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The Politics of Revitalising Agriculture in Kenya

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In March 2004 the Kenyan government set out its Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture (SRA). Eight years later, almost no progress had been made. The SRA experience highlights both the potential and the limitations of competitive politics in promoting reform and the collective-action challenge that can confront reform of agriculture-sector institutions. The December 2002 election had created a window of opportunity for issue- and performance-based politics in Kenya. However, the new government coalition began to unravel soon after attaining power, and the return to ethnically-based patronage politics – illustrated here in relation to agriculture – undermined the SRA's chances of success.

Key words: Kenya, agricultural policy, Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture, collective action, democratisation

1 Introduction

When the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government headed by Mwai Kibaki came to power at the end of 2002, there was widespread agreement amongst the Kenyan policy-making elite that something had to be done to improve agricultural performance. Agriculture was highlighted as a priority sector within the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERS) policy framework produced in April 2003. Work started almost immediately on a sectoral strategy for agriculture, eventually culminating in the Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture (SRA) that was launched by the President in March 2004. The SRA, however, did not just signal the government's intention to 'do something about agriculture'; it proposed a radical reform of the role of the state within the sector. Numerous, often overlapping and sometimes redundant, items of agricultural legislation were to be harmonised into one or a few pieces of framework legislation. The number of state organisations was to be reduced through closure or privatisation, while the mandates of others were to be scaled back and yet others put into public-private partnerships to increase their efficiency. The overall aim was to refocus the government on the provision of key public goods, such as research and extension services, roads and irrigation infrastructure. In theory this focus ought to benefit all producers whilst also creating greater space for the private sector to expand the services it provides, most notably output marketing, but also input supply and financial services.

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As will be discussed in more detail in this article, this did not happen, despite the priority that the government had attached to agricultural recovery and the support the SRA received from Kenya's international development partners. Instead, continuing the Kenyan historical tradition, some efforts were made to improve the performance of individual state organisations so as to revive specific commodity sectors, for example dairy and beef. Then, in 2010 the SRA – originally intended to run from 2004 to 2014 – was superseded by the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy 2010-20 (ASDS). However, eight years after the launch of the SRA, little had changed in the sector.

In what follows we relate the SRA experience to the existing literature on public-sector reform in Africa and other low-middle-income contexts. Given that agricultural state organisations occupy a central position in the political economy of Kenya, we argue that the type of radical reform envisaged by the SRA could only be contemplated because competitive electoral politics created incentives for one part of the political elite to offer a break with the past pattern of patronage politics. In the terminology of Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), the 2002 election represented a critical juncture for Kenya. However, not all such opportunities are seized. In the SRA case, radical reform of Kenya's state organisations required collective action on the part of many Ministers, representing different ethno-regional groups within the country. Unfortunately, the NARC government began to unravel soon after attaining power and such collective action became impossible. Political competition then reverted to its past pattern of patronage politics in which control of state organisations is critical. Moreover, once the national perspective on agricultural policy was lost, the public-goods investments that were also central to the SRA lost all momentum.

The article illustrates the recurring pattern of patronage politics in the Kenyan agriculture sector during the governments of President Kibaki. We also argue that high levels of poverty and inequality in rural Kenya are perpetuated through the resulting pattern of agricultural policy. Some, including Bates (1989), expressed the hope that democratisation would be able to lead to a greater focus on policy issues in national political competition and a chance for poor smallholder households to use their numerical advantage to demand more supportive policy and investment. However, the SRA experience illustrates both the potential and the limitations of competitive politics in promoting public-sector reform in agriculture. In Kenya the limitations stem from the fact that the ethno-regional basis of politics has so far survived the democratisation process largely unscathed, and demand from poor smallholder households for greater investment in agricultural public goods that would benefit them remains very weak.

The article draws on ongoing monitoring of, and participation in, the Kenyan agricultural and political scenes by the authors over the past decade, combined with key informant interviews conducted periodically during the years 2005-12.

2 The political economy of public-sector reform

'Economic reform [including reform of public-sector agencies] is inherently political because by changing the distribution of benefits in society, economic reform benefits some social groups and harms others' (Adams, 2000: 2). Reforms are likely to be supported and opposed by different stakeholder groups, both within government and the bureaucracy and outside. Coalitions of support are required for the design and successful implementation of reform.

In the case of public-sector reform, bureaucrats often oppose reform if it will lead to a reduction in the number of jobs. Moreover, as discussed in more detail below, control of state agencies can allow both politicians and bureaucrats to distribute rents either to political supporters or to those willing to pay to obtain them (Adams, 2000). Any reform of state organisations that reduces their remit affects this potential for rent generation. Politicians and bureaucrats who use the distribution of rents to their advantage, plus the groups that receive these rents, will quickly be affected by any reform and hence may mobilise to oppose it. In contrast, groups that stand to benefit indirectly and/or somewhat later, from more effective or inclusive services made available to the broader population as a result of reform, will be less likely to mobilise strongly in favour of it (ibid.; Thomas and Grindle, 1990). There are also important differences in the influence that different stakeholder groups have over policy processes, with rural groups at a disadvantage as a result of being geographically dispersed and separated from the centres of power, and poor rural groups being doubly disadvantaged because of low education and limited resources for collective action (Lipton, 1977; Bates, 1981; Thomas and Grindle, 1990; Adams, 2000).

Table 1: Interests of key stakeholder groups regarding SRA reforms

Group	Position	Comments
Political elite (senior political figures)	NARC in favour	Elite competition during 2002 elections prompted NARC to differentiate themselves from KANU by promising radical agricultural reform
Bureaucrats	Mixed	Some opposed, as reform would entail loss of jobs and/or greater accountability, but others championed SRA agenda
Donors	In favour	Shared SRA view that less government control and more space for private-sector enterprise were what was needed to revitalise Kenyan agriculture
Commercial private sector	In favour[a]	SRA assumed private sector would sustain reform momentum by participating in national stakeholder reviews
Parastatal workers	Against[a]	Could expect loss of jobs, as many parastatals were earmarked for closure or downsizing
Rural elites (medium- to large-scale farmers)	Against[a]	Many receive rents through high parastatal purchasing prices or access to subsidised credit or inputs. They may also exercise some influence over local politicians
Rural poor	Largely unaware of options[a]	Not organised to track delivery against NARC campaign promises, but expected to benefit from reforms

Note: a) Assessment based on interest or assumptions within SRA itself.

Table 1 summarises the position of different stakeholder groups with regard to the reforms embodied in the SRA. At this stage, the key points to note in the table are as follows. First, consistent with experience with public-sector reform elsewhere, those assumed to be major beneficiaries – the majority of the country's smallholder farmers and the commercial private sector – were not directly involved in the policy process. Secondly, bilateral donors liked the SRA and responded to it by providing funding for its implementation. However, unlike in the scenarios considered by Adams (2000), they were not the initiators of the reform proposals.

Thirdly, and perhaps the most important point to note from Table 1, the main drive for the SRA reforms came from within the NARC administration. It was found both at political level, including President Kibaki himself, and within the bureaucracy, where champions of reform were in due course appointed by the new government. Thus, groups that are often observed to oppose public-sector reform were, for a time at least, amongst those championing it. At the political level, this can be explained by the desire of the NARC government to differentiate itself from the Moi regime that it was replacing. However, in what follows we argue that the window of opportunity for issues- and performance-based politics in Kenya proved very short-lived. Indeed, the window had already started to close by the time the SRA was formally unveiled.

3 Kenyan agriculture and the context for the SRA

Despite relatively well-developed manufacturing, tourism and services sectors, the agriculture sector still accounts for 65% of national exports and 70% of informal employment in rural Kenya, and provides a livelihood to about 80% of the population (Government of Kenya, 2010). In agro-ecological terms, Kenya is a highly diverse country. Only about 20% of its land is classed as medium-high potential, and this supports high population densities, whilst the remainder is mainly arid or semi-arid and supports only a small proportion of the population (World Bank, 2008).

In the first couple of decades after independence, Kenyan agricultural performance was widely regarded as good (World Bank, 1994). Although the agricultural sector was taxed, this taxation was not as severe as in some other countries of Africa, in part because agricultural interests, in the form of the 'Kikuyu gentry', were at the heart of early post-independence governments (Bates, 1981; Lofchie, 1994). Reflecting the high degree of agro-ecological diversity within the country, Kenya is globally or regionally significant as a producer of tea, coffee, horticultural products, dairy and meat products, as well as producing significant quantities of the main staple food-crop maize and sugar for the domestic market.

However, strong agricultural performance in some crops and regions at some times has not been sufficient to reduce rural poverty significantly. According to World Bank (2008), the proportion of Kenyans (47%) living below the national poverty line in 2005/6 was unchanged from 1981. Two major factors explain this: first, that overall agricultural growth has been disappointing; second, that rural Kenya is characterised by high inequality.[1]

One factor initially associated with strong agricultural performance was the operation of effective agricultural 'institutions' – often state, parastatal or otherwise state-sponsored organisations – that provided services to producers within particular commodity chains.

1. World Bank (2008) highlights high inequality both across regions – regional dummies remain significant in regressions to explain poverty even when rainfall is included – and within regions. One manifestation of this latter phenomenon is high and rising Gini coefficients for landholdings within regions, now approaching Latin American levels, as large landowners defend their holdings amongst increasing populations.

These included coffee co-operatives, Kenya Co-operative Creameries (KCC) in the dairy industry, the National Cereals and Produce Board (maize), the Kenya Farmers' Association (input supply), the Kenya Meat Commission, and the smallholder Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA). In turn these were backed by other institutions such as the Co-operative Bank that provided credit to co-operatives. However, during the 1980s and into the 1990s overall agricultural growth in the country declined, a phenomenon that was widely (for example, Government of Kenya, 2003) and popularly linked to the declining effectiveness of agricultural support organisations.[2] By 2002 there was widespread agreement that something had to be done to improve agricultural performance in the country.

3.1 Political power and state organisations in Kenya

Kenya is also an ethnically diverse country, scoring highly on indices of ethno-linguistic fragmentation (Posner, 2004; World Bank, 2008). According to the 2009 census, the five largest ethnic groups (Kikuyu, Luyha, Luo, Kalenjin and Kamba) together account for just under 65% of the population, with a further three (Kisii, Meru, Mijikenda) each accounting for around 5%.

In large part owing to the legacy of colonial policies (Bates, 1989; Wrong, 2009), political power in post-independence Kenya has been obtained and maintained by building coalitions of ethnic groups.[3] The primary way of gaining the allegiance of a group has been to give it access to government resources by granting its leader(s) control of particular state institutions. Thus, Barkan et al. (2003: 6) observed:

> The political process ... is one of perpetual coalition building – of the formation and reformation of coalitions of local organisations that have no common interests other than the control of the state and its resources. Stated simply, the objective of politics is to control the state for the purpose of funneling state resources back to one's supporters and local communities. Politics is local and patronage is usually king.

As each of the major ethnic groups lives predominantly in one area of the country (plus major cities), there is a strong association between a particular group and most of the main agricultural value chains in the country. This has made state-supported agricultural institutions powerful instruments of patronage and central features of Kenyan agricultural policy. Bates (1989) explains that government-supported agricultural institutions first became a feature of the Kenyan agricultural scene during the colonial period, as institutions were created and forged to advance the economic and political interests of particular settler groups. This pattern has continued in the post-independence years. Moreover, particular producer groups have organised themselves to defend the rents that they now receive.

2. In 2007-9 Future Agricultures Consortium undertook work in four districts in Kenya during which farmer focus groups were asked to reflect on agricultural performance in their district compared with previous decades. The 1990s were uniformly identified as the decade of worst performance, and the decline of farmer support organisations was regularly cited as a major reason for this (Future Agricultures Consortium, 2010).
3. Both Bates (1989) and Wrong (2009) also make the point that, in important measure, these ethnic groups and the strength of their identities are creations of colonial policy.

One of the most prominent state agricultural organisations is the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB). This buys maize from surplus-producing parts of the country after harvest, then stores it either for sale to millers or other traders when prices in major urban centres rise later in the season or for distribution as emergency assistance during times of drought, most commonly in the arid and semi-arid north and east of the country. Bates (1989) narrates the rise to prominence of the NCPB during the 1978-82 drought, just after Moi became President. Strengthening the NCPB enabled the new President to supply food to consumers in the country's cities and in drought-stricken areas. However, it also entailed an increase in the number of NCPB buying posts around the Rift Valley – Moi's home area and also the main maize-producing region – which enhanced his capacity to distribute future support to farmers in this area, and to his Kalenjin group in particular, through the NCPB. In turn, this reinforced the Rift Valley's position as the 'breadbasket' of the country. Hence, Nyoro et al. (1999) found that 70% of all marketed maize in Kenya came from four districts of the Rift Valley, populated largely by Kalenjin, while the majority of producers in the rest of the country were deficit or net deficit producers.

Jayne et al. (2008) examine the impact of NCPB buying prices on the maize prices prevailing in Kitale (Rift Valley) and Nairobi wholesale markets over the period 1989-2004. They find that, in the 1989-94 period, when maize marketing was only partially liberalised,[4] NCPB buying prices served to reduce prices in the two wholesale markets by around 20%. However, over the decade 1995-2004 – after both market liberalisation and the introduction of competitive multi-party democracy (such that the government had to show greater responsiveness to powerful interest groups) – NCPB buying prices served to raise maize prices in the two wholesale markets by around 20%. The principal beneficiaries of this policy were the large maize surplus-producing farms in the four districts of Rift Valley. By contrast, consumers, i.e. most of the rest of the country, lost out, with poor consumers, both urban and rural, hardest hit due to their limited ability to afford higher prices for staple food. Jayne et al. (2008: 314) note that 'Mean wholesale market prices in the major surplus zone of Kitale and the capital city, Nairobi, between January 1989 and December 2004 have been \$160 and \$197 per metric ton, respectively, considerably higher than world market levels.' Meanwhile, despite the high prices offered to surplus producers by the NCPB, Kenya remained chronically maize-deficit at national level throughout the period in question.

NCPB operations conveyed considerable rents to Rift Valley maize producers during the 1990s. However, several of the other state agricultural organisations were allowed to decline. One reason for this is that the emphasis within agricultural policy switched from export promotion to food self-sufficiency (Lofchie, 1994). However, it is notable both that the decline was associated with the management of these organisations becoming increasingly politicised and that it especially affected those organisations operating in parts of the country populated by President Moi's political opponents.

The common equation of strong commodity-chain-focused state organisations with good agricultural performance notwithstanding, Kenya's reliance on such organisations has thus not been without its problems. These are magnified if, as argued later, reliance on such organisations occurs *instead* of investment in national public goods in support of

4. Although private traders were allowed to buy maize in competition with the NCPB in 1988, restrictions on cross-district private maize trade were only eliminated in 1995.

smallholder agriculture. First, both coverage and performance of such organisations have been (and are) uneven across the country. Geographically, they tend to be found where significant marketable surpluses of a certain crop are produced. Being channels by which political patronage can be disbursed to favoured groups, which organisations are well resourced and managed depends in large part on who is in power and whose support they are seeking or maintaining. One major ethnic group that has enjoyed relatively little share of power in post-independence Kenya are the Luos. Insofar as the southern Luo-dominated parts of western Kenya have a 'traditional' cash crop, it is cotton. During the 1990s, the support institutions for cotton production in the country were allowed to die completely.[5]

Secondly, but relatedly, the performance of commodity-chain-focused state organisations tends to be uneven over time. Periods of 'revitalisation' when a sympathetic government is in power can be followed by neglect when the complexion of the government changes. Equally, 'revitalisation' might occur when a new government wishes to make a political impact. However, over time the inefficiencies commonly associated with state organisations, especially ones where management is politicised, can set in. A recent example of this is Kenya Co-operative Creameries (KCC), which was relaunched in 2003 after a decade of neglect, providing a valuable boost to dairy producers by heightening competition with the two existing private milk processors. However, as production increased in response, it failed to expand its processing capacity to match, with the result that farmers found themselves throwing milk away by late 2009.

Thirdly, the benefits from commodity-chain-focused state organisations are often captured disproportionately by larger producers. This is because the easiest ways to distribute patronage are through output-price interventions, credit or input subsidies. In absolute terms, the former give the greatest benefit to those who sell the greatest quantities of the crop. Furthermore, where they are introduced on their own, i.e. without accompanying measures to support improvement in productivity, a farmer's ability to increase supply in response to higher prices depends on his/her ability to access additional land, capital and/or labour. Poor households may not have this ability. These inequalities are well illustrated by the maize case, where Jayne et al. (2008: 323) calculate that 'less than 3% of the farms in this nationwide sample account for 50% of all the maize sold'. Meanwhile, the cost of credit or input subsidies often means that they have to be rationed, and the better-off are often better connected to be able to capture them. Commodity-chain-focused state organisations are thus an important mechanism by which high inequality in rural Kenya is reproduced.

3.2 The NARC government

In 2002 Mwai Kibaki led a coalition comprising all major groups except the Kalenjin,[6] united in their conviction that it was time to replace President Moi. Popular expectations were also high that the change of government would signal a new, less corrupt approach to politics that brought greater benefit to the majority of Kenyans. The NARC government

5. The cotton case is a useful reminder that there may still be a need for some commodity-chain-focused state organisations in the country, i.e. we are not arguing for the baby to be thrown out with the bathwater! Particularly after years of decline, the cotton industry lacks strong private-sector actors to provide strategic leadership for recovery. If a public organisation does not provide the co-ordination needed for the various stakeholders (farmers, ginners, input suppliers) to invest in renewed productivity and production, then this is unlikely to happen.
6. Minister of Agriculture Kipruto Arap Kirwa was the only senior Kalenjin member of the NARC coalition.

thus sought to differentiate itself from the Moi regime that it was replacing: in its ability to deliver economic growth and services, its insistence that the best way to stimulate growth was to remove impediments to private-sector investment and in its claim to eschew corruption (rent-seeking). If political competition was to promote issues and performance, however, at least two conditions had to hold. First, the major political dividing line had to remain NARC versus KANU, so that voters could make a clear comparison between the performance of the two. Secondly, the NARC government had to pull together to deliver better performance. By 2005 neither of these conditions obtained.

The new government moved quickly to undermine the remaining power of KANU, which, in a major departure from its historic domination, had won only around 30% of the vote at the 2002 election. An early symbolic and practical act was Kibaki's order to return to public control the Kenyatta International Conference Centre – a building which KANU had occupied as its headquarters since the early 1970s, though it was built with public funds. Major corruption scandals from the 1990s were investigated.

However, without a strong external challenger to discipline it, the NARC coalition began to show strains within its first year in power. Within NARC there were two main factions: Kibaki's National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK), comprising several parties that constituted the opposition when KANU was in power, and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), a splinter group from KANU that joined with NAK in the last days of KANU to form NARC. As part of the agreement between these two groups, Cabinet posts were distributed equally – proportionate to the population share of the main ethnic groups in the coalition. The sense of inclusivity within the coalition was also promoted by the 'hands-off' leadership style of Kibaki and through an informal NARC 'council of elders', known as the Summit, that comprised the President and key leaders from each of the main ethnic groups in the coalition.

Unfortunately, in his first month in office (January 2003) President Kibaki suffered a stroke, from which he did not fully recover for about a year. In his absence a group of Ministers and senior bureaucrats from his region (the so-called 'Mount Kenya mafia') moved to strengthen their grip on power. Thus, when posts for Permanent Secretaries were filled, the Kikuyu and related communities (Meru and Embu) had more posts than others. The LDP complained publicly that they had been cheated and that Kibaki's faction had reneged on the pre-election agreement that parties were to share posts equally. Other public-sector posts were gradually filled, eliciting similar complaints from the LDP. In August 2003 Vice-President Kijana Wamalwa, who was from NAK but tended to play a balancing role between the conflicting groups, died. His replacement, Moody Awori, was more partisan. After Kibaki fell ill, the Summit did not meet and by January 2004 the 'Mount Kenya mafia' were talking of disbanding it.

Internal divisions within the coalition widened during 2004 over the proposed draft of a new Constitution. LDP leader Raila Odinga argued for a strong executive Prime Minister to reduce the centralisation of power around the President, and in 2005 led the 'no' campaign in the referendum on the proposed Constitution, although still formally part of the government. He and his supporters were then expelled from the government and joined with other leading figures from the 'no' campaign (including KANU) to form the Orange Democratic Movement that contested the 2007 elections against President Kibaki and his new Party of National Unity. After the inconclusive presidential election result and subsequent violence, a Coalition government was mediated in which, once again, the major political tensions were within the government, rather than between government and opposition.

In what follows we consider the impact these political conditions had on agricultural policy.

4 The Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture

The NARC government came to power 'with a primary mandate of reversing the many years of poor economic performance and weak governance' (Government of Kenya, 2003: preface). It therefore produced an Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERS) in April 2003, drawing heavily on the NARC election manifesto. As with the manifesto, the clear intention was to be bold in distinguishing NARC from the preceding government of President Moi. On the economy (there were also sections on governance and on social sectors), the ERS adopted a strongly pro-private-sector line, reflecting *inter alia* the personal convictions of President Kibaki. Along with other productive sectors, agriculture was described as the 'core' of the ERS, and work started almost immediately on a sectoral strategy for agriculture to expand on the principal commitments to agriculture made in the ERS.

Unfortunately, there were delays in producing this strategy. First, following the President's stroke, leadership on national economic strategy was lost. Secondly, according to Howell (2004), a Tegemeo Institute report that focused primarily on Agricultural Ministry reform was not 'fully accepted by the stakeholders'. Therefore, in December 2003, another report was commissioned. This was prepared by officers from the Ministries of Agriculture (MoA) and Livestock and Fisheries Development (MoLFD), with assistance from a small team of local consultants, and was launched by the recovered President as the Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture (SRA) in March 2004.

The SRA did not just signal the government's intention to 'do something about agriculture'; it proposed a radical reform of the role of the state within the sector. This reflected both the President's stated commitment to private-sector-led growth and the authors' analysis of the future of Kenyan agriculture, namely that it could not continue as it was if it was to contribute to the growth and poverty-reduction aspirations of the new government. They observed that the most dynamic sectors, for example horticulture, were largely free of government control, whereas state organisations were generally inefficient.

This radical vision was clearly signalled in the President's preface to the SRA document, and then more fully articulated in Section 5.3 on the 'Legal and Regulatory Framework'. This noted that the sector was 'afflicted with too many laws', most of which were out-of-date and many of which justified the continuation of 'dysfunctional' state organisations that continued to perform commercial activities even though this was 'inconsistent with the government's stated policy to withdraw from commercial activities'. 'Further, there are many commodity-specific laws that set out costly, separate institutional and management arrangements.' In the light of this, the SRA proposed to prepare 'a single generic 'all-encompassing' Agriculture Act and replace all commodity- or activity-specific acts with regulations under the single Agriculture Act'. Relatedly, it committed to 'privatise or outsource commercial activities currently performed by the government or parastatals' and to 'reduce the multiplicity of regulatory or research parastatals'.

The strategy as a whole was set to run from 2004 to 2014. In the light of the urgent 'need for a rapid recovery of the sector', six 'fast-track' priority areas were identified in section 10.2:

i) 'reviewing and harmonising the legal, regulatory and institutional framework' (as above);
ii) 'improving delivery of research, extension and advisory support services', central to which was strengthening the funding base for agricultural research efforts and decentralising primary responsibility for extension provision to district level, where contracting in of private extension services alongside public provision was contemplated;
iii) 'restructuring and privatising non-core functions of parastatals and ministries to bring about efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness' (as above);
iv) 'increasing access to quality farm inputs and financial services', where – contrary to other parts of the strategy – the need to revitalise public input-supply organisations such as the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) and the Kenya Farmers Association (KFA) was recognised, given that efforts to encourage farmer organisations, private stockists and microfinance organisations to upscale their services to farmers could take some time to generate results;
v) 'formulating food security policy and programmes', and
vi) 'taking measures to improve access to markets, for example, rural roads and internal taxes'.

The SRA also set out its implementation framework in some detail. This comprised:

- An 'annual National Forum of the stakeholders in the sector, organised by the lead ministries' and to be presided over by 'the highest political authority' (i.e. the President or his representative), to 'ensure political will, give the strategy visibility and provide a platform for reviewing progress in the implementation of the strategy and the extent to which its objectives are being achieved'.
- An Inter-Ministerial Co-ordination Committee (ICC) to be 'composed of permanent secretaries of the lead and collaborating ministries and representatives of the private sector' and 'responsible for co-ordinating the planning of the strategy at the sector level and monitoring its implementation'. Officially, the lead ministries for the SRA were the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development and the Ministry of Co-operative Development – referred to below as the three 'core' ministries – plus the Ministry of Local Government. Several others – including Roads and Public Works, Water and Natural Resources, Lands and Settlement, plus Regional Development Authorities – were counted as collaborating ministries.
- The ICC was to be assisted by a Technical Inter-ministerial Committee (TIC) composed of staff from the four lead ministries, that was responsible for preparing rolling implementation plans.
- Sector Working Groups were to be established by individual ministries to provide advice and 'independent peer review' of TIC implementation reports.

With the benefit of hindsight, we highlight the role envisaged for the annual National Forum in articulating and sustaining political will for the strategy. While the lead ministries were to organise such events, the momentum to drive SRA implementation was apparently expected to come in large part from non-governmental stakeholders (the commercial private sector, perhaps NGOs) who stood to benefit from its scaling back of government involvement in agricultural activities. In practice, such forums were convened only in 2005 and 2008 (Lundgren, 2010).

The role envisaged for Ministers is not explicitly spelled out in the implementation framework. Rather, responsibility for getting the strategy implemented resided at the permanent secretary level, assisted by the technical staff within the TIC. Given the radical intent of the strategy and the institutional vested interests that it challenged, successful implementation required (co-ordinated) ministerial drive. Unfortunately, this soon proved to be lacking.

The tight time-frame for producing the SRA document meant that there was very little consultation – within government or outside – during its development, even though it set out to chart a course for at least three ministries, with implications for multiple others also. According to one informant,[7] the Minister of Livestock threatened not to attend the launch as a result of this, but was obliged to do so because the strategy was being launched in person by the President.

After the launch, the permanent secretaries of the three core ministries asked consultants to draft three-year plans for action in four of the six 'fast-track' priority areas, including

- reform of parastatals. In the spirit of the SRA document, the consultants recommended abolishing the Coffee Board and the Meat Commission, and privatising the Dairy, Pyrethrum and Sugar Boards. They recommended keeping the National Cereals and Produce Board, the Plant Health Inspectorate and the Pest Control Products Board to provide regulation and/or other public goods, but noted scope for private-public partnerships to deliver services better and improve efficiency.
- legal reform. Here the consultants recommended reducing the more than 100 statutes influencing agriculture to the one single Agricultural Act – concerned primarily with health and safety, self-governance, competition and efficiency – by the end of 2005 (Pearson et al., 2004).

Howell (2004) reports that these recommendations provoked further resistance from ministry and parastatal staff and leaderships, some of whom had perhaps not appreciated the radical vision of the SRA before then. In general, parastatal leadership interpreted the recommendations to mean loss of rents, control and influence, while the ministry and parastatal staff foresaw loss of jobs through the restructuring which would have followed.

Further momentum was lost through a bureaucratic reshuffle in mid-2004 in which the permanent secretaries of all three core ministries were moved (Howell, 2004). However, in December 2005 Dr Romano Kiome, one of the original architects of the SRA, became Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture in a further reshuffle, while a second

7. Interview, 23 May 2012.

member of the core drafting team, Joseph Kinyua, was Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Finance – potentially a good axis for progress. Both remained in post until April 2013 when a new government was inaugurated. The problem was that the other 'rural development' ministries were by now reluctant to co-operate and resented what they saw as the Ministry of Agriculture's attempts to tell them what to do.[8]

Thus, over time much of the responsibility for furthering the SRA agenda fell to the Agriculture Sector Co-ordinating Unit (ASCU) – the third tier (TIC) envisaged in the SRA implementation framework – which was eventually established in late 2004. From the outset, however, there was lack of clarity and consensus on ASCU's role: was it to spearhead reform or to monitor and support implementation by line ministries? Staff came from the three core ministries on secondments. Other ministries had no direct stake in ASCU. Moreover, ASCU did not exert any influence over the budgets received by different ministries or what they were earmarked for. Limited ASCU capacity for policy analysis was identified early on (Howell, 2004; Bazeley, 2005). Government of Kenya (2010) acknowledges that ASCU was 'fully established and staffed' only in 2006.

Since 2004 donors have focused much of their support for agricultural-policy reform in Kenya on building the capacity of ASCU to lead it. During 2004-7 basket donor funding came from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the German Organisation for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) and the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA), with additional technical assistance from USAID and the World Bank. In 2007-10 a new phase of funding was agreed through the Agriculture Sector Support Programme. The project document noted that, 'In 2006, ASCU started to produce useful output – principally analyses of constraints and policy options (in five 'fast-track' priority areas) through the work of five Thematic Working Groups drawn from the private sector, civil society, development partners, research and government' (ASSP, 2007: para 3.6). In other words, it had taken two years to start producing 'useful output', and even this was still analysis, i.e. no actual reform. It is also noteworthy that it was the parastatal-reform working group that had not yet been established.

In 2010 a report was commissioned by the government and donors 'to analyse the achievement of outputs and outcomes of the agricultural sector as expressed in the Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture and make recommendations for future planning' (Lundgren, 2010). This observed that ASCU had initiated many activities, but few had yet reached completion. Although it expressed confidence that the work of ASCU is 'building a very good foundation from which positive impact on both production/productivity and poverty alleviation will eventually be possible', it concluded that 'delays in finalising policy, legal and institutional reforms' meant that 'the vast majority of the activities initiated under the SRA/ASDS have not yet led to any significant impact at local level' (ibid.: 9).

4.1 Revitalising agricultural extension?

Progress in 'improving delivery of … extension and advisory support services' – the second of SRA's six 'fast-track' priority areas – provides a good illustration of the patterns observed by Lundgren (2010). In the case of extension, powerful vested interests that might

8. Interview, 23 May 2012.

lead to resistance to reform were limited, although improved co-ordination of staff across the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock and Fisheries would be needed. Nevertheless, a strong lead was needed from the senior political level and this was again lacking. In the years following the launch of the SRA, there were at least three major donor projects supporting agricultural-extension reform in Kenya:

- the Swedish aid (SIDA)-funded National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme, which, *inter alia*, encouraged a 'focal-area' approach in which available extension resources focused on one location within a district each year to achieve maximum impact;
- the Decentralised Agriculture Support Structures programme under the Danish aid (DANIDA)-funded Agriculture Sector Programme Support, which promoted multi-stakeholder forums at district level to help set priorities for government (including extension) support to farmers, and
- the World Bank-funded Kenya Agriculture Productivity Project (KAPP, which became KAPAP in 2010), which piloted demand-driven extension approaches creating space for multiple service providers.

This should have been an ideal foundation for extension reform: the government could compare experiences across the three programmes and decide on the way forward for extension provision nationally.

Indeed, ASCU, through its thematic working group on research and extension, did seek to learn from these various programmes, though no formal, independent comparison of their performance was undertaken. This learning contributed to a new National Agriculture Sector Extension Policy, drafted in December 2005, followed by an implementation framework, a draft of which was produced in June 2007. The policy was, however, approved by Cabinet only in 2008, and the implementation framework is still being refined in the light of the provisions for a devolved level of government contained in the new Constitution eventually approved in August 2010 plus ongoing learning from the World Bank-funded KAPAP.[9] The policy aims to encourage commercialisation of smallholder agriculture, rather than simply telling farmers how to produce more, and to move to a demand-driven approach, putting more onus on farmers to seek out extension staff or resources (available at information points in all districts) when they want information. Meanwhile, KAPAP continues to promote public-private partnerships in extension provision, focusing on specific value chains, but still in pilot districts.

Drawing on case-study work in four districts during 2007 and 2009, Future Agricultures Consortium (2009) found some evidence of enhanced extension effort under the NARC government, related to the introduction of performance contracts for ministry staff. This was a change introduced by reform-minded technocrats within the Ministry of Agriculture. However, outreach to farmers was hampered by systemic inefficiencies in budgeting and resourcing, plus the challenge of co-ordinating technical support across an increasing number of rural development ministries. Many respondents were sceptical of so-called demand-driven extension, with farmers in particular wanting to discuss problems with front-line staff in their fields, rather than having to go to ministry offices to express

9. Interview, 31 July 2012.

their demand for advice. As these challenges remain, it is safe to conclude that the majority of Kenyan farmers have yet to experience any benefit from efforts to improve delivery of extension services since 2002.

4.2 Revitalising state agricultural organisations

The previous Sections have shown that, since 2003, little progress has been made in improving the delivery of public goods such as extension or in harmonising the legal framework or restructuring parastatals so as to reduce the role of the state in agriculture. However, some state agricultural institutions have received a new lease of life. Three examples are instructive. Far from demonstrating a new approach to agricultural policy, they reveal a continuation of historical patterns, including the regional inequities that have characterised these.

Atieno and Kanyinga (2008) narrate the story of the revitalisation of Kenya Co-operative Creameries (KCC), an organisation that was returned to public ownership in 2003 following an underhand privatisation in the late Moi years. The Minister of Co-operative Development, with the backing of the Ministers of Agriculture and Livestock, masterminded the move to return KCC to public ownership when President Kibaki was ill (i.e. before the launch of the SRA, but also before relationships within the NARC coalition began to deteriorate). This was popular both for righting a perceived wrong from the Moi era and for providing a needed stimulus to the dairy industry. The benefits accrued principally to farmers in Central Province (the home area of both the Minister of Co-operative Development and the President) and Rift Valley (home area of the Minister of Agriculture).

Around the same time the Minister of Livestock, from Eastern Province, authorised renewed investment in the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC). Farmers in northern Kenya who had voted for the NARC hoped that revitalisation of the KMC would enhance their access to the major markets for meat in the country. However, in this case revitalisation was restricted to a complete overhaul of the KMC factory at Machakos in Eastern Province – too far from northern farmers for increased demand to be transmitted to them.

The NARC government also promised action during its early years to revitalise the cotton sector. By 2005 a cotton Bill had been drafted, but not presented to Parliament. A private member from western Kenya, who won the right to present a Bill in Parliament through the MPs' ballot, therefore worked with the leadership of the Kenya Cotton Growers' Association to draft a Bill establishing a Kenya Cotton Authority (KCA) with majority farmer representation on its board. The Ministry of Agriculture was unhappy with this and offered a deal whereby, if the private member withdrew her Bill, the Ministry would present its Bill instead. Because this would be a government Bill, the KCA could be given revenue-raising powers, powers that cannot be established through a private member's Bill. However, the Ministry Bill would stipulate a government-controlled board. The MP and the KCGA opted for majority farmer representation on the KCA board and, therefore, to forgo revenue-raising powers (for the time being!). Although the Minister of Agriculture was privately opposed to the Bill, the government was then at a low point in popularity – this was the time of its defeat in the first constitutional referendum and the formal split in the NARC coalition – and the Minister was persuaded to not oppose the Bill publicly in the House, in case that increased its majority. The Bill was therefore passed and the KCA came into being. However, with limited funding, it has yet to effect any change in fortunes in the Kenya cotton sector.

4.3 Agricultural-sector ministries

A technocratic view of policy-making sees ministries as key vehicles for the implementation of formally stated national policies which often highlight the delivery of public goods. However, van de Walle (2001) describes how the formal rational-legal procedures of state agencies are often undermined by informal norms of patronage, whereby control of a ministry is seen as a source both of personal gain (or rents to close allies and friends) and of rents for distribution to supporters. Whilst ministries continued to employ many able staff, their organisation during the Kibaki years became increasingly suggestive of the patronage model. Thus, as the governing coalition in Kenya became increasingly complex, the number of ministries increased, so that more players could be accommodated at the highest level of government. Ministries also gained an increasingly regional focus. For example, the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development – which was itself spun off from the Ministry of Agriculture only in 2003 – then further split into Livestock, which later became the domain of Kenya's pastoralist communities, and Fisheries. Similarly, the Ministry of Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands was created in April 2008.

Strikingly, all three Ministers of Agriculture under President Kibaki (Kirwa, Ruto, Kosgei) have been Kalenjins. The reasons for this 'coincidence' are inevitably somewhat speculative, as little is known about the negotiations within the governing coalition over the distribution of ministries. (However, it seems that Ruto did choose the Ministry during the 2007-8 negotiations over the formation of the government of national unity.) Nevertheless, given that President Moi – fellow Kalenjin and architect of the rise of the NCPB – is no longer in power and that many others lose out from the NCPB's maize pricing policy (Jayne et al., 2008; Mghenyi et al., 2011),[10] it is plausible that protection of the rent to surplus maize producers (discussed earlier) has been part of the calculation. Minister Ruto was alleged to have used his position not just to protect maize producer prices, but also to distribute other rents to allies through the sale of fertiliser and maize from government stocks at subsidised prices. Both these policies generated national scandals (see Africog (2009) for the case of maize, which was the more enduring), and in April 2010 he was moved to the Ministry of Higher Education. However, strikingly, another Kalenjin was chosen to succeed him – recognition that control of the Ministry of Agriculture was seen by one of the country's largest communities as central to their economic interests and that it was too risky to remove it, given the delicate state of inter-ethnic relations in the country at the time.

5 Interpretation of agricultural-reform experience 2003-12

With a new government in 2008 and the launching of Vision 2030 to replace the ERS, the SRA was replaced (four years early) in 2010 with the Agricultural Sector Development

10. Mghenyi et al. (2011) find the welfare losses from high maize prices to be less than they expected, which might also help to explain the policy's persistence.

Strategy (ASDS) 2010-20, which rather fancifully claims that 'implementation of the SRA has been largely successful' (p.vii), so it aspires to build on this success. Its evidence for success includes: exceeding the SRA's modest agricultural growth target for 2003-7 of 3.1% p.a.; revival of KCC, KMC (see above) plus three other state corporations; development of 'over 15 policies and 6 pieces of legislation' (p.5), including the National Agricultural Sector Extension Policy and the Cotton Act 2006 (see above); and the revival of previously 'moribund and dysfunctional' research and extension systems such that they are now 'vibrant' (p.4; see above). However, a detailed reading shows that five of the six SRA 'fast-track' priority areas still remain to be tackled, the exception being the development of a Food Security and Nutrition Policy that was finally approved in 2011.

Unlike the SRA, the ASDS was produced collaboratively. The preparation team for the report was led by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and contained representatives of the now ten ministries concerned with agriculture and rural development, all of whose ministers signed it. It thus avoids one of the problems that faced the SRA, by ensuring that all the necessary ministries were on board. However, it also steps back from the radical language of the SRA on state reform and is structured so as to recognise the distinct domains of the ten ministries. Nevertheless, it does still state an intention to 'divest from all state corporations handling production, processing and marketing that can be better done by the private sector' (p.xiv), reflecting the strong consensus amongst the local policy research community and some government officials that a reduced state role remains essential if Kenyan agriculture is to thrive.

Given that this is still the technical agenda, why was so little progress made with the SRA? Whilst some bureaucratic opposition to radical reform of state structures is to be expected, this is certainly not the whole story in Kenya. Indeed, reform-minded technocrats have occupied key positions in government over much of the past decade, albeit without the ability to push change through when others were resistant. What has been lacking has been political leadership to proceed with implementation. This is especially the case at ministerial level, where action is needed to present new legislation to Parliament or to secure Cabinet endorsement for new policies.[11]

We cannot say how many ministers in the first NARC government ever fully endorsed the SRA agenda. It is possible that the disparate groups within the NARC agreed to bold manifesto pledges for the purpose of the 2002 election campaign, but expected to be able to deliberate on the details once they were in power. However, the lack of consultation in the process of developing the SRA did not allow this. What is clear is that, when the NARC government felt it had to deliver improved agricultural performance to differentiate itself from its KANU predecessor, its solution was radical institutional reform, which was recommended by the local policy community and endorsed by donors.

Critically, however, the reform proposals of the SRA required collective action from multiple ministries.[12] This was the case either because the measures would cut across more than one ministry – for example, extension reform would affect staff in both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Livestock and Fisheries Development – or because they threatened the

11. According to Thomas and Grindle (1990: 1173), a key issue for public-sector reform is 'whether there is enough support for the reform to make the bureaucracy comply with the intention of the decision'. High-level support and 'hierarchical discipline' are thus requirements for success.

12. These observations are consistent with the general arguments advanced by Booth (2012) regarding the importance of collective-action challenges to development.

interests of all ministries and ministers (for example, parastatal reform), such that either all moved together or no one moved.[13] Even though the SRA was perceived by other sector ministries as being too focused on crop agriculture, Minister of Agriculture Kipruto Arap Kirwa was in a delicate personal position when it came to the more radical reform proposals of the SRA (fast-track priority areas 1 and 3). As the lone Kalenjin minister in the NARC government, he could not be seen to be undermining the NCPB, AFC or other state organisations that primarily benefited or were staffed by Kalenjins – certainly if this was not part of a systemic reform of the state sector in Kenyan agriculture.

Collective action would require trust, which unfortunately began to break down within a few months of the NARC government coming to power. Moreover, as it became apparent that the NARC would eventually split, Ministers (as champions of their regional interests in government) had a strong incentive to hold on to sources of rents that could enable them to maintain their own position in future political conflicts. Meanwhile, the decisive and early actions taken by some of the same ministers to revitalise the KCC and KMC – moves which arguably were at variance with the subsequent thrust of the SRA to reduce the state's role in productive activity within the agricultural sector – demonstrated the importance of such rents.

By contrast, decisive action was not observed where investment in key public goods (SRA fast-track priority areas 2, 4 and 6) was concerned. Once the NARC unravelled back into its ethnic constituents, the sense of the national interest in agricultural policy was lost at the highest levels. As ministries became more fractured and more regionally-focused, progress with national public goods was neglected.

Thomas and Grindle (1990: 1166) conceive of a policy agenda that 'always contains many more issues than will be acted upon'. Even once a policy has been formally approved, a shift in the relative strength of supporting and opposing forces may cause the decision to 'be reversed at … some point in the implementation process, and the issues returned to the agenda'. This describes the SRA experience once the NARC coalition unravelled. The abandonment of the SRA agenda was, however, tacit rather than formal. One of the major lessons here is for donors, who continued to support implementation of the SRA well after the political window of opportunity for radical change had closed. With hindsight, their support for the ASCU is perhaps best viewed as funding the groundwork for a future reform effort, if and when a new political window of opportunity opens up.

5.1 Democratisation and the politics of agricultural policy in Kenya

This article has argued that, despite the hopes at the outset of the first Kibaki government, historical patterns of agricultural policy-making have prevailed in Kenya over the past decade. This is despite (i) widespread recognition that they have generated sub-optimal growth and poverty-reduction outcomes and (ii) a bold strategy with presidential backing (the SRA) that sought to change them. We argued that the momentum for reform came

13. Failure to reform the co-operatives that dominate the coffee sector is one of the more surprising features of the 2002-12 experience, given the importance of the sector to national foreign-exchange revenues and that politicisation and bad governance are widely seen as root causes of the sector's decline over the past two decades (see, for example, Owuor et al., 2009). An early initiative to reform the coffee sector, supported by Minister Kirwa, was blocked by the 'Mount Kenya mafia' (interview, 23 May 2012).

from the desire of the NARC government to differentiate itself from the Moi regime, but that the window of opportunity for issues- and performance-based politics in Kenya post-2002 proved short-lived. The question, therefore, is: why have senior Kenyan policy-makers not felt greater pressure to deliver more fundamental reform so as to improve agricultural performance? Specifically, why have two decades of democratisation, which in theory should strengthen the voice of the poor rural majority in the country (Bates and Block, 2009), not done so?

One way to answer this is to look at how people actually vote: do they exchange votes for policy?

There is growing evidence that Kenyan (Bratton and Kimenyi, 2008) and other African (Bratton et al., 2011) voters do assess overall government performance, and also specifically the performance of their President, when voting in elections. However, this is not the only – or even the major – factor that they consider. Rather, the ethno-regional identities that we have highlighted in this article continue to exert a strong influence on political allegiances. This is well illustrated by Bratton and Kimenyi (2008): in a logistic regression to explain voting intentions in the December 2007 election (for/against the re-election of President Kibaki), 51% of the variation was explained simply by dummies for the major ethnic groups: Kikuyu and Embu/Meru (positive), Luo, Kamba, Kalenjin and Luhya (negative), all significant at 5%; only Kisii and Mijikenda were not significant. This may be explained in part by the high level of inter-ethnic mistrust, revealed by Afrobarometer surveys (ibid.). Whether or not voters personally gain from government policy, it is better for their group to control power than for their rivals to do so.

Thus, regional 'champions' continue to present themselves as people able to represent the interests of their group, which invariably is taken to mean accessing the state and its resources for the purpose of 'developing' the group and its region.[14] They seek the votes of group members by claiming that they will defend and promote group interests. In turn, presidential candidates still seek to assemble coalitions of these regional 'champions' who can deliver sufficient votes from their regions to obtain an overall majority, and reward them with control of ministries that can generate rents for them and/or their supporters.

The question, then, is: what do these champions have to offer, and to whom, in order to bring in votes from their region? This question is highly pertinent to poverty and inequality dynamics within regions. What might determine the balance between rents to the next tier of leaders within the region (the 'dyadic exchanges' described by van de Walle, 2001) and wider benefits for the regional population? Following the logic of Boone (2003), we might expect this balance to depend, at least in part, on the nature of the relationships between regional leaderships and the broader rural population. In hierarchical societies, where leaders can readily persuade followers to vote in a particular way, followers may gain little benefit from their support. By contrast, in more democratic societies, individual voters may want to see direct personal benefits in exchange for their vote.

By way of illustration, we contrast three of the main ethnic groups in Kenya:

14. For most groups a dominant regional champion can be identified at any given point in time. There are two notable exceptions to this. Within the Kamba, there has historically been rivalry between the Kitui and Machakos sub-divisions, whilst the Luhya comprise around 20 sub-groups, which produce competing leaders. (According to Wrong (2009), these sub-groups collectively became known as 'Luhya' only in the 1930s and '40s.) As a result, the vote of these two groups is often split at election time.

- Luo culture is hierarchical, both at family level (a younger sibling should not marry before their older one) and in the pervasive influence of Luo council(s) of elders within Luo society. The 'regional champion' can convey views through them and secure strong voting allegiance.[15]
- Within Rift Valley, first President Moi and then William Ruto established themselves as 'regional champions', such that (for example) they could let it be known which candidate they favoured as MP for an area and their view would hold sway with many voters. However, to maintain their mantle, both men have had to listen to the views of, and promise to address demands by, local interest groups, especially larger farmers who are locally well organised, and to deliver benefits to them.
- During their 24 years out of power between Presidents Kenyatta and Kibaki, there was competition for the leadership of the Kikuyus. This made Kikuyu society more independent of their leadership, such that many individual voters now expect benefits in return for their support of particular leaders. This independence is reinforced by above-average education and wealth by Kenyan standards, but conversely may also contribute to the benefits that Central Province has gained during the Kibaki presidency.

Ultimately, the strength of ethnic identity within rural Kenyan society means that a poor Luo smallholder in western Kenya feels more affinity to wealthier Luos than to a poor Kikuyu or Kalenjin smallholder in another part of the country: there is no 'class-based' demand for national public goods, such as a better extension service, that would bring the greatest benefit to resource-poor farmers. And because of the strong ethno-regional dimension of politics, there is limited or no attention to class-based forms of organisation that can cut across the various regions. This goes some way to explaining why neither the radical reform of agricultural state organisations nor the increased investment in agricultural public goods envisaged by the SRA made any headway, despite the promise that political competition seemed to hold out in 2002.

Constitutional provisions that define the rules of the game for political competition may either reinforce or restrain tendencies towards politics based on ethno-regional allegiances and the prominence of regional champions. The new Constitution that was eventually approved in 2010 tries to address some of these issues. One change that is intended to force politicians to make national, rather than regional, appeals is the altering of the first-past-the-post rule in presidential elections with a requirement that a winner receives at least 50%+1 of all votes cast. In the longer term, and buttressed by other provisions, this may encourage the emergence of political parties with a national reach. However, on its own it does not prevent presidential candidates from continuing to assemble coalitions of regional champions to achieve at least 50%+1 of all votes cast – as happened in both the 2002 and 2007 elections, that were fought essentially between two presidential candidates.

15. There are two caveats to this. (i) Some see Raila Odinga as having been 'holding back' from appearing to favour Luos too much in a bid to appear presidential to the wider national electorate. This is an alternative explanation of why relatively few benefits were delivered to them during the past decade. (ii) There has been some recent resistance to Raila calling all the political shots amongst Luos.

There has been much (important) debate in Kenya about the centralisation of power around the President. However, it is also true that democratisation has strengthened the position of regional champions vis à vis the President, who now needs them to bring in regional votes. The 2010 Constitution contains various provisions that increase the accountability of regional champions and hence may ultimately enhance prospects for state performance and reform. First, Ministers, who can no longer also sit as MPs, have to be approved by Parliament. Thus, past or potential performance in running a ministry should become a more important factor in ministerial choice. Secondly, the Constitution has created multiple positions that county leaders can occupy, including regional governors and senators. This should stimulate competition for leadership within regions, raising the possibility that rents will be distributed somewhat more equally within regional populations in the future.

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