

DEBAT

Thierry de Montbrial

Thank you very much Mr. President. We are going to start the discussion and we will ask you two questions. After those two questions, we will take interventions from the participants and members. My first question will be about Rwanda itself. It is very simple to ask, but probably not to answer. To what extent is the Rwandan model exportable to other African countries?

Paul Kagame

Rwanda is a work in progress in almost everything. We are still doing a number of things and still experimenting, but some progress has been made. In terms of that being a model, that relates to what has worked, even in the worst of circumstances or when the adversity we have faced has been so challenging. Therefore, the model we have applied can apply in other places depending on demonstration of where you have come from, what challenges you have addressed and the outcomes.

Therefore, it is not the overall model that is going to work, except if you pick a few pieces. One piece I have in mind is that the model is going to work because it builds on putting people at the centre of addressing the problems and involving them. From there, you move forward. The second piece is about whether you can change people's mindset. For example, in our case what we try to do is have a practical discussion with everybody, with people in our society. We will go to every part of our country and we will have the conversation with our people. We tell them that even though we have a lot of problems, there is a lot in them that they can bring out, to meet these challenges and address them.

We had been telling people all along, 'You can sit back and wait that people will come and help.' Many times, people have come and helped, absolutely, but why wait for people to come and help even on things you can do yourself. This is what we have been trying to plant in the minds of our people. This is what I am talking about in terms of mindset. Apart from other problems we found, there was also this mentality that people are poor and they have none of this and none of that, so people who have more will bring what they need. They will bring medicines and they will bring food. In our country, we found that 45% of our food needs were coming from outside as donations and we said, 'No. We can grow food to feed ourselves, so let us do it.' Then we started moving forward.

The model can work anywhere. Not everything is going to work for everybody, everywhere, but it will overall. The conceptual aspect, the philosophy behind it, can apply in any situation, in Africa or beyond. It is about saying, 'We can do it.' If we cannot do it, then we can rely on friends and partners and we can still move forward until over time, we are able to do what we were not able to do before, so it can work. We do not have anything else in our minds that could have changed our situation unless we involved ourselves, sought partnership and sought assistance. However, we always know that this is our responsibility.

Thierry de Montbrial

I have a footnote to the same question. Have you yourself been inspired by the experience of Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore?

Paul Kagame

When we started off with our reparation struggle and the challenges we faced during and after, we did not think about that. However, as we started rebuilding, we started looking all around us, whether in Africa or beyond, and in particular, we did look at the case of Singapore. Some of the things we have done have come from us and many other things have been lessons learned from others. We explored how they address their problems at one time or another, the

kinds of problems and the approaches they made so that we could find something of our own. It was at a later stage, let us say '95-96.

That was the ending. That was when we started looking around saying, 'What is it that is going to help us overcome these insurmountable obstacles. At that time, they looked to be challenges. The Singapore case was very appealing. It was mainly the case for Singapore. It was the case for South Korea. We looked around. We looked around not only for development models but also governance models.

In fact, our constitution is built on patching up ideas from one place. We looked at South Africa, which was also being born at the time. There were things they were doing to reconcile with their society and approach different things for their development. We looked at some European constitutions, the origins and why things are the way they are. We looked at the US. We looked and we went to other places. We kept pieces of what we thought was appealing, particularly to address and deal with our situation.

Singapore was very appealing in many ways. We looked at how they have approached investments in technology, application of different technologies for efficiency and effectiveness in things they are doing. We looked at how they invested in their people, in sciences and mathematics, and different things. Then we looked at how they were doing business, when people and companies want to do business and make investments, whether small, medium or big ones. What is it that would be appealing for people to come to Rwanda? This is especially with that background we had that was not appealing at all. We had so many things to change so that we could stop being seen as some place where people cannot do anything. We have created that appeal and learned from it, and it is definitely the case that Singapore is one of them.

Thierry de Montbrial

That was my first question. The second question is larger. You served as president of the African Union, so first, what have you learnt from that experience? What have you achieved? What are you proud to have achieved during your teams? Would you also say that the African Union is, to use your own expression, a work in progress, and if this is so, progress towards what?

Paul Kagame

On one hand, Africa is a place of enormous resources, whether human or natural resources. There is no question about that. The challenge therefore is, if you have that on one hand, how do you fail on the other hand to have the kind of prosperity, the kind of transformation. You should have given these enormous resources. There is the statement by everybody that we want to do better, we want to be better, we want to prosper and we want to do this. At the same time, decade after decade, we have been a place that can easily be dismissed, so there is a paradox here that we need to resolve.

With that in mind, one year is a very short time to do anything significant. I was chairman for 12 months, but the beauty of that is that you do not do anything alone. That is where you have to start from. I was working with other African leaders and had all these things in mind that we needed to do to get going. We started with an example, the institution of the African Union. How can we get it better, organise better and more effectively, producing the results that Africans want? How does it become effective?

We agreed that we needed to pay attention to that, and that was the birth of the reforms that we had to carry out. The African leaders entrusted me with the responsibility to lead the reform process, but it was leading the reform process, with them doing different parts of that process. There was one thing we achieved. There are a number of things which we partially achieved. They are not completed but at least we got started. We know where we stand and work will continue with other leaders who will come afterwards and who will take the leadership of the African Union.

For example, we are working with the president of Niger, President Issoufou. We were able to put together the African Continental Free Trade Area that has been created. This is going, and we hope that by July next year, it is going to be the biggest free-trade area in the world. However, we are not just thinking about the area. It is not just about the area. It is also what we do and how, where we do what need to do in the free trade area. How do we as Africans trade well

with each other? How do we allow free movement of people, goods and services? How do we partner with other parts of the world as a group of African countries in this free trade area?

We have seen that come up. I mentioned the Peace Fund in my speech. The Peace Fund comes from our own resources, as Africa could contribute something. We can contribute in the area of prevention of conflict and the management of the conflict that exists. We cannot just be running to other countries that have the capacity. We cannot go to the UN and say, 'We need help with everything.' We said we can contribute. Even if it is 10%, even if it is 15%, we need to contribute. Now, Africans have contributed to the fund, which is running to USD 130 million. It is a good thing and it never existed before. We have never been to this level. The level was sometimes 10 million or even less. There is another chairman of the African Union in place. We always hope the one who becomes the chair helps cover another area that needs to be covered.

Thierry de Montbrial

Thank you very much Mr. President. Now we are going to take a few questions. Renaud Girard, who you know, will be the first one.

Renaud Girard

Mr. President, I am very happy to meet you again. The first time I met you was in the bush in the North of Rwanda, in a place called Mulindi, and after that, you took power and you have been ruling Rwanda for the last 25 years. You have been able to maintain peace and develop your country in an extraordinary way, in agriculture, tourism, industry, services and so on. It is a big success. You have run Rwanda with an iron fist, but an iron fist which works. We call that *despotisme éclairé*. It is a beautiful success, but what will happen in Rwanda after Kagame? Do we have a guarantee that the civil war will not resume?

Paul Kagame

There is the part you started with, which is a good thing. You started with all the good things you said are happening. Good things do not happen because you are doing a bad thing. They happen because you are doing a good thing, so that is one. I mentioned my second point earlier. There is not going to be a situation where only one person does everything, even in our situation, even with the so-called iron hand you are talking about. That hand has its own limits. It is where it starts from and where it ends.

Third, there is the judgment in most cases by Rwandans of our own situation, given where we started from, where we are and what has happened in between. One is the most important. Second, it is a fair judgment. It is a fair judgment, fairer than when somebody uses an outsider's eyes to make a judgment about Rwanda or its leadership. Fourth, I can go into statistics of what has happened, of people we have trained, young people, people who were born during and after the genocide. That is around 25 years. These young people constitute 42% of our population. The number of those under 32 is 71%.

These are the people who are doing most of the things we are talking about. They have high levels of education and they are trained. We have been sending people outside to go and study with Europe. There was a programme to send young people to learn. What is interesting is that over 90% of those we send out come back on their own. There is no enforcement to bring people back home. They come back home. They are the ones running the institutions, most of them. Those of you who have been there recently will have met some of these young people running these things.

There is the Kagame you met that time, so long ago, and you were able to see the iron fist. That iron fist has passed on to many other fists. There are many young people, men and women, doing their work efficiently. They give results, and that is how I found time to come here and have a conversation with you. They are doing the rest of the work that they have to do. However, the time will come when I have to leave. These same young people will decide what to do with their country and they will choose from among themselves who carries on the baton.

Thierry de Montbrial



Thank you very much for this answer, which is both precise and imprecise, but that is normal. Generally speaking, after successful stories, succession is always difficult. That is a generality we can agree on.

Paul Kagame

Let me add something. Even when succession has come so rapidly, and where there has been success across the world, there is no guarantee that things will not go wrong. We can talk about cases if you want. We have had rapid succession and we still have not benefited from that, if there is any benefit from that. We see it across the world, whether it is the developed world or the developing world like ours, but that is another story for another conversation.

Thierry de Montbrial

Thank you very much. I saw several hands. The gentleman to my right.

From the floor

Your Excellency, President Paul Kagame, my question focuses on the model of development, Rwanda's model of development. You explained it. It is people centred and it also has a governance model as well, which you took from different parts of the globe. My question is, what is actually the model? There are known models. Is it the modernization type? This is not and I understand. Is it a developmental state paradigm or any other paradigm?

For me, from my readings and my personal observation, Rwanda is becoming a model of development for Africa. Everyone can say it. Some have even started to say Rwanda is the Switzerland of Africa, not with only the beautiful mountains but the development as well. That is one of my questions. The second one is about the African Union reform process. You led the process at a critical stage. Now, someone has taken over, so are you personally following it? I know as a member state, yes, but the future is your legacy, so what is your involvement in this particular issue?

Paul Kagame

Let me quickly say this. Regarding the model, people call it all kinds of things. I will break it down into some realities and maybe we can see whether that constitutes a model of one kind or another, or a model at all. However, I guess there are things that have to be taken into consideration. One, there is the role of the state. There is the role of the private sector. There is the role of the ordinary citizens. Some of them organize into civil societies.

One has to find the formula that brings these responsibilities together, because it is one country that is being served. In ours, what we have tried to do is strike this balance in a manner that gives results. How far does the State go in delivering the goods it should deliver? How does the private sector work with the State? What does the State provide as an environment for the private sector to do what it needs to do? Then on the side of the citizens, the governance part, how do they participate? How do they get involved so they feel they own what they have? These are the three legs of the stool, if you will, that we have worked on.

Let me quickly also give you an example. When we were dealing with the partners during those years, they were very active in Rwanda, supporting us, from the emergency situation to normalization and development. Every time, we used to tell our partners that we appreciated the kind of support they gave us. In fact, we even need more of it, not less. However, we also want to be the ones in the driver's seat, leading our development process, so we had to form a partnership. We said, 'We will decide for ourselves, or if you will, we will even work together in deciding for ourselves. We will tell you everything we want to do and how we want to do it, and we can make you partners, but we have to be the ones who decide. This was as far early as 1996, for example.

That in itself is very important, and whatever you call the model, those things have to be there. It is the understanding of the balance that has to be struck. There are people at the centre. By people, I mean the citizens, but also their leaders, working together, and the rest is what you get. On the part of the African Union, I still play a role of continuing with the leadership of the reform process. However, it is in support of whoever will be coming or whoever is there as the chair of the African Union after me. We report to the African Union general assembly, and at the same time, we

have the African Union Commission driving the responsibilities around that. We have the commission, the chair and the commissioners, and they participate in that.

Thierry de Montbrial

I have been told by the protocol that we should wind up now, but nevertheless, I will take one question, please.

Aminata Touré

Mr. President, Rwanda has been the country that has the biggest number of female parliamentarians in the world. I think also that women are positioned strategically very strongly, either in the economy or in politics. I would like to ask you whether you saw some real value added in promoting and supporting gender equality? Would you see the link with the success that everybody is describing? My assumption is that there is a very strong link in putting women where they need to be, in a very strong position. As a result, you were able to have success, both in the economy and in society as a whole. We would like you to explain to us how the case went, regarding making sure that women's rights are good for both the economy and for development as you did it.

Paul Kagame

First of all, I want to confirm what you just stated, and then I will back it with these points that will come afterwards. One, as you have said, women's involvement and participation is said that, regarding their contribution to the economy. It is also their right. Then if you look at the numbers, you can just look at our population in Rwanda. 52% of our population is women. It is very basic. If we were to remove 52% of your population and make them redundant, I do not think it is a very clever move and I do not think you will get anywhere.

However, you can also look at many other aspects. We invested in education for women because women were lagging behind in almost everything, including education. In education, business and even in the area of governance, they were absent. We first invested in their education, the health and education of women. What is going to be the result? I will also tell you that in the management of our population growth, the rates we have seen year in and year out, the population growth rate in Rwanda was at 3.2%, which was quite good. Rwanda is a very small country geographically. We have managed to bring down that population growth rate to something like 2.4 from 3.2.

What has contributed largely to other elements, including family planning for example, was education of women. Women were being educated, participating in the economy, doing business and work, in the public service or anywhere. This started bringing some sense of sanity to the whole economy and to society. There is a direct link and there is a direct benefit, no question. We have seen this.

In primary and secondary school education in Rwanda, the enrolment rate is one of the highest, if not the highest, on our continent. About 92% of people who need to go to school access school for the first 12 years. That is how we brought in women who were being left behind. In poor families, if they have girls and boys in families because of low incomes, they will leave girls at home and take the boys to school. We have now made sure that no girl is left behind and everybody is getting educated. They perform as well as the boys, and in some cases, much better.

All of these things cannot add up to nothing. They add up to this impressive progress and the results we see in every sector of our society. By numbers alone, we are raising women who participate. We are restoring the rights they should have in their participation regarding what affects them and what affects everybody. It is by improving their health and their productivity, in the area of agriculture, in business and anywhere else. You can go on and on and on. Every case speaks for itself, that women should not. By the way, if you flipped it the other way around, if there were women living behind men, you would end up with the same poor results. Society as a whole has to be taken care of, and we must particularly make sure women are restored right to the centre where they belong, as part and parcel of our society.

Thierry de Montbrial

Mr. President, I think that a good evening happens when you can combine food for thought and food for eating in a harmonious way. We have reached a good equilibrium tonight and I wish to thank you again, very, very much, for



coming to us. It is a great honour and pleasure and you have given a lot of food for thought. Thank you very much, and I hope that it is not the last time that you will come to the World Policy Conference.