

# Human rights, democracy and Western aid donors' double standards in Africa: The case of Rwanda<sup>i</sup>

Professor Dominique E. Uwizeyimana

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*Professor Dominique E. Uwizeyimana, School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy (SPMGPP), The University of Johannesburg,*  
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## ABSTRACT

*Dictatorships and pretend democracies characterised by gross human rights violations are not a new phenomenon on the African continent. Literature shows that most African people have never tested the democratic system being enjoyed, and sometimes taken for granted, by most citizens in many western countries. Using examples from some selected African countries, this article argues that some undemocratic regimes which are characterised by human rights violations managed to get and remain in power because of the support they received and continue to get from some major International Finance Institutions (IFIs) and bilateral donors. It also argues that while these institutions claim to use their financial aid to promote democracy and human rights in their rhetoric, they contradict themselves in practice by failing or cutting aid from local institutions that promote democracy or by supporting undemocratic and authoritarian governments despite overwhelming evidence proving that the governments being supported violates human rights of their citizens. While the author recognises that no country should be left to fend for itself in case of emergency or disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake or genocide, one of the main recommendations of this article is that of making human rights and competitive multi-party democracy a sine qua non-prerequisite for any form of aid. The author believes that doing so will create basic conditions for establishing, and possibly upholding, democratic rule in African countries which refuse to willingly establish democratic rule and respect human rights.*

**Keywords:** Development aid donors, human rights violation, IMF and World Bank, International Finance Institutions (IFIs), Rwanda's human rights records.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to [1] the donor community, comprising “governments, multilateral organisations and a large number of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) placed increasing emphasis ... on strengthening democracy in developing countries as part of their overall development assistance strategies” over the past three decades. However, while there are noticeable gains in this process, especially on the African continent, there are many flaws that call these western donors' practice into question[2]. The key research question is whether the major International Finance Institutions (IFIs) such as the IMF, the World Bank and their subsidiaries such as the African Development Bank (ADB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) recently established by the BRICS countries (“the Governments of the Federal Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa”)[3] as well as bilateral donors' countries, have lived up to their rhetoric of using their development aid (and other forms

of financial supports and loans) to improve democracy and human rights in aid/loan recipient countries.

Evidence points to the fact that these western countries and IFIs are continuing to support non-democratic and human rights abuser states in different and dissimilar parts of the world. However, the “Occam’s Razor theory” suggests that it is possible to consider a few selected cases such as Rwanda and still be able to find convincing evidence to illustrate such double-standard practices on the part of these development/aid donors.

## **2 THE OCCAM’S RAZOR THEORY**

The so-called “Occam’s razor principle” often stated in its original Latin form "*Pluralitas non est ponenda sine neccesitate*" and translated in modern languages such as English "*Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily/ Plurality should not be posited without necessity*"[4] and French "*Les entités ne doivent pas être multipliées sans nécessité*" is a useful tool in building models of social phenomena such as using aid to establish or maintain democracy and human rights in aid recipient countries, which is discussed here[5].

The “Occam’s razor” principle was “popularised by Sir William of Occam, the 14<sup>th</sup> century English Philosopher and, as the above definitions clearly show, suggest that “one should not increase the number of entities required to explain a phenomenon beyond what is necessary”[6]. In other words, according to [7] “one should strive for a high degree of parsimony in formulating answers to the complex questions” if these answers could be drawn from few prototypes. It could be argued that the purpose of using a sample (a small part or quantity intended to show what the whole population is like) in research is in line with Occam’s razor principle.

There are many reasons why a sample is better than using the whole population in research. Some of these examples are well summed up by Carroll who posits that “When dollars are tight, human resources are limited, and time is of the essence, then sampling is a wonderful option”[8]. This is because, as Carroll continues to argue “for most purposes we can obtain suitable accuracy quickly and inexpensively on information gleaned from a sample” carefully selected from the population[8]. If one can draw conclusive inferences of a given population based on a sample, then “it would be wasteful and foolish to use the entire population when a sample, drawn scientifically, could as well provide accuracy in representing your population of interest”[8]. Carroll’s argument that “assessing all individuals may be impossible, impractical, expensive or even inaccurate”[8] applies well in the analysis of double standards behind continued western donors’ funding of countries that violate the human rights of their people and refuse to wilfully establish democratic rule the African continent and in other parts of the world.

A review of classical literature shows that scholars have used Occam’s razor principle over many centuries and were able to come up with credible theories to explain social and scientific phenomena. A review of Hiroshi’s updates of Phil Gibbs’s original document entitled “*What is Occam’s Razor*” shows that “scientists such as Leibniz’s “*Principle of the Identity of Indiscernible*” as well as Sir Isaac Newton “a famous English physicist and mathematician who is widely recognised for being the key figure in the scientific revolution” due to his invention of the “*Laws of motion*” are said to “have either adopted or reinvented Occam’s Razor rule to justify their famous theories”[9]. Horoshi, citing Gibbs, goes as far as stating that “Newton often used the Occam’s Razor theory to respond to the critics of his theories”[4]. Gibbs’ observation is perhaps demonstrated in Newton’s famous quote “We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances”. According to [10]collection entitled “*The Physics and Relativity FAQ*” the Occam’s Razor principle is that:

“When trying to explain a complex phenomenon and you have two competing theories [one being complex and cumbersome and the other one being simple] but both make the same predictions, then the simpler one is the better”[11].

It is very important to point out from the onset that the application of the Occam’s Razor principle to demonstrate western aid donors and IFIs double standards and hypocrisy in their claim to uphold democracy and human rights in aid recipient countries which are discussed in this article no way suggests that there exist two or more similar or identical countries anywhere in the world. Scientific research has already shown beyond reasonable doubt that “being similar does not necessarily imply being identical in important ways”[12]. Only “clone and progenitors would likely be highly similar in physical and appearance”, but even their similarity “could only happen in peculiar ways”[12].

If one considers Beaudoin’s argument that lack of similarity “holds true even for monozygotic [identical] twins, between right and left fingers and can be anticipated also for clones”[13], then one will easily understand that there are no two similar countries in the world. With this kind of scientific evidence, one would argue that even if future research might be able to prove similarity between two natural or social phenomena or countries, Marcus Pembrey, emeritus professor of pediatric genetics at University College London’s argument that such “similarity between two things will not necessarily mean these things or people are identical”[14] would still hold true as far as elusive concepts such as human rights and democracy are concerned.

Countries and their political and socio-economic governance systems are not human beings or animals, and these aspects and context cannot be compared to clones or identical twins. However, while it is hard to find “similar or identical fingerprints from different fingers”[15], and it is even harder to find two countries that are identical or even similar on such elusive concepts such as democracy and human rights, one can still use the Occam’s Razor principle to come up with facts that prove the continued hypocrisy in the aid disbursement to African prototypes of non-democratic and human rights abusers such as Rwanda[16]. The following paragraphs attempt to find the link between democracy and development aid.

### **3 Democracy and Development Finance/Aid**

The term “aid” has been used extensively in the literature. However, despite its extensive use, literature seems to lack consensus on its meaning. Some call it aids while others call it assistance while others use both terms interchangeably[17]. According to [17] these terms collectively refer to “official grants and technical cooperation offered by foreign countries and multilateral actors” such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank or their subsidiaries such as the African Development Bank, to name but a few, to an “aid/assistance recipient country”. According to [18]“an aid or assistance is generally any form of aid provided by a rich foreign organisation or country to poor countries. Such aid may be provided for any reasons, including but not limited to “economic development, military security, disaster relief and anything between[19]. For the sake of consistency, the term “aid” will be used in this research.

In his analysis of the “*Limits of foreign aid on Malawi’s democratic consolidation*” Resnick distinguishes between two types of aid: namely ‘development aid’ and ‘democracy aid[20]. According to [21]development aid is about “financial and non-financial resources distributed by bilateral or multi-lateral donors to improve the socio-economic welfare of the people in aid recipient countries. Generally, development aid is provided by donors to foster economic growth in the recipient country. A close analysis of current and past literature shows that most people who attempted to define the concept of development aid “often disaggregate it into three categories: project-based lending, sector-wide approaches (SWAps) and general budget support[22].

Another distinctive feature of development aid is that donors often have no choice but to work closely with the incumbent government. On the other hand, donors often work with non-governmental organisations such as civil societies in democratic aid[23]. Such partnership between donors and the incumbent government in development aid has often become a bone of contention in the literature. Some think the donors are only using these governments to achieve their egotistic interests (or hidden agendas) instead of using it as a carrot on a stick to persuade aid recipients' regimes to abandon undemocratic systems and replace them with "social and economic transformation" based on good governance[24].

A further distinguishing characteristic of these types of aid is their origin. For example, "while development aid is mostly provided by international financial organisations such as the IMF, World Bank[25] and other bilateral donors, [26] argue that democratic aid may come from two major sources[26]. According to these authors, this kind of aid generally comes from different foundations. These include but are not limited to the German based "Friedrich-Nauman Stiftung, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung, Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung, and Hans-Seidel Stiftung)[27]. They also come from other international and multilateral actors such as "the US-based National Endowment for Democracy and the Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy[28], to name but a few. The European Union and the United States are also said to be "leading donors in terms of democratic aid. For example, by 2010, according to [29]"the European Union was the largest single funder of democracy promotion activities with over 1 billion USD in annual commitments.

However, when individual countries are compared to each other Germany with its multiple democratic aid donor organisations is the largest democratic aid donor in the European Union, "spending around €200 million in 2004" alone. Germany is followed by the United States which "provides over US\$ 850 in democracy aid annually. As stated above, democratic aid is not the focus of analysis in this paper, but development aid.

#### **4 Developmental Aid and Democracy**

Rakner, Rocha and Fritz argue that "democracy promotion became a key element of foreign policy and development assistance after the democratic transitions of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the ebbing of the Cold War". Three and half decades later (the 1980s to 2015), a review of the literature shows no consensus among researchers on the linkage between democracy and aid[30]. Some scholars such as Resnick argue that a "comparative analysis of literature on aid and democracy has more often resulted in contradictory findings rather than the consensus[31].

On the one hand, there is [32]who argue that democratic aid has had a major impact on the democratising process in aid recipient countries. These authors' view is supported by [33] who claims to have found a "statistically positive but really low" relationship between democratic aid and the democratisation status of the 52 African aid recipient countries whose data she analysed in 2012. One of Menard's major findings was that "only multilateral aid was sensibly beneficial and likely to favour democracy in aid recipient countries rather than "bilateral aid[34].

It is not clear whether Menard's sample of multilateral donors excluded non-democratic states such as China, but one would assume non-democratic aid donors have no grounds to demand aid recipient countries become democratic[2]. Why would a dictatorship and authoritarian regime demand another authoritarian regime to become democratic? [2]argument and to a certain extent Menard's are partly "best explained by the Latin idiom "*nemo dat quod non habet*" (simply put, you can't give what you don't have). However, "this does not stop those democratic countries to providing aid to non-democratic countries" without demanding them to become

democratic and the reasons behind this are given in the following paragraphs of this article. Therefore, it is not difficult to find evidence of “aid from democratic countries being used to support non-democratic agendas in aid-recipient countries. While one would not be surprised to see undemocratic states and IFIs (such as the IMF and the World Bank) funding other undemocratic states, it would simply constitute hypocrisy if the so-called democratic states are also found imitating what non-democratic aid donors are doing. This is where the biggest problem lies.

If one looks at other literature which analyses how the IMF and the World Bank as well as western countries have used their financial muscles to get almost all African countries to adopt privatisation in the early 1970s one could simply wonder, why they did not also do the same to enforce democracy and human rights in these countries at the same time. For example, in the 1980s, the IMF and World Bank made the privatisation of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) a *sine qua non* condition for developing countries to access loans and any other financial aid. Given African countries’ aid dependency, no country in the developing world could afford not to abide by the World Bank and IMF’s “conditionalities” for accessing financial loans and debt relief.

These conditionalities were part of the Public Sector Reforms commonly known in the literature as the New Public Management (NPM)[35]. The Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) are often viewed as the main vehicle through which the NPM principles were transported and expanded into most, if not all African countries. The approach of the NPM reforms was fully supported by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) like the IMF and World Bank (WB) and entailed “privatisation” of public services such as power, transport, telecommunications, and water and sanitation[36]. There has been grassroots resistance to the implementation of the SAPs but there is no known African country that did not push through privatisation. Some such as Bofo-Arthur argue that:

“Whether it is Rawlings (former President of Ghana between 1966 and 1968), Daniel Arap Moi (former President of Kenya) or Yoweri Museveni (President of Uganda since 29 January 1986 to this day, 2015), all any of these regimes had to demonstrate to earn credibility [from the IMF and WB] is the ability to push through anti-democratic, anti-labour and other anti-people policies[37].

If privatisation was successful because the IMF, the World Bank and western countries made them *sine qua non*-condition for non-democratic African countries to access financial loans and debt relief, then there is no doubt that these IFIs and western donor countries could use their financial muscles to establish democratic governments which respect the human rights of their people as they did to push through privatisation. Therefore, what the World Bank, UNDP and others who claim to pursue human rights and democracy in aid-recipient countries are lacking is the genuine will to go beyond their rhetoric[38].

### **5 IFIs and Western democracies talk democracy and human rights but do the opposite**

There are many reasons why western democratic states fund other democratic states and would encourage non-democratic states to also become democratic. The same reasons explain why non-democratic states also fund other non-democratic states. The Latin language has a well-known dictum that says “*Volatilia ad sibi similia conveniunt*” which simply means “those of similar taste congregate in groups” or “Birds of a feather flock together[39] and “*ibisa birasabirana*” in Kinyarwanda or that “*Oiseaux d'une plume volent ensemble*” in French. The French go even further to suggest that one can tell a lot about your personality or character by simply looking at the people you do business with or enjoy sharing your life with (“*dites-moi Qui est votre ami et je vous dirai qui vous êtes*”). That is to say only people or animals with similar interests and values should congregate “*qui se ressemble s'assemble*”. As the French put it:

*“l’homme est comme celui avec lequel il s’assied”*, that being the equivalent of the English proverb “Birds of feather flock together” (*“les oiseaux de la même plume volent ensemble.”*

No doubt the same sayings exist in many other languages. In terms of these sayings, one would not be surprised to find cooperation between countries such as China and North Korea and Uganda[40]. According to the US Department of State “The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) is a dictatorship under the absolute rule of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP)[41]. Kim IL Sung ruled the DPRK from its inception in 1948 until his death in July 1994. He was succeeded by his son Kim Jong Il who was also succeeded by his son Kim Jong-un as the supreme leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on 17 December 2011[41]

President Paul Kagame has ruled Rwanda since 1994 and President Yoweri Museveni, has ruled Uganda since 1986 and none of them is likely to leave power any time soon[2]. In global politics, North Korea, Rwanda and Uganda are said to have “poor human rights records [42]. But one would wonder what the similarity between the USA, UK, and France (the so-called western democracies) and such undemocratic countries such as Uganda, Belarus, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Pakistan, China, and North Korea to name but a few.

A review of the literature suggests that the western aid donors may preach the gospel of democracy and human rights but practice the one of non-democracy and deliberately ignore the human rights status of the aid recipient if it suits their interests. Therefore, studies looking at whether “corrupt governments receive less foreign aid” or whether less corrupt governments are rewarded for their good behaviour by the so-called western aid donors found no such link in the disbursement and allocation of aid. While “supporters argue that foreign aid can be used to reward good governments” on one hand and “critics of foreign aid programs argue that these funds often support corrupt governments and inefficient bureaucracies” on the other, studies such as the one conducted by [43] found the opposite to be true in both cases. As Alesina & Weder put it:

“There is no evidence that less corrupt governments receive more foreign aid and no evidence whatsoever that more corrupt governments are discriminated by foreign donors[43]. On the contrary, according to some measures of corruption, more corrupt governments receive more aid when compared to less corrupt governments. In addition, we could not find any evidence that an increase in foreign aid reduces corruption. In summary, the answer to the question “Do corrupt governments receive less foreign aid?” is a resounding no [43]

Alesina and Weder’s findings were confirmed by more recent studies such as the one conducted by Shah which also concluded that “foreign aid or development assistance, as Shah calls it, is often ... wasted on corrupt recipient governments despite any good intentions [at least rhetoric] from western donor countries. [43]findings are further in line with Kalyvitis and Vlachaki’s argument that “multilateral aid has, in fact, adverse effects on democracy in aid-recipient countries[2] Western multilateral aid is likely to have adverse effects on democracy in aid-recipient countries when the ruling elites allocate aid to their clientele networks at the expense of those who are perceived or suspected not to be loyal supporters of ruling parties. Thus, this diverse effect is the result of the fact that they use aid to buy voters, and depending on the type of aid being provided, they may even use aid to persecute the opposition leaders and their supporters.

For example, it is often alleged that [44], the former Zimbabwean President (1980-2018) was reported to use aid (food, farming equipment from China and Libya) to buy voters in the 2008 presidential elections[44]. An analysis of the pursuit of good governance in countries such as Mozambique, which was conducted by Manning and Malbrough found that “the IMF and World Bank, as well as some western donors, have used aid to strengthen individual dictatorship regimes, often at the expense of the local citizens[45]. It is also often alleged that France’s military aid to the former President

Juvenal Habyarimana's government (1973-1994) could have been used to carry out some of the atrocities that befell the Rwandan people in 1994[2]. It is also alleged that the British and US governments' financial support to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) war campaign against the Habyarimana government (1990-1994) could have been used to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Hutu population inside Rwanda and in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)[46]. The RPF under the chairmanship of General Paul Kagame in Rwanda is one such example of political parties that use foreign aid to prosecute political opponents and to hunt and kill political opponents both in Rwanda and in exile. According to [47] "For 25 years, from 1996 to 2021, perceived enemies of General Paul Kagame were murdered overseas[47]. As Humbara puts it "Kagame celebrates the deaths. In a reference to a failed assassination, of his former Chief of Staff General Kayumba Nyamwasa in 2010, General Paul Kagame said that his government never misses a target and that it is only a matter of time for his enemies to be assassinated wherever they are hiding. General Kagame's death list of Rwandans murdered overseas which Himbara argues "began in October 1996 with the assassination in Nairobi, Kenya, of Théoneste Lizinde, a former intelligence official, and Seth Sendashonga, assassinated in Nairobi Kenya in 1998, kept increasing over the years. The following can be added on Paul Kagame's death list: Theogene Turatsinze who went missing on 11 or 12 October 2012, in Maputo, Mozambique. Turatsinze's "body was found on the 15th, tied up and floating in the sea in Mozambique. Other victims on Kagame's death list include Seth Sendashonga murdered in Kenya in 1998; Charles Ingabire, a reporter murdered in Uganda in 2011; former intelligence chief Patrick Karegeya murdered in Michelangelo Hotel, Sandton, South Africa in 2014. Seif Bamporiki, a businessman, was assassinated in Cape Town, South Africa in February 2021. According to DEUTSCHE WELLE, international human rights groups have documented many opposition politicians, journalists, and activists who have been killed or made to disappear after criticizing Paul Kagame or his ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) party[47]. While it is impossible to list all of them here, the most prominent include the following:

[48], Kizito Mihigo, a singer and government critic, allegedly strangled while in police custody (2020), Anselme Mutuyimana, the assistant to Victoire Ingabire, former president of the opposition United Democratic Forces (FDU-Inkingi) party, was stabbed to death allegedly by Rwanda's secret services in the woods in 2019[49]. They also include "Jean Damascene Habarugira, an opposition politician who was found dead in a hospital after being called to a meeting with an officer responsible for local security in his area in 2017, Illuminee Iragena, allegedly kidnapped by Rwanda's security operatives has never been seen again since 2016), Andre Kagwa Rwisereka, the deputy chairman of Rwanda's Democratic Green Party allegedly murdered and partially beheaded by Rwanda's security operatives in Rwanda in 2010. Jean-Leonard Rugabage was shot dead in 2010 after he published an online article about the attempted murder of a former army chief, Lieutenant-General Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa who lived in exile in South Africa. The most recent political dissent to be caught in Paul Kagame's authoritarian net is Paul Rusesabagina, an international human rights activist, and the subject of Oscar-nominated film *Hotel Rwanda* portraying his life-saving actions of 1260 Tutsis during the Rwandan genocide in 1994[50].

Some of these crimes are well documented since "the 2010 UN report 'Report of the mapping exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003. Furthermore, it has been reported in the media and organisations such as the Human Rights Watch that:

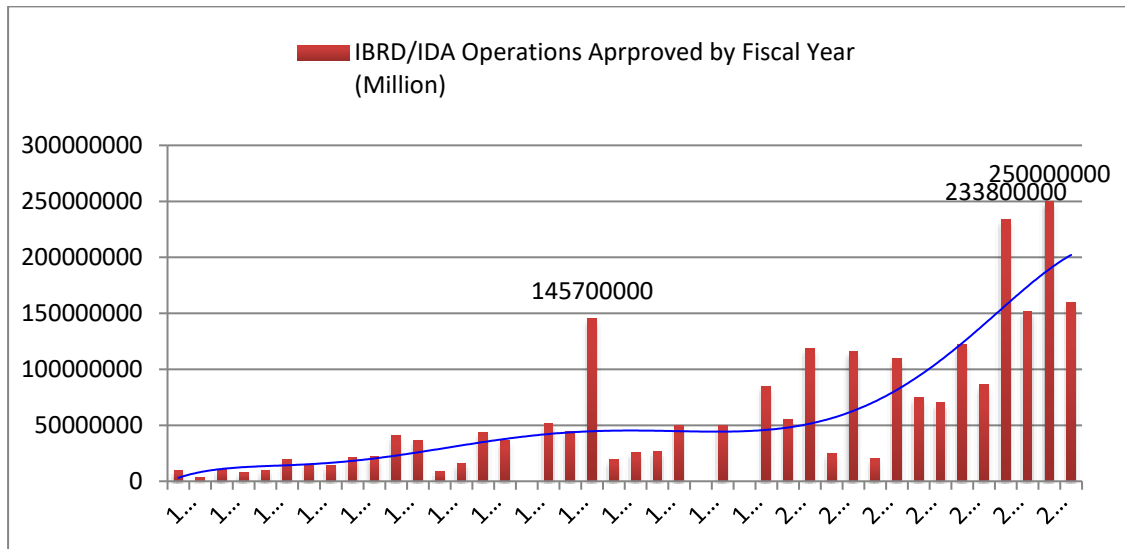
"In 2012–2013 the Rwandan military provided military support, including weapons, training, ammunition, intelligence and recruits, including children to the Congolese rebel group known as M23 in violation of the UN arms embargo on non-state actors in

eastern Congo[2]. Rwandan troops also crossed into Congo to assist the M23 in military operations, including a November 2012 offensive in which the M23

took control of the town of Goma[2]. Currently, Rwanda is accused by all its neighbours in the Great Lakes Region such as Uganda, DRC, Burundi etc... of supporting armed groups such as ADF, Red-Tabara, etc... operating from the DRC forests to destabilise their respective home countries[2].

Many serious war crimes “including the killing of civilians, summary executions, rape and forced recruitment were committed in eastern Congo during this Rwandan-backed M23, ADF, and Red-Tabara attacks[51]. Yet, despite continued reports about the Rwandan government’s human rights abuses both in Rwanda and foreign countries including western donors such as the UK, US. Etc..., the IMF/World Bank, their subsidiaries such as the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Agency (IDA), the IMF, World Bank and bilateral countries such as Germany, UK, U.S., Sweden, to name but a few have continued funding the Rwandan repressive regime as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Financial Support to Rwanda (Millions of US Dollars: 1970-2013)**



Source: World Bank data (2013), <http://www.worldbank.org/country/rwanda> (accessed: 14 August 2013) cited in Uwizeyimana (2014:8).

Despite the variation in the above graph, it proves beyond any doubt that the IMF has not stopped providing financial support to the government of Rwanda during Habyarimana’s 20 years administration (1973-1994) and [52] (1994 to date). It is often said that the Rwandan genocide’s “domestic and international impact has continued to shape Rwanda’s politics, development and foreign policy; it also still influences the ways the international community engage with Rwanda”. For example, “annual funding to USAID/Rwanda is said to have been increased from about \$48 million in 2004 to over \$128 million in 2016 According to Himbara “In the case of foreign aid per capita, Rwanda’s aid per capita is US\$100 against Burundi at US\$39; Kenya, US\$50; Tanzania, US\$45; and Uganda with an aid per capita of US\$[53]. Currently “Foreign aid as a percentage of central government expenditure in Rwanda stands at 70.9%. There are only two countries in the world with a higher percentage of donor support to central government expenditure than Rwanda. These are Malawi at 127.9% and Micronesia at 120.6%.[53]

The analysis of Figure 1 shows that “the financial aid fluctuated between 1994 and 2013”, but it has never stopped to date despite Paul Kagame and the RPF’s continued human rights abuse in Rwanda and abroad. Figure 1 shows that:



*“The highest financial supports (US\$233800000) were provided when the 2010 mapping report detailing gross human rights violations by the Rwandan army in Rwanda and the Republic Democratic Republic of the Congo was being released by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights”[54]. In addition, “(US\$ 250m) was released in 2012 at the same time when the reports of human rights violations by the Rwandan-backed M23 were being released by international Human Rights Organisations”[2].*

Such hypocrisy and double standards justify critics such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch who accuse western donors of bankrolling Paul Kagame, a well-known authoritarian who continue to violate human rights against Rwandan citizens inside and outside the country[55]. As a darling for donors, according to Provost, the Rwandan government “received \$113 million more than its neighboring countries such as Tanzania, Uganda and Burundi in 2011. Currently, foreign aid from western countries such as Britain and the USA among others, account for more than 60% of the Rwandan national budget[56] since 2021. The World Bank contributes over US\$ 100 million to the Rwandan general budget annually[57] and the rest is provided by other multilateral and bilateral donors.

## **6 Why do IMF/WB and western donors provide aid to non-democratic states?**

It is generally believed that the Rwandan rulers have been using the Rwandan genocide and the guilty conscience felt by western donors for having failed to intervene to stop the genocide. Thus, Rwanda managed to “exhaust its ‘genocide credit’ with donors” over the past 28 years and is not likely to stop in the foreseeable future. But Rwandan genocide does not explain why western IFIs and governments preach one thing on the right hand and practice the opposite on the left. It is not clear why western donors have given Paul Kagame the proverbial licence to kill, and practically provide him with the financial means to carry out these human rights violations for the past 27 years (from 1994 to date). The following are just some of the possible reasons western donors have been oblivious of the human rights violations in Rwanda in their disbursement of financial and other supports they provide to President Paul Kagame’s brutal regime.

### **6.1 Security and economic concerns**

A historic review in this article suggests that aid from democratic western countries has often been used to support non-democratic regimes and that such aid has often been used to promote or maintain authoritarian regimes in aid recipient countries such as Rwanda. The US and its western allies such as Germany, France, Belgium, the UK, Canada etc. have maintained strong bilateral and multilateral relationships with dictators such as the former Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko during his more than 30 years rule (24 November 1965 – 16 May 1997)[58]. Some of the other African dictators kept in power by western powers include Paul Biya (the president of Cameroon since 6 November 1982), Teodoro Obiang Nguema president of Equatorial Guinea since 1979, President Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), in power since 1986[59]. Each of these presidents rules an oil, natural and/or mineral resources-rich country, which are important for the socio-economic development of their western backers’ industries. Others that are not natural resources rich countries such as Rwanda are used to provide military personnel to fight insurgencies such Islamic State (IS) which threatens western interests across the globe.

Just after the September 11 terrorist attack, the USA openly supported former Pakistan president General Pervez Musharraf in return for his assistance to the US and the Coalition Forces’ “War on Terror” which targeted Al-Qaeda’s Taliban in

Afghanistan but also led to the overthrow and killing of Saddam Hussein in Iraq[60]. The recent USA and western allies' support to the Egyptian military junta after overthrowing Mohammed Morsi, the first democratically elected president is another example of western democracies' hypocrisy. The support of military regimes in Egypt should be seen in the context of western countries' efforts to protect Israel, a close USA ally in the Middle East. At the time of writing this article, Rwandan soldiers have been deployed in many African countries to protect French, UK, and U.S. economic interests in these countries. For example, it is the Rwandan military who were hired to capture the French energy giant Total's US\$20 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities in the Afungi peninsula in 2021[61]. Rwanda's 1,000-strong force deployed to protect the French energy Total Energy in Mozambique are likely to remain there permanently at the cost of the French Total Energy Company.

In addition, former President Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood was seen by western allies as being too friendly to Muslim organisations, such as Hamas (in Palestine) and Hezbollah which threaten Israel's and by extension the USA's security[62].

On the other hand, those countries that are seen by the west as less democratic (or largely authoritarian) such as the USS and China led block (formerly known as Communists) also never ceased to support anyone who helped them contain the USA and its allies[63]. For example, the USA and western allies are currently supporting the Free Syrian Army (Islamic rebels) who have been battling the Assad regime since 2011. But the Russian government is also supporting President Bashar Al-Assad's regime and making sure it does not run out of money and weaponry because of the international arms embargo and a host of other sanctions that the West has imposed on the Assad regime[64]. It must be said that the only common interest between the USA and the Islamic rebels (or the Free Syrian Army) is that both want to overthrow the Al-Assad government. Russia's support of the Assad regime is driven by its interests. For example, on the one hand, the USA is concerned with Israel's security because, according to one Jewish Virtual Library website "Syria is one of Israel's principal immediate military threats", but on the other hand "Russia had a naval base in the port city of Tartus on the Mediterranean coast of Syria" which it is protecting[65].

This explains why "each superpower and their allies continue to provide aid to these regimes which are friendly to their interests[66]. The question then would be what Rwanda must contribute in terms of Western donors' security interests?

### **6.1.1 Rwanda's role in the US, Western allies' security concerns**

Literature shows Rwanda is a very important USA partner not only in the Great Lakes Region but also in other countries and continents. The Rwandan Patriotic Front/Army (RPF/A) is often said to be "the Pentagon's proxy force[67]. For example, it is "the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF) which has been deployed and singlehandedly removed the former Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in 1996/7[2]. General Kabarebe, the current Rwandan Minister of Defence was also "the Chief Military Strategist in Laurent-Désiré Kabila's rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL) (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo or DRC) (1996-1997) and when the late President "Mr Laurent Kabila took power (1997), Mr James Kabarebe was named as Chief of Staff of the Congolese army" (1997-1998). There were also reports that "the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF) was sent to fight the American enemies in Iraq in March 2003 when most nations of the world felt there was no justification for war[68]. "Rwandan troops are also cited among the US/Africa peace-keeping missions in South Sudan[69].

## **6.2 Ability to squash anti-Bretton Woods system dissidents**

The problem with western countries and IFIs' attitudes is that it tends to incorrectly portray African people as people who would attack and tear down each other if there is no "Strong Man" to keep them at bay from each other's. Such a western attitude has contributed to maintaining dictatorship regimes on the African continent. Most importantly it also hides the fact that the African continent has some examples of democratic regimes such as those in South Africa, Botswana and Mauritius, which are as good as those in western countries[2]. Literature suggests that western donors would not mind the abuse of human rights of an autocratic regime if the dictator in power uses his power (including violence) to curtail his people and to create conditions that are conducive for the economy to grow. Two approaches to creating conditions that are conducive for the economy can be identified in the literature. The first of these approaches is the ability of the dictator to forcefully create what is often referred to as "political stability"[69]. Such political stability is characterised by the ruling party (or head of state) pushing through unpopular policies as was the case with the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the early 1980s. As [70] puts it, what the dictators must do to get and stay in power as long as they like is to agree with western donors and their IFIs' policies.

Such approval of the use of violence to thwart those seen as anti-western IFIs neoliberal policies were the hallmark of mass protests, also known as "IMF riots", like those that took place during the years 1997/98/99 in some Asian countries[71]. They are also the characteristic of later global economic crises/protests such as the ones in Seattle in 1999; Washington DC in 2000 and 2002; Quebec in 2001; and Genoa in 2001. Thus, it can be argued that when western donors and IFIs talk about "good governance they generally mean governance in the sense of neo-liberal reforms that are necessary for the advancement of western donors' "economic growth", not for the social or democratic development of local people. There is perhaps nowhere that lack of democracy and Human Rights concerns are so blatant than in the IMF and World Bank, as well as their subsidiary Financial Institutions' "Articles of Agreements" discussed in this article.

The above argument suggests there are many reasons why the aid donors preach non-support for democratic and Human Rights violating states but contradict what they say in public and their official policy documents in practice. Some, such as Brown argue that the more radical potential of fundamental reform threatens donors' interests the more these institutions will be likely to seek the accommodations of strong leaders who will be able to restore order, even if such restoration of order and the means to achieve it is void of progressive democratic means[72]. Thus, one reason that western donors prefer dictatorship over democratic regimes in some countries such as Rwanda is because of the fear that democratic regimes may lead to chaos.

As Brown puts it:

"Unlike mass demonstrations for political reform in Eastern Europe in 1989–90, which were by and large peaceful, African popular mobilisations ignite a fear of the mob and the sense that anything could happen[72].

However, this fear has nothing to do with the love of African people. Instead, western donors and domestic elites are concerned with potential violence, loss of life, populist or socialist policies, property damage, impaired production, interruptions of trade, increased refugee flows and most importantly, the fear of "missed debt repayments[2].

### 6.3 Economic considerations

The analysis of the literature shows that when the IMF and the World Bank talk about good governance, they do not mean democracy or the human rights of the citizens in aid recipient countries. They only mean economic governance. For example, especially in Africa, according to some authors such as Hope and Uwizeyimana and Maphunye, good governance “is usually associated with multi-lateral or donor agencies and closely related to ‘institutional reforms to strengthen political governanc[2]. Key among the mechanisms of good governance, as argued by Hope:

“The improvement of ...administrative and civil services...the strengthening of parliamentary oversight, not individuals...the promotion of inclusive, participatory and democratic decision-making...and the adoption of judicial reforms[2].

Therefore, good governance approaches should emphasize the assessment and improvement of the quality of the bureaucracy, bureaucratic institutions and processes using specific “governance indicators. Thus, while the IMF/World Bank and the western aid donors in general praise a president such as Paul Kagame for having presided over some economic growth in Rwanda, the same President is also said to have presided over the worst crack-downs on all the basic freedoms and violated the human rights of his people over the past two decades[2]. This situation may lead one to ask: whose economic growth did Kagame grow if it is not for the benefit of his people? Why should the Rwandan people trade their basic human rights for some sort of economic growth? These questions led some such as Brown to argue that “the west often fail to understand the cries of the people in developing countries and often these donors tend to express satisfaction with elections that are not free and fair simply because they expect very little of African democracies[30]. Western donors’ ‘low expectation’ is often believed to be driven by their biased and incorrect thinking that people living in developing countries, especially in Africa, should just stop complaining about the oppressive leaders because their country’s economy is growing. This western attitude has led to a situation whereby, “bilateral donors knowingly endorse severely flawed elections[8], turn a blind eye on human rights violation and even, as is the case with Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister who now serves as President Kagame’s advisor and Bill Clinton, the former US President publicly supports President Kagame, going as far as calling him a visionary leader. [73] cites Stephen Rapp, the leader of the US Office of Global Criminal Justice, who says that:

“The Rwandan leadership may be open to charges of aiding and abetting crimes against humanity in a neighbouring country – actions similar to those for which the former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, was jailed for 50 years by an international court in May 2012[73].

It could also be said that through such support, these western leaders and IFIs are also actively participating and abetting human rights abuse practices, not only in Rwanda but also in the neighbouring countries. Otherwise, how could a country whose annual budget is over 50% funded by western donors, continue to abuse the human rights of its citizens and still receive aid? The above analysis sheds a bit of light on the reasons the western donors, bilateral donors as well as the IMF, the World Bank as well as their subsidiaries across the globe practice such hypocrisy, but unlike bilateral donors who might provide support, sometimes clandestinely the IMF and World Bank, as well as their subsidiaries, have policies to enforce such practices.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis in this article, it could be concluded that there is no link between political conditionality and political liberalisation or human rights of aid recipient countries. Western countries seem to be very much concerned by economic

and security interests at the expense of the human rights of people and the democracy of the aid recipient countries. Few if any western donors consider the democratic and human rights violation status of non-democratic aid recipient countries to protect and advance their security, economic and political interests. The IMF, World Bank, the African Development Bank and all their subsidiaries' Articles of Agreements specifically prohibit their employees from basing their decision for lending on "anything other than purely economic factors". The IMF/World Bank and their subsidiaries as well as their staff have abdicated their human rights and democracy responsibility by claiming that they are too political, and not the responsibility of the IMF/World Bank or their subsidiaries.

The above analysis also shows that the only thing dictators have to do to remain in power and to receive uninterrupted funding and aid from western bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as IMF and WB, is to initiate some political liberalisation (limited to a few multiparty elections), but others also managed to keep western aid donors happy by making themselves "key role players in the fight against terrorism". Doing so was and is still enough reason why countries such as Rwanda's and others' lack of political and democratic freedom, and abuse of human rights has been and is still [not necessarily tolerated] generally overlooked by western donors. The fact is that these so-called champions and promoters of democracy say one thing in public but do the contrary in practice, though their funding and documents suggest there is a link between the so-called Bretton Woods' institutions funding principles and the strategic objectives of western donors. These funding policies need to change if the IFIs want to be genuine about their rhetoric about promoting good governance, human rights and democracy, in aid recipient countries.

Finally, as discussed in this article, while Rwanda was used as a prototype of analysis it is one of many examples of non-democratic countries which maintain a good relationship with western donors despite its poor human rights records and lack of multi-party competitive democracy. Few if any western donors and World Bank/IMF consider Rwanda's lack of democracy and human rights records in their disbursement of aid. This article posits that multi-donors' agencies or countries have failed to use the aid they provide to several aid recipient countries to force them to become democratic.

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