Reshaping Approaches to Sustainable Peacebuilding and Development in Fragile States

Part I: Nexus between Unethical Leadership and State Fragility

Geneva Paper 26/20

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GCSP
Geneva Centre for Security Policy

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About the Author

Dr Gervais Rufyikiri has diversified experience in both academic research and politics. A former President of the Senate of Burundi (2005-2010) and Vice-President of Burundi (2010-2015), he contributed to the building of post-conflict institutions in that country. As a researcher he has written many scientific articles in the domains of agriculture, the environment and politics. His publications on Burundi dealing with the issues of peacebuilding, corruption and partnerships with donors were written while he was a scholar-in-residence at the University of Antwerp in 2015-2016. Since 2017 he has been an executive-in-residence at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. He was educated in Burundi and Belgium, and holds a doctorate in Biological, Agricultural and Environmental Engineering obtained in 2000 at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

The views expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the project's supporters or of anyone who provided input to, or commented on, earlier drafts.

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Executive summary

There is evidence that fragile states are far from achieving the peace and security goals enshrined in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ineffective leadership, weak institutions, poor governance and insecurity are the striking features of fragile states, and the impact of state fragility often extends beyond national borders. Whether affected by terrorism, large numbers of both internally and externally displaced persons, increased international solicitation for humanitarian aid or other problems, a fragile state is never an island by itself. Despite the international community's efforts to help fragile states improve their governance, build effective institutions and sustain peace, only limited progress has been made. This paper discusses the challenges facing ethical leadership, especially in the choice of policies and decision-making regarding their implementation, and highlights key features of the nexus between unethical leadership and (often violent) political crises. It argues that the unethical behaviour of leaders is the root cause of state fragility and suggests the reshaping of approaches to peacebuilding efforts in order to cultivate ethical leadership in fragile states.

I. Introduction

Peace and security are the core of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which states, "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".[1] Its achievement should create lasting positive change towards achieving dignity, justice and prosperity for all the people of the world. However, the fragility prevailing in some states hinders the full achievement of this ambitious agenda, because it has an adverse impact on every single SDG,[2] pushing fragile states towards failure.

In the absence of a consensus on the definition of state fragility, the list of fragile states varies according to the institution that defines them. The World Bank has narrowly defined a fragile state as one characterised by weak institutional capacity and/or seriously affected by violent conflict.[3] By the end of 2018 there were 36 countries and territories on the World Bank's list of fragile states, most of which (20) were located in Africa.[4] The 2018 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) fragility framework based on five dimensions of fragility – political, societal, economic, environmental and security-related – identified a total of 58 fragile states, of which 27 were seen as chronically fragile.[5] The Fragile States Index 2019 annual report indicates that 119 out of 178 countries lie between the "warning" and "very high alert" categories of fragility.[6]

There is evidence that fragile states have fallen behind more stable ones and are far from achieving SDG 16,[7] regardless of the definition used to identify them. Fragile states cannot recover on their own because their ability to self-organise, act and develop is limited[8] and, left to themselves, pose an immediate threat to world order. Countries with the highest fragility indices, such as Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Sudan and Afghanistan,[10] are also defined as the most corrupt states and are generally run by authoritarian regimes.[11] They are also ranked at the bottom in the index on gender equality and inclusiveness, which are other critically important factors in evaluating a country's performance.[12] Violently disputed elections[13] and changes to or the circumvention of countries' constitutions to extend presidential terms in office, even though most people support term limits and resist what are referred to as "constitutional coups",[14] are worrying phenomena that fuel insecurity, especially in fragile states. Such abuses of the fundamental principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights could be prevented by properly working and independent state institutions, in particular parliament and the judiciary, if they were able to fulfil their missions freely. The independence of these institutions and of other so-called independent institutions, such as independent national

human rights commissions, is a theoretical but not a practical reality.[15] Political manipulation and the stranglehold that executive power has over independent institutions are the major factors that limit the effectiveness of democratic control of the public sector in fragile states.[16]

State fragility is a matter of concern to the UN member states who committed themselves to "leaving no one behind" in their implementation of the SDGs.[17] One month before the SDGs' adoption, UN member states pledged through the Addis Ababa Action Agenda that the international community would revitalise a global partnership in the spirit of solidarity.[18] The UN has emphasised the need to address less-developed countries' specific needs.[19] For fragile states, peace and security require priority action because, in their absence, violence and insecurity cause serious harm to society, create multiple challenges and ultimately have a destructive impact on a country's development. Moreover, the impact of state fragility is felt beyond national borders. The propensity of fragile states to breed terrorism,[20] cause trans-continental mass migration[21] and refugee flows,[22] and politically align themselves with authoritarian powers is disrupting global security and order.[23]

Donor-driven legal and institutional reforms are typically introduced in fragile states mostly to fulfil conditionality requirements in order to access development assistance,[24] particularly in the aftermath of conflicts and civil wars. The aim is to help them improve their governance systems, build effective institutions and sustain peace. However, the enforcement of reforms by domestic leaders remains poor in many fragile states. For example, the international community's investment in peace and democracy consolidation turned post-war Burundi into an exemplary test case for the UN Peacebuilding Commission.[25] Various well-known independent international organisations introduced capacity-building and reform programmes, e.g. the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, with the Burundi Leadership Training Programme as a local partner,[26] and traditional partners like the Netherlands through the Burundi-Netherlands Security Sector Development programme.[27] The country has seen short-lived improvements and has been showcased as a success story. However, the gains were not sustained, but later reversed with stunning speed following the country's relapse into the political crisis of 2015. Since then, authoritarianism has been strengthening in Burundi. Many other states are trapped in stagnant fragility, only moving slightly forward, and then backward again in terms of political stability and economic progress, despite substantial international assistance.[28] The fact is that most current peacebuilding strategies can only help to ensure the absence of destructive violence, leading to what Mahmoud[29] has described as a negative peace.

The disproportionality between international efforts to assist fragile states and the poor results achieved suggests that international partners need to develop more efficient approaches and strategies, and that

fragile states and their partners should address the root causes and drivers of state fragility.[30] The entry point for successful stabilisation is the identification of the real circumstances that prevent fragile states from fully participating in the benefits of development. Political crises, corruption, and other indicators of bad governance are just the tip of the iceberg. In many fragile states leaders lack the practical experience and technical skills required for effective public management, either because they emerged from rebellions (in the case of Burundi), or because the state is young (in the case of South Sudan), or because a new leadership emerged after the opposition had won elections after decades of dictatorial regimes (in the cases of Gambia and the DRC). An excessively burdensome and bureaucratic public administration within an inappropriate governance structure (at one extreme characterised by highly centralised and personalised public power, and at the other extreme by loosely coordinated and fragmented public services) is another source of bad governance (in the case of DRC).[31]

Currently, technical capacity-building and legal and institutional reforms have received much attention from the international community to address governance challenges in fragile states.[32] However, from what I experienced as a prominent political personality in Burundi between 2005 and 2015 (see ”About the author”, above), international assistance programmes stumble by neglecting to tackle “adaptive challenges”,[33] such as ethical issues, because these issues are more complex and more resistant to quick fixes than technical ones. No adequate responses have yet been developed to build ethical leadership, while the decline of personal ethical sensitivity is a root cause of bad governance, poor progress in development and frequent crises in fragile states.[34] Sharing lessons learned from her experience in leading a post-conflict fragile country, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf,[35] the former president of Liberia, stated that an ethics base is the most critical aspect of any attempt to build national leadership capacities. This suggests the need to introduce leadership ethics education as basic to any attempts to resolve the challenges of state fragility.

The aim of this paper is to discuss issues of peace and security, leadership, and governance in fragile states. It is centred on the challenges of ethical leadership, especially in the choice of, decision-making regarding and implementation of policies. Part I of the two-part study contains a background description of the nexus between unethical leadership and state fragility. Part II discusses a sustainable solution to the challenges of ethical leadership consisting of a comprehensive educational programme on ethics. After this introduction, Part I first discusses conceptual insights into ethical leadership, then highlights key features of the nexus between unethical leadership and state fragility. The fate of leaders who have misgoverned their countries and the international reputation of exceptional role models for ethical leadership are also discussed to draw lessons

from history on the prominent role of ethical decisions, not only for the stability and prosperity of states, but also for the integrity of the leaders themselves. The paper contributes to the literature on understanding the phenomenon of state fragility and suggests reshaping existing peacebuilding approaches to reverse current governance trends in fragile states. The arguments that are presented are primarily based on the author's own reflections on and experience of leadership and governance issues gained from his role as a former leader in a particular fragile state, Burundi, supported by relevant data and ideas from the literature and discussions with colleagues.

II. Conceptual insights into ethical leadership

Analysed extensively from different perspectives in a wide variety of disciplines,[36] the concept of leadership is presented as a topic that gathers a wide range of evidence reflected in a broad typology that is distinguished by specific qualifiers. Each qualifier identifies the leader in relation to his/her attributes, including cognitive capacities and skills, personality, motives, social skills, task skills, self-belief and self-knowledge.[37] The leader's relationship to the ethical is one of these specific qualifiers.

Several definitions of ethical leadership have been formulated in the literature.[38] Brown et al.[39] have provided an in-depth conceptualisation of ethical leadership by linking it with several positive social and organisational outcomes. Accordingly, they have defined ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to the [leader's] followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making". The qualities that support ethical leadership are linked to tens of attributes, including acting with integrity, honesty, accountability, fairness, trustworthiness and selflessness, among others.[40] In contrast, leaders who lack all or some of these high standards of conduct are inclined to engage in unethical leadership, which is defined as "a process of intentional or unintentional, passive or active, and recurrent influencing that harms others, be it individuals, organization and/or society as a whole".[41] Unethical leadership is characterised by attributes such as dishonesty, corruption, egocentrism, manipulation, destructive influence and immorality.[42]

Multidimensional tools-based scales proposed by researchers to measure ethical leadership have helped to identify a strong positive relationship between ethical and effective leadership. An example is the "Ethical Leadership Work Questionnaire (ELW)" scale developed by Kalshoven et al.,[43] which found a positive relationship between ethical leadership and the perceived effectiveness of leaders in areas such as personal satisfaction and commitment, and, conversely, a negative one with attributes such as cynicism. The latter is one of the three key dimensions of "professional burnout" leading to unethical actions.[44] By increasing the perception of injustice and selfishness in organisations, unethical leaders encourage deviant behaviours among their followers,[45] undermine team member creativity[46] and self-esteem,[47] and drive these followers to lose trust in their leaders.[48] Thus, unethical leaders may disunite an organisation and pull it in a wrong direction, weaken its capacity and ultimately result in poor organisational performance. Weak institutional capacity is one of the features of state fragility.[49] The consequences of unethical leadership are a part of people's daily lives, whether they are confronting public

administrators or company leaders accused of tax evasion, negligence, corruption, political manipulation, human rights violations, or promoting inequalities through unequal access to resources and wealth.

It is worth noticing that unethical decision-making is not always an illegal act. Let us take the example of the controversial Bill amending Law No. 1/20 of 9 December 2009 on the Statute of the Head of State at the end of his/her term of office passed by the Burundian parliament in January 2020.[50] The Bill had been previously approved by the executive power. At the end of his/her term in office an (elected) president[51] will receive a cash payment equivalent to US$530,000 (£400,000), in addition to other benefits, including a luxury villa built in a location of his/her choice and a lifetime salary (the same benefits as a serving vice-president for seven years after he/she steps down and an allowance equal to that of a lawmaker for the rest of his/her life). Such benefits are exorbitant and indecent for the poorest country in the world with around 72 per cent of its population living below the poverty threshold of US$1.9 a day and one of the world's lowest gross domestic products (GDPs) per person employed (US$1,791 for the fiscal year 2018).[52] Such a decision is "lawful" but totally unacceptable and should be considered as a form of legalised corruption.

Ethical principles can conflict with one another, which can result in unethical decisions being taken. Leaders regularly face ethical dilemmas, e.g. when deciding on budgetary allocations among different sectors, especially in countries where resources are limited. The fairest outcome is often highly contentious. For example, following the secession of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011, subsidies that had long been provided on several goods, including bread, resulted in heavy budget deficits and became unaffordable for Sudan. The Bashir government's decision to impose austerity measures, including cutting these subsidies to tackle the economic crisis, resulted in an increase in the bread price and a "bread crisis" amid citizens' protests against the government's decision.[53] What seemed "ethically obvious" for the government turned out to be harmful for citizens. The importance of ethical principles in setting priorities has been evoked in several domains, including health care (disease prevention vs disease treatment)[54] and national security (mass intelligence surveillance to protect national security vs individual liberty and privacy).[55]

For example, six ethical principles are commonly used to analyse the vexing issues of setting priorities when formulating public (health) policy and allocating resources:

1. utilitarian (resources are directed in the most efficient or cost-effective way to reach the desired goals);
2. equity (resources are allocated so that outcomes are distributed as equitably as possible);
3. urgent need (the more urgent the need, the stronger the moral claims to resources);
4. prioritisation (ensuring greater care for the least advantaged cluster/sector);
5. rule of rescue (ensuring greater care for the most threatened groups); and
6. equal worth (non-discrimination among people).[56]

This example highlights the complex nature of ethical decision- and policy-making, especially if ethical principles are in competition, which makes a decision difficult. Thus, ethical leadership involves not only setting what are considered to be the correct priorities, but also anticipating the general public's reaction to the policies that are implemented.

III. Unethical leadership behaviour and political crises

Political crises threaten world peace, disrupt the world order and hinder the progress of affected countries, particularly fragile states. Outwardly, the triggers of crises are multiple, notably the grievances of citizens vis-à-vis the exclusionary ideology of political elites, popular resistance to authoritarian abuses, the popular struggle against corrupt political classes, and opposition to violations of humans rights. This section discusses these issues, which should be understood as outward manifestations of a deeper problem rooted in leadership itself: unethical leadership behaviour.

A. Divisive politics, grievances and political instability

Over the past two decades scholars have extensively debated whether the grievances of those who suffer injustice are a major trigger of political instability and civil wars. Studies have recently pointed out that group grievances are one of the most important determinants of the emergence of civil wars and terrorism.[57] An unethical leadership style that promotes political repression, exclusion, inequality and ethnic hatred creates group polarisation[58] and fosters grievances among excluded groups, all of which are likely to lead to violent conflict. This was the case for the recurrence of civil war in Liberia between 1999 and 2003, which was stirred up by the exclusionary behaviour of the elected post-war government vis-à-vis its former enemies.[59] This issue has caused civil wars in other countries, including in Burundi between 1993 and 2005,[60] Yemen since the Arab Spring uprising in 2011,[61] Sudan between 1983 and 2005,[62] and South Sudan since 2013.[63] In extreme cases the resulting social conflicts, insurgencies and brutal crackdowns have led to genocide, such as in Ethiopia between 1974 and 1991,[64] Rwanda in 1994,[65] Sudan's Darfur region since 2003,[66] and Myanmar since 2016,[67] and crimes against humanity in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010-2011[68] and Burundi since 2015.[69]

Aggrieved people can express their grievances in a variety of forms, from the less violent (such as a simple peaceful demonstration) to the more violent (such as terrorism). Several studies have shown that a greater incidence of domestic terrorist attacks was associated with economic[70] and political grievances.[71] For example, without neglecting the religious radicalisation dimension of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, local grievances have received much attention as the main driver of the insurgency.[72] Maegher[73] reported that "Boko Haram initially emerged as a protest against the poor governance and corruption of northern leaders".

B. Constitutional crises

Typically, unethical leaders such as dictators display utter contempt for democratic norms.[74] Many leaders in positions of power fight to retain the privileges they obtain from power, no matter the cost. For example, in Africa, changes of constitutions to extend presidential terms in office and unconstitutional extensions beyond term limits have been made in 18 countries, while such attempts have failed in eight others in the period between 1991 and 2019 (see Table 1). Attempts to change the constitution in this way led to serious political tensions in Senegal in 2011, Burkina Faso in 2014, the DRC between 2014 and 2018, and Togo between 2017 and 2019. Infringement of the 2005 Constitution for a controversial third presidential term triggered the 2015 violent electoral crisis in Burundi that has already caused more than 1,700 deaths and more than 400,000 Burundians to seek refuge in neighbouring countries.[75] Presidential term limits are generally an important part of peace agreements designed to help war-torn societies stabilise through a peaceful transition of power, but, as McCulloch and Vandeginste[76] have reported in the case of Burundi, the implementation of such limits by leaders in power remains biased in most fragile states.

Effective constitutional change

Country	Year	Country	Year
Namibia	1999	Tunisia	2002
Niger	2009	Togo	2003; 2019
Gabon	2003	Uganda	2005; 2017
Cameroun	2008	Djibouti	2011
Guinea-Conakry	2002	Republic of Congo	2015
Mauritania	1991	Rwanda*	2015
Chad	2005	Burundi	2018
Burkina Faso	1997	Egypt	2019

Failed attempt		***Infringement of the constitution***	
Country	**Year**	**Country**	**Year**
Zambia	2001	Burundi	2015 (third term)
Senegal	2011	DRC	2016-2018 (extending the term)
Malawi	2003		
Nigeria	2005		
Niger	2009-2010		
Burkina Faso	2014		
DRC	2014-2018		
Burundi	2014		

Table 1. Changes to constitutions to extend presidential terms in Africa, 1991-2019
** In Rwanda the constitutional amendment process was consultative, and the result was nationwide unanimity in favour of the amendment.*[77]

While elections should be the cornerstone of democratic governance and political stability, and should enhance the domestic and international legitimacy of democratic governments, they have also been used to bolster the legitimacy of autocratic regimes.[78] Unethical leaders who obstruct credible electoral processes and instigate controversial elections or establish elected autocracies are other sources of fragility in many states.[79] For example, since the re-emergence of multi-party elections in Africa in the 1990s, large-scale violent electoral crises have occurred in many countries. Electoral violence resulted in a high death toll and large numbers of displaced people in Kenya in 2007/2008, Côte d'Ivoire in 2010[80] and Burundi since 2015.[81] These cases are some examples of a more widespread problem. Using data from over 100 elections held in 44 African countries between January 2011 and August 2017, Kewir and Gabriel[82] found that "almost all these elections had cases of electoral violence at one stage of the poll".

Above the manifold causes that include social cleavage and polarisation, the type and stakes of elections, a non-inclusive electoral system and a biased electoral administration,[83] the unethical behaviour of ruling leaders is by far the most important factor causing electoral violence. For various motives, including greed, the desire for absolute power, and personal concerns over their future immunity and status, ruling leaders engage in unethical practices, including electoral fraud, and intimidation and repression of opponents in order to maintain or consolidate their power. Although a leader's opponents may also be guilty of violent acts, in most of cases they are reacting to the provocations of the main culprit, the ruling leader.[84]

Furthermore, while in democracies constitutions are tools for regulating and guaranteeing good political governance, they are used in autocracies to consolidate the power of the ruling system to the detriment of plural democracy. Formal and constitutional institutions tend to be dominated by informal sources of power and networks.[85] Decisions are often based on personal relationships rather than formal rules and are taken in informal settings outside of constitutional institutions.[86] Informal citizen-state engagement can turn an elected government into an unaccountable elected autocracy and promote privileged access to state services and resources for certain categories of citizens and not for others, which is a source of (often extreme) social inequality. As already mentioned above, social inequalities, followed by grievances, are a major cause of violent conflict.

And yet many fragile states have undergone regime changes as a result of insurgencies and civil wars that allow new configurations of political leadership. For example, military victories in the DRC in 1997 and CAR in 2013 and the negotiated peace agreement in Burundi in 2000 allowed warlords of politico-military movements to take part as key actors in the policy- and decision-making arena. At the time of insurgency or war, these warlords were fighting against the governments in power that were accused of being authoritarian, and asserted that their goals were to establish

democratic regimes and ensure social justice, equity and development. Persistent political violence, the progressive consolidation of a centralised and militarised regime, the instrumentalisation of the ruling party's youth movement and state institutions, and corruption scandals involving top leaders[87] indicate that the bad practices of the previous dictatorial regimes that rebel movements had fought against during civil wars simply continued under the new post-war dispensation.

Neuroscience provides an explanation of the seemingly insatiable human desire for power: "Power, especially absolute and unchecked power, is intoxicating".[88] This explains rulers' need to remain in power by associating it with the neurochemical processes in the brain that produce dopamine. Not only does this dopamine cause extreme pleasure in an individual, but at very high levels it can lead to unethical behaviour by the individual concerned. Constitutional changes or overt violations extending presidential mandates beyond the initially agreed term limits, the autocratic attitude of leaders, the use of violence to subjugate citizens and systemic grand corruption are some striking examples of unethical behaviour. When the political context is conducive to the separation of powers, the protection of the state against abuse of power by unethical leaders should be ensured by a combination of three elements: a strong civil society, a strong legal and institutional framework, and strong mechanisms to support and guarantee reforms and the peace process. However, because of constitutional crises and the "big man rule" prevailing in fragile states,[89] state institutions such as parliaments and the judiciary are barely independent, while political rights, civil liberties and freedom of the press are severely restricted, preventing civil society organisations from playing their role as watchdogs. Ultimately the whole democratic process is undermined, paving the way for various forms of abuse of power, including corruption and human rights violations.

C. Corruption

Corruption, defined as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain",[90] occurs in various forms, such as petty vs grand corruption, political vs bureaucratic corruption, and economic vs social corruption. Forms of economic corruption are bribes (including kickbacks), gratuities, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, and the receiving of gifts, while forms of social corruption are clientelism, patronage, favouritism and nepotism. Corruption is a global challenge, but manifests most strongly in fragile states.[91] Supporting her analysis with the examples of Afghanistan and Iraq, Chayes[92] has argued that corruption is at the root of state fragility and that "it is impossible to reduce fragility and some of its most chaotic manifestations while corruption runs rampant". Corruption is a clear component of illicit trafficking and organised crime, and it opens the door to money laundering.[93] A recent study documented that aid disbursements

to the most aid-dependent developing countries (including fragile states like Afghanistan and Burundi) were associated with wealth accumulation in offshore bank accounts by political elites.[94] Whether they come directly from aid or from other branches of the economy, the amounts of money diverted from the economies of developing countries (including fragile countries) by their leaders and their relatives and stashed away in foreign countries are counted in billions of dollars (see section 4). Elite capture of foreign aid renders such aid ineffective and prevents international donors from successfully achieving their initial objective of reducing poverty and socio-economic inequalities in recipient countries. Embezzlement by the elite, along with other forms of corruption, is the main cause of poor development in fragile states and can spark political violence.[95]

This example of elite capture of foreign aid provides an illustrative indication that corruption is an area of unethical behaviour inasmuch as it deviates from moral standards.[96] The fact that the diverted aid is hidden mainly in offshore banks known for secrecy and private wealth management and not in other financial centres means that the corrupt political elite would have made a deliberate choice to engage in corruption. Some researchers have argued that corruption ultimately implies ethics-based decisions, because corrupt people use their moral base to determine whether a certain situation or issue is right or wrong.[97]

In deeply rooted kleptocratic regimes corrupt leaders strive to protect themselves from revolt by using a combination of strategies, including repression by military forces, patronage, and a “carrot and stick” approach to strengthen loyalty to the regime.[98] However, in the event of a breakdown in the balance of this kind of system, popular insurrections have often ensued. Corruption is often central to the unaddressed grievances of the population, which can also spill over into violence.[99] A previous study had shown that corruption in Burundi had contributed significantly to the deterioration of the climate of trust between citizens and the state during the post-war period.[100] Several civil society organisation activists suffered various forms of abuse, including intimidation, arrest, arbitrary detention, and even death threats following their disclosure and criticism of cases of corruption.[101] Corruption and other forms of rent-seeking or “rents to sovereignty” create unequal access to services and resources, and inequalities between a small group of privileged people, on the one hand, and the rest of the population, on the other. Many people suffer from extreme poverty as a result of these inequalities, which increases their sense of grievance. This can lead to crises like those anti-government protests experienced by Brazil, Lebanon, Malaysia, South Africa, South Korea, Sudan and Bulgaria during these recent years.

While most corruption-related conflicts have been managed domestically without the intervention of foreign forces, the crisis in the DRC that led to the fall of the Mobutu regime in 1997 quickly turned into a regional war.

Unlike most analyses, which have described the DRC merely as a fragile and failed state,[102] Lezhnev[103] has presented the country as a violent kleptocracy that has resulted in violence and corruption being enduringly linked. Corruption engendered an inefficient economy and the collapse of the Mobutu regime and, subsequently, sparked a violent crisis that has endured since 1996. Nine other countries, including the DRC's five allies and four foes, were directly involved,[104] and the crisis became the biggest war in the history of modern Africa and one of the deadliest wars in human history. This war showed that corruption-related violence can result in a regional war.

Domestic and donor-driven anti-corruption policies have led to the establishment of anti-corruption institutions, most of which were set up by referring to corruption in terms of the principal-agent-client model.[105] In the public sector the role of the principal is played by domestic policy-makers, such as members of the government, or any official responsible for other public servants, which are referred to as the agents. For example, in the area of revenue collection in Burundi, the commissioner general of the Burundi Revenue Authority is considered the principal, while tax collectors are agents. The basic premise of the model is that the principal is supposed to be honest. Agents make decisions on behalf of the principal and provide services to citizens, who are referred to as the clients (such as taxpayers). They are presumed to work primarily for their own benefit,[106] potentially creating moral hazards and conflicts of interest, which can lead to corrupt behaviour. The behaviour of the principal, agents and clients has been analysed in terms of the costs and benefits associated with their actions, using various kinds of models[107] mostly derived from an economic approach based on the principle of crime and punishment.[108] Thus, anti-corruption policies and institutions should be able to increase the costs of corruption and result in deterrents such as the probability of conviction and the severity of punishments for convicted persons. Examples of punishments are job termination, probation, fines and jail terms. However, the proliferation of anti-corruption institutions has failed to hinder corrupt practices, especially in fragile states.[109] This failure results from the difficulties of implementing the principal-agent-client model in states governed by kleptocratic regimes where elites are the least likely to implement anti-corruption reforms. This was the case in Burundi, where in addition to the regular courts, a large number of anti-corruption institutions were set up in the post-war period, including the Special Anti-Corruption Brigade, the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Anti-Corruption Court, the Anti-Corruption Court, the General State Inspectorate and the Audit Court.[110] However, Burundi is rated among the world's most corrupt countries and continues to experience a decline in its rating in the Corruption Perception Index.[111]

However, anti-corruption measures are ineffective in cases of systemic, grand corruption[112] where the supposedly "principled principals", e.g. senior state officials, are also involved in corruption either as corrupt

individuals themselves or as corrupters of others.[113] In my experience as a former Burundian leader, the main problems under these conditions are both the controlling of those who are supposed to control others and the prosecution of corrupt agents who often enjoy protection from powerful corrupt networks with whom they are complicit in acts of corruption. An illustrative case has been reported in a previous study.[114] This indicates that a strategy to address ethical issues among leaders should be prioritised before anti-corruption reforms.

Corruption is the source of many other forms of abuse of power, such as threats against whistleblowing and criticism, but also other forms of human rights violations, some more serious than others. This is the case with the incentives that unethical leaders offer to their supporters during mass mobilisation campaigns that generally lead to widespread human rights abuses.

D. Unethical leaders' rhetoric and mass killings

Politically motivated mass killings are part of the violence that characterises civil wars. They are never spontaneous, and result from a process planned and prepared in several stages. When conceptualising a stage-by-stage model of the genocidal process (the worst form of mass killings), Genocide Watch has identified eight processes that precede the actual killings, including classification, symbolisation, discrimination, dehumanisation, organisation, polarisation, preparation, persecution, extermination, and denial.[115] This sub-section discusses some of these detectable early warning signs of mass killings. It focuses particularly on dehumanising hate speech and various incentives used as tools to polarise communities and mobilise the perpetrators of crimes.

Dehumanising hate speech

Dehumanisation is known to be a powerful weapon of psychological warfare. It consists of denying human attributes in others and instead representing them as animal-like or people with undesirable characters.[116] According to the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, genocide starts "with the dehumanization of a specific group of persons".[117] Dehumanisation has a twofold purpose. Firstly, it is a means of indoctrinating a social group to consider the targeted group as a threat, as inferior to their social class or as undesirable. Thus, the targeted group is persecuted because of a fear of "contamination", or because of its perceived deviance from "acceptable" standards of appearance or behaviour.[118] Secondly, verbal attacks of this kind can lead to moral exclusion resulting in a deriding, cowing and demoralising effect on the group labelled as "the enemy".

The mass killings of Hutus in Burundi in 1972 (with more than 200,000 victims) were preceded by speeches labelling intellectuals, students and businessmen of the Hutu ethnic group as *"abamenja"*, a Kirundi word meaning traitors or people guilty of unforgivable crimes.[119] The recent exhumation by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of the remains of 7,000 people (of those killed in 1972) identified in 14 mass graves in Ruvubu in Karusi province was shattering.[120] These 14 mass graves were some of more than four thousand that the TRC had identified across the country.[121] At the time of the Burundi monarchy (abolished in 1966), an *"umumenja"* (or *"abamenja"* in the plural form) was any person in rebellion against the king or who had threatened the life of the king. Since 2005 it has been common to hear hate speech by Burundian leaders. In March 2012 the late President Nkurunziza inserted *"mujeri"* in Burundian political jargon as a new term to portray opponents of his regime.[122] *"Mujeri"* is a Burundian term for stray dogs, which are hungry, small and skinny because they have been abandoned by their owners. They are also rabid, and therefore, when captured, are killed. Since then, the term *"mujeri"* has been extensively used by officials and members of the ruling party in references to opponents.[123] These dehumanising hate-filled speeches have encouraged the inhumane and degrading treatment of opponents and led to serious crimes being committed since the 2015 crisis. The ongoing International Criminal Court (ICC) investigations into crimes committed in Burundi[124] and the report by Amnesty International[125] on the existence of mass graves in the suburbs of the capital, Bujumbura, showed that mass killings have also occurred during the 2015 crisis.

Hate speech using animalistic metaphors in recent years in Burundi are reminiscent of those used on the eve of dreadful events in several countries. Hate speech based on the "fantasy of purity" was practised in Nazi Germany to differentiate social groups during the holocaust against Jews and other "undesirables", portraying them as "lice" and "bacteria"[126] and "stupid pigs".[127] Bosnian Muslims were dehumanised as being "ethnic filth" prior to their ethnic cleansing by Serbs.[128] On the eve of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, President Juvenal Habyarimana's regime portrayed the members of the minority ethnic group in that country, the Tutsi, as *"inyenzi"* (cockroaches).[129] President Muammar Qaddafi portrayed opponents of his regime as stray dogs, rats and cockroaches during the 2011 crisis in Libya.[130] Mass killings during the Libyan crisis of 2011 was proven by the discovery of mass graves, one of which contained 1,700 human remains.[131] By likening a specified social group or opponents to these unpleasant, invasive, hated animals in certain cultures, political leaders effectively stripped the targeted group of any semblance to humanity and impelled their supporters to exterminate members of the group as they would any pest.[132] Similarly, the concept of *Ivoirité* (Ivority) was used during the 2011 crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in the hate speech of President Laurent Gbagbo, who tried to galvanise his supporters, whom he considered as "indigenous" people in Côte d'Ivoire, against so-called "non-authentic" Ivorians.[133]

People's response to leaders' hate speech and incentives

Despite the abundance of literature on mass killings and other mass atrocities, opinions still disagree on what constitutes or motivates mass atrocities and killings.[134] Mass killing is intentional and causes the death of a massive number of non-combatants during a given period. Regardless of the threshold for "massive number" suggested by different authors, for example Valentino (50,000 during five years or less)[135] and Mukherjee and Koren (50 during a given year in specific locations in a given country),[136] how do ordinary citizens come to kill their neighbours on a massive scale? In most cases, murderers and victims have been living next to each other for generations in seemingly peaceful cohabitation.[137] For example, the divide between non-Arab and Arab people had not been particularly serious before the 2003 civil war in Sudan's Western Darfur region.[138] As Williams[139] has stated, mass killings such as genocide rarely occur in situations of anarchy or chaos. They require a degree of political organisation by a leader or leaders at the top of a state's governmental hierarchy and are characterised by a progressive increase in hostility and violence. The hate speech of leaders amplifies and transmits the message of hatred from the top to the grassroots levels. The mobilisation of his/her followers to implement the leader's intention is the most distressing phase of the process, establishing a context for massive numbers of inhuman and degrading acts to occur.

In addition to hate speech, leaders frequently use incentives to corrupt their followers' minds and consciences and provoke physical aggression, particularly among young people. The first type of incentive consists of tangible rewards such as promising land or jobs to unemployed young people. The desire to maintain or ensure economic domination over rival social groups[140] can develop into a cleansing of members of "undesirable" groups. This was the case in the civil war in Darfur. At the beginning of the war the Sudanese government was fighting two rebel movements – the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement – both of which wanted a greater degree of power-sharing and equal access to resources at the national level.[141] While government attacks on non-Arab sedentary farming civilians appeared to be political, because the aim was to cut off the rebels from their supporters among the population, occupying the property of the victims was a major interest of the *Janjaweed* – a pro-government militia of Arab nomads who carried out the attacks. Without neglecting other dimensions of the violence that ensued, such as a power struggle, identity politics and regional conflict,[142] control over land and natural resources was a major component of the inter-communal clashes in Darfur.[143] According to Besançon,[144] economic factors "might exacerbate violence in all civil conflicts".

As a second incentive, unethical leaders lead their followers to believe that they face a serious existential threat, thereby creating a sense of deep paranoia that leads them to believe they must fight for their survival. The narrative of victimisation and the underlying professed need to liberate one

group from control by another constitute an effective tool of mobilisation and has motivated mass killings. The victims are targeted because of their racial, cultural, ethnic, political and religious identity, and their country or region of origin. An example was the 1959 Rwandan social revolution, which led to the post-independence Hutu-controlled republic.[145] This Rwandan model inspired a similar form of political positioning among the Burundian elite, caused enormous mutual distrust between the Hutu and Tutsi, and fueled episodes of cyclical mass violence.[146] For the Hutu, the Rwandan model was the ideal political formula for Burundi, constituting a nightmare scenario for the Tutsi that was to be avoided at all costs.[147] (Burundi and Rwanda are neighbouring countries seen as two "false twins" sharing similar ethnic configurations.)

A third incentive used by unethical leaders is that of covering up the crimes committed by their followers by denying them or understating the facts in official statements and by guaranteeing of immunity, i.e. the non-prosecution of perpetrators of mass killings. Then, the public discourse of leaders portraying the targeted group as animal-like would implicitly offer their supporters the possibility to kill without fear of punishment for their crime(s). The lives of the members of the targeted group are at stake because their human identity is stripped away and they no longer enjoy the protection of the leader. In addition to the protection against prosecution by national courts guaranteed to perpetrators, unethical leaders also manage to hinder lawsuits pursued by competent international courts. For example, the Sudanese government's refusal to cooperate with the ICC has obstructed the enforcement of many arrest warrants issued by the latter against those suspected of committing genocide in Darfur.[148] Refusal by national governments to cooperate with the UN's human rights monitoring mechanisms to investigate serious crimes and other atrocities committed on their territories is of considerable concern and has also been reported in many countries,[149] including Burundi,[150] Myanmar[151] and the Philippines.[152] The fact is that, even if these mechanisms have an international legal personality, the supranational elements of their status clash with other international principles. For example, the ICC's investigations are often curtailed by the principle of complementarity to national criminal jurisdictions, forcing it to exercise its jurisdiction on this basis,[153] and the principle of state sovereignty,[154] in addition to its lack of a direct enforcement mechanism, since it has no police force.

Therefore, as long as the effectiveness of the ICC and UN Charter and treaties-based human rights bodies depend on the good faith and willingness to cooperate of UN member states, the UN will only be able to express its "great regret" over the failure of these bodies to deliver justice.[155] Instead, it should develop the system of international diplomacy to make it more effective in engaging the responsibility of states parties, in order to protect the credibility of these institutions. As recommended in another

study,[156] the UN Security Council should also provide more support to these institutions, in particular by taking appropriate measures to carry out follow-up actions against states parties that fail to comply with their commitments.

A fourth incentive used by unethical leaders involves providing political, physical, and economic empowerment to their followers, especially young people.[157] In government-led mass atrocities, the instrumentalisation of youth and their militarisation in government-backed militia that they are sometimes forced to join are another dreadful source of manpower for regimes to perpetrate mass human rights violations and killings. Such militia groups are spaces for youth indoctrination, brainwashing, political manipulation and paramilitary training leading to the risk that an entire generation can effectively be destroyed.[158] Although youth are sometimes coerced into joining militia groups,[159] many of them are volunteers who join of their own free will. Enjoying the "power of guns" and proximity to the government represents a tremendous privilege and enhances the power of pro-government militia. Human Rights Watch[160] has reported that the Burundian pro-government militia known as *Imbonerakure* had more power than local police and that its members were feared by the population for their brutality and cruelty. The opportunities that militia groups offer to their members for looting for self-enrichment and widespread rape provide benefits that can outweigh the moral risks associated with participating in acts of violence. The *Imbonerakure* in Burundi,[161] the *Jeunes Patriotes* movement and the Patriotic Galaxy in Côte d'Ivoire,[162] the Janjaweed in the Sudanese region of Darfur,[163] the *Interahamwe* in Rwanda,[164] the *Shabiha* in Syria,[165] and the *Sturmabteilung* or Hitler Youth in Nazi Germany[166] are a few examples of pro-government militia groups made up primarily of young people affiliated to their respective countries' ruling parties who have been widely reported as active perpetrators of serious crimes. Using a global dataset for the period from 1982 to 2007, Mitchell et al.[167] reported that pro-government militia existed in over 60 countries in that period.

The fifth incentive is ideological support based on the principle of "carrot and stick". Joining the militia group may not be formally mandatory, as it was in Nazi Germany, for instance. However, non-members are often exposed to peer pressure and various types of threats, harassment, violence and, in some cases, killings or arbitrary arrests, as the UN Human Rights Council reported to be occurring in Burundi.[168] This implies that non-membership of a pro-government milia might be a punishable offence according to the guidelines of an informal, parallel administration. Thus, some young people reluctantly submit to joining a militia and being indoctrinated as the only way to ensure their physical safety and the security of their property and livelihoods.

These incentives utilise the classic economic theory of crime and punishment, within an "expected utility" framework.[169] The calculation of expected net pay-off from crime is comparable to the cost-benefit calculation in business. Changing either the cost or benefit alters the

criminal behaviour and the participation of individuals in criminal activities.[170] Normally, any crime should be discouraged by the individual's moral sense, the probability of conviction and the severity of the punishment imposed on convicted people. Reducing these deterrent variables, which results in minimising the expected costs of crime, together with offering incentives that increase the expected benefits, have the effect of maximising the expected net pay-off and encouraging individuals to commit crimes.

In practical terms, economic, political, and ideological motives are often intertwined and difficult to distinguish. Both hate speech and the abovementioned incentives are intended to deepen socio-political identity-based polarisation and encourage a leader's followers to compromise their integrity, their sense of morality and their intrinsic psychological self-censorship prior to taking action. They stimulate the behaviours of sadism, overinflated self-esteem and egotism, and exacerbate the feeling of (misguided) idealism and the desire for power and domination. These key motives transform "ordinary" people into perpetrators of crime.[171] Individuals and/or communities are torn between the advantages they may draw from the incentives that they are offered, on the one hand, and their personal ethical sense, on the other. Hate speech and incentives of this kind are extremely criminogenic, particularly because polarising propaganda increases the likelihood of mass killings.[172]

In light of the points made in this section, I argue that the dimension of ethical leadership has been overlooked in current literature and indices of state fragility (like those of the World Bank, OECD and Fund for Peace). Logically, therefore, it has not received the appropriate attention in policies to counter state fragility. And yet the facts of contemporary history show that the ethical dimension of decisions and actions is a key factor affecting the success (or failure) of leaders and their governance practices.

IV. Learning from history

Expressing his view of a particular political doctrine, former US president Abraham Lincoln wrote in a letter dated 6 April 1859, “This is a world of compensations; and he who would be no slave, must consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves”.[173] The post-colonial history of the African continent (and of other continents) is rife with dictators whose ultimate fate was not as they themselves envisioned. Some examples are shown in Table 2. A number of former dictators such as Jean-Bedel Bokassa, Nicolae Ceausescu, Manuel Noriega, Jorge Rafael Videla, Charles Taylor, Slobodan Milošević, Hissène Habré, Saddam Hussein, Omar al-Bashir and Hosni Mubarak have been held accountable through judicial processes. Prosecutions are also increasingly directed against some former kleptocratic leaders. Nicaragua’s former president, Arnoldo Aleman,[174] and El Salvador’s former president, Elias Antonio Saca,[175] are examples of those leaders who have been jailed for corruption, while the prosecutions are still ongoing for others like Brazil's former president Lula Da Silva,[176] South Africa’s former president Jacob Zuma[177] and Thailand’s former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.[178] The total number of senior national leaders in their respective states with the rank of heads of state or government, like presidents, prime ministers or monarchs, who have been imprisoned or placed under house arrest since 1990 for the abuse of power is certainly more than three hundred. Current leaders should draw the lesson from these examples that any unethical actions should be avoided, not only for the safety of the citizens of their respective countries, but also for their own safety.

Country	Dictator's name	Period of rule	Regime characteristics
Argentina	Jorge Rafael Videla	1975-1981	Repression
Burkina Faso	Blaise Compaoré	1987-2014	Repression and violation of constitutional term limits
Burundi	Michel Micombero	1966-1976	Civil war and mass killings
CAR	Jean-Bedel Bokassa	1966-1979	Authoritarianism and massacres
Chad	Hissène Habré	1982-1990	Crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture
DRC (Zaire)	Mobutu Sese Seko	1965-1997	Civil war
Egypt	Hosni Mubarak	1981-2011	Repression of opponents
Ethiopia	Mengistu Haile Mariam	1977-1991	Civil war and genocide
Iraq	Saddam Hussein	1979-2003	Crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide

	Fate
	Sentenced in 1985 to life imprisonment (died in jail in 2013)
	Exile in Côte d'Ivoire
	Exile in Ethiopia (died in 1983)
	7 years in exile in Côte d'Ivoire and France and 7 years in jail (died in 1996)
	Exile in Senegal, arrested in 2013 and sentenced in 2017 to life imprisonment
	Exile in Morocco (died in 1997)
	Arrested and imprisoned (freed after 6 years in custody and died in 2020)
	Exile in Zimbabwe (sentenced to death in absentia in Ethiopia)
	Arrested and sentenced to death by hanging, executed in 2006

Table 2. Some contemporary dictators and their fate

Country	Dictator's name	Period of rule	Regime characteristics
Liberia	Charles Taylor	1997-2003	Civil war
Libya	Muammar Qaddafi	1969-2011	Civil war
Panama	Manuel Noriega	1983-1989	Human rights violations
Romania	Nicolae Ceausescu	1967-1989	Genocide
Rwanda	Juvénal Habyarimana	1973-1994	Civil war and genocide after his death
Sudan	Omar Hassan al-Bashir	1989-2019	Genocide in Darfur
Gambia	Yahya Jammeh	1994-2017	Repression and execution of opponents
Tunisia	Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali	1987-2011	Human rights violations and repression of the freedom of the press and expression
Uganda	Idi Amin Dada	1971-1979	Terror and cruelty
Yugoslavia/ Serbia	Slobodan Milošević	1997-2000	Crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide

	Fate
	Exile in Nigeria, arrested in March 2006 and sentenced in May 2012 to 50 years in prison by the Special Court for Sierra Leone
	Captured and killed
	Captured and then imprisoned successively in the US, France and his country (died in 2017)
	Arrested, sentenced and executed
	Killed when his aircraft was shot down by surface-to-air missiles
	Arrested and imprisoned
	Exile in Equatorial Guinea
	Exile in Saudi Arabia (died in 2019)
	Exile in Saudi Arabia (died in 2003)
	Arrested and transferred in 2001 to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, where he died in 2006

Table 2. Some contemporary dictators and their fate

It should also be noted that ethical decisions by state leaders have averted crises and encouraged democratic processes around the world, including in regions regularly hit by socio-political crises. Some African countries may be considered successful models or "islands of peace in a troubled sea", such as Botswana, Mauritius and Seychelles. It is partly because they are an exception to the phenomenon known as the "resources curse"[179] that these countries stand out from others by their stability,[180] overall good governance,[181] and low levels of corruption.[182] The success of these countries could not have been achieved if their leaders did not behave ethically and did not commit themselves to good governance practices. Taking advantage of the many benefits offered to people by democracy in terms of peace, stability and development, the effective engagement of leaders in these countries helped to sustain the democratisation process as a pivotal pillar of peace and stability.

While the post-colonial period was marked by political conflicts and civil wars that struck most of the newly independent states, complying with ethical norms helped the former president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, to shape a lasting peace and ensure stability for that country.[183] He codified a set of ethical principles based on the ideal of brotherhood known as *"ujamaa"*. Known for his humility, incorruptibility, integrity, compassion and support for the African continent's liberation movements, Nyerere identified himself as a role model for ethical leadership through his personal and professional behaviour. Tanzania's strong culture of the peaceful transfer of power is one of the legacies of Nyerere's leadership. Countries torn by civil wars have also been able to transition to peace and democracy thanks to great leaders. The key role played by Nelson Mandela in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa is by far the most awe-inspiring example and has earned him international recognition as a rare icon of peace and one of the greatest moral and political leaders of the 20th century.[184]

Exceptional role models for ethical leadership are internationally encouraged and showcased, for example in the case of the Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership. Since 2007, six laureates – J.A. Chissano (Mozambique, 2007), N.R. Mandela (South Africa, 2007), F.G. Mogae (Botswana, 2008), P.V.R. Pires (Cape Verde, 2011), H. Pohamba (Namibia, 2014) and E. Johnson-Sirleaf (Liberia, 2017) – have been recognised and rewarded for outstanding leadership during their presidential terms in office.[185] The prime minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed Ali, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2019 "for his efforts to achieve peace and international cooperation, and in particular for his decisive initiative to resolve the border conflict with neighboring Eritrea".[186] He joined other well-known leaders who have won the Nobel Peace Prize for their contributions to peace in their countries, including Nelson Mandela (South Africa, 1993) and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Liberia, 2011).

From an economic perspective, ill-acquired wealth is receiving more attention than ever, and tracking down corrupt leaders has become a major concern around the world, especially in the current decade. There is a strong upward trend towards greater seizure of assets acquired through economic crimes, and the achievements in this regard have been impressive. Corrupt dictators and their collaborators should be aware that the likelihood of illegally acquired money and other assets being seized and the money being returned to the public treasury is increasing. The prosecutions of former corrupt dictators, their families and associates by national governments for economic crimes, coupled with the seizure of their illicitly acquired money and other assets, demonstrates a political will in several countries to fight corruption at the top. Countries that have already taken tangible action include Angola,[187] Argentina,[188] Honduras,[189] Kyrgyzstan,[190] Libya,[191] Nigeria,[192] Peru,[193] the Philippines,[194] Senegal,[195] Sudan,[196] Gambia,[197] Tunisia[198] and Uzbekistan.[199] The amounts recovered can be enormous. For example, according to Rijkers et al.,[200] the Tunisian post-revolutionary government recouped assets previously held by the Ben Ali clan whose total value exceeded US$13 billion, representing more than a quarter of Tunisia's GDP in 2011.

Moreover, the joint efforts of national leaders and the international community to fight economic crimes and money laundering have helped some countries to recover stolen money that former corrupt dictators and their relatives had stashed away outside their countries. Western countries including France, Portugal, San Marino, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States have already enforced concrete measures by seizing money and other assets misappropriated by former dictators.[201] Marcos (the Philippines), Montesinos (Peru), Mobutu (DRC/the former Zaire), Abacha (Nigeria), Atambaev (Kazakhstan), Salinas (Mexico), Duvalier (Haiti), Ben Ali (Tunisia) and Mubarak (Egypt) are among former dictators who had siphoned off their countries' funds and stashed stolen money in foreign countries. Vigilance also strikes family members of kleptocratic dictators who have accumulated wealth illegally, like the recent seizures of assets and bank accounts owned in Europe by the eldest son of the president of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue,[202] the former first lady of Taiwan, Sue-Jen Wu,[203] and Isabel dos Santos[204] and José Filomeno dos Santos,[205] the daughter and son of the former president of Angola, respectively. These national and international actions that make it tougher for corrupt leaders or their family members to hide illicitly acquired wealth are good practices. They should help fragile states to deal with corruption among high-ranking public figures and should be encouraged and sustained. The systematic enforcement of legal frameworks aimed at fighting corruption and money laundering and enhancing financial transparency should increasingly deter corrupt practices, including in fragile states.

V. Conclusion

The identification of fragile states by referring only to levels of institutional capacity and/or violent conflict, or to the various dimensions of fragility – political, societal, economic, environmental and security-related – has created a large gap in the identification of the real circumstances that prevent such states from emerging from their weakness and fully enjoying the benefits of stability and development. This study has analysed state fragility by using a different lens centred on the challenges of ethical leadership, especially in the choice of, decision-making regarding and implementation of policies, and has highlighted key features of the nexus between unethical leadership and state fragility. It has provided evidence to support its conclusion that the indicators commonly used to characterise fragile states, such as corruption, the prevalence of violent crisis, human rights violations and infringements of the rule of law, are just the tip of the iceberg. It then argued that the unethical behaviour of leaders is the root cause of state fragility. These conclusions pave the way for new prospects for peacebuilding approaches and strategies to reverse current governance trends in fragile states. Part II of this study will present reflections on a new approach to address the root causes and drivers of state fragility.

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