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Generals on the hill

Former military leaders Generals Babangida and Abubakar urge defeated candidate Gen. Buhari to seek redress constitutionally for what he claims is Nigeria's worst electoral fraud. President Obasanjo uses the wealthy Minna generals as a channel to the business and military elite; in return he keeps them in the loop in Abuja.

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Looking down the line

Former mineworkers' leader and newish business magnate Cyril Ramaphosa's political career has bounced back: he is again being touted as a successor to President Mbeki, with the support of many in the ANC hierarchy.

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Getting rid of Muluzi

President Muluzi's failed attempt to stand as UDF candidate for a third term and the worsening economic crisis make the election in 2004 much tougher for the ruling party. And by forming a Kenyan-style grand coalition, Malawi's opposition parties believe they could outmanoeuvre Muluzi's would-be successor.

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Buyoya's boys

New President Ndayizéyé was sworn in on 30 April to replace President Buyoya for the last 18 months of transition to multi-party rule. Ndayizéyé will have fewer powers than his predecessor, who crucially retains the support of the army.

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NIGERIA I

The naira republic wins again

Money-politics and vote-rigging will undermine President Obasanjo's second term without a full investigation of the poll

'Don't give me any more of those Florida results!' bellowed a Nigerian journalist at a computer screen in the Election Commission's media centre. The machine was spewing out results showing nearly 100 per cent support for the ruling People's Democratic Party in the Niger Delta and Igboland. That Nigeria's flawed elections of 2003 were being compared to the **United States'** flawed elections of 2000 was a victory of sorts for the PDP's electoral machine (AC Vol 44 Nos 7 & 8). What party barons wanted was an overwhelming victory for their presidential candidate, **Olusegun Obasanjo**, and most of their 36 state governorship candidates in the 19 April elections. They also wanted a credible enough victory for Obasanjo to have presided over the first successful (that is, uninterrupted by military coup) general elections held by a civilian government since Independence in 1960.

Certainly the PDP got its overwhelming victory but its credibility is under fire. Initially the PDP barons brazened it out. Many argue convincingly that Obasanjo would not have needed to rig the elections to win but the imperatives of Nigeria's naira politics, masterminded by Vice-President **Atiku Abubakar**, demanded it. Politicians operate on payment – in positions and contracts – by results. Ambitious politicians need to prove they can deliver their constituencies to stake their claims to political office and a place in the party hierarchy.

Some Nigerians worry that PDP election managers may have overdone the electoral fraud, prompting their political opponents to seek help from military officers to redress the balance. Although Obasanjo has worked hard to win the loyalty of the high command, there are fears that the junior officers are more ambivalent. An army openly divided over political allegiance could trigger a Nigerian nightmare: that makes the need for a fully independent investigation of the electoral irregularities all the more pressing.

More cellphones, less censorship

Faced with more formidable opposition candidates, Obasanjo would have been a much tougher sell. Few Nigerians say they have benefited from a democracy dividend or from other fruits of political change. Many say they are as poor as they were under military rule and as fearful of arbitrary violence. The most commonly stated achievements of the Obasanjo era are the introduction of cellphones and the removal of the dead weight of military censorship on political life.

Western leaders were divided on the relative merits of Obasanjo and opposition candidate **Muhammadu Buhari**. Some bought the line, peddled by the Lagos press, that Buhari, 60, was an Islamist fanatic and would take the country back to military dictatorship. Others were so disappointed by Obasanjo's lack of progress on economic reform and fighting corruption that they found Buhari's tougher approach more promising. **British Premier Tony Blair**, who has met Obasanjo several times, took a week to issue a congratulatory statement to him after the elections. Paris and Washington followed suit.

Elections, even in oil-rich Nigeria, are quite far down the Western diplomatic priority list now. The consensus Western view was that the elections were messy but that Obasanjo would still have won without PDP rigging so a Western government rejection of the results, as in **Zimbabwe**, was uncalled for. Some diplomats advised the Abuja government to be more magnanimous in victory and take electoral complaints more seriously, lest the aura of electoral fraud be used as a pretext for an extra-parliamentary campaign against Obasanjo. So a week after the bizarre official results emerged from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), PDP officials toned down the triumphalism and were prepared to concede 'possible problems' in results from the Niger Delta. They may also be looking for some fall guys to take the blame for massive fraud: under the new electoral act, convicted fraudsters get hefty gaol sentences and are banned from political activity.

The heaviest criticism was from opposition All Nigeria People's Party presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari, who told loyalists and journalists in Abuja that the 19 April presidential poll was the most fraudulent in Nigeria's history and urged foreign governments not to recognise the Obasanjo government after its current mandate expires on 29 May. Under Buhari's first incarnation as military ruler, from December 1983 to August 1985, such statements would have earned a lengthy spell in gaol.

Buhari, who appeared to be enjoying himself on the campaign trail, took too long to get into his stride.

Landslide in the Delta

The presidential and gubernatorial elections in the oil-rich Niger Delta set new standards of improbability. Just over twelve hours after voting ended in some parts of Rivers, the State's radio station announced that Governor **Peter Odili** of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) had won more than 2.1 million of the 2.2 million votes cast. His challenger from the All Nigeria People's Party, **Serjeant Chidi Awuse**, known as the 'Bulldozer' and supported across the State, was said to have polled just 44,000 votes.

Almost no one believes that so many votes could have been counted and collated from the State's network of creekside villages, the vast majority of which have no electricity, telephones or motor transport. Even more improbable is the claimed turnout of over 95 per cent. In many parts of the State, observers and journalists reported that tens of thousands of registered electors had been unable to vote because there had been heavy rain until after midday and election materials weren't available. In other areas, voting ended precipitately at 1.00 pm and ballot boxes were whisked off to undisclosed destinations.

Election observers reported intimidation and stuffing of ballot boxes across the Delta; opposition party agents claimed they were driven from polling stations at gun point and denied access to the results sheets that were sent to the Independent National Electoral Commission's Abuja headquarters.

The worst clash, local sources say, was on 19 April when men in army uniform tried to stop the lawful distribution of ballot boxes to the Agiama polling stations in the Southern Ijaw local government area in Bayelsa State. At least three people were killed and another seven hospitalised when the uniformed men (alleged to be PDP thugs in disguise) opened fire on a crowd of local election officials and opposition polling agents.

The trio of PDP state governors at the heart of the Delta – Odili (Rivers State), **James Ibori** (Delta State) and **Diepreye Alamieyeseigha** (Bayelsa) – have become hate figures for many in the Delta since they took over after even more implausible elections in 1999. They have presided over the criminalisation of politics and business in the region. Most of the subventions from central government paid to oil-producing states appear to have been diverted either directly into the political machines controlled by the governors or into politically inspired business projects.

None of the governors has pressed Obasanjo for the constitutional reform

and devolution of power that many in the Delta want. Instead, they have negotiated promises of a bigger slice of oil revenue from Obasanjo even though existing subventions are not properly accounted for. Odili's multi-million dollar election campaign in Rivers – which included advertising slots on the **United States**-owned television channel CNN, giant billboards changed weekly across the State and glossy colour manifestos – raised questions about where the money was coming from.

A big chunk certainly goes towards running the governors' much feared security units, operating in tandem with PDP thugs against oppositionists. Human rights activists in the Delta say the reign of terror imposed by the governors' security units and armed PDP supporters is barely distinguishable from the military occupation of the Delta during the last years of General **Sani Abacha**'s regime. When a senior member of the Commonwealth observer team was told that victorious Rivers Governor Odili was a contender for the presidency after **Olusegun Obasanjo**, he replied: 'God help Nigeria!'

Bigger political questions are emerging from the Delta's election debacle. Can Obasanjo continue to stand by Odili, Alamieyeseigha and Ibori in the wake of these reports? All three were involved in last year's moves to impeach him but since then, there has been a rapprochement, with promises of more cash from the centre for the oil states.

Few believe the promised largesse, if it arrives, will be enough to reduce growing resentment and opposition in the Delta to the PDP hierarchy. A pre-election dispute over local government wards in Delta State killed dozens of people in running battles between Urhobos and Itsekiris in February and March.

Several soldiers were sent to Delta in March and have been accused of indiscriminate attacks on Ijaw communities, which the army blames for the killing of four soldiers. These troubles shut down more than a third of national oil production. This week's occupation of oil rigs by striking oil workers will do still more damage to Nigeria's milch-cow.

The rumbling political crisis is turning these three core states in the Delta, the cockpit of the country's oil industry (AC Vol 43 No 21), into a 'failed state'. Obasanjo isn't keen to censure such unreliable 'allies' as Ibori Alamieyeseigha and Odili but failure to address the electoral wrongs in the Delta will rebound against him in the centre itself.

He was a trial candidate for the north, whose heavyweight politicians want to hold off until 2007 when the contest will be more open and power is due to shift away from Obasanjo's south-westerners. For ever associated in Nigerian media minds with the repressive Decree 4, which Buhari as military ruler used to detain many journalists, his candidacy won little sympathy in the press.

All Abacha people

His admonition to electors to vote for candidates who 'would protect your religion' looked divisive to many at a time when hundreds of Christians and Muslims had died in clashes over the imposition of the Islamic (*Sharia*) criminal code in eleven northern states. Worse still, Buhari was associated with the late Gen. **Sani Abacha**'s regime and has made no condemnation of it nor expressed sympathy for its victims (unlike many other politicians, such as the PDP's **Tony Anenih**, who have backpedalled furiously from their Abacha associations). Abacha's advisors **Sule Hamma** and **Wada Nas** were key to Buhari's team.

Sadly for Buhari, his associations with the Abacha circle didn't yield the campaign financing necessary to counter the PDP's multi-million naira campaign strategy. More mainstream northern figures on the Buhari train, such as **Mahmoud Tukur**, helped to pull some, but by no means all, of the north behind Buhari. The Arewa Consultative Forum, a northern think-tank, also accused the PDP of massive fraud but

advised Buhari to follow 'constitutional channels' to remedy it. Buhari's running mate, **Chuba Okadigbo**, drew few votes from the Igbo-dominated south-east, where he competed with better known and more popular Igbo figures such as Gen. **Ike Nwachukwu** and former Biafra secessionist leader Colonel **Emeka Ojukwu**.

The other big loser in the elections was the south-western based Alliance for Democracy, which lost all its governors in the region except Lagos after its strategists claimed the PDP had reneged on an electoral pact. The proposed deal was that if AD didn't present a presidential candidate and campaigned for Obasanjo instead, then the PDP wouldn't compete against it in the gubernatorial elections. The deal wasn't credible, though. The PDP announced its own set of candidates competing in the south-west against AD candidates; older AD activists who weren't risking their offices stuck to the deal, younger militants opposed it. Now AD is again divided – over how far to take its complaints against the PDP of electoral foul play.

This time, election tribunals are likely to be more credible, partly because the observation operation was bigger and better than in 1999. There were 50,000 Nigerian observers compared to 10,000 in 1999, with better training and equipment but still not enough mobile telephones, video cameras or reliable protection.

Obasanjo made much of the open invitation to international observers and then tried to grade their competence. The EU observers (who were



the most critical) were, he said, limited by their 'European-ness' but the Commonwealth team (whose criticism was more nuanced) understood the 'Nigerian environment'. In fact, the two teams agreed on the gravity of the fraud in the Delta but because the EU had a bigger team spread further across the country, it felt able to extrapolate its findings more widely and called into serious question the results in at least twelve states, a third of the federation. In Rivers, the Commonwealth reported widespread and serious irregularities and official results 'which bore little relation to the evidence gathered by our observers on the ground.'

Early remedy needed

EU observers concluded that the elections in Cross River, Delta and Rivers 'lacked credibility' and required an 'early remedy'. The EU said its observers had witnessed and obtained evidence of widespread ballot rigging and the falsification of results in the Delta. The US-based International Republican Institute found evidence of ballot box stuffing and falsification while the National Democratic Institute, also Washington-based, said: '...in polling sites in Enugu and Rivers States, no tally sheets were present, only to appear at collation centres completely filled in, even though ballots had not been counted.'

Although the elections were hammered by the observers, there is little chance of any state-wide reruns, although there could be fresh elections in some constituencies. The observers urged reform, such as an ongoing electoral registration programme, which would avoid a repeat of last September's crisis when the electoral register was reckoned to be more than 10 per cent inaccurate. They also called for each of the 120,000 polling stations to publish its own result (perhaps in INEC) to allow an independent check on the arithmetic and the collation of votes.

All the observers wanted INEC to be more assertive. Its refusal to act against obvious fraud and bad practice or even to comment on some of the implausible results from the Niger Delta states devalued its authority. It also needs bigger and timelier funding: senior officials are hopelessly overstretched. INEC's highly effective National Secretary, **Hakeem Buba Ahmed**, had to rush to Abuja airport in his own car to pick up the ballot boxes because the British and **Canadian** manufacturers saw no security problem in dropping their valuable cargo in a hangar and then jetting home.

NIGERIA II

Generals on the hill

The Abuja-Minna axis still works for old comrades in arms

Two former military leaders, General **Abdulsalami Abubakar** and Gen. **Ibrahim Babangida**, look out from their hilltop mansions in Minna, central Nigeria, unperturbed by the furore over the elections elsewhere. 'I'm happy that elections in Minna have been peaceful,' Babangida told *Africa Confidential* just after he had voted on 19 April. He dismissed parallels with 1983, when flawed elections organised by a civilian government prompted a military coup led by Babangida and other senior officers, including this year's presidential challenger, Gen. **Muhammadu Buhari**: 'The situations are completely different... The military have to come to terms with the fact that coups d'état aren't acceptable'.

Both generals advised Buhari to seek redress through election tribunals if he was unhappy with the results. They have little to gain from turmoil. Even if President **Olusegun Obasanjo** hasn't actively protected Abubakar and Babangida from demands for their investigation and prosecution on charges of misuse of public funds, he's done nothing to advance such claims. In his second stint in office, Obasanjo is as wily as Babangida in keeping communication lines open and public statements ambivalent. Today, the 'governor-generals' are the pillars and power-brokers of Minna, capital of Niger State. Babangida supports the State Governor **Abdulkadir Kure**, who without a hint of self-parody described himself on campaign posters as the 'guru of bombastic achievement!'

Retired generals wield huge influence in the country's naira-fuelled politics. They endorsed the power-shift in 1999, under which south-wester Obasanjo took the presidency after two decades of northern rule. The military old guard lead what anti-corruption campaigner and retired General **Ishola Williams** calls Nigeria's 'contractocracy'. Here money helps broker political deals and facilitates new commercial ones. Babangida, along with Lieutenant Gen. **Theophilus Danjuma**, Major Gen. **Aliyu Mohammed Gusau** and Lt. Gen. **Mohammed Inuwa Wushishi**, was a key financier of Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 1999.

IBB – kingmaker but no longer king

Babangida's support has become more ambivalent. Two years ago, when northern Nigerians called for Obasanjo's exit, Babangida sounded out his own chances. Greedy politicians encouraged him to have a crack at Obasanjo, calculating that even an unsuccessful Babangida bid for the presidency would generate plenty of contracts.

For now, Babangida wants to be kingmaker, not king. The two generals tried to hide their ballot papers (there were no private booths at their Minna polling station) but it seems they would prefer Gen. Obasanjo to Gen. Buhari. These days, Babangida claims to have a working arrangement with Obasanjo. They meet and telephone each other regularly. Babangida has been Obasanjo's special envoy to **Zimbabwe's** President **Robert Mugabe**, whom he describes as 'very African', and to **Sudan**, where he is pessimistic about a settlement because of the weight of the Islamist ideologues of the Khartoum government. Like village elders among West Africa's ruling families, Abubakar and Babangida were brought in by Obasanjo to mediate after relations between **Ghana's** former military leader, the mercurial Flight Lt. **Jerry John Rawlings** and his civilian successor, the dour **John**

Kufuor, hit breaking point recently.

Babangida helped to finance several rival parties of Obasanjo's PDP – as did many other northern businessmen and generals – but failed to provide serious money for Buhari's All Nigeria People's Party. On election day, Babangida phoned Buhari at his Daura home but, we hear, it was an awkward call. Buhari's failure to dent Obasanjo was a lesson for Babangida. A Buhari victory would have scuppered a Babangida presidential bid. Moreover, the ascetic Buhari might have sought revenge against the gregarious multi-millionaire Babangida (who overthrew Buhari in a palace coup in 1985 and detained him for three years).

Alex Ekwueme, who challenged Obasanjo for the PDP ticket, was encouraged by Babangida to open his campaign in Minna. This was disastrous for his standing in his south-eastern Igboland power-base. After that, we hear Babangida declined to fund the Ekwueme campaign, which crashed at the PDP's primaries in January (AC Vol 44 No 3).

Abubakar, who took power after the mysterious death of Gen. **Sani Abacha** in June 1998, is more circumspect on politics. His most controversial outing so far was to head the Commonwealth team monitoring Zimbabwe's presidential elections last year, which condemned them for rigging and violence. Apparently, Mugabe still fulminates against what he regards as an act of treachery by a former African leader. Both Abubakar and Babangida refused to testify before Justice **Chukwudifu Oputa's** Panel – Nigeria's Truth and Reconciliation Commission – claiming its methodology was unfair. They both say the military has been unjustly vilified for corruption and human rights abuses. Obasanjo seems to agree. The Oputa Panel's report was delivered to the presidency in May 2002 but a committee established to make recommendations is yet to report.

Obasanjo's relationship with the wealthy Minna generals is mutually convenient. He uses them as a channel to groups in the military or business elite; in return, they are kept in the loop on some of the government's key political and diplomatic moves. The generals know, though, that Nigeria's civil dispensation remains fragile and that more radical voices in the military and among religious and civic activists could exploit the growing discontent. Babangida now echoes the call of democracy activists for a national conference to debate a new constitution devolving far more power to the regions.

Both see major political realignments in the next four years as succession battles heat up. Neither speaks of joining former military colleagues in competitive politics but they leave the door ajar. 'I am too young to retire and too old to start looking for a new job,' Babangida said. Judging by the gallery of official photographs in his house, Babangida still has fond memories of his old job – head of state.

SOUTH AFRICA

Looking down the line

Cyril 'the Suit' Ramaphosa is positioning himself to succeed Mbeki in 2009

That President **Thabo Mbeki** is the African National Congress presidential candidate for 2004 and its leader for now is not in question. Yet already speculation is rife about who will be anointed to succeed him in 2009, when Mbeki is obliged to step down after his second term. Within the ANC, it is widely felt that the candidates from Mbeki's cabinet or within the party's current senior leadership do not inspire confidence. Of the lot, runs the feeling, Finance Minister **Trevor Manuel**, the favourite of the financial markets, will at best

make a good deputy president.

One figure does enjoy the private support of many in the ANC hierarchy: **Cyril Ramaphosa**. Now a leading businessman with interests in media and manufacturing, he was a prominent anti-apartheid figure during the late 1980s. He became ANC General Secretary in 1991, served as the main negotiator in the constitutional talks with the National Party that led to the establishment of democracy and chaired the Constitutional Assembly responsible for drafting a permanent constitution. Privately favoured by President **Nelson Mandela** to be his successor, Ramaphosa went into business when the party hierarchy favoured Mbeki and even refused to take up a cabinet seat. There have long been whispers about his possible return to politics but finally Ramaphosa is showing signs of being game.

Crucially, despite public appearances of a rift, which were largely fuelled by the earlier rivalry and quickly abandoned allegations of Ramaphosa's supposed part in a plot against Mbeki, the President now appears to have thrown his weight behind a Ramaphosa succession. Already, Ramaphosa has been eased into party work, playing a more central behind-the-scenes role in recent ANC congresses. As a member of the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) he has been 'deployed' to serve two constituencies in Limpopo Province as well as in the Northern Free State and plays a key fundraising role.

There are many in the ANC who would welcome Ramaphosa's return to politics. He is very popular among the party rank and file. At the last party congress in December 2002, he achieved the second highest number of votes to the NEC, coming in just behind Manuel (AC Vol 43 No 24). At the previous congress in 1997, where he retired as party General Secretary, he achieved the top votes.

Sowetan hero

Moreover, unlike Mbeki, who is a product of ANC exile, Ramaphosa is from Soweto and was formed in the politics of the popular internal resistance against apartheid. Born in 1952, he is also a decade younger than Mbeki. He trained as a lawyer and in 1982 became the first General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers – which formed the backbone of the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) – and led the union's members to one of the country's biggest strikes ever. That and his leading role in democracy negotiations still give him hero status.

A survey by the Johannesburg-based liberal Helen Suzman Foundation in early 1999 asked voters to name which prominent people who had left politics in recent times they would like to see return. Ramaphosa was the only one who had strong support from all racial groups. To the ANC leadership and its business backers, he would be the most suitable candidate. He shares Mbeki's views on the dominant role of business and private investment in macro-economic growth. He is a friend of big capital and no friend of the left wing of the ANC. Nowadays, this is a plus.

With all these advantages, Ramaphosa looks set to frustrate for now the leadership hopes of the ambitious Deputy President, **Jacob Zuma**, as well as Defence Minister and ANC National Chairman **Mosiuo Patrick 'Terror' Lekota**. Two other potential long-term rivals are not much in evidence for now: **Joel Netshitenzhe**, head of the government propaganda service and an ascetic public figure, and Mbeki ally **Saki Macozoma**, the sometimes controversial boss of the media company New Africa Investments Ltd.

However, Ramaphosa's relationship with Mbeki is far from solid. Some seven years ago, Mbeki tried to frustrate his entry into business, fearing his acquisition of the National Empowerment Commission's media assets could serve a political agenda. In 2001, Mbeki endorsed his Police Minister, **Steve Tshwete**, when the latter publicly accused

Ramaphosa and two other leading ANC members – **Tokyo Sexwale** and **Matthews Phosa** – of a plot to unseat the President and ‘endanger Mbeki’s life’. Sexwale was Premier of the powerful Gauteng Province and was once tipped for a leadership post in the top five of the ANC, while Phosa was once destined to be deputy president but ran against an Mbeki-favoured candidate at the 1997 national congress. Interviewed at the time, Mbeki said that there was a campaign by key businessmen to fund a challenge to his leadership of the ANC in the run-up to the 2002 national congress. Ramaphosa denied the claim, saying at the time that he had no intention of returning to politics. More embarrassing for Mbeki, both the President and Tshwete had to withdraw the allegations publicly.

Skeleton in Cyril’s closet

Still, Ramaphosa’s closet is not without skeletons. In 1997, he was indirectly implicated in an alleged attempt by the mining conglomerates Anglo-American and De Beers (both of which were backing Ramaphosa) to discredit Mbeki. Ramaphosa dismissed the idea but later investigations by the SA investigative magazine *Noseweek* into a controversial arms deal involving the Pretoria government suggested there may have been some substance to the accusations. If Mbeki and the ANC hierarchy continue to back him, however, these things are unlikely to present major obstacles. Also, given their awareness that international observers, especially investors, are likely to be watching closely to see if SA can offer a repeat of 1999’s smooth transition of power, they are likely to want to pick a candidate and stick with him. This would make SA the exception in the region.

In **Namibia**, President **Sam Nujoma**, who changed the constitution to create a third term for himself, summarily fired his strongest challenger, Prime Minister **Hage Geingob** in August 2002 (AC Vol 44 No 6). In **Zimbabwe**, the idea that he has to go has made President **Robert Mugabe** unleash violence and murder reminiscent of Rhodesian rule (AC Vol 44 No 7). In **Botswana**, the prospect that Vice-President **Ian Khama**, son of the first President, Sir **Seretse Khama**, and former head of the armed forces, should succeed President **Festus Mogae** is still a divisive issue.

For the first time in years, Ramaphosa is raising his public profile with newspaper interviews on issues such as black empowerment – he has chaired a government commission on establishing a greater black presence in the mainstream economy. In the run-up to the 2004 election, the main challenge is to generate enough urgency and unity among the party rank and file. ANC leaders are not as popular as at previous elections. Half of all South Africans say Mbeki is not doing a good job. Relations with Cosatu and the SA Communist Party are at an all-time low. However, the ANC party machine has not fully swung into operation yet.

MALAWI

Getting rid of Muluzi

The President can’t stand for reelection but fears prosecution if he doesn’t hold onto power

Nine years of multi-party politics after 30 years of dictatorship have tested the country’s young democratic institutions. Two years of famine, a devastating HIV/AIDS epidemic and persistent allegations of corruption and economic mismanagement, have discredited President **Bakili Muluzi** and his United Democratic Party (UDF). The presidential election due by May 2004 would be a tough fight even if

(as in neighbouring **Zambia**), Muluzi had not tried and failed to amend the constitution to permit him to stand again (AC Vol 42 No 1).

The re-election struggle, now at last over, began in March 2002 with the ‘Open Term’ Bill being tabled in parliament without prior discussion by cabinet or the party’s National Executive. Instead, it was introduced to the public by the UDF’s regional governors and favoured ministers, including the brash **Dumbo Lemani**. It was supported by two leaders of the opposition and formerly ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP), **John Tembo** (now effectively head of the opposition) and **Heatherwick Ntaba**, and by Tembo’s old adversary, **Chakufwa Chihana** of the Alliance for Democracy (Aford). As a reward, all three began gracing state functions. Tembo got UDF support for his successful attempt to wrest the job of House Leader from MCP President **Gwanda Chakuamba**. Veteran survivor Tembo won the MCP party presidential vote on 29 April, with 374 votes to 275 for Chakuamba and a mere 31 for Muluzi’s favourite, Ntaba. The UDF propped up Chihana’s fading political fortunes in his northern regional stronghold. The Muluzi-Tembo alliance split Aford, the main opposition party.

A platform for Brown

The Open Term debate revived the wider political activity which had faded since Muluzi was reelected in 1999. In particular, it provided a platform for **Brown Mpanganjira**, who was sacked from the UDF cabinet in late 2000 following donor pressure, amid corruption allegations, later dismissed in court (AC Vol 42 No 7). Early in 2001, he formed a pressure group called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA); its bid to transform itself into a full-fledged political party is still hung up in litigation over registration but its steady opposition to a third term for Muluzi has made it the fourth biggest political organisation.

Another opponent of the Open Term Bill was the ecumenical Christian Public Affairs Committee (PAC), which had successfully campaigned against the late dictator, President **Kamuzu Hastings Banda**. When the vote was taken on 4 July 2002, all UDF members of parliament save three voted for the Open Term: the dissidents were **Cassim Chilumpha** (still Muluzi’s proposed vice-presidential candidate, although an embezzlement case is before the courts); **Jan Sonke**; and **Joe Manduwa**. However, Tembo’s faction balked at the last moment, handing Muluzi an embarrassing legislative defeat. UDF bosses demanded publicly that MCP members who had voted against the Bill should repay the money the UDF had paid for their support. The UDF then tabled a Third Term Bill instead.

This has helped new anti-third-term groups to emerge. The churches formed the Forum for the Defence of the Constitution (FDC) and, with non-governmental organisations, lobbied donors and MPs, and organised civic education and prayer-meetings. Three other pro-democracy parties were formed: the People’s Progressive Movement (PPM), People’s Transformation Party (Petra) and the Malawi Forum for Unity and Development (Mafunde).

In mid-2002, the government banned public rallies against the third term. Yet public defiance mounted as rumours persisted of payments to persuade parliamentarians to vote for the Bill. The independent media reported public castigation of wavering UDF leaders and physical assaults on critics by UDF Young Democrats. Commerce and Industry Minister **Peter Kaleso**, dismissed for refusing to support the Bill, was physically attacked and took refuge in the **British** Embassy. All this opposition and fears that the Anti-Corruption Bureau might investigate allegations of pay-offs to politicians forced the government to withdraw its Third Term Bill without a vote, in February 2003.

Muluzi gave up hoping to succeed himself but informed the UDF

National Executive and the cabinet that he would make himself party chairman – a job invented for the purpose – and personally appoint his successors. He sought and found a Catholic from the populous southern region as presidential candidate, backed by a vice-presidential Muslim from the central region. He also sought pledges that his successors would not allow a ‘Zambia situation’ to emerge: Zambia’s ex-President **Frederick Chiluba** was charged with corruption shortly after he left office. Persistent allegations of high-level corruption over the past nine years include the maize revenue scandal of 2000-2001 that implicates several high officials. On 29 March 2003, Muluzi on his own initiative appointed Central Bank Deputy Governor **Bingu wa Mutharika** as sole presidential candidate for approval by the coming UDF convention. Wa Mutharika, 70, worked briefly at the World Bank in Washington, later as Secretary General of the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa) until he was dismissed after allegations of misappropriation of funds in 1999. It is expected that Muluzi will replace the present vice-presidential nominee, Chilumpha, since he publicly opposed the Open Term. Chilumpha, a devout Muslim labelled by the press as a ‘fundamentalist’, was appointed largely to keep Malawi’s Muslim leaders on board with the agenda of a Muslim President widely seen as not fundamentalist.

Upholding the constitution

Now several UDF leaders have come out in support of the constitution. On 29 March, Muluzi received a petition against both the constitutional amendment proposal and the unconstitutional appointment of his intended successors. It came from senior ministers, including Vice-President **Justin Malewezi**, Agriculture Minister and Party First Vice-President **Aleke Banda**, Parliamentary Speaker **Sam Mpasu** and Natural Resources Minister **Harry Thomson**. On 18 April, Aleke Banda and Thomson resigned their party posts. After initially trying to persuade the courts to protect him in the office of Speaker, Mpasu has accepted demotion to a cabinet post, Education. Unsurprisingly, the UDF postponed its Convention from May to August. Nobody would be surprised by fresh attempts to tamper with the constitution or further resignations. Civic organisations (but not the ‘Muslim church’) have welcomed Muluzi’s decision to stop trying to get himself reelected but oppose his attempts to secure formal influence once he has retired. The **Kenyan** precedent encourages some opposition politicians to believe it is worth putting up a fight. The PPM, Mafunde and Petra, each with influential leaders, could merge and found a new alliance backed by personalities such as Aleke Banda, Malewezi and Press Corporation boss **Mathews Chikaonda**. Muluzi poured on more oil on 29 April by dissolving the Board of the Press Trust (whose number two is Aleke Banda), which owns Press Corporation (which is flush with money). The Trust was drawn up to eliminate such presidential interference after Hastings Banda’s abuse of its predecessor Press Holdings, which he once headed, to be succeeded by Tembo.

The rebels could be joined by the 25 (of 35) Aford MPs who were expelled from the party on 29 April, after long disagreement with Chihana, and who call themselves ‘Genuine Aford’. MCP members dissatisfied with the shaky Chakuamba-Tembo alliance could join too. The NDA’s public appeal is fading now that it has won its single-issue campaign against the constitutional amendment. But Muluzi may have another try and would anyway dominate his weak chosen candidate, Wa Mutharika, if the UDF won 2004’s general elections.

The party’s economic incompetence, though, could lose it those elections. Over the past three years, gross domestic product has grown at an annual rate of below one per cent. HIV/AIDS is thought to affect 16 per cent of adults (sub-Saharan average 8.6 per cent, rest-of-the-world average 0.2 per cent). Real exchange rates change unpredictably;

inflation is officially at 15 per cent, surging to 70 per cent; interest rates, usually about 45 per cent, fluctuate because of erratic government borrowing. Official data show that the highest over-expenditure is on State House-related expenses; underpaid (often unpaid) public servants observe that Muluzi hands out cash on his extravagant public outings.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund suspended budgetary support for the government more than three years ago, insisting that the government needs to be smaller while Muluzi defiantly makes it larger. His latest cabinet, named on 21 April, increased the number of ministers to 31, plus 15 junior ministers. There are eight separate ministers in the President’s Office, with portfolios for Special Duties, Presidential Affairs, National Public Events, Poverty and Disaster Management, Statutory Corporations, Persons with Disabilities, HIV/AIDS and ‘without portfolio’. While the National Intelligence Bureau grows, the Anti-Corruption Bureau and HIV/AIDS projects remain under-funded. After his reshuffle, Muluzi planned two private trips – for Easter to **Libya**, to his frequent host Colonel **Moammar el Gadaffi**, then to **Zimbabwe**’s President **Robert Mugabe** (cancelled at the last minute).

Bilateral donors will not restart the budgetary support which should pay for 40 per cent of public expenditure until the government satisfies the IMF’s lending conditions. Without outside help, the proportion of the population regarded as poor is expected to rise beyond the current 60 per cent. The World Bank defines poverty as a dollar a day (some 3,000 kwacha a month). A government clerk earns 1,500-2,000 kwacha monthly. Manufacturing plant is used only to half its capacity. Tobacco exports, which produce a third of GDP, are shrinking. Malawi has achieved food security in only two of the past five years. The hope is that people may start to vote for competence rather than along the traditional ethnic or regional lines. That would benefit the small new parties which, unlike the UDF, MCP and Aford, have no regional labels. Any coalition of these parties, often formed and led by professional people, would be, as one activist put it, a bid ‘to put democracy back on the front page’.

BURUNDI

Buyoya’s boys

In line with the Arusha accord, a Hutu president is taking over from Pierre Buyoya

New President **Domitien Ndayizéyé** was sworn in on 30 April in Bujumbura, replacing President **Pierre Buyoya** for the last 18 months of transition to multi-party rule. Ndayizéyé, 49, is currently Vice-President in the national reconciliation government, named on 23 July 2001 by the signatories to the Arusha accord of 28 August 2000 (AC Vol 43 No 18). He is the first civilian and the first Hutu President since the 1996 coup d’état that brought Buyoya to power. Ndayizéyé fled to **Belgium** during the genocide of Hutus in 1972. He studied mechanical engineering there and led a student movement, the *Mouvement des Etudiants Progressistes Burundi* (Meproba). Returning to Africa, he worked for a car spares supplier in **Rwanda**, where he met **Melchior Ndadayé**, founder of the *Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi* (Frodebu), who took over as elected President in July 1993, then was assassinated in a coup that October.

Ndayizéyé will have fewer powers than his predecessor, who remains influential and, crucially, retains the support of the army. The new Vice-President will be the leader of the main Tutsi party, the *Union pour le Progrès National* (Uprona) **Alphonse-Marie Kadege**.

Under the Arusha accord, Buyoya should have taken the job but he was unwilling to become his former deputy's deputy.

Buyoya has no intention of giving up politics, though, and has indicated that he will contest elections planned at the end of the transition. He is known to have stepped aside extremely reluctantly. As recently as February, he said in a speech that he would resign only if there were a national consensus for him to do so, because he wanted to see through a successful ceasefire with the rebel *Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (FDD) and *Front National de Libération* (FNL). He was persuaded to comply with the Arusha accord by pressure from **South Africa**, the main mediator in the peace process, as well as from **Tanzania, Uganda**, Frodebu and Tutsi moderates.

There is little doubt that Buyoya will continue to be the power behind the throne. Kadege is a Buyoya-loyalist, and both are from Bururi Province and are members of the same Tutsi sub-group, the Hema, like former Presidents **Michel Micombero** and **Jean-Baptiste Bagaza**. Yet unlike Buyoya, Kadege, 53, is a civilian. Elected to parliament in 1993, he has a doctorate in international relations and is a former Communications Minister who has been Uprona President since December 2002. He will be no simple figurehead.

In line with a written commitment from Ndayizéyé, signed on 31 March in South Africa and witnessed by South African Vice-President **Jacob Zuma**, he has a number of important responsibilities. He should, 'in consultation with the President' supervise the finalisation of negotiations on a ceasefire, the cantonment of forces, the integration of rebels in the national army and security forces, and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration into civilian life of former fighters. He should also countersign all official documents on security matters.

The peacekeepers arrive

The new leaders' task will be far from easy. Their main priority is to put an end to the war which continues despite a ceasefire signed on 4 December by **Pierre Nkurunziza's** rebel FDD (AC Vol 43 No 25). **Agathon Rwasa's** FNL still refuses to sign a peace deal. As the transitional parliament was electing the vice-president on 25 April, rebels attacked Bujumbura airport. The attack was seen in the capital as a signal to the African Union peacekeeping force commanded by South African Major General **Sipho Binda**, which will deploy 3,500 South African, **Mozambican** and **Ethiopian** soldiers from 1 May to monitor the ceasefire, supervise the cantonment of fighters and ensure the two sides observe commitments to halt arms shipments, free political prisoners and withdraw foreign troops, whether Rwandan Hutu fighters or members of the *Armée Patriotique Rwandaise*. The first 100 peacekeepers arrived on 27 April; their deployment is to coincide with the start of Ndayizéyé's mandate but they risk being caught up in clashes between rebels and army.

Fighting has continued throughout April in most regions between the army and the two rebel groups. On 23 April in the southern province of Makamba, two teachers were killed by rebels at Gikuzi and several attacks were reported in Rutana Province, where military sources say local government offices, a law court and a health centre were torched. At the same time, in the centre of the country, fighting between the FDD and the army in Musigati and Rugazi communes sent 10,000 people fleeing to seek refuge in Muyebe region. The same day, the offices of *Médecins sans Frontières-Holland* and other aid organisations were damaged by rebel bombardment in Ruyigi in the east. For three days from 17 to 20 April, Bujumbura came under rocket attack from the Musumba Hills. Before that, on the night of 16-17 April, a rebel attack destroyed part of the Gitega brewery. Further incidents were reported in Kayanza, Cibitoke and Muramvya provinces during the month, bringing the total death toll to more than 100 people.

Sources close to the FDD say that there are two main reasons why the fighting is still going on. The army, which sees itself as the Tutsi minority's genocide insurance, refuses to stop using its heavy weapons and welcome rebels into its ranks as long as the ceasefire is not universally observed. Frodebu and other Hutu parties don't want to let rebel leaders into the transitional government because they feel the rebels should be content with a place in the future national army. The FDD rebels accuse the government of not respecting the spirit of the ceasefire by preventing the distribution of European Union food aid to rebel fighters in the bush. As far as the rebels are concerned, the Arusha accord changes little. The army is in charge, Ndayizéyé is its servant and a small elite of Tutsi and Hutu notables are sharing cabinet posts between them. Land disputes in Rumonge region are fuelling their bitterness. The main beneficiaries of land expropriation from Hutu peasants are leading Hutus and Tutsis.

The power of Burundi's leaders is weakened by their own internal divisions and by the mistrust of their people, both Hutu and Tutsi, who contemptuously call them '*ventriotes*' – patriots of the stomach (*ventre*). The political landscape is becoming more and more divided. On 27 March, six parties from the 'G7' Hutu coalition, including the FDD's political wing, the *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie*, the FLN, *Parti Libéral* and *Rassemblement du Peuple Burundais*, decided to throw out Frodebu. CNDD leader **Léonard Nyangoma's** current low profile may hide activity behind the scenes.

The Tutsis are scarcely more united. Kadege does not enjoy the universal support of the 'G10' coalition of Tutsi parties which signed the Arusha accord. Their votes were divided between Kadege, Colonel **Epitace Bayaganakandi** and Ambassador **Térence Nsanzé**. The Vice-President was elected only with support from Frodebu parliamentarians, even though many of them suspect he was involved in the 1993 coup.

A significant number of Tutsi parties, notably Uprona's dissident wing led by **Charles Mukasi**, the *AC-Génocide* movement and the *Amasekanya* 'self-defence' militia, still refuse to recognise the Arusha accord. Uprona still does not trust former President Bagaza, leader of the *Parti pour le Redressement National* (Parena), who spent five months under house arrest until early April suspected of involvement in a plot to overthrow Buyoya. Part of the army opposes sharing power with Hutu parties and rebels, which they view as *génocidaires*.

On 7 May, 103 people are due to appear in court, accused of involvement in a failed coup in July 2001. Some of the suspects feel it is ridiculous that they stand accused of attempting to overthrow a government that they view as unconstitutional. Many Burundians fear Ndayizéyé may be heading for the same fate as ex-President **Sylvestre Ntibantunganya**, toppled by Buyoya in 1996.

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Pointers

UGANDA/CONGO-KINSHASA

Drummed out

Only a burst tyre and a forced landing made Uganda miss its 24 April deadline to pull its troops out of north-eastern Congo-Kinshasa. They set off in four Antonov transport aeroplanes for Entebbe the following day. Locals loudly cheered their farewell parade behind a band through Bunia.

For months, Uganda's army had kept some sort of order in Ituri Province between better off Hema landowners and Lendu peasants, both of them armed and trained by Uganda for its proxy *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Mouvement de Libération* (RCD-ML).

In recent months massacres of Hema by Lendu militias have been reported (AC Vol 44 No 8). With Uganda gone, militiamen are already patrolling Bunia with semi-automatic weapons. Brigadier **Kale Kaihura**, commanding Uganda's Congo occupation force, has warned of a bloodbath if the United Nations does not replace his 6,000 soldiers in Ituri. So far they've managed 200 **Uruguayan** peacekeepers, with another 4,000 from **Bangladesh** expected by 14 June.

No official of the UN Mission in the Congo (MONUC) attended the Bunia hand-over ceremony. Brig. Kaihura says MONUC, after nagging Uganda to get out, is now panicking over its failure to organise enough blue berets and secretly pleaded with Uganda's President **Yoweri Museveni** to stay until it does. Museveni asked for the request in writing if it wanted Kampala to break its deadline. **Vadim Periliev**, MONUC's chief for eastern Congo, says they merely asked Uganda to pull out in an orderly fashion.

Some 1,650 Ugandans have withdrawn so far, some by land. The elaborate Ituri Pacification Committee is supposed to keep order afterwards but may not have the muscle; Periliev insists it does. Besides UN peacekeepers, heavily armed soldiers-turned-policemen have been shipped in from Kinshasa to keep order in towns. In Ituri's vast, mountainous countryside, the IPC has put the leaders of various militias in charge of local security, hoping to create an arbitration mechanism for Hema-Lendu disputes.

Uganda and **Rwanda** have stopped accusing each other of arming and training dissidents in Congo; MONUC insists it has no evidence of a hostile Rwandan advance towards Ugandan positions. Separately, **Thomas Lubanga** of the scattered *Union des Patriotes Congolais* (UPC) has told Congolese radio that he still intends to pacify Ituri 'by the gun'. His is the only rebel faction in the area that refuses to support the IPC.

CONGO-KINSHASA

Wood for the trees

Mystery surrounds the fate of a proposed US\$50 million investment in the Shikolobwe concession in Katanga, one of the world's richest deposits of copper, cobalt and uranium. The **United States** used Shikolobwe uranium for the atomic bomb it dropped on Hiroshima, **Japan**, in 1945. Today's investor, **Swiss**-based commodities conglomerate Glencore, is interested only in the cobalt and already buys much of Congo-Kinshasa's output through its trading arm.

Glencore launched the project after discussions with Ridgepointe International, which formerly had a substantial concession in state mining company *Gécamines' Groupe Central* under the late President **Laurent-Désiré Kabila**. When the *Groupe Central* concession was withdrawn, Ridgepointe went into negotiation for compensation: President **Joseph Kabila**'s government offered it the Shikolobwe concession.

Though this is one of few major mineral projects currently proposed in Congo, it hit an unexplained delay. A government source told *Africa Confidential* the participants had not agreed on the security conditions needed at Shikolobwe. However, a commercial source insisted the plan was being blocked by George Forrest International, which objected to newcomer Glencore obtaining one of the country's prime concessions unless it was involved in the project. George Forrest International Vice-President **Pierre Pairoux** refutes these claims absolutely, insisting his company has no interest in Shikolobwe and that it has invited other companies to invest in Congo. The mystery continues.

LIBERIA

Tackling Taylor

A battle is going on behind the scenes at the United Nations Security Council over whether to give sanctions on Liberia a wider regional focus. Key issues are whether **Guinea** should be pursued for supporting the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and how to deal with Liberian-backed armed groups in western **Côte d'Ivoire**.

The UN Panel of Experts' report, published on 5 May, makes no specific recommendations on the sanctions, which expire on 7 May (AC Vol 43 No 18). Sanctions were imposed in 2001 over Taylor's involvement in **Sierra Leone**, now largely ended. Sierra Leone's Special Court may indict Taylor for war crimes but arresting him would be awkward, though he has travelled this year, most recently to **Togo** for talks with Ivorian President

Laurent Gbagbo on 26 April. The two agreed to set up joint border patrols; it is hard to imagine these in practice; fighters now move freely between the two countries.

Sam Bockarie, a veteran of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front, was thought to be behind the killing on 25 April of Ivorian rebel **Félix Doh**, head of the *Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand-Ouest* (MPIGO). Doh had been trying to rein in the activities of MPIGO's Sierra Leonean and Liberian allies

The new Movement for Democracy and Elections in Liberia (Model) is an offshoot of LURD, which is split between its Krahn and Mandingo wings (AC Vol 43 No 4). Many Model fighters seem to be ethnic Krahn who fled to Côte d'Ivoire after fighting between Taylor's troops and supporters of Krahn leader **Roosevelt Johnson** in September 1998.

They are doing well: an Economic Community of West African States mission in early April found 60 per cent of Liberia under rebel control. An international contact group of **France, Britain, United States, Nigeria** and Ecowas has been established, but Taylor lacks the international terror links to qualify for the US 'axis of evil'. Now less sympathetic to Taylor, France would like to extricate itself from the Ivorian conflict without shoring up Taylor or Gbagbo in the process.

TOGO

Democratic doubts

The 1 June presidential election could be as big a travesty of democracy as 1998, when the electoral commission was replaced on polling day so that phony results could be rubber-stamped, denying victory to opposition candidate **Gilchrist Olympio**. Olympio has not been in Togo since 1999 because of fears for his security—he survived an assassination attempt in 1992—and he may be disqualified for failing to meet tax and residence requirements.

Greeted by large crowds on his return to Lomé from **Ghana** on 26 April, for President **Gnassingbé Eyadéma** (after 36 years of dictatorial power one of Africa's ultimate dinosaurs), Olympio is still the man to beat. The opposition coalition broke up last October, and another leading figure, **Yaovi Agboyigbo**, has announced he will run. Eyadéma, 68, had promised to stand down but changed his mind and got parliament to pass a constitutional amendment to that effect on 30 December.

If Olympio's candidacy is blocked, Eyadéma may face the wrath of donors, especially the European Union, whose aid has been suspended for some years because of human rights concerns. President **Jacques Chirac** is said to feel personally let down by Eyadéma breaking his promise to quit, made when he visited Lomé in 1999.