

Faces of Power: Personalism and Succession Struggles in the Senegalese PDS

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Politics is highly personalised in many African countries.

Drawing on field research on political parties in Senegal it will be demonstrated that the level of personalism is extremely high in the ruling party PDS (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais). Compared to the opposition parties PS and AFP, the PDS exposes the least ideological commitment and the least developed party organisation. Everything relies on the charismatic personality of the 84-year old President Abdoulaye Wade. However, the extreme centralisation of power has an inherent tendency of self-destruction: as the “System Wade” cannot work without Wade, the ongoing succession struggles pose a serious threat to the survival of the PDS as a party.

Drawing on the empirical findings from the Senegalese case study, the paper will try to highlight some of the characteristic elements of power in Africa. It will also discuss Weber’s notion of charisma and try to develop a framework for the analysis of personalistic rule.