



# Bilateral cooperation and local power dynamics

The case of Rwanda

Frederick Golooba-Mutebi and David Booth

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### Key messages

- To understand political dynamics in Rwanda, you need to understand the prevailing political settlement
- The three components of the settlement together explain the comparatively high quality of policy making in Rwanda
- Within the settlement there are significant political and policy debates, but expressed in non-adversarial terms
- Incidents apparently signalling factional power struggles need to be interpreted with care on the basis of solid information
- Bilateral cooperation should assist evolutionary change, taking the settlement, not 'lack of political space', as its starting point

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# Abbreviations

DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
FAR	Forces armées rwandaises
FDLR	Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda
GoR	Government of Rwanda
MDR	Mouvement démocratique républicain
M23	Mouvement du 23 mars
NEC	National Executive Committee (RPF)
PSD	Parti social démocrate
RANU	Rwandese Alliance for National Unity
RDF	Rwanda Defence Forces
RPA	Rwanda Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front

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# Summary

Commissioned by the Swedish Embassy in Kigali as an input to its cooperation strategy for the next five to seven years, this paper is a focused contribution to understanding power dynamics in Rwanda. It proposes a framework for understanding current dynamics and, in particular, for assessing the hypotheses circulating in various media about patterns of agreement and disagreement among power holders in Rwanda, how these shape policy decisions and the implications for bilateral cooperation in the country. It is based on an extended study of the relationships and change processes within the government and political leadership in Kigali. In late 2012 and early 2013, the authors refreshed their previous work by undertaking over 40 interviews with well-placed observers, filling particular gaps in their previous knowledge or understanding.

The paper argues that questions concerning current power dynamics need to be placed firmly in the context of an appreciation of certain elementary features of the structure of power and its institutionalisation in Rwanda. Otherwise mistakes are likely to be made and invalid conclusions drawn. These basic features are captured in the idea of an underlying ‘elite bargain’ (Douglass North et al.) or ‘political settlement’ (Mushtaq Khan).

The authors contend that since the early 2000s, Rwanda has had a political settlement containing three distinct but interdependent elements. These are a commitment to power-sharing among (but only among) parties that are firmly aligned against a revival of ethnic sectarianism; the pursuit of development, not negotiation, as the principal path to national reconciliation; and the search for an alternative to clientelistic political competition.

In each of these three areas, the prevailing institutions (formal and informal rules and corresponding enforcement mechanisms) reflect and are supportive of the basic understanding among the key power holders. The rules include a robust, ‘European’ rather than ‘American’, stance on hate crimes and freedom of speech; constitutional rules that strongly favour parties other than the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF); a preference for non-adversarial policy debate and decision-making by consensus; and an unusually strict approach to disciplinary infractions in civil and military service.

We argue that the elite convergence around these commitments and rules is broad-based and quite robust. This has two effects that sometimes mislead observers seeking to understand patterns of agreement and disagreement among power holders and to predict their effects in the medium term.

First, political and policy differences do exist and are expressed among and within the parties to the settlement. They touch upon several central topics in economic and social policy as well as constitutional matters such as the presidential succession. However, the disagreements tend to be expressed behind closed doors, giving a misleading impression – especially to those accustomed to public and adversarial policy making – of enforced consensus and RPF domination.

Second, the political settlement now prevailing in Kigali is the outcome of a struggle with elements of the new elite, including some original RPF members, who would have preferred other options. Upholding the settlement’s institutional rules, which are in several respects quite alien to ways of thinking and acting in countries of sub-Saharan Africa, is considered to require the periodic reimposition of iron discipline on public servants, civil or military. These features test loyalties and lead to defections, the sum total of which contributes to the appearance of a faction-ridden regime with a progressively narrowing base and suppressed tensions.

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We argue that these impressions are misleading. There is a good deal of policy discussion, governed by institutional rules that are appropriate to the Rwandan context and might usefully be emulated in some of the other ethnically divided societies of the region. The form of policy-making that this permits is oriented to problem-solving and adaptation, which is unusual in the region and bodes well for the future of development efforts for the reasons recently articulated by Matt Andrews and colleagues. On the other hand, few if any of the defections, reshuffles and arrest orders that have taken place since the early 2000s, when the current political settlement was reached, are about policy differences. They do not indicate the existence of significant factional divisions or power struggles about issues of principle, as some observers have concluded. The thesis that a 'hawkish' tendency in the military explains the behaviour of the Rwandan authorities during the M23 conflict in DRC in 2012 seems particularly questionable.

The implications for bilateral cooperation are important. Until such time as the current political settlement is dissolved in favour of something else, cooperation agencies would do well to take it as a working framework, for two reasons. One is that efforts outside the terms of the settlement will benefit from little 'country ownership' and will tend therefore to be fruitless. The other is that Rwanda's elite bargain has important attractions as a framework for development cooperation and democracy support, attractions that are unusual in the region.

The particular brand of multi-party power-sharing that Rwanda has adopted is not just favourable to policy making and implementation for achieving development results (as is usually recognised). It is also the result of a conscious effort to marry democratic aspirations with the hard realities of a divided and structurally underdeveloped society. The model is intrinsically interesting, implying some challenges ahead but many immediate benefits. Democracy support efforts could justifiably begin by recognising those benefits in the perspective of helping to tackle the upcoming challenges. This would certainly be more productive than starting from the fundamentally misleading proposition that Rwanda suffers from a lack of 'political space' or that there are factions within the power structure of the country that are more or less 'progressive' on issues such as freedom of speech and relations with DRC, and that this provides an entry point for external influence.

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# 1 Introduction

It is generally accepted that the structure and dynamics of power are fundamental to national development processes. Power structures shape what institutions are adopted and the way they work in practice. The actual performance of institutions is in turn the key to whether countries make real advances and their peoples are able to realise progressively their basic human rights. International development partners in poor countries need to be attuned to these basic realities if they are to deliver effective support and to be in a position to respect a minimum requirement to ‘do no harm’, especially in conflict-sensitive regions. They also need to be well informed about the current dynamics of power in particular countries, especially where, for one reason or another, current development efforts and partnerships have been put into question. The current situation in Rwanda is a case in point.

Against this background, the Swedish Embassy in Kigali commissioned the authors to carry out a study of power dynamics in Rwanda and their implications for bilateral cooperation in the country. The exercise was an input into a country strategy process in which Sweden sought to define priorities and forms of engagement for the next five to seven years, including in the field of support to democratic development. This occurred at a particularly important moment in the evolution of Rwanda’s relations with its bilateral development partners.

## 1.1 The assignment: scope and approach

The Terms of Reference of the study signalled its scope and basic approach. As to scope, the exercise was to include a broad power analysis and consideration of the nature of the ‘political settlement’ in the country. In this context, it would address short-to-medium term power dynamics, including the relationship with donors as a group. Particular attention would be given to the possibilities for Sweden to contribute to positive dynamics, resulting in optimal development outcomes, democracy and human rights outcomes, and regional peace and security outcomes.

The context in which the work was commissioned needs to be appreciated. As is well known, in late 2012 Sweden and other bilateral donors were led to suspend their assistance to the government sector in Rwanda. This followed events in the neighbouring Democratic Republic Congo (DRC) around the mutiny of a group of Rwandophone officers previously incorporated into the DRC army. The Government of Rwanda (GoR) was judged to have encouraged the mutiny and then provided active support to the mutineers and their M23 movement. A common view among international observers was that the actions of the Rwandan forces in this regard were driven by particular power dynamics within the regime in Kigali.

The precise sequence of events in DRC in 2012 and the correctness or otherwise of the donor assessment of it were outside our Terms of Reference. However, it was necessary to take a view on the particular proposition that there are, or were, significant differences of viewpoint within the Rwandan power structure over the justifiability of renewed military interventions in DRC and the possible costs in terms of Rwanda’s development plans and relations with donors.

As to approach, the Terms of Reference invited the authors to draw on previous knowledge as well as on additional reading and interviews, the assumption being that the latter would be mostly of an informal nature. It was assumed that the previous knowledge on which they could draw would be substantial. Golooba-Mutebi began research in Rwanda in 2000 in the context of a donor-commissioned study of the country’s first Poverty Reduction Strategy. This led to five years of research, with a focus on state-building and the military, for the DFID-funded Crisis States Research Centre. Since 2008, both authors have undertaken research in Rwanda under the Africa Power and Politics Programme and Developmental Regimes in Africa Project funded



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respectively by DFID and Irish Aid, and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The assumption was that this previous work would help to ensure the researchers had access to highly placed interviewees, generating a quality of information and insight that is not common in studies and consultancy reports on Rwandan topics. We think this was vindicated by the volume and calibre of the interview-based material that it proved possible to generate over a few weeks in December 2012 and January 2013.

The paper has a particular analytical orientation. We treated the assignment as an exercise in positive social science – that is, as an effort to identify, distinguish, compare, interpret and analyse the features of a situation with a view to understanding it better. It was not a primarily normative exercise – as in, for example, the standard type of governance assessment where behaviours are evaluated against some externally defined quality standards. This does not mean that we do not make value judgments. It means that we place the accent on understanding situations and analysing them in some relevant comparative framework before beginning to consider questions of right and wrong.

## 1.2 Our research

In operationalising our Terms of Reference, we used and extended an investigative technique we have applied previously with some success. Golooba-Mutebi's studies of state-building and the military in Rwanda and Uganda for the Crisis States Research Centre (2008a; 2008b) used the same basic approach. Together, we applied this technique in previous work on roads reform in Uganda (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2009) and business and politics in Rwanda (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012a; Kelsall, 2013: Ch 5). The principal features of the approach are:

- intensive use of personal networks and a 'snowball' technique for identifying interviewees with particular knowledge or insight;
- an informal and usually confidential interview approach, guided by a prepared informal agenda and a style of questioning designed to elicit valid and reliable information by detecting and discounting conventional or 'strategic' answers;
- the accumulation of a sufficiently diverse body of testimony and observation to permit use of the principle of triangulation (validation by internal and external cross-checking);
- an approach to interviewee selection which does not, therefore, seek a 'representative sample' of opinions, but a diverse sample, including people who would not by nature be expected to agree.

For this assignment, Golooba-Mutebi made preliminary enquiries and set up the interviews. Some interviews were judged to be better conducted by him alone, because interviewees were thought likely to be more frank in the absence of an unfamiliar European. Others were conducted by both authors. Over four weeks in late December 2012 and January 2013, we completed over 40 high-level confidential interviews, including four repeat interviews.

Interviewees included more than a quarter of the membership of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), key non-RPF members of the Government of Rwanda, senior military and security officials, representatives of several types of minor political party and independent academics or NGO personnel. Interviewee selection was biased towards political party figures of various kinds in view of the fact that the authors' recent research interviews had focused on economic actors, including private business leaders, parastatal managers, civil servants, NGOs and donor advisers quite extensively. Political parties, their histories and their ideas were a relatively neglected field of enquiry.

With most interviewees we explored a wide range of issues, starting from the historical origins of the current regime, the process leading to the formulation of the 2003 constitution and the nature of political competition and the policy process today. The background to the decisions taken by a number of the government's donors in late 2012 was usually broached as a final topic, after extended (one-hour to two-hour) discussion of domestic political and policy issues. In a few cases, where Golooba-Mutebi was interviewing a person for the second, third or fourth time on some of these topics, the conversation went straight to international relations.

A couple of important points need to be made about the use to which we put the results of these conversations. First, the paper draws on the sum total of the evidence at the authors' disposal – not just the new interview

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material but information and insight gathered in previous documentary and interview-based research. Second, the paper's argument is the result of our inferences from the raw evidence, our assessment of what it adds up to, expressed in the concepts of comparative social science. It is by no means just a summary of the interview results or other primary data.

Much of the material collected consisted of judgements, beliefs and historical stories which had to be interpreted and assessed in the light of what we knew about the speaker's background and orientation. We took into account, among other things, the possibility that any convergence of opinion on a particular topic was the result of interviewees' toeing a party line, rather than evidence of genuine consensus. The length of the interviews and the repetition of some interviews provided substantial opportunities for checking testimony for authenticity by reviewing its internal consistency. Where factual claims were concerned, the number of interviews conducted on the same topics provided means of cross-checking information from one source against that obtained from other sources. We took these precautions in controlling the quality of our data. We then made our own inferences and constructed conceptually rich analytical propositions, grounded in but not simply reflecting the empirical material.

### 1.3 Argument and structure of the paper

The central argument of the paper is that power dynamics in Rwanda are sometimes difficult to disentangle, particularly for those not privy to inside knowledge. However, they are much easier to understand when placed in the context of the fundamental elite bargain (North et al., 2009) or political settlement (Khan, 1995; 2010) that governs much of what happens in Kigali. Section 2 of the paper is devoted to explaining what we think the settlement is, how it manifests itself in terms of relationships and institutions, and how it arose historically. We suggest it has three interdependent elements, to do with respectively power-sharing, development and rejection of competitive clientelism. The settlement is reasonably robust and more inclusive than often imagined.

In Section 3, we explain how we think the political settlement influences the nature of political competition and policy debate in Rwanda, giving it an unfamiliar flavour that confuses unwary outsiders. We also argue that it is challenging to maintain this settlement against pressures to revert to the clientelistic rent-seeking that is the natural state of affairs in most of sub-Saharan Africa as well as in 'limited access orders' generally, according to comparative historical studies (North et al., 2009; 2013). As a result, there are casualties of various kinds. This generates a misleading impression of a highly factionalised political system. In fact, there is significant political disagreement, but not expressed in an adversarial way and certainly not centred on differences of emphasis between 'security' and 'development'.

Section 4 draws some implications for official bilateral development cooperation, including democracy support. Both pragmatic and principled reasons can be given for adopting the three components of the prevailing settlement or elite bargain as a working framework for any such cooperation. There is currently a perception that donors are bent on promoting a concept of political space that is alien to the current settlement. With appropriate framing, however, international support to democratisation could still benefit Rwanda as the country's political arrangements evolve over the years, in a gradual and well-managed way, as all actors recognise they must.

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# 2 Power and institutions: the ‘political settlement’ in Rwanda

## 2.1 The Rwandan paradox

Those approaching international literature and media content on Rwanda for the first time are often struck by a paradox. On the one hand, here is a country that is making excellent progress on most conventional development indicators, including economic growth, human development outcomes and over the most recent period, socio-economic inequality. While evidence of substantial productivity-enhancing economic transformation remains patchy, there are clear signs that government and private investors are doing many of the right things with a view to getting such transformation started. On the other hand, critics of the government in Kigali persistently condemn it for failing to provide adequate space for the exercise of basic civil and political rights by its citizens. It is said that private investors are not guaranteed a ‘level playing field’. There is a widely held assumption that the regime is simply a dictatorship and that accordingly political and policy debates are highly constrained.

This seems paradoxical in view of the now common belief that, Asian experience notwithstanding, dictatorships are not good at development and that strong liberal-democratic institutions increase the likelihood of sustained economic and social progress, in part by permitting high-quality debate about policy options. Of course, the contrasting images are partly the result of exaggerations and mistakes on both sides of the rather polarised community of Rwanda-watchers. For example, some international observers probably give undue importance to the progress made on conventional (World Bank) indicators,<sup>1</sup> while many of the regime’s critics apply standards of political openness and freedom of speech that are unduly exacting, given the context.<sup>2</sup> However, this does not entirely dispel the sense of paradox. For many, the Rwandan regime remains a puzzle.

We believe that the puzzle can be resolved if one is prepared to probe a little more deeply below the surface of the country reality. Some of the apparent contradictions arise more from the analytical framework with which we approach the problem of Rwanda than from the country reality itself. In fact, both the efficiency which characterises some aspects of public performance and the so-called ‘lack of political space’ are the products of the same underlying features, features that are captured by the concept of the political settlement. Identifying the dimensions of the political settlement helps to dispel much of the remaining paradox about why Rwanda’s national trajectory is what it is. It also provides a useful way of framing the questions to be considered about power dynamics in the medium and short term.

## 2.2 What is a political settlement?

We use the term ‘political settlement’ deliberately and in a particular way. For non-specialists, we should explain that this concept has been developed by political economists and political scientists who believe both a) that institutions matter, and also b) that the way institutions work is shaped by non-institutional factors, especially the power distribution among major elements of a national elite, including its military, civil, economic and political wings. The particular definition offered by Mushtaq Khan, ‘a consistent combination of institutions and a distribution of power such that the two are compatible and mutually supportive’ (Khan, 2010; 2012) conveys this basic idea.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Economist (2012), Crisfulli and Redmond (2013) and Rotberg (2013).

<sup>2</sup> E.g., many of the contributors to Straus and Waldorf (2011), some of the authors in Campioni and Noack (2012) and several recent articles in *African Affairs, Development and Change* or the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, not least Reyntjens (2004; 2011).

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Other parts of the recent literature mostly use a related term, ‘elite bargain’. According to North et al. (2009; 2013) elite bargains are about ways of allocating economic rents that limit the use of violence and preserve the peace while taking into account the basic distribution of economic, political and military power. In this literature, it is recognised that rents are ubiquitous in human societies and that in developing countries they perform essential economic and state-building functions as well as socially negative functions, depending on the circumstances.

In both of these variant approaches, elite bargains or political settlements are not necessarily socially (or ethnically) inclusive to a high degree. However, by definition they do not endure if they fail to include elites with the power to mount an effective challenge to the dominant elite. A political settlement defines the terms on which elites will compete peacefully, and thus the terms on which civil war is discounted as an option (Lindemann, 2008).

The political settlements approach rejects the proposition that progress is a matter of adopting the ‘right’ formal institutions or of complying with generally accepted liberal-democratic norms and practices. It contrasts with the naïve liberalism that categorises regimes by placing them on a continuum between ‘dictatorship’ and ‘democracy’, and holds that democratic politics and functioning state institutions can be implanted in a country without regard to its socio-economic make-up and the composition of the elite (Englebert and Tull, 2008; Kaplan, 2008; Putzel and Di John, 2012).

Political settlements analysis contrasts in a less obvious way with the influential approach of Acemoglu and Robinson (2012). Acemoglu and Robinson’s retelling of the big historical story about ‘why nations fail’ underlines the role of power balances and the feasibility of gross forms of surplus-extraction in shaping the way institutions evolve and how economies work. However, in the cause of establishing that institutions (and not just policies) matter, they rely heavily on a simple bipolar contrast between ‘extractive’ and ‘inclusive’ systems. This draws attention away from the progressive modification of initially extractive rent regimes, which for most now-developed countries was the route they followed for decades if not centuries before eventually embracing ‘inclusive’ politics and market economies. This is surely the bit of history that is most relevant to the choices now being faced in poor developing countries, and to neglect it reopens the door to simple advocacy of ‘right’ institutions.

### 2.3 Background to the Rwanda case

Our basic proposition is that the way Rwanda is governed is shaped by an implicit bargain among all or most of the forces exercising significant political, economic, military or social power in Rwanda. This fundamental elite bargain defines the basic rules under which the political system functions and shapes the way particular institutional arrangements work. The sum total of this power-deal and these institutional functionings is what we call the political settlement.

The terms of Rwanda’s elite bargain are obviously shaped by structural and historical features. As in other poor developing countries, the basic realities of power in Rwanda differ from those in countries where capitalist enterprise is established as the predominant mode of economic activity. Agricultural production and livestock provide the overwhelming dominant mode of livelihood for the population, and much of this activity is undertaken on a very small scale by households rather than firms. The formal enterprise sector is tiny by most standards, and as a consequence the tax base of the country is extraordinarily narrow.

As in most countries until the 20th century, the counterpart of the largely non-capitalist character of the productive economy is the relative importance of control of the means of military domination and hence of means of obtaining and retaining political power. This underlying feature of the political economy limits the options by which national elites can tackle the fundamental challenge of limiting violence by agreeing a way of routinising peaceful political competition. Ordinarily, the ‘bargain’ upon which continued peace depends relies upon tacit acceptance of a set of rules governing the generation and utilisation of major economic rents, including tax revenues but necessarily extending to a range of policy-induced rents, including those legally qualifying as corruption (North et al., 2009). In developing countries, the question of exactly how this is done is of crucial importance not only for the maintenance of a low level of violence but also for the prospects for economic progress (Khan, 2010; North et al., 2013).

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It might be considered that the basic power realities of Rwanda since the genocide are significantly different from those of other countries in the sub-Saharan African region. Certainly, the weakness of the formal economy, private and public, which was extreme at the end of the war in 1994, places Rwanda at the end of the continuum of variation, giving relative importance to politics and military power as means of accessing economic resources. But this is a matter of degree rather than of kind. Since 1994, also, the country has been ruled by the political leaders of a victorious military force whose dominance, it could be argued, has given the regime room for manoeuvre that is unusual. However, we have come to the view that regime origins explain relatively little on their own. What has shaped the political settlement in Rwanda today, including the way rents are used to limit violence and promote development, is the way the elites in power have responded to the fact that they do not possess, or have not acquired until recently, complete politico-military dominance.

Compared with what is characterised as a political settlement in other countries, the elite bargain we describe in the following pages involves a relatively explicit set of principles that can be, and in our interviews sometimes were, articulated by the actors themselves. However, it is worth repeating that our account of the political settlement in Rwanda is an analytical construct. It is not a summary of what we were told, and still less a statement on behalf of the Rwandan government. As portrayed here, the settlement is the end result of an extended series of processes of discussion, negotiation and struggle. It is the product of choices made by a large number of actors, all of which have definite, if in some cases shadowy, empirical referents. It is independent of the perspectives of any particular group.

## **2.4 The three elements of the settlement**

The elite bargain that prevails in Rwanda today has three components, which have been put together in steps over an extended period and are mutually interdependent. We have said, following Khan, that a political settlement is a consistent combination of institutions and a distribution of power. In the Rwanda case, this means that institutions have been selected which are consistent with the basic power realities, and that the way they work is also shaped by these realities. Each dimension of the power bargain has induced and is now reinforced by a particular set of institutional arrangements, the most formal of which is the national constitution of 2003. Much of the world's difficulty in making good sense of what goes on in Rwanda's power structure stems from a failure to understand that the settlement includes three components, and that each has a power aspect and an institutional aspect.

### **2.4.1 Commitment to power-sharing**

In establishing this first element of the settlement, a crucial step was the decision of the winning forces in the 1990-94 Rwandan civil war to share power with other national political forces considered to be opposed to ethnic sectarianism. This was a choice taken under highly pressured circumstances and in the immediate aftermath of an historic blood-letting. However, according to our research it is a mistake to attribute the emergence of an elite bargain around power-sharing entirely to the shock of the genocide and other factors relating to the conjuncture of 1994.

The RPF and the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) did have overwhelming military power at the end of the war in 1994. To this extent, the RPF's rejection of the principle of 'winner takes all' was a choice and not inevitable. Inclusiveness was also wise and pragmatic in the circumstances. The victorious military forces were taking charge of a country and an economy in ruins. In diplomatic terms, they were also bound by the terms of the internationally brokered Arusha Peace Agreements, which visualised the immediate formation of a Government of National Unity. But there were other antecedents too. According to our assessment of the interview testimony, the idea of anti-sectarianism and power sharing had earlier and deeper roots among the politicians who ended on the winning side of the war. And these principles were pursued with considerable vigour after the immediate post-war years, especially during the extensive debates that produced the 2003 constitution.

Before the war began, the creation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was the result of a series of political debates and struggles in the Rwandan diaspora network organised within the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (RANU). What became the majority view decisively rejected the establishment of either a purely Tutsi organisation or an ideologically exclusive 'vanguard party'. Then, during the war, the RPF developed friendly relationships with several new parties and some old ones that appeared to share its ethnically and politically inclusive political project, including notably the Social Democratic Party (PSD) many of whose founders were



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‘southern’ Hutus who had been marginalised by the Habyarimana regime. The partnership with these parties that is today the basis of government in Rwanda dates from that period. It is now enshrined in a constitutional and legal framework with a number of remarkable features.

What is perhaps least remarkable in the circumstances, although very commonly noted by external observers is the strict formal ban on the registration of political parties with an ethnically divisive programme. It is well known that many African and European countries, including some that have never witnessed genocidal political movements, have such laws. The fact that Rwanda is routinely characterised as a country with little ‘political space’, largely on the grounds of this feature of the constitutional set-up, reflects the rather exceptional commitment to unrestricted freedom of speech that influential organisations such as Human Rights Watch take from the US constitutional tradition (Johnson, 2013). While some of the complementary legislation against the promotion of genocide ideology may have flaws from a legal point of view (Waldorf, 2011), having such legislation is in itself not at all remarkable.

On the other hand, what is quite unusual and not widely appreciated is the degree to which the constitution – the product of an extended national consultation process – limits the power of the largest political party and caters to the needs of even microscopic parties that are not members of the governing coalition. Our research confirmed that as of early 2013, there were ten registered political parties in Rwanda.<sup>3</sup> Of these, eight have positions in government.<sup>4</sup> The larger ones, whose representatives vigorously reject the suggestion that they are mere satellites of the RPF, hold important cabinet posts, including one with oversight of security matters. The constitution requires that the largest party in electoral terms hold no more than 50% of cabinet posts, with the effect that the other half is allocated to parties other than the RPF or to independents who belong to no party. Both RPF and non-RPF ministers insisted to us that this is the outcome of a natural evolution that started in the 1980s, when the genocide had not yet happened but the costs of ethnic power monopolies were already clear enough.

The parties that share power in government include some that campaign jointly with the RPF in presidential elections and some that put up their own candidates, meaning that parties which fail to dent the RPF’s electoral margin can nonetheless still play important roles in government. There is a bicameral parliament observing a strict separation of powers (assembly members and senators may not be ministers). Elections to the lower house are based on proportional representation, which has the effect of further moderating the ‘winner takes all’ pattern that is so harmful in other African countries. Finally, parties that are too small to gain parliamentary seats get state funding for capacity and programme development through a Forum of Political Parties. This is the only state funding for parties that has been allowed until now.

As discussed in the next section, coalition government and the power-sharing principle are accompanied and reinforced by a commitment to decision-making by consensus, which means postponing decisions on issues on which agreement cannot be reached (of which there have been a few). Some interviewees maintain that this is an African cultural principle, but it is more obviously and directly a product of the constitutional rules. The effect is that the adversarial approach to policy-making that is typical of advanced Western democracies, particularly those with first-past-the-post elections and Westminster-style parliaments, is notable by its absence. Compared with what happens in many other African countries, there are clear benefits to the quality of policy-making: decision-makers are able to consider the long-term interests of their constituents or the country, freed from the imperative of making public show of their differences with a view to the next election.<sup>5</sup>

In the longer term, there may be costs associated with this arrangement. One concern is that smaller parties, being guaranteed policy influence regardless of their electoral performance, may become ‘lazy’ in developing new ideas to offer to voters. At least one of our senior RPF interviewees recognised this danger. Another is that the system may weaken small parties’ ability to clearly differentiate themselves from the RPF and build a distinct electoral following.<sup>6</sup> However, this may overestimate the extent to which, anywhere in low-income Africa, parties differentiate themselves on a programmatic basis, as distinct from the credibility of their promises

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<sup>3</sup> The abbreviations are RPF, PSD, PL, PDC, PDI, PSR, UDPR, PPC, PSP and PS-Imberakuri.

<sup>4</sup> The exceptions are the last two, neither of which obtained seats in the parliament or senate in the last elections.

<sup>5</sup> The potential is exploited with the use of regular leadership retreats, an Annual National Dialogue and other instruments of deliberative policy-making, lesson-learning and consensus-building.

<sup>6</sup> We are grateful to Phil Clark for this suggestion.

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to deliver the same basic goods – health and education services, infrastructure, electricity, jobs, etc. In the context, we would not rate it as a priority issue for the time being.

It might be thought that none of the above is of great significance so long as the RPF leadership still maintains a tight grip on the army and security apparatuses. However, it is important and again not widely appreciated that considerable efforts have been made to turn the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) into a national army, under presidential and cabinet control, within which party politics is banned. This is more than a constitutional formality. For example, at various points over the years since 1994, the RDF have incorporated significant numbers of the rank-and-file and officer corps of the Habyarimana regime's Forces armées rwandaises (FAR), including some from units that fought government troops from bases in DRC.<sup>7</sup> While the topmost leadership of the RDF remain for the most part RPA originals and of Tutsi background, the middle and lower ranks of the officer corps are highly integrated and professionalised. This is supported by testimony from many different quarters and is not disputed as far as we are aware.<sup>8</sup>

#### **2.4.2 Reconciliation through development**

The second element of the political settlement in Rwanda according to our interpretation is an agreement to wager on national development and inclusive, non-discriminatory, public policies as the main means of combating a recurrence of violent ethnic extremism. The flip side of this developmentalism is rejection of the idea of a negotiated settlement involving bargaining with Hutu supremacists and any of those directly responsible for the genocide. According to all parties to the settlement, reconciliation has to come from joint participation in a development and nation-building process; it cannot come from a political process in which ethnic supremacists are allowed once again to promote their point of view. The risks of the latter option are too great.

This element of the 'bargain' implies on the one hand a policy of robust inclusiveness: a willingness to adopt into the nation-building project almost anyone willing to join it in a spirit of sincerity. On the other hand, it implies an unwillingness to permit even the smallest foot-in-the-door to a recurrence of ethnic sectarianism.

Thus, one side of the story is a strenuous effort to build national organisations on a non-exclusive basis. The most notable example is the already mentioned process of turning the RDF into a non-political national army, but there are many other examples. They include a very deliberately non-discriminatory approach to civil service appointments and state scholarships – important signals to the Hutu middle classes in view of the expectations generated by history and the anti-RPF propaganda that continues to circulate. More obviously, using development as a means of reconciliation and nation-building implies an exceptional level of determination in implementing social and economic policies, including learning and where necessary correcting errors. We have commented elsewhere on the detail of how this works in connection with health services (Chambers and Booth, 2012) and agriculture (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012b). In many respects, Rwandan policy processes approximate to the model of iterative, adaptive problem-solving advocated by Matt Andrews and his colleagues (Andrews et al., 2012; Andrews, 2013) for all poor developing countries.

The other face of the coin of developmentalism is what has underlain, at various moments since the genocide, the use of overwhelming military force – with terrible consequences on some occasions – to prevent a resurgence of Hutu sectarianism. It is obviously also reflected in the requirements of the 2003 constitution on the registration of political parties, absolutely prohibiting those with an ethnically exclusive membership or agenda. We think there is sufficient evidence for believing that this second commitment is widely shared across all the parties that are in government with the RPF, and even by the smaller officially recognised parties that are outside the governing coalition. It is part of the political settlement.

Again, it is easy to over-explain the commitment to development in Rwanda as an inevitable response to the experience of the genocide. Comparative studies of the genesis of developmental political leaderships in Asia and Africa often lead to the conclusion that some form of 'systemic vulnerability' (Doner et al., 2005) or threat

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<sup>7</sup> As early as 1994-96, some 15,000 ex-FAR were integrated into the RPA, and one of them immediately became the Deputy Chief of Staff. Since 1996, nearly 40,000 additional ex-FAR elements and members of militias returning from the DRC have served in the new national army. Although since 2000 some have been demobilised alongside their ex-RPA colleagues, many remain in the RDF and the Rwanda National Police. Those in the police include a current Deputy Inspector-General of Police, the Commandant of Police Headquarters in Kigali and the Director of Administration. For further details, see the excellent article by Jones (2012).

<sup>8</sup> See for example Lars Waldorf's generally approving account of Rwanda's disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration efforts (2009).

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of mass violence (Kelsall, 2013; Poulton, 2012) is a common predisposing factor. ‘Never again!’ is surely a powerful driver of development-oriented politics. However, the experience of Burundi, where reconciliation-by-negotiation has been preferred, to some international acclaim (Uvin, 2009), despite a very comparable history, confirms that neither mass violence nor other long-term historical factors should be allowed to do all the work of explaining the option taken in Rwanda. Furthermore, we would argue that developmentalism has only been sustainable because the political settlement has come to include a third element.

#### **2.4.3 The search for an alternative to clientelistic politics**

The third component of the political settlement is often overlooked but is essential. Failure to understand this element as both necessary to the viability of the overall project and as widely shared among the different elements of today’s Rwandan elite lies behind many of the prevailing misinterpretations of Rwandan reality. As we see it, the current elite bargain was fully defined between 2000 and 2003 and not before. Until 2000, the situation was in important respects unsettled. What happened around 2000 was that the majority view became that the nation-building project and the wager on reconciling former enemies through a process of economic and social development would not be achieved if public affairs were allowed to revert back to type – that is, if the political system were to evolve back to a patron-client pattern, with the attendant tolerance for cronyism and corruption.

According to a common version of the story of Rwanda since 2000, there has been a progressive narrowing of the political base of the regime. Constitutional checks and balances and the toleration of liberal freedoms have been progressively eroded, leading to an increasingly personalised form of rule and, in the words of a British journalist in 2013 a ‘descent into tyranny’. We discuss some of the evidence base for the descent into tyranny thesis further on. Here what needs to be noted is that the interpretation that sees the changes since 2000 (the year in which President Bizimungu was replaced by President Kagame) in simple terms of the erosion of democratic freedoms and the emergence of a ‘dictatorship’ is naïve about the nature of politics in poor African countries.

There has been a certain narrowing of the political base of the regime since that time in the sense that there have been relatively large numbers of defections both from the RPF itself and from the wider membership of the original ruling coalition. Others have joined too, but the number of the defections is hard to deny, and as Kagame’s critics are pleased to point out, they have included quite a few original members of the RPF and members of the security forces who are Tutsis. However, the basis of this narrowing needs a better interpretation than is provided by those who work with a simple democracy/dictatorship dichotomy. It is more accurately portrayed as a parting of ways between those that naturally see democracy in terms of a competitive clientelism and (inevitably therefore) the extraction of personal and party gain from public office, and those who see that development and ethnic inclusion require another type of multi-party political system. The dispute between the MDR and the RPF which was the most important step in the definition of the political settlement around 2000 seems to have resulted from the perception that the MDR leaders were unreliable both on anti-sectarianism and on this issue.

In many cases, it is not hard to portray the incidents in which particular individuals have ‘fallen out with Kagame’ as cases of would-be democrats falling victim to intolerant and anti-democratic forces. However, most are equally open to another reading which says that they have preferred not to participate in upholding the third element of the emerging political settlement. In our concept (which does not of course reflect the language of actual political debate) the settlement has three pillars: power-sharing with definite limits, national development as the main route to reconciliation, and rigorous suppression of attempts to revive the politics of patronage or corruption. We do not want to go into details here, which would involve echoing specific allegations about individuals, but we think this may be shown to be the point at issue in all or most of the personal histories. When situated in a proper comparative and historical context, the third component of the political settlement in Rwanda is not a suppression of established political freedoms but the progressive construction of a non-clientelist model of multi-party politics, one that is or ought to be the envy of the country’s neighbours.

In other writings (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012a), we have made something of the fact that the RPF’s holding company Crystal Ventures Ltd. (CVL) generates dividends for the party which helps to take the pressure off it to fund its campaigns through clientelism or corruption. In addition, the holding company has served as a mechanism for harnessing economic rents to social and developmental purposes, illustrating one of the economically more progressive ways rents can be channelled under what North et al. call ‘limited access orders’.

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We stand by this analysis, but it is far from a complete explanation of how opposition to clientelism has come to be adopted and sustained in Rwanda. Apart from the fact that CVL is only relevant to the funding position of one party, the RPF, it is worth emphasising the extent to which the issue of competitive clientelism has been and is going to continue to be the focus of largely silent but intense political struggle.

The institutional factors favouring the recent and continued supremacy of the anti-clientelist point of view seem to include:

- A dominant party (the RPF) which is formally rule-governed at multiple levels, including by a long-established code of conduct, providing a broad, forceful and disciplined collective leadership at the head of the governing coalition.
- An extraordinarily tight-laced regime of control over minor economic misdemeanours, which is widely regarded as legitimate because President Kagame and his family are believed to have consistently observed the strict standards required by the RPF code and at no point lost the necessary moral authority.
- A local government system that places a stronger accent on delivery of national policies than on representation of local interests, which – whatever the possible disadvantages in terms of administrative excess and lack of responsiveness (Ingelaere, 2011; Pudeková, 2011) – works against the revival of local patronage networks from the bottom up.

The third element in the political settlement is, of course, not free of disadvantages and costs. One of the costs is that to our certain knowledge individuals have been arrested, charged and sometimes jailed for minor infractions more as an example to others than because they were themselves set on a path to major corruption. Another is that some of those who have reason to expect disciplinary proceedings of some kind have often opted to leave the country rather than face them. Appreciating accurately the causes and mechanisms involved in these cases is key to interpreting the evidence on elite power dynamics in Rwanda.

## 2.5 Who's in and who's out of the bargain?

As with elite bargains and political settlements everywhere, not everyone is included. The settlement in Rwanda decisively and unreservedly excludes from political participation not just unrepentant *génocidaires*, but any elite group that refuses to accept the letter and spirit of the ban on ethnic politics. This is in the constitution, but it is in the constitution because it is part of the bargain among a large proportion of the national elite, including its political, economic and military wings.

On the other hand, the bargain is adhered to by significant Hutu elites. There are many Hutus in the RPF and more in the government and parliament, representing other parties or as independents. As mentioned above, the PSD, one of the RPF's most important partners in the 'ruling coalition', used to be regarded as the party of the southern Hutus who were marginalised under Habyarimana. More surprisingly, some former members of the northern Hutu leadership which was the core of the former regime and southern Hutus who served it, have joined the RPF and been brought into important positions in government.

Of those still on active duty in 2013, one is Boniface Rucagu, who was appointed governor of Northern Province and is credited with playing a pivotal role in ending the post-war insurgency of the late 1990s. He is now head of the national leadership training programme, *Itorero*. General Marcel Gatsinzi, who was in the top leadership of the FAR before 1994, has served in RPF-led governments as Chief of Intelligence and Minister of Defence. Until recently, he was Minister for Disaster Preparedness. Thanks in part to Rucagu's contribution to weaning the Northwest away from the resurgent Hutu extremism of the FDLR and its predecessors, that region now brings in one of the largest votes for Kagame in presidential elections.

Last but not least, many members of the business community who are Hutus that were already prominent in Habyarimana's time appear to have decided that the strict anti-sectarianism that has become the distinguishing feature of the regime under Kagame's leadership is not a bad deal in the circumstances. They are in this sense at least passive parties to the settlement. The observation that Kagame is personally more popular than the RPF, especially in areas like the Northwest, may be seen as simply the result of his personal prominence. It may reflect the presidentialism and pro-incumbent biases that are a feature of contemporary African politics generally

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(Rakner and van de Walle, 2009). However, for many observers it is more than that. Kagame is credited with facilitating the emergence of a political settlement that is genuinely non-discriminatory, and for steering the regime firmly away from the Tutsi extremism that many Hutus expected after 1994.

On the basis of a simple head-count of holders of top positions, it has been possible to demonstrate to some people's satisfaction (e.g., Ansoms, 2009) that the RPF-led government and its armed forces are Tutsi-dominated, and more particularly the tool of Anglophone 'Ugandan Tutsis'. However, this type of crude snapshot does not capture what is going on beneath the surface, as new generations of men and women get promoted and prepare to take over top positions. We suspect that, on account of these dynamic factors, the settlement is becoming more solid, consistent and inclusive as the years pass. It is impossible to prove this conjecture, but time will tell who is right.



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## 3 Making sense of current power dynamics

To summarise the argument so far, there is a fundamental elite bargain or political settlement in Rwanda. It may not be to everyone's taste, but it is a reality, and one that is not captured by the image of the country as a progressively consolidating dictatorship. Within the settlement, maintaining Rwanda's security against resurgent sectarianism is a very broadly shared top concern, and this is expressed both in the general approval of the outcome of the Victoire Ingabire court case, and in considerable concern about the enduring presence of armed groups with a Hutu supremacist agenda close to the border in eastern DRC. Another and equally shared concern is the urgency of demonstrating the benefits of ethnic and regional universalism through an accelerated process of national development, including the dimensions of health and education, infrastructure and agriculture.

An important point here, which affects the argument that follows, is that there is no perceived trade-off between these two overarching concerns. As discussed in this section, there are of course differences of policy preference within the settlement. But these are not about 'development' versus 'security'. Asked about policy differences within the cabinet and the government, our interviewees were unhesitatingly and without exception of the view that these exist but are not about development and security as alternatives – security worries and the development drive arise from the same basic concern and are shared by all parties to the settlement. This seems credible.

Our interviews and close monitoring of leadership retreats and Annual National Dialogues over a number of years suggest that the frequently expressed view that there is no political debate or policy controversy within the political set-up in Rwanda is false. The proposition that the only 'real opposition' in the country are the political tendencies that have failed to register as parties over the years is at best misguided and at worst a wilful misinterpretation, one that the RPF and its partners in government are understandably irritated by. We develop these themes below.

### 3.1 Politics and policies

If political divergences are not about 'development' as against 'security', what are they about? The answer is that they include a fairly wide set of central issues in economic and social policy.

For example, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) was in favour of a universal health insurance and had it in its policy documents long before the government picked it up and implemented the *mutuelle de santé*. One of the party's claims is that it has helped to sensitise its partners in government to issues of equity and efficiency in social policy. This is not denied by other parties. One of our interviewees left the RPF in 1998 to join the PSD on the grounds that the RPF was too liberal and not socialist enough in its economic thinking.

A striking example of how policy is made and how it does involve political debate concerns the option of concentrating rural populations in (planned) villages as a means of freeing up scarce agricultural land and providing electricity and public services more efficiently (*imidugudu*). This was strongly favoured by the RPF on the basis of early complications regarding the resettlement of returnees, which has made it the subject of a largely hostile academic literature (e.g., Newbury, 2011). The idea was, however, opposed by some of the other parties in the ruling coalition as well as by senior government officials. Many ordinary Rwandans, members of the RPF included, feared that their families would be required to move to planned settlements with all the disruption involved. In response, the RPF took a decision to back off from pushing the policy in cabinet until it had undergone significant review. Efforts then continued to convince doubters in other parties and its own ranks.

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Villagisation was mentioned, but not prominently, in the 2008-2012 Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS1) for this reason.

It is only since 2008 that the *imidugudu* policy has become more accepted. One thing that has made a difference is the visible benefits accruing to pioneer settlers in some of the planned villages established as pilots, including improved infrastructure and innovations such as the introduction of the use of biogas for cooking. Efforts designed to convince those who are still unconvinced continue. The policy figures more prominently in the new Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS2).

This example, does not suggest an absence of political and policy debate. And we are told that there have been other controversies of a similar kind, including around the consolidated land use that is central to the agricultural strategy, and the eradication of grass-thatched housing (*nyakatsi*). Little of this is reflected in the academic literature on the subject. One reason perhaps is that researchers who come from Western countries where policies are settled by the outcome of adversarial contests between parties have real trouble recognising a kind of policy-making that rests on persuasion and consensus-building.

The style of politics that has emerged from the Rwandan settlement is not adversarial. This has some distinct advantages. For example, in contrast with what happens in most countries of the region, policy for health and education has been able to be settled without the element of populist posturing that has affected the internal coherence of reforms in many countries (Olivier de Sardan and Ridde, 2013). The same applies to the economy. On agriculture, we have noted previously (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012b) how policy underwent major improvements following disastrous results in the mid-2000s. We did not find that the shifts reflected interactions among the governing parties, but we did conclude that significant policy learning had taken place. This was aided by the fact that although agriculture is viewed as a key element in the inclusive economic progress that Rwanda needs, it has not been politicised for competitive clientelistic purposes, as is almost universally the case elsewhere in the sub-Saharan African region (Poulton, 2012).

What about the RPF itself? Within the RPF, there are sometimes said to be ‘moderates’ and ‘hard-liners’. However, our impression is that this mainly refers to differences in modes of expression and degrees of impatience about the modalities of implementation of the overall vision. Other differences of view tend to be about the handling of particular situations or individual cases within the framework of the political settlement. X may have been harshly treated; Y was allowed to express his particular idiosyncrasies for too long without being reprimanded, and so on.

In contrast, fundamental ideological differences are not easy to find. They definitely existed in the diaspora in the 1980s. Some of those who then espoused, for example, ‘socialist’ and monarchist views are still in the power structure today. However, our informants agree that these people accepted long ago that theirs was never going to become an influential viewpoint. Others in the top or middle ranks of the Front who were known to have unusual opinions have been among those who left the country during the phase in which the political settlement was consolidated. The exiled former Speaker of parliament, Joseph Sebarenzi – an early advocate of adversarial political competition – would be an example.

An important exception to this relative homogeneity of view, perhaps, is the current debate – which has been low-key for some time but has recently become formal within the RPF – about the question of the leadership transition in 2017 when Kagame can no longer be a presidential candidate under the current constitution. It appears that there are RPF as well as non-RPF advocates of a constitutional reform to remove term limits. It also seems that there is a likely RPF majority in favour of a highly institutionalised leadership transition under the current rules. As well as noting the existence of differences of view, we should observe that the issue is being broached in a very deliberate way well in advance of the moment of decision.

For some observers, the account we have just given is hardly credible. On this view, there are always power struggles everywhere within both democratic and non-democratic regimes, so it is only a matter of locating them. Whatever the institutional set-up, there are invariably factions and tendencies seeking to get the upper hand, and this applies to the military as well as to civilian politics. We have sat in meetings where it has been claimed that ‘well known facts’ point to the existence of suppressed power struggles. As with other secretive regimes subject to tight party disciplines, it is of course necessary for outsiders to make inferences about what is really going on using signs and signals. In Rwanda, it is suggested, the signs are clear enough.

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### 3.2 'Well known facts' on factions and tendencies

This is an important issue in 2013 because the claim that there are competing factions in the Rwandan power structure, especially within the military and security apparatuses, is influential. It underpins many current views about what has been happening in the controversial field of Rwanda-DRC relations. There are also some broader lessons that are worth learning about the pitfalls of the new Kremlinology of rumour-based guesswork in the Rwandan context.

Two topics have been given special attention by those elaborating the factions and tendencies theme in recent years. One is the origins, composition and trajectory of the four exiles who jointly penned the internet document known as the 'Rwanda Briefing' (Nyamwasa et al., 2010). The other has to do with the causes of the suspension, arrest and replacement of several senior military and security officials in 2011, and similar occurrences before and since.

In the first case, the supposition has been that the individuals in question became disaffected for political reasons, and that those reasons are captured more or less faithfully in the Rwanda Briefing document, whose central theme is about the dictatorship of Kagame. In this case, the past trajectories of the four individuals are relatively well known, and this confirms that the document is a marriage of convenience among four people with different views and very different reasons for breaking relations with Kigali.

Thus, the Rwanda Briefing episode does not suggest conventionally conceived 'power struggles'. In only one of the four cases, that of Theogène Rudasingwa, can one identify a significant ideological disagreement. This one, moreover, concerns an old debate in which the majority view within the RPF prevailed way back in the 1980s. This time round, it provides a smokescreen for something of a more personal nature. None of the other members of the Rwanda Briefing group was ever associated with a distinct political viewpoint before they went into voluntary exile. This contrasts with the above-noted existence of quite significant disagreements about policy within the cabinet and among the country's registered political parties.

The second hypothesis is that the suspensions and reshuffle that took place in 2011 generally indicate the presence of disaffected factions in the military and security apparatuses. This arises more or less entirely from rumour-based guesswork. It does not benefit from relevant insider knowledge, even on elementary aspects. Cross-checked inside information is what is needed before forming a view on matters such as this, and none of the commentators and repeaters of comments (at least those with whom we have spoken) has this.

On both topics, properly validated information does confirm something rather special about the way the Rwandan state system works. It confirms that standards of personal behaviour as well as military and political disciplines are taken unusually seriously and are rigorously enforced.

The mechanisms themselves are quite conventional. Within the government, the president is empowered, like presidents and prime ministers elsewhere, to fire his ministers for weak performance. In the army (and police), discipline is enforced by the usual structures at unit level or higher up, sometimes with the participation of the Commander-in-Chief depending on the gravity of a particular episode of indiscipline and the rank of the culprit. Within the RPF, there is a disciplinary committee that is mandated to deal with abuses and ensure that scandals of any kind are nipped in the bud before they bring the party into disrepute. What is more distinctive is the frequency with which some of these mechanisms are activated and for what kinds of reason.

The president does fire ministers and their permanent secretaries when they are seen to fail. Rwandans generally agree that sanctions are applied with remarkable impartiality, regardless of the offenders' status, rank or political affiliation. In a recent case, the Minister for East African Affairs, Monique Mukaruliza was sacked together with her Permanent Secretary for failure to manage well the preparations for a regional meeting hosted in Kigali. Mukaruliza is a member of the RPF's NEC and therefore a senior member of the party. She was replaced by a member of the PSD.

In the army and security services, similarly, no one is too senior or well-connected not to be called to account for behaviour considered inappropriate or reckless. That is the main lesson to be drawn from the 2011 suspensions. The event further illustrates that disciplines relating to the strictness of border security have been treated with exceptional seriousness. According to the official statement by the Rwandan military, the four officers who

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spent some months under investigation and house arrest during 2011-12 had had ‘questionable individual ties with civilians who had business interests in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo’ (Munyaneza, 2012). At the time, we were told that the gravity of the case in the government’s eyes arose from the fear that international partners could easily misunderstand the significance of any careless interactions across the DRC border.

What is common to all the well-known cases of the ‘disciplining’ of senior officers or security officials is that a recognised personal mistake or error of judgement of some kind was at issue. In the normal course of events, individuals are pulled up for infractions of these kinds and are subject to some sort of reprimand, demotion or suspension. In typical cases, these are temporary punishments, corrected with a resumption of normal service if not promotion to a higher position if and when it is clear that a lesson has been learned. Reshuffles often combine this aspect with the normal objective of making best use of available talent. As in serious military organisations around the world, promotions take into account issues of discipline but they are also about experience and ability. The net effect can easily give the impression of power struggles or factional infighting when actually nothing of the kind is involved.

The emphasis placed on discipline in the Rwandan armed forces and in the public service is often attributed by outsiders to Kagame’s particular leadership style. In the words of the recent *Rwanda Inc.* (Crisfulli and Redmond, 2013) he is more like a corporate leader than a political one. But this underestimates the shared commitment to maintaining disciplines that is a key corollary of the post-2000 political settlement. In fact, in some cases, such as that of former army General Kayumba Nyamwasa, the president has been criticised informally for not stepping in earlier and allowing problems to fester. In well-known instances, an individual has gone into exile rather than face disciplinary proceedings when a timely reprimand might have been sufficient to bring the person into line. Kagame is famously capable of anger but not usually without reason, according to our assessment of the interview testimony. He is not usually accused of either arbitrariness or vindictiveness.

These broad issues about alleged power struggles are important in part because they affect the plausibility of claims that have had major consequences during the debate about Rwanda’s role in relation to the M23 ‘mutiny’ of 2012. It was suggested in the UN Group of Experts’ report (Hege et al., 2012) that the Rwandan Minister of Defence, General James Kabarebe, masterminded encouragement and support to the M23 on behalf of GoR. It was later suggested by others (Shepherd, 2012) that a ‘hawkish’ military faction, of which presumably Kabarebe was a member, was actively engaged in supporting M23 in the face of general GoR reluctance to compromise its development efforts by being involved, and being seen to be involved, in adventures across the border. The hypothesis we are asked to entertain is that Kabarebe and others were involved in free-lance operations, using RDF troops and arms, and that Kagame and the government were politically unable to prevent this. The plausibility of this hypothesis is much reduced if, as we maintain, there has been no evidence of factional struggles in the Rwandan power structure in recent years, and that even minor departures from conventional military discipline are heavily penalised, especially if they involve diplomatically sensitive issues.

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## 4 Implications for international cooperation

We have been arguing that power dynamics in Rwanda need to be understood in the context of the political settlement. The political settlement or elite bargain that prevails in Rwanda today means that political differences over policy take a form that can make them hard for external observers to recognise, especially if they are accustomed to one of the more adversarial forms of multi-party politics. At the same time, Rwanda's political settlement is by no means a natural state of affairs for a very poor, still largely rural, developing country. While we think the underlying elite bargain is robust and more inclusive than many believe, maintaining it against the natural tendencies that North et al. (2009; 2013) and Khan (2010; 2012) associate with 'limited access orders' produces casualties of various kinds. Unless great care is taken, actors including development agencies that are external to the system can be misled into believing that the casualties are leaders of factions or tendencies whose viewpoints are somehow suppressed by the ordinary workings of the political system.

In 2013, the international cooperation community has some fence-mending to do in Rwanda. The way development assistance was suspended by several bilaterals, in the light of suggestions that the GoR was actively supporting the M23 mutineers in DRC, has set back the prospects for successful cooperation. As noted in the Introduction, assessment of Rwanda's involvement in DRC was outside the scope of the study. However, if our argument is correct, a key to understanding Rwandan political dynamics, including in relation to DRC, is an understanding of the prevailing political settlement. We suggest, indeed, that it would make sense for cooperation offices to think seriously about accepting the settlement as a working framework for their programming.

There are both pragmatic and principled reasons for following this course. The Paris/Accra/Busan version of the argument about the importance of country ownership of development efforts has some serious weaknesses, including neglect of the issue of political leadership (Booth, 2012) but the basic insight is correct. Cooperation with public, and even private and non-profit voluntary, organisations in Rwanda will be more effective if it makes some real concessions to the assumptions underlying the current elite bargain. That would allow cooperation to be geared to helping to correct errors and learn from mistakes in the operationalisation of fundamental concepts that are widely shared in the country. This is bound to work better than promoting models and solutions derived from very different political contexts for which there is little support in the country.

A further step to be considered is not just to acknowledge the settlement for practical purposes but actually to embrace it as embodying a worthwhile set of principles. As we have argued, the power-sharing model and the style of policy-making that the settlement permits have distinct advantages over the winner-takes-all clientelism that prevails in many countries of the sub-Saharan African region. It takes the heat out of elections, avoiding the harmful syndrome where the winners expect to get everything and the losers nothing, even if it is 'their turn to eat'. It avoids the limitation of policy thinking to short-term calculations and immediate political convenience that is a feature of governance based on multi-party competition almost everywhere else (Booth and Cammack, 2013). While the system is no doubt imperfect by the standards of the democratic systems of advanced industrial nations, it could be considered quite a satisfactory compromise between the country's democratic aspirations and the harsh realities of a structurally underdeveloped and still very divided society.

If this were to be accepted, there would be scope for democracy and rights cooperation to focus on the real issues that this form of democracy faces in moving to the next stage in its evolution. As we have noted, some



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actors within the system fear that permanently protecting parties' access to power more or less regardless of their electoral performance risks inducing a kind of political laziness. Parties that are not rewarded electorally for offering a distinct profile and new ideas may sooner or later lose the capacity to do so. We do not think this is an immediately important issue in view of the rather limited role that 'ideas' play in electoral contests elsewhere in low-income Africa. Nevertheless, the whole topic of the future shape of the party system would benefit from some structured thinking.

Regarding the smaller parties that are supported mainly by the Forum of Political Parties, our impression is that many find it difficult – as do parties throughout sub-Saharan Africa with the only partial exceptions of Ghana and South Africa – to become something more than vehicles for their leaders. Small parties that have found themselves denied legal recognition are in at least one well-known case the victim more of idiosyncratic personal leadership styles than of any determination on the part of the authorities to deny them political participation. We refer to the case of PS-Imberakuri when led by the eventually imprisoned Bernard Ntaganda. We make this judgment on the basis of testimony from interviewees who observed the process at close quarters, including people who would not normally be expected to agree on such matters. Similar issues also arise in the field of small-scale journalism – institutional quality is an under-rated problem. These are significant issues for the progress of Rwanda's special form of democracy in the medium and long term, alongside more prominent and immediately important topics such as the selection process for the RPF's presidential candidate in 2017.

We would not recommend significant international engagement with the very small parties. The belief that some of them are Trojan horses for donor efforts to promote a concept of 'political space' that is completely alien to the current elite bargain is already a source of difficulty for some of those organisations. The main obstacle at present to robust democracy support by donors is that everyone in government assumes that the international powers are only interested in prising open a political space in which genocide apologists can participate. Were it possible to quell that fear, the question of party programme development among the larger entities participating in government with the RPF would be a possible place to start. All actors envisage that Rwandan politics and the party system will need to evolve, but they want this evolution to be gradual and well managed. If undertaken in that spirit, international democracy cooperation could yet make a positive contribution.

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