

# Rwandan Parliament Makes US Ally and Military Partner, Paul Kagame President for Life

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*Rwanda has never, since its independence from Belgium, experienced peaceful transfer of power from one "elected" president to another. Each president that grabs power declares himself the only Rwandan capable of ruling. Each regime comes in power because they want to remove the dictator from power and hand the mantle of state power to "the people." Change from one regime to another has always been bloody in Rwanda.*

In 1994 General Paul Kagame defeated General Habyarimana after a bloody four year civil war. General Habyarimana had made himself "the father of the nation" and an irreplaceable president of Rwanda. General Kagame and his RPF/A waged the 1990-1994 war because General Habyarimana had closed all the possible venues for peaceful transfer of power. General Kagame and his RPF/A sounded determined to hand power over to "the people" after the war. Over a million Rwandans perished during the war.

## **General Kagame and his Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) party: More of the same**

After the war and massacres that brought Gen Kagame and his RPF/A into power, Gen Kagame's diagnosis of Rwanda's problem was "bad political leadership and clinging on to power. To address this problem, Gen Kagame and his RPF/A wrote the 2003 Rwanda Constitution. Article 101 of the 2003 Constitution provides, inter alia, "no person shall be president for more than two terms". Each term is 7 years under the 2003 Constitution of Rwanda.

Gen Kagame's second and last term under the 2003 constitution of Rwanda is due to expire in 2017. General Kagame claims that no Rwandan is capable of leading the country and "the people" need him to consolidate his "achievements".

## **Constitutional amendment to keep General Kagame in office:**

In a bid to legitimize his broad scheme to cling to power, Paul Kagame deployed his brutal security apparatus, at all levels of his administration, to compel "the people" to petition Parliament to change the law regarding term limits. Millions of Rwandans, including those who cannot read and/or write, "wrote" to Parliament "begging" for a constitutional amendment. The General then instituted a "constitutional review commission" which "consulted" the people before Parliament passed the constitutional review proposal on October 28th, 2015.

## **The new law of the jungle:**

Parliament approved various amendments including Article 167 which provides that:

Considering the citizen petitions preceeding [preceding] the coming into force of this revised Constitution that were informed by the nation-building achievements and creation of a sustainable development foundation, the President of the Republic completing the term of office referred to in Paragraph One of this Article may be re-elected for a seven (7) years term of office. The President of the Republic who has completed the term of office of seven (7) years referred to in [ ...] this Article may be re-elected as provided for by Article 101 of this Constitution.

Article 168: Senators in office at the time of commencement. Article 167 comes under a Section termed " Transitional Provisions".

Article 101 provides that " The President of the Republic is elected for a term of office of five (5) years. He/she may be re-elected only once."

### **A most unusual law:**

Article 167 read together with Article 101 has many implications.

First, the "amendment " has created an exception for the current president and military commander of Rwanda. Article 101 will be shelved until after seven years - the exceptional term created for him after 2017 - when Kagame will start running for a five year term, renewable only once, giving Kagame a chance to rule for 17 years after 2017. This is confirmation that "some animals are more equal than others " in this Animal Farm, thereby rendering the constitutional principle of equality before the law null and void.

Second, the law does not mention whether or not, if Kagame died or otherwise becomes incapacitated after 2017 but before 2024, Article 101 would come into force immediately. In any case, a constitutional provision ( the proposed Article 101) that shall not come into force until after 7 years is a most unusual law.

Third, the amendment creates " transitional provisions" in a constitution without a provisional government. "Transitional provisions" without a transitional government prove that what Kagame's junta has completed is a constitutional coup, not an "amendment to the constitution," as they call it.

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