

The politics of policymaking in Rwanda: adaptation and reform in agriculture, energy, and education

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Abstract

The article links policy adaptation in Rwanda to the wider phenomenon of authoritarian persistence. We analyse political decision-making and implementation in a variety of policy domains (agriculture, energy, and education) to argue that the reality of governance in Rwanda requires more nuance than what is commonly portrayed in the literature. Hovering through the past decade, we first reflect upon how the Rwandan government's ambitions have been translated into concrete policies, and how these policies have evolved throughout time as policymakers have had to deal with evidence on negative policy impact. Finally, we discuss the conditions for policy adaptation, analysing whether, when, how, and from whom criticism is taken on board. We show how policy adaptation is frequent in Rwanda, despite the context of a tightly managed political space. And yet responding to policy problems is not institutionalised and is inherently fragile in an authoritarian regime, leading to the question of how sustainable the country's trajectory can be over the longer term.

Keywords: Policy adaptation; Learning; Rwanda; Energy sector; Land and agriculture; Education sector; Autocratic persistence

When it comes to theorizing policymaking and implementation in Rwanda, the literature reveals a striking divergence. On one hand, it points to the remarkably high capacity of the state to implement ambitious policies in pursuit of the ruling elite's developmental vision. Many studies have outlined the top-down nature of policymaking, implemented by an effective state machinery that is able to exercise a tight monitoring and control of the

population, even in the most remote areas of the country.¹ This is usually explained by the concentration of power in the hands of the ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), that took power soon after the 1994 genocide. The literature holds that the RPF's dominance over the political opposition and civil society, along with its autonomy from societal forces, give the party unobstructed freedom and power to implement its policy agenda.² Furthermore, the regime's ideology is frequently described as 'high modernist' and 'dominant developmental', with bureaucrats focussed on their developmental mission from the top downwards, assuming superior knowledge in comparison to local populations.³ At the same time, some scholars have questioned the omnipotence of the Rwandan state apparatus, suggesting that governance is marked by a subtle interaction between processes of domination and resistance.⁴

To date, however, the scholarship on Rwanda has focused less upon the extent to and the manner in which policy weaknesses have been tackled by the government. When stressing the top-down character of the country's governance, research has rather underlined the tendency of Rwandan policymakers to ignore local realities or dissonant evidence.⁵ It has also shed light on how institutional learning can be impeded by the ideological inconsistency of the Rwandan developmental project that combines a neoliberal approach with state-led developmentalism.⁶ Some scholarship also argued that the learning capacity of the state is not homogenous and might be in fact overestimated.⁷ Finally, scholars have illustrated how governance is characterised by a target-driven culture that pushes to a quantification of bureaucratic action and limits 'possibilities for error correction and policy learning'.⁸ All these factors can arguably converge into rigid policymaking that is unable to respond to societal dynamics.

Yet, some authors have suggested that the Rwandan state does in fact display more capacity for adaptation than some give it credit for. Booth and Golooba-Mutebi for instance – taking the example of the agriculture and horticulture sectors – contend that the regime 'is distinguished by a capacity for learning from errors'.⁹ They characterise the Rwandan political settlement as 'enabling a policy approach that is problem-driven, iterative and learning-oriented, yielding, in due course, better policies for economic and social transformation'.¹⁰ Case studies have supported these claims by highlighting the frequency of reforms to address challenges as soon as they have arisen in different sectors, from social protection to public sector administration.¹¹ Also in the justice sector, there is evidence that points to the complex ways in which citizens and authorities interact in government-initiated processes such as gacaca and how these interactions reshape overall policies.¹² Overall, these

sectoral studies do point to some government's capacity to recognise failure and adjust policies rapidly. At the same time, the literature has mainly treated the topic incidentally, through sector-specific works, offering little systematic understanding of patterns of policy change across the state.

This growing discussion on whether the Rwandan administration, despite its rigid and top-down character, can learn and adapt, is crucial in many respects. First, it directly feeds into the expanding literature on the adaptive capacity of authoritarian regimes.¹³ In spite of internal challenges and sometimes international pressure, many authoritarian regimes manage to survive and even thrive for long periods. We can consider, for example, the ability of Chinese authorities to navigate through tremendous societal changes over the past decades,¹⁴ or the capacity of many Arab regimes to circumvent popular contestation in the aftermath of the so-called 'Arab Springs'.¹⁵ Much of the literature has attempted to understand autocratic persistence while focusing its analyses on regime type¹⁶ or the 'performance-persistence nexus'.¹⁷ Gerschewski has reflected on how authoritarian regimes base their survival upon three pillars of internal stability (repression, co-optation, legitimization)¹⁸ while Maerz further fine-tuned these pillars by identifying two declinations for each and taking a closer look at their complementarity and their interplay.¹⁹ Sá and Sanches have pointed to how authoritarian regimes employ two-level strategies, combining both domestic and international factors.²⁰ Building on Rwanda's case alongside several others, Dukalskis has argued that authoritarian regimes have made 'the world safe for dictatorship' by successfully managing their image.²¹

Much less attention has been devoted to understanding the learning capacity of an autocratic regime where meaningful civic participation is severely constrained. When such 'learning' has come under scrutiny, analyses mostly focus on how 'authoritarian regimes adopt survival strategies based upon the prior successes and failures of *other* governments'.²² The literature on how autocratic regimes learn through their own checks-and-balances – embedded within their policymaking processes – is scant, with one of the few exceptions being Huang's and Liu's analysis of adaptative governance of Chinese authorities in the field of energy transition.²³ On Rwanda, little exists beyond the few sectoral studies already mentioned that tackle learning almost incidentally.

A second reason why a focus upon the adaptive capacity of the Rwandan governance model is important speaks to the sustainability of the country's development trajectory in the long run. Policy performance – that is 'the degree to which desired goals are achieved through political action'²⁴ – has been found to matter for regime persistence.²⁵ But more importantly, it is key to long-term societal stability and peace.²⁶

This article contributes to fill these gaps by opening the back box of adaptation in Rwanda. In doing so, it reconciles the two strands of the literature on the country, demonstrating how the state can be both rigid and adaptive, depending on a variety of developmental and political factors. The article also helps to move away from the normative debate on the positive or negative consequences of the country's developmental policies by asking the more fundamental question of whether the regime can adapt. We define adaptation as the process of taking into account new empirical evidence and altering the policy course accordingly. Consequently, all policy changes are not policy adaptation. As demonstrated below, change can happen but not driven by evolving circumstances and emerging issues to be solved. To explore these aspects, the article adopts a cross-sectoral analysis of policy changes spanning over two decades. It focuses on agriculture, energy, and education sectors because (1) they each play a crucial yet different role (respectively economic, infrastructural and social) in the country's overall development; (2) they have concentrated significant governmental resources ;and (3) they have each been subject to governmental flagship policies that this article analyses: the promotion of commercial agriculture, the building of electricity production capacity, and the change in the language of instruction in schools. Our analysis draws from extensive data collection by the authors spanning more than a decade. Collectively, the authors combine findings from qualitative interviews and participant observation with authorities, donors, actors from civil society, and ordinary citizens. Research covers all five provinces, and spreads over a period ranging from 2004 to 2022. Whereas the authors adopted a sectoral approach in their analysis of Rwandan policies, this article brings their sectoral findings in conversation with one another, therefore offering a broader vision about Rwanda's policymaking and adaptation.

The first section of the article gives an overview of the evolutions in policymaking in the agriculture, energy and education sectors respectively, surveying the contexts in which core policy decisions have been taken, their effects, and the adaptations that were (or were not) made by policymakers over time. The second section leverages sectoral comparison and analyses the broader conditions in which change and adaptation do (or do not) happen in Rwanda.

Policy adoption and adaptation in Rwanda

Since taking power at the turn of the century, the RPF-led government's approach to development has been encapsulated in a strategic planning document called Vision 2020.²⁷ It was recently updated and replaced by Vision 2050.²⁸ Both documents place a strong

emphasis on improved living conditions for all Rwandans across a wide range of sectors. This section examines three of the country's most important sectors to the lives and livelihoods of ordinary Rwandans: agriculture, energy, and education. Within each sector, it focuses on how policy was shaped over time, and on the conditions under which adaptation did or did not occur.

Agrarian and land policies

(i) Policies

After the 1994 genocide, initial development policies paid little attention to the agricultural and land sectors. In fact, the first Rwandan Poverty Reduction Strategy formulated the ambition 'to leap-frog the stage of industrialisation and transform [Rwanda's] subsistence economy into a service-sector driven, high value-added information and knowledge-based economy that can compete on the global market'.²⁹

This changed towards the mid-2000s, when the Rwandan government realized that, with over 85% of its active population embedded within the primary sector, the latter would be key in any scenario of national development and state-building. A first major policy intervention focused upon the land sector. The 2005 land law provided for the registration of all landholdings and the regulation of all land transactions through formal legal procedures. This law intended to tackle the problem of land fragmentation by prohibiting the division of land parcels below one hectare.³⁰ Moreover, by securing official land titles, the government assumed that a market-led process would transfer land in the hands of the most 'efficient' agricultural entrepreneurs.

From there, the agrarian reform – implemented as from 2008 in a top-down way – aimed for a professionalization of the agrarian sector. Its focus again highlighted the importance of efficiency improvement and market-orientation.³¹ Interventions have focused upon three main aspects: (1) the adoption of monocropping and improved production techniques (through the use of fertilizers and improved seeds); (2) the push towards market-oriented crop choices in order to enhance commercialization and move beyond subsistence agriculture; and (3) the alignment of intermediary actors' interventions and strategies (local administrations, civil society organizations and cooperatives) to national priorities by rendering them accountable through performance contracts. Overall, the Rwandan government has embraced a neoliberal view of agrarian development – pushed forward by major international donors, such as the World Bank – aiming for the promotion of modernised farming systems through a 'New Green Revolution for Sub-Saharan Africa'.³²

Moreover, authorities have strongly involved in the pursuit of this agenda, taking a very active role in coordinating the modalities through which market-oriented production is organised.

(ii) Effects

With over ten years of nation-wide implementation of Green Revolution policies, results are mitigated. On average, yields of priority crops have increased. However, Desiere et alii show that – despite reports of FAO indicating a 60 per cent yield increase by the mid-2010s – other datasets point towards more modest gains.³³ Since then, frequent accounts of crop failure came to the surface, with periods of food insufficiency at the regional level³⁴ and a persistent situation of chronic food insecurity.³⁵ Furthermore, an increasing amount of evidence has pinpointed two major shortcomings in the field.

A first strand of literature has questioned the socio-economic viability of Green Revolution methods, highlighting how smallholder farmers are comparatively disadvantaged when being forced to adopt ‘modern’ productivity-enhancing production techniques that imply risks beyond the scope of what farmers can cover. Moreover, smallholders profit less from being inserted into ‘competitive’ agricultural markets as they lack the necessary financial buffer and information that entrepreneurial farmers have. Furthermore, land concentration in the hands of fewer farmers, and the use of more capital-intensive production techniques result into a shrinking labour market for low-skilled rural labour force, while employment opportunities in off-farm markets are still scarce.³⁶

A second strand of literature has focused upon the environmental fallouts of Green Revolution techniques, particularly focusing on the intensive use of chemical fertilizers and the blind adoption of externally designed ‘improved’ seeds. The adoption of these techniques, aiming for homogeneous productivity-enhancing solutions at the regional level, have taken little account of the widely diverse soil types of Rwanda’s rural sites, and have often contributed to soil erosion. Moreover, one-size-fits-all approaches are not able to cope with the increasing variety in climatic and agro-ecological conditions (increasing soil temperatures, higher rain variability, increasing erosion) as a result of climate change.³⁷

(iii) Conditions for adaptation

In the first few years, criticisms around agricultural modernisation policies were mainly raised by a limited group of (mostly) foreign scholars. Certain Rwandan policymakers and development brokers – including within key ministries implementing the agrarian

modernization policies – were aware of the downsides of the new Green Revolution model. However, their criticism remained beneath the surface. At decentralized levels, some authorities showed flexibility in the implementation of the rigid policy of imposed crops and production techniques. Yet, pragmatic solutions depended on the willingness of local authorities. In some locations, they were implemented through a relatively implicit agreement between farmers and local representatives of power (cell executives and agronomists). In other cases, there was no flexibility whatsoever, which led to dramatic crop failure, food shortage and malnutrition. At the same time, the negative externalities of agrarian policies were not evenly distributed; with smallholder farmers bearing the highest burden.³⁸

Until 2015, the official discourse continued to proclaim ‘Rwanda’s agricultural revolution [...] as a model for other nations to unlock policy and market constraints’.³⁹ However, towards 2016, the deleterious consequences of the agrarian policies became increasingly conspicuous: farmers stopped cultivating altogether at various locations in different regions, a very rare phenomenon in the land-scarce and overpopulated context of Rwanda, because of disappointing harvests in previous years, or because land had become so degraded that it was no longer worth the effort. Farmers indicated that degradation was the result of excessive and wrong use of chemical fertilisers or of erroneously applied terracing techniques.⁴⁰

Whereas within the lower Rwandan administration the debate around malnutrition and the negative impact of some policy prescriptions was already perceptible in 2015, it is only when donors (particularly the World Bank, UNICEF and the World Food Programme) got involved that the issue reached the top layers of the RPF and the presidential level. Eventually, it was the prospect of the 2017 presidential elections that led to a breach in the official discourse of the Rwandan Green Revolution as a success story. With various zones affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, the ruling party leadership gave the order to turn the table, fearing elections in a time of food shortage. The local administration and the agronomists started to loosen the strings, reapproving the cultivation of traditionally important crops such as sweet potatoes and sorghum. In addition, authorities were urged to be more responsive to farmers’ concerns. These decisions decreased the pressure upon farmers’ food systems. Multicropping reappeared, although initially limited to prescribed crop types. After Kagame’s re-election, this evolution continued and the discussion on rural livelihood widened. A previously ignored debate on disappointing poverty evolutions – a phenomenon directly linked with the performance of the agricultural sector – became a hot topic within Rwandan policy circles – although mostly discussed behind the scenes. President Kagame

himself publicly raised the issue of high child malnutrition rates during the 2018 national leadership retreat (38% of under-five children being stunted according to official statistics). He ordered his administration to urgently fix the worrisome issues of malnutrition, insisting that it was inconceivable that a country with a far-reaching reputation of outstanding performance could not cope with such a situation.⁴¹ All stakeholders in the agriculture sector (donors, UN system agencies, farmers' organizations, local administration officials,...) were mobilised to provide food assistance to the most vulnerable and to support farmers for the cultivation of short-term, yet nutritious crops, such as vegetables and fruits.

The fact that Kagame himself had placed malnutrition on the agenda cleared the space for a variety of actors to reflect more openly upon the flaws of the agrarian development model. In response to Kagame's discourse at the 2018 national leadership retreat, Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente stated that central authorities did not dispose of reliable disaggregated performance measurements because of 'flawed data' and highlighted how this impeded efficient governance. This was confirmed by the Minister of Local Government Anastase Shyaka in the national press. From there, the system of district *Imihigo* performance contracts was put on hold or amended, especially in the agriculture sector, with new targets aimed mainly at reversing the worsening situation of hunger and malnutrition in the very short term.

The national Rwandan media have also given increased attention to problems in relation to food security, crop failure and food price inflation. Civil society organizations took up a more active role in critical reflections around policy shortcomings. Whereas in the past, 'the [...] regime's preferred *modus operandi* for civil society [had been] service delivery and gap filling',⁴² several organizations now adopted more openly critical approaches.⁴³ In addition, local populations have seized the opportunity to discuss issues of malnutrition and poverty and to widen space for contestation. Initially, critical discourses strategically questioned the 'too rigid' interpretation of 'well-intentioned' national prescriptions by local authorities. But eventually, those forms of often localized contestation culminated into a more fundamental questioning of certain principles that had been key in the Green Revolution policy such as land consolidation and monocropping.⁴⁴

Interestingly, these forms of critical reflection and contestation have been very effective in bringing about a fundamental change in the rural landscape. The phenomenon of non-cultivated land has become much scarcer. Multicropping has increasingly re-emerged as a standard rather an exception. At quite some locations, farmers have returned to old practices of complex multicropping with a higher diversity of crop and seed types⁴⁵. Previously banned

crops such as sorghum and sweet potatoes have reappeared.⁴⁶ During interviews in January 2020, two key informants mentioned that ‘food security is winning over money-making’; while ‘monoculture remains mandatory on state and cooperative-owned land’, farmers now have more freedom elsewhere. Hence, if logics and patterns of ‘modern agriculture’ persist in the discourses of policymakers, they are losing relevance on the ground. Civil society organisations operating at the intermediate level between individual farmers and government agencies, also confirmed having more space to criticise local authorities’ decisions, and to plead for adaptations of policies into directions that better meet local farmers’ needs and preferences⁴⁷.

However, these changes do not mean that all types of criticism are now possible. First, as one of our key respondents said: ‘We often think about how concealing our criticism, how to ‘wrap it’ in finding ‘half-truths’ that touch upon the sensitive issue without going into direct confrontation with authorities’;⁴⁸ *Umukuru ntiyanga umukebura yanga umutuka*’ (‘the authorities do not refuse criticism, they are against blame/insult’ – our translation]⁴⁹. Yet, these contortions to make criticism acceptable for authorities often impede addressing the core of the problem. Second, the local authorities are often blamed for the excesses of the system. The turnover of officials in lower levels of the Rwandan administration is high; either because they are removed from their position, or because they quit.⁵⁰ Finally, discussions often concentrate on technical elements, reducing the discussion to the suitability of certain production techniques or seeds. Debates rarely touch upon sensitive political questions, such as the skewed power relations between farmers and other stakeholders, either public or private (for instance business companies) within the agrarian sector at large; or the problematic positionality of well-connected elites. Many among the latter still see local populations as lacking capacity and/or discernment to autonomously organize their lives and livelihoods. There are also no fundamental debates about the rights of farmers to regain autonomy in decision-making about their farming systems in a structural way; or about the lack of alternative livelihood options for a growing group of low-skilled labour force.

Overall, we see that three aspects have been key in the process towards adaptation: (1) the physical signs of policy flaws when uncultivated land, crop failure, and food shortages became increasingly apparent; (2) the emergence of ‘statistical proof’ of problems in indicators that are often mentioned and referred to by international donors; and (3) the key momentum provided by the president’s discourse, legitimising an open debate around malnutrition.

Energy⁵¹

(i) Policies

After the genocide, the lack of electricity was identified by the government as ‘a limiting factor to development’.⁵² During hours of peak demand, blackouts could affect 50% of the electricity network.⁵³ However, to the government’s frustration, Rwanda’s status as a heavily indebted poor country (HIPC) restricted its capacity to invest in energy infrastructure as a large proportion of the budget was earmarked to poverty-reduction activities. The cancelling of 1.9 billion USD of Rwanda’s debt in 2005-2006 gave the government greater leeway to prioritize investment in electricity generation.

Alongside growing fiscal room, pressure to increase electricity production capacity redoubled. Shortages of electricity became again very acute from 2010 on, as Rwanda’s rapid reconstruction and economic growth increased energy demand. In parallel, electricity became clearly linked with investment attraction in governmental discourse. For example, Vision 2020, in its revised version of 2012, stated that energy investment was required ‘to meet the targets for increased manufacturing and industrialization’.⁵⁴

As a result, pressure on the civil service mounted. Whereas the 2007 Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS-1) had set the production capacity target to 150 MW by 2012, the 2011 Energy Strategy aimed for a target of 1000 MW by 2017. This colossal target was included in governmental planning because it featured in the RPF manifesto for the 2010 presidential election.⁵⁵ It was not based on any realistic demand forecast and contrasted with the 2008 energy policy that had estimated electricity demand to reach around 360 MW by 2020. Nevertheless, the 1000 MW target was imposed by RPF senior members as a statement about the country’s ambition.

(ii) Effects

The commitment to quickly increase electricity generation capacity had both positive and negative consequences. It translated into a spectacular increase in electricity production, from 43 MW in 2003 to around 219 MW in 2017, projected to reach 700MW by 2035.⁵⁶ This generation capacity has greatly reduced blackouts and has allowed the industry to access reliable energy. Furthermore, it enabled the Rwandan government to engage in an ambitious electrification of the countryside through the Electricity Access Roll-Out Program (EARP), qualified as ‘one of the largest ongoing national electrification programs in the world’.⁵⁷

However, this rapid increase in energy generation has also created fundamental problems. Rwanda's generation capacity is currently far exceeding expected demand: it is estimated that in 2021, it will be twice what the country needs.⁵⁸ This situation puts a heavy fiscal burden on the state as the government is strongly subsidizing electricity. Furthermore, the government has heavily relied on Public Private Partnerships (PPP). Most of the electricity is bought at a fixed price from the private sector through Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), usually signed for 20 years. These PPAs have a 'take or pay' clause, meaning that 90% of non-consumed electricity must be paid. This is especially problematic in a situation of oversupply. PPAs, concluded in dollars, expose the government to foreign exchange risks. As a result, the World Bank estimated in 2017 that, by 2020, 4% of GDP might be needed to sustain the electricity sector.⁵⁹

In addition, the increase in energy production has not made electricity cheaper for the population. Residential tariffs have doubled between 2004 and 2018, putting Rwanda on the second last place in a list of 39 Sub-Saharan African countries measuring electricity affordability for households.⁶⁰ Despite the fact that in 2016 the state subsidized electricity to reduce tariffs to only 63% of 'real' electricity costs, this still left tariffs far higher than in other East African countries, and the 12th highest on the continent.⁶¹

This situation directly results from the pressure exerted by RPF and the presidency on the Rwandan administration to deliver on extremely ambitious production objectives. The targets incentivised officials to accept any investment to increase electricity production capacity, even when projects were not part of a competitive tendering process. For example, the Rwamagana solar plant, constructed in 2015 was built in record time. Yet this came at the expense of the negotiation of the PPA, which, as recognized by a government negotiator, was paid too high to allow the project to quickly start.⁶² In addition, the plant is only able to deliver electricity during daytime, when Rwanda needs it less. Another example is the \$45 million Gishoma peat-fired power station. Construction started in 2010; but it was put in service only in 2017 – after much delay – and ceased to function immediately. The haste to build more production capacity resulted in the overlooking of obvious issues such as the lack of peat in the adjacent bog or the improper supply of water by the pressured public and private-public companies involved in the project.⁶³

Overall, the blind rush to reach targets reduced the space for the bureaucracy to use its expertise in assessing projects and undermined its negotiation capacity with the private sector, locking the country into high-energy costs for at least the next two decades.

(iii) Conditions for adaptation

Initial criticism against the unrealistic 1000 MW target, and the resulting distortion in policy implementation, was raised by a few major donors and consultants. However, it was not audible by the RPF or the presidency. Donors and consultants reported being regularly rebuffed if they expressed reserves about the electricity strategy.⁶⁴ Given that the 1000 MW target was part of the 2010 presidential election manifesto, it was particularly difficult to challenge the number openly. In fact, the party played a key role in pressuring the bureaucracy to pursue this objective without adapting it, for example through pre-cabinet meetings where RPF commissioners would ensure that top officials will not challenge the targets.⁶⁵ The president also regularly vented his frustration about the slow progress towards increased electricity generation capacity at National Leadership retreats, thus adding to the pressure to stick to the target.⁶⁶ He replaced the Energy minister and the heads of the Energy Utility three times between 2009 and 2014.

A shift occurred from 2013 onwards, when President Kagame suddenly stated that if research indicated the number should be lower, it should be changed. As a result, the target was quickly revised to 563 MW, a figure that did not seem to respond to any proper forecasting either. Yet, many bureaucrats and donors continued to privately regard this target as unrealistic⁶⁷ while, after the revision, the pressure to reach this still very ambitious number did not abate.

However, the space for adaptation had been opened. In 2016, the Rwandan parliament passed a law forbidding unsolicited bids and instituting a competitive selection process of investors in an attempt to improve the quality of PPPs.⁶⁸ And by 2018, finally, the Energy Sector Strategic Plan revised the electricity generation capacity to a moving target based on a demand-led forecast, with a 15% buffer.⁶⁹ This ‘moving target’ was estimated to be between 282 MW and 376 MW by 2024,⁷⁰ a reachable objective. These changes originate in the eventual realisation by the presidency that Rwanda’s energy boom could jeopardise the country’s fiscal stability in a context where electricity production was taking off, and thus unlikely to hamper Rwanda’s growth. Although the process through which this change happened is not fully known, high-level ‘behind closed doors’ lobbying from donors at the presidential level and with some key trusted individuals in government were instrumental.⁷¹

Education

(i) Policies

Formal education featured prominently into the government's broader aims to become a knowledge-based economy and middle-income country, as described in Vision 2020 and Vision 2050. Clearly, Rwandan policymakers have bet on education as a key sector for development.

Thanks in part to a fee-free basic education policy, primary and secondary school enrolment in Rwanda has therefore surged over the past decades. The EICV5 Thematic Youth Report indicates that over 95% of all youth have attended school.⁷² Yet, quality remains low, while primary school dropout and repetition are high. Most primary school-aged children have not acquired age-appropriate literacy or numeracy skills.⁷³

One of the major challenges in the education sector is the lack of coherency in policy and planning. At several key moments, the Rwandan government introduced transformative educational policies or directives. However, these decisions often occurred outside the sector's strategic planning activities, making it difficult to plan for and fund new priorities.⁷⁴ In 2014, for example, free daily school meals were introduced during the government's annual leadership retreat. This emanated from a concern that many children in secondary school were going to school hungry and had difficulty focusing on their studies in the classroom. Local governments received a directive to start providing food for students⁷⁵. But since school feeding was not part of the budget that year, schools ended up passing along the expenses for the feeding program to students and their families. Similarly, the decision to expand the basic education system from nine years to twelve years took many education stakeholders by surprise. The change was introduced by Paul Kagame during his 2010 re-election campaign, though the 2010-15 education strategic plan – guiding the sector's priorities and finances – made no mention of these three additional years of schooling. But because it suddenly became a presidential priority, sector officials were expected to implement it anyway, which proved extremely challenging.

The most glaring example of the lack of policy coherence in the education sector, however, turns around the language of instruction used in primary schools. The country's first major shift came in 2008, when the government changed the language of instruction to English. Before, teachers used Kinyarwanda, shifting to either French or English in the fourth grade. The government enacted the change within a matter of months. It was especially challenging because the country's presidential cabinet bypassed normal policymaking processes to issue the directive.⁷⁶

In 2011, the government reversed course as the government (and donors) saw that the language shift was having negative impacts on students.⁷⁷ Schools could reintroduce Kinyarwanda for the first three years of instruction, then shift to teaching in English for the upper three grades of primary school.⁷⁸ In the years that followed, the government repeatedly reaffirmed the importance of Kinyarwanda language skills for schoolchildren, while President Kagame stressed the cultural importance for all Rwandans to speak Kinyarwanda.⁷⁹ For its part, the Ministry of Education lauded the scientific basis of teaching children in their mother tongue, which also pleased bilateral donors who had already invested hundreds of millions of dollars to produce textbooks in the local language.

This is why the abrupt decision in late 2019 of the Ministry of Education to shift back to primary instruction in English starting from the first grade, came as a shock. This third language shift in 11 years took place without much warning or evidence of preparation time. The move did not only contradict earlier decisions of policy adaptation. It also stands at odds with the scientific literature that suggests that primary schoolchildren, particularly those from poor households, may learn best in the language that they speak at home.⁸⁰

(ii) Effects

The main effect of the frequent changes in instruction language has been the deterioration of the quality of education, and the exacerbation of inequalities. When the government imposed the change to English in 2008, just 15 percent of teachers understood English.

Unsurprisingly, teachers and students struggled to adapt.⁸¹ Students who had been studying in French were suddenly required to take their examinations in a language they didn't know. After three years, eight in ten teachers still had a 'beginner' or 'elementary' knowledge of English.⁸² The switch back to Kinyarwanda in 2011 could consequently be understood as a much-needed adaptation to address a flawed policy.

While many governments struggle to improve education quality for their citizens, the frequent zigzags on the language are 'unforced errors' that appear unique to Rwanda. Compounded by the similarly ill-planned initiatives described above that have also taken place outside strategic planning processes (school feeding, rapid expansion of basic education, among others), the education sector and quality of children's educational experience remains in great peril. A 2018 World Bank report, for example, pointed to the language issue as contributing to a 'highly unfavourable pattern of progression in early grades' and high dropout rates. It warned that 'most children in primary school do not acquire age-appropriate literacy and numeracy skills'.⁸³

The switch back to English in 2019 was consequently a total surprise for most observers since it could be expected that, as in the past, it would further undermine the chance of improving the quality of education, which was barely recovering from the earlier language shifts. All available evidence suggested that the country was not ready for such a change. In 2018, most primary school teachers in Rwanda still did not sufficiently understand or speak English; a mere 38 percent of teachers have a working knowledge of English.⁸⁴ Moreover, not all Rwandans experience the shift in instruction language equally. The mastery of English is far lower in rural areas outside of Rwanda's Anglophone-friendly capital city of Kigali.

The latest policy shift, like the one in 2008, puts education stakeholders and supporters in the education sector in a difficult position. In interviews with donors and Rwandan scholars, many have expressed concern as to whether and how they can or should support a major education change that will likely worsen children's learning capacities, and will increase inequalities.⁸⁵ Although development partners are typically encouraged to provide technical advice or support when it comes to the implementation of language policies, there was little evidence to suggest that they were consulted before such a decision was made. Development partners are thus bound to formulate mild forms of 'critique' through technical input provided to policymakers – for example by costing out how much time or resources it will take to implement a language shift – but the degree to which these technical inputs sway the government's ultimate decision-making is unclear.

(iii) Conditions for adaptation

While changes occurred regularly in the education sector, adaptation rarely did. With regard to instruction language, it happened once in 2011 when the government switched the language back to Kinyarwanda for the first three years. Research suggested that adaptation resulted from the mounting pressure from key donors such as UNICEF onto the government, along with evidence of the further deterioration of education quality resulting from the original shift.⁸⁶ Except for this episode, the evolution in educational policies is not characterised by responsiveness to evidence of policy shortcomings.

The relative lack of adaptation appears to be driven by ideology rather than by lack of evidence of what improves children's learning. First, since taking power, the RPF sought to distance itself from its Belgian colonial and French postcolonial legacy – and specifically from France and its alleged complicity in the genocide. The shift to English aligns with the government's cultural alliance and economic ambitions by facilitating regional integration

and positioning of the country in the global market economy. Second, many of the core members of the RPF, including the president, grew up in exile in Uganda and studied in English. For this reason, the efforts to switch to English have also been analysed as a move benefiting those in key positions of influence.⁸⁷ To be sure, much has changed in the 28 years since the RPF took over the country and the meaning behind the language differences has also evolved during this time period. If there is a common thread to the language shifts, though, it is a ‘centre versus periphery’ affair: those in positions of power and influence make changes around language in ways that do not seem to account for those in rural areas that have little option but to adapt as best they can.

Third, the limited adaptation in the education sector also stems from a firm belief within Rwanda’s policy circles that the regime’s overarching vision will be best served by a shifting to English as quickly as possible, even if this comes at a high social cost. This is best articulated in a 2012 interview of a senior education official in Rwanda, published in *The Guardian*; commenting on the 2008 sudden decision to switch to English, he noted that ‘the interests of this country are more paramount than the difficulties that people can face in the shorter term’.⁸⁸ However, nearly a decade later, the country switched back to English. These flip flops on language are further exacerbated by other challenges facing the education sector, such as changes to the curriculum, lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms, teachers that need more skills (in addition to speaking English), and, most recently, the compounding effects of COVID-19 school closures. These ‘shorter-term’ challenges are likely to become longer-term problems when an unskilled labour force – increasingly pushed outside the agrarian sector – risks to lack any chances of being incorporated into an off-farm economy.

Analysing state adaptation in Rwanda

The cross-sectoral comparison reveals the capacity of the Rwandan state to embrace **policy adaptation**, but also the fragility of such an adaptability. In contrast to the portrait of a strong-willed regime deaf to criticisms, insensitive to people’s difficulties, and blind to evidence, the analysis shows that learning and adaptation do happen. This study identified instances where Rwandan leadership has been able to recognise problems or failure, and to change course accordingly. Furthermore, adaptation often paves the way to surprisingly open discussions in the broader policy field.

However, our case studies also show how incentives to adapt are filtered through a range of factors including a high modernist ideology, stiff quantitative evaluation processes in the state, and the access of the RPF leadership or the presidency to accurate information

about what is happening on the ground, leaving most of the civil servants or donors unable to meaningfully discuss policies. Overall, this shows that asking whether or not adaptation occurs in Rwanda is the wrong question to ask. Rather, it is understanding the ways in which adaptation happens, or does not, that matters.

First of all, the recognition or acknowledgement of problems hinges on a very small group of people having the ear of the president – in most cases domestic but sometimes also foreign advisors – and on the quality of the information channels that reach them. On the flagship policies studied in this paper, policy adaptation occurs only when the very top gives the green light. In all three sectors, the role of the presidency in signalling that adaptation should, or should not, happen is key. In agriculture, the Crop Intensification Programme was adapted following an order from the president. Similarly, the issue of rampant malnutrition started to be addressed only because the president publicly mentioned it. In education, the switch in language of instruction was never the result of a policy process but originated in decisions from the very top, largely without consultation of bureaucrats or other stakeholders despite its far-reaching consequences for the educational system, particularly children in government primary schools. In the electricity sector, the production target of 1000 MW was not the result of a technocratic process either. It was set by the RPF top-level as part of the presidential programme and was subsequently changed only when the president publicly raised the possibility for a revision at a governmental retreat.

As a result of the prominent role of the presidency and the absence of consultations, adaptation is often sudden, and the bureaucracy is then left scrambling to implement change. This also implies that adaptation is not institutionalised: it remains unsystematic, *ad hoc* and therefore unpredictable. It is only when the president becomes aware that change is necessary, that it finally (and often suddenly) occurs. Adaptation, as a result, is hardly grounded in strategic and routine planning processes that the government had set up, resulting in a policy-implementation gap.

The key role of the presidency in driving change does not mean that administrations are passive recipients of policy decisions, without the capacity to develop their own perspectives on what works and what doesn't. Indeed, Rwandan authorities are not unaware of the problems occurring in their respective policy domains. In fact, our encounters with policymakers over many years of research revealed that authorities at all levels are often capable of giving an in-depth analysis of what causes 'flaws in the system', and off-screen, they do formulate their concerns about the overall impact of those flaws. However, authorities from the local up to the ministerial level also express a lack of agency at their

individual level, pointing to the fact that they are bound by quantitative performance targets and detailed reporting of top-down imposed priorities, without a voice in the broader direction of the policy process. Differently put, there are limits to the appeals Rwandan officials can make, even in their own fields of expertise.

The same goes for other actors on the ground, such as civil society agents or ordinary citizens. The ruling elite is not immune to popular pressure, especially around election times. However, there is limited evidence that issues raised by citizens have routinely contributed to policy adaptation. Often, criticisms formulated by different actors (civil servants, donors, researchers) about the limits or failures of a policy lie beneath the surface of the policymaking process.

However, once the lid is off, discussions previously beneath the surface can enter the public domain. And, more importantly, such discussions may allow for further policy changes to occur. In agriculture, the calling into question of some of the key principles of CIP paved the way towards a larger debate on rural livelihoods. In the electricity sector, the revision of the production target of 1000MW in 2013 led to a critical reflection on the ways in which PPP projects had occurred so far. A new law in 2016 improved the ways in which the government deals with investors and led to the alignment of energy targets with the country's actual needs. In education, the nature of the discussion around the instruction language used in schools shifted over the years. The original 2008 shift from Kinyarwanda to English could not be critiqued in-country because of the ethnic and political sensitivities. More recently, however, even some Rwandan media outlets have been more vocal about the latest changes.

Donors and foreign advisors play a limited, yet sometimes significant role in this process. They can facilitate adaptation, articulating the limits of current policies. They did – and continue to do – so informally or formally in the three sectors. In some cases, they put pressure upon the Rwandan government as they did in the education sector in 2011. Yet, the capacity of donors to trigger change is limited. Their criticisms are also routinely ignored or can remain ignored for a long period of time.⁸⁹ Ultimately, whether or not donors can influence policymaking in a meaningful way depends on when the top is ready to listen to them. Two additional factors may also weigh. The Rwandan government can be more easily incited when the budget at stake is significant as it remains largely dependent upon foreign aid.⁹⁰ Rwandan policymakers are also sensitive when policy problems affect Rwanda's image and reputation as an African development model at the international level.

The timing of adaptation also follows some general patterns. Despite the common depiction of Rwanda as an authoritarian regime, elections do play an important role in the momentum for adaptation. They can constitute a window of opportunity as the government may wish to limit public discontent around election time. This was visible in the agricultural sector where the upcoming 2017 presidential elections pushed the government to address the main problems of its flagship crop intensification programme. This echoes another instance when, just before the 2010 presidential elections, loans for buying fertilizers were generously granted to farmers as a way to build popular support, without considering their repayment capacity.⁹¹ However, elections can also work against adaptation, as they may inspire the leadership to proclaim ambitious objectives, which makes subsequent alteration difficult. This is epitomised by the enshrinement of the 1000 MW electricity production target in the 2010 RPF electoral manifesto, with all the nefarious consequences for the electricity system and for the country's fiscal situation. Similarly, the president introduced the expansion of basic education during his 2010 campaign without considering the budgetary and planning aspects of that decision.

Interestingly, adaptation occurs most smoothly when change is likely to support the regime's transformative development project or, at least, does not go against it. For example, adaptations in agriculture were possible because they did not fundamentally alter the productivist and neoliberal focus of the agricultural strategy. However, neither the skewed power relations that mark the agrarian production chains nor the problematic situation of many small holders in commercialised farming systems were addressed. Similarly, adjustments of the electricity production target were possible as they did not question the country's industrial ambitions. However, discussion around the provision of affordable electricity to households did not happen. Therefore, our analysis points to some of the downsides of Rwanda's model of governance. Whereas in more competitive systems authorities may struggle to agree upon and implement major reforms so that they have to settle for a gradual approach, in Rwanda the overwhelming power of the president and the RPF does not encounter much challenge from technocrats or the public writ large. As a result, they can introduce transformative initiatives quickly and without considering the present-day realities of ordinary Rwandans.

Finally, policy adaptation also depends upon which part of the Rwanda population is affected by the negative impacts of certain decisions. The changes in agricultural strategies pursued had little impact on the urban elite, as did the changes in the language of instruction: the switch to English in 2008 and 2019 generally benefited the children of diasporic returnees

while switching back to Kinyarwanda between 2011 and 2019 would not be detrimental to them. More generally, the volatility of the education strategy had little consequences for the urban children going to elite schools whose parents could afford higher quality education. Similarly, the high price for electricity was hardly an issue for well-off urban dwellers who favour electricity availability over price. The interests of urban elites weigh relatively more than those of the rural population.

This is not to say that adaptation is not possible when it goes against elite interests. Many examples in the literature reveal that the leadership has managed to discipline its followers, for instance by fighting complacency loans to well-connected individuals in the financial sector or by fighting corruption and land grabbing within the high ranks of the RPF.⁹² But the very nature of the regime's development project is more aligned to the wealthy urbanites' skills and interests than to the everyday concerns of the masses. Therefore, the challenges of ordinary Rwandans are only taken into account when failure becomes threatening to the image of the Rwandan model that the national leadership wants to promote.

In short, our data and analysis show that the capacity for adaptation exists but remains limited and is by no means a routine process in the Rwandan governance structure.

Conclusion

The reality of governance in Rwanda is more complex than often portrayed in the literature. The state is neither a responsive and agile machinery nor an authoritarian and rigid instrument completely sheltered from popular demands and divorced from realities on the ground. The regime does adapt, more often as a coping strategy when confronted to the shortcomings of its initial plans and policy provision, rather than through an iterative and institutionalised process marked by flexible learning.

Opening the black box of adaptation reveals that it is not however a haphazard process. It follows certain patterns. The role of the presidency, the behind-the-scenes pressures from donors, the bottom-up pressures around election time, and the mounting evidence of conspicuous failures that might damage Rwanda's image are key determinants. Furthermore, our analysis indicates that change, if not adaptation, is frequent, which is quite remarkable in the context of a tightly managed political space, a prostrate civil society, and a bureaucracy hesitating to speak truth to power.

Yet adaptation is abrupt, inconsistent and as a result, often unnecessarily painful. Lower-level bureaucrats bear most of the blame when policy failure is recognised. And at the same time, they are left scrambling for solutions when adaptation finally comes through,

sometimes without the proper resources for making change happen. Citizens are exposed to sudden policy shifts and have limited or nearly no access to channels that allow for local level dissent to reach the top institutional layers of the Rwandan state.

Moreover, the Rwandan case points to the need to devote more attention to the *internal* learning issue in authoritarian regimes, whereas the literature has mainly focused on the international dimensions of learning.⁹³ Serious limitations in internal learning could indeed have a significant impact on the sustainability of a regime's trajectory on the long term, especially when authorities have committed to improving people's lives as Rwandan leadership has. From the perspective of performance, the Rwandan case raises the question of what might happen as the negative externalities of top-down policies build over time with limited space for ordinary citizens to contribute to policy adaptation on the basis of their daily experiences. If the regime proves unable to make good on its promises even in basic fields such as food, education, affordable energy, etc., a significant source of its legitimacy might erode overtime. As other authoritarian regimes, Rwanda is certainly effective at using both repression and co-optation internally.⁹⁴ As a donors' darling, it can also derive much symbolic and material support from the international community. Yet, the erosion of the regime's internal legitimacy due to inadequate change or insufficient adaptation might weaken its hold on power and alter the mix of authoritarian mechanisms and characteristics on which it rests.

In summary, this study shows the importance of developing more sophisticated and nuanced understandings of policy adaption and change in authoritarian states like Rwanda. By looking at what Rwanda's leaders do when their policies are misaligned with the needs of ordinary citizens, this paper sheds light on the conditions for adaptation in Rwanda, and by extension, contributes to a broader knowledge about the persistence of authoritarian regimes.

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¹ Chemouni, "Explaining the Design of the Rwandan Decentralization," 246–62; Ansoms, "Re-Engineering Rural Society," 289–309; Ingelaere, "What's on a Peasant's Mind?," 214–30.

² Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*; Lavers, *Understanding Elite Commitment to Social Protection*.

³ Ansoms, "Re-Engineering Rural Society"; Dye, "The Return of 'High Modernism'?", 303–324.

⁴ Given that this is not the core point of this article, we won't go into detail. However, for sources on this, see the following: Ansoms and Cioffo, "The Exemplary Citizen" 1247–1268; Nyenyezi Bisoka and Ansoms, "Resistance to the New Green Revolution"; Rollason, "Buying a path," 46–63.

⁵ Ansoms, "Re-Engineering Rural Society"; Williams, "The Political Economy of Primary Education," 550–61.

⁶ Behuria, "Learning from Role Models," 422–40.

⁷ Behuria, "Examining Effectiveness and Learning," 1023–1043.

⁸ Mann and Berry, "Understanding the Political Motivations," 139.

⁹ Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, "Policy for Agriculture," 173.

¹⁰ Ibid., 192.

¹¹ Chemouni, "The Political Path," 87–98; Chemouni, "The Politics of Core Public Sector Reform".

¹² Clark, "Bringing the Peasants," 193–213; Ndahinda and Muleefu, "Revisiting the Legal," 149–173.

¹³ Research on authoritarian politics has recently expanded mostly around two key debates: one on the classification of authoritarian regimes (with new typologies), another on regime survival (notably the role of pseudo-democratic institutions); cf. Frantz, "Authoritarian Politics," 87–89.

¹⁴ Heberer, "The Chinese 'Developmental State,'" 1–22.

¹⁵ Josua and Edel, "The Arab Uprisings," 1–26.

¹⁶ Geddes, "What Do We Know," 115–144.

¹⁷ Croissant and Wurster, "Performance and Persistence," 3.

¹⁸ Gerschewski, "The Three Pillars," 13–38.

¹⁹ Maerz, "The Many Faces," 64–87.

²⁰ Sá and Rodrigues Sanches, "The Politics of Autocratic Survival," 78–102.

²¹ Dukalskis, *Making the World Safe*.

²² Hall and Ambrosio, "Authoritarian Learning," 143 (our italic).

²³ Huang and Liu, "Toward Just Energy Transitions," 1–21.

²⁴ Roller, *The Performance of Democracies*, 3.

²⁵ Various contributions of *Contemporary Politics* special issue on "The Performance and Persistence of Autocracies".

²⁶ World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*.

²⁷ Republic of Rwanda. *Rwanda Vision 2020*. Kigali: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2000.

²⁸ Ibid.

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- ³² World Bank, *World Development Report: Agriculture for Development*.
- ³³ Desiere, Staelens, and D’Haese, "When the Data Source," 1372–1387.
- ³⁴ Ansoms et al., "The Rwandan agrarian and land sector modernisation," 408–431; Huggins, *Agricultural Reform in Rwanda*.
- ³⁵ Pautrizel-Gret, *Agricultural and Food Security Policies*; FAO, *Rwanda. Socio-Economic Context*; World Bank, *Rwanda: Food Smart Country*.
- ³⁶ Ansoms, "The Rwandan agrarian"; Diao, Randriamamonjy and Thurlow, *Urbanization and the Future*; World Bank Group, *Doing Business 2018*.
- ³⁷ Ndimira, *Dynamique et problématique*; Ntihinyurwa et al., "The positive Impacts," 565–581.
- ³⁸ Nyenyezi and Ansoms, "State and Local Authorities," 243–259. Ansoms et al., "Statistics versus Livelihoods," 1–19; Lokuruka, "Food and Nutrition Security".
- ³⁹ Kalibata and Roy. "The Fertile Roots of Rwanda’s Green Revolution." *The Guardian*, February 19, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/feb/19/rwanda-africa-green-revolution-fertiliser-mdgs>
- ⁴⁰ Ansoms, "Hunger in the Name of Development: Rwandan Farmers under Stress", Review of African Political Economy blog series, March 8, 2018.
- ⁴¹ President Kagame speaking at the National Leadership Retreat 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7LeLojKpTo> (32'18" - 32'35 / 38'33- 38'40").
- ⁴² Gready, "You’re Either With us," 637–657.
- ⁴³ Ansoms, "Expanding the Space for Criticism in Rwanda," Review of African Political Economy blog series, March 12, 2019.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ This was confirmed in three in-depth interviews of the first author with Rwandan specialists in agrarian transformations in April 2022, of which one government employee, one independent researcher, and one civil society person.
- ⁴⁶ Ansoms, "The End of the Green Revolution in Rwanda?", Review of African Political Economy blog series, February 11, 2020.
- ⁴⁷ Two in-depth interviews with civil society stakeholders in April 2022.
- ⁴⁸ Interview, civil society organization representative, Huye, 27 January 2020.
- ⁴⁹ Interview, farmer, Kamonyi, 15 January 2018.
- ⁵⁰ Chemouni, "Taking Stock of Rwanda’s Decentralisation," 767.
- ⁵¹ This section is mainly based on Chemouni and Dye, *The Contradictions of an Aspiring Developmental State*.
- ⁵² Republic of Rwanda, *Rwanda Vision 2020*, 19.
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- ⁵⁴ Republic of Rwanda, *Rwanda Vision 2020*, 5.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with former MININFRA official, Kigali, June 2018.
- ⁵⁶ Rwanda Energy Group (REG), *Rwanda: Least Cost Power Development Plan (Lcpdp) 2020-2040*. Kigali: Rwanda Energy Group, 2021.
- ⁵⁷ Lenz et al., "Does Large-Scale Infrastructure", 107.
- ⁵⁸ REG, *Rwanda: Least Cost*, 34.
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- ⁶¹ World Bank, *Rwanda - First Programmatic Energy Sector*, 19.
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- ⁶⁹ Republic of Rwanda, *Energy Sector Strategic Plan: 2018/19-2023/24*. Kigali: Ministry of Infrastructure, 2018.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.
- ⁷¹ Interview, governmental advisor, Kigali, June 2018.
- ⁷² NISR, *Youth Thematic Report*.
- ⁷³ World Bank, *The World Bank Quality Basic*.
- ⁷⁴ Williams, "The Political Economy of Primary Education," 550–561.
- ⁷⁵ Honeyman, *Accountability Practices and Policies*.
- ⁷⁶ Pearson, "Policy Without a Plan," 39–56.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Mwasu. "How CHOGM 2020 Pushed Gov't To Re-embrace English As Language Of Instruction In Schools. " *The Chronicles*, December 3, 2019. <https://www.chronicles.rw/2019/12/03/how-chogm-2020-pushed-govt-to-re-embrace-english-as-language-of-instruction-in-schools/?sfw=pass1612093792>.

⁸⁰ UNESCO, *Mother Tongue Matters*.

⁸¹ Mott MacDonald. *Rwanda Education Capacity*.

⁸² Williams, "Oriented Towards Action".

⁸³ World Bank. *The World Bank Quality Basic Education*, 4–5.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Williams, "Why did Rwanda Abruptly Change the Language in Schools—Again? " *World Politics Review*, February 22, 2021. (<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29440/in-rwanda-language-change-in-schools-leaves-students-and-teachers-struggling>). Mwasu. "How CHOGM 2020 Pushed Gov't to Re-embrace English as Language of Instruction in Schools." *The Chronicles*, December 3, 2019. <https://www.chronicles.rw/2019/12/03/how-chogm-2020-pushed-govt-to-re-embrace-english-as-language-of-instruction-in-schools/?sfw=pass1612093792>.

⁸⁶ Pearson, "Policy Without a Plan".

⁸⁷ Samuelson and Warshauer Freedman, "Language Policy," 191–215.

⁸⁸ Clover, "Jury out on Language-Switch Trend." *The Guardian*, November 13, 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/nov/13/rwanda-english-language-lessons>.

⁸⁹ On this, see Hayman, "Rwanda: Milking the Cow, " 156–84.

⁹⁰ Curtis, "Development Assistance," 1365–1381.

⁹¹ Chemouni, "The Political Economy of the Fertilizer Subsidy," 483–506.

⁹² Kimonyo, *Transforming Rwanda*.

⁹³ Hall and Ambrosio, "Authoritarian Learning".

⁹⁴ As a reminder, cooptation and repression are seen by many authors as the other two mechanisms that, together with legitimacy, contribute to the persistence of authoritarianism.