had to be a focal point. Some of us had hoped that he would transform and start exercising leadership by delegation and build teamwork. We had hoped that the organisation (NRM) would become strong and build structures where all of us as individuals would now become irrelevant, including him. That the institutional culture would outlive us and those who would come in would also keep transforming. Unfortunately, that never came to be. This is why we are facing the crisis we are in now. Museveni became stuck at some point. He failed to transform himself from micro managing so that he oversees everything in foreign affairs, defence, finance and all over and his failure to delegate with trust. (Mugisha Muntu, ibid.).

Paul Ssemogerere agrees: 'what he controls, he controls totally to the minutest detail' (ibid.).

His old friend Kategaya confirms this current style of leadership.

Nowadays I find him impatient. He wants to push things to the extent that sometimes he says: 'Oh those who do not agree with me, I am no longer going to work with them'. I find that one very strange. If you are working with a large group of people, I think if you are going to work with only those who agree with you, you will narrow your base. And sometimes the question is; 'you disagree on what? Is it fundamental or not?' I think he has to be able to say yes, we have a disagreement but it is not fundamental. It is not dangerous to what we all want to achieve. So I find him a bit impatient. Even when you talk to him and you find he does not agree with you, he looks a bit frustrated. (ibid.)

Critics often comment on the type of people who surround Museveni now. Many are labelled yes-men, and are said to be weak and unwilling to tell the president what he doesn't want to hear.¹⁸ It makes sense that Museveni has found this type of advisor compliant but less capable and in need of closer management. Minister of Works Nasasira explains that the problem is that Museveni

is working with very weak systems. Museveni is a victim of Uganda's weak systems and some of the work he does should be done by other people. Because of the weak systems, he is still a hands-on person. I do not know how many people realise that our systems are still extremely weak. Sometimes he can get angry or disappointed on a certain issue. (ibid.)

Others see this more critically. With less-experienced people around him, Museveni must lead from the front. Former minister and Mayor of Kampala, Ssebaana Kizito, explained that

¹⁸ 'Most of the people he listens to are those that feed back to him what he wants to hear ... He has some very bright people in cabinet though they won't say anything against him or a piece of policy ... A cabinet that decides and carries out a decision' is needed. 'Someone who can say "no sir" ... Ministers whose main job is politics, who have small empires themselves', they are the problem (key informant interview, 11 Dec 2006).

These days, people confuse him too much. They take everything to him and therefore this issue of not giving other people authority to make decisions, I think, is not proper ... Maybe he genuinely believes he has it [a vision for Uganda]. But ... he has not empowered people to think for him. Because he bites too much, not much can be done. (ibid.)

This then comes back to Museveni's personality:

President Museveni fears strong personalities, people who can measure to his capacity. Therefore, he must make sure that whoever measures to his capacity is sidelined. I have found him as a person who is not interested in building institutions although by rhetoric he wants institutions. He is a man of contradictions. What he says is not what he wants. (Miria Matembe, ibid.)

His school chum Katagaya says Museveni should 'listen more. He should go back to listening, and I hope he will have the courage not to see an enemy around every bush, because it is dangerous. The moment you think everybody who doesn't agree with you is an enemy, it will lead you to making mistakes. In other words, he should listen to people who may criticise him but with a view to correcting him; not because they want to run him down'.

Some see the people around him as the problem – 'the majority' take advantage of him. 'People whose behaviour is so disgusting' are near to him, and 'useless'. Museveni, driven by a vision of industrialising the country, listens to these people who promise him development but who abuse his trust. At the same time he ignores the advice of 'experts', and has not a cabinet 'that is able to stand up to him'. Thinking he knows everything and 'is the only person who can ultimately solve anything', he makes decisions on all sorts of matters without good advice or detailed knowledge. 'We must all cry for building of systems' to replace presidential decrees, and strong cabinet ministers and 'independent experts' who are 'given the chance to do their work'. If this is not allowed to happen, Museveni's legacy and that of the Movement will be ruined (key informant interview, 11 Dec 2006).

Former Minister Sarah Kiyingi Namusoke is also able to stand back and explain how Museveni's style is impacting on nation-building.

I try to think about Museveni the person. I just got this analogy of a builder. When we were building our house, we got this builder and he worked on the foundation, built the walls up to the ring beam. He told us to find someone to roof the house. We said no, you are the builder. He said, 'yes I can build from the foundation but I cannot roof'. We had to find someone else. This is the analogy that came to mind sometime back when I had to think about the President. Museveni, the man has done well in laying the foundation but the roofing, I don't think he has the capacity. In principle, he has set up democratic structures but I don't think Museveni has the patience to allow these structures to operate the way they should operate. He wants everything to go his way. 'This is what I want; I can not allow this to happen.' You hear this language: I don't think Museveni is the best to carry us through at this cruising level because of his character (ibid.).

In summary then, Museveni's personality, his management style and incapacity to change have led him to the third term, to periodic threats¹⁹ and to his falling out with his oldest advisors, who state that they had hoped by now to see institutional rather than big-man rule in Uganda. Some have argued that 'there is little likelihood that Museveni of 1986 and the Museveni of 2004 would recognise each other; they are two different people' (Barken, 2005, citing a former high official of the Movement). But it is necessary to acknowledge that the reasons behind Museveni's clinging to office, surrounding himself with yes-men, turning a blind eye to corruption and the like, have deep social roots. Further, leaders like this do not emerge from a vacuum; those around him, including donors, are also responsible for what he has become.²⁰

¹⁹ 'Nobody should joke with my army. If you joke with it you will go six feet under...' cited by former minister, Sarah Namusoke (*Weekly Observer*, 2005).

²⁰ 'It doesn't occur to people that you can just say no' to the President. 'We have helped him get to this place where he thinks he knows everything' (key informant interview, 11 Dec 2006).

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