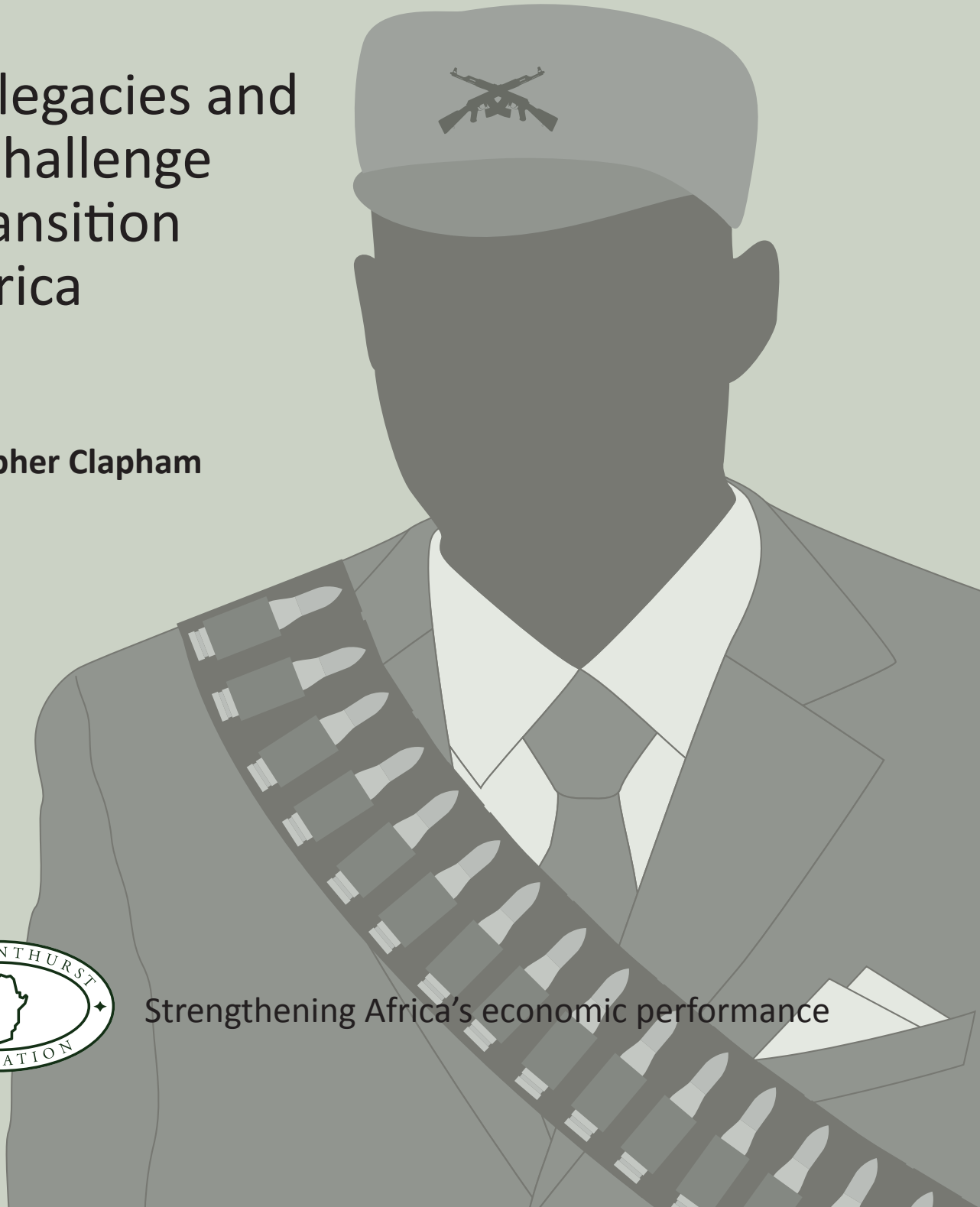
DISCUSSION PAPER 8/2012

From Liberation Movement to Government

Past legacies and the challenge of transition in Africa

Christopher Clapham



THE BRENTHURST FOUNDATION

Strengthening Africa's economic performance

From Liberation Movement to Government

Past legacies and the challenge of transition in Africa

Contents

Executive Summary .. 3
Introduction: The Curse of Liberation? 4
Legacies of Liberation 5
The Immediate Challenges of Governance 7
Moving beyond Liberation 10
Conclusions 12
Endnotes 14

About the Author

Christopher Clapham is the editor of *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, which is based at the Centre of African Studies, Cambridge University. He has also served as Professor of Politics and International Relations at Lancaster University, UK. His book *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (1996) examined the survival strategies of African states in the modern international order.

Published in November 2012 by:
The Brenthurst Foundation
E Oppenheimer & Son (Pty) Ltd
PO Box 61631, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
Tel +27–(0)11 274–2096 · Fax +27–(0)11 274–2097
www.thebrenthurstfoundation.org

All rights reserved. The material in this publication may not be reproduced, stored, or transmitted without the prior permission of the publisher. Short extracts may be quoted, provided the source is fully acknowledged.

Layout and design by Sheaf Publishing, Benoni.

Executive Summary

Throughout Africa, from South Africa to Rwanda to Eritrea, there are many inspiring examples of liberation movements that fought long and often traumatic struggles against colonial, oligarchic or authoritarian regimes. In some rare cases this has resulted in the formation of a new state, as in South Sudan, but for the most part this has occurred within the context of an existing state.

Such independence struggles often promote the formation of an effective movement in opposition that should, ideally, provide the basis for a viable government once victory is eventually achieved. Nowhere in Africa, however, has a liberation movement transformed itself seamlessly into a national government. Governing a state presents numerous challenges that are not only different but, in some respects, clash with the requisites and principles of waging a successful liberation struggle.

The persistence of this phenomenon in Africa was the wellspring for an international dialogue of leading struggle veterans, policy makers and experts, co-hosted by the Brenthurst Foundation and Germany's Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Cadenabbia, Italy, in early October 2012.

This Discussion Paper draws on the discussions and presentations at the Dialogue, though ultimately it represents the author's personal perspective. The Paper argues that some states have been more successful than others in tackling the legacies of such struggles – e.g., an intense sense of entitlement to the state and exclusive vision for its future – and promoting inclusiveness and openness to different groups and interests within their polities, although all ex-liberation movements contend with these issues in one form or another. The experiences of one-time liberation movements who later assumed power reveal numerous challenges that continue to exert a significant impact on politics and governance throughout Africa.

Introduction: The Curse of Liberation?

Liberation is defined by struggle. Throughout Africa, and indeed in much of the world, there are movements that have fought long and hard, with great heroism and often at great cost, in order to achieve the liberation of their peoples and their territories from oppressive regimes, whether these be external colonialists (as for example in Algeria and the former Portuguese territories of Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique), domestic dictatorships or oligarchies (as in the struggles of the ANC in South Africa, the RPF in Rwanda, or the EPRDF in Ethiopia), or governments effectively entrenched in one part of

> Liberation is defined by struggle

the state territory which sought to impose control over other areas that viewed themselves as distinct, and as having the right to separate statehood (as in Eritrea and South Sudan). The length and intensity of these struggles have varied greatly, arguably the most extreme and costly example being the 30-year independence war in Eritrea, while at the other end of the spectrum there are cases like the Convention People's Party of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, which gained independence entirely by peaceful means, but still regarded themselves in key respects as liberation movements. In all cases, however, the consciousness and experience of *struggle* are critical.

Once liberation has been achieved, and the former liberation movement has assumed power as a national government, the experience of struggle has generally been regarded as an enormously positive legacy for the new state and the regime that rules it. The more intense the struggle, indeed, the greater the advantages conferred on the new government, by contrast especially with those successor regimes that are often viewed in disparaging terms as having been handed their independence 'on a plate'. First of all, the now victorious movement inherits from the struggle a powerful sense of legitimacy: these are people who have been prepared to sacrifice their lives for the cause, and who come to power with an abiding memory of the martyrs who have died in order to enable them to do so. They have earned their independence, and with it the right to run the new government. They bring into government, moreover, the ideals that shaped the struggle itself, and which cannot be dismissed as mere window-dressing. Struggle likewise imposes on those who undergo it the need for purpose and commitment, and the discipline required to maintain their cohesion at periods of great stress. Since liberation movements have to build their own organisation from the bottom up, in order to compete with powerful and hierarchically organised states, they must of necessity look to the grassroots, in order to recruit their fighters and ensure their support from among the ordinary people on whose behalf they are fighting. And as time goes by, and the immediacy of the struggle fades, its memory or mythology nonetheless remains as a foundational basis for the state and government itself, and an inspiration for future generations. These are all solid advantages that cannot be overlooked.

Nonetheless, virtually all liberation movements have experienced considerable difficulties in actually making the transition from struggle to government. The persistence of this phenomenon in Africa was the wellspring for an international Dialogue of leading struggle veterans, policy makers and experts in early October 2012. Co-hosted by the Brenthurst Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung,

> They bring into government the ideals that shaped the struggle

the Dialogue, entitled 'From Liberation Movement to Government: Past legacies and the challenge of transition in Africa' took place in the year South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) marked its 100th anniversary. The struggle waged by the ANC against the apartheid regime during the second half of the 20th century is one of the world's best-known and most admired liberation movements, yet in its centennial year it has faced a raft of criticism – both from within and outside South Africa – over its quality of governance, which some of the country's most prominent voices have attributed to its

failure to move beyond 'liberation politics' and shed its struggle mindset.[1]

Experience from South Africa and indeed across Africa suggests that, as the immediate euphoria of liberation subsides – one needs to be there at that magical moment to understand just how much liberation means to those who have trodden the long road to achieve it – so problems characteristically arise that have to be traced back to the liberation movement itself. Few indeed are those movements have actually delivered the aspirations – of peace, of democracy, of popular participation in a cohesive national community that delivers welfare to its members – that animated the struggle. As the problems mount, it becomes all too easy to view the legacies of the struggle not as a blessing but as a curse, and to envy those countries whose transition to majority rule has been marked instead by peace and continuity.

The central purpose of this Discussion Paper, which draws on the discussions and papers presented at the Dialogue,[2] is to emphasise that the problems of liberation are structural ones, rooted in the experience of struggle and common to virtually every movement of this kind. The experience of struggle is for most of its participants so intense and so specific that it is easy to assume that the difficulties of liberation are the result of circumstances unique to that particular organisation: to its history, to the nature of the territory, or indeed to the personalities of individual leaders and their relationships to one another. Every movement certainly has its own distinctive characteristics, and a range of variance is only to be expected as a result. But what is most striking, across the African continent and well beyond it, is the extent to which similar issues constantly recur. And these similarities in turn should foster not a sense of helplessness – that these problems are so entrenched that nothing can be done about them – but rather a sense that much can be learned about the ways in which different movements have tackled them. That is what this Paper seeks to provide.

It becomes all too easy to view the legacies of the struggle not as a blessing but as a curse

Legacies of Liberation

Liberation struggles arise under very different circumstances and take very different forms, and in some degree leave correspondingly different legacies to the regimes that they form on their eventual succession to power. There is, however, a central and common theme that runs through these regimes, found more than anything else in the *mentalities* of those who come to power through struggle. This human legacy of struggle is at the same time both strangely difficult to pin down – why do people think in one way rather than another, and why can't they be induced to think in a different and more 'constructive' way? – and also extremely difficult to change. Participation in the struggle is for most of those who go through it a life-defining experience. It changes who you are and how you think. Even long after the struggle has ended, and its former participants have achieved leading positions in government, it remains extraordinarily vivid in the minds of former fighters. It brings with it a deep sense of conviction in the rightness of the cause, and the entitlement and responsibility of the survivors to continue to exercise the power, and pursue the objectives, for which they fought. In the case of bitter and protracted wars of liberation, these survivors carry with them abiding memories of the comrades who perished along the way, and a sense of obligation not to betray those who sacrificed their lives for the cause. One brief example will make the point. The name of Meles Zenawi, late prime minister of Ethiopia, will be familiar to us all. But 'Meles' was not the name that his parents gave him: he was originally called Legesse Zenawi, but adopted instead the name of Meles to perpetuate the memory of one of the founders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front who died early in the struggle. What was to others merely a simple name, was to him an abiding reminder of the human cost of victory.

Leaders especially are deeply affected by taking their movement through to ultimate triumph, and readily assume a sense not only of the rightness of their cause, but of their entitlement to the power that follows. Power is not for them the result simply of a popular vote that may be reversed in a later election, still less of a *coup d'état* that has to be justified in some way or other, but is instead the culmination of a lifetime mission. It is very hard indeed for them to recognise that anyone else could have any equivalent right to rule, while for the movement as a whole its record in the struggle confers – in the minds of former fighters – a virtually permanent claim on state power: those who did not participate in their struggle, including those who were too young to have had any chance of doing so, are expected to take second place

> Leaders are deeply affected by taking their movement through to ultimate triumph

to veterans. This claim may readily trump alternative legitimations for rule, and notably those derived from actual performance in government. It is easy for the movement's members to assume that the popular support derived from the promise of liberation conveys a permanent and unconditional attachment, and that rival politicians who seek to criticise its performance in office can consequently have no public support, and must therefore be suppressed by whatever means control of the state allows.

That said, the legacies of struggle may actually be far more ambivalent than the victors in that struggle assume. One very common problem – and an almost inevitable one, given the arbitrary territorial units imposed on Africa by colonial partition – is that the war of 'national liberation' must often of necessity take place in what is actually a non-nation state. The struggle itself may play an important role in helping to unify a subject people against an oppressive former regime, and constitute a vital part of the mythology of national identity; however, victory may well have been won at the cost of suppressing dissidents or rivals in the struggle for liberation, who re-emerge once it has been achieved. One common feature of liberation war is the contest for 'movement hegemony', in the course of which often vicious fighting takes place between rival movements – as between ZANU and ZAPU in Zimbabwe, ELF and EPLF in Eritrea, MPLA, FNLA and UNITA in Angola – to determine which of them will be the ultimate beneficiary of eventual triumph, established as the 'real' embodiment of national identity, as opposed to the 'divisive' forces whom they have suppressed. Sometimes there are divergent factions and rival leaders within what is nominally the same organisation. These rivalries, too, often reflect and in some degree represent differences between major population groups, on the basis for instance of ethnicity or religion, which constitute permanent elements within the national population, so that the victory of one over another comes to be interpreted as bringing one group (not necessarily the largest) to power over others: what is presented from the viewpoint of the winners as 'national' liberation may not look that way from the viewpoint of other elements in the population.

There are considerable differences, too, in the societies in which liberation war takes place, and correspondingly in the movements that emerge to fight it. It is certainly one of the great strengths of liberation movements that, denied the access to the coercive resources of the state that are available to their opponents, they must instead build themselves up from the support that they draw from the oppressed peoples among whom they fight. These provide their fighters with their legitimacy, and the

> One common feature of liberation war is the contest for 'movement hegemony'

social networks on which they have to rely in their long years in the 'bush'. But in benefitting from these linkages, it is also inevitable that they should become in some degree dependent on them. It cannot be coincidental, for example, that Africa's strongest and most effective liberation movements, with the EPLF in Eritrea and the RPF in Rwanda as outstanding examples, have been built within societies which

themselves have a long record of governance (however oppressive this may often have been), with the organisational attitudes and values entrenched in it. Movements derived from pastoralist societies with historically much more egalitarian cultures and traditions of deep hostility to settled governance – and here the different Somali movements directed against the oppressive rule of Mohamed Siyad Barre stand out particularly strongly – are likely to carry with them the anarchic traditions of their fighters. Once the old regime has been ejected, and the former fighters seek to take over the state or establish a new state of their own, the skills and attitudes that they bring to the task may vary enormously.

The moment at which a liberation movement comes to power is normally one of extraordinary catharsis

Further differences arise from the way in which the liberation war itself has been fought. In some cases – and here, as so often, the EPLF stands at one extreme – the fighters have carried on the struggle in virtual isolation, locked into the 'liberated areas' within their own territory, and forced by circumstances to develop attitudes of self-reliance and a set of organisational mechanisms that in many respects replicate the state that they intend to construct after liberation. In others – and Namibia provides an apt example – the struggle is conducted for the most part externally, with a leadership located outside the territory, few if any liberated areas, and a high level of dependence on external support; rather than coming to power with an embryonic state system already in being, these movements are effectively parachuted into office as they return from exile, and must to a large extent accept the state structures that they find in being. This in turn draws attention to the critical difference, examined in greater detail later, between those movements that come to power as the result of outright military victory, and those which are able (or obliged) to negotiate a handover with the outgoing regime.

The Immediate Challenges of Governance

The moment at which a liberation movement comes to power is normally one of extraordinary catharsis. Whether this takes the form of sandalled fighters sliding into the capital city from the countryside, as the discredited remnants of the old regime flee or surrender, or a formal handover in the wake of a negotiated settlement and founding election, it has something definitive about it. The war-weary population is generally happy to accept that the long conflict is over, and – whatever misgivings they may have had about the victors when the war was undecided – that this is a regime that is here to stay, and to which they will need to adapt. In many cases, too, when the war has been fought against an illegitimate, oppressive and alien regime, the movement will be buoyed by a sense of legitimacy that was lacking in its predecessor. These are massive advantages that enable the movement to plan over the long term for the kind of state that they wish to bring into being. All the same, there are also immediate challenges. The war itself may well have created major problems of dislocation, not least in the form of youths uprooted from their home societies, grown accustomed to living by the gun, who in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia constitute an outstanding threat to public order. The new regime's own fighters need to be settled into the very different world of peacetime life; refugees have to find their way back, often to home areas shattered in the fighting, and start to re-establish a normal existence; landmines have to be cleared, and communications re-opened. There is little opportunity for the winners to relax and enjoy the fruits of victory.

There are also political tasks to be tackled, notably in creating a sense of national reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict. Some liberation movements – with Nelson Mandela in South Africa as the outstanding example – have been extraordinarily fortunate in leaders who instinctively reached out beyond their having original constituencies to

embody a sense of the new nation. Others – such as Yoweri Museveni in Uganda or Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia – deliberately created new political structures intended to extend the legitimacy of the new regime beyond the limited areas of the country in which the war had been fought, and provide the basis for a new constitutional order. This is a task that needs constant reaffirmation and renewal, but in which a creative initiative in the immediate aftermath of the takeover is essential. Other leaders again, such as Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, remained locked within the mind-sets of the liberation war, with tragic eventual consequences. At this critical moment, individual leadership can often make all the difference.

Fighting a war is an enterprise with a single and readily identifiable goal, victory, to which all other considerations must be subordinated

As the new regime settles into office, further and perfectly understandable problems of transition resulting from the simple fact that running a liberation struggle is a very different kind of exercise from running a government. The ready assumption that the movement provides an all-purpose power tool which, like fitting a new attachment onto a piece of mechanical equipment, can be converted from one use to another – transforming it from winning the war against oppression to winning the new war against poverty, ignorance and disease – is simply misconceived. Fighting a war is an enterprise with a single and readily identifiable goal, victory, to which all other considerations must be subordinated. This in turn calls for unity of purpose, and justifies total dedication on the part of the fighters, and a top-down structure of command and control on the part of the leadership. Running a government is not like that at all. There are multiple goals, which are often in some degree at odds with one another, and which call for a difficult process of agenda-setting and priority identification. Different interests will be involved, and will all demand a privileged say in helping to shape government policy, whether these are derived from their historic support for the struggle, or from their power within the political and economic structures that the government has inherited. There is no end point, like the moment at which the former fighters take over the government, when victory is achieved.

The different nature of the activity calls in turn for different kinds of organisation, and for different mental approaches, on the part of both leaders and ordinary participants. The single-minded concentration of power and priorities required by the struggle readily converts into a limited and blinkered vision in the face of the multiple challenges of governance. Whereas dissent could previously be readily dismissed as disloyalty or even treason, effective governance calls for questioning attitudes through which mistakes can be identified and rectified, and groups with legitimate interests and grievances can be incorporated into the policy process. Flexibility must replace rigidity.

On top of this, the very movement from struggle to government potentially opens up sources of difference and dissent that were previously suppressed or obscured. Members of the movement who could work willingly together in search of the common goal of victory may actually have had rather different ideas about what that victory was expected to achieve, that are rapidly exposed once it comes about. One obvious source of diversity lies between those who are prepared to respond pragmatically to the challenges of government, or who may just enjoy exercising power, and those who retain a stronger commitment to the ideological goals around which the struggle was orchestrated. This in turn can readily be associated with rivalries between 'ins', who have gained important executive positions in the new government, and 'outs', who have failed to achieve the level of prominence that they expected or to which they felt themselves entitled. The former group are easily identified by their opponents as opportunists, the latter as radicals or even subversives. One almost universal pattern is the strengthening of the top leader, at the expense of other leading figures within the movement. During the struggle, even if there is a single

Flexibility must replace rigidity

identified leader, he (and I am aware of no women in this position) will normally have run the movement in collaboration with a group of senior lieutenants, who may have exercised extremely important responsibilities, for instance on the military or diplomatic fronts. After victory, when the top leader assumes the position of head of state, all of his former colleagues fall into subordinate roles, and a more or less obvious process of winnowing out occurs, as these are shifted into less powerful positions or even dismissed altogether, and a new group of individuals personally associated with the leader (but without the same credentials from the struggle) comes to occupy key posts in his shadow.

Finally, there is the need to incorporate elements who were never part of the struggle at all, and who may indeed have been part of the very state machinery against which it was conducted. In some cases – with Eritrea, as so often, the extreme example – the liberators take over the entire state, and chase out any remnants of the old regime. In others – such as the simultaneous victory of the TPLF in Ethiopia – the movement wins the struggle in straightforward military terms, but then takes over an existing state apparatus with which it has to work. Sometimes again – as in Zimbabwe or South Africa – no outright military victory is achieved, but the old regime effectively concedes defeat, while retaining enough power to be able to negotiate a peaceful handover under agreed terms. In the last two scenarios, important parts of the old structure remain, most prominently in the state apparatus (including the security forces) and in the most highly developed parts of the national economy, which are critical to the running of the liberated state, and which seek to reach some kind of deal with the new regime. One key discovery for a liberation movement gaining power is just how important it is to have a trained and effective bureaucracy, through which to implement the programmes that will constitute the real basis of 'liberation' for the mass of the population. The bureaucracy itself, however much it may reflect in attitudes and composition the character of the old regime, nonetheless has key vested interests in keeping itself in being, and working with the new one. The basis for a settlement is therefore clear, despite the lingering distrust that may remain on either side. One sensitive problem from the new government's point of view is that people in critical policy-making positions, faced with the inevitable difficulties of finding practical ways of coping with problems that fail to respond to the often simplistic rhetoric of liberation, will then find themselves accused of being 'sell-outs' to the vested interests entrenched in the government machinery.

One key discovery for a liberation movement gaining power is just how important it is to have a trained and effective bureaucracy

Any new government will be faced with problems of stabilisation and reconstruction

Very similar, and potentially more acute, problems arise in the area of economic policy. Any new government, coming to power in the aftermath of what may have been a long period of liberation war, will be faced with problems of stabilisation and reconstruction, at the same time as facing pressing demands from its own supporters to meet the expectations engendered by liberation. It is thus essential for it to maintain in operation the key productive sectors of the economy, which provide both the government revenues and much of the employment that are desperately needed. Leading businessmen, like leading bureaucrats, can generally be relied on to make their peace with the new regime, since their own operations depend on good relations with it. In the early days of liberation movements, 'socialist' structures of economic development appeared to provide a viable alternative to their 'capitalist' rivals, and outright nationalisation of the most important sectors of the economy appeared to be an obvious option; but this approach was rarely if ever successful, and is now scarcely on the table. Nonetheless, the economic structures inherited from the old regime may stand in opposition to the aspirations of the movement, critically so when these involve control

over agricultural land, which is often the central issue for rural populations whose support had been critical during the struggle itself. Other sectors, notably mining and industry, are likely to arouse demands from organised labour movements which had also backed the movement. In other sectors again, notably finance, newly appointed ministers find themselves having to cope with issues that lie entirely outside the experience that they have gained during the struggle, and leave them particularly dependent on specialist expertise. It is unsurprising, therefore, that economic policy should form a key arena for critical choices in the post-liberation period.

Moving beyond Liberation

As the years after liberation extend into decades, and the memory of that magic moment fades into the distance, so a further set of challenges emerges. Though the struggle remains a vivid source of legitimacy in the minds of former fighters, for most of the population whom they govern it becomes a rapidly wasting asset. The first and in many ways most basic challenge that the movement then faces is to retain as much as possible of the popular support that greeted it when it came to power, while coming to terms with the day-to-day demands of running an effective state, and with the need to work within constraints created especially by the global economy which were barely apparent during the struggle. It is almost inevitable that many of the unreasonably high popular expectations associated with victory, which members of the movement will have genuinely shared, will be disappointed by the realities of its performance in office, and the sheer impossibility of bringing about the level of transformation that had been promised. Given that the regime now controls the apparatus of state power, rather than fighting against it as had been the case during the struggle, it will have a powerful temptation to use that power – augmented and legitimised by the incorporation of former fighters into the security services – to repress forms of dissent which, given the sense of legitimacy and entitlement conferred by the struggle, are assumed to have no genuine popular base. The transformation from reliance on popular support to reliance on organised state power can be frighteningly swift. There is therefore a critical need to develop mechanisms through which popular voices can still be heard, even when these run counter to the attitudes of liberation leaders now in office. This is all the more difficult in that these attitudes were moulded in a context of struggle, in which discipline and leadership necessarily took precedence over democratic procedures: movements that were themselves non-democratic in origin, regardless of the popular aspirations that they embodied, can scarcely be expected to promote democracy.

> The transformation from reliance on popular support to reliance on organised state power can be frighteningly swift

This need is all the greater given the rapid generational change underway in African societies. High birth rates and correspondingly young populations mean that within a couple of decades of liberation, most of the population will have no personal memory of the struggle at all, and calls by members of the ruling party to remember their heroic contribution will simply fall on uncomprehending ears. In some cases, as with the national service scheme in Eritrea, deliberate efforts were made by the ruling party to inculcate into rising generations the values of struggle, discipline and dedication to the cause that had driven their predecessors, but – try as one may – the post-liberation situation is so different that this objective is almost impossible to achieve. Instead, the regime has to look to the delivery of tangible material benefits, in place of the symbolic and aspirational goals of liberation, bringing once more into focus the differences already noted between the relatively straightforward objectives of the struggle and the much more complex needs of development and peacetime governance.

Whereas at the moment of takeover, the immediate need was to build alliances between the liberation movement and established interests – notably in the bureaucracy and the economy – whose support was required in order to ensure a smooth handover and maintain the productive base on which the delivery of services to the population depended, as time goes by the danger arises that these alliances may become too strong, rather than too weak. Post-liberation regimes very readily transform themselves into corporate states, in which a cadre of former senior fighters joins with other established interests to constitute a monolithic power block, essentially serving its own members and deaf to the needs and demands of ordinary people excluded from it. In countries like Angola, where the financial resources provided by oil or some other readily marketable asset generate enormous wealth, the patronage at the disposal of this group may be enough to protect them against any plausible challenge. In other cases, such as Zimbabwe, the original alliance shatters as the political elite takes over (and in the process largely destroys) the productive structures needed to provide food, goods and employment to the mass of the population. The precise forms through which governing elites extract resources from the economy vary from case to case. At its simplest, there may be straightforward personal corruption – always a very sensitive indicator of the extent to which a former liberation movement has remained faithful to its original ideals. Within economies that already have a strong capitalist bent, former fighters may establish their own businesses in sectors that are sensitive to political favours, or else be co-opted by existing companies in order to smooth relations with the regime. In other cases, nationalised industries are run by former liberation leaders, or else 'partystatal' enterprises are created that are owned and run by the ruling party, and while formally competing with independent private companies, actually enjoy the very considerable advantages conferred by their closeness to the government. Even if such enterprises have as their formal rationale the provision of services to elderly or disabled fighters, they readily turn into mechanisms for elite patronage.

Nationalised industries are run by former liberation leaders

Leadership change is made all the more difficult, not only by the emphasis placed on the role of the 'hero leader' by the circumstances of the struggle, but by the fact that leaders of liberation movements often come to power while they are still relatively young, and are consequently in a position to remain in office for a very considerable time. Rare indeed is the leader who voluntarily relinquishes power after just one or two terms at the top. The only such case to come to mind, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, was not only already elderly when he came to power, but (as a result of his long imprisonment) had not in recent years been directly engaged in the struggle; quite apart from his own personal qualities, it may have been easier for him to step down than for a leader who (like most) moved directly from commanding the liberation movement to the state. In other cases, leaders have remained in power for 30 years or more, long past the date at which a fresh vision was needed – in Cuba, to take a case from outside Africa, liberation leaders remain on the scene even after the passage of more than half a century. Nor is it difficult for this privileged cadre to reproduce itself in the form of its own protégés or family members, who gain favoured access to top positions and are thus able to take over from their patrons or family members: in China, the oldest extant liberation regime, the children and even grandchildren of Mao Zedong's companions on the 'Long March' remain prominent in the Communist Party leadership, and equivalent processes can be observed in some African cases.

Leadership change is made all the more difficult by the fact that leaders of liberation movements often come to power while they are still relatively young

Conclusions

Liberation movements rarely face any immediate threat of overthrow once they have succeeded in gaining power. Not only their own victory, but the countrywide relief at the end of conflict, and the splintering and demoralisation of the forces of the former political order almost guarantee them a substantial tenure of office, in some cases, of which South Sudan is by far the most prominent, major issues of state consolidation in the immediate aftermath of victory remain to be resolved, and these must of necessity take precedence. Most of Africa's liberation movements, and notably those that triumphed in that remarkable decade and a half that led from Zimbabwe (1980) through Uganda (1986) to Namibia (1990), and thence to Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somaliland (1991), and then Rwanda and South Africa (1994), have now put a generation of experience behind them. In only one of these, Somaliland, did the liberation movement dissolve itself on achieving its objective of establishing independent statehood from the collapsed Somali Republic, and has it been possible to hold open elections in which an opposition leader has peacefully succeeded to office by winning a popular vote. In only two others, Namibia and South Africa, has a national leader peacefully stood down, to be replaced by another head of state drawn from the liberation party – a process that in South Africa has

> In only one of these, Somaliland, did the liberation movement dissolve itself on achieving its objective of establishing independent statehood

now occurred on two occasions, with the succession of Mbeki to Mandela, and Zuma to Mbeki.[3] One further leader, Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia, died in office and has been succeeded by his deputy, Haile-Mariam Desalegn, who quite exceptionally had not been involved in any way in the liberation struggle. Elsewhere, even after 32 years in the case of Zimbabwe, and 26 in that of Uganda, the original liberation leader remains in office.

The threats facing these movements are correspondingly more insidious, and arise overwhelmingly from within: from the kinds of movement that they are, and the (usually highly idealised) conceptions of themselves that they hold. These are organisations that regard themselves, not just as straightforward governments, but as the embodiment of the very

> The threats facing these movements are correspondingly more insidious, and arise overwhelmingly from within

state that they sought to establish through struggle. In their own minds, they are permanently entitled to govern, and – far from recognising internal splits and domestic opposition as signals that they have outlived their welcome – treat them instead as challenges to the rightful order that they themselves represent, and consequently as pretexts for remaining in power. Yet the liberation credit is a finite one, and is characteristically exhausted in the minds of much of the population much sooner than leaders recognise. The moment soon arrives when the regime is judged not by its promises but by its performance, and if it has merely entrenched itself in positions of privilege reminiscent of its ousted predecessor (in alliance, it may be, with interests still outstanding from earlier times), that judgement is likely to be a harsh one. The recent wave of labour unrest in South Africa, especially the tragic events at Marikana in August 2012, which culminated in dozens of striking miners being shot dead by police, may well be regarded as trumpeting such a moment of truth for the ANC. Nevertheless, governments elsewhere have suffered similar shocks, revealing regimes that can no longer be regarded in any meaningful sense as 'movements', but which have instead solidified into a condition of stasis in which former fighters have become the complacent beneficiaries of state power. Africa's permanent crisis of youth makes this an extremely hazardous posture, risking demands for a new 'liberation' at the hands of a new generation of political or even religious demagogues.

In some cases, with Ethiopia and Rwanda as the most prominent examples, former liberators have sought to reinvent themselves as 'developmental states', following Asian models in which a strong state committed to rapid economic development provides public order, infrastructure and other basic services, while seeking to establish conditions propitious for private sector investment. This has the great advantage – from the movement's point of view – of continuing to guarantee the central role of the movement itself, while at the same time (if the strategy is successful) helping to meet popular demands for employment and public welfare. It may also provide continuing opportunities for state or party owned businesses, or for 'crony capitalists' associated with the regime, and delay the point at which challenges to the government's continued tenure become acute. Whether it can provide a basis for overcoming social fissures as deep as those in Rwanda is altogether more problematic, though Ethiopia appears to provide rather more conducive terrain. Both of these two countries, too, have sought to articulate explicit strategies for national integration, though in paradoxically different ways: in Rwanda by abolishing any explicit recognition of the country's historic ethnicities – Hutu, Tutsi and Twa – and in Ethiopia by explicitly recognising such ethnicities within a federal system constructed on the basis of language. But in any event – and here the Namibian case is also worth citing – it is essential to ensure that strategies for national integration and reconciliation remain permanently at the forefront of government concern, and are not just temporary expedients introduced in order to smooth over the moment of handover.

> Africa's permanent crisis of youth makes this an extremely hazardous posture

Ultimately, as the moment of liberation fades into the distant background, the best one can hope for may be that the movement has succeeded in establishing a sufficient basis for national identity and integration for it to be able to retire as an active political force, leaving the field instead to rival political parties which may derive from splits within the original movement, or from the growth of conditions of tolerance in which formerly ostracised rivals come to be accepted as legitimate participants in the political process. Ghana, once at the forefront of African liberation politics, albeit within a non-violent nationalist party, has now – after too long an experience of military rule – developed into perhaps the most stable multi-party system on the continent. Tanzania, still under the rule of the former TANU (now transformed into the CCM) that led it to independence, appears to have established conventions of peaceful political interaction capable of surviving the demise of the movement itself. Both Angola and Mozambique, two of the earliest African states to gain independence through armed struggle, are still ruled by their original liberation parties, but under conditions that allow at least some political role for members of rival movements once engaged in vicious conflict against the regime. In South Africa, long-established conventions of democratic and parliamentary politics – albeit formerly under the aegis of white minority rule – have strengthened in the transition to majority government, and continue to ensure a measure of openness that restricts the monopolistic tendencies that liberation movements have tended to impose elsewhere.

> Strategies for national integration and reconciliation must remain permanently at the forefront of government concern

The road from liberation is a long one, but allows the possibility of eventual reconciliation between the aspirations expressed in struggle on the one hand, and the need for stable and accountable governance on the other.

Endnotes

1 See Mamphela Ramphele, 'Drop Struggle Politics', *Sunday Times* (South Africa), 23 September 2012.

2 This paper is a personal summary of the discussions at a workshop that brought together a group of participants, including individuals prominent in liberation struggles in their own countries, other observers from those countries, and external scholars and commentators. In accordance with the rules required for frank and critical analysis, the contributions of individual participants cannot be acknowledged by name, and accordingly I can only deeply appreciate the numerous insights incorporated into this paper that I have derived from them. Equally, in attempting to fashion some more-or-less coherent narrative from a complex and wide-ranging debate, I must acknowledge the value of contributions that may not have been directly incorporated into the paper, or that may indeed differ from the views presented here. Participation in the discussion was a thoroughly rewarding experience, and I can only hope that this necessarily generalised summary will be of value, especially to those who find themselves confronting challenges analogous to those considered here.

3 It is worth noting that President Sam Nujoma of Namibia was in power for a decade and half and changed the constitution in order to serve a third term, whilst Nelson Mandela served for only one five year term before stepping down.