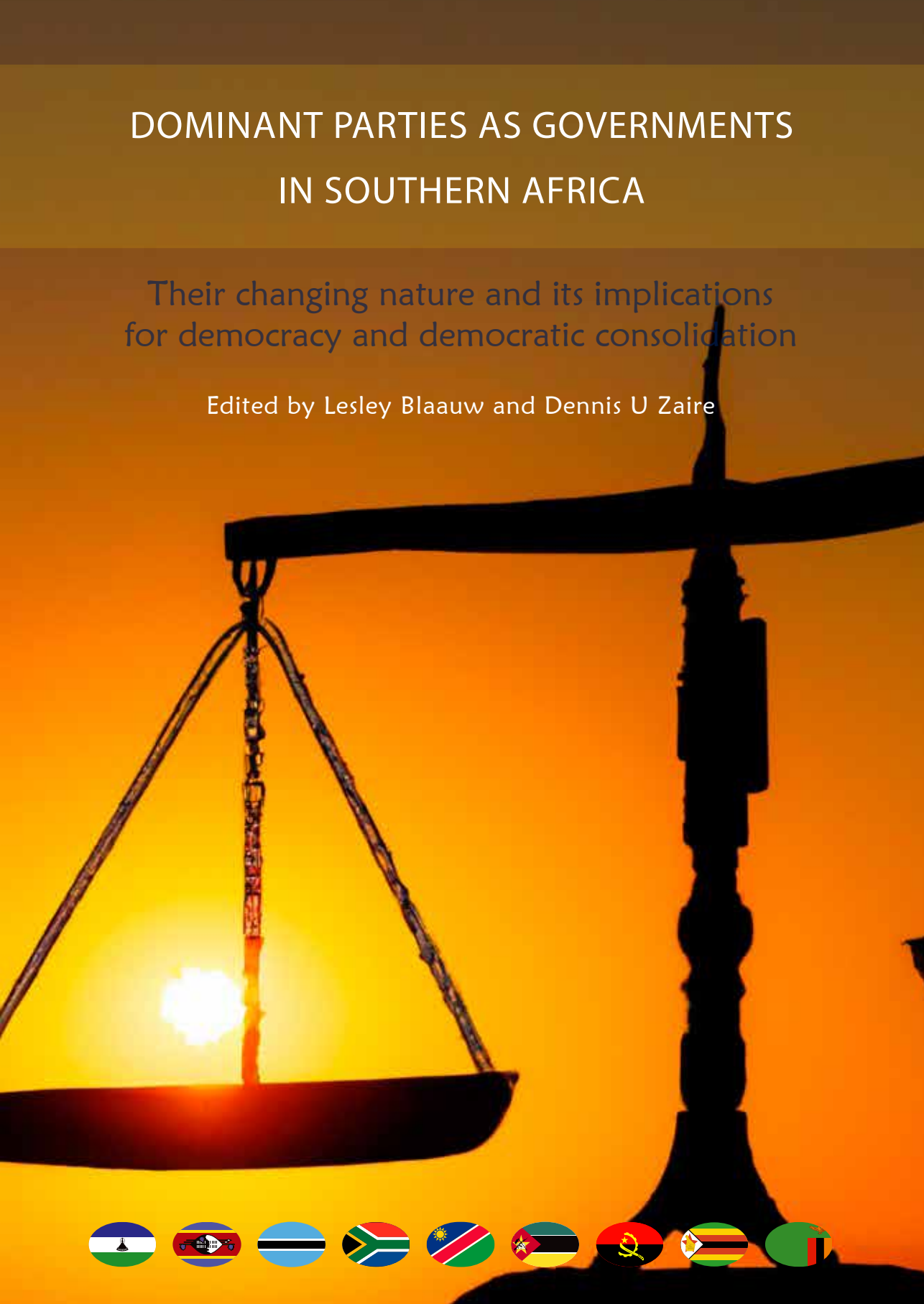
# DOMINANT PARTIES AS GOVERNMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

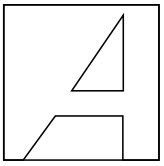
## Their changing nature and its implications for democracy and democratic consolidation

Edited by Lesley Blaauw and Dennis U Zaire



This publication would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Please note that the views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation or of the editors.



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung

Konrad Adenauer Foundation
PO Box 1145
Windhoek
info.namibia@kas.de
www.kas.de/namibia



Cover design: Sandie Fitchat and Bing Dall-E
Content editors: Lesley Blaauw and Dennis U Zaire
Language editor: Sandie Fitchat
Layout: The Word Factory
Printing: John Meinert Printing (Pty) Ltd

ISBN: 978-99916-39-66-6

# DOMINANT PARTIES AS GOVERNMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Their changing nature and its implications
for democracy and democratic consolidation

**Edited by**
**Lesley Blaauw and Dennis U Zaire**

# Table of contents

## PART IV: CONCLUSION

## List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ABC | All Basotho Convention |
| ANC | African National Congress |
| AR | Affirmative Repositioning (movement) |
| BCP | (1) Botswana Congress Party<br>(2) Basutoland Congress Party |
| BDP | Botswana Democratic Party |
| BMD | Botswana Movement for Democracy |
| BNF | Botswana National Front |
| BNP | Basotho National Party |
| BPP | Botswana People's Party |
| CASA–CE | *Convergência Ampla de Salvação de Angola – Coligação Eleitoral* (Broad Convergence for the Salvation of Angola – Electoral Coalition) |
| CNE | *Comissão Nacional Eleitoral* (National Electoral Commission, Angola)<br>*Comissão Nacional de Eleições* (National Electoral Commission, Mozambique) |
| CoD | Congress of Democrats |
| COPE | Congress of the People |
| COVID-19 | coronavirus disease 2019 |
| DC | Democratic Congress |
| DDR | disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration |
| EFF | Economic Freedom Fighters |
| ESAP | economic structural adjustment programme |
| EU | European Union |
| FNLA | *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) |
| FRELIMO | *Frente de Libertação Moçambique* (Mozambique Liberation Front) |
| GDP | gross domestic product |
| GPA | General Peace Accord |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IPC | Independent Patriots for Change |
| JAC | Joint Advisory Council |
| JLo | João Lourenço (incumbent President of Angola) |
| LCD | Lesotho Congress for Democracy |
| LEGCO | Legislative Council |
| LLA | Lesotho Liberation Army |
| LPM | Landless People's Movement |
| LWP | Lesotho Workers' Party |
| MDC | Movement for Democratic Change |
| MDM | *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* (Mozambique Democratic Movement) |

| | |
|---|---|
| MFP | Merematlou Freedom Party |
| MMD | Movement for Multi-party Democracy |
| MPLA | *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) |
| NIP | National Independence Party |
| PF ZAPU | Patriotic Front – Zimbabwe African People's Union |
| PHA | *Partido Humanista de Angola* (Humanist Party of Angola) |
| PRS | *Partido de Renovação Social* (Social Renewal Party) |
| RCL | Reformed Congress of Lesotho |
| RDP | Rally for Democracy and Progress |
| RENAMO | *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Mozambican National Resistance) |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| STAE | *Secretariado Tecnico da Administração Eleitoral* (Election Technical Secretariat) |
| SWAPO | South West Africa People's Organisation |
| TDP | Tuli Democratic Party |
| UD | Democratic Union |
| UDC | Umbrella for Democratic Change |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNIP | United National Independence Party |
| UNITA | *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) |
| US | United States (of America) |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| ZANU | Zimbabwe African National Union |
| ZANU PF | Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front |
| ZAPU | Zimbabwe African People's Union |
| ZIMPREST | Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation |
| ZUD | Zimbabwe Union of Democrats |
| ZUM | Zimbabwe Unity Movement |

## List of contributors

Prof. Lesley Blaauw
Department of Public Administration and Politics Studies
University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia
Dr Mark Chingono
Independent researcher, Harare, Zimbabwe
Dr Albert K Domson-Lindsay
University of Eswatini, Mbabane, Eswatini
Dr Tshepo Gwatiwa
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
Dr Motlamelle A Kapa
University of Lesotho, Maseru, Lesotho
Mr Christiaan Keulder
Owner of Survey Warehouse, Windhoek, Namibia
National Investigator, Afrobarometer in Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia
Prof. Henning Melber
Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa
Centre for Gender and Africa Studies, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa
The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden
Mr Biggie Joe Ndambwa
University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia
Dr Annemie Parkin
Eduvos, Cape Town, South Africa
University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Mr Alexander Rusero
Africa University, Harare, Zimbabwe
Mr Aaron W Siwale
University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia
Dr Alex Vines
Chatham House, London, United Kingdom
Mr Dennis U Zaire
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Windhoek, Namibia

# Editors' note

Every precaution has been taken to ensure the material conveyed in this volume is presented with the highest standard of technical quality. Responsibility for any discrepancies or omissions that may remain is borne by the authors themselves. The inclusion of noun prefixes, e.g. to denote a language, place or person (such as *Isizulu*, meaning "the Zulu language") in certain African languages, has been left to the discretion of the individual author concerned.

# PART I:
# Conceptual orientation

# Introduction

**Lesley Blaauw and Dennis U Zaire**

Electoral politics have always been an important attribute of measuring citizens' involvement in political processes in southern Africa. However, the divergent nature of regimes and governance systems has always made it difficult to measure and assess whether an emerging pattern can tell us anything about the process to and from democratic consolidation in the subregion. This is because, in southern Africa, only four countries – Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia – have held elections under conditions that can be considered generally free and fair. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, has held elections on a regular basis, but they are increasingly seen as neither free nor fair and remain heavily contested. Lesotho's fractured politics mean that elections are held irregularly, while in Eswatini the political landscape remains dominated by the monarchy. Zambia, which has a history of both authoritarianism and fractured democratic politics, oscillates politically between competitive authoritarianism and electoral democracy (Levitsky & Way, 2012). The political fortunes and continued party dominance of former liberation movements as governments in Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe currently face unprecedented challenges from opposition parties. Indeed, the particular case studies of each of these countries reveal interesting dynamics for electoral politics and party system development and sustainability in southern Africa.

In Botswana, for instance, erstwhile President Ian Khama broke with tradition and supported the opposition, which added a new dimension to the electoral dynamics in that country (Brown, 2020). Prior to this move by President Khama, party dominance in that country was explained through an array of diverging variables, including economic performance, institutional cohesion, patronage politics and the first-past-the-post electoral system (Good, 2016; Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe, 2013). Similarly, factionalism in the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has been analysed by looking at the ability of the ruling party to manage social cleavages – and the inability of the opposition to do the same (Maundeni & Seabo, 2013; Poteete, 2012). While this factionalism has not significantly impacted on the existence of the two-party state in Botswana, the fractures it has caused may provide the impetus for more plural politics there.

The changing dynamics in the political economies of Namibia and South Africa, with a huge corruption scandal in the former (Melber, 2020) and a decline in partisan

voting in the latter, have led to a considerable reduction in the electoral support for their respective ruling parties (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2019). Interestingly, in the case of Namibia, the internal dynamics in the ruling party – the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) that became the SWAPO Party after independence in 1990 – led to the formation of two breakaway parties around the end of the first decade of national sovereignty. Cooper (2017) suggests that factional marginalisation was instrumental in this breakaway: it purged the party of members sympathetic to the factional leader, Ben Ulenga, who contested the third term for Sam Nujoma, and sidelined Hidipo Hamutenya, who contested the presidency of the ruling party. Indeed, it could be argued that the purging of these leaders and their followers played a role in the formation of the Congress of Democrats (associated with Ulenga) in 1999 and the Rally for Democracy and Progress (associated with Hamutenya) in 2007. Furthermore, elite rupture and the erosion of party dominance in Namibia were preceded by the expulsion of SWAPO youth leaders in 2014 and the formation of the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement. A similar impact was noticeable when the Deputy Minister of Lands was fired in 2016, an event which was followed by the formation of the Landless People's Movement (LPM). The capacity of the AR movement, the newly-established Independent Patriots for Change (IPC) and, in part, the LPM has ensured that issue-based politics have replaced identity politics ever since the 2019 electoral cycle.

In South Africa, issues relating to crime, corruption, jobs, housing and service delivery in particular have led to the decline in partisan voting (Bank & Hart, 2019). The decline of the dominance of the African National Congress (ANC) has received considerable attention from scholars in that country and beyond. For instance, Chipkin (2016) notes that the dominance of the ANC on a national level has been in decline since the national elections in 2014. After the 2019 national elections, Schulz-Herzenberg (2019) noted that the election outcome bore testimony to electoral uncertainty among the South African voting public. Needless to say, the 2019 election results – in which the ANC garnered less than 60% of the votes for the first time since the advent of democracy in that country – not only brought factionalism into relief within the ruling party, but also the party's inability to resolve it (Kotze & Bohler-Muller, 2019). Other concerns involve the impact of factions and factionalism on South African democracy; this view was already expressed almost two decades ago (Southall, 1998). While Booysen (2014) interrogates the impact of coalition formation and alliances on the party political system in South Africa, a more recent reflection by Kanyane (2021) concludes that factional politics are as old as democracy itself in South Africa.

Similarly, in Zambia, increasing corruption and economic concerns were primary preoccupations for voters. A prominent electioneering issue was the debt that the Zambian government owed to the Chinese, estimated at approximately US$6.6 billion in August 2021 (Brautigam, 2021; Brautigam & Yinxuan, 2021). The advent of multi-party democracy was marked by the emergence of a number of small parties, which meant

that the reintroduction of democracy in Zambia was hallmarked by fractious politics. Indeed, the government formed by the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) in 1991 comprised a number of splinter parties (Phiri, 2021). Thus, at the outset, the MMD was beset by factional competition and corruption, amongst other things (Szeftel, 2000). The Zambian picture suggests that the building blocks for a durable democracy and the institutionalisation of political parties were not based on a strong foundation. Indeed, the fractious nature of politics generally, and electoral politics more specifically, have led Sandbrook (1996) to conclude that, whereas party fragmentation usually plays an intermediary role in democracies, the party system that evolved in Zambia after 1991 did the opposite. This state of affairs is due to (1) the fractious nature of politics in general, (2) electoral politics in particular, and (3) the fact that party fragmentation, which usually plays an intermediary role in establishing a healthy democracy, is incapable of fulfilling this role because the foundation of the governing party was never solidly established.

Evaluations of Zimbabwe's democratic prospects have generally been optimistic since the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) as an opposition party. Today, however, the overwhelmingly negative consensus on the state of affairs in the country points out political misrule, economic mismanagement, corruption and a lack of leadership. Regime classification varies from a failed or fragile state to a pseudo-democracy (Gwande, 2019). Furthermore, while general elections have been held, they could not be considered either free or fair against the backdrop of an uneven playing field that heavily favours the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). Despite this overt imbalance, both the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) declared the 2013 elections in Zimbabwe free and fair, while the MDC and international observers concluded the exact opposite (Raftopoulos, 2013). The subregional and continental bodies expressed similar sentiments with regard to the 2018 elections, while dissenting opinions came from the international community and the main opposition in Zimbabwe (Beardsworth et al., 2019). With regard to factional politics in the ruling party, the late President Robert Mugabe has been credited with being able to play one faction off against the other, keeping all of them accountable to himself (Beardsworth et al., 2019).

Lesotho, who returned to democracy in 1993 after years of authoritarian rule, continues to battle with internal strife. The fractious nature of Lesotho's politics emanates partly from its continuous electoral controversies (Williams, 2019). To counteract this political instability and broaden political representation, a mixed-member legislative system was introduced to replace the first-past-the-post majoritarian system. The advantages of the mixed-member system in Lesotho are that it allows for local representation while simultaneously broadening representation (Rich et al., 2014). However, Kapa (2008) cautions that the fractured nature of coalition politics in Lesotho could undermine the mixed-member system and, subsequently, the democratic gains made thus far.

The dominant party states in lusophone southern Africa, namely Angola and Mozambique, are currently proceeding along divergent lines. Nonetheless, they are similar in one principal respect: democratic consolidation remains precarious in them, despite their holding of regular elections.

In Angola, the complete dominance of the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA, or People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) is illustrated by the fact that it has been in power since independence in 1975. The advent of electoral politics after 2002 and the holding of regular, free and fair elections has created opportunities for democracy to reassert itself as the only game in town – to invoke a popular phrase (Linz & Stepan, 1996). The country held elections in 2008, 2012 and 2017.[1] Despite electoral gains for opposition parties increasing from 18.4% in 2002 to 38.9% by 2017,[2] the MPLA's dominance has meant that party politics in Angola remain non-competitive (Troco, 2019). Indeed, the MPLA received more than 60% of the votes in the last three elections, which confirms their dominant party status (Generoso de Almeida, 2022). However, despite the acknowledged weaknesses of the opposition, which stem from structural and organisational limitations, the MPLA's power of incumbency gives it a considerable comparative advantage. This is because the party has been able to manage electoral processes through the use of government institutions and resources. All these factors have resulted in electoral politics in the country that have produced electoral authoritarianism instead of an electoral democracy (Blaauw, 2014; Troco, 2019).

Following a protracted civil war, multi-party politics returned to Mozambique in 1994. The beginning of multi-party politics also marked the advent of fractured politics in the country. Following the 1994 election, the *Frente de Libertação Moçambique* (FRELIMO, Mozambique Liberation Front) was compelled to accommodate an array of factions from within and outside of the ruling party (Macuane et al., 2017). Fractures within the ruling party, which is characterised by a competition among and between members of the ruling party over power and resources, further complicate the Mozambican political landscape (Macuane et al., 2017). Since 1994, but increasingly since the discovery of natural gas and coal deposits, FRELIMO has come to rely on state resources to control elections and election outcomes (Bussotti, 2021; Pitcher, 2020). By the time elections were held in October 2019, FRELIMO had won for the six consecutive time. Thus, the party has been in power ever since Mozambique's independence in 1975. FRELIMO even consolidated its dominant party status with its 2019 election win. Thus, the current political landscape

1 No elections were held in 2021.

2 The increased support for the opposition in the 2017 election was preceded by a fall in the price of oil in 2016, which meant that the MPLA government had less money to spend on civil servants and others who benefited from their extensive network of patronage. The suggestion that the ruling party was responsible for the mismanagement of state funds also contributed to an increase in opposition parties' fortunes (Pearce et al., 2017).

in Mozambique features growing authoritarianism and widening political polarisation (Pitcher, 2020; Macuane et al., 2017).

The nature of the regime in Eswatini makes its form of governance an outlier in southern Africa. Its authoritarian nature is characterised by the monarch having absolute power in the Kingdom. Indeed, the Swati monarchy remains the dominant political institution in the country. Despite this monarchical dominance, Dlamini (2021) notes that 59% of the electorate in Eswatini wants many political parties. However, the introduction of a non-party, tinkhundla[3] system of government by King Sobhuza II in 1978 meant that multi-party politics have yet to take root and open elections are still to be held (Hlandze, 2021). The tinkhundla system replaced the multi-party system that the erstwhile colonisers, Britain, introduced at the advent of Eswatini's independence. The salient feature of the non-party system was that representatives could be elected through popular elections in local constituencies, the tinkhundla (Hlandze, 2021). The Swati government introduced constitutional changes in 2005, but these were described as a mere cosmetic reform of procedures (Delby, 2014). Not surprisingly, therefore, these changes have also not affected the nature of elections in Eswatini. The 2008, 2013 and 2018, the electoral process has not changed under King Mswati III. This has led to the conclusion that the Swati electoral process is being undermined, with far-reaching implications for democracy and the future of the monarchical state (Simelane, 2017).

The holding of elections, however flawed, created the façade of democracy. In most instances, they have prevented states in the southern African region from taking on a full-blown authoritarian nature. Moreover, as the array of divergent cases above illustrate, elections can be used as a tool to enhance democracy as well as an instrument to reinforce authoritarian rule.

Two constants are discernible in both democratic and authoritarian countries in the southern African region. In most – if not all – the countries under investigation here, these constants are dominant party states and fractured politics. In this book, therefore, we interrogate the prevalence of dominant party states and measure the degree of fractions within them as well as the fractured nature of politics in the region.

## Defining *dominant party systems*[4]

*Dominant party systems* are polities where one party achieves electoral dominance for a prolonged period, even though the system allows the free formation of political parties

3 An *inkhundla* is an administrative subdivision smaller than a district; a constituency. *Tinkhundla* is the plural.

4 The following two subsections on the theory of dominant party states were taken from the chapter by Annemie Parkin herein.

and regularly holds meaningful elections[5] (De Jager & Du Toit, 2013; Greene, 2013). Such systems, which have been called "uncommon democracies" (Pempel, 1990), differ from authoritarian party systems: they ensure the electoral dominance of a single party by closing the political opportunities and space for other parties to compete freely and fairly.

The most frequently used measure of diversity in a party system is Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) "effective number of parties index" (see also Feld & Grofman, 2016; Golosov, 2009; Mozaffar & Scarritt, 2016). This approach, based either on parties' shares by votes or seats, is a size-based measure that returns a relatively simple and easily comprehensible number. However, scholars have criticised the index for considering only vote or seat shares, which do not adequately capture the true extent of domination (Bogaards, 2004). As a result, scholars such as Bogaards (2004) and De Jager and Du Toit (2013) suggest several additional criteria to identify party dominance: the political system, the threshold for dominance, and the nature of the dominance; in presidential systems, the presence or absence of united government; the inclusion of opposition features; and time span. Others argue that dominance does not require a legislative or electoral majority (Blondel, 1968; Pempel, 1990; Ware, 1996). Bogaards (2004) also argues that, in presidential systems, the dominant party has to control the presidency and the legislature through at least a plurality of the seats or vote. Sartori (2005), on the other hand, equates dominance with an absolute vote and seat majority, which causes the make-up of the opposition to be of little or no relevance. Coleman (1960) proposes a "threshold of dominance" of 70%, whilst Van de Walle and Butler (1999) suggest 60%.

The element of time is essential for the study of dominant party systems because it separates occasional majorities from sustained dominance. Pempel (1990) argues for a "substantial period", whilst Ware (1996) requires that the dominant party "usually" wins. Sartori (2005) calls for dominance over at least three elections, whereas Greene (2013) requires five elections or a 20-year dominant incumbency threshold. De Jager and Du Toit (2013) adopt the middle position, namely dominance over four consecutive elections. A more novel approach is that of Dunleavy (2010), who argues for an analytic definition that can identify a party as dominant, irrespective of its tenure in office. Duverger (1954) proclaims that domination is more about influence than strength, more art than brute force. That is, it entails the art of securing electoral domination long before elections occur, and of skewing the playing field while holding meaningful elections (Greene, 2007, 2013).

5 Greene (2007:36) identifies three features of *meaningful elections*. The first is that the chief executive and legislature are elected by popular elections and cannot be dismissed by the executive. In the second, all opposition are allowed to form independent parties and contest all elections: they are neither banned nor forced to join the dominant party. The third feature entails that the incumbent cannot rewrite the rules to ensure permanent consolidation of its rule, nor is it (or any other party) allowed to commit electoral fraud.

## Classifying *dominance*

De Jager and Du Toit's typology of party dominance sets this out very clearly (see Figure 1). Party dominance can either lead to authoritarian/hegemonic systems that are considered not free, competitive authoritarian systems that are considered partly free, or dominant party systems that are considered free (De Jager & Du Toit, 2013:12). All southern African states discussed in this volume with former liberation movements at the helm have either devolved into authoritarian regimes or have established dominant party systems with flawed democratic systems.

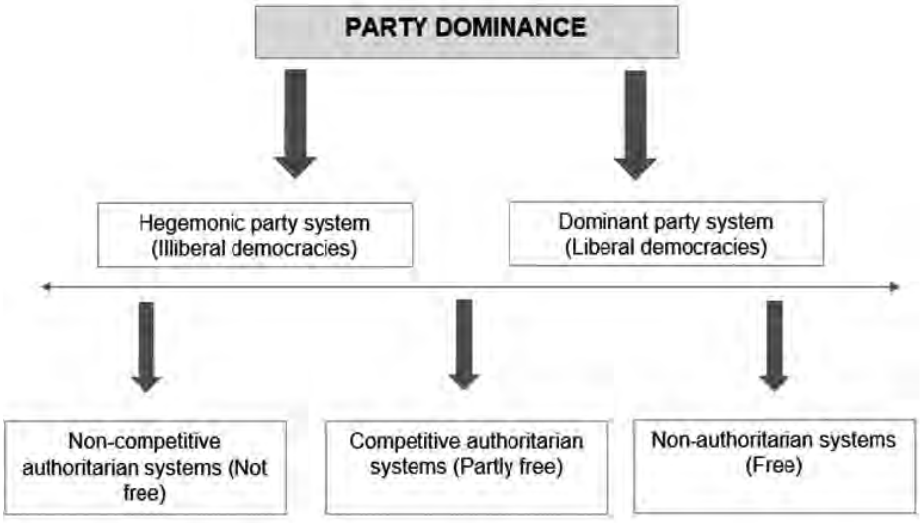



***Figure 1: Typology of party dominance***
Source: De Jager & Du Toit (2013:12)

Liberation struggles in southern African countries and liberation movements' transition into ruling parties have created systems characterised by a single party's dominance. According to Arian and Barnes (1974:593), the dominant party system –

> … has often been associated with developing countries, where low levels of mobilization have sometimes combined with independence movements to give rise to parties that seem to dominate their polities completely without doing away with democratic procedures and symbols.

Some argue that dominant party systems can be conducive to the development of a stable democratic system (Arian & Barnes, 1974; Karume, 2004; O'Brien, 1999; Spiess, 2015). O'Brien (1999:335–336) states the following in this regard:

> The partial democracy of the single-party dominant situation allows for a range of hopes, a range of possible futures: decisively better than political despair and the solution of despair, state collapse. Beyond that, the single-party culture allows for all kinds of a long learning experience.

In southern Africa, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe are characterised by a single party's dominance by winning successive elections as a result of popular support and/or its control over state resources (Southall, 2003:37). In some cases (e.g. Zimbabwe), single-party dominance has resulted in undemocratic practices and the imposition of authoritarian, one-party systems. In other words, they typify a hegemonic party system that is not free. In other cases (e.g. Namibia and South Africa), single-party dominance has led to the establishment of dominant party systems that operate within a (sometimes flawed) democratic framework. This corresponds to De Jager and Du Toit's (2013) typology that speaks about a non-authoritarian, free system characterised by party dominance. Zambia offers a different path and trajectory of the party system. Arguably, Zambia's dominant MMD never had a plurality of seats in Parliament; this compelled it to manufacture its party dominance, which it succeeded in doing between 1991 to 2011 (Doorenspleet & Nijzink, 2013). The variety of typologies in governance in southern Africa also finds expression in endless transitions to democracy. Cases in point are the system in place in Lesotho and the monarchy that rules in Eswatini. Also, the nature of the regime[6] in Zimbabwe, Zambia's oscillation between regime types, the nature of regimes in lusophone southern Africa, and the special case of Lesotho necessitate an examination of the nature of these regimes because they are often conceptualised as defective democracies and/or electoral authoritarianisms.

The advent of the third wave of democracy globally from 1990 has also given rise to regimes that hold elections, but such elections are normally not free or fair. Therefore, regimes of this nature are not only not democratic, they can also not be considered authoritarian (because they hold regular elections). Simply put, they combine democratic and non-democratic features of respective regime types and operate in the interface between liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes (Bogaards, 2009). Scholars therefore classify these regimes as *hybrid*. Despite the overwhelming focus on electoral politics, clearly understanding the dynamism of hybrid regimes demands an investigation of what happens in a state's executive, legislative, judicial and public dimensions (Ekman, 2009; Levitsky & Way, 2002, 2010). Hybrid regimes are those where elections

6 *Regimes* in this context are defined as a governance system based on a set of rules. We share the view that the intentions of regimes are to control three aspects of political life. These are (1) the number and type of actors allowed to take part in the selection of the individuals who fill the principal governmental offices, namely the position of chief executive and the membership of the legislative body, if any; (2) the methods of access to such positions; and (3) how power is exerted (Ekman, 2009:13).

– despite being held – are characterised by irregularities, a lack of freedom or fairness, and a government that harasses the opposition. Furthermore, in such regimes political participation is circumscribed by intimidation, while civil society and the rule of law are generally weak. Overall, whether in hybrid regimes, defective democracies or electoral authoritarian governments, corruption is rampant, and the judiciary is biased in favour of the ruling party (Ekman, 2009; Riaz, 2019).

## Factionalism and fragmentation

Both democratic and hybrid regimes are sustained by factions and factionalism. Generally, intra-party politics are characterised by both conflict and consensus between interdependent groups within a party (Maor, 1997:147). Intra-party groups – or *factions* – not only influence changes in the identity, organisation and internal decision-making processes of the party concerned (Harmel & Tan, 2003), but they may also affect the party's stability as well as the party system at work. Factions can influence how parties perform their societal and state-oriented tasks. Thus, factions can impinge on the legitimacy and efficacy of democratic political systems (Köllner & Basedau, 2005).

In a generic sense, *factionalism* is understood as the interplay of collective actors within parties, competing for power resources. Contextually, *faction* is defined as follows (Zariski, 1960:33, cited in Beller & Belloni, 1978:419):

> … any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organised to act collectively – as a distinct bloc within the party – to achieve their goals. These goals may include any, several, or all of the following: patronage (control of party and government office by members of the faction), the fulfilment of local, regional, or group interests, influence on party strategy, influence on party and governmental policy, and the promotion of a discrete set of values to which members of the faction subscribe.

The above discussion suggests that factions are, by and large, a feature of all political parties. Thus, the notion of a unified party where no internal contestation takes place does not exist. In debunking the idea of states as unitary actors, Boucek (2009:55) asserts that parties should be seen as "collective entities in which competition, divided opinions and dissent create internal pressures". The nature of political contestation between political parties within a democracy should also allow for an interplay of factions within political parties competing for political power. Thus, factionalism can be an expression of a democratic political culture, although this is dependent on the type of factionalism. Indeed, as Boucek (2009) argues, factional competition is not necessarily a bad thing, although it can be difficult to manage. Ufen (2020) asserts that factionalism can be beneficial because factions provide opportunities for the party rank and file to influence policymaking; they also help to represent different interests and sharpen the party's

programmatic profile. Factions may also offer the party an opportunity to adapt quickly to a changing political environment. Moreover, an increase in political parties arguably provides voters with a wide range of choices (Köllner & Basedau, 2005). However, divergent factional preferences and polarised party opinion create splitting pressures and loosen intra-party ties as factions become opposed, rather than simply separate. The latter type of factionalism, which Boucek (2009) refers to as *degenerative*, has the potential to splinter a party. Whether or not factionalism becomes degenerative depends, by and large, on the role of the leader.

For Ufen (2020), the control of party groups depends on the strength of their party leaders, their ability to stifle factionalism because of their charisma and/or deftness in power politics, and the centralisation of party organisation. Factionalism is prevented from leading to a party split or a fundamental policy switch if the party is centralised to such a degree that the party leader has the ability to quash revolt by using repressive measures or patronage. Where leaders are unable to rein in factions and stifle factionalism through repressive measures, patronage, or both, ideological differences lead to breakaway parties or party splits. Evidence shows that political parties often become polarised because of deep-seated issues that are difficult to integrate into party ideology. This type of factionalism can be episodic but destabilising for parties as well as for government. If party fragmentation is not kept in check, competitive factionalism may produce negative outcomes that threaten party unity (Boucek, 2009). In the context of a centralised decision-making structure, as is the case for most southern African governments where erstwhile liberation movements are in power, party splits have proved to be inevitable (Chigudu, 2019; Gumede, 2017; Melber, 2018). The inability of political leadership under liberation movements as governments to allow for open contestation, without purging opposing contestants, is embedded in the history and political culture of these parties-turned-government.

If, as Boucek (2009) contends, factionalism is a multifaceted phenomenon, a country's political culture plays a decisive role in whether intra-party factions endure or whether factionalism becomes degenerative to the extent that it leads to breakaway parties. For instance, in authoritarian regimes, intra-party factionalism is seen as a constraint on the dominant party and, indeed, such a regime's very survival. To counteract potential degenerative factionalism, a system of patronage and the targeted provision of public goods mediate conflict between and among factions (Fiona & Tomsa, 2020:40; Pepinsky, 2013). In democracies, on the other hand, intra-party democracy normally allows for competing and contesting factions, but also mitigates the influence of opposing factions (Boucek, 2005). Indeed, the alluring charm of democracy is that its party politics make allowance for a dominant party to draw in both elites and ordinary people (Greene, 2007). Moreover, divergent coalition-building within political parties normally also translates into the building of victorious electoral outcomes for the dominant party (Boucek, 2014). This has the extra benefit of removing the incentive for factionalism to become degenerative.

In addition, as Boucek (2010) notes, the electoral system impacts on intra-party competition and factionalism. More particularly, electoral rules determine, to some degree, the prospects for party cohesion or degenerative factionalism (Close, 2012). Cohesion is arguably much more important in a parliamentary system than in a federal government one: in the latter, party unity is less important than the individual candidate (Boucek, 2002). It has even been suggested that the first-past-the-post system allows for more broad-based parties and increases intra-party competition (Close, 2012). In contrast, the absence of party consolidation mechanisms in a parliamentary system encourages the emergence and persistence of factionalism (Poteete, 2012). Another element among the institutional arrangements within an electoral system that has a bearing on factionalism is the relationship between the legislature and the executive (Köllner & Basedau, 2005). As has been pointed out earlier in this discussion, the authoritative nature of presidential power influences the nature of factionalism in any party. The question to pose, therefore, is this: what role does factionalism play in the decline of dominant parties?

The sustenance of dominant party status is impacted by a number of a factors. For Sharma and Swenden (2020), economic governance plays a fundamental role in the durability of dominant party status. They postulate that "[t]he essence of economic governance lies in the resource strategies adopted by national incumbents to build up and sustain an electoral following in national and sub-national politics" (Sharma & Swenden, 2020:452). Writing on economic voting in Africa in general, Bratton et al. (2012) contend that African voters also factor in governmental policy performance in relation to unemployment, cost of living, inflation and income distribution. This suggests that poor economic performance and the politicisation of public resources, especially where corruption erodes public trust in the ability of the state to prudently govern economic resources, have fundamental implications for a dominant party's fate.

Using the classification of regime types in southern Africa advanced by Matlosa (2017), the case studies in this volume also examine the electoral authoritarian regimes in Angola and Zimbabwe; the electoral democratic regimes in Lesotho, Mozambique and Zambia; and the liberal democracies in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. A comparative research design and case studies were intentionally employed to cast light on the issue of party dominance in democracies and non-democratic regimes alike in southern Africa. Besides catering for an absence of studies that account for declines in party dominance, this study also takes a novel approach to the subject matter by interrogating the fracturing of intra-party politics. The latter seems to have contributed to declining party dominance of former liberation-movements-turned-government, to fracturing of the party system in Lesotho, to Zambia's oscillation between an electoral democracy and a liberal democracy, and to the enduring dominance of the monarch in Eswatini.

## References

Arian, A, & Barnes, HS. 1974. The dominant party system: A neglected model of democratic stability. *The Journal of Politics*, 36(3):592–614.

Bank, L, & Hart, T. 2019. Land reform and belonging in South Africa: A place-making perspective. *Politikon*, 46(4):411–426.

Beardsworth, N, Cheeseman, N, & Tihnu, S. 2019. Zimbabwe: The coup that never was, and the election that could have been. *African Affairs*, 118(472):580–596.

Beller, DC, & Belloni, FP (Eds). 1978. *Faction politics: Political parties and factionalism in comparative perspectives*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio.

Blaauw, L. 2014. Reinforcing authoritarianism: Electoral politics in Angola. *Journal of African Elections*, 13(2):122–136.

Blondel, J. 1968. Party systems and patterns of government in Western democracies. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, 1(2):180–203.

Bogaards, M. 2004. Counting parties and identifying dominant party systems in Africa. *European Journal of Political Research*, 43:173–197.

Bogaards, M. 2009. How to classify hybrid regimes? [sic] Defective democracy and electoral authoritarianism. *Democratization*, 16(2):399–423.

Booysen, S. 2014. Causes and impact of party alliances and coalitions on the party system and national cohesion in South Africa. *Journal of African Elections*, 13(1):66–92.

Boucek, F. 2002. The structure and dynamics of intra-party politics in Europe. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 3(3):453–493.

Boucek, F. 2005. Why does party dominance end in factionalism and what are the implications for democracy? Unpublished paper presented at the General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, Budapest, 8–10 September 2005.

Boucek. F. 2009. Rethinking factionalism: Typologies, intra-party dynamics and three faces of factionalism. *Party Politics*, 15(1):455–485.

Boucek, F. 2010. The factional politics of dominant parties. In Bogaards, M, & Boucek, F (Eds). *Dominant political parties and democracy*. London/New York: Routledge.

Boucek, F, 2014. The maintenance and decline of dominant party systems in the developed world: Inter- and intra-party interpretations. Unpublished paper presented at the Dominant Party Systems Conference, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 9–10 May 2014.

Bratton, M, Bhavnani, R, & Chen, T. 2012. Voting intentions in Africa: Ethnic, economic or partisan? *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 50(1):27–52.

Brautigam, D. 2021. How Zambia and China co-created a debt "Tragedy of the Commons". *Working Paper No. 2021/51*. Washington, DC: China Africa Research Initiative, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. http://

www.sais-cari.org/publications-working-papers, last accessed 28 December 2022.

Brautigam, D, & Yinxuan, W. 2021. Zambia's Chinese debt in the pandemic era. *Briefing Paper No. 05/2021*. Washington, DC: China Africa Research Initiative, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. http://www.sais-cari.org/publications-briefing-papers-bulletins, last accessed 28 December 2022.

Brown, C. 2020. Botswana votes 2019: Two-party competition and the Khama factor. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 46(4):703–722.

Bussotti, L. 2021. Peace and democracy in Mozambique: An endless transition. *Africa Development*, XLVI(2):1–16.

Chigudu, D. 2019. The paradox of the national liberation movements in post-colonial southern Africa: Which way to go? *African Renaissance*, 16(2):207–224.

Chipkin, I. 2016. The decline of African nationalism and the state of South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42(2):215–227.

Close, C. 2012. Electoral system changes and party factionalism: The consequences of electoral reforms on intra-party dynamics. Unpubslihed paper presented at the Conference of the International Political Studies Association, Madrid, 8–12 July 2012.

Coleman, J. 1960. The politics of sub-Saharan Africa. In Almond, G, & Coleman, J (Eds). *The politics of developing areas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cooper, I. 2017. Dominant party cohesion in comparative perspective: Evidence from South Africa and Namibia. *Democratization*, 24(1):1–19.

De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P (Eds). 2013. *Friend or foe? Dominant party systems in southern Africa: Insights from the developing world*. Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press / Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Delby, T. 2014. Culture and resistance in Swaziland. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 32(3):284–301.

Dlamini, M. 2021. *Dissatisfaction with Eswatini's democracy rises*. Mbabane: Afrobarometer.

Doorenspleet, R, & Nijzink, L. 2013. One-party dominance in African democracies: A framework for analysis. In Doorenspleet, R, & Nijzink, L (Eds). *One-party dominance in African democracies*, pp 1–23. Boulder, CO/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Dunleavy, P. 2010. Rethinking dominant party systems. In Bogaards, M, & Boucek, F (Eds). *Dominant political parties and democracy*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Duverger, M. 1954. *Political parties: Their organization and activity in the modern state*. London/New York: Methuen & Co./John Wiley & Sons.

Ekman, J. 2009. Political participation and regime stability: A framework for analyzing hybrid regimes. *International Political Science Review*, 30(1):7–31.

Feld, S, & Grofman, B. 2016. The Laakso–Taagepera Index in a mean and variance framework. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 19(1):101–106.

Fiona, U, & Tomsa, D. 2020. Changing patterns of factionalism in Indonesia: From principle to patronage. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(1):39–58.

Generoso de Almeida, C, Sá, AL, & Faria, PCJ. 2022. We got a taste for protest! Leadership transition and political opportunities for protest in Angola's resilient authoritarian regime. In Sanches, E (Ed.). *Popular protest, political opportunities and change in Africa*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Golosov, GV. 2009. The effective number of parties. *Party Politics*, 16(2):171–192.

Good, K. 2016. Democracy and development in Botswana. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 35(1):113–128.

Greene, K. 2007. *Why dominant parties lose: Mexico's democratization in comparative perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Greene, K. 2013. The political costs of privatisation: Why democratic and authoritarian dominant parties meet their doom. In De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P (Eds). *Friend or foe? Dominant party systems in southern Africa: Insights from the developing world*. Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press / Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Gumede, W. 2017. The democracy deficit of Africa's liberation movements turned governments. *Politikon*, 44(1):27 –48.

Gwande, V. 2019. Zimbabwe's predatory state: Party, military and business. *African Affairs*, 118(472):601–602.

Harmel, R, & Tan, A. 2003. Party actors and party change: Does factional dominance matter? *European Journal of Political Research*, 42(3):409–424.

Hlandze, S. 2021. Between collaboration and conflict: Patterns of interaction between labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Eswatini, 1973–2014. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2021.1966398

Kanyane, M. 2021. Factions and factionalism in South African party politics – Appraising (de)merits. *Politikon*, 48(4):572–588.

Kapa, M. 2008. The politics of coalition formation and democracy in Lesotho. *Politikon*, 35(3):339–356.

Karume, S. 2004. Party systems in the SADC region: In defence of the dominant party system, *Journal of African Elections*, 3(1):42–61.

Köllner, P, & Basedau, M. 2005. Factionalism in political parties: An analytical framework for comparative studies. *GIGA Working Papers No. 12*. Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies.

Kotze, J, & Bohler-Muller, N. 2019. Editorial: Quo vadis? Reflections on the 2019 South African general elections. *Politikon*, 46(4):365–370.

Laakso, M, & Taagepera, R. 1979. Effective number of parties: A measure with application to West Europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, 12(1):3–27.

Levitsky, S, & Way, L. 2002. Elections without democracy: The rise of competitive authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2):51–65.

Levitsky, S, & Way, L. 2010. *Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levitsky, S, & Way, L. 2012. Beyond patronage: Violent struggle, ruling party cohesion and authoritarian durability. *Perspectives on Politics*, 10(4):869–889.

Linz, J, & Stepan, A. 1996. Towards consolidated democracies. *Journal of Democracy*, 7(2):14–33.

Macuane, J, Buur, L, & Monjane, M. 2017. Power, conflict and natural resources: The Mozambican crisis revisited. *African Affairs*, 117(468):415–438.

Matlosa, K. 2017. The state of democratisation in southern Africa: Blocked transitions, reversals, stagnation, progress and prospects. *Politikon*, 44(1):5–26.

Maundeni, Z, & Seabo, B. 2013. Management and mismanagement of factionalism in political parties in Botswana, 1962–2013. *Botswana Notes and Records*, 45:27–38.

Melber, H. 2018. Populism in southern Africa under liberation movements as governments. *Review of African Political Economy*, 45(158):678–686.

Melber, H. 2020. Namibia's parliamentary and presidential elections: The honeymoon is over. *The Round Table*, 109(1):13–22.

Mozaffar, S, & Scarritt, JR. 2005. The puzzle of African party systems. *Party Politics*, 11(4):399–421.

O'Brien, D. 1999. Does democracy require an opposition party? In Giliomee, H, & Simkins, C (Eds). *The awkward embrace: One-party domination and democracy in industrialising countries*, pp 319–336. Cape Town: Tafelberg; London: Routledge.

Pearce, J, Pélchard, D, & De Oliveira, R. 2017. Angola's elections and the politics of presidential succession. *African Affairs*, 117(466):146–160.

Pempel, TJ (Ed.). 1990. *Uncommon democracies: The one-party dominant regimes*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Pepinsky, T. 2013. The institutional turn in comparative authoritarianism. *British Journal of Political Science*, 44:631–653.

Phiri, B. 2021. From one-party participatory democracy to multiparty democracy in Zambia since 1990: Reality or illusion? *South African Journal of Contemporary History*, 46(2):113–136.

Pitcher, A. 2020. Mozambique elections 2019: Pernicious polarization, democratic decline, and rising authoritarianism. *African Affairs*, 119(471):468–486.

Poteete, A. 2012. Electoral competition, factionalism, and persistent party dominance in Botswana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 50(1):75–102.

Raftopoulos, B. 2013. The 2013 elections in Zimbabwe: The end of an era. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39(4):971–988.

Riaz, A. 2019. *Voting in a hybrid regime: Explaining the 2018 Bangladeshi election*. Singapore: Springer Nature.

Rich, T, Vanerjee, B, & Recker, S. 2014. Identifying the Institutional effects of mixed systems in new democracies: The case of Lesotho. *Journal of African and Asian Studies*, 49(6):637–653.

Sandbrook, R. 1996. Transitions without consolidation: Democratization in six African countries. *Third World Quarterly*, 17(1):69–87.

Sartori, G. 2005. Party types, organisation and functions. *West European Politics*, 28(1):5–32.

Schulz-Herzenberg, C. 2019. The decline of partisan coting and the rise in electoral uncertainty in South Africa's 2019 general elections. *Politikon*, 46(4):462–480.

Sebudubudu, D, & Botlhomilwe, M. 2013. Interrogating the dominant party system in Botswana. In De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P (Eds). *Friend or foe? Dominant party systems in southern Africa: Insights from the developing world*. Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press / Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Sharma, C, & Swenden, W. 2020. Economic governance: Does it make or break a dominant party equilibrium? The case of India. *International Political Science Review*, 41(3):451–465.

Simelane, H. 2017. The evolution of the Swazi electoral process: Ideological contradictions 1978–2015. *Journal of African Elections*, 16(1):1–23.

Southall, R. 1998. The centralisation and fragmentation of South Africa's dominant party system. *African Affairs*, 97:443–469.

Southall, R. 2003. *Democracy in Africa: Moving beyond a difficult legacy.* Cape Town: Human Science Research Council.

Spiess, C. 2015. Party systems and their effects on political parties: Tales of one-party dominance and mutli-party competition. In Fakir, E, & Lodge, T (Eds). *Political parties in Africa*, pp 1–19. Johannesburg: The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa.

Szeftel, M. 2000. "Eat with us": Managing corruption and patronage under Zambia's three republics, 1964–99. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 18(2):207–224.

Troco, A. 2019. Electoral politics and political transition in post-war Angola. *Journal of African Elections*, 18(1):23–44.

Ufen, A. 2020. Clientelist and programmatic factionalism within the Malaysian political parties. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(1):59–81.

Van de Walle, N, & Butler, K. 1999. Political parties and party systems in Africa's illiberal democracies. *Cambridge Review of International Studies*, 13(1):14–28.

Ware, A. 1996. *Political parties and party systems.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, C. 2019. Lesotho in 2019: Looking back to find a way forward. *Policy Insights 68*. Braamfontein: South African Institute of International Affairs.

Zariski, R. 1960. Party factions and comparative politics: Some preliminary observations. *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 4:27–51.

# PART II:
# Dominant party states and fractures in democratic southern Africa

# Botswana's democratic rigor mortis and freefall

**Tshepo Gwatiwa**

The relevance and efficacy of ruling parties in the southern African region have come into question in recent years. Of particular interest is the extent to which liberation movements in what appear to be one-party-dominant systems still resonate with voters. Evidence from different countries reflects that the popularity of these liberation movements has declined and the share of the ruling parties in some of these states has decreased. Nonetheless, opposition parties remain weak even in the thriving democracies of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, for example. Voter apathy is also on the increase. Moreover, survey results show that different sections of society, particularly the youth, are increasingly apathetic toward politics per se (Mfundisi, 2006; Ntsabane & Ntau, 2006). Some of the reasons cited for this are the increase in corruption and the disregard for democratic values and systems. Also of interest is the increase of factionalism within the ruling parties as well as the splintering of parties in some southern African countries. All of these inclinations raise questions about the nature and popularity of the former liberation movements/current governments concerned.

Botswana is often – for the right empirical reasons – presented as a unique case due to its longstanding history as a functioning democratic state. However, the country's political landscape is not that different from that of most African states. At its core, Botswana exhibits the same dominant party system. The ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has been in power since independence in 1966. The party's detachment from voters' concerns and aspirations is not inconspicuous. Despite rising from the ranks of the three poorest countries in the world in the 1960–1970s to a middle-income economy today, Botswana consistently features among the five most unequal societies globally (Mookodi, 2019; World Bank, 2015), and, over the past two decades, corruption has been on the rise (Isbell & Seabo, 2020; Theobald & Williams, 1999). As a corollary, youth unemployment is increasing, law enforcement is ineffective, and organised crime, human trafficking and money laundering are prevalent. The voting populace is increasingly disenfranchised. Notably, unlike all of its immediate neighbours, Botswana did not experience (or aspire to) an armed liberation struggle: it has a history of a diplomacy-based liberation – as will be elaborated in the following section. Nonetheless, it has become a de facto one-party system that is increasingly detached from the plight and needs of the majority of the population.

This article examines the extent to which liberation movements and subsequently ruling parties as well as opposition parties have transformed in relation to voter aspirations and needs. The discussion adopts analytical eclecticism as its primary discursive approach. Analytical eclecticism is a pragmatist approach that seeks to find middle ground between strong theoretical assumptions and practice by avoiding "more narrowly parsed research puzzles" meant to fit certain theoretical arguments (Sil & Katzenstein, 2008:412). Thus, this paper does not seek to advance a strong theoretical thread in minority studies, but rather discusses the subject on a more empirical level that leans closer to policy issues than concerns with theorems. In essence, this is "a commonsensical approach to empirical research", largely adopted in international studies (Friedrichs & Kratochwil, 2009:708–709). The approach also comprises what is perceived as *event analysis*, which works by deriving logical arguments from a phenomenon and inductively proceeding to derive causal impressions from a given phenomenon (Bernard & Ryan, 2010:326–331). The author prefers this analytic approach to retain empirical sharpness and relevance in the discussion at hand, rather than have them lost in theoretical debates. This is because the paper is at best a theory-affirming case study and does not present a radical departure from the already existing theoretical frameworks and corpus on minority studies. The broader methodology largely remains qualitative and does not engage in quantitative analytics. The methodology also combines a historical perspective and a survey analysis.

## Contextual background of state and party formations

Botswana obtained its independence on 30 September 1966. Prior to that, the territory was a British protectorate known as *Bechuanaland*. The latter name was a mispronunciation of *Batswana-land*, i.e. the land inhabited by its historical residents, the Batswana. As a protectorate, the territory was primarily administered by a high commissioner based in Cape Town, South Africa. There were also resident commissioners who were stationed in various parts of Bechuanaland. During the protectorate era, the territory was considered barren and without economic benefit. The British therefore ran a dual governance and political system wherein the resident commissioners dealt with the traditional leaders, who were largely left in control of their populations. These leaders were largely focused on their own fiefdoms, which were scattered over an expansive land mass the size of Texas but comprising relatively smaller populations.

The formation of parties in Botswana can be traced to the legislative systems that existed during the protectorate era. In 1920, the British allowed the formation of the Native Advisory Council. The Council was largely comprised of chiefs, resident commissioners, and their administrative officials. In 1940, the body was renamed the African Advisory Council; it operated parallel to the European Advisory Council. In 1951, the African Advisory Council simply became the Advisory Council. This new structure retained chiefs as ex-officio members but broadened its membership to include 32 more representatives appointed from various tribes as well as those added by the

high commissioner. Accompanying these changes was the establishment of a Joint Advisory Council (JAC) consisting of members from both the other Councils. Overall, the Advisory Council is often credited with saving the territory from being incorporated into the Union of South Africa, saving land from European encroachment, agricultural improvement, and investing in African education (Manungo, 1999). In 1959, the JAC was tasked with writing a constitution for the impending republic of Botswana. Seretse Khama, who would be the first prime minister and later president, was part of the JAC by virtue of his chieftainship over the Bangwato. He had also emerged as a leader of a popular political party known as the Botswana Democratic Party.

To understand the nature and popularity of the parties in Botswana, it is also imperative to understand their origins. In 1958, Africans in the JAC proposed the formation of the Legislative Council (LEGCO); it was to be modelled after a similar body in Ghana, which had gained its independence two years prior. The LEGCO, which was eventually formed in 1960, would act as a lawmaking body. This political development encouraged the formation of political parties. The first party to be formed, in 1959, was the Bechuanaland Protectorate Federal Party. It mainly comprised the educated elite, who campaigned for greater African representation in the LEGCO and for the reduced influence of chiefs (Lodge et al., 2002). Although the party did not do well, it produced the leaders Philip Matante, Motsamai Mpho and Kgalemang Tumediso Motsetse, who then formed the Botswana People's Party (BPP) in 1960. However, the party was beleaguered by infighting and factionalism from an early stage, after which it was divided between Mpho and Matante. The following year, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) was formed.

The BDP was an Africanised version of the Tuli Democratic Party (TDP) – a party for European settlers. Although Lodge et al. (2002) do not mention the history of the TDP and drool over European and Asian settler support for the BDP, they ignore the party's settler origins. They also ignore the fact that Khama was also the de facto leader of the Bangwato, which had a long history of patronage and clientelism from the British colonial government (UK Parliament, 1958). Thus, it was not a surprise that the settler community, which resented the BPP's radical Africanist stance, acquiesced to the BDP. It is also imperative to note that Khama was returning from exile at the time due to his marriage to a British Caucasian woman. His affinity for Europeans and moderate political stance were inadvertently attractive to the then patrons of the TDP. For example, in a broadcast interview, former politician Motsamai Mpho indicated that, in 1959, Seretse Khama was not in favour of writing a new constitution for Botswana; he had preferred to retain the version used during the protectorate era. This explains why Botswana's constitution was starkly similar to that of Lesotho's pre-2001 version. The TDP's Africanisation also made sense if one considered the by then dwindling fortunes of the colonial enterprise. Thus, the BDP rose to prominence largely due to Khama's royal status, foreign patronage, and its stability in comparison with the faction-ridden BPP.

In the first universal elections, factionalism and splintering had already reared their heads. The BPP was engulfed in a leadership-based factionalism between Matante and Mpho; by 1964, Mpho had broken away to form the Botswana Independence Party. The factionalism and splinters on this political front worked in favour of the BDP, which was seen as both ideologically moderate and organised. From the framing of their early publications, the BDP clearly used its moderate stance and relatively hidden factionalism as a rallying and selling point (BDP, 1964, 1965). This worked in the BDP's favour, winning it 28 of the 31 seats in the National Assembly in the country's first elections. The BDP would continue as a relatively much more coagulated force in Botswana politics. As chief of the Bangwato – one of the largest ethnic groups pursuing Batswana tribal hegemony in Botswana – Khama's status appealed to most supporters. Although Khama's political legacy was often sanitised, he was a quasi-colonial conformist. For starters, the Ngwato traditionally ruled by the Khama dynasty consisted of 43 ethnic communities, with the Ngwato ward in Serowe comprised of seven ethnicities (Schapera, 1952). Khama drew on both his royal status and colonial systems to enhance his political fortunes. For instance, there were installations in such places as Francistown which were meant to symbolise European superiority over Botswana's African inhabitants. In his maiden address to Africans in Francistown – then a racially divided town – he used the same elevated platform used by Europeans and waxed rhapsodic in renditions about his social tribulations and his political ideals (also drawn from his personal and romantic struggles with the colonial governments in Bechuanaland and South Africa) without denouncing the symbolism of the existing colonial and apartheid-like structures, or addressing the plight of the locals (personal communication, Supa Ngwao Museum official, 2017). Khama's many travels in Botswana not only targeted chiefs who were still beholden to him as a de facto senior royal, but also included distributing gifts to his subjects (personal communication, W Machola, former Police Mobile Unit officer, 2019). In return, the locals would dedicate monuments to Khama or award him large tracts of land – a practice from which European explorers and missionaries benefited. This bolstered Khama's popularity and, by extension, the BDP's.

## Democracy, patronage elections and voters: A review of the literature

This section explores the literature on party politics, elections, voter interests, and party dominance in Botswana. Thereafter, the narrative gravitates towards a critical aspect of Botswana's statecraft, which intercedes between parties, power, and voters.

Botswana has held 12 free and fair elections since 1965 although a single dominant party system has abided throughout. Several factors impede democratic consolidation in the country. These include the disproportionate power of the executive, a lethargic civil society, restricted media, and the absence of an even electoral playing field (Sebudubudu,

2017). Moreover, although the country possesses a functioning electoral democracy, it is marked by illiberal authoritarianism and presidentialism characterised by elitist, top-down structures as well as oligarchic characteristics such as clientelism, particularism and executive dominance. As Good and Taylor (2008) argue, this not only destabilises horizontal liabilities between and among state institutions, but also undermines the prescribed competitive spirit supposedly intrinsic to democracy.

In a democratic system, parties can and/or should develop without impediment to broaden voter choices as well as increase the competitiveness of the referent democracy. In the case of Botswana, party development and institutionalisation are problematic. Among other things, there are problems with funding and no law prohibits or limits floor-crossing in Parliament after an election (Molebatsi, 2014). Party development, particularly as regards the opposition, is problematic – given the paucity of ideology that resonates with the voters. This ideological shortcoming has often left the political landscape without alternatives, which has contributed to the ruling BDP's dominance since independence (Molomo, 2000).

Factionalism is almost an innate part of democracy. For example, the phenomenon has occurred in global democratic systems, such as those in Germany, Japan, the UK and the US. In some quarters, factionalism is even considered by political parties to be an informal management system. In Botswana, the political institutions encourage factional competition; moreover, factionalism interacts with the electoral system to hinder consolidation of the party system (Poteete, 2012). Indeed, as Somolekae (2005) argues, factionalism is also not necessarily a bad thing in politics. One of its positive effects is that it can encourage and provide opportunities for self-criticism, honest internal debate, and even self-renewal. However, in a worst-case scenario, it can destabilise a party when it produces intolerance, fighting and suppression (Maundeni & Seabo, 2013). At another level, as recent examples discussed below show, it can also lead to violence or splintering. Furthermore, factionalism can be viewed as an informal mechanism to complement formal mechanism of party management. According to Maundeni and Seabo (2013), the ruling BDP has relied on both formal and informal mechanisms of conflict resolution and has, as a result, enjoyed better organisational stability. As for factionalism in the opposition, namely the Botswana People's Party (BPP) and the Botswana National Front (BNF), one has both weak formal and informal mechanisms, and the other has allowed formal and informal mechanisms to work against each other (Maundeni & Seabo, 2013). However, factionalism in opposition parties has debilitating effects. In the case of Botswana, factions have weakened the opposition, thus ensuring the dominance of the ruling party (Osei-Hwedie, 2001). Notably, however, factionalism can also be a manifestation of scarce resources and power at the state level.

Voter preferences and interests are important to any democracy. The basic assumption, as portrayed by the principal–agent model, posits that voters are the principals and

politicians are the agents. However, in most of Africa, and aligning with the core theme of this paper, the empirical irony is that voters and politicians switch positions after elections (Von Soeston, 2009). In the case of Botswana, voters are either marginalised, betrayed or exploited by politicians. Makgala and Botlhomilwe (2017) argue that, although some (opposition) politicians' rhetoric is pro-poor, some members of the opposition elite also engage in business ventures with their ruling party counterparts. Furthermore, as Makgala and Botlhomilwe (2017) contend, not only has the scramble for economic opportunities fuelled factionalism within both the ruling and opposition parties, but tribalism has also, in some instances, been mobilised in intra- and inter-party elections for positions of influence – even though voters are more interested in service delivery than traditional ethnic issues. Several surveys suggest that Batswana demonstrate their satisfaction with democracy and the legitimacy of the state by claiming that the government exercises power within legal means and equally represents the interests of all citizens (Isbell & Seabo, 2018; Lekalake, 2016). Lekorwe et al. (2001) indicate that, while most Batswana are content with political participation, they are increasingly discontented with the country's economic direction. However, surveys such as those that informed the foregoing position are irregular. It is important, therefore, to include the media's role in expressing public opinion and as the fourth estate in the broader checks and balances on the democratic system.

## Botswana's political economy and how it resonates with voters

Botswana is a democratic middle-income state located at the heart of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It gained independence from Britain in 1966. Before independence, its gross domestic product (GDP) per-capita income was US$60, placing the country among the three poorest nations in the world. Great Britain had not economically invested in Botswana, having perceived it as barren of natural resources. Hence the country only inherited £7,000 and 2 km of tarred road from Great Britain (Masire & Lewis, 2006). Ironically, the discovery of diamonds in 1967 in Botswana turned its fortunes around. Its GDP per-capita income rose to US$80 in 1966, and currently stands at US$7,270 (IMF, 2023). Some observers note that prudent fiscal and monetary policies, coupled with good governance, have led to relative prosperity in Botswana (Leith, 2005:2–12).

The Botswana economy faced its first major challenges in 1990. The recession that ensued during that period undermined the economic growth that was heavily reliant on mining. The double-digit GDP growth ceased as its European and American markets incurred huge setbacks from the recession (Valentine, 1993). Botswana continued to rely on mineral exports while buttressing its economy with beef exports and tourism. However, a key turnaround in 1990 was the fall of the Soviet Union. Botswana's

distinction as the only thriving democracy in southern Africa was eclipsed by Namibia's independence in 1990, South Africa's democratisation in 1994, and the end of Angola's civil conflict in 2002. After SADC's consequent stabilisation, trade within the region improved significantly between Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Chauvin, 2004:29–32). While improved governance and infrastructure also resulted in more foreign direct investment for some countries such as Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, investment in Botswana and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) first remained steady, but then began declining (Kibasomba, 2004:110–113). Botswana became less competitive due to higher production costs, insufficient human capital, and higher taxes.

One of the problems with Botswana's development story is that the statistics often obscure the grotesque underlying economic realities (Manatsha & Maharjan, 2009). Botswana's economy, like most of its African counterparts, is based on resource extraction and is characterised by high levels of inequality and poverty (Clover, 2003). Secondly, the Incomes Policy of 1972, which was meant to avoid rapid wage escalation and reduce income disparities and social disharmony, has hardly been implemented; it has thus far therefore failed to achieve its objectives (Siphambe, 2007:23–24). Thirdly, if one draws inference from the collapse of the Zambian economy until then solely reliant on copper, Botswana's undiversified economy is not sustainable as the future of diamonds – on which the country relies – becomes more uncertain. These factors heighten the need to diversify the economy.

There have been few government measures attempted and, hence, little progress in dealing with the economic setback from the 2008 global recession. Conteh (2008) argues that Botswana's macroeconomic indicators tend to hide the structural factors that account for the poverty rate, which was 26% in 2022 (Trading Economics, 2022). The reality has been much grimmer. First, because of the recession, the top two buyers of Botswana's diamonds, Japan and the US, have been unable to maintain diamond purchase quotas. Second, in 2011, beef exports, the second largest foreign currency earner, were suspended by the European Union (EU) due to Botswana's failure to meet new EU standards. Third, tourism, the third largest sector, faced stiffer regional competition from Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe because of Botswana's increased cost of living (TICAD, 2009). Perhaps principally at fault, however, is Botswana's lethargic engagement in development policies when the country had a regional economic advantage (Lange, 2004). Nevertheless, the worst problem has been the government's inability to adopt a development strategy to engage practically in an all-inclusive industrial indigenisation policy. Often, the development strategy has been hobbled by cumbersome implementation and characterised by ethnic politics of invisibility and indifference.

Ethnicity plays a major but silent role in Botswana's development process. It is important to downplay the myth of a homogenous Botswana society where development resources

are evenly distributed (Molefe & Mguni, 2000). There is evidence of an ethnic bias in wealth distribution, whereby minorities often have less access to economic resources and, thus, rely on government welfare systems or other subsidies that grossly reduce their economic activities to subsistence levels (Good, 2003). Negligence of, discrimination against, and the invisibility of some minority groups are a continuing problem because of early post-independence attempts to assimilate the non-Setswana-speaking groups into the larger Setswana-speaking ones, which comprise about 75% of the current population (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008).

## The nature of politics in post-independence Botswana

The nature of Botswana politics, as reflected in the most popular movements, is closely tied to its historical and cultural systems. Botswana's politics are mostly oriented towards the interests of the elites, largely comprising cattle barons and ranchers. Early policies were usually designed to appeal to a larger fraction of the population because most Setswana- and non-Setswana-speaking groups as well as European settler communities were disposed to cattle farming and other forms of agriculture. As argued by Robinson and Parsons (2006), the earliest political elites – including Seretse Khama – created a 'beefocracy', which also appealed to the salariat populace in the civil service and commercial sector. Consequently, prior to the mining of diamonds, the beef industry was the government's first largest export-oriented economic sector and source of revenue (Robinson & Parsons, 2006:119–122). This model, based on the traditional Batswana socioeconomic system, appealed to the voters. However, the model gradually promoted and entrenched a form of elitism that would define the nature of political movements in Botswana to date.

The elitist political system in Botswana is rooted in the cultural values of status-based hierarchy and inequalities. As indicated in the preceding section, the pre-independence systems were largely aligned with traditional leadership. The Native Advisory Council (later the African Advisory Council and then simply the Advisory Council) were largely chieftainship-based. The emergence of traditional leaders such as Seretse Khama further entrenched this consciousness in Botswana politics. As Good (2008) argues, the masses were incorporated into politics to reinforce the Weberian notion of "the law of the small number". The elitist system is most conspicuous in the echelons of power. The president has sweeping constitutional powers over the civil service, the security forces, oversight institutions and informational outlets; yet s/he is not directly voted into office (Good, 2008:51–52). The ruling party cleverly crafted a system wherein it ignored economic diversification, thus creating a huge gap between the economically compromised masses and the educated or wealthy elites (Good, 2008:51–52). Most of the early ministers had a political pedigree dating back to the pre-independence advisory stature. Although only a few chiefs joined politics in the first three decades, it important to highlight the number of royal-adjacent families in Botswana politics such as the Kgafelas, the Komas, the

Magangs, the Merafhes, the Mmusis, the Pilanes, and the Segokgos. This does not imply that the BDP is cartel-based, but these royalty-adjacent coalitions explain how the elites founded the security sectors – primarily the army. Botswana did not form an army until a decade after its independence, namely in 1977, because it feared the precedent set by military coups in other post-independence states (Henk, 2004). Yet, Botswana faced two virulent white minority regimes: one in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and one in South Africa. To balance their fears and strategic needs, the Botswana political elites decided to form a defence force led by their offspring. Apart from the well-known Ian Khama, one of the then president's sons, other princelings included members of such families as the Kgabos, Masires, Masisis, Mmusis, Morakes, Pilanes, Segokgos and Tsoebebes (personal communication, Botswana Defence Force Officer, 2020). Not only was this defence force composition a self-preservation strategy on the part of the political elites, but it also indicated the genesis of a long-lasting tendency to use the government's security services to retain power.

The use of security services to keep political movements in power in Botswana has not been as excessive as observed in other countries, whereas colonial Bechuanaland predominantly used security intelligence services for the surveillance of political movements (Parsons, 1999). In the subsequent governments of Seretse Khama and Ketumile Masire, the Special Branch – a colonial intelligence relic usually operating under the police – was primarily used for the same purpose (Dehéz, 2010). Indeed, Masire and Lewis (2006) even admitted to using the Special Branch to carry out surveillance on opposition movements, although there is no direct evidence that the ruling party directly used intelligence services to destabilise the opposition. However, there is little doubt that the same political elites did not use intelligence collected by the security services to their benefit. There are also suspicions that the ruling party sponsored factions and splinters that occurred each time the opposition movements grew stronger, especially in the late 1990s and the late 2000s.

While the BDP remained largely intact, the opposition experienced major factional battles and splinters in the 1990s. The BNF emerged as the main position after the demise of the BPP and collapse of the Botswana Independence Party. However, in the 1990s, the BNF became susceptible to factional battles.

## Politics in Botswana since the Mogae administration: Corruption and the information space

The political landscape changed significantly in the post-Masire era. Corruption rose as a prominent topic in the press and in society. The Festus Mogae administration prosecuted several high-profile corruption cases. There were several cases, such as that of former permanent secretary Lionjanga, which trended on state television for a long

time. However, the anomaly with most high-profile corruption cases in Botswana is that even those convicted did not serve any sentences. Nonetheless, the Louis Nchindo case illustrated the beginning of change in Botswana's elitist politics. Nchindo was both a friend to then President Mogae and long-time managing director of Debswana – the primary parastatal managing the partnership between global diamond behemoth De Beers and the Botswana government. Nchindo was a kingmaker of long standing in Botswana politics and corporate affairs, so his case had implicated many political and economic elites. The state's methods during the Mogae and subsequent Ian Khama administrations indicated a change in elitist interest clashes. During Nchindo's trial, the state used its intelligence operatives to disrupt proceedings when it appeared that the state would win. The state security intelligence service broke into Nchindo's lawyer's house and, ignoring several other valuables, stole only his laptop (Gaotlhobogwe, 2010). The stolen laptop contained crucial information about such political networks. Eventually, Nchindo (allegedly) committed suicide, but the police kept the details of the case secret when the public began asking questions about the mystery of his headless torso (Morula, 2010). However, it was not the case itself that was at issue, but the rise of deep mistrust between political and economic elites and voters. Although corruption was not commonplace, at least at that point, it raised awareness of the extent to which the government had become corrupt. Moreover, there was growing public perception that these elites were ready to protect each other when at fault with the law. This was the first stage of voter alienation from a government led by a party that had been in power since independence. However, it was the Ian Khama administration that deepened voter consternation and intensified factionalism and splintering.

The Khama administration ushered in the most oppressive regime in Botswana's history. The country became a quasi-surveillance state. The then newly instituted Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS) was primarily used for repression in such a way that alienated voters, unsettled the ruling party, and caused it to splinter.

## Interest coalitions, ruling party splinters and opposition coalitions

As stated above, Khama's repression caused division within the ruling party. His authoritarian style resulted in a fellow party elite, Gomolemo Motswaledi, taking Khama to the High Court to challenge his authoritarian tendencies. Motswaledi had approached the High Court seeking relief against Khama's decision to suspend him not only from the BDP's Central Committee, but also from the party itself (Nkala, 2009). Motswaledi lost the case with costs on the grounds of presidential immunity from criminal and civil liability; the same fate awaited him at the Court of Appeal (*Sunday Standard*, 2009). This emboldened Khama to be more dictatorial as he clashed with more party cadres and especially its youthful members. For example, Motswaledi's suspension was challenged

by the youth and political princelings. As one of the subsequent splinter leaders – Ndaba Gaolathe, a former BDP campaign manager – stated shortly after the legal validation of Motswaledi's suspension, the latter caused a 'movement within a movement' to emerge (*Sunday Standard*, 2009). The support behind Motswaledi swelled as prominent and the most outspoken BDP figures rallied behind him. Key among these were Botsalo Ntuane, who was a legislator for a constituency in Gaborone as well as acting secretary-general of the BDP; Wynter Mmolotsi, then a legislator under the BDP; and Gaolathe, a former BDP campaign manager. At some point it become clear that a new faction had been formed relatively swiftly, when Gaolathe stated the following (*Sunday Standard*, 2009):

> [T]hose who refuse to believe that what is at stake is indeed not about an individual or individuals will soon learn that the banishment of one man does not take away from our cause because our party or our movement is a deep and wealthy oasis of emerging talent and principled visionaries.

However, the breakaway group was not a faction in the sense that they had emerged in previous decades; rather, it comprised individuals who did not really have ideological and policy differences with the BDP leadership, only personality differences with Khama. More figures – such as Guma Moyo, who had been charged with corruption (without evidence) – were alienated by Khama's security-services-based style of party leadership. This group would include former President Mogae's legal counsel, Sidney Pilane.

The abovementioned group of individuals later formed a splinter party called the Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD). The founding vanguard of the BMD consisted of individuals who were popular within and outside the party. For example, Ntuane, a youthful orator with a strong civic consciousness, was known for advocating for issues affecting the youth. His positions had often pitted him against President Mogae (who was relatively more tolerant of dissent); now, however, he found himself at odds with Ian Khama, a leader who loathed dissent. Moreover, Motswaledi began to raise issues that affected both the youth and the adult population. The popularity of the BMD soared both in urban and rural areas. A key policymaker within the movement was Gaolathe, while Pilane, who had also served under Mogae, was a strong opponent of the Khama administration. Within academic and policy circles, it was often said that, whenever Pilane issued a press statement, the government had to fumble for answers. There are two major reasons why Ntuane, Gaolathe and Pilane were popular. Firstly, through repression and within two years, the Khama administration had managed to reverse the civil and political liberties enshrined in pre-independence Tswana state systems and societies to which Batswana had become accustomed over the decades. The public, despite their fears, loathed the semi-authoritarian system that was installed by this new administration. Secondly, the BMD pushed for policy and structural reforms for which the BDP youth cadres (once branded 'The Young Turks') had long agitated. These included constitutional reforms, the restructuring of government (e.g. reducing the state

president's powers enshrined in section 46 in the constitution), and massive economic transformation. These were some of the significant issues that various constituencies of society, including pressure groups, had been demanding for nearly two decades (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008). Moreover, by the time Mogae stepped down from the presidency, there was widespread concern about growing youth unemployment and poverty in Botswana. These resonated with the youth within the BMD and beyond. Thus, the BMD's soaring popularity at the time certainly benefited from the disenfranchised youth as well as from apolitical voters who had long sought a different political and economic system. However, the government response to these developments translated into further agitation of voters and society.

The heavy-handedness of the Ian Khama administration caused fear and reduced the BDP's popularity. Primary drivers of these negative sentiments were the extrajudicial killings. The most controversial extrajudicial killing during the Ian Khama administration was the public killing of John Kalafatis on the night of 12 March 2009 by security intelligence officers and special forces soldiers at an entertainment complex in Gaborone. Days before the shooting, Kalafatis was implicated in a robbery at the house of one of the President's friends (Morewagae, 2011a). To public dismay, the perpetrators were put on a sham trial, at the end of which they received a presidential pardon (Morewagae, 2011b). Furthermore, perceptions that Ian Khama was abusing state institutions and resources arose especially when the Kalafatis family attorney alleged, on radio, that Kalafatis – as well as, later, his two sons – had been killed over a laptop implicating senior members of society in same-sex acts. However, Ian Khama was also feared within his party and political circles, especially at the end of election cycles. In 2009, young activists were abducted and tortured (Madibana, 2009). The practice continued in the 2014 election, when more people were tortured. This included a union activist who was tortured for making a pun about Khama's encounter with a cheetah in a supermarket queue. The man nicknamed 'Comrade Cheetah' later sued the state for over a million and won (*Mmegi*, 2013).

However, it was ultimately Motswaledi's assassination that had the greatest impact on the 2014 election outcome. The ruling party, which continues to have a penchant for using state resources, used security intelligence services to survey prominent opposition politicians – including Motswaledi. The state security institutions had not only put him under surveillance, they had also been using subversive tactics to intimidate him since 2010 (*Sunday Standard*, 2010). In July 2014, Motswaledi died in what was described as a car accident after mysteriously disappearing from a guesthouse in Mafikeng (South Africa) the previous night (Leagajang & Basimanebotlhe, 2015; *Sunday Standard*, 2015a). The subsequent leaks by disgruntled intelligence officers (*Sunday Standard*, 2014) in the press confirmed what most people had always surmised: that a few elites within the BDP were using fear and intimidation to accentuate their power both within the ruling party and across the political space.

Ironically, the last splinter in the ruling party was caused by the same figure that had caused its first – Ian Khama. The question of Ian Khama's succession was lingering during his second term. There were suspicions that he would appoint his younger brother, Tshekedi Khama, as Vice President, but their relationship had soured by the time the ruling party went to congress. Given his reliance on his spy agency, Ian Khama heeded his spy boss's advice to throw his weight behind Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi (Kgalemang, 2018). Masisi had publicly passed himself off as a second-generation *lelope* ("bootlicker", "sycophant"), which pleased the incumbent President. Masisi promised President Ian Khama that he would retain his programmes and policies on assuming the presidency under the controversial automatic succession system. (Many of these programmes and policies were not popular, especially among technocrats and policy circles.) However, when Masisi was declared President in 2018, he immediately began to undo Khama's legacy. He began by firing his spy chief after the latter had uttered a reckless statement before the Parliamentary Accounts Committee (Charles, 2018). Masisi then started dismantling all social and development policies and programmes deemed unprofitable or populist (*Africa Confidential*, 2019). This riled Ian Khama and his supporters both at home and abroad. In May 2019, Ian Khama resigned from the ruling party, citing "harassment and bad leadership" by his successor (Charles, 2019). He formed the Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF) with a few people who had been disgruntled by Masisi or had lost primary elections in their previous constituencies; the latter included the current leader of the BPF, Biggie Butale. Khama also recruited his younger brother, with whom his ties had strengthened, to join the BPF. The BPF largely won constituencies in Serowe – the seat of the Bangwato where the Khamas are royals. Although Ian Khama campaigned in other areas within the Central District, the BPF did not fare well. Furthermore, in most constituencies in northern Botswana, the BPF lost seats to the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) rather than the BDP. Yet post-election analyses showed an increase in BDP popularity. The BDP won the election, but its popular vote remained relatively the same as in 2014, namely around 47%, even though most voters were disgruntled with developments that had ensued under the Ian Khama administration (Fabricius, 2019). Moreover, the clamour around the BDP's victory largely revolved around the feuds between Ian Khama and Masisi and had less to do with voters' views or wishes (Friesen, 2019). Nevertheless, the abovementioned competition between the BDP and BDF should not obscure the opposition parties' popularity dynamics.

The opposition movement in Botswana rose and fell within two election cycles. Without implying that the previous popularity of such parties as the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) does not warrant discussion, it is the rise and demise of the splinters and coalitions in the last 11 years that inform this paper. Motswaledi, who was then leader of the BMD, realised the value of a coalition and duly started talks with existing opposition parties. The resultant alliance, which included the BNF and BPP, was renamed the Umbrella for Democratic Change. The BCP preferred a pact and therefore refused to join the coalition.

Motswaledi, realising the strategic value of the BNF numbers, opted not to contest the UDC presidency but left it to the BNF instead.

Although some had opposed the idea of a coalition, the alliance became popular. There were key explanations for this. Firstly, Motswaledi was not only a skilled crowd-pulling orator – with impeccable proficiency of Setswana, but he also knew all the BDP policies. This appealed to many voters and politicians and led to many defections from the BDP to the BMD, besides attracting more people into politics. Secondly, Duma Boko, the then president of the BNF and the UDC, was an efficient tactician. He recruited well-known people, including chiefs, into key positions to boost votes – even in parliamentary reruns (Basimanebotlhe, 2015; *Sunday Standard*, 2015b). Moreover, Boko leveraged the support of his US and British friends to amplify the UDC's public relations strategy. His American friend was renowned actor Rick Yune as well as the latter's British fiancée. They visited Botswana and held press conferences in support of Boko (*Mail & Guardian*, 2014; Mathala, 2014). More importantly, to counter Ian Khama's populist strategy of using state aircraft to appeal to rural voters, Boko employed helicopters borrowed from his wealthy friends in South Africa to campaign in rural and urban areas (*Mmegi*, 2019; *Timeslive*, 2019). The coalition's popularity consequently soared in the run-up to the 2014 elections.

However, it was not only the optics that mattered. The UDC primarily addressed issues of concern to most voters, including disgruntled and retired civil servants. These issues included the reduction of presidential powers, the restructuring of the civil service, cluster-based development, reducing military spending, reducing unemployment, and alleviating poverty. From a non-political vantage point, such issues were considered a retardation of Botswana's democracy. The youthful politicians who had become legislators in 2009 also appealed to most voters because they had an activist streak. UDC legislators such as Boko and Gaolathe, but also Sedirwa Kgoroba and others, were known for their active engagement with the voters. Moreover, the private press also seemed focused on these public figures.

Gradually, however, the public also lost trust in opposition parties as the most popular opposition politicians' business and economic interests got entangled with those in the ruling party. For example, the Saleshandos had to defend their business entanglements with the Khamas in the largely white-owned tourism industry. The Saleshandos (both Gil and his son, Dumelang) were understood to be staunch opposition politicians who spoke in favour of disenfranchised constituents and minorities. However, Dumelang Saleshando had to defend his family's stake in Wilderness Safari Holdings by stating that they had no qualms with the company as long as it did not affect minorities, i.e. the KhoiSan (Seretse, 2013). However, what has never appeared publicly is that Dumelang Saleshando's family interests are entangled with those of the Khama twin brothers (Tshekedi and Anthony) in the military. Although Dumelang (but not Gil) Saleshando had

often criticised the Khama brothers' uninterrupted supplies to the military, his wife had been supplying the military with its uniforms. However, it is important to bear in mind that opposition politics are also dynastic. For instance, the BCP has largely remained a Saleshando dynastic project, just as the BDP has largely remained near-dynastic by recycling the same political families.

The splinter in the BMD also affected opposition unity and the mood of the voters. When the BMD convened an elective conference in Bobonong in 2017, there was already a divisive issue regarding the return of one of its founding members – Sidney Pilane (Morapedi, 2017). One faction preferred him as leader over the then incumbent, Gaolathe. The other faction, largely comprising politicians from the southern part of Botswana, preferred Gaolathe because Pilane was considered a divisive figure. The two factions got into a violent confrontation in Bobonong in July that year (Charles, 2017), with the corollary that they held separate congresses and elected two different national executive committees. Eventually, the Pilane faction retained the BMD, while the Ndaba faction formed the Alliance for Progressives, a social-liberalist party (*Economist Intelligence*, 2017). Boko, the UDC's leader, took long to reconcile the two factions despite public appeals to do so. These developments frustrated opposition followers and non-aligned voters. Resultantly, as the Economist Intelligence Unit (2017) predicted, the BDP won the 2019 election – albeit by just a narrow margin. The Alliance for Progressives won only one a single parliamentary seat – fewer seats than the BPF, which was formed in the election year.

## Relations and alliances in Botswana politics: National or party/personal interests?

It is important to assess the implications of the dramatic events between former President Ian Khama and his successor, Mokgweetsi Masisi. Merely three weeks into his new post, President Masisi fired Colonel Kgosi and replaced him with his former boss, Brigadier Peter Magosi. The skill and skulduggery displayed in the covert but forceful change of guard in the intelligence services – which had been a key part of Botswana's politics for a decade – was widely celebrated in public and private media (*Sunday Standard*, 2018a, 2018b). However, apart from the inevitable campaign rhetoric, President Masisi has never spoken publicly about DIS reform; nor has he heeded calls by opposition parties to reform the country's security and intelligence services. Eerily, and casting aspersions on his commitment to democratising security sector oversight, in 2018 Masisi requested Parliament to approve an amendment of the Financial Intelligence Act to empower the presidency rather than the relevant minister to appoint the Director General of the Financial Intelligence Agency. When the public registered its displeasure at this development on various media platforms, the government responded by stating that it sought to align the Act with existing constitutional provisions, and that it would revisit

the legislation after the promised constitutional review (Botswana Television, 14 June 2018). This raised questions, given that the Financial Intelligence Agency was already functioning adequately with ministerial oversight. If anything, the Act would serve as a benchmark for impending constitutional review. However, Botswana's political meanderings ran deeper than what featured in the press: they had more to do with political elites and the settling of scores between political princelings than with voters or ordinary citizens. To understand these dynamics, it is imperative to track post-election appointments, starting from the Khama administration through to the present cabinet and top civil service.

Ian Khama's cabinets and top appointments were heavily partisan, nepotistic, elite-based and interest-led, and they often served as appeasements or to settle scores between political princelings and dynasties. For example, his cabinets included his close cousin and former colleague, Brigadier Dikgakgamatso Ramadeluka Seretse; former military subordinates such as Captain Kitso Mokaila; and his former boss and relative, Lieutenant General Mompati Merafhe as Vice President (BOTSFA, 2009). In the second cabinet, the number of party loyalists and former subordinates increased. Notable additions included Thapelong Olopeng, a friend and former army subordinate; former police commissioner Edwin Batshu; and Ian Khama's younger brother, Tshekedi Khama. In 2012, Ian Khama had already accentuated his personal and political network, which cut across government and economic strata. This included appointing his nephew, Marcus Khama Ter Haar to the state-owned diamond trading company; buying shares in Wilderness Safari (a premium tourist company) and appointing his personal lawyer to its board of directors; appointing his childhood friends the Mokaila brothers to government posts – Kitso as a minister and Tefo as a personal secretary at State House; and employing their father, Dingaan Mokaila, who had served as Seretse Khama's private secretary (Ditlhase, 2012). There were wide perceptions that the BDP, under Ian Khama's leadership, had become less connected with voters. The general who had risen to prominence through his displays of empathy, his donations to the needy, and his promises of large-scale changes in Botswana's political and economic landscape was now perceived as someone interested only in personal aggrandisement, showing no desire to tackle Botswana's income gap, increasing youth unemployment, and other socio-economic challenges.

The transition from the Ian Khama to the Masisi administration generated a resurgence of political princelings. This became clearer in the pre- and post-2019 elections. Masisi's father, Sethomo Masisi, was a minister in Seretse Khama's government. Moreover, Tshekedi is a son to the first president, Seretse Khama. The current Minister of Defence, Justice and Security, Thomas Mmusi, is one of former Vice President Peter Mmusi's sons. Mmusi Kgafela, brother to exiled paramount chief Kgosi Kgafela, is Kgosi Linchwe II's son. Kgosi Linchwe II was an instrumental paramount chief not only in the build-up to the transition to Botswana's independence, but also in early opposition politics (Morima, 2016). The appointment of other BDP princelings to the echelons of the civil service

and state-owned enterprises has raised concerns about politicising the civil service more deeply. In fact, already since early on in his presidency there have been concerns about Masisi's preferential treatment of those who originate from his ethnopolitical enclave (Gabathuse, 2018). The foregoing assessment by Gabathuse demonstrates that Masisi's regionalist practices in civil service governance are considered unusual. From one perspective, his practices can be viewed as a form of political hedging, given Masisi's ongoing feud with his predecessor, Ian Khama. Perhaps what is more startling is how politics under Masisi, a former teacher, remain entangled with the security sector; in this regard, he is much like his predecessor – a former soldier.

Botswana's political princelings also dominate the security sector, particularly the military. The first cabinet of Botswana was reluctant to form an army in the first ten years of Botswana's independence. The rationale was that military institutions were responsible for coups in most of Africa by 1966, when Botswana attained independence (Denk, 2007). By the time the political elites formed the Botswana Defence Force in 1977, they staffed its echelons with their sons or nephews. The current commander of the Botswana Defence Force, Lieutenant General Placid Segokgo, is former Minister Segokgo's son. The Lieutenant General's first deputy, Major General Gotsileene Morake, is former Minister Morake's son. Their achievements are not in question, but their appointment by former President Ian Khama and retainment by Masisi is of interest (Morake was redeployed as ambassador after a fallout because he was considered an Ian Khama loyalist). These are political princelings who have been in the same social space for decades. Their political utility is not inconspicuous. For instance, when Masisi sought to replace Ian Khama's loyalists, he relied on his brother, retired Brigadier Thulaganyo Masisi, and on retired Lieutenant General Tebogo Masire (*Sunday Standard*, 2018c). Moreover, political princelings continue to climb the ranks of the Botswana Defence Force, so there is no certainty that Botswana's politics will be divorced from its security sector.

## Concluding notes on the popularity of political movements in Botswana

The popularity of political movements in Botswana is uneven. Although the same party, the BDP, has been in power since independence in 1996, its popularity has dwindled over the years as the quality and cost of living have changed. The BDP's former popularity rested on the developmental policies it implemented; over the years, development and poverty have become daunting problems, largely due to a failure to diversify the economy. The ruling party's current popularity also came about as a result of the near-autocratic state in place under the Ian Khama administration. His controversial presidency gave rise to the first splinter from the ruling party – the BMD. Even the splinter group's name – the Botswana Movement for Democracy – pointed to the democratic freefall that Botswana had been experiencing for ten years.

The splintering of the ruling party also constituted a gain for the opposition as it drew in many former BDF adherents. The growth of the opposition movements led to the creation of the UDC coalition, which exists to this day. The opposition's significant gain in the 2014 elections despite the assassination of one of its leaders testifies not only to the ruling party's dwindling popularity, but also to the opposition finding increased favour among voters. The discussion here also demonstrated that splinters in the opposition – and a belated one in the ruling party – did not imply that the BDP was growing more popular, but rather that such splintering polarised and disenfranchised voters.

It is highly probable that the abovementioned outlook will persist in the coming years due to the nature of Botswana's politics. The ruling party is not necessarily ideological. It has not transcended the quasi-feudal politics that characterised the transition from the chief-led legislative councils to the extant political parties. Botswana remains a large tribal administration area where nation-building and state-making are nascent. This anomaly owes itself to the fact that Botswana society never underwent an armed and/or ideological liberation struggle. The non-ideological (but issue-based) politics that have characterised Botswana's political arena for over five decades partly explain the nascence of state- and nation-building.

Indeed, the biggest weakness in the opposition is its ideological fragmentation; this position is exacerbated by the fact that even the two ruling party splinters have no ideological platform. The last two elections have demonstrated that the ideological heterogeneity that characterises the political landscape in Botswana triumphs over any commonalities in party interests or issues. This heterogeneity partly explains why the ruling party has survived two splinters, while the opposition – for example, the BMD – has not. Moreover, it is imperative to reiterate that the BDP will most probably remain in power even if it experiences more splinters (which does not seem as imminent under Masisi as it was under Ian Khama). It is also uncontroversial to speculate that ideological inclinations will remain the bane of the opposition: hence its yoyo-like trajectory in Botswana's politics.

## References

*Africa Confidential*. 2019. Key round to Masisi, 19 April 2019. https://www.africa-confidential.com/article-preview/id/12621/Key_round_to_Masisi, last accessed 29 April 2022.

Basimanebotlhe, T. 2015. Lotlamoreng II to resign from Ntlo Ya Dikgosi. *Mmegi*, 15 June 2015. https://www.mmegi.bw/news/lotlamoreng-ii-to-resign-from-ntlo-ya-dikgosi/news, last accessed 20 September 2021.

Bernard, R, & Ryan, G. 2010. *Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA/London: Sage Publications.

BDP/Botswana Democratic Party. 1964. Magosi, boipuso, diphathi. *Therisanyo*, 2(7):1–8.

BDP/Botswana Democratic Party. 1965. "There must be an opposition". *Therisanyo*, 3(5):1–10.

BOTSFA/Botswana Sweden Friendship Association. 2009. *Botswana cabinet: 21 October 2009*. http://www.botsfa.nu/news/cabinet091021.pdf, last accessed 28 November 2021.

Botswana Television. 2018. *9 pm live news bulletin*, 14 June 2018, Lesego Mohutsiwa. Gaborone: Botswana Television.

Charles, T. 2017. BMD stones war at Bobobong. *Mmegi*, 20 July 2017. https://www.mmegi.bw/full-picture/bmd-stones-war-at-bobonong/news, last accessed 15 January 2022.

Charles, T. 2018. The mighty fall of Kgosi. *Mmegi*, 4 May 2018. https://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=75564&dir=2018/may/04, last accessed 1 October 2021.

Charles, T. 2019. Khama quits BDP. *Mmegi*, 27 May 2019. https://www.mmegi.bw/full-picture/pictures-khama-quits-bdp/news, last accessed 15 January 2022.

Chauvin, S. 2004. What role for the private sector in the process of regional integration in southern Africa? *African Development Perspectives Yearbook*, 10:27–56.

Clover, J. 2003. Botswana: Future prospects and the need for broad-based development. *African Security Analysis Programme: Situation Report, 1 September 2003*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

Conteh, C. 2008. Rethinking Botswana's economic diversification policy: Dysfunctional state-market partnership. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 46(4):540–554.

Dehéz, D. 2010. Security sector reform and intelligence services in sub-Saharan Africa: Capturing the whole picture. *African Security Review*, 19(2):38–46.

Denk, D. 2007. *The Botswana Defence Force in the struggle for an African environment*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ditlhase, Y. 2012. Khama Inc.: All the president's family, friends and close colleagues. *Mail & Guardian*, 2 November 2012. https://mg.co.za/article/2012-11-02-00-khama-inc-all-the-presidents-family-friends-and-close-colleagues, last accessed 2 November 2012.

Economist Intelligence Unit. 2017. *Botswana: BMD splits and Alliance for Progressives is born*. London: Economist Intelligence Unit. http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1655935149, last accessed 12 May 2023.

Fabricius, P. 2019. Botswana's ruling BDP defies the pundits. *Daily Maverick*, 28 November 2019. https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-10-28-botswanas-ruling-bdp-defies-the-pundits/, last accessed 28 November 2019.

Friedrichs, J, & Kratochwil, F. 2009. On acting and knowing: How pragmatism can advance international research and methodology. *International Organization*, 63(4):701–731.

Friesen, P. 2019. Botswana's ruling party won again. This makes 12 consecutive victories. *The Washington Post*, 6 November 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/11/

06/botswanas-ruling-party-won-again-this-makes-consecutive-victories/, last accessed 12 January 2022.

Gabathuse, R. 2018. How Khama weakened DCEC. *Mmegi*, 23 February 2018. https://www.mmegi.bw/opinion-analysis/how-khama-weakened-dcec/news, last accessed 12 May 2023.

Gaotlhobogwe, M. 2010. Nchido's prosecutor's laptop goes missing. *Mmegi*, 12 May 2010. http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?sid=1&aid=2316&dir=2010/May/Wednesday12, last accessed 20 June 2018.

Good, K. 2003. *Bushmen and diamonds: Uncivil society in Botswana*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Good, K. 2008. *Diamonds, dispossession and democracy in Botswana.* Woodbridge: James Currey.

Good, K, & Taylor, I. 2008. Botswana: A minimalist democracy. *Democratization*, 15(4):750–765.

Henk, D. 2004. The Botswana Defence Force. *African Security Review*, 13(4):85–99.

IMF/International Monetary Fund. 2013. *Botswana*. https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/BWA#ataglance, last accessed 17 June 2023.

Isbell, T, & Seabo, B. 2018. Batswana support democracy, but satisfaction and perceived freedom of speech decline. *Afrobarometer Dispatch AD228*, 9 August 2018. https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r7_dispatchno228_democracy_in_botswana.pdf, last accessed 15 January 2020.

Isbell, T, & Seabo, B. 2020. Corruption crossroads? Rising perceptions of graft weaken citizen trust, threaten Botswana's democratic standing. *Afrobarometer Policy Paper 68*. Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa. https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/pp68-corruption-crossroads-rising-perceptions-graft-weaken-citizen-trust-threaten/, last accessed 27 December 2022.

Kgalemang, T. 2018. Kgosi convinced Khama on Masisi. *The Weekend Post*, 6 August 2018. https://www.weekendpost.co.bw/wp-news-details.php?nid=5464, last accessed 17 August 2018.

Kibasomba, R. 2004. Challenges to private sector development: The role of foreign direct investment from South Africa. In Wolmuth, K, Gutowski, A, Knedlik, T, Meyn, M, & Ngogang, S (Eds). *Private and public sector: Towards balance*, pp 105–136. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Lange, GM. 2004. Wealth, natural capital and sustainable development: Contrasting examples from Botswana and Namibia. *Environmental & Resource Economics*, 29:257–283.

Leagajang, B, & Basimanebotlhe, T. 2015. Motswaledi report: More questions than answers. *Mmegi*, 31 July 2015. https://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=53009&dir=2015/july/31, last accessed 15 August 2018.

Leith, JC. 2005. *Why Botswana prospered*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Lekalake, R. 2016. Botswana's democratic consolidation: What will it take? *Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 30*. Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

Lekorwe, M, Molomo, MG, Molefe, W, & Moseki, K. 2001. Public attitudes towards democracy, governance and economic development in Botswana. *Afrobarometer Paper No. 14*. Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

Lodge, T, Kadima, D, & Pottie, D (Eds). 2002. *Compendium of elections in southern Africa*. Johannesburg: Electoral Institute of Southern Africa.

Madibana, K. 2009. CID allegedly kidnap SRC president. *Sunday Standard*, 18 January 2009. http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php?NewsID=4230&GroupID=1=, last accessed 20 September 2018.

*Mail & Guardian*. 2014. We're on the government's hit list – Botswana opposition leader. 23 October 2014. https://mg.co.za/article/2014-10-23-were-on-the-governments-hit-list-botswana-opposition-leader/, last accessed 15 January 2022.

Makgala, JC, & Botlhomilwe, MZ. 2017. Elite interests and political participation in Botswana, 1966–2014. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 35(1):54–72.

Manatsha, B, & Maharjan, KL. 2009. 'Fancy figures and ugly facts' in Botswana's rapid economic growth. *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, 15(1–2):19–46.

Manungo, KRD. 1999. The role of the Native Advisory Council in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1919–1960. *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 13(1–2):24–55.

Masire, K, & Lewis, S. 2006. *Very brave or very foolish? Memoirs of an African democrat*. Gaborone: Macmillan Botswana.

Mathala, S. 2014. Rick Yune speaks. *Mmegi*, 6 October 2014. https://www.mmegi.bw/news/rick-yune-speaks/news, last accessed 15 January 2020.

Maundeni, Z, & Seabo, B. 2013. Management and mismanagement of factionalism in political parties in Botswana 1962–2013. *Botswana Notes and Records*, 45:27–38.

Mfundisi, A. 2006. Civic participation and voting patterns in Botswana. *Journal of African Elections*, 5(2):81–98.

*Mmegi*. 2013. Commando, comrade and cheetah. , 21 June 2013.

*Mmegi*. 2019. Taxman seizes Boko's jet, helicopter. 24 April 2019. https://www.mmegi.bw/news/taxman-seizes-bokos-jet-helicopter/news, last accessed 15 January 2022.

Molebatsi, RM. 2014. Political parties and democratic consolidation in Botswana: Challenges and opportunities. *IUP Journal of International Relations*, VIII(2):7–21.

Molefe, W, & Mguni, B. 2000. Opinion polls in Botswana. *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 14(1):122–129.

Molomo, MG. 2000. Understanding government and opposition parties in Botswana. *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 38(1):65–92.

Mookodi, L. 2019. Consumption inequality in Botswana: The decomposition of the Gini coefficient of consumer expenditures. *BIDPA Working Paper 65*. Gaborone: Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis. https://media.africaportal.

org/documents/Consumption_inequality_in_Botswana.pdf, last accessed 28 December 2022.

Morapedi, T. 2017. Mmolotsi: Pilane has kidnapped BMD. *The Weekend Post*, 6 September 2017. https://www.weekendpost.co.bw/20628/news/mmolotsi-pilane-has-kidnapped-bmd/, last accessed 28 December 2022.

Morewagae, I. 2011a. Three Kalafatis killers get 11 years. *Mmegi,* 28(92), 23 June 2011. https://www.mmegi.bw/news/three-kalafatis-killers-get-11-years/news, last accessed 15 May 2023.

Morewagae, I. 2011b. Kalafatis killers to appeal. *Mmegi,* 28(119), 12 August 2011. http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?sid=1&aid=951&dir=2011/August/Friday12, last accessed 13 August 2011.

Morima, N. 2016. Remembering the unwanted: Kgosi Linchwe (1935–2007). *The Weekend Post*, 23 May 2016. https://www.weekendpost.co.bw/25372/columns/remembering-the-unwanted-kgosi-linchwe-ii-1935-2007/, last accessed 12 October 2018.

Morula, M. 2010. Police conclude investigations into Nchindo's death. *Sunday Standard*, 2 June 2010. http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php?NewsID=7897&GroupID=1, last accessed 21 September 2018.

Nkala, G. 2009. Motswaledi suffers devastating blow as Khama wins big. *Mmegi*, 11 September 2009. https://www.mmegi.bw/news/motswaledi-suffers-devastating-blow-as-khama-wins-big/news, last accessed 15 September 2022.

Nocera, J. 2008. Diamonds are forever in Botswana. *The New York Times*, 8 August 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/business/worldbusiness/09nocera.html, last accessed 21 September 2022.

Ntsabane T, & Ntau, C. 2006. Youth and politics in Botswana. *Journal of African Elections*, 5(2):99–113.

Nyati-Ramahobo, L. 2008. *Minority tribes in Botswana: The politics of recognition*. London: Minority Rights Group International.

Osei-Hwedie, BZ. 2001.The political opposition in Botswana: The politics of factionalism and fragmentation. *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 45:57–77.

Parsons, N, with Ramsay, J. 1999. The ambiguities of intelligence in late colonial Botswana, and the case of Nelson Mandela a.k.a. 'David Motsamayi'. Unpublished paper presented at the Conference of the South African Historical Society, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, South Africa, 12 July 1999.

Poteete, AR. 2012. Electoral competition, factionalism, and persistent party dominance in Botswana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 50(1):75–102.

Robinson, J, & Parsons, N. 2006. State formation and governance in Botswana. *Journal of African Economies*, 15(1):100–140.

Schapera, I. 1952. *The ethnic composition of Tswana tribes*. London: P Lund, Humphries & Co.

Seabo, B, Molefe, W, & Molomo, M. 2018. Political trust in Botswana's executive presidency: The Khama era. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 12(6):85–99.

Sebudubudu, D. 2017. Factors that impede democratic consolidation in Botswana. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 13(1):137–153.

Seretse, L. 2013. Saleshando defends family business interests. *Mmegi*, 30 April 2013. https://www.mmegi.bw/news/saleshando-defends-family-business-interests/news, last accessed 1 July 2018.

Sil, R, & Katzenstein, PJ. 2008. Analytic eclecticism in the study of world politics: Reconfiguring problems and mechanisms across research traditions. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(2):411–431.

Siphambe, HK. 2007. Growth and employment dynamics in Botswana: A case study of policy coherence. *Working Paper No. 82*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Somolekae, G. 2005. Political parties in Botswana. *Africa Portal*, 1 January 2005. https://media.africaportal.org/documents/rr27.pdf, last accessed 28 November 2021.

*Sunday Standard*. 2009. "We are moved by the inner peace generated by standing for what is right". 29 October 2009. https://www.sundaystandard.info/ocwe-are-moved-by-the-inner-peace-generated-by-standing-for-what-is-rightoco/, last accessed 16 May 2023.

*Sunday Standard*. 2010. Watergate-style burglary rattles BMD. 7 November 2010. https://www.sundaystandard.info/watergate-style-burglary-rattles-bmd/, last accessed 13 October 2018.

*Sunday Standard*. 2014. DISS broke into Motswaledi, Prof Good's houses. 15 September 2014. https://www.sundaystandard.info/diss-broke-into-motswaledi-prof-goodocos-houses/, last accessed 13 October 2018.

*Sunday Standard*. 2015a. Alleged DISS briefs suggest Motswaledi was assassinated. 8 November 2015. https://www.sundaystandard.info/alleged-diss-briefs-suggest-motswaledi-was-assassinated/, last accessed 13 October 2018.

*Sunday Standard*. 2015b. Kgosi Lotlaamoreng II confirms plans to resign from Bogosi. 18 June 2015. https://www.sundaystandard.info/kgosi-lotlaamoreng-ii-confirms-plans-to-resign-from-bogosi/, last accessed 16 May 2023.

*Sunday Standard*. 2018a. Inside the black op to oust Kgosi. 6 May 2018. http://www.sundaystandard.info/inside-black-op-oust-kgosi, last accessed 13 October 2018.

*Sunday Standard*. 2018b. Kgosi fired as DISS director. 2 May 2018. http://www.sundaystandard.info/kgosi-fired-dis-director, last accessed 13 October 2018.

*Sunday Standard*. 2018c. Trust issues mar transfer of power from Khama to Masisi. 6 May 2018. https://www.sundaystandard.info/trust-issues-mar-transfer-of-power-from-khama-to-masisi/, last accessed 17 June 2023.

Theobald, R, & Williams, R. 1999. Combating corruption in Botswana: Regional model or deviant case? *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 37(3):117–134.

TICAD/Tokyo International Conference on African Development. 2009. *TICAD IV Annual Progress Report 2009: Digest version*. https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/africa/ticad/ticadfollow-up/report/annual/2009/report2009.pdf, last accessed 18 June 2023.

*Timeslive*. 2019. SA business tycoon's aircraft on 'election campaign duty' impounded in Botswana. 28 April 2019. https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-04-28-sa-business-tycoons-aircraft-on-election-campaign-duty-impounded-in-botswana/, last accessed 15 January 2022.

Trading Economics. 2022. *Botswana*. https://tradingeconomics.com/botswana/forecast, last accessed 17 June 2023.

UK Parliament. 1958. Tshekedi Khama and Seretse Khama. Hansard, 585, 3 April 1958. https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1958-04-03/debates/8fd42ee8-6fbc-416f-ae90-a7906d94ad98/TshekediKhamaAndSeretseKhama, last accessed 15 January 2022.

Valentine, T. 1993. Drought, transfer entitlements, and income distribution: The Botswana experience. *World Development*, 21(1):109–126.

Von Soeston, C. 2009. Stagnation of a 'miracle': Botswana's governance record revisited. *GIGA Working Papers No. 99*. Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies.

World Bank. 2015. Incomes growth in rural Botswana lifts thousands out of poverty and decreases inequality. 8 December 2015. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/12/08/incomes-growth-in-rural-botswana-lifts-thousands-out-of-poverty-and-decreases-inequality#:~:text=The%20level%20of%20inequality%20in,64.7%20percent%20to%2060.5%20percent.&text=However%2C%20half%20of%20Botswana's%20population,31%20percent%20classified%20as%20vulnerable, last accessed 28 December 2022.

# Namibia – From liberation movement as government to government without liberation: Democracy under the governance of SWAPO (1990–2015)

**Henning Melber**

After more than 20 years of armed resistance to the illegal South African occupation, negotiated decolonisation transferred political power to the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO of Namibia)[1] through general elections under the supervision of the United Nations in a relatively peaceful way. Since then, Namibian society has enjoyed had a rather remarkable social and political stability, only gradually giving way to shifting grounds since 2020.

This stability, which is a striking feature of Namibian society, is accompanied by a national narrative anchored in the liberation struggle and promoted by a largely uncontested, de-facto one-party democracy on the one hand, and by the relatively deprived living conditions of the majority of the population on the other, in one of the most unequal societies on the planet in terms of income distribution. The kind of social engineering within such an environment by the dominant party in political power is the matter of interest in this chapter.[2] The discussion pays special attention to the patriotic and heroic narratives cultivated in the nation-building discourse, ending with the shift in rhetoric since 2015 by the then newly elected head of state, President Hage Geingob. He adjusted the patriotic reference to SWAPO as the nation-builder into a metaphor presenting a wider conceptual framework. The new vocabulary contrasts with the degree of inclusivity – or, rather, exclusivity – of the policy applied and the Namibian identity shared among the different political, cultural and economic groups in society.

1 SWAPO transformed after independence into the SWAPO Party of Namibia and is since then referred to in differing ways. Unless otherwise quoted, this article maintains the acronym SWAPO to refer to all its various iterations.

2 The analysis is partly based on earlier efforts to come to terms with Namibia's sociopolitical culture (see e.g. Melber, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2017a; Melber et al., 2017).

## From liberation movement to dominant party

Established in 1960, from the mid-1960s onward, SWAPO resorted to forms of armed resistance against the continued illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa. About a decade later, the liberation movement emerged as an agency recognised by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly as the only legitimate representative of the Namibian people.[3] In retrospect, this acknowledgement was a rather dubious (though maybe understandable) response to the continued violation of international law understood as the right to self-determination (Melber, 2004). The slogan *SWAPO is the nation, and the nation is SWAPO* was not only prominent during the so-called struggle days, but it also remained a common understanding within the party as well as the wider population.

In November 1989, SWAPO secured the mandate to constitute the first government of the Republic of Namibia, proclaimed a sovereign state on 21 March 1990, when it obtained an absolute majority of votes in the UN-supervised elections. Subsequently transformed from an anti-colonial movement into a political party, SWAPO considerably expanded its dominance on national as well as regional and communal levels between then and 2014 within the National Assembly, as the election results document (Table 1).

SWAPO continually entrenched and enhanced its power over the definition of the official political discourse by virtue of its seizure of the legitimate and democratically based control over the state through being the elected Namibian government. During the first generation into independence, this discourse reflected an ongoing affinity towards the authoritarian structures required in waging war; it was dominated by the heroic narrative of a patriotic history according to which SWAPO liberated the people, who in return owed SWAPO their unconditional loyalty (Melber, 2003, 2005).

The internal logic of a former guerrilla movement, organised through a military hierarchy and chain of command and its fear of enemy infiltration, remained an influential point of departure for the way many of Namibia's ruling party members executed their offices. More than a generation into independence, the unofficial but widespread view – from the national leadership down to the party foot soldiers – held that SWAPO, the government, and the state were identical and indivisible. According to the official paradigm, SWAPO single-handedly brought democracy as well as development and progress to Namibia, and any form of opposition undermined the peace and unity needed for the nation-building project to continue. Indeed, the former liberation movement's identification with such a reading of history was a strong factor in guiding the electorate's voting behaviour for the first 25 years of independence.

3 The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 3111 of 12 December 1973 recognised SWAPO as "the authentic representative of the Namibian people" (UNGA, 1973:94). This was amended in UNGA Resolution 31/146 of 20 December 1976 to "… sole and authentic …" (UNGA, 1976:131), thereby endorsing SWAPO's exclusive status and political monopoly in negotiations on behalf of the Namibian population.

***Table 1: Parliamentary election results of Namibia's larger parties, 1989–2014[4]***

| Party | 1989* | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWAPO | 384,567 | 361,800 | 408,174 | 620,609 | 602,580 | 715,026 |
| | 57.33% | 73.89% | 76.15% | 75.83% | 75.27% | 80.01% |
| Democratic Turnhalle Alliance** | 191,532 | 101,748 | 50,824 | 42,070 | 25,393 | 42,933 |
| | 28.34% | 20.78% | 9.48% | 5.14% | 3.13% | 4.80% |
| United Democratic Front | 37,874 | 13,309 | 15,685 | 30,355 | 19,489 | 18,945 |
| | 5.60% | 2.72% | 2.93% | 3.71% | 2.40% | 2.12% |
| Congress of Democrats*** | – | – | 53,289 | 59,464 | 5,375 | 3,402 |
| | – | – | 9.94% | 7.27% | 0.66% | 0.38% |
| Rally for Democracy and Progress**** | – | – | – | – | 90,556 | 31,372 |
| | – | – | – | – | 11.16% | 3.51% |

* Elections for the Constituent Assembly, which in 1990 became the National Assembly.
** Renamed the Popular Democratic Movement in 2017.
*** Founded in 1999.
**** Founded in 2007.

During this period, the diverse collection of opposition parties remained largely ineffective. Infighting within and among them made no meaningful contribution to the democratic process and weakened, rather than strengthened, civil society. Most of these parties based their main support on regional-ethnic affiliations. The challenges to SWAPO's rule, therefore, have remained few, inefficient, and isolated. The "SWAPO Kingdom" (Elischer, 2013) was never seriously contested – even though newly formed breakaway parties claimed to be political alternatives. Cases in point are the Congress of Democrats (CoD) and the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP). Represented by contestants with liberation struggle credentials in that they had previously held political offices in SWAPO, the CoD and RDP emerged as new, but only rather fleetingly relevant, elements. Their appearance caused intense debates and a tense atmosphere, but ultimately, they had a very limited effect on the party landscape – or, rather, the

4 Based on official figures released by the Electoral Commission of Namibia and a December 2014 supplement issued in certain local newspapers (***Allgemeine Zeitung***, ***Namibian Sun*** and ***Die Republikein***), entitled ***Celebrating 25 years of democratic elections*** (NMH, n.d.:10–11). Figures at times vary minimally for the same elections, depending on the source consulted.

distribution of votes among the electorate – since they did not garner any votes from the SWAPO support base. The two parties were not, therefore, sustainable alternatives.

The credibility of most opposition parties was further eroded since they lacked a proper alternative programme. Opposition party leaders' interests seemed instead to be focused on obtaining a well-paid seat in the National Assembly for its privileged status and source of income. This is a realistic aspiration for the top-ranked candidates, even among the smaller parties, given that the proportional electoral system allocates parliamentary representation with less than 1% of votes. In the end, parties managing to secure parliamentary representation often find themselves bogged down in internal squabbles over access to the associated financial contributions. These disappointing practices have weakened the opposition further. The dominant liberation party displayed similar behaviour: they, too, eagerly took up the reins of government to achieve political dominance – something which offers such a wide range of privileges that they are tantamount to self-enrichment. As a result, opposition parties had difficulty convincing the electorate that they would be a credible alternative for which a voter should risk being branded unpatriotic, a traitor, a dissident or worse in promoting regime change for neo-imperialism. These stigmas lay in store for anyone who turned away from SWAPO.

Indeed, the results for the opposition parties in the first five parliamentary elections since independence, i.e. from 1994 to 2014, were sobering (Table 2).

### *Table 2: Total results of opposition parties, 1989–2014*

| Year | Total votes in proportion to total mandates* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total votes | % of total votes | No. of mandates |
| 1989 | 680,787 | 42 | 31 out of 72 |
| 1994 | 497,508 | 26 | 19 out of 72 |
| 1999 | 541,114 | 24 | 17 out of 72 |
| 2004 | 829,269 | 24 | 17 out of 72 |
| 2009 | 811,143 | 25 | 18 out of 72 |
| 2014 | 893,643 | 20 | 19 out of 96 |

Source: Compiled from data in the other tables in this chapter

Note: Based on constitutional amendments adopted in August 2014, the number of elected mandates for the National Assembly was increased from 72 to 96, beginning from the legislative period commencing in March 2015.

As Kaapama et al. (2007:92) concluded, "a weak opposition has contributed significantly towards one-party dominance". This allowed SWAPO to use (if not abuse) the state institutions for its further consolidation and to apply democracy in a way that strengthened

the party even more. Based on the lacklustre performance by opposition parties, Cooper (2014:127) concluded that, "if the process of challenging and overcoming single-party dominance is a marathon, Namibia's opposition parties have been given up at the starting line". Given the disproportionality of the party landscape, findings of an Afrobarometer survey presented in March 2014 concluded that the "political system seems to deliver more democracy than the population seems to demand" (Lindeke, 2014:1) as a participatory political culture had not yet been developed. While democratic consolidation might be considered a feature in the institutional domain, "democratic values, behaviours and expectations are yet to catch up" (Lindeke, 2014:14).

At the same time, the party's presidential candidate in each of the elections garnered more votes than the political organisation did, thereby showing a high degree of identification with both the political organisation and its candidate nominated for president. The overwhelming majority of Namibians had a high degree of confidence and trust in the party's presidential candidates, who, once in office as head of state, hold a large degree of executive power (Melber, 2015b). An Afrobarometer survey ahead of the 2014 elections showed that the two Namibian Presidents to that date as well as the then serving Prime Minister put forward as SWAPO's presidential candidate for the upcoming elections enjoyed exceptional approval rates in terms of trust and performance. These ratings ranked among the highest on the continent: Nujoma (trust 76%, performance 78%), Pohamba (trust 81%, performance 88%), and Geingob (trust 79%, performance 89%) (IPPR & Afrobarometer, 2014).[5] Through a change to the Namibian Constitution, the nation's first President, Sam Nujoma, served a third term as head of state from 1990 to 2005,[6] followed by his trusted confidante Hifikepunye Pohamba (2005–2015) – who, at the end of his second term, was awarded the Mo Ibrahim Prize for Good Governance.[7] Hage Geingob is the third (and most likely last) of SWAPO's first generation in the highest office of state. He received 87% of the votes in the presidential elections in 2014. Directly elected in parallel to the members of the National Assembly, SWAPO's presidential candidates until then received even more votes than the party, with Geingob scoring even higher than his predecessors (Table 3).

5 The approval rates for Nujoma were based on results of a survey from 2002; Geingob's rates were for his position as Prime Minister.

6 This was motivated by the fact that he was appointed for the first term by the members of the Constituent Assembly and not through direct election by the voters. Therefore, he was allowed to stand for a third term in the national presidential elections.

7 For a critical assessment of his achievements, see Melber (2016).

***Table 3: Results for SWAPO candidates in presidential elections, 1994–2014[8]***

| | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWAPO | 73.89% | 76.15% | 75.83% | 5.27% | 80.01% |
| Nujoma | 74.46% | 76.85% | – | – | – |
| Pohamba | – | – | 76.44% | 76.42% | – |
| Geingob | – | – | – | – | 86.73% |

The high degree of conformism among the electorate with one party and the social capital (i.e. trust) vested in the party's leadership, in combination with the reputation of having liberated the country from colonial minority rule, created an almost insurmountable challenge for any political opposition. Many Namibians shared the assumption with the party cadres that the seizure of political power by the anti-colonial movement represented the end of history in the sense that no other political organisation would ever be entitled to take the political reign. A statement by Sam Nujoma indicates this assumption (and is devoid of any historical sensitivity). As the Founding Father of the Republic of Namibia – an official honorary title bestowed on him by the National Assembly when he retired in 2005 (Melber, 2006), he addressed the SWAPO Party Youth League annual congress with the following categorical prognosis: "SWAPO Party will grow from strength to strength and continues to rule Namibia for the next ONE THOUSAND YEARS" (Nujoma, 2010; capital letters in the original).

Namibia's political sphere remained the arena of predominantly one party. Thus, the slogan from the struggle days, namely *SWAPO is the nation and the nation is SWAPO*, was carried over into the dominant political culture. Doorenspleet and Nijzink (2013:202) explain such cases of enduring party dominance by –

> … the fact that they continue to be associated with important historical legacies, that they are well organized and deeply rooted political movements, and that they successfully manage leadership change and succession.

Namibia had become a classic case to illustrate this phenomenon in an almost unprecedented way. Not only did SWAPO provide continuity, which was a welcome stabilising factor in the institutionalisation of the new state, the party also allowed for a relatively smooth and unspectacular establishment of a new order under a dominant hegemony whose "narrative connects powerfully to the ushering in of a new political order[:] the democratic regime of independent Namibia" (Du Pisani, 2013:136). This corresponded with a similar assessment by Levitsky and Way (2010:3, 44–45):

8 Based on official figures released by the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN, 2014:18).

> The most durable party-based regimes are those that are organized around non-material sources of cohesion, such as ideology, ethnicity, or bonds of solidarity rooted in a shared experience of violent struggle. … Revolutionary or liberation struggles also tend to produce a generation of leaders … that possesses the necessary legitimacy to impose discipline during crises. … new ruling parties that emerged from violent struggle, such as SWAPO in Namibia, … appear to be more durable.

But even such durability needs to bridge a generational divide. At a time when the expiry date for most first-generation SWAPO activists with struggle credentials approaches the heroic narrative relating to SWAPO's patriotic history risks becoming an anachronism (Melber et al., 2017). A 2012 Afrobarometer survey offered a significant indication (IPPR, 2013): only half of interviewees aged between 18 and 24 years were interested in public affairs; 23% of them did not care if they lived in a democratic state; and 14% stated that they would actually prefer undemocratic forms of governance. Similarly, 25% of 25- to 34-year-old respondents did not care about democracy, while another 15% preferred undemocratic systems. Strikingly, in almost all age groups, religion was more important and rated higher than politics (IPPR, 2013).

## Patriotic history for a nation in formation

The organisation of a serious liberation struggle had much in common with the authoritarianism and hierarchical nature of the totalitarian structures epitomising the colonial system being opposed. Thus, features of the colonial character were reproduced in the fight for their eradication, and the emerging concepts of power were applied in the post-colonial reconstruction phase. The ideology presents evidence for the post-colonial nation-building under SWAPO as a process of social engineering. Such engineering was based on reinventing tradition as the liberation gospel of a patriotic history – a narrative seeking to claim exclusivity for the liberation of the country and its people, and the subsequent successful consolidation of political power and control guided by this exclusivist perspective (Melber, 2003, 2005; Saunders, 2007).

"The violent heritage" (Soggot, 1986), from a dialectic point of view, shaped mentalities and ideologies of both coloniser and colonised. This has been aptly characterised by Frantz Fanon (1967). Social interaction in the colonial period had visible spillover effects on the sociocultural and political identities and mental dispositions of the Namibian people, even after the end of foreign rule. In this sense, the new societies governed by a former liberation movement retained essential elements of the old system and entrenched conflicts. Thus, aspects of colonialism were mirrored in the struggle for its dissolution; they were subsequently also manifested in the structures and concepts of governance in post-colonial times.[9] The newly established systems of power and political outlook,

9 This once motivated the Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani to comment flippantly during a panel debate that the only post-colonial he was aware of was the post office.

despite being different from the old oppressive hierarchy, also perpetuated the binary view of the previous colonial discourse (Ashcroft, 2001).

A new political elite operating from the commanding heights of the state induced a dominant public discourse. It introduced and cultivated selective narratives and memories related to the war(s) of liberation to establish an exclusive post-colonial legitimacy under the sole authority of one particular agency of social forces. The mythology plays an essential role in this fabrication – if only by omission of the less favourable aspects of the struggle history (Saunders, 2018). What has been said of the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) in Zimbabwe and its excessive (if not abusive) reference to the Chimurenga[10] applies to Namibia under SWAPO too: it has "since independence sought to ground the nation's identity as well as its own political legitimacy in the liberation war" (Alexander et al., 2000:254).

Histories of war and violence had a lasting impact on Namibia's post-colonial ideological environment. These histories in turn shaped and affected memories and their institutionalisation in symbols, rituals and day-to-day practices related to present-day political culture and hegemony (Akuupa, 2015).[11] Thus, the significance of revolt and resistance in the history of Namibia and its utilisation for legitimising the currently dominant patterns of rule are conserved. In many ways, Namibia's society today still bears the traces and marks of its violent colonial history. The national liberation movement as government cultivated a discourse which displayed an ongoing affinity for the authoritarian mentality that was required in waging a war. The dominant heroic narrative of post-colonial Namibia subsequently prevailed in everyday life. President Pohamba, who followed Sam Nujoma as head of state in 2005, ended his speech on Heroes' Day on 26 August 2013 with the following flaming appeal (Pohamba, 2013):

> Namibia is now free and free forever. The destiny of our country is in our own hands. We will work harder to make Namibia a winning nation. We will do our best to secure a brighter future for our children and for the future generations. This we will do in honour of those who made the supreme sacrifices for Namibia's freedom.
>
> We will do this to honour their legacy of bravery and gallantry because as we sing in our National Anthem "their blood waters our freedom". They gave their lives and shed their precious blood so that all Namibians can live in peace and security, free from hunger and poverty.
>
> Glory to the memories of our Heroes and Heroines!

Sam Nujoma, as the political father figure of Namibian independence (until very recently, mothers have been conspicuously absent in Namibia's official history), personifies in a particularly pronounced fashion how memories of the liberation war are cultivated.

10 A Shona word meaning "liberation struggle" (Wikipedia, last accessed 30 December 2022).

11 For a different cultural form of constructing a national identity, see Haugh (2014).

He frequently enjoyed posing as the military (rather than diplomatic) figurehead of the struggle for liberation. He also preferred to display the virtues of an uncompromising man, with the emphasis firmly on *man* rather than *human being*. One testimony to this is the personified memory culture cast in stone and metal at the Heroes' Acre site. The cultivation of the militaristically reduced and highly personified liberation gospel of this monument displays the symbolic features of autocratic rule and, as such, is rather revealing.[12] Just as enlightening is the autobiography of Nujoma (2001), which Saul and Leys (2003:351) (dis-)qualify as follows:

> … a true measure of the moral obtuseness that has become part and parcel of the Swapo project – an ironic index of events to which, over long years of struggle, the cruelty and callousness of the apartheid masters also entered into the souls of those who spent much of their lives fighting apartheid. The book can fairly be said to have raised the practice of 'forgetting history' in Namibia to a new level.

Significantly, a quote from one of Nujoma's speeches during the days of the struggle was chosen as the autobiography's programmatic title (i.e. *Where others wavered*) and says it all (SWAPO, 1978):

> When the history of a free and independent Namibia is written one day, SWAPO will go down as having stood firm where others have wavered: that it sacrificed for the sacred cause of liberation where others have compromised.

The autobiographical account is treated as official history and was even turned into a Hollywood film at a cost of N$50 million from the public purse. As "a partial, highly selective account", it "wishes to try to stamp a certain version of the past on the nation's collective memory, to help shape the future" and "will bring no comfort to those concerned about the future of democracy in Namibia today" (Saunders, 2003:98).

Nonetheless, the historiography of both the man and the movement reveals an interesting view of the mindset of the freedom fighters from their own perspective. It offers access to some of the reasoning and the underlying driving forces which otherwise might be not as clearly captured and understood. The impact of this patriotic history, which at the same time casts the so-titled Father of the Nation in a particular mould, should

12 The massively oversized statue entitled ***Unknown Soldier*** posing in front of a similarly gigantic phallic symbol (aka obelisk) leave no doubt about the intended connotation. Not only does it bear a striking resemblance to SWAPO's founding president – as if to underline the fact, but it also has a quote from Nujoma with his signature displayed. Subtlety is not as yet a feature of Namibia's post-colonial political culture. Built by the North Korean Mansudae company, the architecture resembles the ideology of a centrist, authoritarian state philosophy, with official heroism vested in political leaders. The same company also built the Independence Museum, which in its outer and inner characteristics resembles the same format, features and simplifications when it comes to the struggle narrative. For the Mansudae projects and their symbolic meaning, see Kirkwood (2011) and Van der Hoog (2019).

not be underestimated. Sam Nujoma is not only the personification of SWAPO: he is also the mirror image of, and the most prominent figure for identifying and admiring, the dominant post-colonial political culture. His story is the story of SWAPO; and as the SWAPO version of Namibian history, it is at the same time part and parcel of the ideological core composing the official post-colonial Namibia.[13] As a dominant narrative, it is hardly counteracted by attempts to tell the story or stories from another perspective, such as that based specifically on the exile experiences of those who were victims of the SWAPO leadership's paranoia and subsequent terror in the Angolan and Zambian camps. These voices have yet to find a place in Namibia's national history (Melber, 2018; Saunders, 2018).

In contrast to these silenced voices, Nujoma personifies the resilience and perseverance of the struggle mentality. He managed to survive all internal power struggles taking place in SWAPO, showing his qualities as a leader who could remain in charge. However, these qualities are not rooted in democratic convictions in terms of the virtues and top priorities for success. It is, therefore, not surprising that the type of statesmanship displayed by President Nujoma during his time in office did not always show respect for democratic principles. Nor did it always meet the minimum standards of diplomacy. There were increasingly alarming public performances, particularly since the mid-1990s, which revealed a growing intolerance of dissenting views and a certain self-righteousness, both at home and in the international arena.[14]

## Party, family, nation and state

The tendency to glorify the history of liberation warfare (which, by implication, is for a just cause and, hence, leans towards embracing the dubious notion of a *just war*) is an obvious symptom of Namibian society. This tendency plays a significant role in the

13 This official post-colonial discourse was prominently displayed in March 2000 on the 10th anniversary of independence, when two glossy volumes with the official (but edited) speeches of Namibia's President since independence in 1990 and his state-of-the-nation addresses in three volumes – amounting to more than 1,200 pages – were published (Nujoma, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). Nujoma's exit from office was honoured by another compilation, claiming, without any modesty, to offer a collection of the President's wisdom by means of selected quotes (Gowaseb, 2005).

14 Most revealing in this context were Nujoma's impromptu deviations from scripted official speeches as he read them. Notable in this regard was when he performed publicly in his home region (and using the vernacular) or at party-internal occasions: as a firebrand, he uttered scarcely gentlemanly polemics. He also established quite a reputation for the way in which he sometimes treated journalists in interviews and at press briefings. His track record included vicious outbursts of homophobia, slamming other alternative behaviours, uttering anti-white sentiments, and delivering personal attacks. Nujoma was nicknamed "Mugabe lite" because of his radical attacks within regional and international politics in defence of his ally, with

symbolism and rituals of the post-colonial political culture. Nujoma's mindset is not an accident; nor is he the victim of an obsessive, misguided personality. His understanding and particular competence are a result of the socialisation process within an armed struggle, relying on underground practices, guided by the utmost loyalty towards the leadership of an organisation, and entrusted with the absolute right to take decisions. It resonates with the experiences captured by Raymond Suttner, a long-time African National Congress (ANC) activist in South Africa. He argues that the liberation movement is a prototype of a state within the state – one that sees itself as the only legitimate source of power, which includes intolerance towards any form of political opposition. But he also carefully seeks to explain how the anti-pluralist factor remained largely unnoticed within the underground structures. These structures cloaked individual, independent-minded thinking, guided by perhaps dissenting moral values, under a collective which used hardly democratic centralism as a core belief system to ensure maximum discipline and loyalty as a prerequisite for survival and ultimate victory. As he suggests, the liberation organisation represented a distinct notion of *family*: there was a general suppression of the personal in favour of the collective. Individual judgement (and, thereby, autonomy) was sacrificed for a collective decision from the leadership. Such "warrior culture, the militarist tradition", according to Suttner (2008:119), "entailed not only heroic acts but also many cases of abuse of power". Notably, there has also been a gendered dimension of abuse in the struggle setting, as is illustrated in the Namibian case (Akawa, 2014).

Suttner (2006) also engaged with the dominant discourse of the hegemonic rule of the ANC now controlling and representing the state in a way that resonates with Namibian realities under SWAPO. As he observes, this form of applied patriotic history, which defiantly refuses to acknowledge any meaningful and legitimate opposition, equates the national liberation movement with the emergent nation in an exclusive, all-embracing concept. Suttner (2006:24, original emphasis) qualifies the dominant narrative as –

> … a language of unity and a language that *tends to represent the unified people as embodied in the liberation movement organisation and then equates them with the people as a whole*. … In a sense the liberation movement depicts itself as a proto-state. This notion derives from a framework of ideas in which the seizure of the state was represented as the central issue of the day.

The situational application of militant rhetoric as a tool for inclusion or exclusion in terms of the post-colonial national identity is common practice. The practice demonstrates that the declared notions of *National reconciliation* and the slogan *Unity in diversity* are not always acknowledged in terms of political pluralism and permissiveness. The practice also discloses a decidedly exclusivist monopoly on being the one and only liberator.

whom he had established increasingly closer ties in recognition of common interests and similar views since the mid-1990s (Melber, 2015c).

## Social versus political realities

Formal self-determination in a sovereign state does not automatically translate into individual liberty and freedom – nor social equality in economic terms. Instead, self-determination has shifted the struggle for sovereignty to one for true emancipation. Namibian realities have deviated from the one promised by SWAPO. The slogan *Solidarity, freedom, justice* of the struggle days was reiterated as the party's official motto in its revised constitution (SWAPO Party, 1991:26).[15] Nonetheless, *National reconciliation* was employed as the new government's programmatic slogan and co-optation strategy, given that it was faced by the structural legacy of settler colonial minority rule and its corresponding property relations. Thus, as a cultural entrepreneur, SWAPO facilitated the creation of an elite pact. By Africanising the settler structure, this pact entered into by SWAPO under the *National reconciliation* slogan reinvented "a historical communality and continuity among the Namibian people(s) and projected a common destiny into the future" (Du Pisani, 2010:16).

The reconfiguration of the socio-economic landscape was based on control over the politically commanding heights of the newly proclaimed Namibian state. This reconfiguration operated only through the officially adopted vehicles of Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment, both concepts promoting a redistributive strategy based on the co-optation of a new elite into the old socio-economic structures. National reconciliation of such a class character could only be "an elite discourse bent on maintaining the legitimacy of the state and responding to the inherent contradictions that characterize SWAPO's [own] anti-colonial discourse" (Du Pisani, 2010:31). Public procurement and other outsourcing activities by those in control of state agencies have turned Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment into a self-rewarding scheme based on struggle credentials and credits among the activists of the erstwhile liberation movement. Through such practices, the skewed class character of Namibia's society has hardly changed since independence: co-optation into the ruling segments of an existing socio-economic system is very different from social transformation.

Indeed, policy does not show any convincing signs of redistributing relative wealth or tackling chronic poverty by means of social protection; rather, it seems to be about self-enrichment within a given and unchallenged system of crude capitalism and a related class structure. In other words, it is business as usual. A trade-union-affiliated local think-tank assessed the situation and issued the following warning (LaRRI, 2005:11):

15 Interestingly enough, the term ***equality*** has never featured prominently – if at all – in the official vocabulary.

> Affirmative action does not necessarily eradicate socioeconomic inequalities. Instead, inequalities may merely be shifted from the basis of race, ethnicity or gender to the basis of class. Affirmative action may promote the redistribution of opportunities in favour of previously disadvantaged groups, but it's not the principal mechanism to redistribute wealth or to overcome poverty.

## Shifting political discourse in the national narrative

On 21 March 2015, the 25th anniversary of Namibia's independence, Hage Geingob entered office as the country's third head of state. He introduced a new narrative which transcended the *SWAPO is the nation* dictum and replaced it with a much more embracing formula. After a year in office, the stocktaking exercises by local institutions and individuals concurred that he had managed to offer innovative discourses, initiatives and programmatic declarations. Since then, however, criticism has mounted on the grounds that he has "struggled to turn rhetoric into action" (Hopwood, 2016). Shejavali (2016:3) describes President Geingob's performance as follows:

> … [a] mixed bag made up of some great rhetoric, wonderful intentions, interesting policy pronouncements, and some sound action and consultation on certain policies. There have also been actions that have seemingly contradicted the positive rhetoric and some inaction on certain issues, raising question marks about how much progress can be achieved.

The president's inaugural address as well as his first state-of-the-nation address marked an interesting watershed in the official rhetoric of the party's heroic narrative. They shifted from the hitherto mainly party-dominated patriotic history, which had cultivated an exclusive narrative of SWAPO as the sole liberator, towards a more all-inclusive terminology. Geingob no longer emphasised SWAPO's role as embodying the Namibian nation. Instead, the Namibian house became the new metaphor and reference point. Thus, the new President Geingob concluded his inaugural address as follows (Republic of Namibia, 2015a:7–8):

> All of us must play our part in the success of this beautiful house we call Namibia. We need to renew it from time to time by undergoing renovations and extensions. … Let us stand together in building this new Namibian house in which no Namibian will feel left out..

In his first state-of-the-nation address a few weeks later, President Geingob again used the Namibian House metaphor, summarising his new approach in the following opening passages (Republic of Namibia, 2015b:4; original emphases):

> *Nation building is similar to building a house, and in our case, building the Namibian house*. Firstly, you clear an area on which you build a solid foundation. You then lay the bricks and use cement to ensure that the bricks are kept in place. Allow the house to dry and firm up. Finally, you plaster the wall and it is important to let it dry before you paint the house.

> The same is true for building the Namibian house. We cleared the area with United Nations supervised elections. After which we drafted the constitution as our foundation. The bricks of our house are the different ethnic groups and the mortar is the various laws passed in Parliament to hold us together. Allow the democracy to firm up and mature.
>
> *We are intent on building and maintaining a high quality house in which all its residents have a sense of shared identity*. We are determined to build a house that will be a place of peace and refuge for all its children and a house *in which no Namibian will be left out*.

Since then, the powerful house metaphor has been a constant, integral feature of the President's public statements – despite his own behaviour and views not always living up to the proclaimed ideal.[16] This emphasis on inclusivity was complemented by the introduction of another core term during Geingob's first year in office, namely *harambee* (Republic of Namibia, 2015c:4; italics in original):

> As leaders of our communities, let us always endeavour to accentuate the spirit of *Harambee* which is a Swahili principle that describes people pulling together in the same direction.

Before year's end, Geingob elaborated on a plan which he termed *Harambee Towards Prosperity for All* (subsequently, the *Harambee Prosperity Plan*) and explained that the Kiswahili term *harambee* was selected (Republic of Namibia, 2015d:14) –

> … because it resonates well with the Namibian public. It was chosen as a word that all Namibians speaking different languages could get behind and is consistent with the ideal of "no one should feel left out".

In his official speech marking the opening of the 2016 National Assembly, President Geingob explained the notion further (Republic of Namibia, 2016:6):

> … when I refer to the spirit of Harambee it is not a mere slogan but it is a call on the people of this Nation to adopt an ethos of unity, devoid of selfish ambition, and to pull in one direction for the sake of National prosperity.

16 In his last press conference as Prime Minister, just days ahead of taking the oath as President, Geingob rebuked a gay activist who asked him what he was going to do about the rights of gays and lesbians in Namibia, "so that they may have the same rights as other people". The visibly upset Prime Minister asked that the question be repeated (which the activist did, while being laughed at by others present), after which he responded tersely: "My goodness, we are talking about poverty eradication, unemployment, food, and yet my young brother comes up with gay issues! Those are not the issues we are talking about. Those things are luxuries" (Ntinda, 2015). On other occasions, Geingob also made it clear that former soldiers employed by the South African Defence Force would not be granted war veteran status and would remain excluded from all benefits former SWAPO combatants receive. The national discourse also excludes the counter-narrative of those considered as enemies rather than as fellow Namibians (Bollinger, 2017). Clearly, the Namibian House is not open to everyone, and the rooms are rather differently furnished.

Beyond the official rhetoric, however, Namibians also remained subdivided over fundamental issues of how to come to terms with the past in the present. A prominent symptom was the ongoing dispute over how bilateral Namibian–German relations should best address the issue of genocide committed by the soldiers of the German empire between 1904 and 1907/8, mainly among the Ovaherero, Ovambanderu and Nama – and, to a lesser extent, Damara – communities – in the eastern, central and southern parts of what was then colonial German South West Africa (Melber, 2017b). The Namibian government claimed it had sole authority to represent the descendants of the victims in the bilateral negotiations with Germany initiated at the end of 2015. However, the descendants concerned had their own agencies through which they had mobilised and campaigned relentlessly for recognition of, and compensation for, the crimes committed. They protested for being ignored in the negotiations. In their view, the government was denying them recognition as those whose forebears were the first to engage in an anti-colonial resistance, also by military means, with huge sacrifices and lasting effects.

Tempers flared in a particular National Assembly debate when Members of Parliament (MPs) belonging to Ovaherero and Nama communities chose to challenge the official policy approach by the SWAPO-led government, voicing opinions over and above their respective party affiliations (*The Namibian*, 30 March 2016). The leader of the official opposition party, also a member of the Ovaherero community, claimed that those directly affected as descendants of the victim groups were excluded from the current negotiation process between Namibia and Germany over how best to achieve reconciliation (*The Namibian*, 30 March 2016). He was supported by a SWAPO MP, who, as a member of the Nama communities in southern Namibia, declared that the descendants felt like "stepchildren of their government" (Beukes, 2016). The Minister of Land Reform (and son of Namibia's first President), Utoni Nujoma, then angrily reprimanded her: "You are a member of this party, you must take note that all of us are affected" (Beukes, 2016).

Despite new claims for unity under the Geingob administration, regional ethnic anger and frustration were on the increase. Given these dynamics, in his official speech for the opening of parliamentary sessions for 2018 (Republic of Namibia, 2018a:17f), Geingob stressed that –

> … we have established a narrative around nation building and inclusivity, in order to embed the doctrine of unity and shared obligation, within our society. Effective governance cannot be fully achieved in a country fraught with division and factionalism. I will therefore never tire of regularly repeating the narrative of inclusivity, through the concept of the Namibian House; where No Namibian should feel left out (unless, of course, one decides to exclude oneself); as we build One Namibia – One Nation; by pulling together in the same direction in the spirit of Harambee.

Speaking on the 28th anniversary celebration of independence, Geingob warned against the cultivation of silo mentalities (Republic of Namibia, 2018b:15f):

> We must equally guard against tribalism and racism. The Namibia we fought for belongs to all of us, and we will not allow the retrogressive mentalities to return to our land. We will not allow those who propagate the divisive Bantustan mentality of the past, to gain a foothold in our society. We either embrace unity in order to move forward as a nation, or we choose division, pouring scorn on the memory of the brave sons and daughters who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. We have to choose unity.

## Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the transformation of the anti-colonial movement SWAPO into a party forming the national government within a de facto political one-party state guided by a constitutionally enshrined system of multi-party democracy under the politics of a new elite in the post-apartheid era. Through a comparison of the nation-building narratives with material delivery to the majority of the people, the discrepancy so often noted between claims and realities becomes obvious. In addition, despite a more all-embracing discourse under the head of state assuming office in 2015, adequate recognition of multiple political, cultural and ethnic identities as well as other orientations outside the norms and values defined by those in political power is missing. Social cohesion has become rather superficial and is often based on coercion. While there is undeniably a link between social cohesion and a political discourse relating to the (albeit inexplicit) notion of a developmental state, implementing such cohesion has revealed serious shortcomings. Social relationships have remained vulnerable in the absence of a joint identity among the citizenry beyond the pithy "Namibian and proud of it" – a popular slogan displayed on stickers during the first years after independence. The slogan has since lost its powerful message and has disappeared from the public domain. Alongside *Namibianness*, *belonging* has continued to be defined largely by local cultural and historically connected factors, as well as by being *previously disadvantaged* – a notion based on pigmentation but denoting a new class of politically connected beneficiaries of access to state power and public administration.

The social imagery that has guided politics and ruling to date has remained impregnated and designed by the heroic narrative of SWAPO as the national liberation movement executing control over politics and society, rather than by the diversity of historical experiences brought together in the *One Namibia, One Nation* mantra. This imagery is vested in the exclusivity SWAPO was awarded on the international diplomatic front during the anti-colonial struggle of the 1970s when the liberation movement was declared the "sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people" (UNGA, 1976:131). By implication, and as a long-term consequence, this singular status reinforced the tendency to continue to claim this exclusivity, practically aborting any notion of plurality in the specific brand of Namibian democracy. As the election results from independence until 2014 have shown, this tendency was, to an unprecedented degree, more or less voluntarily acknowledged by the Namibian population as the electorate. Based on

SWAPO's overwhelming dominance, its equating of itself with the government, and its equating of the government with the state, had become taken for granted. This outcome has excluded and marginalised those social and political forces that were considered as having deviated from the national gospel.

Notwithstanding that SWAPO has performed better than any other former liberation movement in power in terms of consolidating its political dominance, Namibia under SWAPO faces a similar challenge as South Africa does under the ANC, as Abrahams (2016:106) points out, when it –

> … [enmeshed] social cohesion with nation-building. This discourse reduces social cohesion to a banal form of nationalism that required enactment of certain allegiances – to the symbols and historical narratives of … liberation.

This reduction to historical achievements which are used as a continued justification of, and claim to, legitimacy loses sight, in several respects, of the required social compact (and contract) that aims at all-inclusiveness. Indeed, despite the overwhelming dominance of one political agency only, Namibia has so far remained a deeply divided society in which cohesion cannot do without coercion. It seems that the settler-colonial rule of the past and the subsequent armed struggle for independence still cast their shadows.

## References

Abrahams, C. 2016. Twenty years of social cohesion and nation-building in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42(1):95–107.

Akawa, M. 2014. *The gender politics of the Namibian liberation struggle*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

Akuupa, M. 2015. *National culture in post-apartheid Namibia. State-sponsored cultural festivals and their histories*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

Alexander, J, McGregor, J, & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence and memory: One hundred years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*. Woodbridge: James Currey; Harare: Weaver Press; Cape Town: David Philip; Oxford/Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Ashcroft, B. 2001. *Post-colonial transformation.* London/New York: Routledge.

Beukes, J. 2016. Heated debate over genocide. *Namibian Sun*, 30 March 2016.

Bollinger, L. 2017. Apartheid's transnational soldiers: The case of black Namibian soldiers in South Africa's former security forces. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43(1):195–214.

Cooper, I. 2014. It's my party: Opposition politics, party motivation and electoral strategy in Namibia. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40(1):111–127.

Doorenspleet, R, & Nijzink, L. 2013. Why one-party dominance endures in some democracies but not others. In Doorenspleet, R, & Nijzink, L (Eds). *One-party dominance in African democracies*, pp 195–207. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Du Pisani, A. 2010. The discursive limits of SWAPO's dominant discourses on anti-colonial nationalism in postcolonial Namibia – A first exploration. In Du Pisani, A, Kössler, R, & Lindeke, WA (Eds). *The long aftermath of war – Reconciliation and transition in Namibia*, pp 1–40. Freiburg: Arnold Bergstraesser Institut.

Du Pisani, A. 2013. The politics and resource endowment of party dominance in Namibia: The past as the present and the future? In De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P (Eds). *Friend or foe? Dominant party systems in southern Africa: Insights from the developing world*, pp 132–148. Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Elischer, S. 2013. *Political parties in Africa: Ethnicity and party formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fanon, F. 1967. *The wretched of the earth.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gowaseb, M (Ed.). 2005. *The quotable Sam Nujoma: Wisdom of Namibia's first President*. Windhoek: Legacy.

Haugh, WA. 2014. *Lyrical nationalism in post-apartheid Namibia: Kings, Christians, and cosmopolitans in Catholic youth songs*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Hopwood, G. 2016. Namibia's President Geingob one year on – A for effort, D for performance. *African Arguments*, 18 March 2016. http://africanarguments.org/2016/03/18/namibias-president-geingob-one-year-on-a-for-effort-d-for-performance/, last accessed 2 October 2021.

IPPR/Institute for Public Policy Research. 2013. *Election Watch, No. 5*. Windhoek: IPPR.

IPPR & Afrobarometer/Institute for Public Policy Research, & Afrobarometer. 2014. *News release, 28 October 2014: Trust, approval ratings high for Namibia's president and prime minister following a long trend*. Windhoek: IPPR & Afrobarometer.

Kaapama, P, Blaauw, L, Zaaruka, B, & Kaakunga, E. 2007. Consolidating democratic governance in southern Africa: Namibia. *EISA Research Report No. 34*. Johannesburg: Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa.

Kirkwood, MLE. 2011. Postcolonial architecture through North Korean modes: Namibian commissions of the Mansudae Overseas Project. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Kansas.

LaRRI/Labour Resource and Research Institute. 2005. *Namibia's Affirmative Action in employment: An assessment – 2000–2004*. Windhoek: LaRRI.

Levitsky, S, & Way, LA. 2010. Beyond patronage: Ruling party cohesion and authoritarian stability. Unpublished paper presented to the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, 2–5 September 2010.

Lindeke, B. 2014. The perils and complexity of democratic values in Namibia. *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 144*. Windhoek: Afrobarometer.

Melber, H. 2003. "Namibia, land of the brave": Selective memories on war and violence within nation building. In Abbink, J, De Bruijn, M, & Van Walraven, K (Eds). *Rethinking resistance: Revolt and violence in African history*, pp 305–327. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

Melber, H. 2004. Decolonization and democratisation: The United Nations and Namibia's transition to democracy. In Newman, E, & Rich, R (Eds). *The UN role in promoting democracy: Between ideals and reality*, pp 233–257. Tokyo/ New York/Paris: United Nations University Press.

Melber, H. 2005. Namibia's past in the present: Colonial genocide and liberation struggle in commemorative narratives. *South African Historical Journal*, 54(1):91–111.

Melber, H. 2006. 'Presidential indispensability' in Namibia: Moving out of office but staying in power? In Southall, R, & Melber, H (Eds). *Legacies of power: Leadership change and former presidents in African politics*, pp 98–119. Cape Town: HSRC Press; Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute.

Melber, H. 2014. *Understanding Namibia: The trials of independence*. London: Hurst; Auckland Park: Jacana (also New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Melber, H. 2015a. Post-liberation democratic authoritarianism: The case of Namibia. *Politikon – South African Journal of Political Studies*, 42(1):45–66.

Melber, H. 2015b. From Nujoma to Geingob: 25 years of presidential democracy. *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 18:49–65.

Melber, H. 2015c. In the footsteps of Robert Gabriel Mugabe: Namibian solidarity with Mugabe's populism – (Bogus) anti-imperialism in practice. In Ndlovu-Gatsheni, SJ (Ed.). *Mugabeism? History, politics and power in Zimbabwe*, pp 107–120. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Melber, H. 2016. *A decade of Namibia: Politics, economy and society – The era Pohamba, 2004–2015*. Brill: Leiden.

Melber, H. 2017a. How democratic is Namibia's democracy? An anatomy of SWAPO's political hegemony. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 13(1):143–161.

Melber, H. 2017b. Genocide matters: Negotiating a Namibian–German past in the present *Stichproben*: *Vienna Journal of African Studies*, 33:1–24.

Melber, H. 2018. The shifting grounds of emancipation: From the anti-colonial struggle to a critique of post-colonial society. In Krishnamurthy, S, & Vale, H (Eds). *Writing Namibia: Literature in transition*, pp 17–38. Windhoek: University of Namibia Press.

Melber, H, Kromrey, D, & Welz, M. 2017. Changing of the guard? An anatomy of power within SWAPO of Namibia. *African Affairs*, 116(463):284–310.

NMH/Namibia Media Holdings (Pty) Ltd. [n.d.]. *Celebrating 25 years of democratic elections* [free supplement in NMH newspapers]. Windhoek: NMH.

Ntinda, A. 2015. Dr Hage Geingob unimpressed by gay activist. *SWAPO Today*. http://www.swapoparty.org/zoom_in_176.html, last accessed 25 March 2016.

Nujoma, S. 2000a. *Ten years of freedom, peace and prosperity. Speeches of the President of Namibia. Part 1: March 1990–March 20, 1995*. Windhoek: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

Nujoma, S. 2000b. *Ten years of freedom, peace and prosperity. Speeches of the President of Namibia. Part 2: March 21, 1996–March 20, 2000*. Windhoek: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Nujoma, S. 2000c. *Ten years of freedom, peace and prosperity, 1990–1999. State of the nation*. Windhoek: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Nujoma, S. 2001. *Where others wavered: The autobiography of Sam Nujoma*. London: Panaf Books.

Nujoma, S. [n.d.; 2010?]. *Where we came from.* Speech delivered to the SWAPO Youth League congress in 2010. http://www.swapoparty.org/where_we_came_from.html, last accessed 25 October 2013.

Pohamba, H. 2013. *Full speech: HE President Pohamba at Heroes' Day. Omugulu gwoombashe, 2013. Informanté*, 28 August 2013.

Republic of Namibia. 2015a. *Inaugural address by His Excellency Dr Hage G Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia at the 25th Independence Day celebration and swearing in of the 3rd President of the Republic of Namibia. Independence Stadium, Windhoek, 21 March 2015*. Windhoek: Office of the President.

Republic of Namibia. 2015b. *State of the Nation Address 2015 by His Excellency Dr Hage G Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia. Windhoek, 21 April 2015*. Windhoek: Office of the President.

Republic of Namibia. 2015c. *Keynote address by His Excellency Dr Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, on the occasion of the official opening of the 18th Annual Meeting of the Council of Traditional Leaders. Ekamuti Lodge, Ondangwa, 5 October 2015*. Windhoek: Office of the President.

Republic of Namibia. 2015d. *His Excellency Dr Hage G Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia. State House, Windhoek, 14 December 2015*. Windhoek: Office of the President.

Republic of Namibia. 2016. *Statement by His Excellency Dr Hage G Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, at the official opening of the 3rd Session of the 6th Parliament. Windhoek, 9 February 2016*. Windhoek: Office of the President.

Republic of Namibia. 2018a. *Statement by His Excellency Dr Hage G Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, at the official opening of the 7th Session of the 6th Parliament. Windhoek, 13 February 2018*. Windhoek: Office of the President.

Republic of Namibia. 2018b. *Speech by His Excellency Dr Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, on the occasion of the 28th Independence Day celebration. Tsumeb, 21 March 2018.* Windhoek: Office of the President.

Saul, JS, & Leys, C. 2003. Lubango and after: 'Forgotten history' as politics in contemporary Namibia. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(1):333–353.

Saunders, C. 2003. Liberation and democracy: A critical reading of Sam Nujoma's autobiography. In Melber, H (Ed.). *Re-examining liberation*, pp 87–98. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

Saunders, C. 2007. History and the armed struggle: From anti-colonial propaganda to 'patriotic history'? In Melber, H (Ed.). *Transitions in Namibia: Which changes for whom?*, pp 13–28. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

Saunders, C. 2018. Namibia's liberation struggle: The Mbita version. *South African Historical Journal*, 70(1):281–290.

Shejavali, N. 2016. One year of Geingob: An analysis of the Namibian President's hits and misses during his first year in office. *Democracy Report/Special Briefing Report No. 11*. Windhoek: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Soggot, D. 1986. *Namibia: The violent heritage*. London: Rex Collings; New York: St Martin's Press.

Suttner, R. 2006. Talking to the ancestors: National heritage, the Freedom Charter and nation-building in South Africa in 2005. *Development Southern Africa*, 23(1):3–27.

Suttner, R. 2008. *The ANC underground in South Africa to 1976: A social and historical study*. Auckland Park: Jacana.

SWAPO. 1978. *Information on SWAPO: An historical profile*. Lusaka: SWAPO Department of Information and Publicity.

SWAPO Party. [n.d.; 1991?]. *Constitution of SWAPO Party. Adopted by the First Congress of SWAPO Party in an independent Namibia, December 6–12, 1991 and amended by SWAPO Party Extra Ordinary* [sic] *Congress, 27–28 August 1998*. http://www.swapoparty.org/swapo_constitution.pdf, last accessed 5 May 2011.

*The Namibian*. 2016. National Assembly split over genocide reparation talks. 30 March 2016.

UNGA/United Nations General Assembly. 1973. Resolution 3111: Question of Namibia, 12 December 1973. *A/RES/3111*, pp 93–95. United Nations: New York https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f1c580.html, last accessed 17 May 2023.

UNGA/United Nations General Assembly. 1976. Resolution 31/146: Situation in Namibia resulting from the illegal occupation of the Territory by South Africa, 20 December 1976. In *Resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly during its Thirty-first Session, Vol. 1, 21 September to 22 December 1976*, pp 130–132. United Nations: New York.

Van der Hoog, TA. 2019. *Monuments of power: The North Korean origin of nationalist monuments in Namibia and Zimbabwe*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.

# Namibia: Heading for a fall? Government and party performance 1999–2021

**Christiaan Keulder**

Since the first Constituent Assembly elections held in 1989, Namibia has held six National Assembly and presidential elections. Elections have always taken place on time, and all have been deemed substantially free and fair by local and international observers. Arguably, and irrespective of the criteria used, Namibia meets all the requirements of a dominant party system. The country is considered "free" by Freedom House (2021),[1] which means that, at least procedurally, it is still considered a democracy. The ruling party has been in power for 32 years and seven consecutive national elections. It has held a two-thirds majority for most of that time. It has also won all presidential elections with equally large margins and has controlled all central urban local authorities and regional councils, prior to 2022. Its electoral dominance peaked in 2014, when the party won 80% of the National Assembly vote and 86% of the presidential vote. In addition, the ruling party has had almost total control over the executive and legislative bodies at all three levels of government.[2]

The erstwhile liberation movement, the South West Africa People's Organisation – SWAPO (now *SWAPO Party of Namibia*[3] – has won each national election with an overwhelming majority of votes and seats. In 1994, in only the second national election ever held, the party gained a two-thirds majority of seats in the National Assembly, giving it the power to change the Namibian Constitution unilaterally. The party retained this dominant position until 2019 when it missed the two-thirds threshold for the first time since the 1994 elections. In 2021, the SWAPO Party lost control over major urban areas, including the capital city and many rural constituencies outside its traditional stronghold of north-central Namibia. This decline in electoral support for the ruling party coincided with inconsistent economic growth, high unemployment, escalating poverty, declining direct foreign investment, and rapidly growing public debt (see e.g. Sherbourne, 2022;

1 In 2021, Namibia was considered one of just eight African states still considered "free" by Freedom House (2021). Two others, South Africa and Botswana, are also dominant party systems.

2 Only Botswana, where the Botswana Democratic Party has ruled uninterruptedly for 55 years, has had a dominant party system for longer.

3 Reference to *SWAPO*, *SWAPO Party* or *SWAPO Party of Namibia* in this text signifies the same entity.

Simonis Storm, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic decimated the already struggling economy, putting even more pressure on public resources. Are these developments a sign that the country has reached a political crossroads? Is the country's dominant party losing its dominance? If so, what are the reasons? The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to answering these questions.

For example, survey data show a significant shift in public opinion after 2014[4] as most Namibians have become much more critical of the government's performance and of the ruling party that has not only embedded itself deeply into the post-colonial state, but also continues to rely on liberation rhetoric to galvanise support. Social change – in the form of a new post-liberation (also known as the *born-free*) generation with no personal experience of the liberation struggle and urbanisation that modernises voters politically – has forced daylight between younger voters and what once was a very popular party. After decades of running a "party-state" (Southall, 2013), the ruling party's failures to deliver economic goods and eradicate inequalities have come home to roost. There are increasing perceptions that most public institutions and leaders are corrupt; approval of the government's performance on critical economic and social policy issues has diminished; deep trust and levels of partisanship have declined; and, ultimately, voters have 'dealigned' from the ruling party. Those who *dealign* have disengaged from the party system rather than realigned with opposition parties.[5] This dealignment has helped the ruling party retain its electoral dominance.

4 The public opinion data presented in this writing are from nine rounds of Afrobarometer surveys conducted between 1999 and 2021. These are nationally representative surveys based on 1,200 face-to-face interviews using a probability-proportional-to-size sample that included urban and rural areas and a 50/50 gender quota for respondent selection. The surveys have a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of +-3%. The National Statistics Agency (NSA) selected 150 primary sampling units from the national sample frame. More information about the sampling methodology and actual data sets is available from https://afrobarometer.org.

5 Even though opposition parties gained some votes and seats during the 2020 regional and local elections, their performance must be contextualised by the very low voter turnout and the mechanical effects of the electoral systems in use. In the regional council elections, which used a simple majoritarian or first-past-the-post system, the SWAPO Party obtained 73% of the seats (88/120) with only 56.7% of the votes cast. Voter turnout was low, i.e. 38.1% of registered voters. The turnout will be much lower if calculated as a proportion of the voting age population. In this case, the mechanical effects of the first-past-the-post system benefited the SWAPO Party much more than the opposition parties, who won only 27% of the seats with 44% of the vote. Local authority elections use a closed-list proportional representation system and, hence, produce seat allocations in proportion to each party's share of the votes in each constituency. In this way, no party benefits from manufactured majorities such as those produced in regional council elections. At this level, turnout was equally low, at 42.1% of registered voters. This translates into an even lower turnout if measured against the voting age population. Thus, even if opposition parties gained votes in some town and regions, their gains were minor in comparison with the number of voters who did not show up to vote.

This chapter assesses these shifts in public sentiment toward the ruling party and the government, which explain the disengagement from the ruling party. Such shifts are evident in several key areas, including corruption, economic performance and public trust, and are responsible not only for the dealignment from the ruling party, but also disengagement from the party system per se. The point of departure for this chapter is to gauge some of the outcomes of the social changes that are redefining the post-colonial political landscape. The discussion then shifts to growing discontent and declining public trust. Finally, the chapter looks at voters' dealignment and realignment behaviour and concludes that the SWAPO Party's electoral dominance is under threat and may even, under the right conditions, come to an end in the not-too-distant future.

## The art of domination

Namibia's struggle for liberation was primarily one for self-determination and majoritarianism rather than for (liberal) democracy. The state's transition and constitutional framework was a series of compromises and "reform bargains" (Southall, 2014), with all significant forces settling for a mix of liberal democracy and capitalist economics. After winning the founding democratic elections, the SWAPO Party assumed political control and set about transforming a racially divided and ethnically defined colonial state, but it could do little about transforming the economy. Namibia adopted political institutions to promote inclusivity to replace the colonial institutions that had denied most citizens fair and meaningful representation. Its closed-list proportional representation system, with its accompanying low thresholds for inclusion, enabled even small opposition parties to achieve legislative representation at the highest level. This particular electoral system ensured that even though one party continued to dominate legislative positions, the benefits of creating and maintaining opposition parties outweighed the costs.

### Patriotic history

The SWAPO Party has deep historical roots in the rural areas of north-central Namibia. The area was once the most populous part of the country and an impenetrable fortress of electoral support for the party. It was also the heartland of the liberation struggle and most possibly the area most intensely occupied by the South African Defence Force. As a result, residents experienced the war very personally and often ferociously. The liberation struggle also profoundly affected these residents' socialisation and their tolerance of opposition parties.

Writing about the effects of war in Zimbabwe on support for their dominant party, Friesen (2022:2) argues that "geographic and temporal proximity to the liberation war has provided the party with a bedrock of partisan support through institutions and branding effects". In many ways, the war caused the hardening of political orientation

among residents who regularly had to live with the risks and threats of war. They rallied behind the liberation movement and distanced themselves from all opposition parties, especially those that had ties to the colonial administration. North-central residents' shared experience with the war meant it was relatively easy to mobile this unified segment of voters with the anti-opposition rhetoric of the liberation struggle. Moreover, because of the numerical weight of the north-central regions, electoral victory for the SWAPO Party was a foregone conclusion.

For much of the post-independence period, the SWAPO Party relied on its portrayal of the nation's founding project and the use of "patriotic history" (Ranger, 2004) to discredit opposition forces. The liberation struggle remained the most prominent political cleavage long after its conclusion. At its peak, prolonged electoral victory seemed an inevitability,[6] even though opposition forces were free to form and contest meaningful elections.[7]

For roughly the first three decades since independence in 1990, opposition parties failed to develop a distinctive brand to attract voters, leaving them as "niche-oriented competitors" that appealed to minority electoral constituencies (Greene, 2007, 2013). Such competitors included the United Democratic Front (UDF), the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO), and the Monitor Action Group (MAG), which represented small ethnic and regional fractions. Others, such as the erstwhile Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA, later *DTA of Namibia*) and, more recently, the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) and the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC), opted to contest as catch-all national parties. Although their ideological positions were close to those of the ruling SWAPO Party, they hoped to appeal to a more significant, centralist segment of the voting population.

## The party-state

At independence, the newly elected ruling party set off to capture and transform the colonial state. It inherited a fragmented civil service in terms of the shortage of

6 In 2010, Sam Nujoma declared that the SWAPO Party would rule for the "next 1,000 years"; in 2021, Prime Minister Sarah Kuugongelwa-Amadhila paraphrased disgraced former South African President Jacob Zuma by declaring, "we will not allow SWAPO to be defeated until Jesus comes back" (Ndeyanale, 2022).

7 Just recently, ex-minister and party hardliner Jerry Ekandjo dismissed opposition parties in a manner that is typical of the SWAPO Party's view of opposition (Ndeyanale, 2022): "A fly doesn't stay in one place for long. These small parties come and go but SWAPO will stay forever and ever. That must be clear. SWAPO was not formed as a result of bitterness or vengeance, SWAPO is not about a particular leader. SWAPO does not exist because of Sam Nujoma, Pohamba or Hage Geingob. SWAPO is the nation, a spirit created by God."

skilled human resources, the gap caused by fleeing highly-skilled professionals, and competencies based on colour lines (Nghidinwa, 2007). To entrench its control over the state and civil service, the party adopted a strategy of cadre deployment and embedded its election manifesto as the government programme of action. This strategy had three significant effects. Firstly, it ensured a civil service loyal to the party and respectful of its leadership. Secondly, it ensured that non-bureaucratic institutions – such as the ruling party – designed significant policies (Nghidinwa, 2007). Thirdly, it gave the party exclusive access to public resources, as Hengari (2008:4) argues:

> SWAPO has shown over the years a desire to establish a permanent relationship with the state machinery in order to protect itself, and thereby entrenching its hegemony in the allocation of resources. As a consequence of the fused party-state apparatus, it has become the norm for ministers, who are also party leaders to use officialdom for party-dom, if one could use such a word.

Hengari (2008:4) makes very clear that subjugating the constitutional state to the party is perilous:

> The danger here is clear in that through the usage of state-resources for party-affairs, SWAPO has a distinct resource advantage over other political parties when it comes to political campaigns and mobilization. These actions also compromise the very integrity and essence of the constitutional state that ought to be nurtured because it places the political party above the nation it ought to serve. The monopolistic party has reduced the formal institutional processes of government to a mere appendix at the whims of a factional political elite.

Thus, the SWAPO Party effectively turned the post-colonial state into a "party-state", in Southall's (2013) terms. Once under party control, the state was used to tilt the playing field, which is crucial for maintaining electoral dominance (De Jager & Meintjes, 2013; Greene, 2013; Levitsky & Way, 2010). Elites started using "patrimonial logic" to exchange loyalty for opportunity (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997).

In 2015, the Public Service Commission removed all restrictions on civil servants owning and operating businesses, which has opened new opportunities for corruption.[8] The post-colonial party-state is bloated, inefficient and expensive by its very nature. Namibia's public wage bill currently equals 15.7% of the country's gross domestic product and 55.7% of national revenue (Shiimi, 2021). The government is inefficient and the status quo is not sustainable; hence, the economic consequences of the party-state may well be impossible to bear for much longer. Such a negative outcome is anticipated to have implications for continued single-party dominance. Writing about the demise of the Mexican dominant party system after 71 years, Greene (2007:6) argues as follows in this regard:

8 This includes the form of state capture engendered by the so-called ***Fishrot*** case as well as the allegedly unorthodox funding of Geingob's electoral campaign.

> Thus, the political economy of dominance involves creating a large and politically controlled public sector. When privatization deprives incumbents of access to illicit public resources, single-party dominance is threatened. In short, economic and political monopolies are mutually reinforcing in the dominant party equilibrium.

In this light, recent economic developments such as the liquidation of the national airline do not bode well for the future of single-party domination.

## Party funding

Another dimension that shows how the ruling party has tilted the political playing field in its favour is the disproportionate extent to which it has benefitted from state funding for political parties. Namibian political parties with representation in either the National Assembly or the National Council are funded through a formula introduced in 1997, following a Cabinet resolution in 1996. The resolution allocates state funding to parties in proportion to their vote and seat share. Under this scheme, the SWAPO Party collected 83% of the estimated N$282 million distributed to parties between 2000 and 2014 (Links & Rakkel, 2019). However, Links and Rakkel (2019) found that political parties were either too slow to or did not comply with the legal obligation for financial audits nor the electoral authorities compelling such audits to be done.

The ruling party's constitution calls for the party to establish and maintain businesses to generate income. In 1989, the party established Kalahari Holdings, through which it has interests in numerous sectors such as property, farming, media, fishing, transport, printing, security, healthcare, and mining. Even though it is difficult to assess the state of the party's business endeavours, party-owned businesses have competed for and won several government tenders (Links & Rakkel, 2019).[9] Opposition parties, on the other hand, rely heavily on state funding to run their operations and struggle to find foreign funding. The financial contributions from their members are also insufficient to sustain even the smallest of these parties (Hopwood, 2005).

## Corruption

Incentives for corrupt behaviour arise whenever public officials have broad discretion and little accountability. Eroding the distinction between the state and the party in power causes opposition parties and movements to deteriorate; thus, dominant parties diminish the value of the democratic system of checks and balances (Coşkun, 2016). Such circumstances can lead to increased corruption. Moreover, compared with multi-party systems, dominant party systems generate far more damaging consequences when it comes to corruption and bribery (Coşkun, 2016) because the prospects for replacing

9 In 1999 and 2004, the party-owned entity Namprint won tenders to print ballot papers despite the obvious conflict of interest.

those in power are significantly reduced. Those on a party ticket – politicians, bureaucrats, security forces and judges – control access to valuable benefits and can impose costs on private citizens and businesses.

Incentives for rent-seeking and corruption increase when the economy has a substantive natural resource endowment; when government pursues interventionist policies; when civil servants are allowed to operate businesses; when government invests in large capital projects; and when government circumvents its institutional checks and balances. Namibia has recently experienced several high-profile corruption cases[10] that have fuelled anti-corruption sentiments. Money from the so-called *Fishrot* case was allegedly used to fund President Geingob's campaign and the scandal laid bare how foreign companies are forced to 'pay to play'. It also offers insight into how the executive used its dominance over the legislative bodies to change legislation to facilitate corruption on a grand scale, and how party-connected individuals in the public and private sectors collaborated in pillaging public resources. In other words, those who make the rules are also the ones that stand to benefit most from them.

Greene (2007, 2013) maintains that corruption is a central tool in the armoury of dominant parties to ensure an unlevel playing field. Through corruption, dominant parties have exclusive access to public resources for private gain and for greasing the palms of their extensive network of patrons and clients. In Greene's theory, state-owned enterprises (such as the state-owned National Fishing Corporation of Namibia, Fishcor) are often

10 In the ***Kora*** case, the Namibia Tourism Board sued Telecom Mundial and others for US$1.5 million (about N$22.3 million) for breaching an agreement to stage the Kora All Africa Music Awards ceremony in Namibia in March 2016. Telecom Mundial president Ernest Adjovi, who claimed to be President Hage Geingob's friend and tennis partner, claimed that the latter and the then Attorney-General Sacky Shanghala "were well aware of the circumstances surrounding this matter" (Menges, 2021). Shanghala also featured prominently in the infamous so-called ***Fishrot*** case which involves, among others, the former Minister of Justice (Sacky Shangala), the former Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources (Bernhardt Esau), several local businessmen (including brothers James and Tamson Hatuikulipi, the latter being Esau's son-in-law), and the former Chief Executive Officer of the state-owned National Fishing Corporation of Namibia (Mike Nghipunya). Together, they allegedly received N$175 million in kickbacks from Samherji, an Icelandic fishing company. In the ***Nangomar*** case, the same group of individuals hijacked fishing quotas worth N$150 million donated by Namibia to the Angolan government. In another high-profile case, former deputy chairperson of the Small and Medium Enterprises Bank, Enock Kamushinda, took part in the looting of the bank – in which the Namibian government was a shareholder – when some N$247 million was stolen from the bank before its closure in 2017. Among the bank's directors at the time were the Secretary to Cabinet (George Simataa), the Minister of Home Affairs (Frans Kapofi), and the former head of the state-owned Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (Andrew Ndishishi). These individuals have been sued in their personal capacities for failing to perform their fiduciary duties and, in doing so, aiding the theft.

crucial channels for moving public resources into the party and personal coffers and, thus, maintaining the resource asymmetry required to keep the dominant party in power.

## The breaking down of domination

Early studies of dominant party systems focused on how such systems were created, i.e. on the events and conditions that produced them. However, as time moved on, it became clear that "founding projects" such as these systems could not sustain their dominance forever: societies change, regimes change, and "even epochal events pass into memory" (Levite & Tarrow, 1983).

Scholars such as De Jager (2013), Du Pisani (2013), Melber (2015) and Southall (2008) have all questioned the virtue of dominant party systems in (southern) Africa by pointing to the diminished quality of democracy in countries such as Namibia and South Africa. For example, Melber (2015) highlights the difference between the procedural nature of Namibia's democracy and its substance and practice. The latter two are often overshadowed by the country's good performance on international good governance indices, which measure freedom of the press, civil liberties, and regular free and fair elections. As this section of the current chapter will reveal, public opinion data show significant public discontent with not only the SWAPO Party's performance to date, but also the government's, which puts the SWAPO Party's position of dominance under pressure. Indeed, the government may soon face a full-blown political crisis caused by a dramatic shift in public opinion due to its failure to perform.

As was illustrated in the previous section of this chapter, the SWAPO Party remained the dominant political force from independence in 1990 to 2014 by virtue of the committed support of its loyal following. After 2014, a schism opened between the government (and ruling party) and the Namibian people. Discontent grew so fast that support for the government had fallen to an all-time low since independence. Dominant parties can fail for various reasons: these include generational replacement; massive discontent linked to continuously poor performance; internal fractures leading to fragmentation in the form of breakaways and splits (Sakaiya & Maeda, 2014); the loss of control over public resources (Greene, 2007); and, ultimately, when their founding ideologies lose traction. Dominance ends either through electoral defeat or large-scale defection.

This chapter argues that at least five factors threaten the current ruling party's dominant position. These are the following:

1. Intra-party fractions and breakaways
2. Social change that alienated urban and youthful voters from the dominant party
3. Perceptions that corruption is extensive and on the increase
4. Poor economic performance that causes widespread public disapproval and weakens trust, and

5. Failure to prevent once loyal supporters from dealigning from the party and disengaging from the party system.

## Intra-party fractions and breakaways

Dominant parties do not rule "until Jesus comes back", nor do they rule for "1,000 years" (Ndeyanale, 2022). Ultimately, many carry the seeds of their destruction within them. Sakaiya and Maeda (2014) show that most of the dominant parties in their study suffered major splits that reduced their electoral strength before their final defeat. These dominant parties would have survived much longer if they had not split. Sakaiya and Maeda (2014) pose two important questions: why do party members decide to defect from an electorally dominant party, and why do party leaders fail to buy off the defectors to stay in power? The authors present two models as their answers. In the first model, ruling parties are more likely to break up when they lose popularity among the voters. Rational politicians stay in their party if it assures their re-election is highly likely, but they would have more substantial incentives to leave when the party becomes a sinking ship. In the second model, The second model proposes that splits occur when exogenous shocks such as the death of a leader or an economic crisis shift the internal balance of power in a ruling party. Such parties break up because of commitment problems among factions. Major splits – defined as *opposition movements* by members of the dominant party – could either lead to immediate loss of the legislative majority, or the departure of notable leaders with considerable personal followings. Under certain conditions, dominant parties will break up even when their electoral prospects are much better than their opposition's (Sakaiya & Maeda, 2014).

To date, the SWAPO Party has survived several splits. In 1999, Ambassador Ben Ulenga broke away to form the Congress of Democrats (CoD). The rift occurred after the SWAPO Party decided to amend the Namibian Constitution to allow a third term for Founding President Sam Nujoma. The CoD failed to attract meaningful electoral support and began withering away. It did not participate in the 2019 National Assembly elections. In 2007, erstwhile minister and SWAPO stalwart for 45 years, Hidipo Hamutenya, cited the party's lack of vision and poor performance as the reasons for his decision to leave the ruling party to form the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP). The RPD fared only slightly better than the CoD; in 2015, Hamutenya rejoined the ruling party. The RDP currently holds a single seat in the National Assembly.

The SWAPO Party survived the first two spits quite easily, primarily because Namibians were still satisfied with the ruling party's performance. As a result, the party was still very popular among the electorate: it could also, therefore, offer candidates a very high probability of winning elections and gaining seats. Without sufficient discontent, the breakaway factions were always going to struggle to find enough votes to pose a real threat. The poor timing of these splits meant they were destined to fail.

However, more severe threats to intraparty cohesion soon emerged. The first in this third wave of splits was between the party leadership and its youth wing, leading to the party's expulsion of Job Amupanda and a few other youth activists. Amupanda's subsequent establishment of the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement of activists managed to split the SWAPO youth wing. The AR received 14% of the vote in the capital city and won a single seat in its local assembly. Amupanda, as part of a three-party coalition, became the mayor of the city for one year. The AR has since remained a thorn in the ruling party's side as the movement continues to canvass the youth, focusing on urban land reform, housing, and corruption.[11]

A second severe threat manifested when Former Deputy Minister Bernadus Swartbooi formed the Landless People's Movement (LPM) in 2017. He was fired by President Geingob after publicly disagreeing with the incumbent Minister about land reform. The LPM won four seats through the 2019 National Assembly elections and 12 regional council seats in 2021 through the Regional Council and Local Authority Council elections. The party now effectively controls most of southern Namibia.

Divisions within the ruling party have been driven to the surface since the party's 2017 elective congress. The so-called slate politics, which effectively means factions with their own candidates and agendas, saw party leadership divided into two camps. Team Harambee supported the nomination of President Hage Geingob as the SWAPO Party's presidential candidate, while Team SWAPO supported Nahas Angula and Jerry Ekandjo in their bids to oppose Geingob. In 2019, Panduleni Itula ran as an independent presidential candidate against the incumbent whilst still a member of the SWAPO Party, securing nearly one-quarter of the vote. In 2020, he formally registered his new party, the IPC, and contested the 2021 Regional Council and Local Authority Council elections.

Our data indicate that the timing of the third wave of splits was much better than the first two, as public discontent and dissatisfaction increased rapidly after 2014. The ruling party has lost significant support, and especially at the local and regional may not offer prospective candidates the great odds for election it once did. Our data also show that the party's poor performance, the impact of the *Fishrot* case, and corruption in general have had a strong negative effect on the voting age population and on ruling party support, as voters downgraded their evaluations of those in power. Under current rules, the party will find it challenging to incorporate youth leaders into its top structures, and the loss of leadership talent to the LPM and AR has harmed the party's youth wing's resistance to the old guard. Efforts to change the party's rules may fuel the divisions highlighted

11 The ruling party is dismissive of the reasons for this breakaway – and others. Veteran SWAPO members' reaction to the AR's decision to break away indicates very clearly how many of the older generation dismiss the youth: "I am unmoved, and thousands of SWAPO members are unmoved. SWAPO members do not live on social media. This is a rural country. For you to tell me that people are leaving on social media is irrelevant" (Mbathera & Ikela, 2020).

by slate politics, and it is unlikely that the party will be able to reinvent itself as a youth reference group before the next election in 2024. Under current economic conditions, the party will also not be able to buy off the youth with jobs.

Much will depend on the next group of leaders. With their restrictive rules, the party's top leadership offer little to the born-free generation, and unless the party reinvents and modernises itself, the gap between it and the youth will continue to grow. Such a status quo will not only cause problems at the voting booth, but it also may well lead to another significant split. Provided opposition parties can get their houses in order in time, they could pose a real challenge to the ruling party's dominant position in 2024, if one goes by their electoral successes in 2019 and 2021. Such a turn of events may well see a move toward a genuinely multi-party system.

## Social change

*Social change* refers to changes in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions. These changes occur over time and often have profound and long-term consequences for society. One such agent of change is urbanisation. In 1991 only 28% of Namibia's overall population resided in urban areas. Population projections have estimated that the urban population would grow to 43% by 2011 and to 67% by 2041 (NSA, 2014). The World Bank[12] currently estimates Namibia's urban population at 52%.[13] From this point forward, Namibia will continue to transit from a predominantly rural population to a predominantly urban one. The Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) also projects that, by 2041, more than a third of Namibia's population will reside in just two Regions: Erongo and Khomas. The overall population will grow by 63% during the three decades, i.e. between 2011 and 2041. During this time, the urban population is expected to double, while the rural population will gradually shrink. Thus, Namibia's voting age population is moving out of rural areas, and parties will have to remain in touch with the future growth in urban voters. This strategy would require a shift in crucial policy areas if the government were to become a provider of housing, land, and essential municipal services such as water, electricity, sanitation and, most crucially, employment and education.

The urban voting population differs from its rural counterpart in several important ways (Keulder, 2021b). Overall, urban areas have a more significant proportion of the

12 See https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=NA, last accessed 13 March 2023.

13 These numbers are all based on projections in the absence of the next population census (the fourth one was due in 2021 but was postponed due to COVID-19). Unless stated otherwise, the 2011 population projections (medium variant) published by the NSA in 2014 were used in this text.

18–25-year cohort as the younger population move to urban areas looking for better education and employment. Secondly, the urban population is much better educated than its rural counterpart, particularly at tertiary level. Thirdly, employment levels are substantially higher in urban than in rural areas. Fourthly, urban voters are more exposed to the modern economy – as taxpayers, public transport users, employees, vendors, and consumers of municipal services and retail goods. They are therefore far more likely to be mobilised by economic considerations than those in rural areas. Urban areas are also associated with more significant discontent and dissatisfaction with, and subsequent dealignment from, the ruling party – as was evident in its poor performance in the 2021 Local Authority elections.

A second force driving social change is generational replacement. Generations are socio-historical constructs. Young Namibians born after independence in 1990 entered the voting age population around 2008. This born-free generation had not experienced colonial rule and were not part of the war for liberation. Therefore, they constituted a political generation quite different from those born during the war years. Figure 1 shows how the born-free generation has grown as a segment of the voting age population. This young group will possibly constitute half (or even more) of the overall voting age population for the next election cycle and will be central to any political party's aspirations to win.

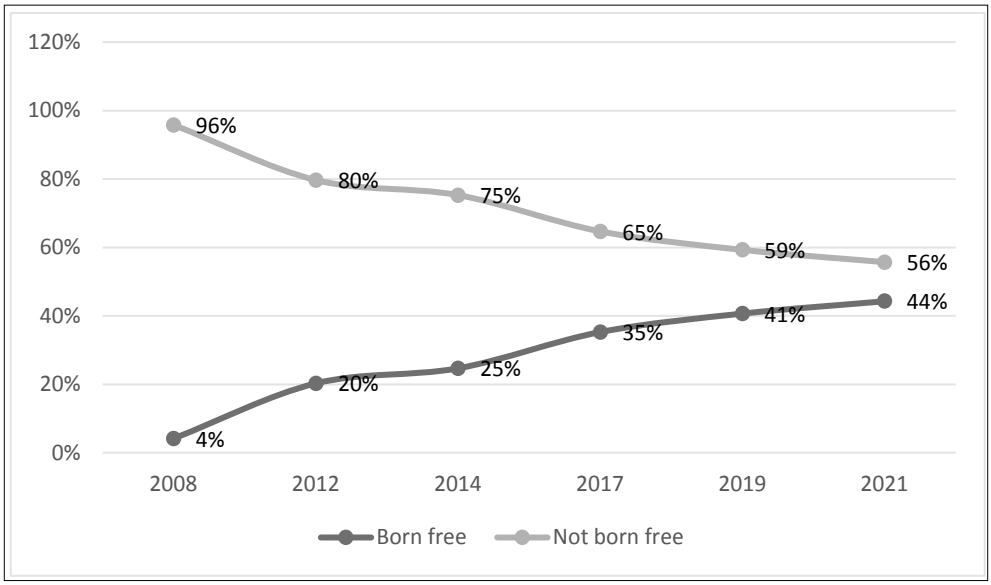



***Figure 1: Proportion of the voting age population by political generation, 2008–2021***

Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2008–2021

However, the political potential of the born-free generation remains largely untapped by any party. More than half (55%) of this young cohort reported not feeling close to any political party during Round 9 of the Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2021.

This percentage is substantially higher than the 39% registered for those born prior to independence. Moreover, close to four in ten voters (37%) did not vote during the 2019 elections, compared with the 20% abstinence rate among the older cohort. When asked the question, *If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which candidate's party would you vote for?*, only 34% of the born-free generation selected the SWAPO Party, whilst 22% indicated that they would not vote. These answers are significantly different from those of their older counterparts, 40% of whom indicated they had voted for the SWAPO Party, and only 11% said they would not vote. With its liberation rhetoric and patriotic history, the SWAPO Party arguably does not present itself as a viable reference group to the born-free generation. On the function of the elite for younger generations, Jansen (1974:92) argues as follows:

> The elite is a reference group for the mass; it is a communication group which transmits to the mass ideas, symbols, and so forth, which symbolize and concretize the relations of the mass with its circumstances by providing it with a frame of reference in terms of which it could reach a meaningful relation with its circumstances. …
>
> The function of the reference group is to make manifest the perspectives which concern the general and typical experiences of the mass. It should be clear that these perspectives already exist in the mass and that the reference group is simply responsible for making them manifest and concrete. In this way, the reference group is in fact the embodiment of the self-image of the mass.

In this line of argument, Namibia's born-free generation is currently without a political reference group as neither the ruling party nor the established opposition parties manage to capture their support. Like the Israelites of old, the born frees are wandering the political desert, waiting for Joshua to replace the ageing Moses and take them to the Promised Land. This non-committal attitude is clear from their general disconnect from political parties and their willingness to abstain from voting. Recently formed opposition parties and movements such as the LPM and AR have much younger leadership and are more left-leaning than the ruling party, which may garner them young voters in future elections.

## Perceptions on corruption

Despite reporting minimal personal experience with corruption, Namibians have become very critical of the government's handling of this scourge. Ordinary Namibians may not have to bribe their way to public services, but they see political elites benefiting from corrupt practices. Government, on the other hand, is dismissive of public perceptions of the state of corruption and dismisses these as an inaccurate reflection of the actual instances or scope of corruption. Nonetheless, the public is convinced that corruption is

increasing. Its suspicions in this regard have been borne out by Namibia being among the top six out of 34 countries surveyed by Afrobarometer in 2019 to investigate the prevalence of corruption. Close to three in four adult Namibians (73%) believed that corruption had increased from the previous year, but only 8% reported paying a bribe. This result is well below the 34-country average of 28%. Seven in ten (70%) Namibians disapproved of the way government was handling corruption, and Namibia was below the average African rate of approval of their governments' efforts to fight corruption. In addition, two in three Namibians (67%) believed that those who reported corruption risked retaliation (Keulder, 2021a).

Corruption – the misuse of public office for private gain (or to benefit a specific political party) – impacts evaluations of a country's economic performance and democratic governance and, thus, its political judgements. Those judgements might not depend on personal bribery experience. Vicarious experience and contextual factors such as what is reported in the media or shared through social media significantly influence perceptions of corruption (Canache et al., 2019). Perceptions of increased corruption cause citizens to downgrade their opinions of those deemed involved or having benefited. The individuals or groups concerned could include civil servants, political representatives, elected leaders, judges, and party officials. Alternatively, such groups or individuals could be institutions, e.g. the electoral body, Parliament, courts, or parties. Voters judge corruption in the same way that they use sociotropic judgements – i.e. judgements of the economy at a collective level – to determine whom to vote for or approve.

Figure 2 shows the rising trends among Namibians of voting age that evidence their perception that *Most* or *All* members and officials in three elected bodies are involved in corruption. This view not only ties elected leaders – and, therefore, democracy – to corruption, but it also confirms corruption as an election issue. Moreover, the perception that most members and officials were involved in corruption has increased across all three elected bodies since 2012, but most significantly between 2014 and 2021. Thus, at the time of writing in 2022, this perception among voters is its highest level since 2006.

Survey respondents' perceptions in respect of perceived corruption among elected officials are closely correlated across elected institutions and over time. These perceptions are consistent in revealing a belief that many officials in key elected positions are involved in corruption. These views form part of an integrated attitudinal map used to assess the performance of the government and the ruling party. Such views also, therefore, form part of a coherent set of economic and political judgements that reveal how much public opinion has shifted, and how critical Namibians have become of their government and the ruling party.

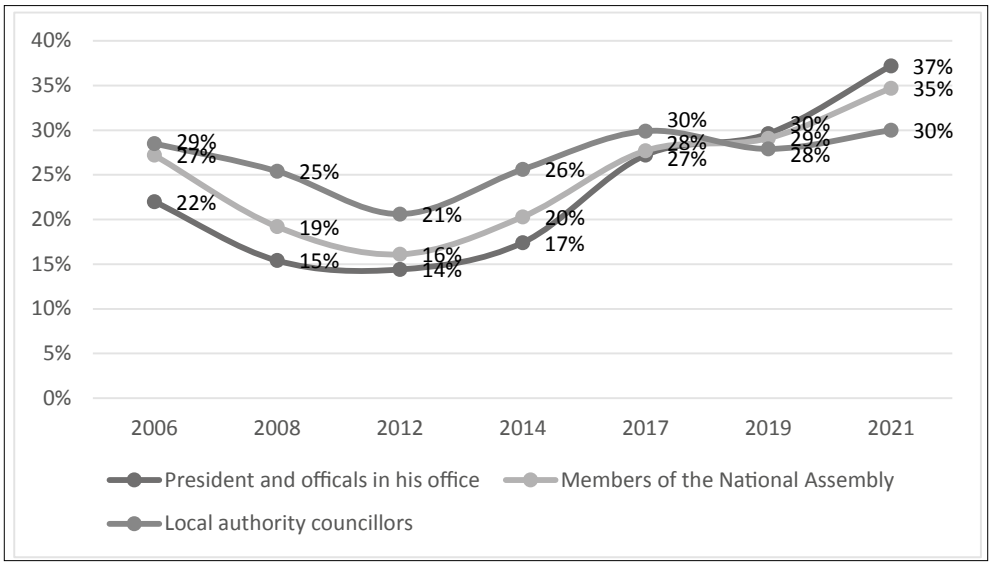



***Figure 2: Most or all members of official bodies involved in corruption, 2006–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2006–2021

## Performance

Scholars such as Neuberger (1974) have argued that, for Africa, dominant party systems are not all doom and gloom because they are associated with better political stability, better economic development, and better prospects for nation-building. Namibia's dominant party system has also had good results with political stability, but it has had mixed results with nation-building and has performed poorly with respect to the so-called triple challenge of inequality, unemployment and poverty – as the discussion below will elaborate.

### *The state of the economy*

It is generally accepted that there is a link between perceptions of the economy and vote choice (Anderson, 2006; Duch & Stevenson, 2006; Stevenson & Duch, 2013). In this school of thought, incumbents are rewarded or punished based on the economy's performance, making it the primary mechanism of democratic accountability. Duch and Stevenson (2006:529) note that "it is virtually a universal belief among politicians, political commentators, and even voters that elections are referenda on the economy". Memoli and Quaranta (2019) have found that political support depends not only on government achievements, but also on how the economy is perceived and on the level of economic freedom present in any society.

Figure 3 shows that, between 2003 and 2014, Namibians were generally very optimistic about their country's economic conditions and their personal living circumstances. In general, Namibians were more pessimistic about their own living conditions than the state of the country's economy. This view changed after 2014. Those who felt the country's present condition was *Bad* or *Very bad* increased from 13% in 2014 to 73% in 2019.

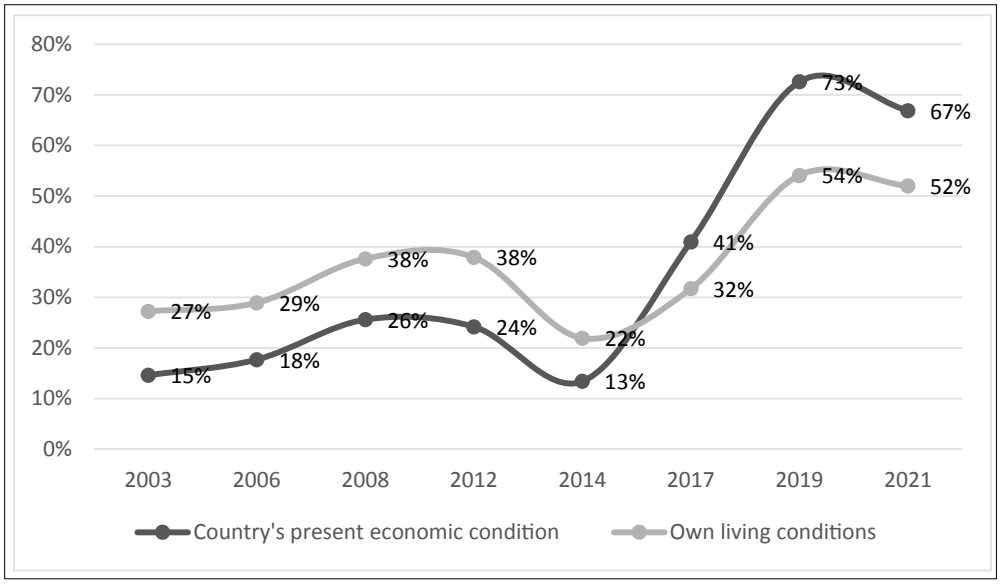



***Figure 3: Public perceptions that economic conditions and personal living conditions are* Bad *or* Very bad*, 2003–2021***

Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

Similarly, those who felt their personal living conditions were *Bad* or *Very bad* increased from 22% in 2014 to 54% in 2019. These changes represent a significant change in mood among Namibia's voting age population as they have gone from predominantly positive to predominantly negative.

Moreover, a growing number of Namibians feel the country is moving in the wrong direction. In 2012 only one in four (24%) Namibians felt that this was the case; by 2021, that proportion had increased to 76%. Conversely, those who felt the country was moving in the right direction declined from 71% in 2012 to 22% in 2021.

Namibia has enjoyed political stability since its independence, but the country has not been able to generate sufficient levels of economic growth to reduce unemployment and poverty. As a result, the level of economic inequality remains among the highest in the world – as the following sections illustrate.

### *Unemployment and lived poverty*

Figure 4 highlights the section of the voting age population that has been unemployed and looking for work since 2003.[14] It also compares youth unemployment with unemployment among the population overall. Unemployment among the voting age population increased from 26% in 2003 to 37% in 2021. During the same time, unemployment among 18–25-year-olds declined somewhat from 51% in 2003 to 43% in 2021. Among 26–35-year-olds, unemployment increased from 31% in 2003 to 45% in 2021.

Figure 5 shows that, although unemployment was higher in rural areas, urban and rural unemployment followed a closely correlated path until 2014. After that, rural unemployment grew significantly faster than urban unemployment did. By 2021, rural unemployment was at its highest level since 2003, while the 2021 urban unemployment figures remained close to their 2006 levels.

Afrobarometer measures poverty through the Lived Poverty Index. Based on the frequency with which respondents and their households experienced inadequate access to a basket of essential items – water, medical services, food, cash income, and cooking fuel – respondents are coded into one of four categories representing 'degrees of poverty'. The Index constitutes a scale that ranges from *No lived poverty* to *High lived poverty*. The latter category represents the most vulnerable in society.[15]

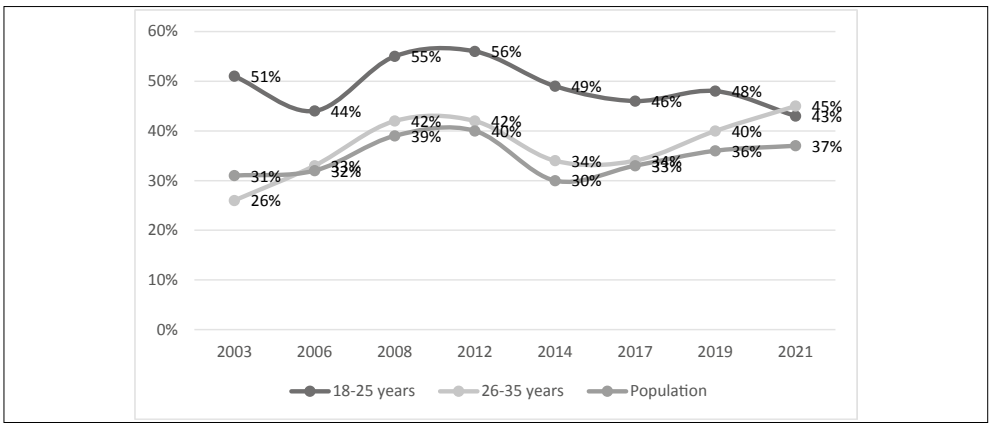



***Figure 4: Unemployed looking for work, by age, 2003–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

14 The last official employment statistics were released in 2018. The numbers used here stem from the various rounds of Afrobarometer surveys (see https://afrobarometer.org).

15 For a discussion of the Lived Poverty Index, see Mattes (2020:35).

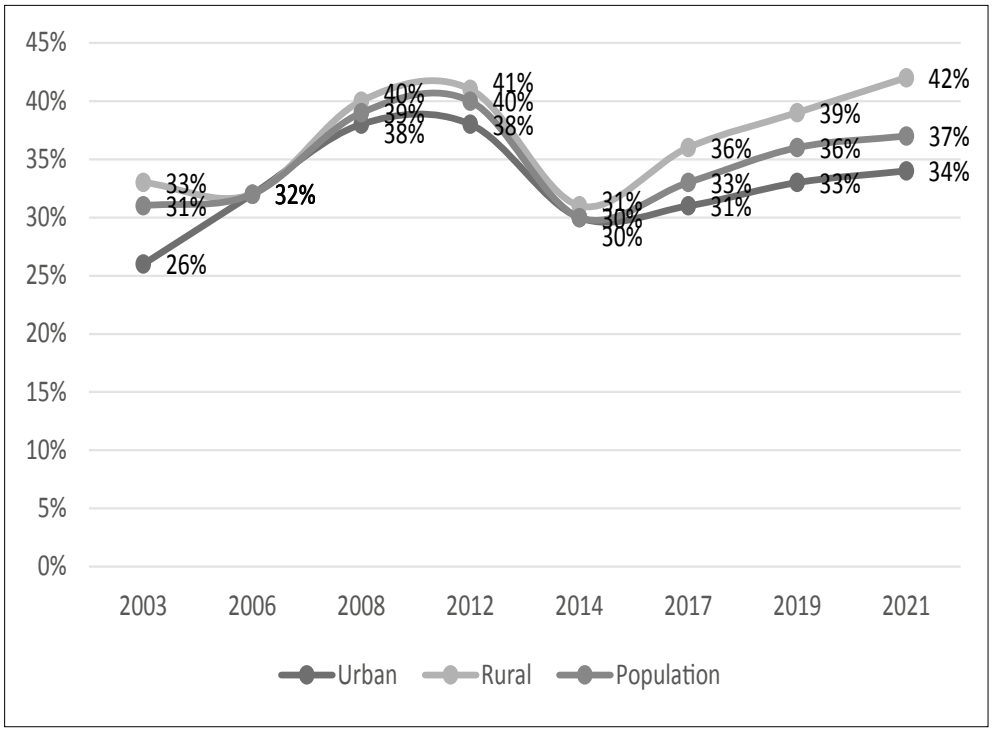



***Figure 5: Unemployed looking for work, by urban and rural location, 2003–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

Mattes (2020:1) found that, in Africa, –

> … people who live in urban areas, those who have higher levels of education, and those who have a job (especially in a middle-class occupation) are less likely to live in poverty, as are younger people and men.

Overall, the degree of lived poverty in Namibia has increased since 2006, and in 2021, more Namibians had experienced some degree of lived poverty than ever before (Figure 6). In 2021, only 11% of adult Namibians reported no lived poverty – a figure that has declined by 16% since 2014. Also in 2021, 22% of the adult population reported a high level of lived poverty. This response represents an overall increase of 17% between 2014 and 2021, whereas responses matching the *Moderate lived poverty* option increased from 19% in 2014 to 32% in 2021. Those with *Low lived poverty* declined from 49% to 32% between 2014 and 2021. *High lived poverty* and *Moderate lived poverty* have grown since 2006, whilst the proportion of the population registering *No lived poverty* or *Low lived poverty* declined over the same period. As these results make clear, a greater

number of Namibians had experienced a more severe degree of lived poverty by 2021 than was the case in 2014. Figure 6 also shows that the trends in the various states of lived poverty started long before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

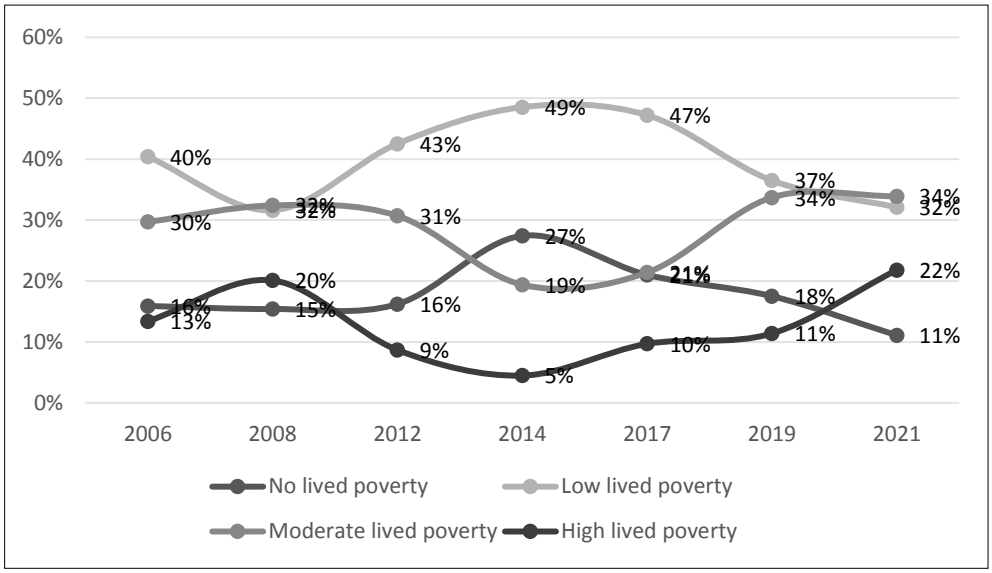



***Figure 6: Lived poverty, by year, 2006–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2006–2021

In economic theories of voting, the notion of *clarity of responsibility* is important because it refers to (Anderson, 2006:450) –

> … the characteristics of domestic political context which shape the ability of citizens to apportion responsibility for economic or policy decisions to particular institutions, parties or actors within the national government.

Therefore, voters' perceptions of the economy will only shape their vote if they know whom to punish or reward. One factor that may distort the clarity of responsibility is partisanship. The theory holds that loyal supporters may not link their party with the declining economic situation to the same extent as non-supporters do. Their loyalty may cause them not only to shift the blame away from their party, but also to be more optimistic in their judgements of current conditions. Differences were statistically insignificant when comparing the mean scores of ruling party supporters to those of non-supporters (using 2021 data). This finding means that ruling party supporters were as pessimistic about the state of the economy as the rest of adult Namibians were. In this regard, Figure 7 indicates a strong negative correlation between two elements of lived

poverty and voters disengaging from the party system.[16] The correlation is especially robust after 2014. The number of Namibians of voting age who felt close to a political party declined significantly as the number of most vulnerable adult Namibians indexed by their access to food and cash increased. Therefore, Figure 7 reveals that poverty affects partisanship.

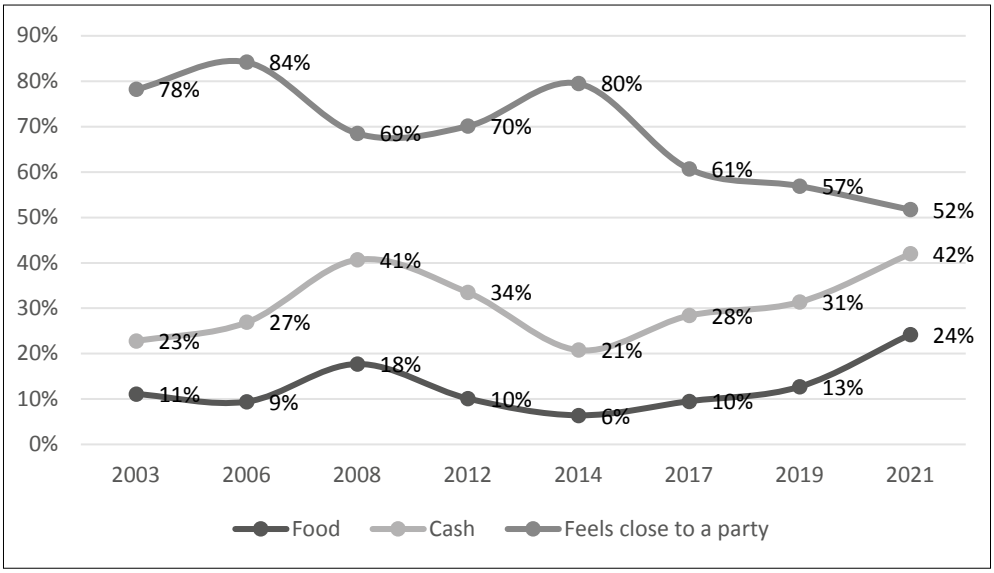



***Figure 7: Going without food or cash* Many times *or* Always*, by closeness to a political party, 2003–2021***

Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

## *Elected leadership*

Figure 8 illustrates that presidents are generally rated more positively in comparison with the two other levels of elected leaders, i.e. Local Authority councillors and Members of Parliament (MPs). Local Authority councillors' approval rates were the least positive. The graph also shows that presidential approval started declining in 2003, it continued slowly until 2014, and then accelerated to 2021. Between 2003 and 2014, the decline in presidential approval was a mere 3% overall, whereas between 2014 and 2021, it had declined by 34%. Figure 8 further reveals that just over half of the Namibian population of voting age (54%) approved of President Hage Geingob.

16 Access to cash and food security correlate very strongly in Namibia, as around 80% of the population relies on markets for food. Without cash to purchase food, food security is compromised almost instantly.

Between 1999 and 2014, the approval rating for the National Assembly increased by 16% to 81% - its highest level yet. After that, it slumped to an all-time low of just 48%, a loss of 33%. Local councillors recorded a very similar trajectory but with lower overall approval rates. By 2021, less than half of Namibian citizens of voting age approved of the way National Assembly and Local Authority as well as Regional Council incumbents had performed, which points to widespread dissatisfaction and discontent. These elected leaders were not seen to be performing.

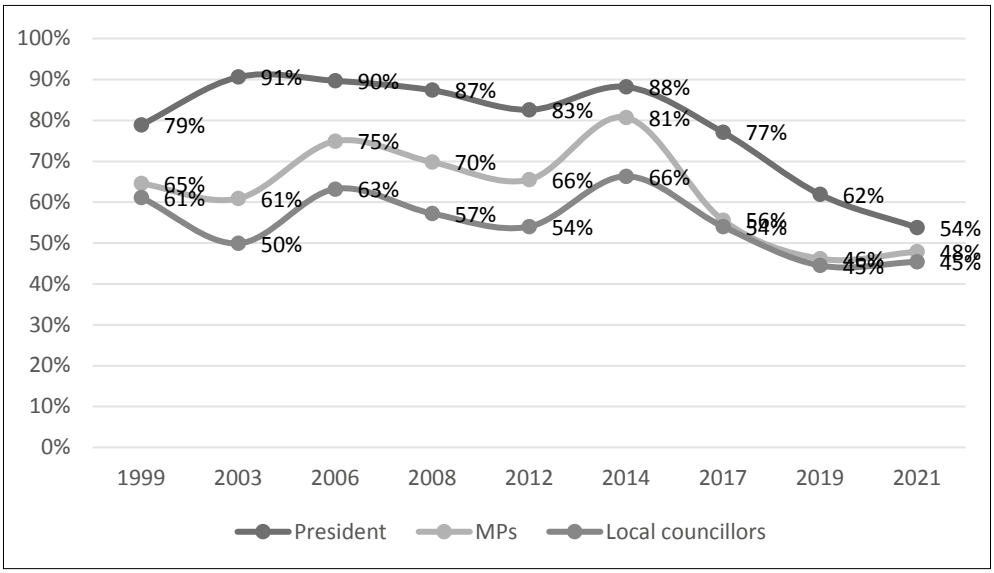



***Figure 8: Performance approval – Elected leaders, 1999–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2006–2021

Figure 9 shows that presidential approval and votes received during elections were closely correlated until 2019, when the vote share dropped significantly. Between 1999 and 2008, presidential approval exceeded the electoral popularity of the winning candidate. Thus, approval is more than just an expression of partisanship: many opposition voters and non-voters also expressed approval of how the President went about his business. That changed after 2019, as President Geingob's vote share dropped by 31%, and his approval rate by almost the same measure, 34%. Performance matters, therefore, and it matters very much. People felt that the highest official in the land and the ruling party had not performed well. Not only did these views cost the President and other elected officials electoral support, they also present a challenge for the new, yet unnamed, presidential replacement for the incumbent. The successor will not inherit the same goodwill or, possibly, the same electoral support as previous candidates had when they assumed office. In other words, the incumbent's performance and approval may count against his successor.

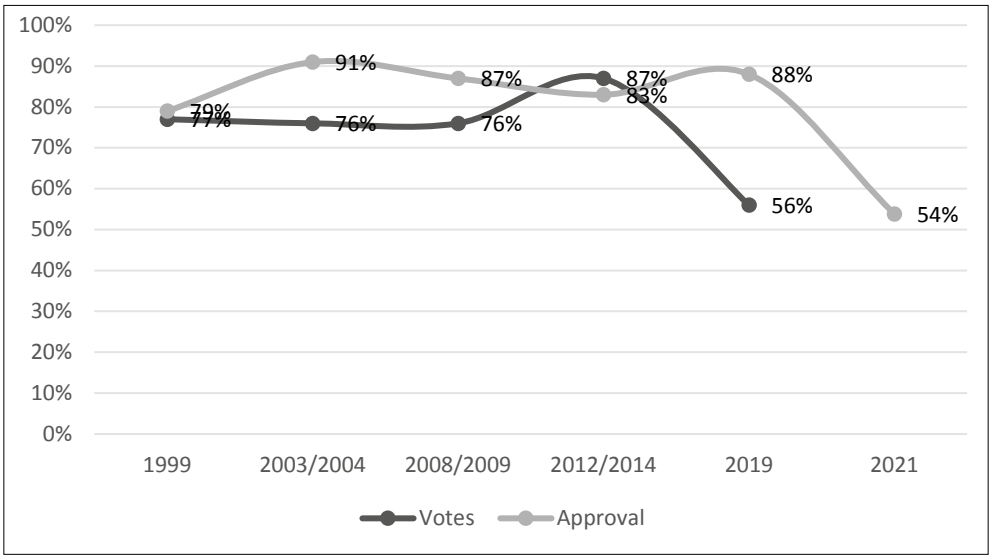



***Figure 9: Presidential approval and votes obtained, 1999–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 1999–2021

## *Public policy*

Figures 10a and 10b present public approval rates for eight policy areas between 2003 and 2021. Approval rates for all eight areas have declined significantly, and all were well below their 2003 levels. The four policy areas with the highest positive approval ratings were electricity (50%), education (49%), essential health services (48%), and water and sanitation (43%).

Between 2003 and 2014, education lost only 3%. Water and sanitation gained 9%, while electricity gained a single percentage point from 2008 to 2014. Essential health services declined by 10%. Between 2014 and 2021, positive approval declined significantly faster: 25% for essential health services, 31% for education, and 13% for water and sanitation.

The policy areas with the lowest approval rating were *Overall management of the economy* (27%), *Narrowing the income gap between rich and poor* (17%), *Job creation* (15%), and *Fighting corruption* (30%). These areas all display a similar downward trajectory. Approval for *Overall management of the economy* declined by 39% and *Job creation* by 21%. Approval for *Fighting corruption* had declined by 25% since 2003, and for *Narrowing the income gap* by 20% over the same time.

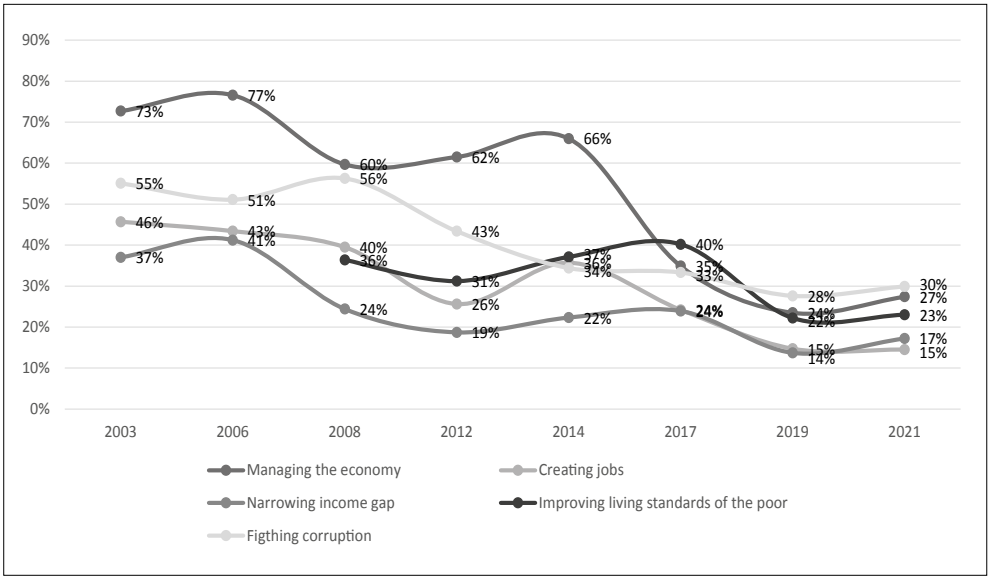



***Figure 10a: Performance approval – Economic policy, 2003–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

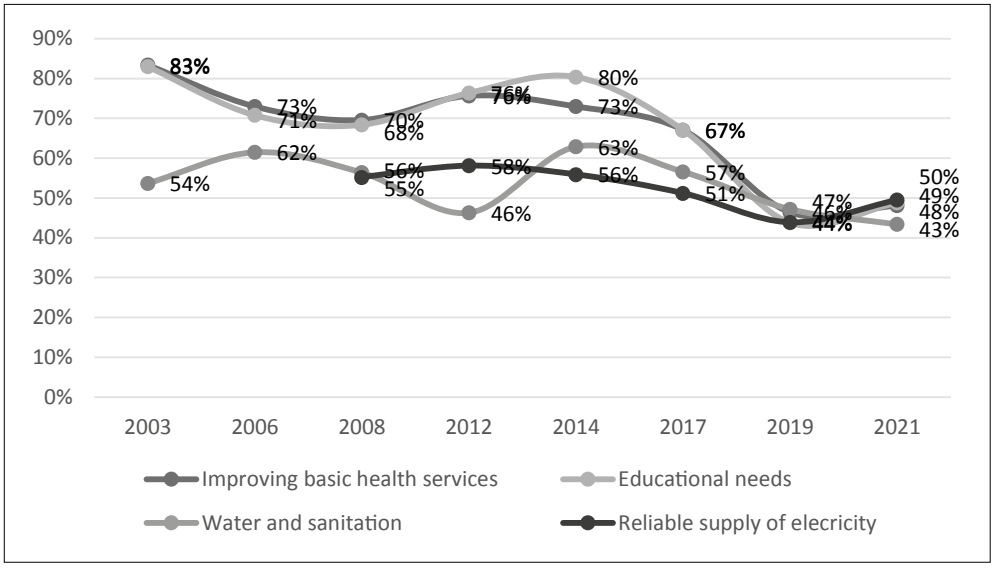



***Figure 10b: Performance approval – Social policy, 2003–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

## Public trust

Trust is a subjective phenomenon, and it matters because it shapes behaviour. Trust refers to citizens' confidence in the actions of a government "to do what is right and perceived fair" (Easton, 1965). Van de Walle and Bouckaert (2003) go a step further, saying that trust depends on the congruence between citizens' preferences for what is right and fair, but also the perceived delivery of services by government. Thus, expectations are key to trust; and factors such as education, living conditions, income, and past experiences may drive, mediate and shape expectations – and, therefore, trust. In addition to declining levels of trust, other aspects of political support, such as confidence in political institutions, party attachments, support for political parties, and public confidence in Parliament and other political institutions, are similarly affected (Dalton, 2005). Citizens' perceptions of government performance and their experience with government services or agencies also shape their levels of trust. Presumably, negative experiences have a more substantial impact than positive ones. Citizens may have very diverse preferences and, as such, they may use a multitude of different criteria to assess their government's performance. Van de Walle and Bouckaert (2003:892) ask the following in this regard:

> Do citizens have a negative perception of government because its services do not work properly, or do citizens evaluate government administrations and their performance negatively because their image of government in general is a negative one?

If the decline in trust is due to inadequate performance, fixing the problem should be straightforward: fix the performance of the relevant government agencies. However, if the decline in trust is general and diffused throughout the government, the problem may be significantly more challenging.

Afrobarometer measures trust on a four-point Likert scale that taps into degrees of trust, namely *Not at all*, *Just a little*, *Somewhat*, and *A lot*. These responses were recoded into three categories based on the degree of trust shown: *Trusters* (those who trusted *A lot*, i.e. they had deep trust), *Sceptics* (those who trusted *Just a little* or *Somewhat* and, thus, had shallow trust), and *Cynics* (whose level of trust was *Not at all*) (see also Mishler & Rose, 1997).

Bratton and Mattes (2001) state that citizens will extend tentative support to neo-democracies early on, if only because they promise change from failed authoritarian formulae of the past. In the case of Namibia, that support originated from loyalty to the liberation movement. In the absence of performance indicators, trust in the newly established democratic institutions 'spilt over' from the trust Namibians had put in their liberators (Keulder, 2020). Thus, initially, trust in leaders and institutions originate in the "patriotic history" (Ranger 2004:215) of the country rather than through the performance of its leaders and institutions. However, it is doubtful that loyalty alone would suffice to

maintain trust indefinitely. Invariably, over time, loyalty is replaced by rationality, and trust in institutions hinges on citizens' evaluations of institutional performance. As Mishler and Rose (2001:31) put it, "[i]nstitutions that perform well generate trust; untrustworthy institutions generate scepticism and distrust". Indeed, ineffective governance is known to weaken support for governments and leaders (Claassen & Magalhães, 2022).

### *Trust in the President*

Namibia's first two presidents commanded significant levels of nearly unconditional trust and very positive approval from nearly the entire nation (Figure 11). Founding President Sam Nujoma concluded his third term (2005) with nearly two in every five Namibians (39%) in 2003 trusting him *A lot*. During President Hifikepunye Pohamba's two terms (2005–2015), trust improved from 39% in 2003 to 56% in 2014. The proportion of trusters remained relatively stable at close to 60% from 2006 to 2014. Trust in Namibia's third and current President, Hage Geingob, does not match the level enjoyed by his two predecessors: it declined from 45% trusting him *A lot* in 2017, to just 27% doing so in 2021. Over the same period, the number of sceptics steadily increased, going from 32% in 2008 to 54% in 2021 – a rise of 22%. As of 2014, that number increased more rapidly (17%). Prior to 2014, the number of cynics remained relatively consistent, with around 6% of adults of voting age responding *Not at all* when asked whether they trusted the President. After 2014, that number increased more than threefold to 20% in 2021.

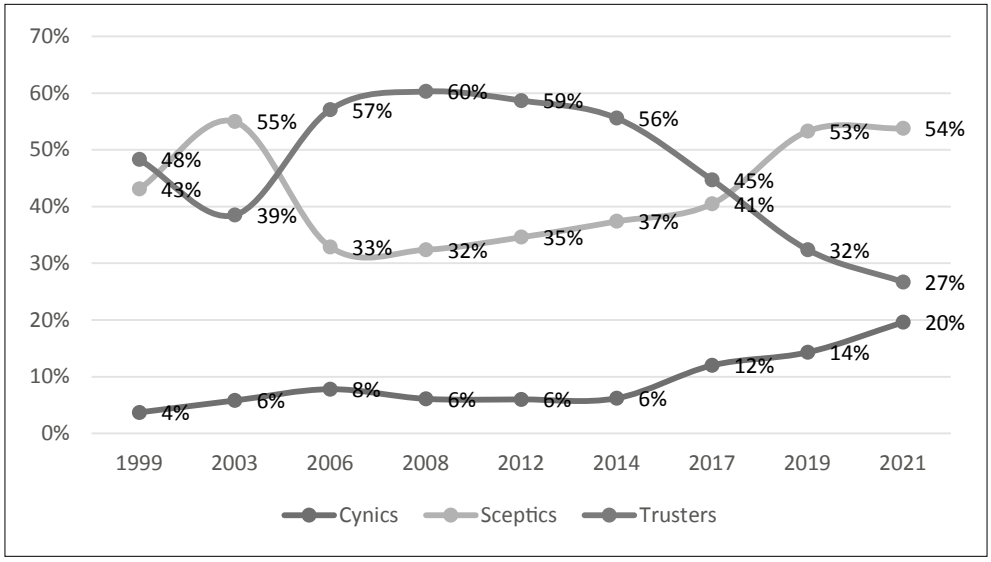



***Figure 11: Trust in the President, 1999–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 1999–2021

These results indicate a change in the depth of trust in the President. Deep trust declined significantly and was replaced by increasing scepticism and cynicism. Figure 12 shows a direct correlation between presidential approval and deep trust.[17] This outcome ties in with the results depicted earlier in this section in Figure 9, where the direct relationship between approval and votes was evident.

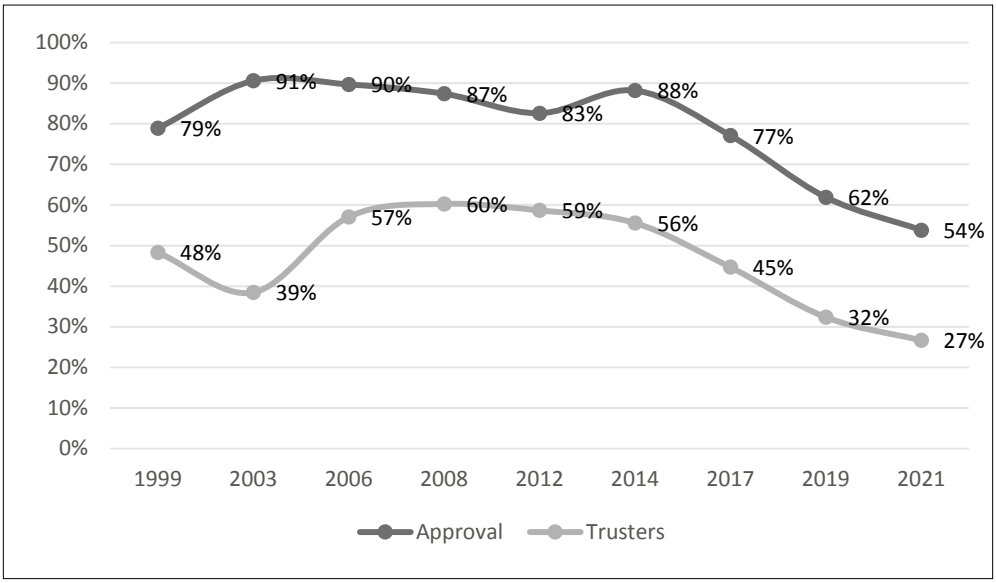



***Figure 12: Approval of, and trust in, the President, 1999–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 1999–2021

Naturally, approval of presidential performance is by no means limited to those who trust *A lot*. A fair number of sceptics and cynics may also approve of presidential performance, as is seen in Figure 12. However, the results for approval and trust between 2003 and 2021 do ring some warning bells for future presidents: performance will count for much more than it did in the past, and presidents will be held accountable if they do not perform. Future candidates' struggle credentials will not count for much; instead, their track record and performance history will. Given the state of trust in the current incumbent, opposition parties may have significantly more opportunity to garner votes than before.

## *Trust in the National Assembly*

Trust in the National Assembly showed a slightly different pattern than that for trust in the President (Figure 13). Between 2003 and 2006, the level of deep trust doubled to

17 The correlation coefficient ($r$) for deep trust and approval from 1999 to 2014 was -0.115 ($p < 0.01$), whilst from 2014 to 2021, it was 0.998 ($p < 0.01$).

34%, then increased slowly to 42% (2014), before dropping to 18% in 2021. Similarly, shallow trust decreased from 70% in 2003 to 47% in 2008, then stayed constant until 2014 before increasing to 56%. The number of cynics increased threefold, i.e. from 7% in 2014 to 22% in 2021. Most Namibians of voting age (78%) revealed that they had either shallow or no trust in the legislature.

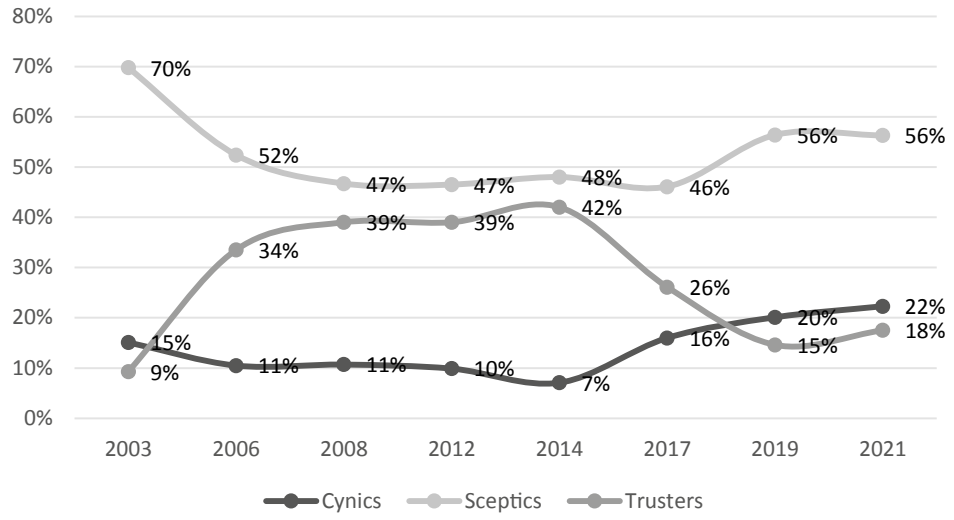



***Figure 13: Trust in the National Assembly, 2003–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

Figure 14 demonstrates that, as of 2014, the positive correlation between citizens' deep trust in the National Assembly and their approval of its performance was more potent than the similar correlation for the President. The relevant approval of and trust in the National Assembly followed the same trend over time.[18] Only 48% of Namibians of voting age in 2021 approved of the National Assembly, which is only half of those who did so in 2014.

Several authors have alluded to the fact that declining trust in politicians may not be that bad because it is relatively easy to replace the distrusted office-bearers through elections (Dalton, 2004; Fuchs & Klingemann, 1995). If, however, that declining trust relates to the fundamental institutions and structures, the consequences will be more severe and impactful. Namibia faces a darker scenario, as the decline and changes in public

18 Here, the correlation coefficient ($r$) for deep trust and approval from 1999 to 2014 was 0.691 ($p < 0.01$), whereas from 2014 to 2021 it was 0.988 ($p < 0.01$).

trust correlate with declining support and satisfaction with key institutions such as the National Assembly and democracy as the preferred system of government.

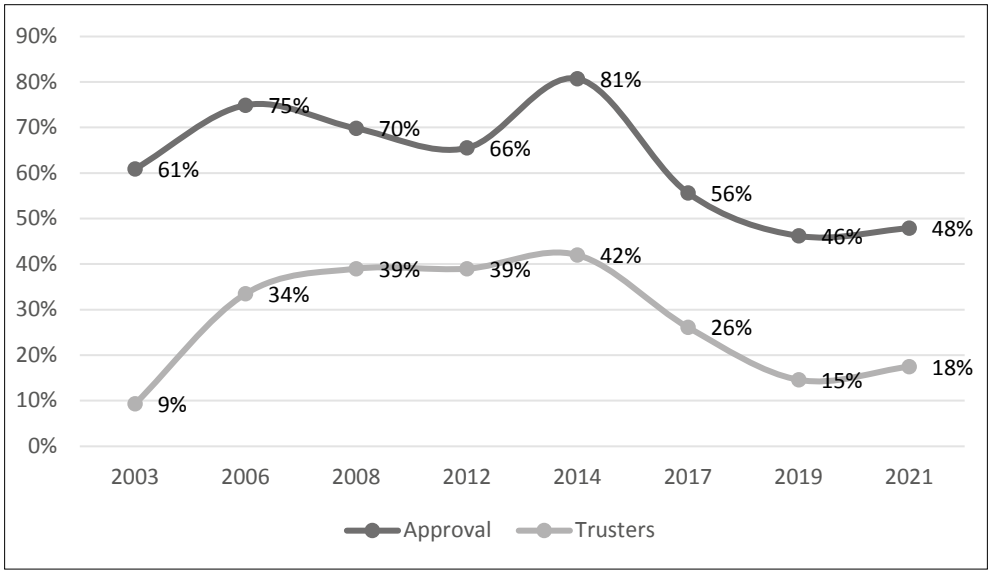



***Figure 14: Approval of, and trust in, the National Assembly, 2003–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

## Partisanship

Democracy without political parties is inconceivable: they perform several critical functions in it. Critical among these functions is linking citizens to their state. The state organises and mobilises citizens for elections; it socialises and educates voters; it converts public needs and preferences into public policy; and it recruits and trains talent for public office.

Partisanship – or citizens' adherence to a party – does not presume any formal membership of the party concerned. Even though such adherance may take the form an informal relationship between supporter and party, partisanship is an important variable not only for understanding voting patterns, but also for assessing the strength of the linkage between parties and their supporters. Citizens of voting age with no or only fragile ties to parties risk being excluded from the political sphere altogether and, thus, end up losing their influence over policy. Conversely, parties without supporters have little chance of doing well or winning elections. Most parties count on partisanship to mobilise and convert supporters into voters. Loyalty helps stabilise the party system as voter volatility

tends to be lower. Such systems discourage the formation of new parties. The ties that bind a party to its support base are predictable and enduring and build on deep trust.

Partisanship may be more important than membership when it comes to explaining political attitudes such as trust in institutions. As Hooghe and Kern (2015) found, partisanship was directly correlated to political trust; and, in linking citizens to the state, partisanship had a more substantial linkage effect in this regard than party membership did. Because political parties are fundamental entities for any democracy, closeness to parties is an essential indicator of the relationship between citizens and their state. Thus, low feelings of closeness indicate weak links between citizens and the state. Figure 15 shows that the proportion of adult Namibians who felt close to a political party declined from 1999 (70%) to 2021 (52%). Such feelings of closeness peaked in 2006 (84%) and again in 2014 (80%), whereas between 2014 and 2021, they declined by 28%. Thus, barely more than half of the number of Namibians of voting age felt close to a political party. This questions political parties' efficiency in linking citizens to the state.

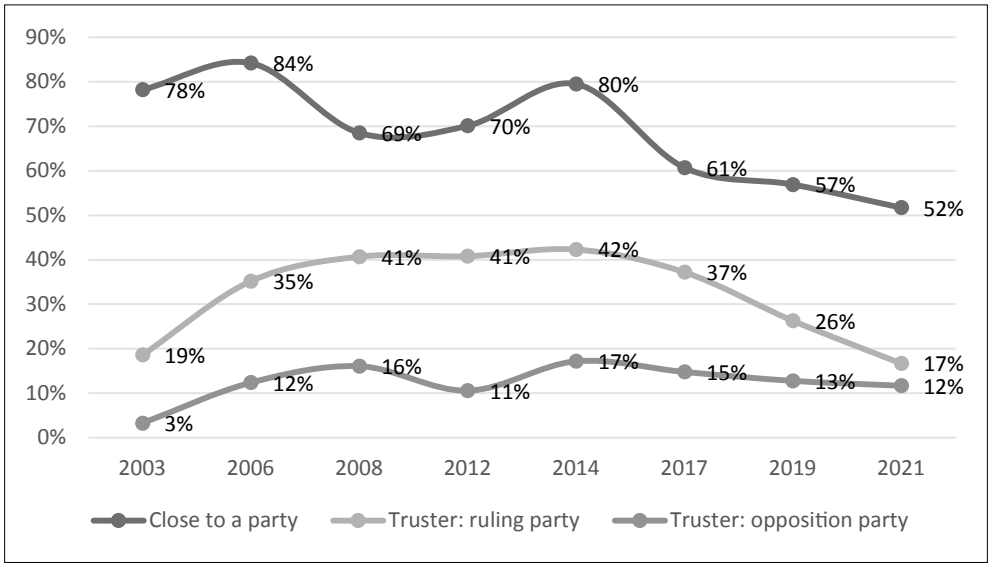



***Figure 15: Partisanship and trust in parties, 2003–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2003–2021

Figure 15 also illustrates that deep trust in the ruling party increased between 2003 (19%) and 2014 (42%), then it declined to 17% in 2021. There is thus a strong positive correlation between feelings of closeness and deep trust in the ruling party between 2014 and 2021. Deep trust in opposition parties was much lower than for the ruling party, however: overall, between 2003 and 2021, it increased by only 9%. After 2014, trust in opposition parties also declined by 5%. Political parties are, therefore, not very effective

in linking citizens to the state, which may explain why Namibians disengage rather than realign. In this regard, Figure 15 shows that declining trust in the ruling party did not necessarily lead to increased trust in opposition parties.[19]

Figure 16 reveals that more than half (55%) of the born-free generation did not feel close to a political party in 2021. This finding indicates a 22% increase from 2014, when such closeness was registered at 30%. Furthermore, Figure 16 shows that feelings of closeness have also declined – albeit at a slower rate – among the older generation. Close to four in ten (39%) of the cohort born before independence did not feel close to a political party in 2021. Declining feelings of closeness may well happen faster among the younger political generation, but it is not limited to them because the older generation shows a similar tendency.

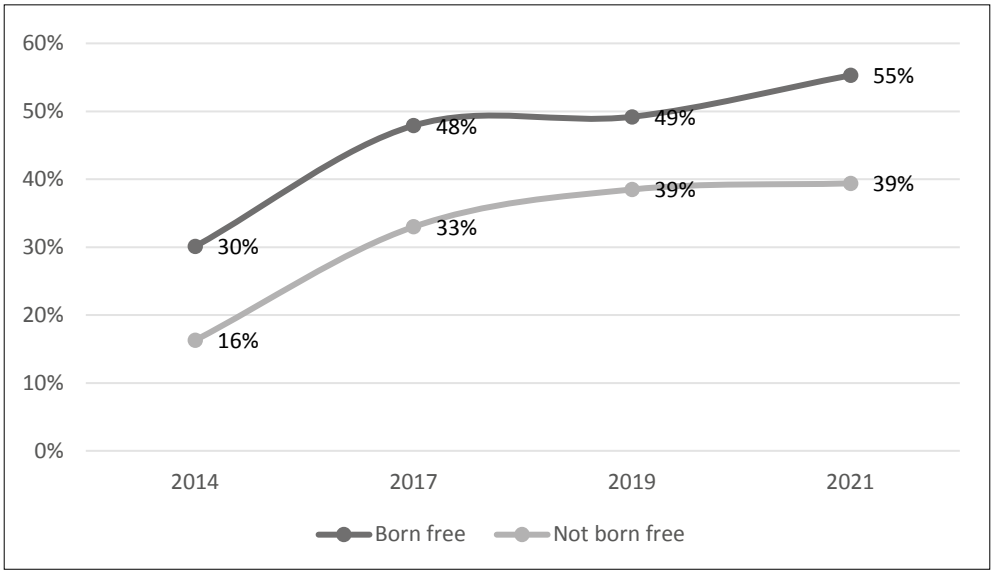



***Figure 16: Proportion of voting age population not close to any political party, by political generation, 2014–2021***

Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2014–2021

Figure 17 shows that feelings of closeness to a party declined in urban and rural areas, albeit at different rates. Urban Namibians have always been more distant in their feelings of closeness than their rural counterparts, but the gap has remained consistent over time. This constancy implies that the decline in such feelings is countrywide and not limited to urban areas.

19 Deep trust is not an absolute precondition for a voter's ultimate party choice. For example, it is possible for voters to be sceptical about a party and nonetheless vote for it.

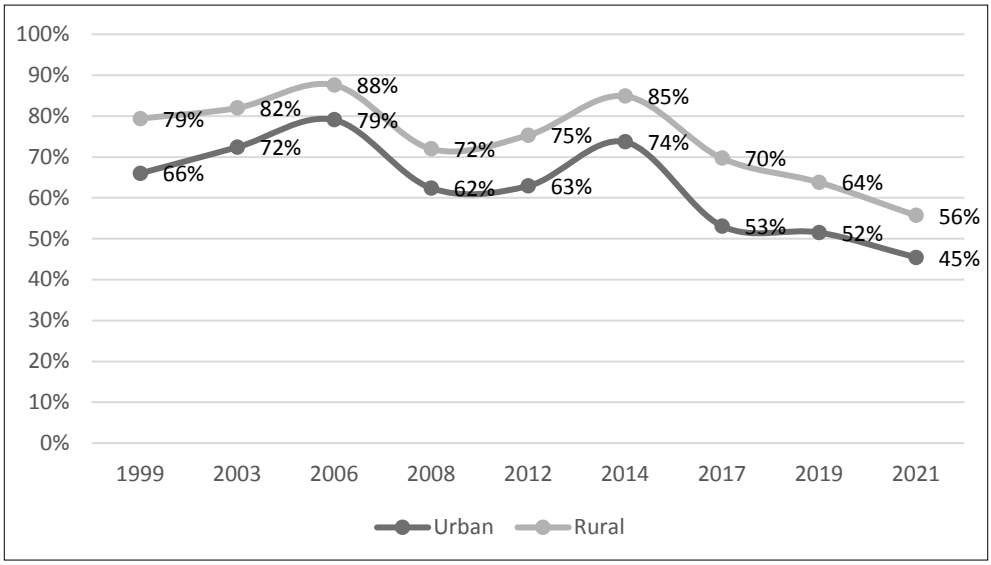



***Figure 17: Proportion of voting age population close to a political party, by urban and rural location, 1999–2021***

Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 1999–2021

## Election results

Political parties face challenges brought on by voters with weak ties to parties across all spectrums. Such voters may be more willing to switch votes or abstain from voting, and they be more difficult to mobilise and organise. They may also be less willing to join a party as members, participate in party activities, pay membership fees to a party, or make financial contributions to it. In Namibia, feelings of closeness to parties are not stable. They have fluctuated and even declined significantly and could be responsible for the greater electoral volatility during the 2021 elections in comparison with that registered in previous election years. For example, several key features are prominent in an overview of National Assembly election results since the first democratic elections in 1989 (Table 1), for example. First of all, Namibia has always had many electoral parties (parties that participate in elections) – indeed, much more so than the number of cleavages experienced in them. For example, in 1999, eight parties contested the elections, whereas in 2019, 15 parties did so. From this it appears that the cost of forming new parties is not prohibitive. Namibian voters seem spoilt for choice, therefore. Indeed, in 2021, 19 political parties and 21 associations were registered with the Electoral Commission of Namibia, while 11 candidates contested the 2019 presidential campaign.

Secondly, the number of elective parties (parties with at least one seat in the National Assembly) increased over the same period, which came about owing to the electoral

system used.[20] In Namibia, the largest-remainder/Hare system proportional system is applied. This produces the lowest thresholds for inclusion of all proportional representation systems (Lijphart, 1994). The system, which is also highly proportional and delivers almost no disproportionality, favours small parties – which is evident from the high number of legislative parties in Namibia.

Thirdly, between 2004 and 2021, turnout – expressed as a percentage of the voting age population – dropped from 80% to just over 55%, a change of 25%. Between 2014 and 2021, the drop was sharpest, namely 19%. By 2021, one in every four voters who voted in 2004 no longer voted. About one in five who voted in 2014 did not vote again in 2021. These results mean that these voters disengaged from participation in elections rather than realigned with different parties.

Fourthly, the low voter volatility rates show that Namibia's party system is stable. The rates also show that, before 2019, new entrants to the party system had a minimal impact on the system overall, and that breakaway parties had been unsuccessful in reducing the ruling party's dominance.

Fifthly, the results of 2019 differ from previous elections in several important ways. For one thing, voter volatility had increased and was the highest it had ever been. Therefore, reading the effective number of parties together with the winning party's vote share suggests that, although elections had become more competitive, the ruling party's electoral and legislative dominance remained intact. However, the third wave of breakaway parties was much more successful than those formed during the previous two waves. This outcome was due mainly to heightened discontent and dissatisfaction among the voting age population, sentiments which had been increasing rapidly since 2014.

***Table 1: Summary of results – National Assembly elections, 1989–2019***

| Election year | National Assembly elections, 1989–2019 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of electoral parties | Number of legislative parties | Voter volatility | Turnout (% of voting age population) | Effective number of electoral parties | Winning party vote share |
| 1989 | 10 | 7 | – | – | 2.42 | 57.3% |
| 1994 | 8 | 5 | 34% | 64% | 1.67 | 73.9% |
| 1999 | 8 | 5 | 25% | 62% | 1.69 | 72.2% |
| 2004 | 9 | 7 | 16% | 80% | 1.68 | 76.1% |

20 Namibia uses a closed-list proportional representation system with a Hare quota and with provision for largest remainders. There are no explicit thresholds, and the entire country is treated as a single constituency – meaning it has a district magnitude of 1.

| Election year | National Assembly elections, 1989–2019 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of electoral parties | Number of legislative parties | Voter volatility | Turnout (% of voting age population) | Effective number of electoral parties | Winning party vote share |
| 2009 | 14 | 9 | 27% | 68% | 1.70 | 75.3% |
| 2014 | 16 | 10 | 25% | 74% | 1.53 | 80.0% |
| 2019 | 15 | 10 | 39% | 55% | 2.09 | 65.6% |

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Voter Turnout Database (https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout, last accessed 16 March 2023; ECN (https://www.ecn.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Final-Election-Results-Announcement-Speech-ECN-Chair-30-Nov-2019.pdf, last accessed 16 March 2023; author's calculations

## Party choice

One of the Afrobarometer questions is the following: *If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which candidate's party would you vote for*? The responses to this question provide insight into two aspects of voting: (ii) likelihood of voting, which is treated as a measure of disengagement over time; and (ii) party choice or preference, which will provide a measure of dealignment and realignment of voters over time.

Figure 18 demonstrates that the number of members of Namibia's voting age population who said they would *Abstain* from voting increased fourfold from 2014 (4%) to 2021 (16%). At the same time, the response *Undecided* grew from 2% to 7%. In 2021, 16% responded that they *Refused to identify* the recipient of their vote, a result which showed an increase of 9% since 2014, when it was 7%. If these three response categories are grouped together as *Undetermined* votes, it represents the largest cluster of Namibians of voting age (40%) (Figure 19). To some extent, this reflects the great degree of uncertainty that characterises the current party-political landscape.

Party choice has been stable in Namibia for roughly three decades since independence in 1990. Figure 19 reveals that party choice became much more unstable after 2014. Approximately one quarter of prospective voters (23%) revealed they would vote for an opposition party in 2021, whilst almost four in ten (38%) said they would vote for the ruling party. Preference for opposition parties grew by 9% between 2017 (14%) and 2021 (23%), which could be interpreted as the extent of realignment with opposition parties. As a result of this limited realignment, overall opposition support remained at 2008 levels (25%).[21]

21 Notably, one of the largest opposition parties, the IPC, did not contest the 2019 National Assembly elections because the party was only formally registered in 2020. One could argue that this underestimates the realignment rate, as the party is untested at national level.

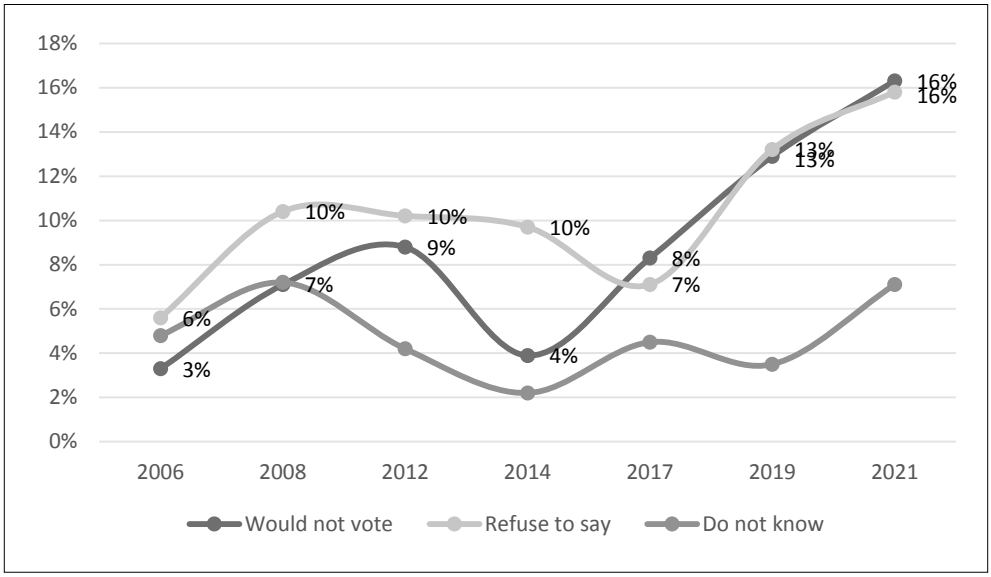



***Figure 18: Voting intent, 2006–2021***

Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2006–2021

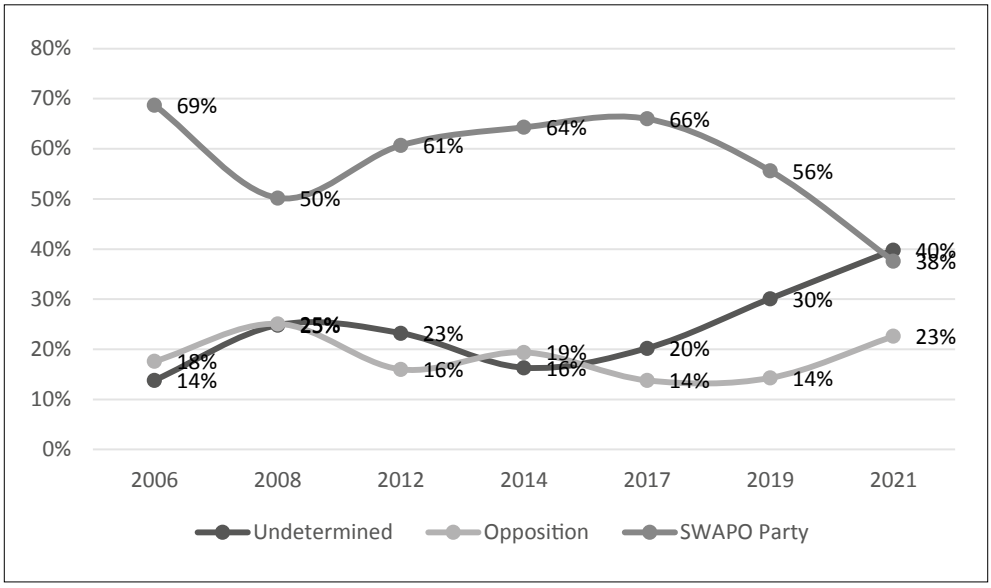



***Figure 19: Party choice, 2006–2021***

Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2006–2021

The most substantial changes occurred when it came to SWAPO Party support. As Figure 20 illustrates, preference for the ruling party declined by 31% between 2006 (69%) and 2021 (38%). This shift could be interpreted as the extent of dealignment from the ruling party. Most of those who dealigned from the ruling party did not realign with the opposition; as a result, the opposition parties' gains were modest. The rapidly declining support base for the ruling party suggests that they will not be able to enter the 2024 elections with the same confidence as in previous elections, when the party still enjoyed high levels of deep trust. Figure 20 also illustrates the strong correlation between deep trust in the party and willingness to vote for it. The correlation between trust and votes is positive, and it is strong ($r = 0.762$; $p = 0.001$).

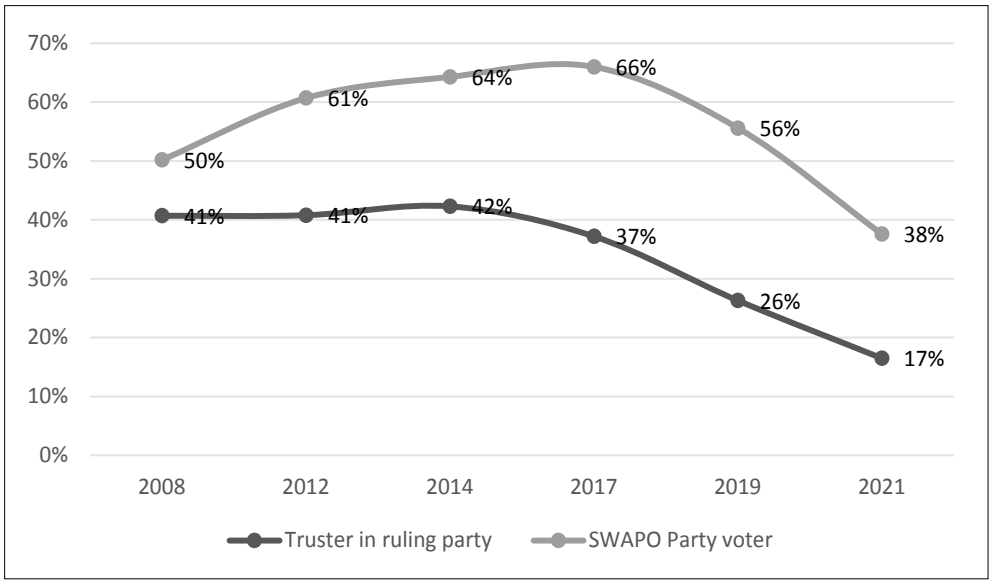



***Figure 20: Trust in and voting for the ruling party, 2008–2021***
Source: Author's calculations from Afrobarometer datasets 2008–2021

## Conclusions

For the ruling party to stop and reverse the dealignment of once-loyal voters, it will have to restore trust in and support for the party. However, for that to occur, the party needs to be reformed: intellectually, morally, and politically. Such reform will be difficult, if not impossible, as the government and the 'party-state' struggle to deliver the social and economic goods expected of them. Furthermore, the party's reputation has been tarnished by corruption and the perception that corruption is on the increase. The party has also painted itself into a political corner: it has not come to terms with its founding project having run its course, nor with the patriotic history used to galvanise electoral

support no longer being relevant or practical. In its current form and under its current leadership, the party has little chance of transforming itself into an entity that could deal with the pervasive discontent and distrust that has developed among its support base since 2014. A more-of-same or business-as-usual option is no longer politically viable.

With this discontent and distrust being pervasive through the party, state, and government agencies, it is difficult to see which of these three agencies could be used to drive improved performance, transformation and, ultimately, revival. The bloated, ineffective "party-state" cannot be sustained, especially under current economic conditions; thus, the resources to secure party dominance through patronage may well diminish in the future.

The ruling party also faces leadership problems. It is still under the control of liberation war veterans that have no connection to, or base among, the born-free generation. The older generation has blocked the development of young talent within the party and, as a result, the party has lost touch with the youth and the politically modernised urban population.[22] As this older generation of leaders is responsible for the precarious position in which the party finds itself, it is difficult to anticipate how those leaders will transform the erstwhile liberation movement into a modern, post-colonial party. It is therefore also unclear who the modernising forces within the party will be.[23] The party may even split again, as the reformists and old guard clash for control. The loser may look for a new political home.

The ruling party may also have to 'learn to lose' sometime soon. Southall (2013:327) argues that it is destined simply to become one party among many others:

> That they will survive organisationally, in one form or the other, is not in doubt, but their essence as 'liberation movements', as harbingers of hope and freedom, is dying, even as they cling on to power against a future where their continuation as ruling parties is increasingly uncertain.

22 During his second term in office, which began in 2019, President Hage Geingob appointed several young individuals to Cabinet and the National Assembly. Among the newcomers were Patience Masua (MP), Emma Theofelus (Deputy Minister), and Daisry Mathias (Presidential Advisor: Youth Matters and Enterprise Development). The three were recruited from outside party youth structures and without any specific youth mandate. Conversely, in 2021, President Geingob reached out to the SWAPO Party youth structures and appointed SWAPO Party Youth League Secretary, Ephraim Nekongo, as a Member of Parliament.

23 Article VI(4) of the SWAPO Party constitution states the following: "A minimum of ten (10) years of continuous membership in SWAPO Party shall be required for a member to be eligible for membership of the Central Committee" (https://www.politicalpartydb.org/wp-content/uploads/Statutes/Namibia/Namibia_Swapo_1998.pdf, last accessed 16 March 2023). The current Central Committee is made up of old-guard politicians, current and former Ministers, MPs, and appointed Governors.

The current level of popular discontent is at its highest ever. Such discontent provides a window of opportunity for opposition parties that did not exist when the likes of Ben Ulenga or Hidipo Hamutenya broke away from the ruling party. The most recent splits from the ruling party were more successful than their predecessors' because of the elevated discontent at the time. The performance of opposition parties during the 2019 national elections and then again in the 2021 subnational elections is tangible proof that many dealigned voters have realigned themselves with the opposition. Nonetheless, opposition forces face challenges that may prevent them from fully exploiting the current window of opportunity. Their lack of resources is arguably their most immediate problem. As a result, they lack infrastructure and skills. At this point, opposition parties still struggle to convince voters that they present a viable alternative to the ruling party. Ideologically they are no different, and their key policy proposals are either nonexistent or poorly developed. They consequently have no programmes for tackling fundamental problems such as unemployment, poverty, inequality and corruption. They may, therefore, lack the resources and programmes to convince disengaged voters to return as opposition voters.

Namibia has reached a political crossroads defined by great uncertainty. For the first time since its independence in 1990, election outcomes are not a foregone conclusion, and the ruling party cannot take its electoral dominance for granted. Discontent and distrust are high and keep rising, raising questions about the nature and extent of the developing political crisis. Is it a crisis of governance that threatens the ruling party as the temporary government of the day? Or is it a crisis of democracy that threatens the current political order, i.e. democracy itself?

## References

Anderson, CD. 2006. Economic voting and multilevel governance: A comparative individual-level analysis. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(2):449–463.

Bratton, M, & Mattes, R. 2001. Support for democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or instrumental? *British Journal of Political Science*, 31(03):447–474.

Bratton, M, & Van de Walle, N. 1997. *Democratic experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Canache, D, Cawvey, M, Hayes, M, & Mondak, JJ. 2019. Who sees corruption? The bases of mass perceptions of political corruption in Latin America. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 11(2):133–160.

Claassen, C, & Magalhães, PC. 2022. Effective government and evaluations of democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 55(5):869–894.

Coşkun, GB. 2016. Does corruption end the dominant party system? A comparative analysis of the Italian and Turkish cases. *European Review*, 25(2):320–336.

Dalton, RJ. 2004. *Democratic challenges, democratic choices: The erosion of political support in advanced industrial democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dalton, RJ. 2005. The social transformation of trust in government. *International Review of Sociology*, 15(1):133–154.

De Jager, N. 2013. South Africa: A democracy in the balance. In De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P (Eds). *Friend or foe? Dominant party systems in southern Africa: Insights from the developing world*. Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

De Jager, N, & Meintjes, CH. 2013. Winners, losers and the playing field in southern Africa's 'democratic darlings': Botswana and South Africa compared. *Politikon*, 40(2):233–253.

Du Pisani, A. 2013. The politics and resource endowment of party dominance in Namibia: The past as the present and the future. In De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P (Eds). *Friend or foe? Dominant party systems in southern Africa: Insights from the developing world*. Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Duch, RM, & Stevenson, R. 2006. Assessing the magnitude of the economic vote over time and across nations. *Electoral Studies*, 25(3):528–547.

Easton, D. 1965. *A systems analysis of political life*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Freedom House. 2021. *Freedom in the world 2021*. Washington, DC: Freedom House.

Friesen, P. 2022. The partisan consequences of liberation mentality: Ruling party support in Zimbabwe across space and time. *Party Politics*, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211060024

Fuchs, D, & Klingemann, H-D. 1995. *Citizens and the state*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greene, KF. 2007. *Why dominant parties lose: Mexico's democratization in comparative perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Greene, KF. 2013. The political costs of privatisation: Why democratic and authoritarian dominant parties meet their doom. In De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P (Eds). *Friend or foe? Dominant party systems in southern Africa: Insights from the developing world*. Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Hengari, AT. 2008. Thinking about democracy in Namibia. *BAB Working Paper No. 5*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

Hooghe, M, & Kern, A. 2015. Party membership and closeness and the development of trust in political institutions. *Party Politics*, 21(6):944–956.

Hopwood, G. 2005. Trapped in the past: The state of the opposition. In Hunter, J (Ed.). *Spot the difference: Namibia's political parties compared*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy.

Jansen, N. 1974. Definition of generation and sociological theory. *Social Science*, 49(2):90–98.

Keulder, C. 2020. Culture, performance and the origins of political trust in Namibia. *Special Briefing Report No. 1*. Windhoek: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Keulder, C. 2021a. Africans see growing corruption, poor government response, but fear retaliation if they speak out. *Afrobarometer Dispatch 448*. Accra: Afrobarometer.

Keulder, C. 2021b. *Youth participation in national agenda through mass media*. Windhoek: Namibia Media Trust.

Levite, A, & Tarrow, S. 1983. The legitimation of excluded parties in dominant party systems: A comparison of Israel and Italy. *Comparative Politics*, 15(3):295–327.

Levitsky, S, & Way, LA. 2010. Why democracy needs a level playing field. *Journal of Democracy*, 21(1):57–68.

Lijphart, A. 1994. *Electoral systems and party systems: A study of twenty-seven democracies, 1945–1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Links, F, & Rakkel, A. 2019. Namibian political finance – An unresolved regulatory question. *Special Briefing No. 29*. Windhoek: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Mattes, R. 2020. Lived poverty on the rise in Africa: Decade of living-standards gains ends in Africa. *Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 62*. Accra: Afrobarometer.

Mbathera, E, & Ikela, S. 2020. Amupanda dumps "corrupt" SWAPO. *The Namibian*, 27 August 2020.

Melber, H. 2015. Post-liberation democratic authoritarianism: The case of Namibia. *Politikon*, 42(1):45–66.

Menges, W. 2021. Namibia: Kora deal concerns raised in vain. *The Namibian*, 5 May 2021.

Memoli, V, & Quaranta, M. 2019. Economic evaluations, economic freedom, and democratic satisfaction in Africa. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 55(9):1928–1946.

Mishler, W, & Rose, R. 1997. Trust, distrust and skepticism: Popular evaluations of civil and political institutions in post-Communist societies. *The Journal of Politics*, 59(2):418–451.

Mishler, C & Rose, R. 2001. What are the origins of political trust? Testing institutional and cultural theories in post-communist societies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 34(1):30–62.

Ndeyanale, E. 2022. Keep SWAPO in power until Jesus comes. *The Namibian*, 26 April 2022.

Neuberger, B. 1974. Has the single-party state failed in Africa? *African Studies Review*, 17(1):173–178.

Nghidinwa, AN. 2007. Public service reform in Namibia: A case of cadre appointments in the central government. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pretoria.

NSA/Namibia Statistics Agency. 2014. *Namibia population projections 2011–2041*. Windhoek: NSA.

Ranger, T. 2004. Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30(2):215–234.

Sakaiya, S, & Maeda, K. 2014. Explaining the breakdown of dominant party systems: Party splits and the mechanisms of factional bargaining. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 15(3):397–415.

Sherbourne, R. 2022. *Namibia quarterly economic review, April–June 2022*. Windhoek: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Shiimi, I. 2021. *Clarification on the object, terms and use of the Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI) by Namibia from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)*. Windhoek: Ministry of Finance.

Simonis Storm. 2022. *Political and socioeconomic review, August*. Windhoek: Simonis Storm.

Southall, R. 2008. The South African elections of 1994: The remaking of a dominant-party state. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32(4):629–655.

Southall, R. 2013. *Liberation movements in power: Party and state in southern Africa*. Suffolk: James Currey/Boydell & Brewer.

Southall, R. 2014. Threats to constitutionalism by liberation movements in southern Africa. *Africa Spectrum*, 49(1):79–99.

Stevenson, RT, & Duch, R. 2013. The meaning and use of subjective perceptions in studies of economic voting. *Electoral Studies*, 32(2):305–320.

Van de Walle, S, & Bouckaert, G. 2003. Public service performance and trust in government: The problem of causality. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 26(8–9):891–913.

# Democracy in the balance: An ailing African National Congress and the fight for the South African miracle

**Annemie Parkin**

Southern African countries have experienced liberation struggles, in some cases violent transitions to power, and post-liberation governments made up of those liberation movements. In South Africa, this new dawn was met with hope for a better future after years of suppression and discrimination against the majority of the population. The African National Congress (ANC) emerged as the harbinger of freedom and prosperity after the country's democratisation in 1994. The ANC afforded the majority valuable social capital and public trust, enhanced by the leadership of Nelson Mandela. For these reasons, the party garnered overwhelming shares of the vote during successive national elections. After successfully negotiating the tricky transition from a government of unity to being the sole governing party, the ANC managed to establish its dominance in every sphere of the state due to these huge election victories.

Today, South Africa is recognised as a dominant party state, with the ANC unlikely to lose its electoral majority in the near future. However, despite its dominance and clout as a liberation movement, the ANC has experienced serious challenges in the last few years. These range from massive corruption scandals, socio-economic challenges, and bitter factional infighting. This has eroded the party's political support and, of greater concern, South Africans' trust in democracy and democratic institutions. This begs the following questions: what is the ANC's future as South Africa's ruling party, and what is the future of democratic consolidation in South Africa?

This chapter explores the ANC's transformation from a liberation movement to a ruling party, its challenges as a ruling party, and its failure to curb certain undemocratic tendencies. Furthermore, it is important to explore the reasons for the ANC's loss of electoral support and its future as South Africa's ruling party. Lastly, the chapter will look at the implications of these changes, and what the ANC's decline in support could mean for democratic consolidation in South Africa.

# Liberation-movement governments and dominant party states: The future of democratic consolidation

Towards the end of the 20th century, there were several liberation struggles for self-determination and political independence by previously oppressed people in southern Africa. Liberation movements led these struggles and managed to take power through a combination of several factors such as armed resistance, negotiations with political rivals, and the end of the Cold War. Southern Africa's experience with liberation struggles and transitions to post-colonial rule has fundamentally shaped the trajectory of its subsequent political regimes.

Liberation movements are formed for specific goals. In the southern African context, such movements were formed to battle the oppressive minority-led governments and to establish majority rule. The experience of liberation-movement governments, however, has been far less successful. The transition to majority rule, democratisation, and the projects around nation-building and socio-economic restructuring have been met with several challenges (Bereketeab, 2018:4). This is also the case in South Africa, where the material conditions of the previously disadvantaged majority have not improved.

When one evaluates the trajectory of democracy and democratic consolidation in South Africa, it is important to consider the liberation struggle history and the ANC's ascent to power. In addition, the ANC's transition from a liberation movement to a ruling party and its establishment of political dominance are crucial factors to look at in the context of the future of democratic rule in South Africa. This section will explore the literature around liberation-movement governments and their challenges; the link between liberation movements and dominant party systems, and the implications of that link for democracy; and, lastly, what is required for a democracy to become consolidated.

## A liberation struggle, the ascent to power, and the creation of dominance

### *Liberation movements*

Several scholars (Bereketeab, 2018; Dorman, 2006; Gumede, 2017; Melber, 2002, 2009, 2010, 2011; Southall, 2003) have investigated the nature of liberation movements, armed liberation struggles, and post-liberation politics in southern Africa, specifically liberation-movement governance. Liberation movements are largely associated with the developing world and a phenomenon that became more prominent after the advent of decolonisation.

Montiel and Rodriguez (2009:157) argue that liberation movements are political types of social movements. As social movements, liberation movements act collectively, and

their goals are largely influenced by their revolutionary Marxist–Leninist–Maoist ideas. Gibson (1972:10) also refers to this by pointing out that African liberation movements were influenced by a plethora of ideas. Bereketeab (2018:5) states that only when a liberation movement has a clearly defined ideology can the goal of liberation succeed. Common among liberation movements is that they were committed to radical social change and they engaged in revolutionary rhetoric – and, in some cases, revolutionary tactics – to achieve liberation.

According to Gibson (1972:3), a key feature of liberation movements is that they were created largely in response to an oppressive, foreign rule. Southern African liberation movements fought against entrenched white minorities for the political, economic, social and cultural emancipation of indigenous peoples. This corresponds with what Montiel and Rodriguez (2009:156) state with regard to liberation movements:

> Collective action frames of liberation movements include economic and political independence from foreign and domestic exploitation, and profound social change toward an equitable social configuration benefiting the masses of poor people.

Soler-Crespo (2019) argues that southern African liberation movements share certain key characteristics, which include the following: they all embraced a Marxist ideology, they were all African national movements, and they all conducted an armed struggle against their white oppressors.

MacFarlane (1985:5) argues that national liberation included four elements: political independence, freedom from external economic control, social revolution aimed at the removal of internal oppression, and cultural regeneration. Another key characteristic of liberation movements is that they require fierce commitment from their members (Montiel & Rodriguez, 2009:157). This latter characteristic might thus explain why many liberation movements are in power for long periods of time in the post-liberation dispensations.

Salih (2018:21) argues that there are four indicators of the success or failure of liberation struggles. These include the liberation movement's ability to create a broad-based social coalition and a workable post-liberation development programme; its ability to provide services in liberated areas; its ability to create and develop a civilian administration and opportunities for citizen participation; and its ability to maintain autonomy between military and civilian affairs, i.e. laying a foundation for civilian – not military – rule.

All of the factors mentioned in this section provide a clear, thorough conceptualisation of liberation movements. Thus, primarily, liberation movements constitute groups who fought armed struggles against an oppressive minority regime; in the southern African cases, these regimes were settler-dominated governments. Such movements fought for the political, economic, social and cultural freedom of indigenous peoples in the

countries concerned. However, are liberation movements able, as ruling parties, to establish functioning, consolidated democratic regimes? In answering this question, Gumede (2017:1), for example, states the following:

> Yet, over the past 50 years, most of the African governments that sprang from these movements, which were expressly committed to transforming their societies for the better during the liberation and independence struggles[,] have failed to establish quality democracies, build inclusive societies and bring economic prosperity to their countries.

Gumede (2017) further argues that the culture within these movements is the reason why many of them have failed as ruling parties. Various scholars (Dorman, 2006; Gumede, 2017; Melber, 2002, 2009, 2010, 2011; Soler-Crespo, 2019; Southall, 2003) agree that the nature of the armed struggles in the various contexts produced a certain political culture within the liberation movements concerned; Southall (2003:31) terms this "the logic of national liberation". The liberation struggles forced these movements to organise in strict military hierarchies and adopt rough survival techniques and strategies (Dorman, 2006:1086; Melber, 2010). Melber (2008) also argues that, when liberation movements (specifically those in southern Africa) came to power, political office-bearers were still being influenced by their own military mindsets. Not only did such mindsets have a considerable impact on the (undemocratic) political culture that developed within these movements, but this culture in turn also influenced the mode of governance adopted by liberation-movement governments as well as the internal workings of the subsequently formed parties. In other words, the strict political and organisational hierarchy that was formed during the liberation struggles was maintained. In many cases, this experience and history led to the suppression of dissenting voices and enabled different factions to emerge. In sum, this political culture affected the liberation movements' transition into political parties as well as their behaviour as ruling parties.

Dorman (2006:1086), who has investigated the legacy of liberation struggles in Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, states the following on how this type of political culture has developed within liberation movements:

> Prolonged warfare leads to the development of hierarchies, hardship and brutality have been experienced, and links with external supporters and arms dealers have been strengthened. These factors continue to influence the style of governance, institutional reforms and relations with civilian populations 'post-liberation'.

Nonetheless, it is also important to note that a number of liberation movements in southern Africa did not come to power through military victories, but rather through negotiated settlements and democratic elections (Dorman, 2006:1087). Thus, liberation movements have had to transform themselves into political parties that could function within a liberal democratic setting. This metamorphosis has been difficult for several liberation movements.

According to Southall (2003:31), the political culture – or, as he refers to it, the "logic of national liberation" – is authoritarian in nature and reluctant to engage with democracy. Rather than promoting democracy, it suppresses it. This authoritarian culture/logic became more prominent during the armed struggles against white-minority settler governments, such as those in South Africa and Zimbabwe (Southall, 2003:32). Where this culture has become completely dominant and entrenched, it can lead to an almost desperate clinging to power – as was amply demonstrated in the Zimbabwean case. When this authoritarian culture/logic has to engage with an opposition within a liberal democratic setting (such as that which obtains in Namibia or South Africa), the outcome of the democratic regime remains in the balance. Thus, once liberation movements are in power, they display features and tactics that are rooted in their experiences of armed conflict.

A feature of concern in liberation movements' political culture is that these movements portray themselves as the sole liberators of populations, and that they are therefore entitled to be afforded these populations' loyalty (Soler-Crespo, 2019:3). Such movements view themselves as the only legitimate rulers. Their rhetoric toward opposition parties is also of concern, if one bears in mind that the existence of multiple parties is crucial to a functioning and healthy democracy. In other words, there is a continuation of the liberation rhetoric as well as the we/they divide adopted during the struggle. According to Dorman (2006:1092), the exclusionary rhetoric manifests once the dominant parties are challenged by the opposition or civic groups. In many instances, the opposition is accused of working against the 'national interest' and is, therefore, dismissed as being 'racist' or 'counter-revolutionary'. This is also evident in the South African case where opposition parties such as the Democratic Alliance are vilified as being 'racist' and against the national democratic revolution (NDR).

In essence, when you are not with the liberator, you are the enemy (Melber, 2002). The increasing blurring of the boundaries between the party and the state, and the equation of the party being the government and the government being the party, mean that any opposition is viewed as hostile, branded an enemy of the people, and admonished for acting against the national interest. Melber (2011:86) states the following in this respect:

> There is a lack of (self-)critical awareness and extremely limited willingness to accept divergent opinions, particularly if they are expressed in public. Nonconformist thinking is interpreted as disloyalty, if not equated with treason.

By using this type of exclusionary language, dominant liberation movements establish themselves as the only legitimate rulers due to their status as the principal liberators. A further important characteristic of liberation movements is their intention to capture state power and dominate the spheres of government.

Liberation struggles in southern Africa were mostly focused on taking power from colonial and/or white minority settler rule (Southall, 2003:35). There was a sense that, due to liberation movements' capture of state power, these movements should stay in power permanently (Melber, 2011:89). This conviction contrasts with democratic values and processes. However, it is important to understand that, even though democratic rule was a desired outcome, it was never the main goal. In most cases, decolonisation and the removal of white minority regimes by any means necessary were the goals (Melber, 2011:82–83). Resistance was about remaking the state in the image of the liberation movements' ideology, objectives, and goals. Therefore, democracy was in many instances converted into anti-democracy. Salih (2007:673) states the following in this regard:

> … liberation movement leaders' persistent politicking under the banner of liberation, with all its military and violent connotations, not only calls into question their democratic credentials, it speaks loudly of a leadership mindset that found it difficult to turn its back on the revolutionary methods that brought them to power in the first place.

The way in which former liberation movements have governed is in many ways a reflection of the internal dynamics of the liberation movement itself. For instance, within liberation movements, there is usually an elite who make decisions on behalf of the organisation; this in turn promotes an authoritarian tendency within liberation movements (Gumede, 2007:13). This tendency is also reflected in how former liberation movements have enforced party discipline and their sometimes-violent reaction to so-called sell-outs (Southall, 2003:1093). The spoils of liberation have also created many conflicts within the formal party structures when it comes to compensation and rewards. This issue has also plagued the ANC and will be explored in more detail elsewhere in this chapter.

Another telling and somewhat undemocratic feature of liberation movements is the suppression of the individual/personal in favour of the collective (Melber, 2010). This also speaks to the Marxist–Leninist–Maoist ideological convictions which place the collective or group above the individual. There is, therefore, an incongruence between these convictions and the values of a liberal democracy which emphasises the predominance of the individual.

The experience of armed liberation struggles has impacted the political culture that has developed within these movements. This political culture, this "logic of national liberation" (Southall (2003:31), has also, therefore, influenced liberation movements' governance style in the post-liberation era. Furthermore, there is a close link in southern Africa between liberation-movement governments and dominant party systems. The next section will focus on the concept of these systems.

In southern Africa, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe are characterised by a single party's dominance by its winning of successive

elections as a result of popular support and/or its control over state resources (Southall, 2003:37). In some cases (e.g. Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe), single-party dominance has resulted in undemocratic practices and the imposition of hybrid or semi-authoritarian systems, i.e. a hegemonic party system that is not free. In other cases (e.g. Botswana, Namibia and South Africa), single-party dominance has led to the establishment of dominant party systems that operate within a (sometimes flawed) democratic framework. This corresponds to De Jager and Du Toit's (2013) typology that speaks about a non-authoritarian, free system characterised by party dominance.

Prolonged political and electoral dominance by one party is not conducive to the health of a democratic system. Such dominance is even more perilous if the ruling party in question has a history as a liberation movement. South Africa, for example, is still recognised as a democratic regime, albeit with several flaws. However, there are several major concerns with party dominance in the country, including the following typical indicators of it: (i) the fusion of party and state; (ii) a sense or culture of entitlement among the ruling elite; (iii) the delegitimisation of opposition; and (iv) the denunciation of minority groups who mobilise around certain issues (Southall, 2003:37). This is certainly the case with the ANC and South Africa. It therefore remains to be seen whether South Africa will continue as a non-authoritarian and free system or if it will slip into a competitive authoritarian one.

For democratic consolidation to become a reality, it becomes even more important to focus on the actions of the incumbent party. In the South African case again, the ANC's actions can either contribute to the further deterioration of democratic values and practices or help to restore the public's confidence in, and demand for, democracy. The more the ANC elite abuses its position in power, the further South Africa will move to a partly free system and one where citizens find other, undemocratic ways of engaging with government.

## Democratic consolidation: When is democracy safe?

Democratic consolidation can be described as the process as making democracy the "only game in town" (Schedler, 1998:91). This process of democratic consolidation has become particularly important for democracies that emerged after the Third Wave of democratisation around the world in the early 1990s. A key aspect of democratic consolidation is to prevent democracy from slipping back into authoritarianism. *Democratic erosion* means the gradual weakening of democracy, its institutions, and processes. Some argue that a central element of democratic consolidation is an alternation in power (Beetham, 1994:160; Schedler, 1998:98). There are questions around this conceptualisation because it is possible for democratic values to become entrenched even though the incumbent party has been in power for some time.

Schedler (2001:68) argues that there are behavioural, attitudinal, and structural foundations to democratic consolidation. When everyone respects the 'rules' of the democratic game, democracy is consolidated behaviourally. If people violate democratic rules, it can lead to democratic erosion. In short, for democracy to be consolidated, antidemocratic behaviour must be absent. *Antidemocratic behaviour* includes the following: (ii) the promotion and use of violence; (ii) the rejection of elections; and (iii) government officials reject the rule of law and the boundaries of their office (Schedler, 2001:71). Furthermore, when there is democratic consensus among the broader public, not just the political elite, a democracy is consolidated attitudinally (Schedler, 2001:75). Thus, there is intrinsic – instead of instrumental – support for democracy. As regards structural consolidation, this occurs when the socio-economic conditions and institutional factors favour the democratic disposition. Abject poverty and inequality in a country, for example, would pose a significant danger to democratic consolidation (Schedler, 2001:81).

There are other definitions of *democratic consolidation* that focus on the establishment of a democratic political culture (Diamond, 1996; Leftwich, 2000; Linz & Stepan, 1996). Linz and Stepan (1996:16), for instance, state the following:

> In short, with consolidation, democracy becomes routinized [sic] and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life, as well as in political calculations for achieving success.

Diamond (1996:33) similarly argues that *democratic consolidation* is –

> … is the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation [sic], such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine.

Thus, *democratic consolidation* entails a shift from an authoritarian to a democratic political culture.

A democracy is consolidated where all stakeholders can pursue their interests according to rules-based, peaceful competition, cooperation, and negotiation, and where one government succeeds another via these democratic processes (Leftwich, 2000:135). In other words, these democratic processes, behaviours, and institutions become the norm and standard. Thus, democratic consolidation is more than just avoiding authoritarian regression, but rather about establishing widespread acceptance of democratic rule – the creation of a democratic political culture. The next section will focus on the ANC's transition from a liberation movement to ruling party, the nature and pitfalls of that transition, and what the ruling party's struggles mean for democratic health and consolidation in South Africa.

# ‘Divine right of liberators’: Power, money, and the root of corruption

The ANC has successfully leveraged its status as a (former) national liberation movement to establish its support base and its position as dominant party. However, the elitist nature of the transition to democratic rule, the social capital gained as a result of the liberation struggle, and the ANC’s electoral dominance have all contributed to entrenching a culture of entitlement among members of the ruling party. Since South Africa’s democratisation in 1994, almost 30 years ago, the project of societal repair and renewal has degenerated into a fierce battle for resources among the political elite. The ANC’s continued victories at the polls have created a false sense of security and an (arrogant) dismissal of ordinary South Africans’ plight. The party has continued to portray itself as a liberation movement and, therefore, the only party that could govern legitimately.

This political dominance by the ANC, coupled with its history as a liberation movement, has blurred the lines between party and state. This has left the ANC with the advantages – and dangers – of political power. A case in point is the symbiotic relationship between the ANC and the various arms of government, which has led to large-scale corruption and looting of state resources. Opposition parties, in turn, have struggled to compete with the ANC’s electoral dominance and have also found it difficult to keep the ruling party accountable. However, growing discontent with corruption and maladministration is causing fractures in the ANC’s political and electoral supremacy. The way the ANC responds to these challenges is crucial. If the ruling party opts to continue down this path of corruption and lack of accountability, there is a very real possibility that South Africa will become an illiberal or competitive authoritarian system as opposed to a liberal democratic one. The next section places focus, firstly, on the ANC’s controversial cadre deployment policy, and secondly, on how this strategy has contributed to state capture and endemic corruption.

## Cadre deployment

The ANC adopted its controversial cadre deployment as part of a larger strategy linked to the NDR. The NDR dates to the 1960s, the height of the liberation struggle. The strategy was developed by communist intellectuals within the movement to try to conceptualise the relationship between the overarching aim of international socialism and the immediate task of national liberation (Butler, 2007:39). This overarching aim is “the creation of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society” (ANC, 1997), i.e. the transformation of the state and of South African society. The ANC also places itself at the centre of this project and views itself as the embodiment of the national will (De Jager, 2009:279). During its 50th National Congress in 1997, for example, they stated the following (ANC, 1997):

> The ANC is a vanguard for all the motive forces of the NDR, the leader of the broad movement for transformation. Its leadership has not been decreed but earned in the crucible struggle and battles for social transformation.

The ANC's intent with cadre deployment was to infiltrate all areas of the state and society in order to advance and implement its policies and strategies. One section of the 1997 document also refers to this strategy as "winning hegemony" (ANC, 1997:1). Clearly, for the ANC, winning political power and controlling the government policymaking process are not sufficient: the party also desires to permeate the conscience of the South African polity and to influence most aspects of life. The transformation of the state requires that the ANC seize and extend its power to all levels of influence, including the defence force, the police, the bureaucracy, intelligence structures, the judiciary, the media, parastatals and agencies such as regulatory bodies, and the central bank (Southall, 2008). In other words, the NDR and this project of transforming the state and society urges the ruling party to control the state.

This radical transition entails the quick achievement of "demographic representivity" [sic] in all the important institutions of the economy, society and state (Southall, 2008). Thus, transformation is conceptualised in terms of race – all institutions within society, private or public, must reflect the racial composition of South African society (De Jager, 2009:282). The ANC's role in this project of transformation is crucial. In fact, the party views itself as the only legitimate authority for achieving South Africa's social transformation. Gumede (2007:13) also notes this conflation of liberation movement and the people based on how liberation movements perceive themselves as the embodiment of the nation itself. In addition, liberation movements' legitimacy stems from them acting as representatives on behalf of the people (Melber, 2009:453).

The dangers of the cadre deployment strategy are evident when one considers the blight of corruption and the poor effects on governance. However, this strategy and the influence of factional power struggles in the deployment process have led to a stalemate within the party, which has stalled efforts to address the strategy's negative consequences. Booysen (2011:378) put it as follows:

> There was widespread recognition that the ANC's performance in government was increasingly and directly affecting the longevity of its power. Yet, loyalty to comrades was the other side of the coin – with power-bloc construction and aversion to alienating potentially powerful ANC players and their followers frequently an unspoken bottom-line.

Against this background, the next section will focus on state capture, how the ANC's history as a liberation movement has contributed to state capture, and the effect of state capture on democratic health.

## State capture

State capture has become synonymous with Jacob Zuma's tenure as President and ANC leader. The notion refers to the "looting of state organs and companies by elements of the ANC, spearheaded by Jacob Zuma during his two terms as President" (Schulz-Herzenberg & Southall, 2019:6). It is also important to understand that state capture has been far more insidious than mere corruption. Arguably, the Zuma faction within the ANC and government, along with the Gupta family, aimed to create a parallel state that could be manipulated and controlled by ANC elements. Furthermore, state capture has created a socio-economic crisis in the country, following the failure of state-owned enterprises such as the national energy company, Eskom; the national airline, South African Airways; the national railway company, Transnet; and the national broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). State capture has damaged investor confidence, economic growth, and the state's ability to deliver basic services. In short, it has brought South Africa to the brink of being a failed state.

According to the Corruption Perception Index, South Africa ranks 70th out of 180 countries, with a score of 44 out of 100 (Transparency International, 2019). Among African countries, South Africa ranks 9th; it is 34th in the world and has a score of 61 out of 100. Even South Africans themselves do not have much confidence in the government's ability to curb or eliminate corruption. According to Afrobarometer (2021), approximately 75% of South Africans said that their government was handling corruption badly.

Notably, however, endemic corruption did not start under the Zuma regime: it simply became more blatant, unashamed, and worse. State capture can be traced back to the ANC's cadre deployment policy and the blurring of party and state. It is important, therefore, to understand that, as a former liberation movement, the ANC aimed to control/capture the state and make it in its own image. Unfortunately, with newfound political power (and dominance), access to state resources, and a sense of entitlement, many ANC cadres saw opportunities to enrich (themselves) rather than empower (others). A lack of parliamentary oversight, a weak opposition, and no political will within the party to address these initial negative tendencies led to a culture of corruption. The consequences of state capture and its impacts are currently the most dangerous threat to South Africa's democracy.

State capture has also brought the ANC to a crossroads. The party's seeming unwillingness and inability to punish corrupt members have exacerbated distrust in democracy and political apathy – as will be discussed later in this chapter. This approach also points to the weak unity within the party along with the need to portray itself as a united front

(Duvenhage, 2020). Indeed, the party has never been more fractured, with deep divisions becoming evident between opposing factions. Endemic corruption – which has led to the near destruction of state-owned enterprises, dire economic conditions, and high levels of unemployment, poverty, and crime have together conspired to erode the ANC's support and its legitimacy. How the party deals with the fallout from this is a litmus test for its survival – and, quite possibly, the survival of the democratic system itself.

## ANC vs ANC: Factionalism and the spoils of war

The ANC's history as an umbrella organisation that has housed many different groups of people with different worldviews and ideas has meant that the party has had to deal with disagreements within its ranks for many years. However, with the attainment of political power, the battle has not necessarily just been about ideological differences: this time it is for the very essence of the ANC. The factions have formed around power and access to state resources. The nature of the conflict is now about ousting political enemies that stand in the way of a particular group's agenda. In many ways, the battle lines between factions have been linked back to state capture. This is evident in the factional tussles among the last three Presidents, namely Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma, and Cyril Ramaphosa.

The factions that have formed in the wake of the 2017 election have deepened the divides among ANC leaders per se. Furthermore, the July 2021 riots that came about as a result of Jacob Zuma's imprisonment illustrated that these divisions within the ANC can have destructive and even deadly consequences. That violent eruption also illustrated the ruling party's descent into almost primordial, tribal politics, marked by violence and ethnic mobilisation. If this trend continues, it not only spells danger for the ANC's grip on political power, but it also threatens to upend South Africa's (increasingly fragile) democratic regime.

### Cracks in the surface: Factions, divisions, and the emergence of COPE and the EFF

Since around 2012, the ANC has experienced significant infighting and power struggles between different factions. In some instances, these conflicts have led to splits whereby ANC members left and formed new political parties. The first of these splits took place in 2008 with the removal of Thabo Mbeki as ANC and South African President. This was preceded by the 2005 removal of Jacob Zuma as South Africa's Deputy President due to allegations of corruption and his involvement with associates linked to an arms deal. The decision regarding Jacob Zuma was not agreed on by all within the ruling party (Southall, 2009:317). In the ANC's 2007 national elective conference in Polokwane, Zuma won the party leadership battle against Mbeki and became president of the party.

There was a perception among Zuma supporters that the National Prosecuting Authority's case of corruption against him had been politically motivated, essentially a witch-hunt (Southall, 2009:318). By September 2008, Judge Chris Nicholson had dismissed the charges against Zuma, and determined that there had indeed been political interference in his ousting as Deputy President of the country (Russell, 2009:251). These events led to the ANC recalling Mbeki to serve as the country's President again.

On reflection, the Polokwane conference that led to a change in ANC and state leadership was more about the change of guard and a shift in leadership style than about fundamental changes in central ANC policies (Fikeni, 2008:31). Southall (2017:182) argues the following when discussing the battle between Mbeki and Zuma:

> It was therefore battles around jobs, privileges and perks rather than ideology, and resentment at the President's personal appointment of acolytes as premiers and metro council mayors, as well as to numerous other posts, which shaped the power struggle between Mbeki and Zuma.

In the aftermath of Mbeki's recall, some of his supporters – most notably Minister of Defence Mosiua Lekota and Premier of Gauteng Province Mhbazima Shilowa – resigned and called for a convention (Southall, 2017:175). This convention, held in 2008, was focused on creating a breakaway party that could engage with other opposition parties and form a challenge to Zuma's ANC. Thus, the Congress of the People (COPE) was formed, and it competed in the 2009 elections. COPE members and supporters were of the view that the ANC had been hijacked by Zuma and his supporters and were discarding its heritage. In many ways, COPE became the mirror image of the ANC and was supported by a broad range of people, including public servants, the emerging (black) middle class, trade unionists, communists, and those ousted or marginalised by the new ANC leadership. COPE's emergence was initially met with a sense of excitement because it had the potential to challenge the ruling party electorally in subsequent elections. Southall (2017:180) stated the following in this regard:

> More generally, COPE has been extensively heralded as representing the first significant breakaway from the ruling party capable of offering the latter a major electoral challenge, and perhaps within a few years replacing it.

The new party managed to win an impressive 7.42% of the vote during its first national elections in 2009 (Independent Electoral Commission, 2019). However, the enthusiasm with which it had initially been greeted was short-lived as its support plummeted to 0.67% in 2014. This was in part due – ironically – to internal leadership struggles between Lekota and Shilowa.

The ANC's second major split occurred after the expulsion of Julius Malema, leader of the ANC Youth League, in 2012 (Bauer, 2012). He had become increasingly insubordinate

to and critical of the ANC's leadership, particularly of Jacob Zuma. The expulsion left Malema in a political wilderness within the ANC. This prompted him and other expelled ANC Youth League members such as Floyd Shivambu to form the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in 2013. The EFF has emerged as the second largest opposition party and has become a regular thorn in the ruling party's side. The EFF went on to become the third largest party in the 2014 and 2019 elections. It managed to garner 6.35% of the vote in the 2014 national elections, which grew to 10.8% in the 2019 elections (Independent Electoral Commission, 2019).

The EFF was based on the ideological convictions of the ANC Youth League during Malema's term as its president (Essop, 2015:217). The party's worldview is rooted in Marxism–Leninism, and it displays a penchant for radical and theatrical politics. Since 2013, the EFF has managed to gain extensive media coverage because of its radical and controversial actions (Mbete, 2014:35). The EFF attempts to attract those who are unemployed, are poor, or feel disenfranchised (Adams, 2018:102; Roberts, 2019:98). This approach appeals to the unemployed, frustrated youth who are not loyal to the ANC or its legacy. The EFF represents a group of South Africans who feel excluded from the current social contract embodied in the Constitution (Adams, 2018:114). This sense of exclusion is also related to the view that the post-1994 period has provided political freedom but not economic freedom or material prosperity (Essop, 2015:214). With the party's socialist convictions, it advocates for the nationalisation of mines, banks, and other industries; for expanding the influence and capacity of the state; for the provision of free services such as healthcare and education; for land expropriation without compensation; for developing the South African economy; for a focus on industrial development to stimulate job creation; and various other aspects not, or insufficiently, catered for by other parties (Mbete, 2014:40). It remains to be seen whether the EFF can continue to grow and attract voters or whether it will reach an electoral ceiling with its radical, controversial, and often inflammatory tactics.

More recently, the emergence of Cyril Ramaphosa as ANC president has also exposed further fault lines in the ruling party. Ramaphosa won a bitterly fought ANC leadership race against Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma at the ANC's 2017 national conference, by a slight margin of 179 votes (Hunter, 2017). Furthermore, the top six leadership posts in the ANC were split between the members of the two contesting candidates' factions.[1] The change of ANC leadership also led to the forced resignation of Jacob Zuma as

1 These factions refer to a pro-Zuma faction, which supported Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's failed Presidential bid, and the Ramaphosa faction, which supported investigations into state capture. The pro-Zuma faction was comprised of the so-called Premier League – Supra Mahumapelo (former North West Premier), Ace Magashule (former Free State Premier), and David Mabuza (former Mpumalanga Premier and current Deputy President) (Umraw, 2017). This so-called Premier League was instrumental in increasing ANC membership in their respective provinces. In the case of Mahumapelo and Magashule, they encouraged their delegates to support the Dlamini-Zuma presidency; in Mabuza's case, the support was split.

South Africa's President (Tromp & Patel, 2018). For many South Africans, the election of Ramaphosa as ANC leader in December 2017 and his elevation to the country's presidency were met with a sense of expectation and renewed hope. However, due to the slight margin by which he won the ANC leadership and the fact that the top leadership was composed of people in the Zuma faction, Ramaphosa has been cautious in enforcing and implementing his vision for the party.

He has had the difficult task of dealing with both the divisions in his own party along with major socio-economic challenges (a weak economy, the COVID-19 pandemic, failing state-owned enterprises, etc.). Thus, instead of bold changes, the Ramaphosa presidency has been characterised by an incremental, cautious approach to appease various stakeholders and factions (Calland, 2019). He has also faced resistance from within the party by those who were – and in some cases still are – loyal to Zuma (Calland, 2019; Greenstein, 2018). This loyalty has played out in various ways. One of the starkest illustrations of it were the July 2021 riots that spread from KwaZulu-Natal to Gauteng as a result of Zuma's arrest.[2] The riots were not only part of a well-orchestrated campaign aimed at destruction, but also part of a more insidious focus on destabilising the state. Booysen (2021) writes the following on the aftermath of the July riots:

> The effects of the Zuma-linked July 2021 explosion will be felt for a considerable time, both by the ANC and South Africa. It is a tale of knock-on effects when a political party with lingering Struggle legitimacy becomes the de facto one-party hegemon within a multiparty democracy. Party and state fuse. The party's problems reverberate nationally.

The ANC's legacy as a liberation movement has reverberated throughout its tenure as ruling party. In most cases, this struggle-related internal culture, with its associated behaviours and actions, has tarnished the democratic disposition. Governance-related challenges and internal divisions have seriously tested the ANC's electoral dominance and will be increasingly decisive in years to come. Booysen (2011:5), however, makes the following statement about the current political situation in South Africa (original emphasis):

> A cohering, broadly trusted and in-charge ANC, the popular argument seems to be, will better serve the interests of South Africa than an ANC that crumbles and has *no* prospect of gaining mastery of government, and specifically of policy and delivery. Opposition parties are certainly not trusted to take over.

---

Eventually, Ramaphosa narrowly won the ANC leadership by 179 votes (Umraw, 2017). Due to the closeness of the race and their influence, Magashule and Mabuza were elected as Secretary-General of the party and Deputy President of the country, respectively.

2 Former President Zuma was arrested due to contempt of court in July 2021 (Booysen, 2021).

The next section will focus on the socio-economic challenges that South Africans have faced and how many have expressed their dissatisfaction at this state of affairs.

## "*Cry, the beloved country*"[3]: Unfulfilled promises and civil discontent

Since 1994, South Africa has struggled with the dichotomy of establishing a democratic regime with all the hopes that promise brings, on the one hand, versus the dire material circumstances – poverty, unemployment, income inequality – of the black majority, on the other. The ANC's ascent to power was met with great enthusiasm for a better future, specifically an improvement in people's material prosperity. However, this newfound hope has steadily been eroded since then and is being replaced by increasing discontent and dissatisfaction. This section will now explore the socio-economic challenges that most South Africans face, and how many have expressed their dissatisfaction by way of protest action.

### Politics of the belly: Socio-economic struggles and rising desperation

South Africa has experienced major socio-economic challenges in since 2003. Unfortunately, since the emergence of democratic rule in 1994, a large portion of South Africans have continued to experience poverty, unemployment, income inequality, and a lack of infrastructure and resources. Instead of inequality being eradicated, it has worsened – and the gap between the haves and the have-nots has grown. South Africa is considered as one of the most unequal societies in the world, with a Gini coefficient[4] of 0.63 as at 2014, when it was last measured (World Bank, 2022a). In fact, according to the World Bank (2022a) data, South Africa is the most unequal society in the world. Even though the Gini coefficient declined from 0.72 in 2006 to 0.63 in 2014, there are crucial variations within a number of population groups domestically (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Black South Africans show the highest income inequality, with a Gini coefficient of 0.68, followed by the so-called Coloured population (0.58), the Indian/Asian population (0.56), and white South Africans (0.51).

This unequal state of affairs does not bode well for the health and consolidation of a democratic regime. If the material conditions of most South Africans – who are the electoral majority – do not improve, there is a danger of people ultimately rejecting democracy. Further exacerbating factors are the increase in unemployment and the high

3 Title of a novel by Alan Paton, set in the time leading up to apartheid South Africa.

4 The Gini coefficient is an indicator of income inequality, with 0 indicating perfect equality and 1 a completely unequal society (Kotze & Garcia-Rivero, 2018:1).

levels of poverty. As regards unemployment, the official figure has hovered around 25% of the workforce roughly since 2008. However, there has been a steady increase in this rate since 2015 and, by 2021, it had jumped to more than 30% (World Bank, 2022a). An even more alarming statistic is the level of unemployment among young South Africans. For those between the ages of 15 and 24, the unemployment rate is a staggering 64%. For those aged between 25 and 44, it is 43% (World Bank, 2022a). This also helps to explain the political apathy that many young South Africans express toward politics and democratic participation. As regards poverty, the rate was estimated at 55%, or 30 million South Africans, in 2022 (World Bank, 2022a). These statistics worsened with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the poverty rate currently being estimated at nearly 60%. Those who live in extreme poverty (earning less than R441 per person per month) had increased from 11 million in 2011 to 13.8 million by 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

As already mentioned, the fragile South African economy was further damaged by the impact of COVID-19, which exacerbated these socio-economic challenges. The biggest economic impact was on growth, which came to a standstill in 2020 after the economy contracted by 7.6%. By 2021, growth had increased to 3.6%, but the damage done by the pandemic will have long-lasting socio-economic effects (World Bank, 2022a; World Bank, 2022b).

South Africans are economically and socially fragile, with these socio-economic challenges pushing many to the edge of desperation. In addition to rising poverty, inequality and unemployment, other pressures have also crippled the economy. The drastic increase in diesel/petrol prices has driven up the cost of living significantly and many ordinary South Africans are struggling to survive. Along with that, several rate increases have put the middle class under more pressure. In addition, Eskom's woes are far from over. In 2021, loadshedding returned in full force, contributing to economic stagnation and potentially scaring away investors. These conditions require decisive government intervention, appropriate policies, and the political will to rebuild crucial institutions and infrastructure. If the ruling party and government fail to address these conditions, South Africans will continue to 'check out' of the democratic system, which could in turn lead to a dangerous and volatile future. The next section will focus on how the socio-economic conditions and poor governance have driven many South Africans to the brink of desperation.

## Politics of protest: A failed state and (the lack of) service delivery

There is a direct correlation between South Africans' dissatisfaction with democratic rule and the socio-economic conditions described in the previous section. More alarmingly, many South Africans have opted not to express this satisfaction within the democratic 'rules of the game'; instead, they have increasingly reverted to the politics of protest to

have their voices heard. This indicates a disconnect between the governed and those who govern, which is dangerous to democratic consolidation. It is also clear that democratic consolidation is strongly connected to the material conditions people experience; if those needs are not met, it is difficult for a democracy to become consolidated.

According to the Quality of Government data set (2016, cited in De Jager & Parkin, 2017:12) South Africa's quality of government in 1994 was relatively high, but it has declined sharply since then. In the period after the euphoric transition and the Mandela presidency, the stark reality of apartheid inequalities, the government's failure to effectively address socio-economic challenges, and the ruling party's increasing appetite for corruption have led to public dissatisfaction. According to Afrobarometer (2021) Round 8, 72.8% of South Africans believed that the county was moving in the wrong direction. Another concern is the lack of trust that the public displays in important institutions. Round 8 also showed that close to 60% of South Africans expressed distrust in the President, nearly 70% expressed distrust in Parliament, and 72% did so in respect of local government (Afrobarometer, 2021) – the last being the sphere of government responsible for providing many of the basic services people need.

This evidenced lack of trust is directly correlated with poor service delivery and a lack of accountability. Once again, this is mostly felt at a local government level. Many South Africans have used protest action to express their dissatisfaction and frustrations. Booysen (2011:126) notes the following in this regard:

> ... protest has frequently been used to pressurise the elected ANC government to do more, to deliver on election promises, [or] to replace local leaders[;] or as a minimum, it has been used to extract promises and reassurances from [the] ANC government. South Africans have crafted protest to supplement the vote, not to substitute … voting.

Protests have steadily increased since 2003. In fact, the average number of protests has increased nine-fold per year if one compares the period 2004–2008 with that of 2015–2019 (Visagie et al., 2021). Protest action is deeply rooted in South African society and the reasons for it are varied. According to Visagie et al. (2021), protests have been linked to a sense of unfairness when one community has obtained better services than another, when unfulfilled electoral promises have led to years of frustration promises, and when social inequalities have persisted.

Thus, in many ways, protesting is part of South Africa's political culture and a holdover from apartheid. However, a potential danger is that many disgruntled people will resort to extralegal, violent protest action instead of 'kicking the rascals out' via the ballot box. The next section explores the future of South Africa's democracy and the role the ANC plays in determining that future.

## Democracy or bust?

The aforementioned sections lead to the question of whether democracy in South Africa is safe or in danger. At this point, there are major concerns about democratic health and consolidation. The factors discussed in the previous sections are impacting the citizenry's participation in, support for, and acceptance of, democracy. In the last few elections, voter turnout has steadily declined. This state of affairs reflects apathy and disillusionment with the democratic process (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2020:4). De Jager and Parkin (2017:8) have also commented on this situation in South Africa:

> Voter turnout in the last three national elections (2004–2014) shows that less than 60 percent of eligible voters decided to vote, and it is clear that many are opting out of the democratic process of elections. Instead of voicing their discontent by punishing the ruling party at the polls and voting for an opposition party, citizens are increasingly using non-conventional methods of political participation.

Voter turnout in South Africa has declined with every election since 2009. The lowest turnout was in 2019, when only 66.05% of registered voters participated in the election, compared with 48% in 2014. Of even greater concern is that less than 50% of eligible voters (47.28%) voted in 2019. This is another sharp decline from 2014 levels (53.77%). A major concern is that the turnout in respect of the voting age population has decreased by almost 40% since the 1994 election, i.e. from 85.53% of the voting age population in 1994 to 47.28% of eligible voters in 2019. Indeed, more than 10 million eligible voters decided not to register for the 2019 national elections (Table 1). South Africa's most recent turnout of eligible voters (2019) is comparable to that in other low-turnout countries in terms of eligible voters (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2020:4). This decline in turnout once more speaks to the disillusionment that South Africans are experiencing with democratic rule. This is a troubling trend if one considers how important political participation is for democratic consolidation.

***Table 1: Voter participation, 1994–2019***

| Year | Voter turnout | Total vote | Registration | VAP* turnout | VAP* | Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2019 | 66.05% | 17,671,616 | 26,756,649 | 47.28% | 37,372,792 | 55,918,443 |
| 2014 | 73.48% | 18,654,771 | 25,388,082 | 53.77% | 34,691,652 | 54,002,000 |
| 2009 | 77.30% | 17,919,966 | 23,181,997 | 56.57% | 31,678,238 | 49,052,489 |
| 2004 | 76.73% | 15,863,554 | 20,674,926 | 56.77% | 27,944,712 | 42,768,678 |
| 1999 | 89.28% | 16,228,462 | 18,177,000 | 63.86% | 25,411,573 | 42,424,823 |
| 1994 | 86.87% | 19,726,610 | 22,709,152 | 85.53% | 23,063,910 | 40,436,000 |

Source: Author compilations using 2019 data derived from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

* Voting age population

Age plays a determining role whether individuals cast a vote or not (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2020:27). In this regard, the 21st century has seen a steady decrease in young (aged 18 to 29) voters' rate of electoral participation. This is a global phenomenon (Zvaita & Tshuma, 2019:24). In the case of South Africa, young voters in this age cohort are less likely to participate in elections because they do not have the strong party loyalties their parents may. Young South Africans have also expressed a certain level of cynicism about politics, which affects their political participation. Importantly, Zvaita and Tshuma (2019:25) note that young South Africans "find formal political processes not only frustrating and alienating but also less likely to yield desired results". This younger cohort is also not easily persuaded or mobilised by other networks/institutions (social network, organisations, media) to participate, but rather tend to "rely on current, short-term political and economic evaluations when deciding whether to vote or not" (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2020:27). The continued disengagement on the youth's part will continue to have a negative impact on voter turnout and the subsequent stability of democratic rule. The next section will discuss South Africans' dissatisfaction with democracy and the factors that contribute to it.

## (Dis)Satisfaction with democracy and democratic rule

South Africans are increasingly disillusioned and dissatisfied with democratic rule as a result of debilitating socio-economic realities, corruption and poor governance. This stance is directly related to the issues discussed in the previous section. According to Afrobarometer (2021) Round 8, only 40% of South Africans preferred democracy above other non-democratic options. This outcome represents a 30% decline in comparison with the Round 5 survey (Afrobarometer, 2021), in which over 70% of South Africans indicated that democracy was preferable. Of greater concern is that only 23% of respondents registered a demand for democracy (Mattes, 2019:9). This puts the country in the bottom five of African democracies in terms of demand for democracy (Mattes, 2019:9).

The democratically elected South African government's inability to improve the material circumstances of the majority of the population is causing many of its citizens to 'opt out' of democracy. South Africans are also generally dissatisfied with democracy and, according to Dryding (2020:11), 62% of South Africans would, on average, forego a democratic regime for one that would deliver law and order and socio-economic benefits. From these statistics, it is evident that the majority of South Africans demonstrate instrumental – not intrinsic – support for democracy.

The steady decline of South Africans' satisfaction with, and support for, democracy is illustrated in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 indicates how the level of dissatisfaction with democracy has increased and how satisfaction has decreased. Even more troubling is the significant decline, as evidenced in Table 3, in the number of people who consider

democracy as the preferred type of government. Since 2013, this number dropped by more than 30%, i.e. from 71.9% in 2013 to 40.8% in 2021. The decline is directly related to South Africans' perceptions of the ANC-led government's performance. However, the more South Africans reject democracy, the more difficult it will be to sustain democratic norms, values and practices, including the value of voting and using the ballot box to 'kick the rascals out'.

### *Table 2: Satisfaction with democracy in South Africa, 2013–2021*

| Survey response options | Afrobarometer survey* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Round 5 (2011/3) | Round 6 (2014/5) | Round 7 (2016/8) | Round 8 (2019/21) |
| *Not a democracy* | 0.2% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 0.9% |
| *Not at all satisfied* | 11.0% | 23.4% | 30.7% | 34.8% |
| *Not very satisfied* | 28.0% | 26.2% | 26.0% | 31.4% |
| *Fairly satisfied* | 41.1% | 37.0% | 30.5% | 23.5% |
| *Very satisfied* | 18.8% | 11.1% | 11.7% | 7.9% |
| *Don't know* | 0.8% | 1.8% | 0.7% | 1.4% |

* Responses to the survey question *Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in South Africa?*

Source: Author compilation based on Afrobarometer (2021)

### *Table 3: Support for democracy in South Africa, 2013–2021*

| Survey response options | Afrobarometer survey* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Round 5 (2011/3) | Round 6 (2014/5) | Round 7 (2016/8) | Round 8 (2019/21) |
| *Doesn't matter what kind of government we have* | 10.8% | 15.3% | 25.6% | 37.1% |
| *Sometimes non-democratic preferable* | 14.8% | 17.4% | 18.6% | 19.8% |
| *Democracy preferable* | 71.9% | 63.8% | 54.2% | 40.8% |
| *Don't know* | 2.6% | 3.4% | 1.7% | 2.3% |

* Responses to the survey question *Which of these statements is closest to your own?*

Source: Author compilation based on Afrobarometer (2021)

As the responses in Tables 2 and 3 reveal, the inherent value of a democratic form of government is becoming conflated with the government's poor performance. The danger of this outcome is that many South Africans are no longer expressing their dissatisfaction at the polls. Instead, many are using non-conventional forms of participation such as protesting and civil disobedience, which are outside the confines of legal political

participation (De Jager & Parkin, 2017:9). Thus, a political culture where violent protests, riots, civil disobedience, and vigilantism occur daily is not conducive to democratic consolidation. In addition, the decline in voter turnout and in support for the ANC spells trouble for the ruling party. In the next section, the decline in ANC support is discussed in more detail.

## Punished at the polls: The ANC's declining electoral popularity

In recent election cycles – both local and national – the ANC's dominance has slowly been eroded. This is due to several reasons, among which are corruption and state capture; poor socio-economic performance; and increased pressure from opposition parties and civil society organisations. The 2016 local municipal elections proved to be a watershed moment for the ANC and, in turn, for the trajectory of South Africa's political future. Firstly, opposition parties were able to wrest control from the ruling party in the Johannesburg, Tswane and Nelson Mandela Bay municipalities, albeit through coalition agreements (De Jager & Parkin, 2017:8). Secondly, the 2016 elections in question pointed to the ANC's electoral decline as a reflection of the electorate's disillusionment with the ruling party owing to corruption and its inability to deliver on policies (Engel, 2016:103).

The decline in support for the ANC in national elections since 2004 (Table 4) is linked to a steady decline in voter registration and turnout – as discussed elsewhere in this chapter. This steady decline of electoral support should be of concern to the party because it relates to South Africans' disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the current situation.

### *Table 4: The ANC's electoral performance, 1994–2019*

| Electoral performance measure | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of votes | 62.64% | 66.35% | 69.69% | 65.90% | 62.15% | 57.50% |
| Number of seats (out of 400) | 252 | 266 | 279 | 264 | 249 | 230 |

Source: Author compilation based on Independent Electoral Commission (2019)

### *Table 5: Trust in the ruling party, 2002–2021*

| Survey response options | Total | Round 2 2002/3 | Round 3 2005/6 | Round 4 2008/9 | Round 5 2011/3 | Round 6 2014/5 | Round 7 2016/8 | Round 8 2019/21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Not at all* | 23.0% | 25.4% | 13.0% | 20.1% | 14.9% | 31.7% | 36.1% | 46.9% |

| Survey response options | Total | Round 2 2002/3 | Round 3 2005/6 | Round 4 2008/9 | Round 5 2011/3 | Round 6 2014/5 | Round 7 2016/8 | Round 8 2019/21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Just a little* | 25.1% | 35.0% | 21.3% | 22.5% | 23.1% | 24.4% | 23.6% | 24.2% |
| *Somewhat* | 24.7% | 23.6% | 27.3% | 26.0% | 32.5% | 22.1% | 14.3% | 12.1% |
| *A lot* | 23.3% | 8.7% | 34.4% | 23.6% | 28.5% | 20.8% | 23.8% | 14.7% |
| *Don't know* | 3.9% | 7.4% | 4.0% | 7.8% | 1.0% | 1.0% | 2.1% | 2.1% |

Source: Author compilation based on Afrobarometer (2021)

Distrust in the ruling party (Table 5) increased markedly in the last few Afrobarometer surveys (Rounds 5–8; Afrobarometer, 2021). This abrupt rise can be attributed to increasing widespread corruption, poor governance, and socio-economic challenges (unemployment, poverty, inequality). Many people have lost faith in the ruling ANC, who offer many electoral promises but manage to deliver on only a few. This has caused the ruling party to lose support, a tendency which was at its most pronounced during the Zuma years. The heightened distrust also points to South Africans' dissatisfaction with democracy – as discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

## The future of South Africa's democracy

Democratic politics in an African context is closely associated with the so-called politics of the belly. This association is also reflected in the South African context. The reality is that, if governance and living standards are not improved, South Africans will not just reject the ANC, they may opt for alternatives to democracy. What, then, is required? In an ideal situation there would be a peaceful handover of political power to any new party that obtains an electoral majority. This handover seems unlikely in the near future, despite the ANC's loss of electoral support because South Africans trust opposition parties even less than they do the ruling party. There is a slight possibility that, by the next general election – depending on how quickly the ANC loses support – there could be a coalition government. However, that would spell even greater danger. Coalition governments are volatile, prone to disruptions and ruptures, and generally weak when it comes to making and implementing policy. South Africans need a government with the political will, skills, and resources to make and implement effective policies to change the dire socio-economic circumstances of a the majority of the country's population.

As a ruling party, and with that power still firmly in its grip, the ANC is once again at a crossroads. If the party decides to allow the Radical Economic Transformation faction led by the likes of Ace Magashule to gain control, democratic health and consolidation will be in peril because it could mean the rise of an illiberal/hegemonic system. However,

if the ANC decides to deal with corruption within its ranks decisively and it can govern with a semblance of accountability and integrity, it will bode well for democratic health and consolidation.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored and discussed the ANC's history as a liberation movement, what that social capital meant for democratic health and consolidation, and what the future of democracy might look like in the South African context. There is an uneasy relationship between liberation-movement governance, political dominance, and democratic consolidation.

Liberation movements such as the ANC were forged under (sometimes violent, militaristic) circumstances. As a result, such movements have developed their own 'logic of liberation' or political culture. With the advent of the third wave of democracy across the globe and the transition of many southern African states from minority rule to democratic rule, liberation movements had to make the transition from being freedom fighters to ruling parties. The nature of these former liberation movements has caused difficulty in adjusting to, and operating within, the confines of democratic rule. As a result, southern Africa has seen the establishment of party dominance in the wake of transitions to democracy. In some cases, party dominance, coupled with the experience of a liberation struggle, would lead to the establishment of an illiberal or hegemonic system. In others, a competitive authoritarian system would emerge and some – like South Africa – would see the development of a liberal dominant party system (non-authoritarian and free). However, one of the key questions on which this chapter has focused was whether South Africa, under the rule of the ANC, would remain on this democratic path or descend into authoritarianism. To provide a sufficient answer to this, it is important to understand what is required for democratic consolidation to take place.

Democratic consolidation is reliant on certain attitudinal, behavioural, and structural elements. In short, it relies on the establishment of a democratic political culture that engenders intrinsic as opposed to instrumental support for democracy. Behaviourally, democratic consolidation requires actors to operate within the confines or 'rules' of the democratic 'game'. Lastly, democratic consolidation is also related to socio-economic conditions that are conducive to strengthening democracy and government institutions.

In South Africa, democratic consolidation is in jeopardy on all three fronts. Attitudinally, many South Africans have showcased alarming dissatisfaction and a lack of support for democracy. Behaviourally, actors have not played by the rules of the game in many instances. This behaviour is evident among those who looted government coffers via state capture. The appropriate behaviour required to consolidate democracy is also absent among the citizenry who opt for violent, non-democratic means to express their

dissatisfaction with the political status quo. Structurally, democratic consolidation is under pressure due to many socio-economic challenges. These challenges include inequality, poverty, unemployment and poor infrastructure. These structural indicators have in turn had a negative impact on people's satisfaction with, and desire to participate in, democracy. The ANC's inability to curb corruption, its poor performance in government, and its factional infighting have all contributed to the non-consolidation of democracy in the country. South Africa's democratic prospects will only improve if the political will and sound governance prevail. Without those two elements, the continued survival of a democratic regime is in danger.

## References

Adams, R. 2018. South Africa's social contract: The Economic Freedom Fighters and the rise of a new constituent power? *Acta Academica*, 50(3):102–121.

Afrobarometer. 2021. *Round 8, 2019/2021. Online data analysis tool: Round 8 2019/2021*. Accra: Afrobarometer.

ANC/African National Congress. 1997. *Policy documents. 50th National Congress: Strategy and tactics as amended by conference*. http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=2424, last accessed 15 June 2022.

Bauer, N. 2012. Out! ANC upholds Julius Malema's expulsion. *Mail & Guardian*, 24 April 2012 [Online]. https://mg.co.za/article/2012-04-24-malema-expelled/, last accessed 12 September 2023.

Beetham, D. 1994. Conditions for democratic consolidation. *Review of African Political Economy*, 21(60):157–172.

Bereketeab, R. 2018. Introduction: Understanding national liberation movements. In Bereketeab, R (Ed.). *National liberation movements as government in Africa*, pp 3–16. London/New York: Routledge.

Booysen, S. 2011. *The African National Congress and the regeneration of political power*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Booysen, S. 2021. South Africa's July riots and the shadow of Jacob Zuma fall over party and state. *Daily Maverick* [Online], 30 July 2021. https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2021-07-30-south-africas-july-riots-and-the-long-shadow-of-jacob-zuma-fall-over-party-and-state/, last accessed 13 July 2022.

Butler, A. 2007. *Cyril Ramaphosa*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media; Oxford: James Currey.

Calland, R. 2019. Backstabbers limit Ramaphosa. *Mail & Guardian* [Online], 20 December 2019. https://mg.co.za/article/2019-12-20-00-backstabbers-limit-ramaphosa, last accessed 5 July 2022.

De Jager, N. 2009. No 'new' ANC? *Politikon*, 36(2):275–288.

De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P. 2013. Introduction. In De Jager, N, & Du Toit, P (Eds). *Friend or foe? Dominant party systems in southern Africa: Insights from the developing world*, pp 3–20. Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

De Jager, N, & Parkin, AC. 2017. Whither the ANC's dominance? Waning electoral dominance, rising hegemonic dominance. In Thuynsma, AH (Ed.). *Political parties in South Africa: Do they undermine or underpin democracy?*, pp 1–22. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa.

Diamond, L. 1996. Is the Third Wave over? *Journal of Democracy*, 7(3):20–37. http://www.f.waseda.jp/pbacon/files/temple/larry.pdf, last accessed 11 June 2022.

Dorman, S. 2006. Post-liberation politics in Africa: Examining the political legacy of struggle. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(6):1085–1101.

Dryding, D. 2020. Are South Africans giving up on democracy? *Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 372*. Accra: Afrobarometer.

Duvenhage, A. 2020. Ramaphosa fails to show leadership as difficult and decisive year looms. *The Conversation* [Online], 12 January 2020. https://theconversation.com/ramaphosa-fails-to-show-leadership-as-difficult-and-decisive-year-looms-129762, last accessed 10 July 2022.

Engel, U. 2016. Zupta's next nightmare: The South African Local Government Elections of 3 August 2016. *Africa Spectrum*, 51(2):103–115.

Essop, T. 2015. Populism and the political character of the Economic Freedom Fighters – A view from the Branch. *Capital and Society*, 48(1&2):213–238.

Fikeni, S. 2008. The Polokwane moment and South Africa's democracy at a crossroads. In Kagwanja, P, & Kondlo, K (Eds). *State of the Nation South Africa 2008.* Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Gibson, R. 1972. *African liberation movements: Contemporary struggles against white minority rul*e. London/New York/Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Greenstein, R. 2018. Can Ramaphosa centre the ANC and quell opposition parties? *Mail & Guardian* [Online], 11 March 2018. https://mg.co.za/article/2018-03-11-can-ramaphosa-centre-the-anc-and-quell-opposition-parties/, last accessed 14 July 2022.

Gumede, W. 2007. Africa: How we killed our dreams of freedom. *New Statesman*, 2 April 2007, pp 12–14.

Gumede, W. 2017. The democracy deficit of Africa's liberation movements turned governments. *Politikon*, 44(1):27–48.

Hunter, Q. 2017. Cyril Ramaphosa wins ANC presidential race. *Times Live* [Online], 18 December 2017. https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2017-12-18-cyril-ramaphosa-wins-anc-Presidential-race, last accessed 27 June 2022.

Independent Electoral Commission. 2019. *Election results*. https://www.iec.gov.bw/index.php/election-results/election-results-2014.html, last accessed 10 July 2022.

Kotze, H, & Garcia-Rivero, C. 2018. The evolution of the middle class during nearly two decades of democracy in South Africa. *Politikon*, 45(3):387–407.

Leftwich, A. 2000. *States of development. On the primacy of politics in development*. Cambridge: Polity.

Linz, J, & Stepan, A. 1996. Toward consolidated democracies. *Journal of Democracy*, 7(2):14–33.

MacFarlane, N. 1985. *Superpower rivalry and 3rd World radicalism. The idea of national liberation*. London/Sydney: Croom Helm.

Mattes, R. 2019. Democracy in Africa: Demand, supply, and the 'dissatisfied democrat'. *Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 54*. Accra: Afrobarometer.

Mbete, S. 2014. The Economic Freedom Fighters: South Africa's turn towards populism? *Journal of African Elections*, 14(1):35–59.

Melber, H. 2002. From liberation movements to governments: On the political culture in southern Africa. *African Sociological Review*, 6(1):161–172. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/asr/article/view/23208, last accessed 11 January 2023.

Melber, H. 2008. Beyond settler colonialism is not yet emancipation: On the limits to liberation in southern Africa. https://www.ascleiden.nl/pdf/paperMelber.pdf (12 June 2010), last accessed 11 May 2023.

Melber, H. 2009. Southern African liberation movements and the limits to liberation. *Review of African Political Economy*, 36(121):451–459.

Melber, H. 2010. The legacy of anti-colonial struggles in southern Africa: Liberation movements as governments. *LINKS – International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, 26 May 2010. http://links.org.au/node/1704, last accessed 5 June 2022.

Melber, H. 2011. Liberation movements as governments in southern Africa – On the limits to emancipation. *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 33(1):78–103.

Montiel, CJ, & Rodriguez, AMG. 2009. Liberation movements during democratic transition: Positioning with the changing state. In Montero, M, & Sonn, CC (Eds). *Psychology of liberation: Theory and applications*. New York: Springer.

Paton, A. 2002. *Cry, the beloved country.* London: Vintage Classics.

Roberts, B. 2019. The Economic Freedom Fighters: Authoritarian or democratic contestant? In Schulz-Herzenberg, C, & Southall, R (Eds). *Election 2019: Change and stability in South Africa's democracy*, pp 97–112. Auckland Park: Jacana Media..

Russell, A. 2009. *After Mandela: The battle for the soul of South Africa*. London: Windmill Books.

Salih, MA. 2007. African liberation movement governments and democracy. *Democratization*, 14(4):669–685.

Salih, MA. 2018. Varieties of African liberation movement governments. In Bereketeab, R (Ed.). *National liberation movements as government in Africa*, pp 17–32. London/New York: Routledge.

Schedler, A. 1998. What is democratic consolidation? *Journal of Democracy*, 9(2):92–105.

Schedler, A. 2001. Measuring democratic consolidation. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 36(1):66–92.

Schulz-Herzenberg, C. 2020. The South African non-voter: An analysis. *The Midpoint Paper Series No. 2/2020*. Johannesburg: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung NPC South Africa.

Schulz-Herzenberg, C, & Southall, R. 2019. Introduction: The South African elections of 2019. In Schulz-Herzenberg, C, & Southall, R (Eds). *Election 2019: Change and stability in South Africa's democracy*, pp 1–11. Auckland Park: Jacana Media.

Soler-Crespo, D. 2019. *The slow death of liberation movements in southern Africa*. Pamplona: Navarra Center for International Development, University of Navarra.

Southall, R. 2003. *Democracy in Africa: Moving beyond a difficult legacy*. Cape Town: HSRC Publishers.

Southall, R. 2008. Thabo Mbeki's fall: The ANC and South Africa's democracy. http://www.opendemocracy.net, last accessed 29 May 2022.

Southall, R. 2009. Understanding the 'Zuma Tsunami'. *Review of African Political Economy*, 36 (121):317–333.

Southall, R. 2017. The congress of the people: Challenges to South African democracy. *Representation*, 45(2):173–191.

Statistics South Africa. 2017. *Poverty trends in South Africa: An examination of absolute poverty between 2006 and 2015*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=10341, last accessed 15 July 2022.

Transparency International. 2019. *Corru:ption Perception Index 2019*. https://www.transparency.org/cpi2019?/news/feature/cpi-2019, last accessed 7 July 2022.

Tromp, B, & Patel, K. 2018. Time's up: Jacob Zuma has resigned. *Mail & Guardian* [Online], 14 February 2018. https://mg.co.za/article/2018-02-14-zuma-address/, last accessed 26 June 2022.

Umraw, A. 2017. The rise of the Premier League, and their failed bid to install NDZ. *Huffpost* [Online], 12 December 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2017/12/19/the-rise-of-the-premier-league-and-their-failed-bid-to-install-ndz_a_23310554/, last accessed 19 June 2022.

Visagie, J, Turok, I, & Swartz, S. 2021. What lies behind social unrest in South Africa, and what might be done about it. *The Conversation* [Online], 18 August 2021. https://theconversation.com/what-lies-behind-social-unrest-in-south-africa-and-what-might-be-done-about-it-166130, last accessed 21 June 2022.

World Bank. 2022a. *Poverty and equity brief – Africa Eastern and Southern: South Africa*. https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_ZAF.pdf, last accessed 10 July 2022.

World Bank. 2022b. *World development indicators*. https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators, last accessed 22 June 2022.

Zvaita, G, & Tshuma, D. 2019. Political fatalism and youth apathy in South Africa: An analysis of the 2019 General Election. *Conflict Trends*, 20–29.

# Part III:
# Between democracy and authoritarianism

# Democratisation and the survival of liberation movements in southern Africa: The case of Zambia's United National Independence Party

**Aaron W Siwale and Biggie Joe Ndambwa**

Throughout Africa, few political parties have survived after successfully removing European colonial governments. In Zambia, the experience of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) is not very different from that of other liberation parties on the continent. UNIP governed Zambia from 1964 to 1991 with Kenneth Kaunda as President. UNIP was founded in October 1959 by freedom fighter Mainza Chona. Kaunda later assumed leadership of UNIP after he was released from prison in 1960. UNIP played a critical role in Zambia's independence struggle and later on in the southern African region. In 1964, Zambia became an independent sovereign state with UNIP winning the majority of seats in the National Assembly. In the 1968 general elections, UNIP won both the presidency and 81 of the 105 seats in the National Assembly (Kashimani, 1995; Phiri, 2001).

In 1973, the country became a one-party participatory democracy with UNIP as the only legally allowed political party in the country (Ndambwa, 2015). The general election of 1973 described the steps which were meant to consolidate UNIP's rule and survival. According to Zambia's Constitution, UNIP's president was selected at the party's general conference, and the second-ranking person in the Zambian hierarchy was UNIP's secretary-general. The Constitution also stipulated that UNIP's president was the sole candidate for President of the Republic; the incumbent would be confirmed in office every five years via a yes/no referendum (Phiri, 2001). Voters chose between multiple UNIP candidates for the 125 parliamentary seats, with three candidates running in each constituency. Kaunda was confirmed as President with 89% of the vote. Elections were held under the same system in 1978, 1983 and 1988, with Kaunda receiving at least 80% of the vote each time (Kashimani, 1995).

However, at the end of 1990, multi-party democracy was reintroduced, and UNIP was heavily defeated in the 1991 general elections by the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD). The events after 1991 show that UNIP was struggling to survive as evidenced by its poor performances in subsequent elections. For instance, following changes to the Constitution – which effectively barred Kaunda from running for President again – UNIP boycotted the 1996 general elections, although two members contested National Assembly seats. The party returned to contest the 2001 elections with Kenneth Kaunda's son, Tilyenji, as its presidential candidate; he received 10% of the vote, finishing fourth out of the 11 candidates. In the National Assembly elections, the party won 13 seats.

This chapter discusses the reasons why UNIP, like other independence parties, has found it difficult to survive and compete after the reintroduction of multi-party politics in 1991. The discussion also offers a brief prelude to the development of multi-partyism in Zambia since 1991.

## Literature review

As Chongo (2016) records, liberation movements successfully waged wars of national liberation, forcing white minority regimes to negotiate independence under black majority rule. This success partly stemmed from extensive diplomatic, military, and material support extended to various liberation movements by regional alliances such as the Frontline States as well as transnational state actors and solidarity movements. In Siwale and Momba's (2020) chronicle of some of the issues of party institutionalisation in an independent Zambia, they report that political parties in the country – even previous ruling parties such as UNIP, the liberation movement – fail to function after they lose power due to a lack of funding. In most cases, this loss of power can also be traced to a lack of resilient structures providing a framework for coordinated, inclusive and sustainable governance.

This chapter examines salient aspects of Zambia's contribution as a prominent regional actor to the liberation wars in southern Africa. In doing so, it underlines the nature and significance of Zambia's support for liberation movements. The chapter also shows that Zambian authorities under UNIP's leadership employed a dual strategy – war and diplomacy – in seeking to secure black majority rule in the southern African region. However, for mainly economic reasons, these authorities were more inclined to pursue diplomatic approaches rather than rely exclusively on violence. They backed armed struggle only to the extent that it was a necessary instrument to coerce the white minority regimes to come to the negotiating table, but this strategy had limited success, and created numerous tensions and contradictions.

It must nonetheless be acknowledged that Kaunda's dominance in UNIP and in government greatly shaped the political culture of countries that set up bases in Zambia

for their liberation struggles. These included the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) leading the struggle for Namibia, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) doing so for Zimbabwe and, to a moderate extent, the African National Congress doing so for the democratisation of South Africa. The magnitude of Kaunda's and Zambia's influence is manifested in how long the parties in power have persisted in those countries even though the leaders of the ANC, SWAPO and ZANU PF have changed. However, the change of leaders still shows that so-called Big Men are in control of politics and governance in those countries, as most of the new leaders still have a connection to the liberation struggle based on the roles they played at the time. It is, therefore, safe to suggest that Kaunda and UNIP played a major role in shaping the political systems of a number of countries in southern Africa. The major question then rests on understanding why UNIP, the role model for regional politics, failed to maintain political power itself and compete effectively in opposition, whereas other resistance movements that assumed government leadership in sovereign states that were inspired by UNIP's model of party organisation have managed to persist in power since their respective countries' independence or democratisation (Scarritt & Nkiwane, 1996). Answering this question is important in understanding the role played by the UNIP government in fighting liberation wars in southern Africa.

A plethora of scholars has acknowledged the paradox that exists between political parties in consolidating democracies and those in developed democracies (see e.g. Lupu & Riedi, 2012; Parpart et al., 1984). Some have argued that there are strong ideological similarities between political parties that were established many decades ago in consolidated democracies and such parties that have emerged in developing democracies (Mainwaring & Mariano, 2006). Divisions within political parties that emerged after various countries around the African continent achieved their independence – especially countries that had embraced a one-party system and one leader, as the case of UNIP reveals – caused those parties to become unstable. UNIP resorted to a one-party participatory democracy where the presidency was not up for competition, since Kaunda was preferred as a permanent president (with the slogan *Kumulu Lesa, Panshi Kaunda Wamuyayaya*, which translates as "In Heaven it is God, and on Earth it is Kenneth Kaunda as President forever"). This left many politicians who had presidential ambitions with no choice but to fight Kaunda's government and break away from UNIP. For instance, former UNIP and Republican Vice President Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe founded the United Progressive Party and competed effectively in the 1971 elections (Kashimani, 1995; Phiri, 2001). This scenario is reminiscent of pre-independence days, where a number of different African political parties fought for the same cause but had to merge in order to succeed.

Nevertheless, there is a dilemma. On the one hand, many political parties in consolidating democracies fail to survive, even if such parties have formed a government before and have held a majority of parliamentary and local government seats. On the other hand, political parties in developed democracies have always remained stable. Gunther et al. (2002) posit that, while political parties in advanced democracies easily adapt to new

environments, they experience other challenges as well; one arises due to structural changes in society which manifest in the form of new youthful voters, which entails finding ways to mobilise them and manage their expectations (Lupu & Riedi, 2012). Political parties in consolidating democracies also face serious challenges, including the effects of party disorganisation and other uncertainties. For instance, the advent of social media has impacted party organisation: the ways in which party sympathisers and opponents now engage parties have changed – which means that party mobilisation drives have to change as well.

The evidence from consolidated democracies shows that advances in the use of technology for mass political mobilisation and other changes in society do not result in the extinction of political parties (Ndambwa, 2020). Rather, parties adjust and find alternative ways to reorganise themselves, and they continue to operate and pursue the goals for which they were established. For instance, Lupu and Riedi (2012) argue that parties in consolidated democracies have faced uncertainties emanating from technological developments that call for new strategies for engaging the masses to participate in political processes through social media and improved radio and television broadcasting. It could be said that effective party mobilisation would be affected negatively by these new technologies since the interaction between parties and voters has to be done through the media, i.e. remotely, rather than in person. However, the United States of America and other developed countries that have held elections and used social media to campaign for votes have done so successfully – even under severe restrictions such as those imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, it has become commonplace in the developed world for political parties to adjust to new realities and employ social media such as Twitter and Facebook to campaign. Had these parties been rigid and unable to use social media for their campaigns, it would have impacted their popularity negatively.

These new methods of interaction also pose a challenge for parties to recruit party members that they can easily influence and control. However, parties in consolidated democracies in Western Europe in particular have shown that they can resist and survive unexpected shocks, such as periodical difficulties in party organisation, whereas parties in consolidating democracies fail to resist any major shock in the political environment and subsequently become defunct. In other cases, a number of breakaway parties are formed. Cases in point here are those parties that broke away from the MMD and established separate parties. Strangely enough, these breakaway parties did not have leaders that were staunch UNIP adherents; rather, they were hostile to UNIP. However, many of these breakaway parties soon became defunct. Only the Patriotic Front and the United Party for National Development persisted, and eventually formed governments between 2011 and 2021. Notably, for these parties to succeed, they tended to follow the traits of UNIP politics, where the individual founders of the parties concerned dominated in top leadership positions and determined who contested on the party ticket in national elections.

Lupu and Riedi (2012) further observe that political parties in developing countries are relatively new and often reflect the ideologies of an associated 'sister party' that existed under their former colonial powers. Lupu and Riedi (2012) conclude that the relative democratic age of a political party affects the success of its organisation and determines how it responds to external shocks such as technological advances; poor organisation and failure to accommodate technological change mean such parties fail to survive. When these parties become defunct in their original form due to internal differences that they fail to resolve, they may reincarnate as new parties. Lupu and Riedi (2012) add that political parties in consolidating democracies also fail to survive partly because they fail to address the challenges of party mobilisation, the shortage of funds needed during and after elections, and the absence of concise and codified party rules.

The study by Lupu and Riedi (2012) sheds light on why political parties in Zambia have or have not survived. The determining factors in this regard involve the internal sphere of party organisation, namely the issue of funding strategies and intra-party democracy in all party programmes. In UNIP's case, intra-party democracy was a complicated issue. Although UNIP's constitution had allowed for a one-party participatory democracy in which party members competed against each other, the party effectively reserved the country's presidency for only one individual – Kenneth Kaunda. This exclusivity later affected the party when it transitioned from a ruling position to the opposition because it failed to compete effectively and, hence, did not survive as a ruling power. The party's failure to grasp the tradition of exchanging the presidency amongst the membership arguably made it difficult to select leaders that would rebrand the party and compete to regain power. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Kaunda's son, Tilyenji Kaunda, held on to the UNIP presidency for two decades. A pivotal event occurred after the 1991 elections, however, when UNIP members crossed over to other political parties where they could finally participate in intra-party activities. However, why did they not remain with the party and effect reforms that would enable it to adapt to the new democratic world order? It therefore appears that the main reason for the mass exodus from UNIP was the party's failure to conform to the new politics or to the new regime's specific kind of politics; these had an immense impact on UNIP's survival. Changing the the Zambian Constitution to bar Kenneth Kaunda from contesting elections again as well as technically blocking other likely successors to him made it difficult for UNIP to reorganise (Parpart et al., 1984; Phiri, 2001).

Similarly, Ferdinand and Fernando (2016) posit that structural changes in consolidated liberal democracies such as those of Western Europe have negatively affected the organisation of political parties. The two scholars observe that the increased levels of higher education among the population have negatively affected the bond that existed between political parties and society, and that new value orientations and a weakening class structure have correspondingly weakened the relationship that long served to link political parties and voters. Furthermore, these trends have severely impacted political

parties' ability to mobilise society and aggregate citizens' different interests. This weakening social rootedness has also negatively affected political parties' strategies to mobilise voters during electoral campaigns and increase opportunities to recruit more voters. This reduced not only party membership, but also parties' income – which was essential for party organisation. However, regardless of these observed challenges, political parties in developed European democracies have persisted. The above findings by Ferdinand and Fernando (2016) inform the current study in terms of grasping why many political parties in consolidating democracies fail to survive when faced with various organisational challenges, on the one hand, or how they can adjust to different political environments and continue to survive, on the other.

*Institutionalisation* refers to the process by which a political party "acquires value and stability" as an end in itself (Huntington, 1968:12). Salih (2003) writes that African political parties have been institutionalised through both internal and external pressures. To strengthen his argument, Salih (2003) writes that political parties have failed to live up to their responsibility of ensuring that states and society democratise. In Salih's (2003) opinion, the observed traits of institutionalisation in a few African parties could be described as cosmetic only, as the search for African alternatives is slow in coming. He further postulates that many – if not all – political leaders focus on one function of political parties alone, namely maximising the opportunities that come their way to gain unmatched control of, and access to, state resources and civil service personnel. This, Salih (2003) believes, has resulted in African political parties being far less concerned with the fundamental problems such as economic development, poverty alleviation and public policy reform that confront African peoples in their organisation strategies, and this detaches them from the expectant electorates. Salih (2003) further suggests that new political parties still face old governance challenges that manifest very broadly, including how to adjust and coordinate the interests of power seekers blinded by the illusion of power; how to ensure that inclusivity is respected within the existing differentials in social and political interests; how to maintain the coercive authority of the state; and how to eliminate the unpleasant effects of majoritarian tyranny vis-á-vis the minorities. While Salih (2003) generalises his findings across Africa, he fails to acknowledge that, even in the process of democratisation among African states, the way political parties operate is not uniform: each country is unique in this regard, for various reasons. Nonetheless, the current study employed Salih's general conclusions about African parties to understand the specific reasons why UNIP failed to survive, despite the solid reputation the party had on the continent as well as globally. Arguably, when UNIP lost control over national resources after 1991, it played a major role in the party failing to maintain its party structures and its constant interaction with the voting populace (Baylies & Szeftel, 1992).

Also in this regard, Momba (2005) investigated the external regulations and environment under which Zambian political parties operate by examining the functioning and internal organisation of four such parties in particular. Although he found no legal or

administrative inhibitions to freedom of association, Momba (2005) revealed that the application of the Public Order Act (No. 3 of 1996) greatly disadvantaged opposition parties. Notably, African political parties had complained about this law in Zambia even during the liberation struggle; however, even after these parties had assumed governance themselves, they maintained the law (Momba, 2005). In addition, Momba (2005) discovered that a number of critical state institutions in Zambia – including the public media and, at times, the police service – had acted to the detriment of opposition parties. Momba (2005) also observed a general decline in party membership subscriptions over time for both the ruling party and opposition parties. Furthermore, the lack of a distinctive party ideology as well as party members not duly accounting for party funds impacted negatively on democracy and party performance – especially when the time came for members to vote (Momba, 2005). However, Momba's (2005) research only focused on four parties and mainly investigated the external factors affecting political party operations, i.e. the external regulations and environment influencing those operations. The current study therefore sought to limit the number of political parties to one – UNIP – so that party-internal democracy could be examined directly, along with how this milieu within UNIP affected its survival in Zambia.

Previous empirical studies (Siwale, 2016; Siwale & Momba, 2020) reveal that parties face serious difficulties to survive. This is mainly because parties are suffocated by factors such as failure to contain individual power seekers that are not interested in uniting the general membership to work together and attract more voters. Furthermore, these studies reveal that employing a top-down approach in party organisation blocks intra-party democracy from thriving and disconnects parties from the electorates. Finally, failing to integrate a wide range of societal actors and the lack of funding, among other things, affect party survival as well as effective participation in political processes (Siwale, 2016). The current study seeks to build on these findings by trying to establish why, regardless of such challenges in the political environment, some political parties persist but UNIP continues to struggle to survive.

## Analytical framework

The analytical framework is based on a revised model, originally devised by Selznick (1957) and Huntington (1968) and used by several scholars since, to analyse the survival and endurance of political parties. The model contains three different, but related, concepts used to analyse various indicators of institutionalisation (Ndambwa, 2015). Selznick (1957:17) states that "to institutionalise is to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand". *Stability* also denotes that an organisation is no longer a mechanistic entity that is easily altered or eliminated, or that fails to perform its functions effectively (Ndambwa, 2015).

As an organisation institutionalises, it survives various internal and environmental challenges, such as the reintroduction of multi-party politics. *Value* denotes "the prizing of the organisation for its own sake" (Selznick, 1957:17). As a party institutionalises, it acquires a distinctive identity, a way of acting, and tasks it acts upon. For the organisation, its value is also a matter of political power exhibited by its capacity to survive environmental changes (Huntington, 1968). As a conceptual construct, *institutionalisation* can be examined more concretely by understanding certain indicators first proposed by Huntington (1968), namely autonomy, adaptability, complexity, and coherence.

If one were to add an external dimension to Huntington's model of indices for measuring institutionalisation, one needs to consider the stability and value of leadership as well as a party's capacity to adapt to political change and other pressures in its social environment. In the current study, the model for measuring external as well as internal institutionalisation used three distinct but related indicators: *functional rigidity*, *leadership cohort rigidity*, and *resource mobilisation capacity*. According to Huntington (1968), these indicators have had far-reaching implications on the survival and endurance of parties established at independence as well as after the introduction of multi-party democracy.

The most common political reasons for the survival and endurance of a former liberation party that has assumed governance entail its failure to adapt to the new political environment under a multi-party system. The indicator for UNIP's party institutionalisation here, then, is its relative *functional rigidity*. *Political adaptation* is pertinent in this context because it relates to the relative flexibility inherent in a party to respond to changes in its political environment. UNIP, for example, failed to respond to two main indicators of such adaptation. The first of these indicators is ensuring a generational change in the party leadership hierarchy, i.e. the building of authority associated with the transitioning from one generation to another (Huntington, 1965). The second indicator of political adaptation is f*unctional adaptation* (Huntington, 1968). It refers to the ability of an independence party to acquire new functions in addition to those performed when it was first established. UNIP, for instance, was created to fight colonialism. Therefore, when an independence party (or, for that matter, a liberation movement) acquires value and stability, it is able to create new functional units without subtracting from the substantive functional units. If an independence party has been able to adapt to changes in the political environment, it must have been able to exercise flexibility in order to enable it successfully to cope with the change in its environment (Huntington, 1968).

*Leadership cohort rigidity* with respect to party institutionalisation in UNIP refers to its relative flexibility to replace one generation of leaders with another (Ndambwa, 2015). If the same generations of leaders continue to perform party functions across generations, then adaptation of party from an independence struggle to a struggle for multi-party

politics becomes problematic (Huntington, 1965). This may be measured by evaluating the percentage of inter-generational changes, as opposed to intra-generational changes whenever there has been leadership change in the political party. Higher percentages of inter-generational changes indicate higher levels of adaptation from the political environment.

The last element of party institutionalisation has to do with *resource mobilisation capacity* in general, and party funding in particular. Zambia has never legally provided for the resourcing of political parties by the state. In 2003, legislation to provide for the funding of political parties, the Political Parties Fund Bill, was introduced in the National Assembly. To promote a healthy and democratic multi-party system, the Bill sought to provide a legal framework that would encourage transparency, accountability and justice in political activities. Furthermore, this legislative reform initiative set forth clear criteria for party registration, finance and internal governance to advance political pluralism, increase citizen engagement in the political process and increase transparency (Chibwana, 2004). However, when the Bill passed its second reading in the House with the unanimous support of the ruling MMD, the incumbent President Levy Mwanawasa rejected the measures. He argued that Zambia did not have the finances required to execute the provisions of the proposed legislation, so the Bill never became law (Simutanyi, 2005).

All political parties raise some of their funds internally through membership dues, levies on Members of Parliament and, especially in UNIP's case, through assets owned by the party (Momba, 2005). These resources do not adequately meet the demands of electoral campaigning; thus, the burden of campaign fundraising falls on a party's leadership. Top party structures are thus obliged to rely on three main sources of funding: the personal wealth of its party leaders, candidates' own funding of their campaigns, and contributions from donors (Kabemba & Eiseman, 2005). These sources of funding undermine the democratic functioning of the parties in Zambia and lead to a disproportionate influence by a few wealthy people on leadership selection and party decision-making. The situation that has emerged in Zambia is little short of a plutocracy. Thus, the trajectory of politics in Zambia suggests that, since 2006, the dominance of one party over others has been a challenge.

## Methodology

The investigation reported here employed a case study research design. A case study is useful for generating an in-depth understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The case study format was applied to the current research rather than, say, a comprehensive comparative enquiry, to enable an in-depth analysis of UNIP as a liberation movement to see why it failed to survive democratic politics and competition. Another benefit of the case study design here is that it fills the need to obtain

an in-depth appreciation of specific issues related to the survival of liberation movements after the Third Wave of democratisation around the globe (Johnson et al., 2016).

The research used qualitative methods in its approach and adopted a non-experimental format. Thus, the researcher had either little or no control over the circumstances under which the research was conducted. The sources of data for the research were both primary and secondary. Primary data were collected through interviews. The interviewees included retired politicians and current UNIP members. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants. Purposive sampling (also known as *judgement*, *selective* or *subjective* sampling) relies on the researcher's own judgement when research participants are selected (Johnson et al., 2016). The study therefore targeted select individuals considered to be knowledgeable about UNIP.

Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews conducted with these key informants. Semi-structured interviews contain the components of both structured interactions (complete control over interview topics) and their unstructured equivalents (no control over such topics). In the semi-structured option, the interviewer has a set of questions to be answered by all interviewees, but additional questions can be asked during the interaction to clarify and/or further expand on certain issues (Johnson et al., 2016). The current research adopted the semi-structured interview because it facilitated obtaining a variety of data through additional questioning, while providing a carefully prepared set of questions to glean a consistent set of required data from each interviewee.

The data were analysed using the content analysis method. This method relies on the content of either on individuals' written or spoken words or their visual representations (Johnson et al., 2016). The current research adopted this data analysis methodology so that the issues brought forward by the key informants could be examined in relation to the investigation subject matter.

## Discussion and analysis

Throughout Africa, few political parties have survived after successfully removing European colonial governments. As the analysis of this case study revealed, UNIP's experience in Zambia was not very different from that of other liberation parties on the continent.

UNIP was founded in October 1959 by freedom fighter Mainza Chona. Kenneth Kaunda later assumed leadership of UNIP after he was released from prison in 1960, where he had served owing to his role as a political activist. UNIP played a critical role in Zambia's liberation struggle. In 1964, Zambia became an independent sovereign state, with UNIP winning the majority of seats in the National Assembly of Zambia. In the 1968 general elections, UNIP won both the presidency and 81 of the 105 seats in the

National Assembly (Phiri, 2001). UNIP governed Zambia from 1964 to 1991 with Kenneth Kaunda as the country's first President. The party's electoral dominance and the relative weakness of any opposition to counter it explains the introduction of a one-party state in Zambia (Simutanyi, 2004). The following section discusses and analyses some of the reasons why UNIP failed to compete favourably after the Third Wave of democratisation.

Like many other liberation movements that became political parties, UNIP performed the usual important party functions of candidate selection, leadership formation, interest aggregation, and agenda development. As a liberation movement, UNIP did very well to help other similar organisations in the southern African region, where it served more broadly as a vehicle for the decolonisation of state apparatus. Immediately after Zambia's independence in 1964, UNIP faced a number of challenges in terms of distinguishing the party's leadership selection from those who would serve in top government positions. The factionalism that later characterised UNIP began right away, when President Kaunda chose Rueben Kamanga as Zambia's Vice President (Geward et al., 2008). One faction in the party demanded a national convention to address the deepening disagreements within the party. Ardent UNIP supporters argued that Vice President Kamanga's installation as Vice President was improper because he had never served as deputy leader of the party (Kashimani, 1995). At UNIP's subsequent convention in 1967, Kapwepwe defeated Kamanga as UNIP's deputy leader. To curb internal factionalism, President Kaunda promoted Kapwepwe to serve as the country's Vice President – a position the latter held until 1970 (Phiri, 2001).

Nonetheless, despite the party having followed a democratic process when selecting Kapwepwe as both party and Republican deputy, internal factions soon demanded his removal. Clearly, internal party democracy could not root out the factions within UNIP. Even though the social forces represented by party members would claim to have played a major role in pressurising the party to hold its 1967 convention, the decision depended largely on UNIP and President Kaunda's discretion. This essentially confirms that a political party will function according to the structural arrangement peculiar to a political community. UNIP's members, for example, came from diverse backgrounds in terms of their economic or social class, religion and ethnicity, among other considerations. These distinctions were as essential to shaping the party's operations – as can be seen by the influence exerted by those who forced Kaunda to replace Kamanga with Kapwepwe (Geward et al., 2008; Phiri, 2001).

As noted by Huntington (1968), even an organisation or procedure that is able to adapt to changes in the system in which it finds itself is likely to face serious challenges from its environment. For instance, UNIP, which is Zambia's oldest political party, has survived many challenges in its day. It has fought colonialism, it has experienced the trials and tribulations both as a ruling party and as the opposition. It would be reasonable to assume

UNIP shood a greater chance of surviving than a party formed in 2016. However, its extended existence – or generational age – is exactly what challenged UNIP's survival.

*Generational age* suggests that, for as long as an organisation has maintained its first set of leaders and the functions are still performed by the same leaders who performed them at the time the organisation was formed, its adaptability is highly questionable. Thus, the survival of long-standing political parties or governments is more likely to be challenged than a counterpart that has served for a shorter time if that organisation/ government continues to be headed by its original generation of leaders – specifically when the average age of the population is younger than that leadership. This is owing to a big gap or variation in interests existing between the leaders and the ruled at a particular moment of challenge. (Huntington, 1965, 1968).

Up until 1991, when UNIP faced its first truly competitive electoral contest, the party was still led by the same set of leaders that governed it when it was formed in 1959. These leaders had fought for the country's independence and had led it during the Cold War. These events alone had already presented the party with the major challenge of adapting to new demands. By the time of socialism's demise in the late 1980s, a new generation of Zambians was arguing that their ageing leaders could not keep up with the new democratic dispensation. Moreover, when UNIP lost the elections, it faced another major challenge: that of rebranding and reorganising itself. However, its first notable leaders continued to be sourced from the Kaunda family, which essentially meant that the party was still being inspired by Zambia's founding President. This can be seen by the party fielding Kaunda in the 1996 elections: it led to the country's Constitution being amended to introduce a parentage clause, which effectively permanently barred Kaunda from ever contesting for the presidency again. The clause required a candidate to have Zambian parents, whereas Kaunda's were of Malawian origin and had moved to Zambia in the early 1900s as missionaries (IPS, 1996).

The constitutional change in 1996 made UNIP boycott the general elections. These boycotts were probably one of the main reasons why UNIP no longer had a grip on Zambian politics: it lost the parliamentary seats it had won in the 1991 general elections as well as any new seats it might have won at parliamentary and local government levels. The decision to boycott elections could also be attributed to UNIP's leadership at the time, as the party was still controlled by the same generation of leaders who would have been reluctant to conform to the new way of conducting politics. Even the attempts to salvage the party after 1996 still fell under the Kaunda name. From 2001 to 2021, the party was presided over by Kaunda's son, Tilyenji Kaunda, and he was usually a sole candidate representing the party in national elections. Notably, the party has not been able to field candidates to contest the parliamentary and local government elections since 2021.

At a general conference held from 2 to 4 April 2021, the party voted for a new president. The successful candidate, Bishop Trevor Mwamba, had just returned from Germany,

where he had been based for several years. Although he was from a different generation than the first set of UNIP's leaders, he was arguably out of touch with the domestic reality on the ground – not only because he had lived outside the country for some time, but also because that life was in a developed country, characterised by different challenges from those that Zambia faced (*Lusaka Times*, 5 April 2021). The effect of choosing a leader from outside the country to represent the party in national elections was reflected in UNIP's poor performance at the polls, where it garnered less than 1% of the total national vote in the 2021 general elections. Thus, the shift from Kenneth Kaunda to Tilyenji Kaunda and then Trevor Mwamba shows that a discord exists between the party's ideology and the needs of the general population.

Another factor affecting liberation parties like UNIP today is party funding. They enjoyed such support in the immediate post-independence era, but not after they lost power in 1991. Siwale and Momba (2020) write that intra-party democracy was and continues to be affected by the financial capacity of the political party concerned. According to an examination of Zambia's political party programmes and their historical backgrounds, all such parties – but especially those in the opposition – were challenged by having insufficient funds to enhance party activities or promote effective participation in democratic processes (Matlosa, 2007; Randall & Svåsand, 2002).

As was noted earlier in the chapter, most political parties depend on voluntary contributions from their general membership. However, such contributions do not even cover the parties' operational costs. Also, membership cards that are supposed to be given to members at a fee are usually issued for free. Moreover, most parties encourage those who defect from other parties to exchange membership cards, which in most cases they also get without paying any fee. Being unable to meet even its operational costs means a party also cannot pay its election fees or meet other essential demands such as buying media space during an election campaign to spread their message to the entire population. Indeed, these financial constraints have resulted in many political parties resorting to endorsing other parties that are able to manage to meet such costs (Sakyi et al., 2015).

UNIP has also not escaped the problems that come with inadequate funding. Having spent less than five years in opposition, the party enjoyed over two decades in power and, as the only party legally allowed to exist in Zambia, direct control and use of state resources without any serious checks. Consequently, the party failed to invest in programmes that could raise funds for the resources it needed to participate in national politics. This is also the main reason why the party has failed to field candidates in a number of elections. Other attempts at representation included entering into alliances with other parties (e.g. with the United Democratic Alliance). However, as the 2006 general elections showed, even though UNIP was once the ruling party, it even had to support the leader from the United Party for National Development (UPND) (Lansford, 2014). One of the many questions that could be asked about this alliance is why UNIP

believed that another party could represent its ideology. Thus, it appears UNIP's survival has been deeply challenged after it lost its position as the ruling party and ceased having access to state resources.

The nature of the party system in Zambia ensured that the MMD remained a dominant force in Zambian politics until 2006. The MMD emerged as the dominant party when mutli-partyism was introduced in Zambia in 1991. Its dominance in both 1991 and 1996 was reflected in the party gaining more than 60% of the votes for both the presidential and legislative elections in each of the two years in question (Simutanyi, 2004, 2013). In the elections between 2001 and 2006, two factors ensured the MMD's dominance. The first was the nature of the first-past-the-post electoral system, which ensured that the MMD remained in power despite only garnering 29% of the vote in the presidential elections and only 28% of the vote for the legislative elections in 2001. Secondly, neo-patrimonialism, the MMD was able through to co-opt members of the opposition to work with them and, in that way, ensured the party had a parliamentary majority (Burnell, 2001; Simutanyi, 2004). The highly fragmented political party system since the introduction of multi-partyism in 1991 also accounts for the fact that no single party in Zambia has since maintained dominance over the others.

## Conclusion

The process of democratisation today is a complex one that emerging democracies have failed to comprehend fully. If one considers the case of UNIP in Zambia, it is not unreasonable to have imagined its survival in perpetuity because it carries within it the memories of a sad history and the sacrifices it made not only in Zambia, but also on the continent. However, the world is a dynamic place. Social forces that change the nature of the political community are constantly emerging. Political parties must, therefore, be constantly aware of these changes and adapt to them in time. Here, UNIP neglected to include a mix of leaders in its echelons that would represent different generations appropriately. Such a change would have empowered the party to understand how to address the changing needs of society.

Furthermore, the continued dominance of the Kaunda family in the party perpetuated the belief that the party continued to reflect the aims it had had during the one-party era. As a result, the party no longer received support from its general membership. In a bid to rebrand itself as a new and vital political force, the party elected a new leader – but he proved to be out of touch with Zambian politics, having lived outside the country for many years. If UNIP attends to some of the concerns mentioned in this study, it stands a greater chance of being revived and may yet compete favourably with other parties in forthcoming elections.

## References

Baylies, C, & Szeftel, M. 1992. The fall and rise of multi-party politics in Zambia. *Review of African Political Economy*, 19(54):75–91.

Boyce, C, & Neale, P. 2006. Conducting in-depth interviews: A guide for designing and conducting in-depth interviews for evaluation input. *Pathfinder International Tool Series: Monitoring and Evaluation – 2*. Watertown, MA: Pathfinder International. https://www.pathfinder.org/publications/guide-designing-conducting-depth-interviews-evaluation-input/, last accessed 11 January 2023.

Burnell, P. 2001. The party system and party politics in Zambia: Continuities past, present and future. *African Affairs*, 100(339):239–263.

Chibwana, C. 2004. Electoral politics in Zambia: Western political science perspectives and African realities. *African Journal of Political Science*, 9(1):51–68.

Chongo, C. 2016. Regional and transnational solidarity in the success of African liberation movements. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 9(6):54–75.

Ferdinand, MR, & Fernando, CB. 2016. *Party politics and democracy in Europe: Essays in honour of Peter Mair*. London/New York: Routledge.

Geward, JB, Hinfelaar, M, & Macola, G. 2008. *One Zambia, many histories: Towards a history of post-colonial Zambia*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

Gunther, R, Montero, J, & Linz, J. 2002. Political parties: Old concepts and new challenges. *Comparative Politics*, 34(3):273–292.

Huntington, SP. 1965. Political development and political decay. *World Politics*, 17(3):386–430.

Huntington, SP. 1968. *Political order in changing societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

IPS/Inter Press Service. 1996. Zambia-politics: Kaunda's comeback finally over. http://www.ipsnews.net/1996/05/zambia-politics-kaundas-comeback-finally-over/, last accessed 1 February 2022.

Johnson, JB, Reynolds, HT, & Mycoff, JD. 2016. *Political science research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.

Kabemba, C, & Eiseman, M. 2005. Multipartyism in Zambia. In Kabemba, C (Ed). *Elections and democracy in Zambia. EISA Research Report No. 6*. Johannesburg: The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa.

Kashimani, EM. 1995. Zambia: The disintegration of the nationalist coalitions in UNIP and the imposition of a one-party state, 1964–1972. *Transafrican Journal of History*, 24:23–69.

Lansford, T (Ed.). 2014. *Political handbook of the world 2014*. Thousand Oaks, CA/London: CQ Press.

Lupu, N, & Riedi, BR. 2012. Political parties and uncertainty in developing democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(11):1339–1365.

*Lusaka Times*. 2021. Tilyenji Kaunda dislodged, Bishop Trevor Mwamba is the new UNIP president. 5 April 2021. https://www.lusakatimes.com/2021/04/05/

tilyenji-kaunda-disloged-bishop-trevor-mwamba-is-the-new-unip-president/, last accessed 14 February 2022.

Mainwaring, SP, & Mariano, T. 2006. Party system institutionalization and party system theory after the Third Wave of democratization. In Katz, RS, & Crotty, WJ (Eds). *Handbook of party politics*. London: Sage Publishing.

Matlosa, K. 2007. *Political parties in southern Africa*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Momba, JC. 2005. Political parties and the quest for democratic consolidation in Zambia. *EISA Report No. 17*. Johannesburg: The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa.

Ndambwa, BJ. 2015. Institutionalisation of legislative leadership in the National Assembly of Zambia. Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Zambia, Lusaka.

Ndambwa, BJ. 2020. Electoral integrity and democratic consolidation. In Banda, T, Kaaba, O'B, Hinfelaar, M, & Ndulo, M (Eds). *Democracy and electoral politics in Zambia*. Leiden: Brill.

Parpart, JL, Gertzel, CJ, Baylies, CL, &, Szeftel, M. 1984. *The dynamics of the one-party state in Zambia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Phiri, BJ. 2001. Colonial legacy and the role of society in the creation and demise of autocracy in Zambia, 1964–1991. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 10(2):224–244.

Randall, V, & Svåsand, L. 2002. Party institutionalization in new democracies. *Party Politics*, 8(1):5–29.

Sakyi, EK, Agomor, KS, & Appiah, D. 2015. *Final report – Funding political parties in Ghana: Nature, challenges and implications*. London: International Growth Centre .

Salih, MMA (Ed.). 2003. *African political parties: Evolution, institutionalization and governance*. London: Pluto Press.

Scarritt, JR, & Nkiwane, SM. 1996. Friends, neighbors, and former enemies: The evolution of Zambia–Zimbabwe relations in a changing regional context. *Africa Today*, 43(1):7–31.

Selznick, P. 1957. *Leadership in administration: A sociological interpretation*. Evanston, IL: Row Peterson.

Simutanyi, N. 2004. *Political opposition and the 2006 elections in Zambia*. Lusaka: Institute of Economic and Social Research.

Simutanyi, N. 2005. Parties in Parliament: The relationship between Members of Parliament and their parties in Zambia. *EISA Occassional Paper No 36*. Johannesburg: Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa.

Simutanyi, N. 2013. Zambia: Manufactured one-party dominance and its collapse. In Doorenspleet, R, & Nijzink, L (Eds). *One-party dominance in African democracies*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Siwale, AW. 2016. The survival of political parties in consolidating democracies: A qualitative case of Zambian political parties 1991–2015. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg.

Siwale AW, & Momba, JC. 2020. Party funding: A crisis of Zambia's multiparty politics: From 1991 to 2016. In Hinfelaar, M, Ndulo, M, Banda, T, & Kaaba, O (Eds). *Democracy and electoral politics in Zambia*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

# Angola's MPLA: Implications for democracy and democratic consolidation

**Alex Vines**

Angola's post-independence instability and political development has its roots deep in history, including Portugal's failure to prepare its colonies for independence and the ethno-regional divisions among nationalist movements that fought the Portuguese and turned on each other. This led to a violent struggle for supremacy at independence in 1975. The *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA, or People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) got Soviet and Cuban support, while apartheid-era South Africa and the West supported the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA, or National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). The MPLA was in effect born out of war and had "its history and purpose informed by the political visions moulded by war and survival" (Ingles 2018:46).[1] The civil war may have ended with all-out military victory in 2002 over its rival UNITA, but the shadow of decades of conflict is still felt today.

These were key external factors behind Angola's decision to adopt and maintain Marxism–Leninism as official policy under President Agostinho Neto and then, after his death in 1979, under José Eduardo dos Santos, although the revolutionary aspects of the Soviet ideology had resonated especially strongly in the anti-colonial struggle. Birmingham (2015) describes Agostinho Neto, the MPLA's first leader and the first President of Angola, as a typical product of the country's complex cultural history. He came from the Kimbundu hinterland of Luanda, spoke excellent Portuguese, and wrote poetry in that language. Although a black African, he associated freely with creoles and mestizos in the colonial cities and married a white woman (Birmingham, 2015). When Neto died from cancer in Moscow in 1979, he was succeeded by José Eduardo dos Santos, a Soviet-trained petroleum engineer, who built up a system of "totalitarian

1 The MPLA emerged in 1956 as an umbrella organisation for various nationalist groups agitating for the end of Portuguese colonialism in Angola. Its major base of support emanated from the Ovimbundu, representing 20% of the population.

presidentialism", according to Birmingham (2015:14), which entailed the centralisation of the presidency.

A long history of Western interference after independence, and the fact that Dos Santos and other early post-independence leaders held power for 38 years, partly explains Angola's current resistance to Western political and economic models. This stance softened from the 1990s, as illustrated by President Dos Santos' visits to the US, and by the current President, João Lourenço, owning property there.

## The post-colonial political and administrative system[2]

Neto sought to create a disciplined party along Soviet lines. The Angolan Constitution of 1975 subordinated the government to the ruling party and, in October 1976, the MPLA Central Committee formally embraced Marxism–Leninism as its guiding ideology. Neto became head of government in 1977 and abolished the position of Prime Minister and Vice Prime Minister the following year. Until 1980 there was no legislature, and an ad hoc Council of the Revolution was the supreme organ of state power – although real power lay in the MPLA's Political Bureau. However, in 1977, a group led by Nito Alves tried to seize power by force. Although the coup attempt failed, several senior MPLA leaders were killed – as was Alves himself. This provoked a purge of the MPLA, referred to as *rectification*, during which every member was vetted prior to being expelled or retained. A wave of killings then ensued, contributing to a climate of paranoia and increased repression that would have deep and long-lasting effects.

The MPLA's Marxist–Leninist-style structures, together with the notion that the state should provide for all, suited the nascent patrimonial logic of the post-independence political and economic system. Over time, patronage networks developed around the allocation of resources, business and trading permits, government, and other public offices, although Angola was not unusual in this respect, either in Africa or in the Soviet bloc. The MPLA ruling party became the main provider of benefits and goods, driven by its ideological belief as a liberation movement that it was a people's vanguard party. However, faced with conflict, a rebellion and a struggle to retain power, the party neglected the provision of services – a situation aggravated by the decline of agriculture owing to the war and inefficient, centralised Socialist management. Peasants and the urban poor became further marginalised. The MPLA was drawn more heavily from urban, partly creole elites, while UNITA, whose core lay in the Ovimbundu-dominated central highlands, and the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA, or National Front for the Liberation of Angola), drawn heavily from northern Bakongo groups, had more rural backgrounds. As UNITA grew to become the main guerrilla force, military

2 This whole section draws from Vines et al. (2005).

realities – with the MPLA supplying and protecting the urban centres and UNITA doing so in the countryside – sharpened the urban/rural divide. The legacy of these divisions helps, in part, to explain the MPLA's massive neglect of rural areas and the interior more generally until after 2002 (Malaquias, 2007).

After independence in 1975, the MPLA set about building a one-party state. Though it embarked on programmes of nationalisation, some multinationals were allowed to stay, notably in the diamond and oil industries. Keeping oil flowing was so crucial that, although officials from the Cabinda Gulf Oil Company pulled out at independence and the new Angolan leaders were hostile to the West, Angola quickly persuaded Cabinda Gulf to return and to restart operations (Ovadia, 2016). Cabinda's decision to return was helped by pressure from Nigeria, where Gulf (later acquired by Chevron) also had important interests (Ovadia, 2016). Although the MPLA showed signs of elitism from an early stage, grand corruption was not initially in evidence. In large measure, the redistribution of resources involved the provision of cheap goods such as flour and sugar in People's Shops with ration cards issued to mostly urban sections of the population. Party officials received extra privileges. Public sector posts tended to be allocated to those with credentials in the independence struggle, although ethnic, subethnic, regional, and racial criteria also had some influence. Artificially low food prices discouraged peasant agriculture, while state subsidies encouraged imports. However, it was party discipline and a strong security apparatus, rather than patrimonial distribution, that formed the main basis of state power in the early post-independence years.

## Dos Santos during the Cold War era

As mentioned in the previous section, when Neto died in 1979, he was replaced by Dos Santos. The new President, a Soviet-trained petroleum engineer, had held various posts in the Angolan government to that date, including those of Foreign Minister and Minister of Planning. He was a compromise candidate, a diffident man surrounded by strong personalities, many of whom accepted him because they believed they could control him. This turned out not to be the case, however. Over the course of the coming years, he honed his considerable skills as a political chess player, consolidating his grip on power with Soviet-bloc support. Unlike Neto and Jonas Savimbi, the founder of UNITA, Dos Santos is depicted as an undistinguished apparatchik and, according to Soares de Oliveira (2015:41), he was "the typical compromise choice: young and good-looking but quiet and apparently none too smart". "None too smart" might be unjust: Dos Santos showed remarkable resilience and, over four decades, developed a neo-patrimonial system which cleverly rotated those with influence or who had obtained favour. Over time, Dos Santos increasingly centralised power to himself. Angola became a presidential state in which power mostly emanated from the palace. Following Dos Santos' death in 2022, it remains to be seen whether this established routine will change.

When Dos Santos assumed the presidency in September 1979, the MPLA had already become highly authoritarian. Dos Santos, however, took it to another height, reflecting instincts that remained powerful until his death. From 1980, he began to draw into the presidency responsibilities that had previously been under party control, such as foreign affairs and the economy. In December 1982, following new South African incursions into southern Angola, he obtained sweeping emergency powers, overseeing Regional Military Councils that were superior to all other governing and administrative structures. The Office of the President, known colloquially as *Futungo* during this period, took over business contacts with public or private foreign entities. His increasing dominion over state business gave him autonomous control over external sources of income, including oil revenues.

Dos Santos continued to concentrate power, gaining the authority to control and revoke all executive and legislative acts, and drawing into the presidency responsibilities previously under party control, such as foreign and economic affairs. He also gained autonomous control over external sources of income, especially oil (Vines & Weimer, 2009). However, an increasingly dysfunctional state bureaucracy, compounded by a severe shortage of middle-level professionals, made it hard to ensure delivery. Concentration of powers in the presidency and party created a top-heavy, highly bureaucratic system, with even minor decisions needing top-level approval. With no civil society, or freedom of expression or opposition allowed, inefficiency and corruption thrived.

Dos Santos was now president of the party, head of state, head of government, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. It would be an exaggeration, however, to describe all his rule as a personal dictatorship: he had to play complex games of consensus politics within the party – games at which he became very skilled. He created a parallel government: the presidency with a host of advisers setting policies across the board. However, the already dysfunctional state bureaucracy was exacerbated by this concentration of powers in the presidency and party. In his last years of power, as Dos Santos weakened, he became increasingly reliant on family and a small circle of advisers.

Two factors in the mid-1980s increased the pressure on the system, preparing the ground for tentative political and economic reforms. The first was a collapse in oil prices in the mid-1980s, with savage repercussions on the state's ability to meet its commitments. The second was the increasing intensity of the war, following a rapid rise in US covert military assistance to UNITA. These developments initially provoked an increase in centralisation and repression, which were responses to the state's declining ability to redistribute and deliver services. However, war-weariness and rising concern about the balance of payments opened the way to early, timid economic reforms. This was backed by leading Luanda families who felt constrained by the state's dominance and wanted more latitude for developing their own private interests.

A third factor exerting pressure on the system was the introduction of perestroika in the Soviet Union. This challenged the ideological underpinnings of the Angolan economic and political model. These were reinforced by the Soviet Union's increasing reluctance to keep bankrolling Angola. From 1987, a few provisional political and economic changes began to emerge, which began a slow transition to a form of market economy and multi-party politics. Although Marxism–Leninism was to remain the official ideology for another three years, the socialist model was in gradual decline from that time. The Soviet-inspired political and economic model, therefore, began to crumble in the late 1980s, partly because of far-reaching changes in the international context – including the collapse of communism – and moves towards a regional deal involving withdrawal of Cuban troops, consequent independence for Namibia in 1990, and the conclusion of the Bicesse Peace Accords in 1991. This arguably marked the period of greatest Western leverage over post-independence Angola, coming from a growing sense that military victory over UNITA was probably impossible. The pressure from private interest groups within Angola added impetus to the transition.

Several aspects of political and economic reform were akin to what happened in the transformation of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, including the sale of large state assets below fair value to well-connected locals. However, there were huge differences too: in particular, the old leadership stayed in power in Angola, whereas it was ousted in the other states. Hodges (2004:39) writes the following in this regard:

> When more far-reaching economic reforms began [in Angola] in 1990–91 they were accompanied by a formal and explicit rejection of Marxism–Leninism, without any change within the top political leadership. The implication is that the leadership itself resolved to embark on a new 'project' for the organisation of society and the economy.

This is a fundamental point, and political and economic reforms since then were aimed above all at adapting to change while remaining in control. This has had negative implications for political openness until today. Though Marxism–Leninism has long been abolished, the notion that the state should provide for all remains potent.

## Dos Santos during the post-Cold War era

From 1990, the MPLA – helped by Brazilian public relations experts – recast itself as the architect of peace, democracy and reconciliation. This contrasted with UNITA's bellicose and intimidating behaviour and helped deliver victory to the MPLA in the 1992 elections. Savimbi rejected defeat and returned to war. Responding to this new crisis, President Dos Santos recentralised political control and closed space for independent civil society and the opposition. The MPLA interpreted this experience as a lesson about the dangers of allowing too much change, too fast. From 1992, the transition to a multi-party system was suspended, de facto, and fell hostage to the fortunes of war. Some

political space, partly because of US pressure to accommodate UNITA, reopened after the Lusaka Protocol of 1994 was signed to promote a return to peace, but events such as the killing of campaigning journalist Ricardo de Mello in 1995 highlighted the fragility of these attempts to end the war.

From 1994 to 1998, for the first time in Angola's history, multi-party parliamentary politics started to emerge. This was largely because of UNITA's bargaining power at the time, but also due to international pressure. However, UNITA's deputies only took their seats in 1997.

The war started afresh in 1999 and lasted until 2002, during which time dissent was again repressed. UNITA representatives who stayed in Luanda were compromised and weakened. However, some smaller parties were involved in an anti-war movement. Although their influence had important effects, when Savimbi was killed in 2002, their objective to seek a negotiated, rather than a military, solution failed. This failure reinforced the MPLA's sense of self-belief and its disdain for non-state actors. When the war finally ended that year, it was hoped that the space that had been gained after the Bicesse agreements would be reopened. However, except for freedom of movement across most of Angola, the political opening was a gradual process, and it remained limited under Dos Santos. Even now, after Dos Santos' death, the MPLA appears determined not to surrender space voluntarily. Meanwhile, UNITA has become a shadow of its former self and depends heavily on funding through the national budget – which can be withdrawn at any point. With over 100 political parties registered in Angola today, fewer than a quarter are operational. Indeed, many of them are little more than symbolic and lack any ideological ambition.

However, another unusual by-product of the war was the emergence of a widely supported civil society platform. This forum opposed the government's search for a military solution against UNITA and instead sought peace through new dialogue. Foreign embassies suddenly had an entry point in the political process. In the event, the fundamental fact remained that the MPLA's oil exports were worth at least ten times UNITA's diamond revenues. The Angolan Armed Forces had superior weaponry as well as foreign logistical support and advice, which UNITA could not match. The sanctions were beginning to bite, too, and from some time in 2000 the tide began to turn, with UNITA steadily being pushed back on the battlefield. After a widely criticised scorched-earth policy undertaken by the Angolan Armed Forces, Savimbi was tracked down and killed in an army ambush in February 2002.

UNITA generals surrendered to their MPLA counterparts, and a peace deal was negotiated. This culminated in the signing of the Memorandum of Luena in April 2002. The Luena deal promised that the terms agreed under the Lusaka Protocol would be implemented. Many hoped this would create the conditions for a rapid opening up of

the political space, as had occurred after the Bicesse Accords. However, despite some openings, signs of a political peace dividend were relatively sparse. Opposition parties faced great challenges and the MPLA was determined not to offer them much political space voluntarily. The MPLA drove this political peace process, set out its terms, and eschewed outside involvement. In fact, by now the MPLA had become highly resistant to the idea of fresh intervention by the international community in its dealings with UNITA and instead chose a home-grown solution to the end of the conflict. The MPLA even prevented Western diplomats from attending crucial meetings during the process of negotiation as well as the subsequent demobilisation and integration of UNITA forces into the national defence structures.

One promising reform that did follow the end of the war was the reintroduction of the post of Prime Minister in December 2002. Another was the appointment of a reformist economic team which claimed several successes, including a dramatic reduction in inflation. The prime ministerial post remained weak, however. As head of government, President Dos Santos continued to chair the Council of Ministers. This position gave him considerable hands-on influence in government policy. In the reshuffle of top government posts at the time, however, some of the main managers of the presidential patronage network retained their posts. Notable among these were then Public Works Minister Higino Carneiro and Planning Minister Ana Días Lourenço. The latter Minister was a technocratic but also a presidential loyalist, besides being married to then MPLA secretary-general, João Lourenço (and now the incumbent President). Thus, despite several encouraging signs of political reform, progress remained very slow. Indeed, as the MPLA made clear in December 2003 at its fifth party congress, gradualism was to dictate the pace of change.

During this period, power was managed through the distribution of money and political and other posts, in consideration of political, ethnic, subethnic, regional and racial balances. Although this type of power manipulation is not unique to Angola, the oil and diamond money in the country lend the patrimonial system special force. The overriding imperative is to maintain political and economic hegemony and stability, and to satisfy urban elites (Vidal, 2016). During the war, personal loyalty to the President was a fundamental criterion for appointment. Although such loyalty has remained significant in post-war Angola, it is becoming somewhat less so, with competence now attaining greater importance in the selection process.

Thus, despite the multi-party framework, the Angolan political system continued to retain many of the characteristics that emerged after independence and developed through the 1980s, with power still centralised in the presidency. President Dos Santos made several statements in favour of democratic participative approaches after 2002, but they always coincided with efforts to weaken the opposition through coercion or co-option, suggesting that the primary goal of such statements was international and domestic legitimacy.

The agents of authority ran from the presidency through provincial governors to ministers. Governors had considerable discretion, but not over policy matters. Ministerial importance regularly shifted, and key policy decisions continued to be made by the President. Dos Santos received much of his advice from a group of unelected advisers at the presidency as well as from individual ministries and the MPLA itself. He played complex power games, playing different groups – including foreign business interests – off against each other. This autocratic style of government impeded formal institutional dialogue and partnership, meaning that personal contacts were the most effective route to gain access to policymakers. Moreover, access to the President remained highly restricted and was controlled by a handful of gatekeepers at the presidency; these were used by diplomats and others to transmit information to the President. However, even access to the gatekeepers was difficult. Power was managed through the distribution not only of money from state revenues, but also of political and other posts. This situation is not dissimilar to that of many other African countries today.

The most prized positions remained ministerial posts and provincial governorships, but they included less publicised posts within the presidency itself. Several past government reshuffles appeared to resemble the game of musical chairs, with old faces not being sacked but simply being moved to new positions of authority. Some ministerial posts were especially desirable because they placed the minister concerned closer to the centre of the patrimonial system. One of these posts was Public Works, which – alongside a special Reconstruction Office headed by an official at the presidency – was responsible for overseeing the enormous oil-financed reconstruction tasks after the war. Others, such as Youth and Sports, were clearly of less importance. In some cases, especially where a UNITA member held the ministerial post, the Vice-Minister was more powerful than the Minister and was placed there to ensure loyalty to the presidency.

Many posts were allocated to incumbents because of their specific personal relationships with the President. Even today, individual merit and competence are often not grounds for selection. An example is the case of Flávio Fernandes. He stayed in place as Governor of Malange for more than a decade, despite being highly unpopular because of his autocratic style and outrageous appropriation of the main (albeit limited) economic opportunities in that Province. Fernandes likened himself to a turtle, saying that if a turtle were found in the branch of a tree, it was because somebody had put it there. This was taken to mean that he was untouchable because he had the President's backing. Such was his unpopularity that even the provincial MPLA (unlike in many other Provinces, Fernandes was not also first provincial secretary of the MPLA) tried to exert pressure in Luanda for many years to have him removed. His personal bond with the President even outweighed the fact that Fernandes was a liability to the MPLA during the war. Moreover, his continued presence among the elite highlights Dos Santos's unwillingness to overturn relationships based on friendship and loyalty. Fernandes' appointment, and that of several others during the Dos Santos era – led to a widespread perception that

the President was unwilling to yield to pressure, whether from ordinary people, foreign organisations, or even the MPLA structures themselves.

Fernandes was ousted as Governor in July 2002, shortly after the war's end. The manner of his departure was also highly significant. When President Dos Santos visited Malange in July 2002, a large rally was organised, involving tens of thousands of people. However, when Fernandes tried to speak, the crowd loudly booed him – in front of the President. Dos Santos promised during the rally that a new local government would be appointed. According to several interviewees in Malange, however, this demonstration against Fernandes was not a spontaneous one, but one the local MPLA had planned by sending out word in the city that such a public display of disapproval would be tolerated. Several interviewees consulted in Malange believed that President Dos Santos himself knew the outcome of the rally in advance and used the public demonstration as a pretext for overriding the bonds of friendship and loyalty to sack Fernandes. The former Governor was subsequently nominated by the country's Cabinet as a member of the board of the biggest state clinic in Luanda (but he has since been fired amid allegations of malpractice).

Fernandes' sacking as Governor fits a pattern that emerged after the end of the war, namely that the government – or, at least, the President – would be paying more attention to performance and popularity in selecting his leadership. President Dos Santos also systematically contained potential rivals. For example, in 2001, he said that he would not be the party's candidate at future presidential elections (although he partially retracted that statement in November 2003, saying it was an open question whether or not he would stand). It was widely perceived that the original statement had been made partly to see which challengers might emerge. In August 2003, MPLA secretary-general João Lourenço had said 2003 that he had not considered himself excluded from being a future presidential candidate. Then, at an MPLA congress four months later, Lourenço was replaced as MPLA secretary-general by Juliåo Mateus Paulo Dino Matross, a Soviet-educated veteran of the independence struggle and a presidential loyalist. (Lourenço remains a member of the MPLA political bureau and has since kept a very low profile.) By then, the role of MPLA secretary-general had lost some of its importance since the post of Prime Minister had been re-established. These changes paved the way for Lourenço's ascent to the presidency.

Clearly, the MPLA elite was increasingly weakened from the late 1990s by the presidency under Dos Santos, who developed an even more personalised neo-patrimonial system supported by an effective security apparatus designed to protect his and his supporting elite's interests. This system was not only protected by the Presidential Guard, loyal securocrats, intelligence services, political militias, and a militarised police force, it was also lubricated by revenues from extractive industries and, after 2002, reconstruction funds – particularly from China. Over time, the system adapted to the personalisation

of power: a shadow government operated autonomously and accountable only to the presidency. Securitisation successfully protected the President and the post-war order, but it entrenched inequality, poverty, fear, and impunity (Roque, 2021:9). President Dos Santos' last decade was marked by a survivalist mentality of governance and it played on social and ethnic stratification, using oil rents to avoid the need for aid-conditioned reform or economic policies that were pro-poor rather than aimed at protecting the elite.

In the following extract, Maussion (2019:6) vividly captures Dos Santos in his prime at a family lunch:

> In the joyful noise caused by the grandchildren, all observe the reaction of the patriarch, José Eduardo, the incarnation of an iron fist in a velvet glove. Never a rise in the tone of voice, never a public scene, but an undisputed authority. Impenetrable tribal leader, he decides, separates, promotes and punishes. He is not only brother, father, grandfather, leader or President, he is the master of existence, the 'godfather' of a supreme and unscrupulous clan which dominates Angola.

It is worth remembering that Dos Santos' key legacy was ending the civil war and ensuring that Angola's first two post-war decades were not marked by large-scale violence. Today, however, most Angolans will remember him for his last years in power in Angola, in the throes of an economic and leadership crisis. Verde (2021:4) describes this 2014–2017 era as follows:

> … the regime closed in on itself, [and] President dos Santos and his family advanced to directly occupy key positions in the country's economy. Control intensified. However, the middle class and technocratic classes were dissatisfied. The levels of corruption were unbearable, and the situation seemed to get explosive. Sick, the president decided or was obliged to withdraw, and a successor was indicated, the then Defence Minister João Lourenço.

By 2016, weakened by continuing ill-health, Dos Santos had lost his firm grip over his family, who increasingly exploited their privilege for economic gain. Roque (2021) shows how this system evolved and was protected mostly successfully by the presidential *Casa de Segurança* ("House of Security").

The Dos Santos regime was not monolithic, however. Advisers and officials were regularly reshuffled. Dos Santos himself sought greater protection too. For example, he had the Angolan Constitution revised in two respects in 2010. One amendment allowed him to avoid having to follow the fate of Frederick Chiluba in neighbouring Zambia after leaving office, namely being pursued in court. The second amendment allowed any future president to avoid having to be elected by direct suffrage. The latter amendment addressed Dos Santos' fear that his personal vote would be less than that for the MPLA. The Arab Spring in 2013 also influenced presidential calculations. It resulted in doing away not only with introducing a dynastic Dos Santos succession, but also with heavy-

handed security responses, such as the overreaction to the so-called book club coup, the Kalupeteka religious sect massacre, and the political killings of Isaias Cassule and Alves Kamulingue by state agents.

In a July 2016 interview, President Dos Santos acknowledged that Angola was "struggling" and that revenues were "barely enough" to repay its debts (*RFI*, 2016). In June 2016, the President had fired the board of the state oil company Sonangol and put his daughter, Isabel, in charge. Her appointment was to protect the country's main wealth generator, but also the first family's interests. In retrospect, this move clearly constituted defensive transitional politics. Isabel wanted to walk away several times, but family members convinced her that she needed to stay, given the uncertainties of what might happen once their father stepped down as President (see also Vines, 2016). At the time, some had also suggested Isabel might be being groomed for the presidency: but dynastic succession as an option had been ruled out back in 2013. In any event, Isabel was born outside Angola. Interestingly, Angola has always been less tolerant of political nepotism than its northern central African neighbours.

Most observers in 2016 expected Dos Santos to be reappointed as President, to finish a new mandate, and to retire in 2022. He had signalled, several times since 2001, that he was considering retirement; however, he also used such occasions to smoke out competitors for the presidency and stunt their aspirations. Finally, Dos Santos was convinced by his family and senior MPLA members that he should not be nominated for the presidency during the 2017 national elections. These advisors felt that his name on the party list would result in serious damage to the MPLA's electoral fortunes. The focus then shifted onto how to maintain economic power (and, therefore, political influence) via the Dos Santos family and close allies such as the presidential trio of Vice President Manuel Vicente, General Leopoldino Fragoso do Nascimento ('Dino') and General Manuel Vieira Dias ('Kopelipa') – who had become pervasive in most economic activities (although the Dos Santos–Vicente relationship cooled significantly in 2017). The January 2020 Luanda Leaks of 715,000 files (ICIJ, 2020) showed how Isabel's business dealings from 1980 to 2018 had flourished and allowed her to become the richest woman in Africa, assisted greatly by presidential privilege (*Forbes*, 2020).

## The Lourenço era

João Lourenço (known widely in Angola as *JLo*) is the first Angolan President with a military background. Therefore, from September 2017, after being sworn into office, he had two policy priorities: (i) to stabilise the economy, and (ii) to take full control of his party, the MPLA, and reform it. There has been progress since 2021, but the Angola economy remains in the doldrums. By the time COVID-19 hit in 2020, Angola was already in its fifth year of recession.

At over 140% of Angola's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020, the public debt stock is more than double the size of the median revenue of the country's oil producers. The authorities seem committed to reducing the (modest) fiscal deficit and stock of debt. Higher oil prices can help, but progress will be slow. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated underlying economic weaknesses, reducing job opportunities across the formal and informal sectors. In Angola as elsewhere, it will take several years for some sectors to recover from these shocks. The economic weakness also resulted in a spate of protests across the country in 2020, due to rising dissatisfaction with the government's ability to improve livelihoods.

## Power consolidation

João Lourenço was inaugurated as President after the MPLA won just over 61% of the vote in the multi-party elections of August 2017. However, the MPLA had also lost several seats to the opposition. After the elections, many Angolans assumed that the Dos Santos family would continue to pull the strings since JLo had been the MPLA's compromise candidate. He surprised everyone when, within six months, the image of him as a puppet had been transformed into that of action hero The Terminator: he went on to take over the MPLA presidency after a brief tug-of-war over the position with his predecessor, and he removed Isabel dos Santos from Sonangol. Verde (2021:180–181) cites a fascinating interview JLo gave to the Spanish news agency EFE during a private visit to Madrid just before the elections in August 2017, which signalled his reform intentions:

> [EFE] You were trained in the Soviet Union and are a chess player. You have the Army on your side, which is very valuable. Those who know you say that you are calm and discreet. Tell me, in short, who is João Lourenço? Is it too bold to call you the Angolan Gorbachev? Are you a reformer?
>
> [JLo] I think you said it all. It's hard to talk about myself. I'd rather have someone else talk about me. Reformer? Let's work towards this, but certainly not like Gorbachev, Deng Xiaoping, yes.

JLo's reform action was initially quicker than many expected and this boosted public expectations of change. The state of the Angolan economy and the reluctance of the Dos Santos family and its allies to accept economic reforms gave JLo little choice but to act quickly. However, the honeymoon had ended by 2020: JLo was no longer fondly called The Terminator as the living standards for most Angolans had not improved, and 2021 marked the sixth year of economic contraction.

Creating new jobs remains a key priority for the JLo administration. Nonetheless, there were demonstrations in late 2020 in Luanda as well as other cities, including Benguela,

Huambo and Lubango. They entailed clashes with the police, which resulted in injuries as well as a death in Luanda. The protests had been triggered by discontent not only over the enforcement of COVID-19 lockdown measures, but also with government corruption, limited economic opportunities and high unemployment. Joblessness was particularly rampant among the youth, as borne out by the government's statistics agency estimating that over 50% of young people were unemployed.

By the MPLA's Seventh Extraordinary Congress, held in June 2019, JLo had strengthened his grip on power. The party's Central Committee was enlarged from 366 to 497 members while the Bureau Político (Political Bureau) had grown from a membership of 52 to 72. These changes brought in new blood – notably not associated with the Dos Santos era – and signalled preparation for a generation leap for JLo's successor in 2027. A total of 61% of the new *Comité Central* (Central Committee), comprising 134 members, were under the age of 45, while 15% (21) were female. JLo's administration was larger than Dos Santos', with 40 Ministers – including four Ministers of State. In 2020, however, a reshuffle consolidated some ministries to help to cut costs (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020).

Not spelt out by either Roque (2021) or Verde (2021) is the current emphasis in JLo's administration to increase technocratic capacity, especially in portfolios related to the economy, such as Finance, Economy, Mineral Resources and Petroleum, and Agriculture. JLo clearly sees the need to reform and open the economy, but low oil prices and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have stunted these ambitions. The biggest conundrum facing JLo is the colossal challenge of transforming a political economy addicted to easy oil rents to one that is more balanced. This transformation has become more urgent than ever before, as pressures grow internationally on major economies to diversify away from fossil fuels. The problem for JLo and the MPLA is that alternative industries do not provide easy lucrative returns.

## Dismantling networks from the Dos Santos era

According to Angola's central bank, the Banco Nacional de Angola (BNA), some US$30 billion of Angolan money is held outside the country, around half of which lies in personal accounts. New legislation approved in May 2018 mandated the return of illicitly exported capital over US$100,000, with an amnesty until December 2018. Some funds have been quietly repatriated, but there have also been high-profile convictions. Both Roque (2021) and Verde (2021) describe how, in August 2020, a court in Luanda sentenced José Filomeno de dos Santos, the former head of Angola's $5 billion sovereign wealth fund, to five years in prison after he was found guilty along with three other defendants of transferring $500 million to a Credit Suisse account in London. Valter Filipe, former BNA governor, was also sentenced to eight years in the case.

The capacity to investigate contraventions of the new legislation seriously was initially limited. A subdepartment within the Attorney General's office had only three magistrates and a director and no experience of economic-financial affairs, according to Verde (2021:3). This capacity has improved over time, spearheaded by Attorney General Hélder Pitta Groz (who is also a three-star General).

By early 2020, JLo had consolidated his grip on power. Many Dos Santos loyalists increasingly hoped that, if they kept a low profile, they would still be able to enjoy some of the assets that they had accumulated in the past. Investigations and arrests continued, however. Since 2020, JLo has overseen a purge of Dos-Santos-era family, friends and allies from key government and parastatal jobs. It shocked some and surprised many, as Verde (2021:11) recounts, when even retired General Antonio Andrade in 2018, ordered by a court of law to vacate a building to which he was not entitled, refused to do so with the following argument: "I am a general: I have immunities, I don't have to obey any court". In December 2020, JLo reaffirmed his determination to work with all "living forces" to defeat corruption and impunity in the country (*Deutsche Welle,* 2020). This anti-corruption drive played well among Angola's middle class and weakened resistance to JLo's reforms of the MPLA.

The anti-corruption drive continued, with high-profile targets such as Carlos Manuel de São Vicente, who was linked to Dos Santos and married to the daughter of Agostinho Neto, Angola's first President after independence. Interestingly, in May 2021, an army officer serving the presidency, Major Pedro Lussaty, was arrested after allegedly being caught trying to leave the country with millions of US Dollars in cash (travellers leaving the country are allowed to carry a maximum of US$10,000). A few days after this arrest, JLo also fired six military generals attached to the army serving the presidency, following a BNA investigation (Operation Crab) into embezzlement and currency retention by army officers in the *Casa de Segurança*. On 31 May that year, JLo also fired General Pedro Sebastião – the security minister and head of the security and intelligence service – for his part in this financial scandal (Vines, 2021).

For the first two years of the Lourenço administration, the Dos-Santos-era presidential business trio – Vicente, Dino and Kopelipa – were relatively unscathed by the anti-corruption drive. In mid-2019, they began returning some assets and found themselves under increasing scrutiny. These actions are a significant broadening of the anti-corruption drive to tackle high-level graft within the current administration. JLo is also being watched very closely by his critics. One of the reasons is that he kept his chief of staff, Edeltrudes Costa, despite the latter having been suspected of a conflict of interest and of enriching himself by obtaining public contracts. JLo has also seemingly spared others for now, including former Vice President Manuel Vicente, who is suspected of corruption (but is protected by state immunity during his first term as an ex-VP).

## Preparing for the 2022 elections

The 1992 Angolan Constitution provided for the direct election of the President. While UNITA accepted the result of the National Assembly elections in 1992, it rejected that there needed to be a presidential run-off election; they subsequently alleged there had been fraud (British Angola Forum, 2005). UNITA then resumed the civil war, although its Members of Parliament eventually took their seats in the National Assembly as part of the Lusaka Protocol. As a result, the second round of the presidential elections were not held, nor were the legislative elections due at regular intervals in accordance with the Constitution. Moreover, following the end of the civil war in 2002, the MPLA refused to hold the second round of the presidential election. Instead they organised legislative elections in 2008 and won a majority. This allowed the MPLA to adopt a new Constitution for Angola in 2010. The new provisions abolished the direct election of the President, stipulated that legislative elections would be held at regular five-year intervals, and dictated that the leader of the party that received the most votes would become President. Table 1 shows the number of National Assembly seats won in elections since 1980 and since multi-party elections were introduced in Angola in 1992:

### *Table 1: Angola elections*

| Party | Number of National Assembly seats won in elections | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1980 | 1986 | 1992 | 2008 | 2012 | 2017 |
| MPLA | 229 | 173 | 129 | 191 | 175 | 150 |
| UNITA | – | – | 70 | 16 | 32 | 51 |
| FNLA | – | – | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Other | – | 117 | 16 | 10 | 11 | 18 |
| Total | 229 | 289 | 220 | 220 | 220 | 220 |
| Turnout | – | – | 91.35% | 87.36% | 62.77% | 76.13% |

Source: Comissão Nacional Eleitoral, Angola (https://www.cne.ao/, last accessed 8 April 2023)

During the August 2017 national elections, the MPLA won 61.08% of the vote, UNITA 28.68%, and *Convergência Ampla de Salvação de Angola – Coligação Eleitoral* (CASA–CE, or the Broad Convergence for the Salvation of Angola – Electoral Coalition) 9.45%. UNITA and CASA–CE leaders spoke of boycotting the National Assembly but decided that September to take up their seats (Pearce et al., 2018).

In 2019, Afrobarometer conducted its first national survey of Angolan perceptions related to governance and democracy performance (Pacatolo, 2021). As Figure 1 shows, only about four in ten Angolans (37%) said they preferred democracy to all other forms of government. Moreover, Angolans strongly rejected authoritarian alternatives to democracy, whether one-party rule (70%), dictatorship (63%), or military rule (60%). Only four in ten (40%) recognised the country as a *Full democracy* or a *Democracy with*

*minor problems*. Far fewer (18%) said they were *Fairly satisfied* or *Very satisfied* with the way democracy worked in the country.

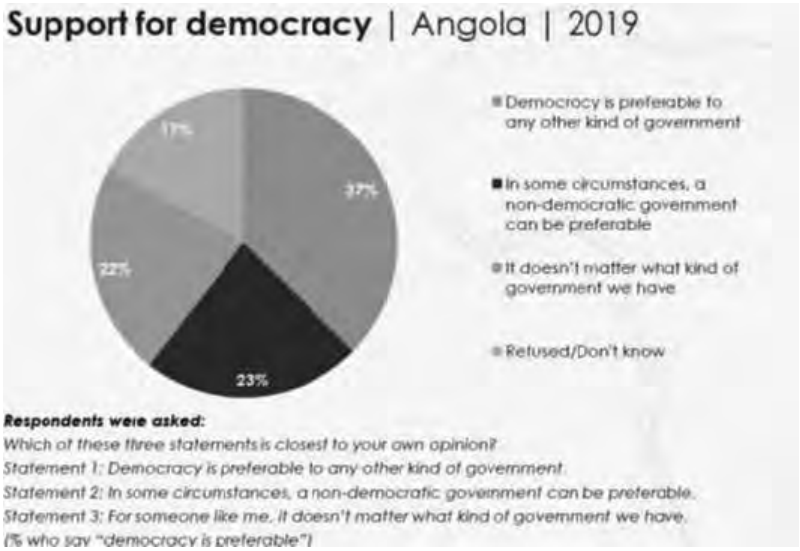



***Figure 1: Support for democracy in Angola, 2019***
Source: Afrobarometer, 2019

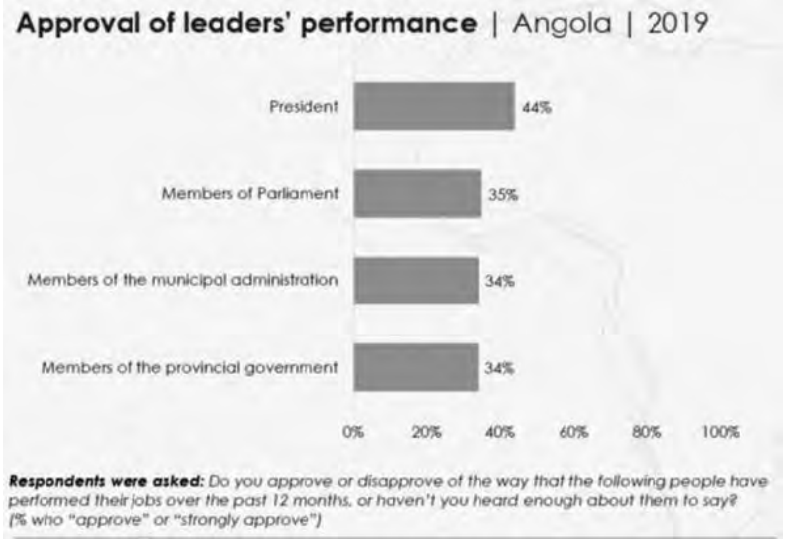



***Figure 2: Approval of leaders' performance, 2019***
Source: Afrobarometer, 2019

Among respondents old enough to vote, seven in ten (68%) said they voted in the 2017 elections, but only half (46%) said they "feel close to" any party. Far fewer attended a political rally (27%), worked with political parties or candidates (20%), or were contacted by political representatives of political parties (15%) during the 2017 campaigns. This survey was conducted at the tail end of the JLo honeymoon, namely in 2019, and showed the President's popularity at the time, which was higher than other parts of government (Figure 2).

Further opinion polls in 2022 signalled that JLo's honeymoon had ended and that the MPLA's lead was narrowing. According to a second Afrobarometer survey in February–March 2022, the proportion of Angolans who said they would vote for UNITA in a hypothetical presidential election had increased since 2019. The MPLA's lead over UNITA among respondents declaring a voting preference had narrowed to 7% (29% in 2019 vs 22% in 2022), although almost half of survey respondents did not indicate a preference, making a data-based prediction for the August presidential election impossible.

## The 2022 elections[3]

The national legislative elections of August 2022 were fiercely fought. A constitutional amendment allowed some 400,000 Angolans estimated to be residing in the diaspora to exercise their right to vote from abroad for the first time. Yet the MPLA also limited additional electoral reforms in the revised Constitution. Furthermore, the party welcomed a 5 October 2022 Constitutional Court ruling that the main opposition party UNITA's congress election of Adalberto Costa Júnior as its leader was invalid because he held dual nationality. This ruling came on the same day that UNITA formed the United Patriotic Alliance with two other opposition parties to field Costa Júnior as their single presidential candidate for the 2022 elections. Lourenço had already been endorsed as the de-facto presidential candidate at an MPLA congress in December 2021.

This court ruling and the politics around it were a reminder that the MPLA had held power since independence in Angola in November 1975, that it benefited from incumbency, and that it had expected to win, with JLo to be ensconced for a second term. A political earthquake struck Angola on 24 August 2022 through the ballot box, therefore. The MPLA saw its share of the vote decline dramatically by 9.9%, i.e. from 61% in 2017 to 51.17% in 2022. Abstention also increased to 55.17% over the same five-year interval. Low turnout was also noticeable among much of the diaspora vote, with UNITA winning internationally (except in respect of Angolan voters in Germany), but with the MPLA prevailing regionally in both Congos.

3 This content is based on Vines (2022).

## The implications

The MPLA's eventual win of 124 seats represents a majority, but one that constitutes less than two thirds. Thus, a future MPLA government will find it hard to make constitutional amendments. The presidential post went to the head of the party with the most seats – the MPLA. JLo and his fellow MPLA member, Esperança Maria Eduardo Francisco da Costa, as the new Vice President elect, will need to dialogue more consistently than ever before with their main competitor, UNITA.

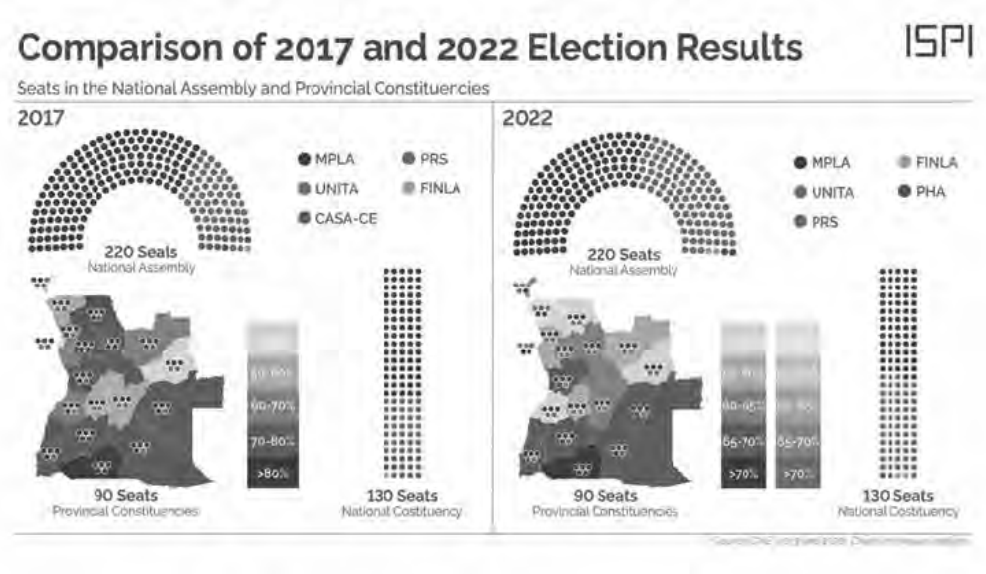



***Figure 3: Comparison of 2017 and 2022 election results***
Source: Vines (2022)

As Figure 3 reveals, the opposition party, UNITA, significantly increased its vote from 26.67% in 2017 to 43.94% in 2022, winning 90 seats overall as a result. This is a remarkable turnaround for UNITA, considering it was defeated militarily in 2002, 20 years ago.

All 90 regional constituency seats went to the two largest parties: MPLA won 57 of the seats, mostly in the central and southern regions, while UNITA won 33, showing strongest support in the north-west. Of the nationwide seats, MPLA won 67 and UNITA 57, while the FNLA, the *Partido de Renovação Social* (PRS, or Social Renewal Party) and the *Partido Humanista de Angola* (PHA, or Humanist Party of Angola) all received two seats each. The vote for opposition party CASA–CE collapsed; having won 9% of

the vote in the previous general election, it received only 0.76% in 2022, meaning the party lost all 16 seats it had previously held.

UNITA won outright majorities for the first time in the capital Luanda and in the northern province of Zaire. The electorate in the enclave province of Cabinda also voted overwhelmingly for UNITA for the first time. This new development contributed to the CASA–CE being wiped out and not winning any seats. As previously mentioned, the *Partido Humanista de Angola* , created just three months before the 2022 elections and led by ex-UNITA official and journalist Florbela Malaquias, won two seats. This also contributed to CASA–CE's loss, along with the increased support for UNITA and the historic FNLA. An extra seat gained by the FNLA brought their representation to two, while the *Partido de Renovação Social*, which focused on the Lunda Provinces, retained their two due to their nationwide vote tally.

As they had done in the aftermath of the 2017 elections, observers reported "shortcomings" in those of 2022 as regards the preparation of the vote and the failure to display voters' lists, which "compromised transparency" at some polling stations (AU, 2022). On 1 September 2022, UNITA filed an electoral complaint with the Constitutional Court, asking for the annulment of the August 24 elections owing to what they termed "several illegalities" in the process (Mendes, 2022). UNITA had already challenged the results through the *Comissão Nacional Eleitoral* (CNE, or National Electoral Commission), four of whose 16 commissioners did not sign off on the results, expressing doubts about the process. UNITA leader Costa Júnior said he expected the Constitutional Court and the CNE to do their jobs by comparing their vote count with the party's vote tally, which has yet to be fully released.

On 8 September 2022, the Constitutional Court rejected the legal challenge to the election lodged by several opposition parties, including UNITA. JLo accordingly moved ahead and formed a new government, being sworn in for his second term on 15 September that year. Once again, UNITA is likely to accept defeat eventually but will continue to reject the gap in votes. The difference this time is that the majority view on the street in Luanda is that fraud occurred – a perspective on which UNITA will try to capitalise politically.

## Learning lessons

The 2022 election outcomes remain a seismic shock for both JLo and the MPLA. The party entered the election, complacent and factionalised. Moreover, their election campaign overlapped with the death in July 2022 of its previous leader and Angola's President for 38 years, José Eduardo dos Santos, with a visible dispute over the curation of his death and burial. These results will focus minds and could provide JLo with the impetus he needs to deepen his reforms efforts in the party, the government and the state.

The key question is this, however: will the MPLA accept reform and the need to enter more concessional politics? JLo, with his new five-year mandate, may possibly turn things around due to the following:

- The low voter turnout favoured UNITA (many MPLA and undecided voters had abstained from voting, presumably in protest)
- Much of UNITA's new gain in votes was derived from protest votes. Even in Luanda's polling station No. 105, normally a purely MPLA neighbourhood (and where JLo and his family voted), the MPLA lost. If an MPLA government delivers, UNITA's votes will diminish.
- In Cabinda Province, UNITA promised it would support an increased devolution of administrative powers, while its promise to review illegal artisanal mining attracted votes in the Zaire and Lunda Norte Provinces. UNITA supporters will monitor delivery on these promises closely, and
- Positive economic prospects ahead will work in JLo's favour.

## Looking ahead

Creating a more diversified economy with improved living standards is key if JLo is to redeem his party and himself. Despite a honeymoon of several years after the 2017 elections, the poor electoral showing for JLo as President and the MPLA as the ruling party can be attributed to the decline in living standards during JLo's first term in office. By 2022, Angola had just exited a five-year recession caused by a commodity slump and worsened by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This already dire situation was compounded by the effects of the fiscal austerity measures imposed on Angola by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under its 2018–2021 Programme, which won international acclaim but impacted urban areas in particular.

This status quo does not mean that JLo should rid himself of his economic team. Prudent spending – despite the 2022 elections – has seen the Ministry of Finance maintaining regular foreign exchange sales in the market and accelerating local debt repayments, thereby lowering government paper yields, for example. Elevated global oil prices, averaging more than US$100 per barrel in 2022, have also helped to create fiscal buffers which will support future government expenditure. The IMF predicts that, if record-high oil prices remain, they will drive up Angola's economic output – when measured in US Dollars – by around 40% this year. However, although there was a material decline in the public debt-to-GDP ratio towards 65% in 2022 from a high of 127% in 2020, high debt-service ratios may still limit Angola's borrowing capacity. Angola's overall debt-service-to-revenue ratio was projected at 82.1% for 2022, which is up from 70.8% in 2021 but lower than the peak of 114.2% in 2020.

Angola has also already resumed the principal repayments on part of its US$21.4 billion debt to China that had benefited from the pandemic's three-year debt reprofiling under

the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (the Initiative ended in December 2021). The resumption of these payments will result in the external debt-service-to-revenue ratio rising next year, although increased oil rents should assist in managing the financial burden. With increased global interest rates and a weakening global economy, there will be limited room for public borrowing, however. Angola may, therefore, need to speed up structural reforms to support a private-sector-led growth strategy. JLo promised that the priorities for his second term would be economic diversification, job creation, enhanced education services, the modernisation of public administration, state decentralisation, and expansion of health and basic sanitation services. The incumbent President has also noted that these ambitious plans require reforms and investment, and that the private sector and other stakeholders, including development partners, are likely to play critical roles in the envisaged improvements.

Employment will be the biggest challenge for the MPLA. Angola has 14 million registered voters, about half of whom are under the age of 36, and its youth unemployment was close to 60% in 2021. The oil industry does not generate enough jobs, and Angola's economy remains far too dependent on it. Nonetheless, higher oil prices offer JLo an opportunity to improve livelihoods through subsidies and investments to diversify the economy and upscale Angolans' skills.

The creation of a technocracy, drawing in talent from across Angola and its diaspora, is needed now. The 2022 election results wrote a new episode in Angola's post-independence nation-building chronicle. Now is the time for visionary leadership, brave reforms, and humility if Angola is to grow its economy, reduce poverty, and realise its full potential as a future powerhouse of Africa. The present scenario also offers UNITA an opportunity to demonstrate that it can hold the MPLA to account and constructively encourage policy that will benefit all Angolans.

## Conclusion

Unlike the opposition parties, the MPLA had advanced preparations for the 2022 elections. Given its visceral belief in its legitimacy to lead, it had drawn up plans in 2002 on ruling until 2025. Moreover, the party has been trying to revive its grass-roots support base, partly through internal restructuring. The MPLA's party headquarters was well resourced, but splits in the party and, especially, the economic hardship being experienced by many Angolans resulted in high abstention and a protest vote in the 2022 elections.

The MPLA had hoped that their party and the state would continue to be equated (even the flags look similar). This is, in part, an issue of mindset, where a former revolutionary movement has seen itself as guardian of the people, the public good and societal values. Firstly, movements have difficulty in comprehending a state where it is not in this role

and where it may have to share or lose power. Deeply embedded in its Marxist–Leninist roots, its self-definition is fundamentally opposed to those of liberal democracies, where parties are seen as vehicles for contest between opposing ideologies and policies. This self-perception has continued to prevail in rural areas (including formerly UNITA strongholds), but no longer in urbanised areas such as Luanda.

Secondly, the MPLA still has resource and capacity advantages. It has governing experience, skilled staff, dominance over state media, and control of key aspects of the economy and the treasury. The MPLA has even been able to co-opt several opposition parties. It has the power to intimidate its opposition, and it uses that power. Its agents and the domestic intelligence services are reported to infiltrate opposition groups routinely to sow discord, influence them, and collect information.

Opposition parties, by contrast, face immense challenges. They are highly dependent on state funding and lack both managerial skills and an international profile. Where they have attempted to withhold participation in the legislature or the constitutional process, the MPLA has proceeded without them – perhaps with reduced legitimacy, but nonetheless with the ability to govern in some way or another. The loss of the MPLA's absolute majority in the 2022 elections has now provided the nation with the opportunity to introduce more concessional politics.

It should also not be forgotten that JLo's reforms have strengthened the securitised shadow state, placing ex-generals and securocrats in key positions. Furthermore, he controls the majority party, the executive, the armed forces, and the intelligence agencies; this situation is unlikely to change. He is also responsible for appointing senior members of the judiciary as well as the leadership of the country's parastatals. However, unlike his predecessor, José Eduardo dos Santos, JLo is far more sensitive to middle-class public opinion; his political grip is less tight, and his policies reflect that. For example, during his first term, his anti-corruption stance was exemplified in Operation Crab, which targeted and effectively dealt with close but corrupt military aides such as General Pedro Sebastião, head of his Security House (Casa de Segurança do Presidente da República, CSPR), as well as other CSPR staff.

JLo's first-term presidency was all about transitional politics. The anti-corruption campaign had two immediate primary objectives: (i) to strengthen his grip on power by rebuilding support for the MPLA as it prepared for national elections in 2022, and (ii) to turn the fragile economy around and diversify it so that Angola could be weaned off its addiction to oil rents. These objectives have not been achieved, however. The open questions, therefore, are whether João Lourenço can return to a more developmental reform agenda – given the slim majority won by the MPLA in the 2022 elections – and what his legacy vision will be for his second term. There is no doubt that JLo deserves credit for "trying to fight corruption and liberalise the economy from within the regime

that has led the country to a stalemate, in a situation of economic and financial crisis" (Verde, 2021:3). Roque (2021:22), though, is correct to conclude that the JLo presidency is –

> … facing a difficult crossroads. Policies enacted could either lead it down a path of entrenched securitisation and militarisation or to a process of desecuritisation and democratic emancipation. Either way, politics as usual will have to end.

## References


Africa Center for Strategic Studies. 2020. The challenges of reform in Angola. *Africa Center for Strategic Studies – Spotlight*, 21 January 2020. https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-challenges-of-reform-in-angola/, last accessed 13 October 2021.

AU/African Union. 2022. Preliminary Statement, African Union Election Observation Mission to the 24 August 2022 General Elections in the Republic of Angola, Luanda, 26 August 2022. https://reliefweb.int/report/angola/preliminary-statement-african-union-election-observation-mission-24-august-2022-general-elections-republic-angola-luanda-26-august-2022, last accessed 22 May 2023.

Afrobarometer. 2019. *Angola Round 8 questionnaire (2019)*. https://www.afrobarometer.org/survey-resource/angola-round-8-questionnaire/, last accessed 22 May 2023.

Birmingham, D. 2015. *A short history of modern Angola.* London: Hurst.

British Angola Forum. 2005. *The challenges for free and fair elections in Angola: Conference report*. London: Chatham House. https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/africa/AO/BAFelections.pdf, last accessed 13 October 2021.

*Deutsche Welle*. 2020. João Lourenço: "Angola tem mais noção sobre a corrupção". Política – Angola, 12 December 2020. https://www.dw.com/pt-002/jo%C3%A3o-louren%C3%A7o-angola-tem-hoje-mais-no%C3%A7%C3%A3o-da-gravidade-da-corrup%C3%A7%C3%A3o/a-55919374, last accessed 22 May 2023.

*Forbes*. 2020. Profile – Isabel dos Santos. https://www.forbes.com/profile/isabel-dos-santos/?sh=5a801fcf523f, last accessed 22 May 2023.

Hodges, T. 2004. *Angola: Anatomy of an oil state*. London: James Currey.

ICIJ/International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. 2020. *Luanda leaks*. Washington, DC: ICIJ. https://www.icij.org/investigations/luanda-leaks/, last accessed 13 January 2023.

Ingles, P. 2018. The MPLA government and its post-liberation record in Angola. In Bereketeab, R (Ed.). *National liberation movements as government in Africa*, pp 40–54. London/New York: Routledge.

Malaquias, A. 2007. *Rebels and robbers: Violence in post-colonial Angola*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

Maussion, E. 2019. *Le Dos Santos Company: Mainmise sur l'Angola*. Paris: Editions Karthala.

Mendes, C. 2022. Angolan court dismisses UNITA challenge to election results. *Bloomberg*, 5 September 2022. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-05/angolan-court-dismisses-opposition-challenge-to-election-results?leadSource=uverify%20wall, last accessed 22 May 2023.

Ovadia, J. 2016. *The petro-developmental state in Africa: Making oil work in Angola, Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea*. London: Hurst.

Pacatolo, C. 2021. *Angola Forum 2021: Policy options to support economic recovery in Angola*. Presentation delivered online at Chatham House Virtual Events, 7 October 2021. https://www.chathamhouse.org/events/all/research-event/angola-forum-2021-policy-options-support-economic-recovery-angola, last accessed 13 October 2021.

Pearce, J, Péclard, D, & Soares de Oliveira, R. 2018. Angola's elections and the politics of presidential succession. *African Affairs*, 117(466):146–160.

RFI/Radio France Internationale. 2016. Jose Eduardo dos Santos admite que "2016 é um ano difícil". *RFI*, 20 December 2016. https://www.rfi.fr/pt/angola/20161220-jose-eduardo-dos-santos-admite-2016-e-um-ano-dificil, last accessed 22 May 2023.

Roque, P. 2021. *Governing in the shadows: Angola's securitised state*. London: Hurst.

Soares de Oliveira, R. 2015. *Magnificent and beggar land: Angola since the civil war*. London: Hurst.

Verde, R. 2021. *Angola at the crossroads: Between kleptocracy and development*. London: IB Tauris.

Vidal, N. 2016. MPLA e a governação: Entre internacionalismo progressista marxista e pragmatismo liberal-nacionalista. *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, 42(3):815–854.

Vines, A. 2016. Review article – Continuity and change in Angola: Insights from modern history. *International Affairs*, 92(5):1229–1237.

Vines, A. 2021. Dos Santos to Lourenço: Angola's transitional politics. *The Africa Governance Papers*, 1(1):121–133. https://tagp.gga.org/index.php/system/article/view/10/6, last accessed 12 September 2022.

Vines, A. 2022. *Angola's political earthquake: The aftermath of the August 2022 elections*. Milan: Italian Institute for International Political Studies. https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/angolas-political-earthquake-aftermath-august-2022-elections-36067, last accessed 12 September 2022.

Vines, A, & Weimer, M. 2009. Angola: Thirty years of Dos Santos. *Review of African Political Economy*, 36(120):287–294.

Vines, A, Shaxson, N, & Rimli, L, with Heymans, C. 2005. *Angola – Drivers of change: An overview*. London: Chatham House. http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/doc87.pdf, last accessed 16 January 2023.

# Mozambique's FRELIMO: Implications for democracy and democratic consolidation

**Alex Vines**

The *Frente de Libertação Moçambique* (FRELIMO, the Mozambique Liberation Front), which has been the party of government since the country's independence in 1975, ended the one-party system in 1990. Yet, 30 years on, the party has continued as the dominant force in state and society, winning all six presidential and parliamentary elections (Weimer & Carrilho, 2017). Mozambique is not formally a one-party state, but the ruling party is still so deeply entrenched in the state apparatus that, in practice, it is still hard to separate one from the other. As with other 'liberation movement states' in southern Africa, FRELIMO has blurred the interests of the party with those of the state and of key individuals. In doing so, FRELIMO has always sought to keep a tight grip on political power (Vines, 2016).

This trajectory is not sustainable, however, as this chapter will show. The discussion charts FRELIMO's evolution since independence and evaluates how efforts to promote political pluralism through national and local elections have fared since 1990. The chapter also considers how Mozambique's colonial and post-colonial history, being intertwined with complex regional politics and failures in nation-building, has impacted on its post-independence journey.

## Background[1]

After Mozambique's independence, FRELIMO was committed to a radical programme of socialist transformation, intended to reconstruct the entire social and material basis of Mozambican life. The programme involved exercising a greater degree of state control over the rural population than had ever been attempted before. However, many of the policies originally adopted for reasons of socialist transformation were later reproduced as counter-insurgency measures, when the government desired even closer control of the population for military reasons. FRELIMO also, as part of this transformation, began organising the countryside along the lines of its liberated areas during the independence

1 This section draws from Maier et al. (1992).

struggle. The new government's ambitious education and health programmes won international acclaim. The number of primary school students doubled in just seven years, while in the first decade of independence, the number of health posts nearly quadrupled.

Further control took the form of cracking down on the Churches, especially the Roman Catholics, who had largely supported the Portuguese colonisers during the liberation war. FRELIMO nationalised Catholic schools, hospitals and missions, for example. In addition, an estimated 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses were rounded up and sent to a giant re-education camp. FRELIMO also launched campaigns to undercut loyalties to indigenous religions and forms of social organisation. Traditional community leaders, many of whom exercised authority on the basis of spiritual ties to the land, were another particular target.

In February 1977, FRELIMO held its third congress, during which the former liberation movement was formally transformed into a Marxist–Leninist vanguard party. It declared that its historic mission was to lead, organise, orientate, and educate the masses, thus transforming the popular mass movement into a powerful instrument for the destruction of capitalism and the construction of socialism (Maier et al., 1992:24). The party's transformation came at a time when Mozambique was seeking to attract significant military aid from eastern Europe and the Soviet Union for its war against Rhodesia. What were called 'mass democratic organisations' were set up to ensure FRELIMO controlled workers, women, the youth and journalists. State farms – mainly estates abandoned by the Portuguese – received massive investments, while peasant agriculture was largely ignored.

At the heart of FRELIMO's plans to transform society were the *aldeas comunais* ("communal villages"). Reminiscent of the *ujamaa* system in Tanzania, FRELIMO's villagisation was compulsory, sparking bitter resentment among the very people who were supposed to inhabit the areas concerned. However, a severe lack of resources and trained personnel undermined the government's ability to provide basic services to these villages.

On 20 June 1975, five days before Mozambique's independence, FRELIMO's Central Committee approved, by acclamation, the country's first Constitution outlining its impending sovereignty. The document was essentially a set of guidelines on how FRELIMO would rule the country. For example, the president of the party automatically became the President of the People's Republic. The Central Committee also had the power to amend the Constitution, while the envisaged Council of Ministers had legislative authority pending the establishment of a national Parliament.

The 1975 Constitution embodied the Marxist–Leninist ideology that had informed FRELIMO policies since the late 1960s. Its stress was on social and economic rights,

rather than civil and political liberties. The claimed need for socialist transformation – later emphasised in the amended Constitution of 1978 – followed the failure of centuries of colonial rule to deliver any substantial improvements in the living standards of ordinary people. Other characteristics of the new regime included the continuation of armed struggle. This was said to be necessary because of the presence of militarily aggressive white minority regimes in neighbouring South Africa and Rhodesia, and the existence of "internal enemies" within Mozambique who were not only hostile to the FRELIMO-led government, but were also prepared to collaborate with its external foes. This created what was called "garrison socialism" (Markakis, 1979).

Parliament, in the form of the People's Assembly, was created in 1977 together with a hierarchical system of indirectly elected assemblies at provincial, district and local level. A 15-member Standing Commission of the People's Assembly, which included six members of FRELIMO's Politburo and four other members of its Central Committee, had full legislative powers when the Assembly was not in session.

Election of deputies to the People's Assembly consisted of the party presenting a list of nominated candidates and the provincial assemblies approving it. At the local and district levels, some elections that resulted in victories by candidates whom FRELIMO opposed – usually traditional chiefs – were annulled. In this regard, the Elections Act of September 1977 stated that, in carrying out FRELIMO's policies, deputies did not "serve nor represent the particular interests of any village, locality, district, province, region, race, tribe or religion" but the interests of "workers and peasants" (Hall, 1990; cited in Maier et al. 1992:139). The various assemblies' legal basis was established in August 1978 by way of amendments to the Constitution. By the early 1980s, the People's Assembly had simply become a rubber stamp, with no policymaking or legislative functions; it even failed to meet twice a year, as statutorily required.

These policies provided fertile ground for the discontent and insurgency that crystallised around the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO, the Mozambican National Resistance). The modest gains made in the economy after independence were eroded by conflict and drought. In 1983, at its fourth party congress, FRELIMO tried to reverse its course: it barred the start of new big development schemes, promised support for small private farmers, and called for small projects to be built with local materials.

By the mid-1980s, the simultaneous intensification of the war and the precipitate decline in the economy were forcing FRELIMO to re-examine its policy fundamentals. Primary among these re-examinations was a policy of economic perestroika, whose origins predated that famously associated with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Notably, the Soviet Union refused to allow Mozambique to join the Communist trading bloc, Comecon. This obliged the FRELIMO-led government to look to the West for economic and trading relations.

The first major amendment to the Constitution came in June 1986, when the People's Assembly created the Office of the Prime Minister and the Office of the President of the People's Republic. The creation of the Office of the Prime Minister was officially designed to allow then incumbent President Samora Machel to devote more time to the war effort; it also signalled a marginal delegation of powers away from the President.

The second general elections since independence were held between 15 August and 15 November 1986. Their function was to elect deputies to the various assemblies. Unlike the 1977 polls, when deputies to the People's Assembly were nominated by the FRELIMO Central Committee and simply ratified, this time, the provincial assemblies chose the deputies. Although, as before, the deputies were nominated by FRELIMO, they did not have to be party members. Moreover, the revised Constitution enabled elections to be carried out by the Provincial Authorities for the first time. A five-year mandate for deputies and universal suffrage for their election rather than mere nomination had been considered but had been rejected due to the war. The death of President Machel in an air crash in October 1986, during the elections, suspended the election process and his successor, Joaquim Chissano, proposed a more radical review of the Constitution.

In July 1989, at its fifth congress, FRELIMO dropped its commitment to Marxism–Leninism and an olive branch was held out to RENAMO. This was soon followed in early 1990 by the production of a new draft Constitution that would radically reshape the legal basis of society. The proposal would guarantee individual freedoms, universal suffrage by secret ballot in direct elections to the presidency and the legislature, an independent judiciary, a free press, habeas corpus, the right to strike, and outlawing of the death penalty. Following negotiations and a public debate, on 31 July 1990, the FRELIMO Politburo unanimously favoured the adoption of a multi-party system. In August, the Central Committee endorsed that view and voted that the word *People's* should be dropped from the country's name and state institutions. After these changes were approved by the People's Assembly, the new Constitution entered into force at midnight of 30 November 1990.

As highlighted above, during the socialist period, the blending between the roles of nation, state and party were official policy. The reality was that party and one's position in it trumped all else; moreover, in effect, the military and security services were designed to protect the party (Ottaway, 1988). There was goodwill towards FRELIMO at independence, but its narrowing support base soon became more obvious – especially as it bluntly tried to "squeeze" the peasantry to become more productive (Paris, 2004:146). One can conclude the FRELIMO's socialist experiment failed due to crude attempts at social engineering, ill-conceived economic projects, and an inability to effectively control the populace, exacerbated by externally funded aggression (Geffray, 1991).

Rhodesian and South African direct and indirect destabilisation through RENAMO was designed to weaken FRELIMO and cut its support of nationalists from those two countries (i.e. the Zimbabwe African National Union and the African National Congress, respectively) operating from Mozambican soil. This destabilisation partly worked up to the mid-1980s. However, RENAMO increasingly developed its own agenda in the late 1990s, specifically as regards gaining power and resources for itself. When the Rome General Peace Accord (GPA) to end the Mozambican civil war was signed in October 1992, the event was in many ways a hurting stalemate: both sides were exhausted – although FRELIMO remained the party of government and was recognised as such internationally. This allowed the new FRELIMO-led government not only to access international support and aid, but also to survive the after-effects of the war.

More importantly, FRELIMO reformed its political system from one-party socialism to multi-party capitalism before this final peace accord, providing it with a significant advantage over RENAMO, which was still fundamentally a guerrilla movement. FRELIMO effectively drew on its incumbency to rebuild its presence and recreate a FRELIMO party-state in the post-war period, built on neo-patrimonialism and the control of capital-rich assets (Pitcher, 2002). Dependence on international development provided some incentive for political pluralism, but, as Mozambique developed its own extractive resources, minerals, precious metals and stones, coal, and then gas, so FRELIMO become increasingly focused on its electoral domination and the neutralisation of opposition.

## Post-1990 electoral trends[2]

Mozambique is often classified as an incomplete hybrid democracy after the introduction of multi-party politics in the country in 1990 (Newitt, 2017:22).[3] The first multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections were overseen by the United Nations (UN) and were held on 27–29 October 1994, based on the framework agreed on in the Rome GPA that ended the 1977–1992 civil war between the Mozambican government and RENAMO. Of the 12 presidential candidates put forward, only three besides Joaquim Chissano (FRELIMO) and Afonso Dhlakama (RENAMO) – who obtained 53.3% and 33.7% of the vote, respectively – managed to obtain more than 2% of the vote. The parliamentary elections were contested by 12 political parties and 10 coalitions. A minimum of 5% of the national vote was required to secure a seat in the legislature. Apart from FRELIMO

2 This section draws from Do Rosário et al. (2020).

3 This author was part of the Commonwealth Observer Group to Mozambique for the 15 October 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections. The following section therefore also draws from the Group's final report (COGM, 2020), which includes a detailed review of electoral developments since 1994.

and RENAMO, only the Democratic Union coalition secured this minimum percentage: they won 5.15% and obtained nine seats in the 250-seat Parliament.[4] Dhlakama accepted the results of the presidential vote, despite allegations of irregularities. Chissano formed an entirely FRELIMO-led government, despite pressure from RENAMO and some Western governments for a government of national unity.

The second multi-party national elections took place in December 1999 and were described as "free and fair" by international observers (COGM, 2020). FRELIMO's margin of success was lower than that achieved in 1994, but once again, the party secured a majority in Parliament. It was the most popular party in only four of the ten provinces, however, namely the three southern regions and Cabo Delgado in the far north. Chissano's share of the vote fell from 53.3% in 1994 to 52.3% in 1999, while the share gained by RENAMO's candidate, Afonso Dhlakama, rose from 33.7 to 47.7% during the same interval (see Figure 6 later herein). RENAMO reacted to the results by alleging fraud, refusing to recognise the government, and threatening to establish a parallel administration in the provinces where it had won a majority. Nonetheless, the election outcome was endorsed by international observers. Mounting political tension led to police raids on RENAMO offices. This was followed by demonstrations throughout the country, all held on the same day. One such protest, in Montepuez in the Cabo Delgado Province, degenerated into violence, leaving 40 dead (including police officers); a subsequent police crackdown led to the death of 80 alleged RENAMO supporters in an overcrowded police cell (Vines, 1995).

In the elections in December 2004, Armando Guebuza, the new FRELIMO candidate who replaced President Joaquim Chissano, won with 63.7% of the vote. This was more than twice as many as RENAMO's candidate, Afonso Dhlakama (31.7%). In the parliamentary election, FRELIMO won 62% (1.8 million) of the votes cast, while RENAMO achieved 29.7% (905,000 votes); 18 minor parties shared the remaining 8%. FRELIMO obtained 160 parliamentary seats while RENAMO obtained 90. However, these elections were widely criticised in respect of issues of transparency and credibility. Several cases of electoral fraud reportedly took place. Nonetheless, the irregularities were deemed insufficient to have altered the overall outcome of the elections (Vines, 1995).

On 28 October 2009, presidential, National Assembly and Provincial Assembly elections were held in Mozambique. Incumbent President Guebuza ran for re-election as the FRELIMO candidate. He was again challenged by opposition leader Dhlakama. Also contesting the presidency was Daviz Simango, the Mayor of Beira, who was an affiliated RENAMO member before he founded his own party, the *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* (MDM, the Mozambique Democratic Movement) earlier in 2009. On 11

4 This author observed these presidential and parliamentary elections; see Vines (1995).

November that year, the *Comissão Nacional de Eleições* (CNE, or National Electoral Commission) officially announced that Guebuza had won the election with 75% of the vote; Dhlakama and Simango trailed with 16.5% and 8.6%, respectively. Results for the parliamentary election were also announced, showing that FRELIMO had won 191 seats, followed by RENAMO with 51 seats, and the MDM with eight. RENAMO was unhappy with the conduct of the elections and demanded, unsuccessfully, that they be annulled. RENAMO alleged that FRELIMO supporters had stuffed ballot boxes in several areas and were assisted in doing so by the CNE, which allegedly provided them with additional ballot papers (Vines, 1995).

The 15 October 2014 elections in Mozambique were the fifth national vote since the country introduced multi-party politics in 1990. The elections took place at a time when Mozambique was undergoing several transitions. At a political level, the country was transitioning from one president to another, as it was President Guebuza's last term in office. There was also a transition in the ruling party as a result of the change of presidential candidate – from President Guebuza to Filipe Nyusi.[5] Economically, the country was also undergoing a transition with the discovery of huge natural gas fields. These transitions – and the accompanying need for the preservation of individual and collective interests, access to resources, and the levers of power – opened up further avenues for political tensions. RENAMO's decision in 2013 to rescind the 1992 Rome GPA and return to the bush to resume military activity, mainly in the Sofala Province, cast a cloud of uncertainty over preparations for the elections.

Recurring armed attacks in 2013 and 2014 by RENAMO supporters on convoys travelling on the North–South highway as well as clashes with security forces, mainly in the Sofala Province (but with isolated incidents in a number of other Provinces too), left 140 people dead and more than 300 injured. In August 2014, several months of negotiations between the government and RENAMO culminated in the signing of a peace agreement on 5 September that year by RENAMO leader Dhlakama and President Guebuza in a formal ceremony held in Maputo.[6] Before then, Dhlakama had been based at a RENAMO base deep in the forests of central Mozambique for about two years. The signing of this peace deal, coupled with previous concessions made by the government in revising the electoral laws to RENAMO's satisfaction and Dhlakama's decision to register for and take part in the 2014 elections, offered reassuring signals of a more stable political environment leading up to the elections that year.

5 For a deeper analysis of Mozambique's elections, see De Brito (2010) and Thay (2020).

6 For the text of this accord, see https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MZ-143508-MozambiqueCeasefire_1.pdf (last accessed 15 September 2020). Despite this agreement, however, hostilities resumed in early 2015.

October 2014 saw the advent of Mozambique's fifth general elections. The event was characterised by distrust between the main political parties, a partisan police force, irregularities in the election process, and insufficient preparation by the opposition parties to oversee the process. In addition, there was a large imbalance in financial resources available for campaigning. The ruling FRELIMO party ran its most expensive campaign to date and enjoyed backing from the state media, with only a few private outlets supporting the opposition.[7] According to the European Union Election Observation Mission, "[t]he advantage of the ruling party over its adversaries through the use of material and human resources of the state resulted in an uneven playing field" (EU, 2014:4). That RENAMO had not disarmed before the elections also "bore an influence on the electoral campaign" (EU, 2014:4). Unsurprisingly, the election results were rejected by RENAMO, citing irregularities such as ballot stuffing, institutionalised bias in favour of FRELIMO, intimidation from the police, and state media bias. The tally gave incumbent FRELIMO President Nyusi 57% of the votes cast, while RENAMO's Dhlakama won 36% and the MDM's Simango obtained almost 7%.

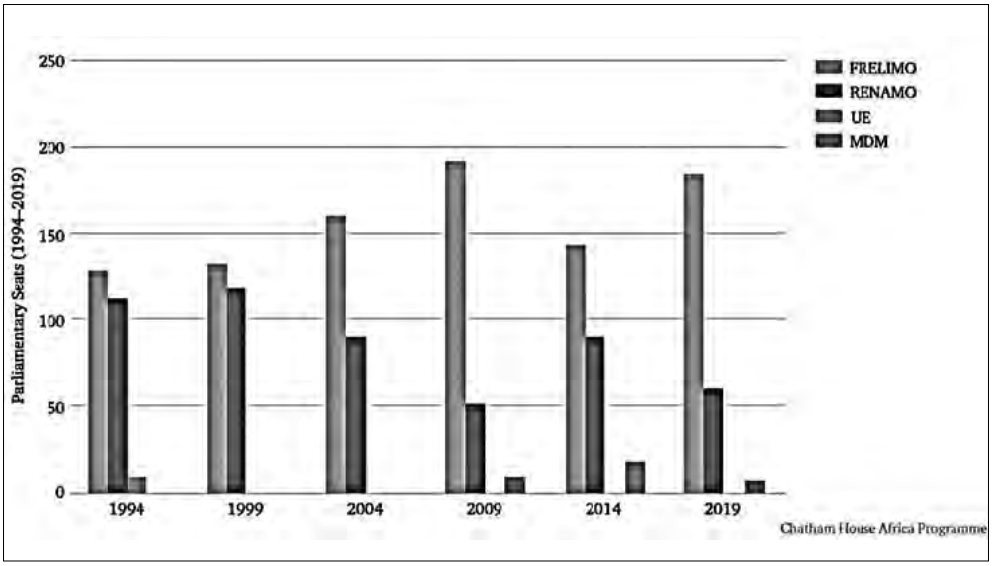



***Figure 1: Parliamentary elections, 1994–2019***

Source: *Comissão Nacional de Eleições* (CNE, National Electoral Commission); *Secretariado Tecnico da Administração Eleitoral* (STAE, Election Technical Secretariat); http://www.stae.org.mz/, last accessed 8 April 2023; Chatham House Africa Programme analysis

7 The EU Election Observation Mission's final report (EU, 2014) noted that FRELIMO and Nyusi received a greater proportion of media coverage on state television channels than other candidates, and it accused the state-run *Televisão de Moçambique* (TVM) of being in breach of Article 11 of the country's press law.

By the time the sixth general election was held, in October 2019, most observers expected RENAMO to make electoral gains. What actually happened, though, was that FRELIMO won the elections in every district of the country. The party obtained the presidency with 73.46% of valid votes, more than two thirds (184 of 250) of the parliamentary seats, and the vast majority (628 of 794) of the Provincial Assembly seats, as well as all ten provincial governors. The electoral process again took place in a polarised and challenging environment, marked by high levels of mistrust: it was foul and fair, with FRELIMO benefiting significantly from incumbency and RENAMO expecting at least token electoral gains because of the agreements into which it had entered.

Figure 1 graphically compares the parliamentary election results in Mozambique since the advent of multi-partyism. In reality, however, FRELIMO concluded that RENAMO posed an electoral risk to its incumbency after the 1999 presidential election results and again after the 2018 municipal election results.[8]

## Impact of municipal politics

Mozambique is a unitary state, with a mix of decentralised government through local and provincial structures. There are 53 elected local administrators, which include elected executives and local assemblies, but the central government also appoints district administrators for each of 128 districts in Mozambique's ten provinces. The districts cover all territories in the country, including those where there are no elected administrations, and there are some that overlap with the jurisdiction of an elected municipal government.

Until 2019, the President had full powers to appoint and dismiss the governors of the various provinces (these powers have since been revoked, however). In addition, each national minister appoints a representative director for the ministry concerned to serve in each province. Elected assemblies without decision-making powers were introduced to the provinces in 2009, but these bodies act merely as forums for discussion and token forms of local representation (Thomashausen, 2019; Weimer & Carrilho, 2017).

Decentralisation has featured in constitutional discussions since the early 1990s, beginning with the single-party assembly.[9] The first law establishing local administrations was approved in 1994, before the multi-party elections. FRELIMO claims credit for the implementation of decentralisation, but progress has been slow, and combative opposition by RENAMO – which contributed to the stagnation of reforms from 2004 to 2014 – has not helped. The latter voted against gradual decentralisation in the Parliament elected

8 Personal communication, author's interviews with FRELIMO officials, Maputo, 22 September 2010.

9 The first law constituting local government was approved in 1994 (Lei No. 3/1994 of 13 September 1994), but the first local elections only took place in 1998.

in 1994 and boycotted the first local elections in 2009. In fact, RENAMO's absolutist approach to decentralisation was self-defeating, depriving it of the opportunity to make early inroads and win control of several municipalities when its support was at its peak and FRELIMO was more amenable to opening up political space. FRELIMO's own fear of decentralisation derives from the culture of a centralised system that prevailed since independence, from perceived risks to national unity, and from the opposition's growing presence and influence on elected municipalities. As a result, Mozambique has a complex structure of overlapping administrative layers at the provincial and local levels.

The October 2018 municipal election had been generally peaceful. However, its results confirmed that, even if RENAMO had been disadvantaged after Dhlakama's death on 3 May that year, the electorate were not voting significantly for FRELIMO. Although FRELIMO won 44 out of 53 municipalities, there were at least five others in which electoral irregularities had denied RENAMO victory. The 2018 municipal election results were, therefore, a pronounced wake-up call, signalling a significant collapse of turnout for FRELIMO in the most populated provinces such as Nampula and Zambézia. This outcome resulted in FRELIMO forensically planning for the elections during 2018 and 2019 to prepare for the coming national elections.

RENAMO's national election expectations had also increased significantly after the 2018 municipal election results. In the past, FRELIMO had always done worse in national elections that followed the municipal ones. This predictable trend convinced RENAMO's leadership that it could win majorities in many provinces. Some RENAMO officials spoke of winning up to seven, but two or three seemed more realistic.

Figure 2 illustrates that, from 2003/4 to 2013/4, FRELIMO's vote in each National Assembly election declined every time after a Municipal Assembly election vote. The trend was reversed in the 2018/9 elections.

RENAMO had also learned that its boycotts backfired. A case in point was in the November 2013 municipal elections which the party boycotted due to an electoral law dispute. At the local level, in Quelimane and Nampula, RENAMO supporters had tactically voted for the MDM, helping the latter party gain four mayoral seats – including the large cities of Beira, Nampula and Quelimane (FRELIMO won 49 mayoral seats). The MDM also managed to secure 365 (30%) of 1,216 Municipal Assembly seats overall, and its candidates took more than 40% of the vote in 13 municipalities – including in the FRELIMO heartlands of Maputo and Matola, a feat never achieved by RENAMO before then. This was the MDM's maiden entry to the contested municipal polls nationwide, and the results showed the party could indeed campaign at national level and attract support from urban areas outside Beira and Quelimane (Vines, 2017).

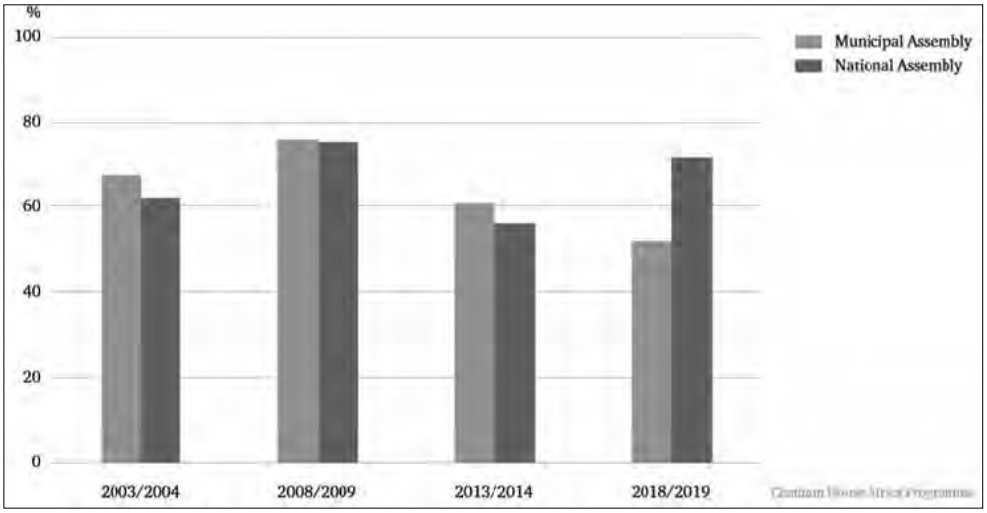



***Figure 2: FRELIMO share of votes at Municipal Assembly and National Assembly elections (%), 2003–2019***

Source: CNE and STAE; http://www.stae.org.mz/, last accessed 8 April 2023; Chatham House Africa Programme analysis

These municipal election results convinced RENAMO and FRELIMO that they needed to return to negotiations to ensure they neutralised the MDM's growing support base. Moreover, the 2014 presidential and legislative elections had also re-emphasised that RENAMO and FRELIMO were the country's primary political players. Another outcome of the 2014 election was to indicate that support for FRELIMO was declining and that RENAMO was winning over voters. It also confirmed to Dhlakama that his strategy of returning to targeted armed conflict had been rewarded: not only had the government resumed negotiations directly with RENAMO, but the party had made electoral gains as well, thus increasing its number of deputies. A few years earlier, memories of the previous civil war would have been stronger among the electorate and a return to conflict might have been punished. However, as is often the case in politics, timing matters. It is a reminder of the state of democracy in Mozambique that an undemocratic action of armed violence was rewarded by an amnesty and votes from the electorate.

RENAMO's strong performance in 2014, with Dhlakama winning the majority of the vote in five provinces (Manica, Nampula, Sofala, Tete and Zambézia), was surprising – not least because of his late start to campaigning. This election outcome strengthened Dhlakama's position in the party and there were no longer calls for him to step down. RENAMO also concluded that calculated armed violence had restored greater parity with FRELIMO, had brought about concessions, and had marginalised the threat posed by the MDM.

Figure 3 shows a sharp decline in FRELIMO's percentage of the votes, particularly in the Nampula and Cabo Delgado Provinces:

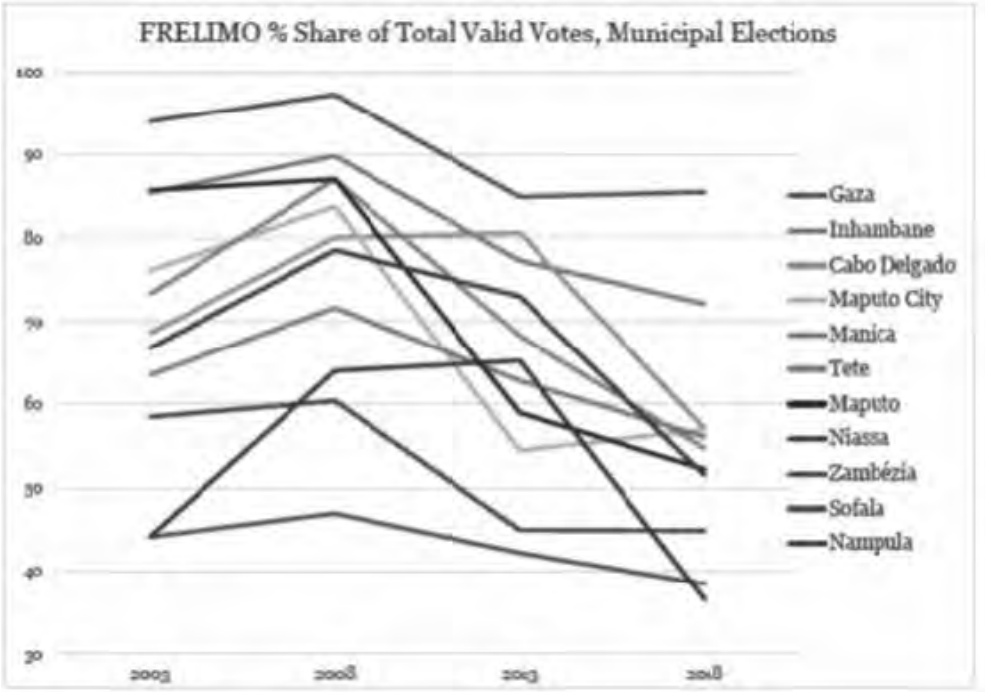



***Figure 3: FRELIMO share (%) of total valid votes in municipal elections, 2003–2018***
Source: CNE and STAE; http://www.stae.org.mz/, last accessed 8 April 2023

## Repeated electoral shortcomings

As had occurred after previous elections, the judiciary rejected the opposition' claims of rigging at the 2014 elections on technicalities (Vines et al., 2015:18). Although there was insufficient evidence to conclude that rigging had taken place on a scale that would have affected the overall result of a FRELIMO presidential victory and parliamentary majority, it became clear that the CNE had not performed its duties satisfactorily. However, the opposition parties were also at fault for being unable to provide credible evidence of widespread fraud, despite having deployed electoral observers across the country. The resulting suspicion, conspiracy and allegations have contributed to deepening political tensions between FRELIMO and opposition parties. These shortcomings were evident again in the 2019 elections, i.e. the required lessons from the 2014 elections had not yet been learnt. These lessons entailed amending the electoral legislation to provide a clear system of complaints and appeals, and providing training to judges, electoral

managing bodies and political parties in how to use the new system. There also needed to be efficient training on counting and tabulation procedures. The matter of incumbency was to be addressed as well, since it had offered a significant advantage to FRELIMO: the party had been able to draw on state assets to support its electoral efforts, while the opposition had not.

Since 1994, all political parties have claimed custodianship of the country's democracy. RENAMO leader Dhlakama campaigned as the "father of democracy" while FRELIMO claimed the mantle of independence and subsequent democracy (Agência de Informação de Moçambique, 2014). However, all parties share responsibility for the incomplete state of Mozambique's democracy today. Regular changes to the electoral law and repeated post-election deadlocks illustrate the frailty of the state and its superficial democratisation. The elite bargains[10] concluded in 1992, 2014 and 2019 between FRELIMO and RENAMO had failed to ensure a sense of inclusiveness among non-FRELIMO political elites.

Mozambique's political architecture, as exemplified by its electoral rules, elections, Constitution and decentralisation model, are all important for stability. However, they need to be underpinned by an inclusive politics in which key opposition players invest. FRELIMO also needs to make concessions merely for the sake of stability and should start reaching beyond the agreement of political rules. Since 1994, for instance, the two main parties have constantly changed the electoral rules. Sometimes this was encouraged by international partners but mostly it was because of specific requirements from the parties, such as the 2014 RENAMO demand for parity in political appointments to the electoral administration. The ongoing lack of consensus among the main parties as regards the rules of a democratic regime has not helped overcome the frailty of Mozambique's political institutions and processes. Persistent mistrust, combined with flawed elections, illustrates that, despite the civil war having ended over 20 years ago, reconciliation is far from accomplished, and that democratisation is a long-term project.

Another electoral shortcoming is that voter participation is decreasing. In 2014, participation stood at 48.6%, compared with 87.87% in 1994 (it was 51% in 2019). Furthermore, as has happened after previous elections, the judiciary rejected the opposition's claims of irregularities in procedures such as vote counting and tabulation. In the 2019 elections, for example, these claims were dismissed, but irregularities and fraud had clearly occurred. Granted, significant evidence was not provided to conclude that such deviations were on a scale that could have affected FRELIMO's presidential and parliamentary victories, but there was fraud nonetheless as well as incompetence on

10 These can be defined as "… discrete agreements between contesting military, political and socio-economic elites explicitly to (re)negotiate the distribution of power, allocation of resources and rules of the game" (Menocal et al., 2022).

the part of the CNE. Moreover, opposition parties were also at fault for failing to provide credible evidence of widespread fraud despite having deployed electoral observers across the country. In this regard, the 2014 EU Election Observation Mission concluded that the "opposition parties were unprepared and lacked organisation and capable party structures to fully implement and benefit from the new [electoral] arrangement" for which RENAMO had pushed (EU, 2014:5). The result is that suspicion, conspiracy theories and allegations remain, which have contributed to deepening political apprehension between FRELIMO and Mozambique's opposition parties. Moreover, the recommendations after the 2014 elections to implement a system of complaints and appeals and train all parties in the system as well as those in the counting and tabulation camps had been ignored. Both the EU and the Commonwealth concluded that past lessons had not been learned, nor had recommendations been actioned (COGM, 2020; EU, 2014). This neglect is noteworthy since RENAMO has rejected all election results since 1994, with the 1999, 2009 and 2019 elections having been particularly controversial. Thus, the perceived unfairness and irregularity in elections are not new in Mozambique. In other words, for reconciliation to take place, it is vital to show that the electoral processes have been improved over time – and this has not happened.

The 2019 legislative elections that saw FRELIMO gain an outright majority enabled it to pass legislation without having to negotiate with others. Parliament operates by proportionality in almost all matters – from time allocated to parliamentary groups taking the floor to the distribution of committee seats. There is a danger that such FRELIMO domination will ensure that Parliament continues to be a rubber-stamp institution. Factors such as these have exacerbated the national perception that the institution of democracy in Mozambique is being reversed. As reflected in surveys on how Mozambicans perceive democracy (Afrobarometer, 2021), the strongest voices for political accountability today come from civil society, from the media, and from within parts of FRELIMO. Figures 4 and 5 are the respective results of an Afrobarometer survey and a World Bank assessment: both illustrate democratic decline.

Supporting the Afrobarometer (2021) findings are the World Bank's (2019) governance index for Mozambique. The index reflects perceptions of the extent to which a country's – here, Mozambique's – citizens are able to participate in selecting their government. The index also shows people's perceptions of the degree of freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media implemented in the country assessed. Using this index, Figure 5 shows a significant and quickening decline in democracy in Mozambique since 2009.

## The limitations of elite bargaining

The Rome GPA lasted until 2013, which was when RENAMO returned to targeted armed conflict, ambushing vehicles, buses and trains, and attacking government facilities. The

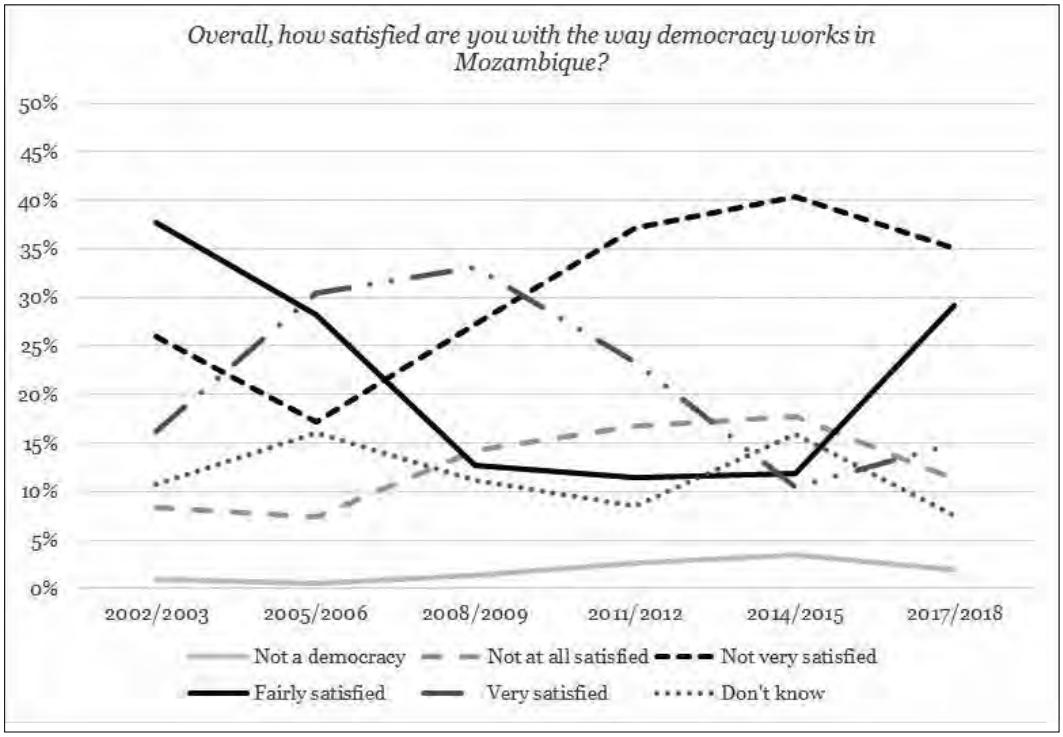



***Figure 4: Satisfaction with Mozambican democracy, 2002–2018***

Source: Afrobarometer (2021); http://afrobarometer.org/countries/mozambique-0, last accessed 8 April 2023

violence was concentrated in the central Manica and Sofala Provinces. If one includes the death toll caused by government countermeasures, this resumed conflict in its two phases between 2013 and 2016 resulted in at least 150 killed and 500 injured.[11] Map 1 illustrates RENAMO armed clashes in 2013–2014 (left) and 2015–2016 (right), as reported by the given sources.

11 As mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter, an agreement to end hostilities was signed by President Guebuza and RENAMO leader Dhlakama on 5 September 2014, but hostilities resumed in early 2015. For the text of this accord, see https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MZ-143508-MozambiqueCeasefire_1.pdf (last accessed 15 September 2021).

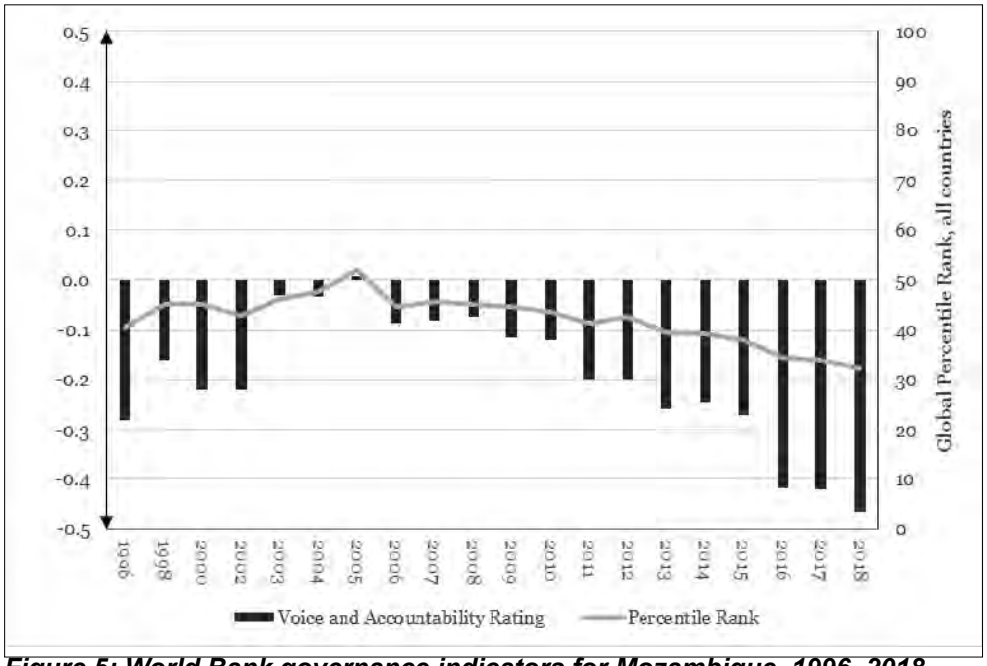
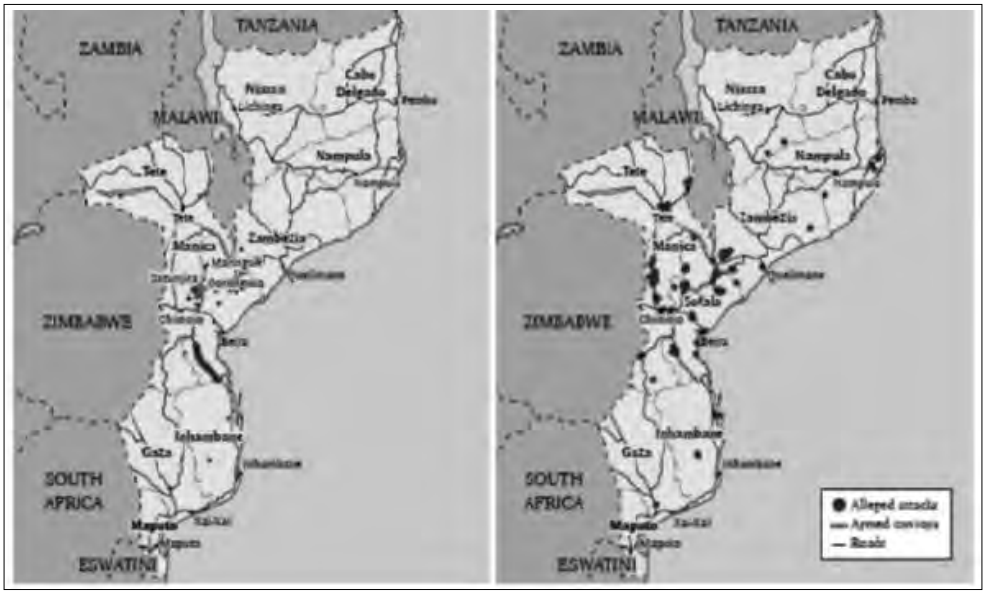



***Figure 5: World Bank governance indicators for Mozambique, 1996–2018***
Source: World Bank (2019)




***Map 1: RENAMO armed clashes, 2013–2014 (left) and 2015–2016 (right)***
Source: Adapted from @Verdade, Agencia Informação Moçambique (AIM), Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), and author interviews

So why did RENAMO return to armed conflict in 2013 after 20 years of peace and after contesting four national elections peacefully? What can be done to avoid a resumption of hostilities again?[12] FRELIMO's strategy towards RENAMO was the prime reason the opposition party took up arms again from 2013. FRELIMO was given an existential fright during the 1999 national elections when RENAMO's former leader, the late Afonso Dhlakama, nearly won the presidency by getting 47.7% of the vote; some respondents subsequently interviewed by the author believed Dhlakama had actually won. Figure 6 displays the results of presidential elections in Mozambique between 1994 and 2019.

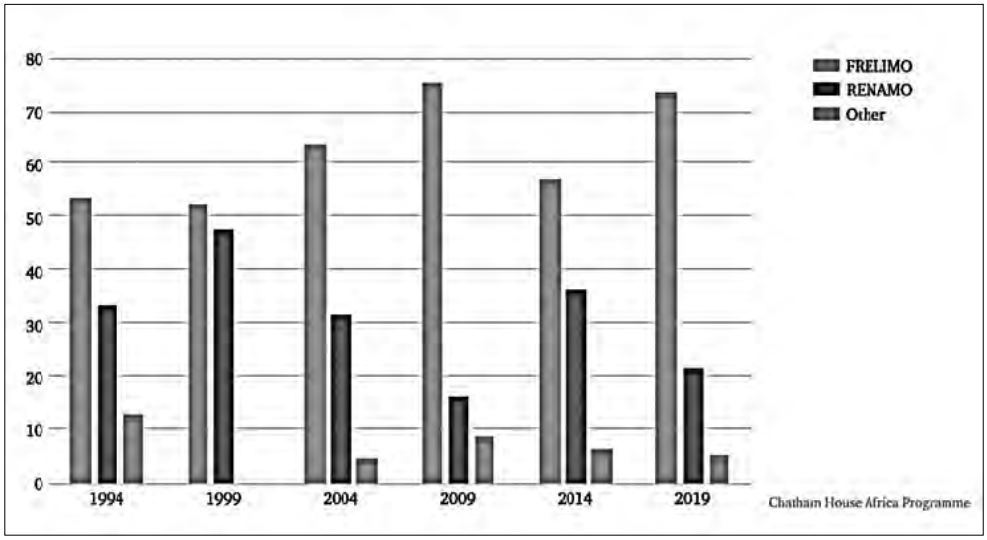



***Figure 6: Presidential election vote (%), 1994–2019***
Source: Chatham House Africa Programme analysis

When Armando Guebuza became President in 2004, therefore, the shock 1999 national election outcome made him seek total dominance for FRELIMO to guarantee its control of the country. This pursuit backfired spectacularly, instead convincing Dhlakama that he needed to return to armed conflict to extract new concessions. Reaching a new peace accord took six years, with three different peace-building efforts. The peace agreements of 1 and 6 August 2019 built on these past peace processes. They were signed in Gorongosa and Maputo, respectively, by then President and FRELIMO boss, Filipe Nyusi, and the RENAMO leader at the time, namely Ossufo Momade. The 6 August agreement was the third of its kind between the two parties and was designed to bring an end to 42 years of violent competition between them, even though their rivalry had somewhat

12 For the importance of local-level politics and neo-traditionalism and how they provide relevant insights for understanding peace-building and state formation in Mozambique today, see Bertelsen (2016).

weakened due to Dhlakama's death, which had also caused some fragmentation within RENAMO.[13]

The 6 August 2019 Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation was witnessed by the Chair of the African Union as well as four presidents (among whom were South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa and Namibia's Dr Hage Geingob) and several past mediators. President Nyusi reminded the large crowd in Maputo that the road to peace has had past setbacks (Vines, 2019b). This new elite bargain also assumed that there would be increased decentralisation, presenting an opportunity for RENAMO to win governorships in ten Mozambican provinces in exchange for the meaningful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of RENAMO's armed militia. (The process for the 5,221 earmarked RENAMO fighters started in central Mozambique at the end of July 2019.) Nobody, including FRELIMO strategists, imagined that RENAMO would fail to win majorities in at least one or two provinces.

This deal had been ripe for agreement in 2018, but Dhlakama's passing resulted in a power struggle within RENAMO and delayed the process. Gradually, Momade asserted some authority, resulting in an attempt to pivot the party away from central Mozambique towards the Nampula and Zambézia Provinces. However, the October 2019 election results failed RENAMO, as its electoral campaign had been artisanal compared with FRELIMO's industrial effort. Of course, there had already been splintering in RENAMO before. Furthermore, from July 2019, a self-styled RENAMO Military Junta elected its own leader, Lieutenant-General Mariano Nhongo, and began challenging Momade's authority. This group was small (around 200 core people) but enjoyed some support in central Mozambique. Armed attacks – resulting in up to 30 dead in central Mozambique by August 2021 – are a reminder that even only a few militants can be disruptive. However, the killing of Nhongo in October 2022 has probably tolled the bell for this splinter group.

A disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process (DDR) started in August 2019 and was scheduled to continue until mid-2021. The aim was to process 5,221 former RENAMO fighters and dismantle 16 RENAMO bases. These former combatants were to receive financial and social support for 12 months so that they could be reintegrated into their communities successfully. By 31 May 2023, over 4,000 former combatants from 15 of the 16 bases had already been reintegrated in this way. In addition, in March 2023, the government issued a decree aimed at guaranteeing that demobilised RENAMO soldiers were reintegrated socio-economically and would receive a pension.

Most of RENAMO's armed supporters are in favour of a lasting accommodation. FRELIMO's elite also want political stability to attract international investment. The benefits of the elite bargain for RENAMO were to have included elected governorships,

13 For a detailed account of this process, see Vines (2019a).

payment for disarmament and employment, and development opportunities. However, RENAMO's poor election results in October 2019 complicated this calculation.

## Importance of decentralisation

Meaningful decentralisation by the government and full demobilisation by RENAMO had been the key issues of negotiations in 2018 and 2019. In early 2018, President Nyusi and RENAMO leader Dhlakama negotiated a framework accord on political decentralisation. Following Dhlakama's death there were fears this might not last, but in May 2018, Parliament enacted a series of constitutional amendments to prepare for deepened decentralisation. These provided for elected provincial, district and municipal assemblies (with the leading delegate with the party with a simple majority, heading them). Following the work of the Commission on Decentralisation, a constitutional amendment on the issue was passed in the National Assembly in May 2019. The following month, the President promulgated the Law of Punctual Review of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (Weimer & Carrilho, 2017).

RENAMO had dropped its insistence of directly appointing governors in the provinces it claimed to dominate and accepted the principle of indirect gubernatorial elections in 2019 – as new provincial governors would be chosen based on the winning candidates on the provincial party list. For the first time, provincial governors would be elected and not appointed by the President. Provincial assemblies, which currently play an advisory role, were to become Provincial Executive Councils and have some tax-raising authority. In February 2019, the Cabinet announced a legislative package for the decentralisation of powers across Mozambique's ten provinces.[14] The proposals imposed overlapping mandates on provincially elected governors and Presidentially appointed provincial Secretaries of State, but were nonetheless designed to preserve FRELIMO power and disadvantage grass-roots representation. Under the new legislative package, crucial tax-raising powers remained with the Secretaries of State, whose said appointment by the President was something on which FRELIMO insisted.[15]

RENAMO's comprehensive disarmament is the key government demand.[16] The government understood that it needed to offer concessions for reintegrating RENAMO

14 This came into effect for cities and provinces with the 2019 elections and will apply to district assemblies for the 2024 elections. In terms of a compromise between the government and RENAMO, the government would, until 2024, consult with governors regarding district executive appointments.

15 Personal communication via author interview with government official, Maputo, February 2019.

16 After the May 2018 decentralisation reforms, FRELIMO parliamentarians suspended additional action subject to progress on RENAMO's disarmament. In July 2018, the signed Memorandum of Understanding on Military Affairs paved the way for further parliamentary progress on decentralisation.

combatants into the Mozambican defence force and police. In this regard, for example, a Memorandum of Understanding on Military Affairs, drafted between the government and RENAMO, includes security provisions for placing RENAMO ex-combatants in senior positions in the army and police force. New symbolic senior posts are being created to absorb some of these former fighters, and RENAMO raised the idea of creating a "provincial police force".[17]

International partners will also need to review their past peace-building efforts to encourage local-level political pluralism. As Machietto (2016:268) observes, –

> … it is clear that economic and political liberalization ... have not translated into a fair redistribution of the peace dividend. On the contrary, liberalization measures have been 'adapted' in such a way as to consolidate the regime of the dominant party, only now with the legitimization of the international community.

As a case in point, Machietto (2016) examined an ongoing national microcredit programme by the government called the District Development Fund (the so-called *7 million*) designed to support decentralisation and aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in Mozambique. Machietto's (2016) examination of the 7 Million was based on field research in the Nampula Province and showed that, despite the programme's limitations, some money and decision-making had indeed been devolved to local districts. This devolution allowed some communities to experience the possibilities of increased accountability by their local officials through Local Councils and associated Local Development Committees. Unsurprisingly, FRELIMO party loyalty was an advantage when it came to accessing microcredit from this programme. However, as FRELIMO found in the 2018 local elections, pandering to loyal supporters was no longer enough to guarantee votes in Nampula. The party realised it would have to work increasingly harder to retain patronage.

Another major challenge to sustainable democratic growth is the creep of corruption and the use by elites of their political influence to accumulate private wealth (Buur, 2014; Orre & Rønning, 2017:18). Corruption has grown over the post-civil war period, with worrisome implications for the economy and stability. The post-2015 economic decline followed disclosures that the government had failed to report to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over $2 billion in state-guaranteed debt, which violated the terms of Mozambique's cooperation with the Fund (Cook, 2019). Two foreign banks provided these loans, in an allegedly corrupt manner, to state-owned firms registered as private entities and controlled by state intelligence officials. These secret loans, most of which had been acquired in 2013 and totalled some US$2.2 billion, added around 30% to

17 The existing force, the ***Polícia da República da Moçambique*** (Mozambique Republic Police), would retain responsibility for the most serious crimes, while other policing matters would pass into the hands of the provincial force.

the country's foreign debt (Castel-Branco et al., 2016). Adding to the range of corrupt elements that accompanied this incident, not disclosing the size of the debt also entailed a significant understatement of the country's debt position.

This scandal transformed the political and economic landscape and led to widespread anger among Mozambicans at FRELIMO. The roots of this extensive loan request and its non-disclosure probably lie in the shock of the 1999 election results, when FRELIMO concluded that it needed regular funds for patronage and to ensure it won future elections. One response was to create a financial and business arm for the party, the *SPI – Gestão e Investimentos SARL*, usually referred to as the *SPI* (Nuvunga & Orre, 2019).

The fallout from the loan scandal is ongoing and more revelations will emerge on what exactly happened in 2013. What is nonetheless clear is that the private benefits that corruption entailed for the elite were part of the logic behind the loan acquisition and its subsequent non-disclosure. President Guebuza himself was already wealthy, however. Therefore, it is probable that, as he neared the end of his second and constitutionally final term of office, he nonetheless considered trying not only to secure a further term as party leader, but also to remain the de-facto power behind whoever succeeded him in office (Nuvunga & Orre, 2019). Conflict with RENAMO in 2013 suited these ambitions (he also denied the national defence force the military equipment required to counter RENAMO's return to targeted violence). However, by 2014, as his influence faded within FRELIMO, and as RENAMO's armed actions continued to damage the Mozambican economy, he instead sought a new settlement with the former rebels. The motivation behind, and the fallout from, the scandal serve as a potent reminder that peace-building and elite bargaining in Mozambique is multi-layered and open-ended; it also progresses in fits and starts and can have setbacks.

A durable peace settlement requires compromise by FRELIMO and an acceptance that RENAMO and other opposition parties can, in the near term, capitalise on some of the government's shortcomings. RENAMO also faces the challenge that its armed militia is mostly middle-aged (the average age of those registering for DDR is 53, and 48% of applicants reportedly suffer from pre-existing or underlying health conditions), meaning that it cannot rely on them indefinitely to provide armed backup.[18] Furthermore, the military wing is divided, split over the appointment of Momade as party president and his efforts to pivot the party core away from the Manica and Sofala Provinces. Moreover,

18 During interviews conducted by the author in Maputo in March 2016, a number of RENAMO supporters speculated that Afonso Dhlakama's niece, Ivone Soares, might be his possible successor. Several also mentioned André Matsangaissa, the son of RENAMO's first leader, was being groomed for leadership as well. In August 2017, senior RENAMO officials signalled that, for the 2019 national and presidential elections, Dhlakama would run as the party's presidential candidate for the sixth time. With Dhlakama's death in 2018, this all changed.

there is uncertainty over Momade's commitment to historical loyalties dating to the 1977–1992 war.

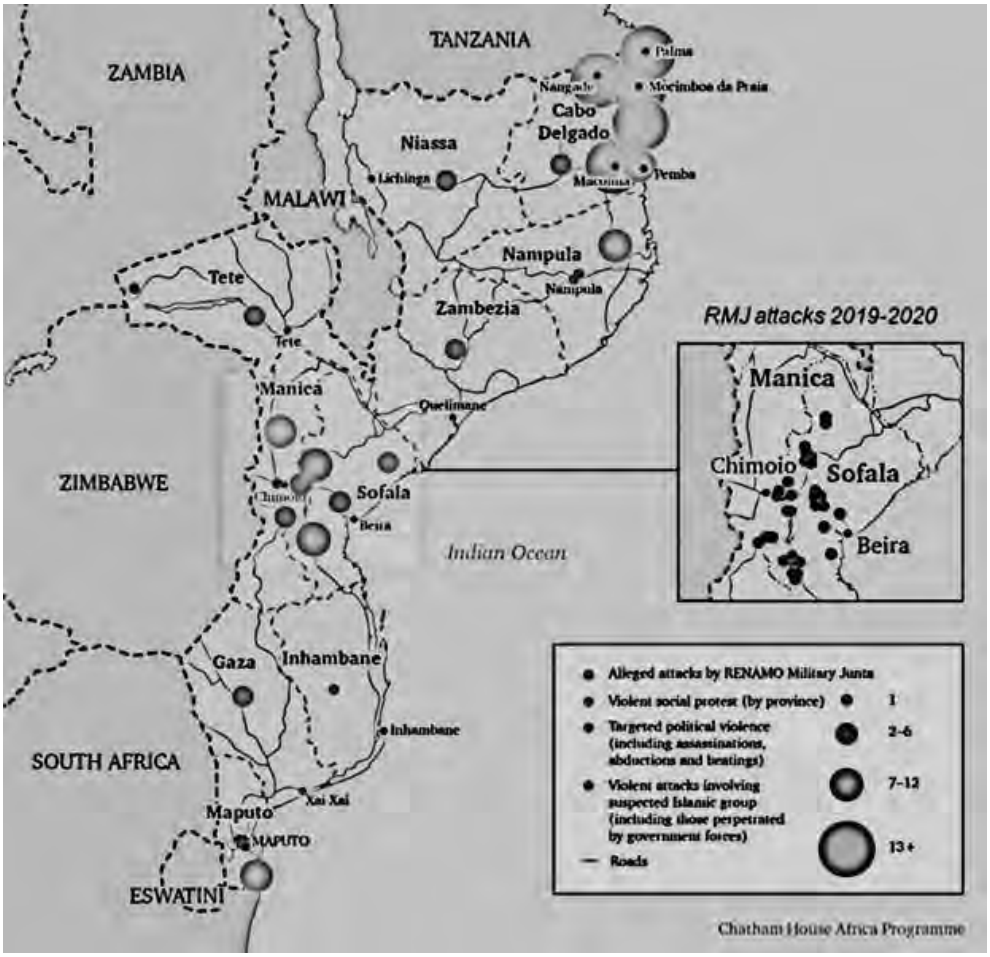
The 1992 Rome GPA successfully ended over 20 years of civil war in Mozambique. The establishment of peace was followed by an aid bonanza that rapidly transformed the FRELIMO elite into a patrimonial political class that became increasingly determined to hang on to power at all costs. The discovery of substantial natural gas as well as coal reserves around the turn of the millennium heightened the stakes further, dividing the FRELIMO elite over who has access to the spoils. This manifest oligarchy also triggered RENAMO's return to armed violence in 2013 to push for a new elite bargain with the government, contributing to new violent conflict in Cabo Delgado (Manning, 2002). Back in 2007, Sumich and Honwana (2007:22) warned of the fragility of the Rome GPA elite bargain in their assessment of FRELIMO and its disinclination to share power, and concluded the following:

> Since independence power has primarily been located in the Frelimo party, not in supposedly neutral state structures that could be inherited in a reasonably intact manner by another political force. Thus the very success of the party in rebuilding their hegemony and their disinclination to share power with social forces outside of their control could intensify the divisions and inequalities that helped to fuel the civil war in the first place.

The return to targeted armed conflict in 2013 between the government and RENAMO and the need for a new peace process are a reminder of state fragility and the lack of social resilience. The new 'definitive' peace agreement signed between the government and RENAMO on 6 August 2019 was a positive step forward, but many Mozambicans question whether it will stick. Furthermore, there is domestic and international anxiety over a growing violent crisis in northern Mozambique – especially in the Cabo Delgado Province. Since late 2017, Mozambique has also faced attacks by a violent Islamist extremist group that is active along its far northern coast. The group – known as Al Sunnah wa Jama'ah (ASWJ), among other names – has killed hundreds (see Map 2), which has often involved decapitation (Dos Santos, 2020; Haysom, 2018; Pirio et al., 2018; Vines, 2021).

These new and resumed conflicts, as illustrated in Map 2, were taking place in 2020 – a time of significant population growth, deepening inequality, and growing frustration at mainstream politics in Mozambique. The optimism which followed the end of the civil war during most of the 2000s has evaporated: Mozambique remains one of the world's least developed countries, ranking as 180th out of 189 countries. Up until 2022, Mozambique's state finances have relied on significant international loans, with development aid represented half of the state budget.

The discovery of world-class gas reserves in 2011 generated renewed optimism about the country's future. The production of natural gas will drive large gains in economic




***Map 2: Social and armed protest, 2020***
Source: Chatham House Africa Programme analysis

growth from the mid-2020s to the early 2030s; however, "rapid population growth, rising inequality and the lack of access to basic services and infrastructure [mean] that much of this growth may not benefit the poor.

## Conclusion

In retrospect, many factors contributed to the end of the Mozambican civil war in 1992 and the introduction of democracy. These include the end of the Cold War and of

apartheid in South Africa; political changes among Mozambique's neighbours; and a damaging military stalemate between FRELIMO and RENAMO (Vines, 1996). Post-conflict politics – as with civil war politics – were framed by regionalism and inequality, with FRELIMO increasingly trying to assert its hegemony across Mozambique as a national project. The situation in Mozambique today highlights the degree to which these bargaining processes are long-term. FRELIMO's post-conflict strategy under Chissano, for example, was to weaken RENAMO's support base in central Mozambique through compromise, including gradual decentralisation and patronage. This was abruptly ended by President Guebuza's attempt to impose total FRELIMO domination across Mozambique in 1999, once RENAMO's levels of electoral support were clear. Guebuza's strategy backfired spectacularly, humiliating Dhlakama and radicalising RENAMO's ex-combatants, resulting in their push to resume targeted, armed violence. Isolated and backed into a corner, Dhlakama felt he had nothing to lose by authorising such violence. Moreover, his tactic was rewarded in the 2014 elections, strengthening his leadership position in RENAMO (Vines, 2018).

By 2015, Dhlakama had also miscalculated, believing his threat of further violence would win more concessions. Instead, it increased splits in FRELIMO over its strategy towards RENAMO, and it weakened President Nyusi's attempts to reach a lasting accommodation of RENAMO's share of governance. The result was at least one assassination attempt on Dhlakama and increased violence by both sides, despite a haphazard good-offices effort by various international mediators. Common frustration of this process encouraged President Nyusi and RENAMO leader Dhlakama to cut intermediaries and start bilateral talks. A newly formed Contact Group led by the then Swiss Ambassador to Mozambique, Mirko Manzoni offered support in terms of focus and logistics. These efforts paved the way to the 6 August 2019 Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation. The October 2019 elections that followed were a significant test of that Accord, given RENAMO's failure to win any provincial gubernatorial posts. The Mozambican government is lucky that RENAMO is divided, its new leader weak, and its armed wing mostly in pursuit of a lasting accommodation. The current Accord may well stick but, as argued above, other, newer protests – including armed violence – are emerging (Porter et al., 2017). Allowing for greater democracy, particularly by way of political pluralism, and focusing on a reduction of national poverty are the best ways to continue to build the nation.

FRELIMO came up largely victorious in the 2018 municipal elections as well, winning 44 out of 53 cities and towns across the country. RENAMO won eight municipalities in the central and northern provinces, which are the most populous, while the MDM retained its stronghold in the strategic central port city of Beira.

Furthermore, on 15 October 2019, Mozambicans voted for the sixth time in national multi-party elections. A total of 39 parties and three coalitions contested the legislative and

presidential elections. However, in reality, the electoral contest was between FRELIMO and RENAMO, and the main competition was for the provincial governorships and parliamentary seats in the National Assembly rather than for the presidency. The municipal election results of 2018 also illustrated how the turnout for FRELIMO had begun to decline steeply in the Nampula and Zambézia Provinces, and that RENAMO had made significant inroads into traditional FRELIMO strongholds such as Mozambique's second city, Matola.

For FRELIMO – a party that still sees itself as enjoying historical legitimacy based on defeating Portuguese colonialism in 1974 – this was a wake-up call, spurring further mobilisation to ensure it remained dominant. Despite RENAMO's internal crisis, which was partly due to the passing of its leader in 2018 in the run-up to elections, FRELIMO was expecting a hard-fought election. The landslide results that emerged in FRELIMO's favour were not entirely democratically achieved, however, and it has become evident that the party is united in its resolve to ensure it continues to dominate in the governance of Mozambique, despite the broader societal risks posed by an increased lack of political inclusivity.

Mozambique will hold its sixth municipal elections in October 2023, marking the beginning of another electoral cycle that will culminate in the presidential, legislative and provincial elections a year later, in October 2024. The country once again is gripped by election politics.

FRELIMO is aware that, within its ranks, members are demanding a more balanced distribution of power between the different ethnic groups and provinces. While this discussion around provincial representation in Maputo is clearly important, it could overshadow the real issues if it does not also address the devolution of power for regional decision-making. The debate on decentralisation needs to take place in tandem with discussions about development. The current agenda of provincial political and administrative advancement) has been implemented by an elected FRELIMO governor and representative directors who are simultaneously accountable to that governor as well as to their respective national ministries. Aside from the potential pitfalls associated with answering to a dual leadership, as this structure imposes, the province's development agenda is often applied piecemeal. As a high-ranking official complained in 2014 before the security crisis there, "Not much has changed. Maputo still decides what happens in Cabo Delgado."[19]

The economic reforms from the 1990s have also allowed some members of the elite to acquire significant material benefits (Sumich, 2021). This was probably assisted by the

19 Personal communication during an interview conducted by the author in Pemba, October 2014.

fact that democratisation and neo-liberalism were externally imposed, and Mozambique's economic reforms have tended to be shallow and undertaken to legitimise the government from the international community's – rather than the internal population's – perspective (Harrison, 1999). Sumich and Honwana (2007:22) concluded the following in this regard:

> Ironically, while authoritarian governments expend serious effort to keep their finger on the pulse of the population, externally imposed democracy often allows them to treat large segments of their population far more casually.

It is clear that development, combating inequality and corruption, and promoting better education and health care are the best way to combat the new security crisis posed by Islamic militants in Cabo Delgado, as well as to ensure that more virulent and violent political protests do not further threaten peace and prospects of prosperity elsewhere for Mozambique. Elite bargaining might have contributed to drawing down the historic dispute with RENAMO, but there is no guarantee that it will work as a strategy when confronted by new conflicts. Opening up democratic space for the competition of ideas for leadership, government and party accountability may be a better nation-building strategy going forward, as will accepting that FRELIMO cannot dominate Mozambican politics in perpetuity.

## References

Afrobarometer. 2021. *Mozambique Round 8 – Summary of results*. Accra: Afrobarometer.

Agência de Informação de Moçambique. 2014. Dhlakama arrives in Zambézia. *Allafrica.com*, 27 September 2014. http://allafrica.com/stories/201409280033.html, last accessed 15 September 2020.

Bertelsen, B. 2016. *Violent becomings: State formation, sociality, and power in Mozambique*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Buur, L. 2014. The development of natural resource linkages in Mozambique: The ruling elite capture of new economic opportunities. *DIIS Working Paper 2014:3*. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies. https://rucforsk.ruc.dk/ws/files/55471747/Buur_Ruling_Elite_Capture_DIIS_WP_2014_03.pdf, last accessed 15 September 2021.

Castel-Branco, C, & Massarongo, F, with Ali, R, Mandlate, O, Massingue, N, & Muianga, C. 2016. Mozambique's secret debt: The impact on the structure of the debt and the economic consequences. *Informação sobre Desenvolvimento, Instituições e Análise Social Boletim No. 86e*. Maputo: Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos.

COGM/Commonwealth Observer Group to Mozambique. 2020. *Mozambique: Presidential, National and Provincial Assembly elections, 15 October 2019*.

Commonwealth Secretariat: London. https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/mozambique-elections-2019-commonwealth-observer-group-make-recommendations-improved, last accessed 15 September 2020.

Cook, N. 2019. Mozambique: Politics, economy, and US relations. *Congressional Research Service Report R45817*. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45817.pdf, last accessed 15 September 2021.

De Brito, L. 2010. O sistema eleitoral: Uma dimensão crítica da representação política em Moçambique. In De Brito, L, Castel-Branco, CN, Chichava, S, & Francisco, A (Eds). *Desafios para Moçambique 2010*. Maputo: Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos. https://www.iese.ac.mz/lib/publication/livros/des2010/IESE_Des2010_1.SisEleit.pdf, last accessed 15 September 2020.

Do Rosário, DM, Guambe, E, & De Salema, E (Eds). 2020. *Democracia multipartidadária em Moçambique*. Maputo: Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345238502_Jovens_redes_sociais_da_Internet_e_radicalizacao_em_Mocambique, last accessed 12 October 2021.

Dos Santos, A. 2020. War in resource-rich northern Mozambique – Six scenarios. *CMI Insight 2020:02*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute. https://www.cmi.no/publications/7231-war-in-resource-rich-northern-mozambique-six-scenarios, last accessed 15 September 2021.

EU/European Union Election Observation Mission. 2014. *Mozambique: Final report – General elections 15 October 2014*. Maputo: Delegation of the European Union in Mozambique.

Geffray, C. 1991. *A causa das armas: Antropologia da guerra contemporœnea em Moçambique.* Porto: Edições Afrontamento.

Harrison, G. 1999. Corruption as 'boundary politics': The state, democratisation and Mozambique's unstable liberalisation. *Third World Quarterly*, 20(3):537–550.

Haysom, S. 2018. *Where crime compounds conflict: Understanding northern Mozambique's vulnerabilities*. Geneva: Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. https://globalinitiative.net/northern_mozambique_violence/, last accessed 27 August 2019.

Jacobs, D, & Isbell, T. 2020. *In Mozambique, strong regional differences mark fear of extremist and election violence*. Cape Town: Afrobarometer.

Machietto, R. 2016. *Beyond peacebuilding: The challenges of empowerment promotion in Mozambique*. Camden: Palgrave MacMillan.

Maier, K, Mustafa, K, & Vines, A. 1992. *Conspicuous destruction: War, famine and the reform process in Mozambique. An Africa Watch Report*. New York/Washington/Los Angeles/London: Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/m/mozambq/mozambi.927/mozam927full.pdf, last accessed 12 October 2021.

Manning, C. 2002. Conflict management and elite habituation in postwar democracy: The case of Mozambique. *Comparative Politics*, 35(1):63–84.

Markakis, J. 1979. Garrison socialism: The case of Ethiopia. *MERIP Reports No. 79*. Chicago, IL: Middle East Research and Information Project.

Menocal, AR, Von Billerbeck, S, & Zaum, D. 2022. From elite bargains to more inclusive politics? Lessons and implications from existing research. *ODI Newsletter*, 24 March 2022. London: ODI.

Newitt, M. 2017. *A short history of Mozambique*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nuvunga, A, & Orre, A. 2019. The 'Secret Loans Affair' and political corruption in Mozambique. In Amundsen, I (Ed.). *Political corruption in Africa: Extraction and power preservation*, pp 116–135. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Orre, A, & Rønning, H. 2017. *Mozambique: A political economy analysis*. Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/6366-mozambique-a-political-economy-analysis.pdf, last accessed 15 September 2021.

Ottaway, M. 1988. Mozambique: From symbolic socialism to symbolic reform. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 26(2):211–226.

Paris, R. 2004. *At war's end: Building peace after civil conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pirio, G, Pittelli, R, & Yussuf, A. 2018. The emergence of violent extremism in northern Mozambique. *Africa Center for Strategic Studies Spotlight*, 25 March 2018. https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-emergence-of-violent-extremism-in-northern-mozambique, last accessed 27 August 2019.

Pitcher, A. 2002. *Transforming Mozambique: The politics of privatisation, 1975–2000*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Porter, A, Bohl, D, Kwasi, S, Donnenfeld, Z, & Cilliers. 2017. *Prospects and challenges: Mozambique's growth and human development outlook to 2040*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies. https://issafrica.org/research/books-and-other-publications/prospects-and-challenges-mozambiques-growth-and-human-development-outlook-to-2040, last accessed 15 September 2020.

Reppell, L, Rozen, J, & De Carvalho, G. 2016. Planning for peace: Lessons from Mozambique's peacebuilding process. *ISS Paper 291*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies. https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/Paper291.pdf, last accessed 17 January 2023.

Sumich, J. 2021. "Just another African country": Socialism, capitalism and temporality in Mozambique. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(3):582–598.

Sumich, J, & Honwana, J. 2007. Strong party, weak state? Frelimo and state survival through the Mozambican civil war: An analytical narrative on state-making. *Crisis States Research Centre Working Paper No. 23*. London: Crisis States Research Centre. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08bf4e5274a31e0000ece/wp23.2.pdf, last accessed 12 October 2021.

Thay, AH. 2020. Eleições e sistema eleitoral africano: Desafios e perspectivas para Moçambique. *Revista Debates*, 14(2):131–152.

Thomashausen, A. 2019. The concept and implementation of 'gradual decentralisation' in Mozambique. In Fomad, C, & Steytler, N (Eds). *Decentralisation and constitutionalism in Africa*, pp 384–409. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNDP/United Nations Development Programme. 2018. *Human development indices and indicators - 2018 statistical update*. New York: UNDP. https://hdr.undp.org/content/statistical-update-2018, last accessed 17 January 2023.

Vines, A. 1995. As eleições multipartidárias de Outubro de 1994 na Província de Gaza: Uma análise. *Arquivo*, 18:93–115.

Vines, A. 1996. *Renamo: From terrorism to democracy in Mozambique?* Melton: James Currey.

Vines, A. 2016. Are southern Africa's liberation movements in crisis? *Newsweek*, 16 August 2016. https://www.newsweek.com/are-southern-africas-liberation-movements-crisis-490642, last accessed 15 September 2021.

Vines, A. 2017. Afonso Dhlakama and Renamo's return to armed conflict since 2013: The politics of reintegration in Mozambique. In Themnér, A (Ed.). *Warlord democrats in Africa: Ex-military leaders and electoral politics*. London: Zed Books. http://nai.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1094726/FULLTEXT01.pdf, last accessed 15 September 2021.

Vines, A. 2018. Remembering a warlord democrat. *Mail & Guardian*, 9 May 2018. https://mg.co.za/article/2018-05-09-00-remembering-a-warlord-democrat, last accessed 15 September 2020.

Vines, A. 2019a. As perspectivas de um acordo sustentável entre as elites em Moçambique: À terceira é de vez? *Chatham House Africa Programme Trabalho de Pesquisa*. London: Chatham House. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-09-04-ElitePerspectivesMozambique-Portuguese.pdf, last accessed 15 September 2021.

Vines, A. 2019b. Third time lucky for peace in Mozambique? *Mail & Guardian*, 7 August 2019. https://mg.co.za/article/2019-08-07-third-time-lucky-for-peace-in-mozambique, last accessed 15 September 2021.

Vines, A. 2021. Responding to Mozambique's Islamic insurgency: Will foreign military assistance make a difference? *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 15 September. https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2021/09/15/responding-to-mozambiques-islamic-insurgency-will-foreign-military-assistance-make-a-difference/, last accessed 12 October 2021.

Vines, A, Thompson, T, Jensen, SK, & Azevedo-Harman, E. 2015. Mozambique to 2018: Managers, mediators and magnates. *Chatham House Report*, June 2015. London: Chatham House. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/fieldocument/20150622Mozambique2018VinesThompsonKirkJensenAzevedoHarman.pdf , last accessed 15 September 2021.

Weimer, B, & Carrilho, J. 2017. *Political economy of decentralisation in Mozambique – Dynamics, outcomes, challenges*, pp 49–52. Maputo: Institute for Social and Economic Studies. https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/IESE_Political_Economy_of_Decentralisation_-_Livro.pdf, last accessed 16 September 2021.

World Bank. 2019. *Worldwide governance indicators – Mozambique*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

# Revisiting party factionalism within ruling parties and political stability in Lesotho, 1993–2022

**Motlamelle A Kapa**

Since the return to multi-party politics in 1993, after seven years of military rule, Lesotho's ruling parties have all been bedevilled by an incessant phenomenon of factionalism: a trend also observable in many countries in the southern African subregion. Why is factionalism so deeply entrenched in Lesotho's ruling parties, and what does this imply for political stability? An attempt is made to answer this question by adopting a qualitative approach in which secondary data are used to revisit this intra-party factionalism phenomenon and its implications for political stability. The phenomenon has already received some attention in Lesotho's political and historical literature (see e.g. Makoa, 2014; Matlosa, 2008; Pule, 1999; Sekatle, 1997), albeit not as an exclusive and independent variable – as it will be treated in this chapter. The chapter, thus, makes some knowledge contribution in that regard. It will also show how intra-party factionalism in Lesotho has been caused by fierce power struggle and leadership succession contestations, with adverse implications for political stability. The study focuses on the four main parties that have been in government alone and/or in coalition with others from 1993 to 2022. These parties are the All Basotho Convention (ABC), the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), the Democratic Congress (DC), and the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). The chapter presents the contextual background to, a conceptual overview of, and the phenomenon of factionalism within, these four parties, the phenomenon's implications for political stability, and a conclusion.

## Contextual background

Within the southern African region, the struggle for liberation from colonial rule and an apartheid system (in former settler colonies) followed two main routes: the peaceful transfer of power (Botswana, Eswatini, and Lesotho) and a protracted armed struggle led by liberation movements (Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe) (Bauer & Taylor, 2005:3–4). In all the named countries except Eswatini and Lesotho, the parties that won the first election – i.e. the former liberation movements – have remained

in power, entrenching one-party-dominant systems (Karume, 2004). Eswatini adopted a no-party system (Matlosa, 2021:106), which is now under intense pressure as its citizens demand democratic reforms from the country's executive monarch and his regime.

In Lesotho, the Basutoland African Congress (which later became the BCP) was the first political party to organise and mobilise the population to demand independence from British colonial rule (Nyeko, 2002:153). The party experienced the first spectre of factionalism, based largely on clear ideological and policy differences, when the Basotho National Party (BNP) and Marematlou Party (later named the Marematlou Freedom Party, MFP), broke away from it (Nyeko, 2002:160–166). Nonetheless, all of these early parties shared a common desire for an independent Lesotho, to which the British finally conceded on 4 October 1966, after the 1965 parliamentary elections.

The BNP won the elections by 31 seats against the BCP's 26 and the MFP's four seats in the country's first, 65-member National Assembly (Khaketla, 1971:12). When the five-year term of the first Parliament ended in 1970, Lesotho held its second elections. However, the BNP leader and Lesotho's then Prime Minister, Chief Leabua Jonathan, alleged widespread violence and fraud by the opposition BCP and annulled the election results, declared a state of emergency, and suspended the Constitution (Khaketla, 1971:208). Lesotho became a de facto one-party state under the BNP government (Matlosa, 1999:171).

In reaction to Prime Minister Jonathan's declaration of a state of emergency and the repression that his regime unleashed on the opposition, resulting in the BCP leadership fleeing the country in 1974, the BCP resorted to an armed struggle and thus formed the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) in exile. This was an inconsequential move, however. Besides some sporadic hit-and-run acts, the LLA did not achieve its core objective of toppling the BNP government; that only happened once the BCP returned to the country and the LLA itself was disbanded by the party's founder, Ntsu Mokhehle (Pule, 2002:183). In January 1986, the then BNP government was ousted by the very army that had protected it from the LLA. The military took power and ruled the country until 1993, when it called a transitional election. The election was won overwhelmingly by the BCP, who swept up all 65 parliamentary seats.

From 1993 to date, all parties that have been in power have been embroiled in factionalism. Two main factions have emerged from these intra-party conflicts and have engaged in fierce power struggles – in all cases leading to the split of each party and consequent political instability. The various factions will not be named individually here for the sake of brevity.

## Conceptual overview: Factions, factionalism and political stability

As organisations, political parties in pluralist systems are made up of individuals who have self-interests to pursue and protect, and they promote such interests at any given time. Köllner and Basedau (2005:6) indicate that political parties are not homogeneous entities; rather, they consist of "coalitions of political actors who pursue their own individual interests and goals". These individuals sometimes form factions. The term *faction* has been defined variously. According to Heywood (2013:223), a *faction* refers to "a section or group within a larger formation, usually a political party". The aims and organisational status of a faction must be compatible with those of its host party lest it becomes "a party within a party" (Heywood, 2013:223). Zariski (1960, in Kanyane, 2021:4) defines a *faction* as –

> … any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organised to act collectively and as a distinct bloc within the political party to achieve their goals. These goals may include any, several, or all of the following: patronage (control of party and government office by members of the faction), the fulfilment of local, regional, or group interests, influence on party strategy, influence on party and governmental policy, and the promotion of a discrete set of values to which members of the faction subscribe.

Zariski's definition is useful because it brings to the fore key features that characterise factions, namely the commonality of group identity, purpose, and collective action to achieve common goals, which may include patronage, influence on party strategy, government policy, and the promotion of the group's set of values (Zariski, 1960, in Kanyane, 2021:4). Köllner and Basedau (2005:6) outline the following as some key features of factions:

- Factions are either almost totally unorganised or exhibit only a very ephemeral organisational setup
- They pursue a single issue or fight an electoral campaign
- They have no coordinated recruitment of membership
- Their leadership is ad hoc
- They have no hierarchical command structure, and
- They have a short life span, especially if members have one common issue.

Kanyane (2021:4) adopts this conceptualisation but stresses some outcomes of factions. For him, factions are "intra-party cliques which lead to complots and split-offs giving birth to party formations with a purpose in mind to contest for elections on their own terms as new opposition parties or splinter groups" (Kanyane, 2021:4). Not all factions result in their party splitting, however: they sometimes stay on if their loyalty to the mother party remains strong, and they may compromise or work towards a consensus

on issues of concern to them (Kanyane, 2021:4). This conceptualisation of factions is instructive in the context of Lesotho, since all major parties have had factions. In most cases, such factions have broken away and formed splinter parties – as will be illustrated later in this chapter.

Factions also lead to the phenomenon of factionalism, which has similarly been defined in many ways. Heywood (2013:223), for example, defines *factionalism* as "either proliferation of factions, or [leading] to the bitterness of factional rivalry"; he adds that the term is "always pejorative", and implies "debilitating infighting". Boucek (2009:456) regards *factionalism* as "a multifaceted phenomenon which can transform itself over time in response to incentives" and as "a process rather than organised units with predetermined characteristics".

Boucek (2009) goes on to identify three types of factionalism, namely cooperative, competitive, and degenerative. *Cooperative* factionalism is normally associated with the process of party formation. This type of factionalism facilitates the aggregate capacity of parties while preserving subgroup identities. This factional structure may, therefore, be instrumental in promoting intra-party cooperation and consensus-building. The second type is *competitive* factionalism. This represents the splitting of parties into groups that are opposed to and compete with each other. If not properly managed, this type of factionalism results in dissent, disagreements, polarised opinion, instability, a stalemate in decision-making, and fragmentation of the party. If managed, this diversity may produce positive outcomes for the party, including improved intra-party democracy, debate and communication among leaders and followers, and the accommodation of dissenting views. The third type is *degenerative* factionalism. It is characterised by too many self-seeking factions that operate as channels for distributing patronage, leading to the privatisation of incentives. The result of this type of factionalism may be that some members capture the faction, which may then trigger a cycle of factionalism and end in the party's disintegration (Boucek, 2009:479–480).

This discussion argues that, in Lesotho, parties portray degenerative factionalism more than the other two types. Ever since the late 1950s, when factions have emerged and become public, the result has usually entailed the degeneration of the party concerned – as will be shown below.

Degenerative factionalism may lead to political instability, especially when it afflicts parties in government. Ake (1974:585) notes that *political instability* is generally understood – either implicitly or explicitly – to mean violence, conflict, civil disorder, a short duration of government, and a lack of institutionalisation. This conceptualisation is problematic, however, since all these characteristics of political instability do not themselves necessarily destabilise or stabilise political systems. Rather, what destabilises one system may stabilise another – or it may be altogether irrelevant in

some cases. For Ake (1974:585), *political stability* means "the regularity of the flow of political exchanges". But stability does not imply that there is no political change; such change "becomes an instance of political instability only when it violates the established expectations about how that particular type of change may legitimately occur" (Ake, 1974:590).

Although he wrote over four decades ago, Ake's conceptualisation of political instability remains useful in the context of Lesotho, where factionalism has led to instances that lie outside generally expected behaviour. Such instances are therefore illegitimate and, as such, cause political instability. In the context of this chapter, *political instability* is defined as a series of instances and actions that include violent conflict, assassinations, and short durations of governments, especially since the advent of coalition politics after the 2012 elections. These instances and actions have led to Lesotho's political system being largely unstable. Indeed, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has had to intervene to arrest the problem of political instability since Lesotho's return to multi-party politics in 1993.

Against the background of this conceptual consideration of *factionalism* and *political instability*, what about intra-party factionalism in Lesotho's ruling parties, and what has this implied for political stability since the 1993 transitional elections?

## Party factionalism within the BCP and political instability, 1993–1997

Before delving into the phenomenon of factionalism within the BCP, it is useful to understand, at a general level, the link between intra-party factionalism and political instability by looking at the broader context of Lesotho's political economy. In this regard, Matlosa (1999:175) is instructive when he says –

> … political instability in Lesotho is not only a manifestation of institutional decay and constitutional disorder, it is also a mirror-image of age-old structural crises marked by (a) a resource-poor labour reserve, and (b) external dependence which impinges on its sovereignty and security. Under conditions of weak resource endowments and poverty, everybody looks up to the state to provide the basic necessities of survival.

Although Matlosa's observation is over 20 years old, it remains on point. Nothing much has changed in Lesotho's politics. The degenerative intra-party factionalism portrays the same causes, nature, and content with no significant alternation. It is still primarily about access to state power and the associated rents, which have always been both "fierce and acrimonious", and without any ideological or policy differences between both the intra-party factions and between political parties themselves (Matlosa, 1999; Pule, 1999). At the core of factional feuds within and between Lesotho's political parties has been and

continues to be access to state power. Such access is used as an avenue to the political elite's economic survival – with debilitating effects on political stability. These factional fights often become manifest at parties' national executive committee levels towards the end of the parliamentary term as parties prepare for elections. The committees get torn into factions – and this has become an almost permanent feature of Lesotho's party system and, even more so, of the parties in government.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the BCP won the 1993 transitional elections from military to civilian rule by a landslide, sweeping up all 65 parliamentary seats (Sekatle, 1999:41). However, the BCP had come back from exile in the 1980s as a divided party before its electoral victory; moreover, its emerging dominance of Lesotho's political scene was short-lived due to factionalism and its associated power struggles (Pule,1999:2). Immediately after the party assumed leadership of the state, this factionalism became more palpable than before due to two factors: a struggle for power within the party, and contests for leadership succession. The failing health and advanced age of BCP party leader Mokhehle prompted "intense jockeying" for his position by two intra-party factions in anticipation of his departure from public life (Pule,1999:2). The party had failed to manage the succession issue amidst suspicions that the incumbent leader was preparing to hand over the reigns to a candidate of his own choosing (Pule,1999:2). The two factions in question were the Conservatives *(Majelathoko)* and the Pressure Group. Pule (1999:5) describes the former as having organised around the personality of the leader and being composed of the "old guard" of the party, which was regarded by its rival faction as "conservative" (although there were no clear ideological distinctions between them); this faction also portrayed itself as "the real or authentic BCP". The Conservatives dismissed their rivals, who were aligned to the party's deputy leader, Molapo Qhobela, as "a clique of power-hungry and untrustworthy opportunists" who had no "understanding of the constitution of the party and its way of doing things" but intend on "taking over the party from within" (Pule, 1999:5). The Pressure Group consisted of "the young, enlightened, modernising, progressive and dynamic members" but was later joined by the "veteran members" (Pule, 1999: 5). This second faction also claimed that it wanted to "ensure that the BCP and its government were united, democratic, and strong" (Pule, 1999:5). Contrary to what its rival claimed, the Pressure Group maintained that it was not interested in power (Pule, 1999:5).

The phenomenon of factionalism within the BCP spilled over into the country's electoral constituencies and its state institutions, namely the courts of law which were drawn in to intervene, as well as the executive and legislative bodies. All these structures became divided along the party's factional lines, resulting in the government neglecting key public policy matters, including the historically thorny issue of securing favourable relations between Lesotho and South Africa (Pule, 1999:23–24). As a result, the BCP was unable to develop a strategy on which relations between a democratic South Africa and the whole region could be based, at a time when the conditions in South Africa were most favourable for the success of such a strategy (Pule, 1999:23).

When it probably became clear that there was no end in side to the BCP's factionalism as a ruling party and its negative effects on the country's political system, its leader announced the formation of another party. The announcement, made in Parliament on 9 June 1997, went as follows (Pule, 1999:22):

> I announce the formation of a new party, which shall be known as the Lesotho Congress for Democracy. The main objective of this new party, as the name implies, will be to deepen and foster democratic rule in Lesotho. Because we have the support of the majority of parliamentarians, there will be no change in government. We wish those members of parliament who will remain with the BCP success in their new role as the official opposition in parliament. I request that they furnish the Speaker of the House with the name of their leader so that the government can arrange his entitlements.

Following this announcement, the remaining BCP Members of Parliament (MPs) were enraged and called Mokhehle's move unconstitutional. They embarked on several destabilising protest actions, including attempts to disrupt the functioning of Parliament; forging protest alliances with other parties, specifically the BNP and the MFP (both of which had no parliamentary representation), and civil society organisations; seeking support from diplomatic missions in the country and from SADC; and called on the King to dissolve Parliament and establish an interim government that would prepare for elections. However, all these moves were in vain (Makoa, 1997:18; Pule, 1999:23). The LCD, therefore, relegated the BCP to the opposition ranks and finished the remaining period of the five-year parliamentary term.

The BCP's factional fights between 1993 and 1998, when the next poll was called, were marked by intense political instability characterised not only by a power struggle between the two factions, but also by a serious conflict between the government and key state institutions, namely the security forces, the bureaucracy, and the monarchy/chieftainship. The result was the paralysis of governance (Matlosa, 1999:174). This situation persisted until the elections in 1998.

## The LCD and the continuing factionalism, 1997–2012

The now almost established trend of degenerative factionalism continued within the LCD, which remained as the ruling party after winning the 1998 elections overwhelmingly – claiming 79 out of the 80 parliamentary seats; the remaining seat went to the BNP (Matlosa, 1999:175).

As had been the case in the original BCP, the LCD's troubles began in the national executive committee, which was divided into two factions. The first, Sehlopa, was grouped behind the pro-party leader, Pakalitha Mosisili, who was also Lesotho's Prime Minister at the time. The second, Lesiba, was led by Kelebone Maope, who was then Lesotho's Deputy Prime Minister. Lesiba accused LCD leader Mosisili of, among

other things, dictatorial tendencies, refusing to work with the party's national executive committee, and making unilateral decisions in the appointment of key public servants (Likoti, 2005:5).

In 2001, Kelebone Maope led a group of 27 MPs and crossed the National Assembly floor to form a new party, the Lesotho People's Congress (LPC). The LPC adopted Mokhehle's head as its symbol when it finally broke away from the LCD. The new party's formation did not do much damage to the LCD's electoral performance in the next elections, however, since the latter won all but one of the 80 parliamentary seats in 2002. Thus, LPC leader Maope managed to retain his constituency-based seat. The 2002 election was contested under the newly introduced mixed-member proportional system, which saw the size of Lesotho's National Assembly enlarged from 80 to 120 seats: of these, 80 were constituency-based, while 40 were won by proportional representation (Musanhu, 2009:180-181). The model also injected some degree of political stability since, for the first time in the country's history, nine opposition parties obtained parliamentary seats through the proportional-representation variant of the mixed system (Makoa, 2014). However, the degenerative factionalism within the LCD continued after 2002 and became most evident in 2006, with a faction led by Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, who was then Minister of Communications, and one by Monyane Moleleki, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The causes of this factionalism were still characterised as struggles for power and squabbles over leadership succession – as had been the case in the BCP after the 1993 elections. As with Mokhehle after the latter elections, it was speculated that Mosisili would step down as Prime Minister and the LCD leader before the 2007 elections. These speculations triggered internal tussles and personality clashes between Moleleki and Thabane in a bid to succeed Mosisili in both his incumbent capacities. The result was a series of actions that caused political instability (Matlosa, 2008:33–34). In the end, in October 2006, Thabane resigned as Minister, crossed the floor in Parliament, and formed a new party – the All Basotho Convention (ABC) – with 16 other MPs from the LCD. When the 2007 elections were held, the ABC secured 27 seats: 17 constituency-based and 12 via proportional representation – an impressive performance historically by any new party. The LCD was awarded 62 seats: 61 constituency-based and 1 via proportional representation (Elklit, 2008:16).

Although several parties had formed alliances before the 2007 elections, the most controversial of these were the ABC–Lesotho Workers' Party (LWP) and the LCD–National Independence Party (NIP) alliances. These groupings undermined the spirit of the new mixed-member proportional electoral system and effectively turned it into a parallel variant of the mixed systems, thus triggering a spate of incidents that caused further political instability (Kapa, 2009). However, the LCD was able to retain state power until the next poll in 2012 due to its alliance with the NIP, which gave it ten

more seats via proportional representation and allowed it a comfortable parliamentary majority of 72 seats in total.

In line with the by now predictable trend in ruling parties in Lesotho as parliamentary elections approach, the LCD became engaged in yet another faction fight over the control of the party. Once again, two factions emerged: the Lija-Mollo ("Fire Eaters") was associated with the party's general secretary Mothetjoa Metsing, while Litima-Mollo ("Fire Extinguishers") was aligned with Mosisili, the LCD party leader and the country's Prime Minister (Mothibe, 2017:69). To put an end to the factional fighting, Mosisili and 43 LCD MPs abandoned the party and formed the Democratic Congress (DC) (Shale, 2017:37). As Prime Minister, Mosisili advised the King to dissolve Parliament and call another snap election a few months later in 2012.

## The ABC in power, 2012–2015: Factionalism and political instability

The 2012 polls produced a hung Parliament, forcing the formation of Lesotho's first coalition government composed of the ABC, the LCD, and the BNP, which together had secured the simple parliamentary majority of 61 seats required to form a government (Mothibe, 2017:70). Political instability once more ensued when the power struggle between the Prime Minister and his Deputy – who were still the leaders of the two main parties in the coalition – erupted anew. The Prime Minister attempted to dismiss some key public officers, including the commander of the army, but his Deputy alleged that the Prime Minister had not consulted him before making those decisions so he vetoed them. This power struggle plunged Lesotho into a security crisis that ultimately caused the government to collapse and prompted a SADC-brokered early election in 2015 (Sejanamane, 2016). Thus, this time, political instability had been caused more by factors between rather than within political parties leading the government, but with a change of government as its key outcome.

## The DC's turn: Factionalism and political instability, 2015–2017

The 2015 SADC-brokered snap polls were intended to restore political stability after Lesotho had been rendered ungovernable, largely due to the crises in which the army and the police had featured prominently (Sejanamane, 2016). The outcome of the elections again reflected no outright winner, forcing the second coalition government to be formed from a combination of parties to constitute a 65-seat parliamentary majority. This coalition was composed of the DC, the LCD, and some smaller parties (Kapa, 2021:185). However, when factionalism again reared its head, this time within the DC national executive committee, it was caused by a power struggle between two rival groups within

the party – Lithope and Lirurubele – who were respectively aligned to DC party leader Mosisili and his deputy, Moleleki (Matlosa, 2017:153). Since Moleleki had the support of the majority of the national executive committee as well as that of the women's and youth leagues, he sought to replace Mosisili as party leader.

Towards the third year into this second coalition government's life, the factional feuds between Lithope and Lirurubele intensified, with the former alleging massive corruption regarding the award of a vehicle fleet management contract to a South African company, Bidvest Bank Limited. Lithope also accused Mosisili of sidelining the national executive committee in making key appointments in the public service, among other things, and attempted to suspend him as party leader. In reaction, Mosisili suspended both factions from the party, which led to a series of court cases which were ultimately won by Mosisili's faction (Matlosa, 2017:156).

After its legal defeat, the Moleleki faction broke away from the DC to form a new party, the Alliance of Democrats. The new party joined forces with the ABC, BNP and Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL) and successfully passed a motion of no confidence in Prime Minister Mosisili and his coalition government. The move forced Mosisili to advise the King to dissolve Parliament and call yet another snap election in 2017 (Matlosa, 2017:156).

## The ABC back in power: Unrelenting factionalism and political instability, 2017–2022

The 2017 elections produced Lesotho's third hung Parliament and another coalition government. This third body of its kind in the country's history consisted of the ABC, the Alliance of Democrats, the BNP, and the RCL. In early 2019, the ABC held its elective conference. Delegates were to elect the members of the party's national executive committee, except its leader, in terms of the party's constitution. The conference was preceded by a fierce contest for all key positions, including that of deputy leader.

Two main factions had emerged as the conference approached. One was The State House, which was aligned with the party leader, Thomas Thabane, and his controversial wife, 'Maesaia Thabane. The other was Likatana, which supported Professor Nqosa Mahao, the former Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho. The State House faction rejected Mahao's candidacy because he did not qualify to contest the election in terms of the ABC's constitution. The matter of Mahao's candidacy was decided by Lesotho's apex court, the Court of Appeal, on the eve of the conference, thus enabling Mahao to contest and win (see C of A (CIV) No. 10 of 2019).

Both The State House and the Likatana factions had drawn their memberships from among the highest levels of the ABC – its MPs and members of the Senate. Mahao, who

was a newcomer to the ABC, was seen as a threat to some elements within The State House. If he won the party's deputy leadership position, he would be well placed to assume its leadership when Thabane (who is old and not in good health) retires.

The degenerative factionalism within the ABC led to a change of government in 2020 when Likatana – with ABC MPs' support – succeeding in forcing Thabane to resign as Prime Minister. Dr Moeketsi Majoro, an MP for the Thetsane Constituency and then Minister of Finance, took over as Prime Minister in November 2020 by way of a new grand coalition. This coalition was composed of the ABC and the DC and their allies: the BNP and RCL on the side of the ABC, and the Movement for Economic Change and the Popular Front for Democracy on the side of the DC (Kabi, 2020).

Thabane's removal from office while he remained the leader of the ABC did not end factionalism within the party, however. The State House regrouped and managed to divide its rival: the ABC's secretary-general (and son-in-law to Thabane, Lebohang Hlaele), the party's publicity secretary (Montoeli Masoetsa) and its national chairperson (Samuel Rapapa) defected to The State House. This defection forced Mahao and nine ABC MPs to abandon the ABC and form a new political entity, the Basotho Action Party (BAC) in April 2021 (Kabi, 2021).

With Mahao's departure, the contest for the ABC's leadership remained with Prime Minister Majoro, Samonyane Ntsekele (the party's former secretary-general), Nkaku Kabi (then deputy secretary-general), and Sam Rapapa (the party chairperson). Kabi eventually won the contest during a special elective conference, after which he joined forces with the national executive committee in a bid to unseat Majoro as Prime Minister. With the support of the DC and the other four parties in the coalition, Majoro prevailed over Kabi, who was also backed by Thabane (*The Post*, 1 March 2022). As a sign of the persistent rift between Prime Minister Majoro and ABC leader Kabi, the former has not attended the ABC's electoral campaign rallies. Moreover, having qualified for pension as Prime Minister, Majoro presumably had a secure future and did not intend contesting the elections scheduled for 7 October 2022.

## Conclusion

This chapter revisited the topic of intra-party factionalism within the four parties that have been in power in Lesotho since its return to multi-party politics in 1993. At the core of degenerative factionalism, as Boucek (2009) aptly dubs it, lies politicians' desire to access state power and use it for their economic survival – with consequently debilitating effects on political stability. Factional fights often manifest at national executive committee level towards the end of a party's parliamentary term when it prepares for elections. These torn-up committees have become an almost permanent feature of Lesotho's party system, particularly of the parties in government. However,

Lesotho's party leaders in general but also leaders of parties in government have not demonstrated a desire to allow democratic processes to determine who their successors should be. Moreover, such leaders have, at all costs, prevented their deputies from taking over. This is the nature of intra-party political dynamics in Lesotho at the time of writing, and there are no signs that factionalism and its destabilising effect on the political system will end soon.

## References


Ake, C. 1974. Modernisation and political instability: A theoretical exploration. *World Politics*, 26(4):576–591.

Bauer, G, & Taylor, SD. 2005. *Politics in southern Africa: State and society in transition*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Boucek, F. 2009. Rethinking factionalism: Typologies, intra-party dynamics, and three faces of factionalism. *Party Politics*, 15(4):455–485.

Court of Appeal of Lesotho. 2019. *Koro-Koro Constituency Committee v Executive Working Committee – All Basotho Convention* (C of A(CIV) 10/2019) [2019] LSCA 3 (01 February 2019). https://lesotholii.org/courtnames/court-of-appeal/2019, last accessed 27 October 2021.

Elklit, J. 2008. The 2007 general election in Lesotho: Abuse of the MMP system? *Journal of African Elections*, 7(1):10–20.

Heywood, A. 2013. *Politics*. Tottenham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kabi, P. 2020. Majoro takes over. *Lesotho Times*, 27 May 2020. https://lestimes.com/majoro-takes-over/, last accessed 23 October 2021.

Kabi, P. 2021. ABC splits. *Lesotho Times*, 27 April 2021. https://lestimes.com/abc-splits/, last accessed 22 October 2021.

Kanyane, M. 2021. Factions and factionalism in South African party politics: Appraising (de)merits. *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 48(4):572–588. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346,2021.1913553.

Kapa, MA. 2009. The case of Lesotho's mixed-member proportional system. *Africa Insight*, 39(3):1–10.

Kapa, MA. 2021. Coalition governments and unrelenting political instability in Lesotho, 2012–2020. In Booysen, S (Ed.). *Marriages of inconvenience: The politics of coalitions in South Africa*, pp 145–168. Johannesburg: Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection.

Karume, S. 2004. Party systems in the SADC Region: In defence of the dominant party system. *Journal of African ElectionsI*, 3(1):42–61.

Khaketla, BM. 1971. *Lesotho 1970: An African coup under the microscope*. London: C Hurst & Co.

Köllner, P, & Basedau, M. 2005. Factionalism in political parties: An analytical framework for comparative studies. *GIGA Working Papers No. 12*. Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies. http://hdl.handle.net/10419/182555, last accessed 23 October 2012.

Likoti, FJ. 2005. Investigating intra-party democracy in Lesotho: Focus on Basutoland Congress Party and Basotho National Party. *EISA Occasional Paper No. 39*. Johannesburg: Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa.

Makoa, FK. 1997. A Lesotho voter and elections: A note on the 1998 general election. *Lesotho Social Science Review*, 3(2):14–26.

Makoa, FK. 2014. Beyond electoral triumphalism: Reflections of the coalition government and challenges. *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 36(1):100–110.

Matlosa, K. 1999. Conflict and conflict management: Lesotho's political crises after the 1998 election. *Lesotho Social Science Review*, 5(1):163–196.

Matlosa, K. 2008. The 2007 general election in Lesotho: Managing the post-election conflict. *Journal of African Elections*, 7(1):20–49.

Matlosa, K. 2017. Understanding political crises of Lesotho's post-2015 elections. In Thabane, M (Ed.). *Towards an anatomy of persistent political instability in Lesotho, 1966–2016*, pp 130–159. Roma: National University of Lesotho.

Matlosa, K. 2021. Electoral systems, party systems and coalitions: Lessons from southern Africa. In Booysen, S (Ed.). *Marriages of inconvenience: The politics of coalitions in South Africa*, pp 85–114. Johannesburg: Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection.

Mothibe, TH. 2017. Political leadership challenges in Lesotho – A cause of political instability. In Thabane, M (Ed.). *Towards an anatomy of persistent political instability in Lesotho, 1966–2016*, pp 47–74. Roma: National University of Lesotho.

Musanhu, B. 2009. Lesotho. In Kadima, D, & Booysen, S (Eds). *Compendium of elections in southern Africa, 1989–2009*. Johannesburg: Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa.

Nyeko, B. 2002. The independence movement, 1952–1966. In Pule, N, & Thabane, M (Eds). *Esssays on aspects of the political economy of Lesotho*. Roma: National University of Lesotho.

Pule, V. 1999. Power struggle in the Basutoland Congress Party 1991–1997. *Lesotho Social Science Review*, 5(1):1–30.

Sejanamane, M. 2016. Lesotho's 2015 elections in the context of an ongoing security vacuum. *African Security Review*, 25(3):288–302.

Sekatle, P. 1997. The establishment of Lesotho Congress for Democracy: Implications for the 1998 general election. *Lesotho Social Science Review*, 3(2):69–92.

Sekatle, P. 1999. The Lesotho general election of 1998. *Lesotho Social Science Review*, 5(1):31–45.

Shale, V. 2017. Political parties and instability in Lesotho. In Thabane, M (Ed.). *Towards an anatomy of persistent political instability in Lesotho, 1966–2016*, pp 23–46. Roma: National University of Lesotho.

*The Post*. 2022. Majoro must pack and go. 1 March 2022. https://www.thepost.co.ls/news/kabi-tells-majoro-to-pack-and-go/, last accessed 24 October 2021.

# Critical notes on division, factionalism and purges in Zimbabwean politics: Implications for democracy and development

**Mark Chingono and Alexander Rusero**

Division, factionalism and purges have been defining features of party politics in Zimbabwe since the emergence of nationalism in the late 1950s. The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF)[1] is itself a child of division and factionalism among members of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). In post-independent Zimbabwe, continued division, factionalism and purges within the ruling party have undermined its popularity and led to dwindling electoral support. In the 1980 general elections ZANU PF scooped up 71.25% of the votes, while in the hotly contested elections of 2008 this fell by 28.05% to 43.2% and was behind Morgan Tsvangirai's 47.9%, as leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party that existed between 1999 and 2005. In the disputed 2018 elections, ZANU PF received 51.44% of the vote (about 20% less than it had garnered in the 1980 elections) and the newly formed coalition calling itself the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDCA) won 45.07%. Thereafter, mounting popular discontent and a sapient loss of faith in the ruling elite had led to the formation of new political parties in Zimbabwe.

Highlighting the relationship between politics and economics, this chapter considers the causes and impacts of division, factionalism and purges within the ruling elite. The analysis argues that these dynamics within the ruling party have both negative and positive implications for democracy and democratic consolidation in Zimbabwe. On the one hand, the democratic space is shrinking as a result of such dynamics within ZANU/ZANU PF. On the other hand, as the purged form new political parties, become independent politicians/legislators, or join the opposition, the democratic space has been expanding. In other words, simultaneously and dialectically, the suppression of

1 ZANU was renamed ZANU PF in 1979 so that the two parties, ZANU and ZAPU, could negotiate as a united patriotic front during the Lancaster House Talks that paved the way for independence. Accordingly, in this chapter, ZANU and ZANU PF are used to refer respectively to the period before and after the adoption of the new name.

democracy in some political space has led to its flourishing in some other spaces. The analysis concludes that the challenges facing the country today are both a cause and consequence of such divisions and disunity among the ruling elite. The chapter ends by assessing the future prospects for democracy and development in Zimbabwe, given the continued division and factionalism among the political elite.

## Analytical focus and methodology

Starting from the premise that criticism is a negative task seeking to achieve positive results, the analysis focuses on Zimbabwe's recent political history. The assessment explores how division, factionalism and the purging of ruling party members have contributed to the decline of its election fortunes, to the formation of new political parties, and to the rising popularity of the main opposition party currently led by Nelson Chamisa. Methodologically, the chapter adopts a holistic and multidisciplinary approach that draws from political science, development economics and peace studies. The discussion also relies on secondary literature and social media.

On one level, the discussion is a critique of the dominant discourses on corruption, democracy, development and the party. By looking at these concepts from a critical and holistic standpoint, the exploration offers a useful corrective to the shortcomings of the perceptually biased dominant narratives. In a nutshell, the chapter attempts to put Zimbabwe's post-independence political challenges in a historical context and offers a wider frame for considering policy options for mitigating the impacts of division, factionalism and purges.

The chapter is organised into three sections, namely a literature review, a historical narrative and a theoretical exposition. The literature review discusses relevant works on the subject matter under consideration here. This is followed by a historical account of division, factionalism and purges within the ruling ZANU PF: the account also identifies the causes and impacts of these three dynamic elements. The final part is theoretical and it critically problematises some popular political ideas, namely democracy, development and political parties, that have been taken for granted in dominant public discourses.

## Literature review

Research and literature on Zimbabwe has increased remarkably since the country's independence in 1980. To comprehensively review this burgeoning literature would require whole other chapters. Therefore, only works that directly relate to the subject matter under consideration here will be reviewed in this section. Sithole (1979) documents the contradictions and infighting in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, and attributes the expulsion of ZANU's first leader, Ndabaningi Sithole, to power struggles and ethnic

rivalry within the party. Highlighting the undemocratic political culture of the liberation movement, Kriger (1992) noted how common the use of violence by liberation fighters was against the peasantry during the liberation war, particularly in respect of public beatings and executions. This use of violence has persisted in the post-independence era, especially during elections. For example, in the 2008 elections an estimated 200 people were murdered; after the 2018 elections, seven protestors were shot dead.

Makumbe (2002) asserts that the ruling party and government's election rigging, authoritarianism and ruthless suppression of dissent are ingrained in the post-independent Zimbabwe's violent political culture. In a similar vein, Simpson and Hawkins (2018) stress the role of the state, and especially its undemocratic practices, as being responsible for the deteriorating political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. Sibanda (2017:5) – a medical doctor and former Councillor of the ruling party who resigned "because he was disgusted by the corruption, fraud, theft, factionalism and chicanery which he witnessed both in the Town Council and … in his own political party" – argues that there is no democracy in Zimbabwe. Breaking "away from conventional wisdom" and debunking "some of the biggest myths about politics and government", he further argues that political parties are not the best tools for bringing about democracy and good governance, and that there are better alternatives to such parties (Sibanda, 2017:5). In a recent reflection, Muchena (2022), a former Member of Parliament (MP) and Minister of the ruling party who was dismissed from the party in 2015, offers a practical guide to aspiring politicians. For her, ignorance, a lack of skills and technical know-how, and a poor understanding of law as well as of global developments are the main causes of inefficiency, ineffectiveness and poor governance in Zimbabwe.

The above viewpoints each give a partial picture of a much more complicated and changing reality. The analysis that follows in the next two sections explores the interface between undemocratic political practices and politico-economic outcomes, and stresses that power struggles and jostling for party positions are part of the game for those desiring to enjoy the intoxicating perquisites of political dominance.

# Historical narrative

## Division, factionalism and purges during the liberation struggle

Division, factionalism and purges have been a defining feature of Zimbabwean politics for a long time. Indeed, ZANU itself was born out of division and factionalism among the leadership of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), founded on 17 December 1961. Conflicts within the ZAPU leadership – which centred primarily on the capabilities, strategy and leadership style of its Ndebele president, Joshua Nkomo – led to the split. A Shona factional group led by the party's treasurer (Ndabaningi Sithole),

its secretary for external relations (Leopold Takawira), its publicity secretary (Robert Mugabe), Enos Nkala, and Herbert Chitepo split from ZAPU and, on 8 August 1963, formed the rival ZANU. Sithole became its founding president. He was deputised by Takawira, whilst Mugabe became the new party's secretary-general.

A few years after being elected party president, and while in jail, Sithole, a Ndau, was expelled from ZANU, in what his younger, academic brother, Masipula Sithole (1979), considered to be an ethnically motivated move. In 1974, Chitepo, a Manyika, who had taken over as the leader, was assassinated in Zambia in yet another suspected ethnically-inspired elimination.

In 1977, after Mugabe had been installed as the new president of ZANU, which was now based in Mozambique, the leaders of the *Washandi* (Workers') faction, which was opposed to Mugabe's ascendency to power, were arrested and detained for the rest of the liberation struggle. Were it not for the Mozambican President, Samora Machel, objecting to it, they might have been executed. In December 1979, just after the ceasefire and about four months before independence, Josiah Magama Tongogara, the commander of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA, ZANU's military wing), died in a suspicious car crash in Mozambique. This strategy of deceitfully and callously eliminating rivals was code-named *chinyawada* ("scorpion" in Shona) during the liberation war: while looking harmless, a scorpion delivers a deadly sting to unsuspecting victims.

## Purges, new political parties and independent candidates

ZANU PF, in its nearly 60 years of existence, has had quite a significant number of purges. Some of the purged have formed new political parties, while others have become independent candidates; yet others have joined existing opposition parties. Interestingly, quite a few have rejoined the ruling party. The first senior member to leave ZANU and form a rival party was the late Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, who formed a party that contested the 1980 elections as ZANU Mwenje/Isibane ("Light"). After losing in the elections, the party was renamed ZANU Ndonga ("Knobkerrie"). The party remained "a tribal outfit which did not enjoy any popularity outside Chipinge District in Manicaland Province", where Sithole came from. In 2018, the party rejoined ZANU PF (Runyanga, 2022:1).

After independence many more were purged. The first casualty was Edgar Tekere, a former ZANU PF secretary-general and Cabinet Minister, who had escaped to Mozambique together with Mugabe in 1975. Tekere was fired from ZANU PF in 1990 when he opposed the newly adopted one-party-state ideology. He then founded the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), which became the first opposition party formed after independence. By contesting the 1990 elections, ZUM "effectively averted the birth

of a one party state in Zimbabwe" (Pindula, 2022a). As Mugabe had said in dismissing the party, "ZUM zoomed into doom" after its defeat in the 1995 elections (eNCA, n.d.).

Another liberation war veteran, Margaret Dongo, defected from ZANU PF after being dropped as a parliamentary candidate for not toeing the party line. She contested as an independent candidate, won, and became the first independent MP in post-independence Zimbabwe (Pindula, 2022b). She later helped establish the Zimbabwe Union of Democrats (ZUD) party. Simba Makoni, the former Minister of Finance, also left ZANU PF. He founded the Mawambo/Kusile/Dawn party in 2008, which contested the 29 March 2008 elections and came third behind Mugabe and Tsvangirai.

Accused of plotting to illegally remove Mugabe from power, of corruption and of colluding with enemies, Joice Mujuru – the country's Vice President between 2004 and 2014 – was expelled from ZANU PF in 2015 (Pindula, 2022c). Mujuru formed the National People's Party (NPP), but it collapsed due to infighting (Pindula, 2022c). In 2021, Mujuru quit politics. She was replaced as Vice President by Mugabe's rival, Emmerson Mnangagwa. Grace Mugabe, the President's wife, was eyeing the presidency herself, and tried to out-manoeuvre Mnangagwa through the backing of a G40 faction. The faction was led by Professor Jonathan Moyo, Saviour Kasukuwere, Patrick Zhuwawo and the then incumbent Vice President, Phelekezela Mphoko. At the height of the factional wars in November 2017, Mnangagwa was dismissed from both the government and the party, forcing him to flee the country for his safety. Two weeks after the Mnangagwa's dismissal, the military, led by General Constantino Chiwenga, staged a soft coup – ostensibly to save the revolution from "criminals surrounding the president and usurping executive powers" (ZBC, 2017). On 21 November 2017, Mugabe was forced to resign officially as President, and Mnangagwa was sworn in on 24 November 2017 to replace him. This marked the end of Mugabe's 37-year rule.

In the new dispensation, ZANU PF has perfected its preferred strategy of dealing with dissent. Indeed, the list of those purged from the party or dismissed from government as ministers is growing. These include Killer Zivhu, a former MP, who was dismissed from the party in 2021 for suggesting that the First Lady, Auxilia Mnangagwa, should meet Sithokozile Chamisa, the wife of opposition leader Chamisa, as a first step towards reconciling the two major rival political parties, ZANU PF and MDC (Kunambura, 2022). Another was Owen Mudha Ncube, who was dismissed as State Security Minister for defying Mnangagwa's directive not to jostle "for a ZANU-PF leadership position in the Midlands province" and for violence (Kunambura, 2022). The latest to form a party after being expelled from ZANU PF was Walter Mzembi, a G40 kingpin, who formed the People's Party in January 2020, and which he quit in May the same year (Runyanga, 2022). However, none of the new political parties has been able to effectively challenge ZANU PF. In fact, some have collapsed, while others have rejoined ZANU PF.

Moreover, some of those purged from the ruling party have not formed political parties but have instead contested as independent candidates. Professor Jonathan Moyo, exiled G40, former Cabinet Minister, and bitter critic of Mnangagwa, contested as an independent candidate and won (Runyanga, 2022). This was after his expulsion from ZANU-PF in February 2005 for defying the party's directive to reserve the Tsholotsho constituency for a female candidate ahead of the polls held that year (Runyanga, 2022). Temba Mliswa, the former ZANU PF Mashonaland West chairman and Hurungwe West legislator, who was expelled from ZANU PF in February 2015 for undermining its leadership, also contested and won as an independent candidate for Norton.

Quite a few of those who left the ruling ZANU PF party applied to rejoin and were accepted. These include Kudzanai Chipanga, Fay Chung Makhosini Hlongwane, Didymus Mutasa and Ambrose Mutinhiri, who were expelled between 2015 and 2017. Mliswa, Kasukuwere and Zivhu are said to be very eager to rejoin ZANU PF (see e.g. Runyanga, 2022).

Why rejoin the ruling party? The simple answer is that, outside the party and government, many have no alternative ways for financially sustaining themselves. As Runyanga (2022:1) observes, "[f]ormer senior party members can't have a meaningful future without ZANU PF". Similarly, "in reference to the life of former ZANU PF members outside the party", Jonothan Moyo observed that "It's cold out there" (Runyanga, 2022). Also according to Runyanga (2022:1), –

> … it is obvious that Mliswa is dying to rejoin ZANU-PF so that he can continue to abuse it for personal gain as before.

Kasukuwere, who was the Minister of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment, wants to come back to ZANU PF because his Migdale Holdings business empire has collapsed, and he is feeling the cold out there (Runyanga, 2022). The point is, being a member of the ruling party offers "power and opportunities for self-enrichment" (Runyanga, 2022:1) as well as protection and security.

In addition to purging, rivals or opponents who are perceived to be great threats are clandestinely eliminated. Indeed, as Mbiriyamveka and Muchinjo (2021) noted, "Mystery deaths deepen in Zim", and the list of suspected victims is growing. The list includes Solomon Mujuru, a former ZANLA and Zimbabwe National Army Commander and husband to former Vice President, Joice Mujuru, who died mysteriously in a fire at his farmhouse in Beatrice in 2011; and Perence Shiri, the former Air Force Commander who played a crucial role in the coup that toppled Mugabe and who officially died of COVID-19 – but is suspected to have been poisoned. Mnangagwa himself has survived deliberate food poisoning as well as an assassination attempt at the White Hall bombing in Bulawayo.

To recapitulate, ZANU PF's undemocratic nature comes out clearly in the way it deals with dissent. Those labelled as traitors and sell-outs of the revolution or as dissenters are suspended, expelled, imprisoned or even eliminated, depending on the severity of their perceived crime. The question, however, remains: have the purges made ZANU PF stronger or weaker? Judging by the party's declining electoral performance, the latter seems more likely. An equally important question, therefore, is this: what are the causes of division, factionalism and purges?

# Theoretical exposition

## Causes of division and factionalism

Crude power struggles, clientelism, nepotism, ideological differences, corruption and economic decline have fuelled division and factionalism within the ruling elite. Power bestows numerous benefits and privileges to those who wield it. Not surprisingly, and in a typical Machiavellian fashion, many in Zimbabwean politics have tried to "capture it, consolidate it and use it" to crush foes (Machiavelli, 1532; cited in Spark Notes, 2023). It is perhaps from this Machiavellian perspective that the sudden deaths of, among others, Solomon Mujuru, Perence and Shiri Josiah Tongogara can be understood best.

Clientelism, by its very nature, implicitly leads to divisions within political parties and, hence, fragmentation. *Clientelism* – favouring allies by, for instance, giving them positions of power, while marginalising rivals by demoting them – creates divisions among party members. The patron (leader) offers favours to the client (ally) in return for support. Oftentimes, this results in less competent but loyal persons being appointed to influential positions. This, in turn, results in poor decision-making and inefficiency, ultimately weakening the party and government. The choice between competency and loyalty in making appointments is a dilemma that every leader has to face, for the two traits are rarely found in one person.

*Nepotism* means selecting allies on the basis of kinship ties and ethnic relations. Nepotistic leaders appoint their kinsmen or members of their ethnic group to influential positions as a strategy for consolidating their power. Similarly, nepotistic masses vote for their kinsmen or members of their ethnic group, even though these may not be the best candidates. As with clientelism, and with disastrous implications for effective and efficient governance, merit is thrown out of the window in appointing officials or electing leaders. Mugabe, for example, consolidated his position after independence by appointing his kinsmen, the Zezurus, to influential ministerial positions. Such appointments included Ignatius Chombo as Minister of Local Government. In short, ethnic balancing has always been a tricky and recurring theme in Zimbabwean politics.

Ideological differences have often resulted in fierce jostling for positions in the liberation movement, ruling party and government, as rivals try to impose and implement their ideas. The conflict between the *Washandi* (workers) and the nationalists in the 1970s is a typical example of an ideological and hegemonic struggle within ZANU. The *Washandi* faction, which was crushed in 1977, clearly articulated a pro-worker socialist ideology and denounced the bourgeoisie, imperialism and local puppets in slogans such as *Pasi nezvigananda*! ("Down with the bourgeoisie!") and *Pasi nezvimbwasungata*! ("Down with puppets!"). As with other international socialist movements, the enemy was not (as per the nationalists' stance) in terms of race, but through class lenses. Accordingly, local Black businessmen who had joined ZANU, like Doctor Hebert Ushewokunze, were denounced as bourgeoisie and oppressors (thus the slogan, *Pasi na Ushewokunze* ("Down with Ushewokunze!" was chanted). After their defeat, the leaders of the workerist faction were incarcerated and only released at independence. As noted above, Tekere formed ZUM because of his ideological differences with Mugabe. Similarly, the main difference between ZANU PF and opposition leader Chamisa's Citizens' Coalition for Change party seems ideological: the former is socialist-oriented and pro-East, while the latter is liberal and pro-West.

Corruption has fuelled division and factionalism within the ruling party and government in that corrupt allies of the powerful are not punished, while corrupt rivals are severely punished. Zimbabwe's economic decline has meant that the resources to dish out favours to clients are diminishing, and this has fuelled factional feuds for a piece of the cake. In short, feeding on each other, the factors mentioned above have created a vicious circle of violent factionalist politics characterised by the suspension, expulsion, imprisonment or even murder of dissenters perceived to be threats. The frequent purges have fractured the ruling party and undermined its electoral performance. With the purged forming new parties or – as occurred after the coup – fleeing to exile, there is an unstable peace: a 'peace of the graveyard', characterised by fear and anxiety. The overall consequence has been the creation of a toxic political environment antithetical to democracy and development.

## Why purge?

Purging, in all its forms, is a manifest failure to manage of conflict and evidence of the intellectual laziness of the age. Given our different identities, histories and tastes, conflict is inevitable in any social group. Although conflict is inevitable, it is also a moment of choice and a potential source of development. What matters is how one responds to a conflict situation, i.e. whether one fights, flees, or compromises. As well documented in the literature on conflict management, the first two options are costly, if not futile, and only the last one is reasonable. Put differently, purging (fighting) or defecting (fleeing) are both costly options: they fracture and weaken the party and should be avoided at all

costs. Perhaps, in order to avoid the perils of purging, all senior party members should attend a compulsory refresher course in conflict management.

Zimbabwe is not alone in purging dissenters. In the undemocratic communist parties of China, North Korea and the former Soviet Union, purging is the most common strategy of dealing with opponents or anyone who defies the authority of those in power.

## Impacts of division, factionalism and purges

Division, factionalism and purges within the political elite in general, and within the ruling ZANU PF in particular, have had many unintended consequences. These consequences, in turn, have fundamental implications for democracy and democratic consolidation in Zimbabwe. Among others, the most important consequences have been the Gukurahundi genocide, corruption, economic decline, and the formation of new political parties. The following subsections briefly look at each of these consequences.

### *The Gukurahundi genocide*

In spite of the Patriotic Front – Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF ZAPU) joining ZANU PF to form a Government of National Unity in 1980, the two parties remained suspicious of each other. When the "dissident menace" (Tigere, 1994) erupted in the Matabeleland and Midlands Provinces, some sections in PF ZAPU were perceived to be sympathetic to the dissident cause, and this led to the dismissal of the PF ZAPU leader and founding nationalist, Joshua Nkomo, from the government, which in turn led to the collapse of the Government of National Unity. Nkomo fled the country after an attempt on his life, and several senior ZAPU leaders were arrested. These purges were a manifestation of the political culture of intolerance to difference that characterised the liberation struggle, and that was embraced in the immediate aftermath of independence. As shown below, the continuing purges contributed to party fragmentation in the 2000s.

To neutralise the dissidents within ZANU PF, Mugabe unleashed the North-Korea-trained 5th Brigade in an operation dubbed *Gukurahundi*,[2] which, in Shona, refers to the rain that sweeps away the chaff before the spring showers come. The Gukurahundi operation, which officially intended to root out dissidents allegedly estimated to be about 400 men, was dispatched and sponsored by the South African apartheid government. The aim of the latter government was to destabilise an independent Zimbabwe. Gukurahundi resulted in the death of an estimated 20,000 civilians as the 5th Brigade made no

2 Mugabe had used the term during the liberation struggle, declaring 1979 as ***Gore reGukurahundi*** ("Year of the Storm"), signifying the culmination of the Black people's struggle against White rule.

distinction between dissidents and ZAPU supporters (Coltart, 2016). The operation ended in 1987, when a Unity Accord was signed between the victor, ZANU PF, and the vanquished, PF ZAPU.

More than three decades after the Unity Accord was signed, and in spite of some efforts at reconciliation and peace-building spearheaded by the Zimbabwean Peace and Reconciliation Commission, the impacts of Gukurahundi are still being felt. As evidenced by its poor performance in the 2008, 2013 and 2018 elections in the Matabeleland and Midlands Provinces, the ruling ZANU PF has failed to win the hearts and minds of the victims of Gukurahundi. Instead, the following has happened (Nkala, 2022):

> New political outfit, Freedom Alliance (FA)[,] is rallying Gukurahundi survivors to aggressively engage the government to address concerns arising from the unresolved atrocity. The call came after allegations of repeated vandalism of memorial plaques erected by Matabeleland-based pressure group Ibhetshu Likazulu at Bhalagwe and Silobela mass graves.

War veterans associated with the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army have also complained that Mnangagwa has ignored their request to have their property, confiscated during Gukurahundi, returned to them. Even more worrisome is that an ethnically based, separatist political party, Mthakwazi, has emerged, which advocates for the secession of Matabeleland and Midlands from Zimbabwe as well as the formation of a new state of Mthakwazi for the Ndebele. In short, therefore, division, factionalism, and purging of the Ndebele elite by the Shona in the ZANU PF government led to Gukurahundi – a genocide whose impacts are still being felt today.

## *Corruption*

### Corruption, division and factionalism

Corruption and factionalism within the ruling party are inextricably interlinked, and they feed on each other. The existence of factional alliances and rivalries within the body politic means that some corrupt allies are protected while rivals are punished, purged and even arrested. According to Runyanga (2022), because Mliswa is protected by powerful allies, he is able to get away with corrupt deals. In one such deal, US$165 million was allegedly extorted from businessman Conrad Billy Rautenbach in 2014 as a purported consultancy fee to enable the latter to see the President, among other reasons (Runyanga, 2022). In another, British businessman Paul Westwood's two companies – Noshio Motors and Benbar – were seized in the name of ZANU PF in December 2009, after receiving tacit approval and support from Kasukuwere, then Minister of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (Runyanga, 2022).

As the chairperson of the Zimbabwe Anti-corruption Commission decried, corruption persists in the country because the Commission is unable to arrest or prosecute certain party bigwigs or those protected by powerful politicians (Tafirenyika, 2021). Only small fish or so-called rebels are caught in the anti-corruption net. In other words, the corrupt allies of the powerful in factional struggles are untouchable, while rivals are sacrificial lambs to be prosecuted and persecuted. Today, corruption has permeated every group in society: rich or poor, powerful or weak, old or young, men or women. There are many causes of corruption, and these include greed, poor wages, bureaucratic red tape and traditional culture.

Starting with the Willowgate scandal of 1982–1989 and moving on to the war victims compensation saga, the case of the missing Chiadza diamonds, and the dismissal in 2021 of the Minister of Health over a COVID-19 vaccination drug scandal, corruption has been a major feature on Zimbabwe's political landscape. Among the political elite and masses alike, it is an almost irresistible temptation. In the Willowgate Scandal, ZANU PF government ministers accessed motor vehicles from the state-owned Willowvale Motor Industries (Pvt) Ltd at car dealership prices of between Z$3,000 and Z$5,000 – only to resell the vehicles on the open market for at least Z$100,000 each. Another instance of corruption on a grand scale concerned the compensation of war victims. In this case, a fund meant to compensate those injured during the liberation struggle was looted by the ZANU PF elite, which exaggerated its injuries and disability percentage to inflate pay-outs (Coltart, 2016). More recently, there was the Chiadza diamond case, where Mugabe admitted that about US$15 billion worth of diamonds was missing. The highest profile corruption case during the time of the second republic was the scandal surrounding the procurement of COVID-19 vaccination drugs, which resulted in the Health Minister's dismissal. There have been so many other high-profile corruption cases that it would require whole other books to discuss fully. These cases demonstrate the extent to which corruption has become pervasive in Zimbabwean society. More important, these instances of corruption have led to the further fragmentation of ZANU PF, with those accused of corruption defecting to join the opposition or form political parties of their own.

Corruption has given rise to an intricate clientelist system based on the relationship between individuals, the networks they create, and institutional politics (Young, 2009). In Zimbabwe and elsewhere, an exaggerated sense of entitlement to the new state – courtesy of the sacrificial role such individuals played during the liberation struggle – has justified corruption (Mwatwara & Mujere, 2015). The *Daily Maverick* (2019) puts it aptly as follows:

> The trouble with Zimbabwe is a predatory elite that prioritises personal accumulation over public interest and service. Comprised of top ruling party officials, their relatives and friends,

> this elite has a vested interest in the fuel economy. It controls and is the primary beneficiary of the minerals sector and the retailing businesses.

To effectively fight corruption, therefore, requires a holistic approach to understanding its many causes, forms and roots. An attempt will be made to cover some of these in the following subsections.

### Traditional culture and corruption

Some forms of corruption are condoned, endorsed and even encouraged by traditional culture. For instance, in traditional culture, the more successful members of an extended family are expected to assist their less fortunate kith and kin. Assisting a relative by, for instance, getting him/her a job is not only deemed to be a noble deed but also a rational economic decision. Such assistance means one can avoid being ostracised by extended family members or having to dig deep to support a relative financially. Yet, in the modern Western discourses that inform public administration and governance in Zimbabwe, such behaviour is condemned as outright nepotism.

In fact, some traditional Shona proverbs, idioms and sayings justify corruption, exploitation, nepotism and theft. For example, a popular proverb which justifies theft from work is *Mbudzi inofura payakasungirwa*, which literally means "a goat grazes where it is tied". A proverb that justifies exploitation is *Kakara kununa kudya kamwe*, which means, for a creature to be fat, it has to eat another creature. Justifying nepotism, the Shona say *Chawaona idya nehama, mutorwa ane hanganwa*, which translates as "share whatever you get with your relatives, for a stranger is forgetful". Traditional values and practices that perpetuate corruption include gerentocracy (which makes it difficult for those who are young or relatively junior to criticise their elders or seniors when the latter err) and patriarchy (which subordinates women to men, thereby making it difficult for the former to criticise the latter). When some behaviours which are considered legitimate and justified in Shona traditional culture are deemed corrupt in Western discourses, this could be seen as a clash of civilisations.

### The costs of corruption

The costs of corruption to society are immense. Diverting money from its intended official uses or siphoning it away from state coffers results in many bad things happening. These include forgone or mortgaged development, deteriorating infrastructure, unserviced roads and sewage systems, underfunded education and health, poor public services in general, and an overall deterioration in the quality of life and standard of living. In turn, a deteriorating quality of life causes frustration – fertile ground for opposition recruitment and even rebellion leading political instability.

## The benefits of corruption

Although costly to society, there are indeed cases where corruption can be beneficial to society. Smuggled goods, such as bales of secondhand clothes and *kapenta* fish (Lake Tanganyika sardine) from Mozambique, are sold at lower prices which the poor can afford. Also, smuggled goods create employment for vendors who sell them at informal markets. Through smuggling, the poor citizenry and poorly paid government officials, who take small bribes to allow the goods passage, are able to put food on the table. Without these smuggled goods, the cost of living might be much higher for them, and more would be unemployed and poorer. Some smuggled goods even end up on the shelves of formal shops. Without smuggling, therefore, some goods would simply be unavailable on the market. Prices that are too high and the scarcity of certain goods could be a recipe for violent demonstrations, looting, and even rebellion. Therefore, although the state loses revenue it cannot collect from smugglers, the poor masses benefit by having access to goods at affordable prices, thus enhancing human security, which is the first line of defence for state security. Identifying the benefits and beneficiaries of corruption aims not to sanitise it, but to illuminate ways by which it can best be tackled.

## Addressing the root causes of corruption

One of the most serious challenges to addressing corruption effectively is that it may lead to further party fragmentation and a decline in party dominance, and it may dangerously jeopardise ZANU PF's continued rule. Put differently, the divisions, factionalism and client relations within the ruling party make it difficult to address corruption without destabilising and further fragmenting the party. The point is, in a clientele–patron system, punishing corrupt allies weakens one's position. The inverse in nonetheless also true: in a bid to strengthen one's position, many rivals are punished, often unfairly. This is the context in which the charges of corruption involving huge sums of money that the former Minister of Local Government, Ignatius Chombo, and the former Police Commissioner-General, Augustine Chihuri, are facing have to be understood.

It is also true that many people have been victimised for exposing corruption. During his short stint at the Public Service Commission in 1990, for example, the first author of this chapter was threatened for exposing a scandal. The scandal involved expatriate Ghanian English teachers apparently connected to the then First Lady, Sally Mugabe, herself from Ghana, that had apparently remained on the government foreign currency payroll long after they had left Zimbabwe. Others have paid with their lives for exposing corruption. A case in point is Maurice Nyagumbo, a senior member of the ZANU PF Politburo. He was said to have drunk poison, but it is suspected that he was murdered for threatening to expose corrupt deals in which Mugabe's first wife, Sally, was involved in buying cars from Willowvale Motors in Zimbabwe for resale at huge profits in Ghana.

To effectively deal with corruption, it is vital to address its underlying causes and not just its symptoms. The need to supplement poor wages is what usually drives low-ranking officials into accepting bribes and engaging in corrupt activities. Similarly, the need to short-circuit bureaucratic red tape, e.g. in getting business licences, often forces otherwise innocent people to bribe officials to speed up the process. The solutions to these forms of corruption are obvious: increase wages and simplify the bureaucratic system. However, dealing with the greedy – the principal cause of corruption – is far more complicated, and stiffer penalties may be necessary. To deal with forms of corruption that are condoned and justified by traditional culture, a revolution in societal values may be necessary.

In the eyes of the ruled, the ruling elite's failure to deal with corruption effectively has dented its image. The opposition has capitalised on this failure in its membership recruitment campaigns. Corruption is indeed an important factor in the fortunes or misfortunes and electoral successes or failures of the ruling party, and as such it needs to be addressed with the urgency it deserves.

## Land reform and corruption

A rallying point for the liberation struggle – the land question – has its roots in the Land Apportionment Act of 1922 which dispossessed indigenous Blacks of their land and allocated it to Whites. Not surprisingly, since independence, the land question has been a ticking time bomb. In 2000 and in a chaotic and violent revolution, hundreds of land-hungry peasants and war veterans invaded White farms, destroying and looting farm machinery as well as murdering 20 White farmers.[3] The *Daily Maverick* (2019:3) offers the following observation in this regard:

> Land reform was chaotic and violent. It was also corrupt, with ruling party leaders grabbing multiple farms for themselves and their families. Agricultural production, a key driver of the country's success, plummeted, as did manufacturing. Businesses fled or shut down in response to laws aimed at benefiting the ruling elite.

Land reform – a noble and necessary exercise to address the injustices of colonialism – was instead used to reward allies and party supporters while punishing rivals and opposition party supporters. Indeed, party bigwigs not only received prime properties, some even received several. Meanwhile, many ordinary Zimbabweans remained landless. After the coup that toppled Mugabe, some members of the G40 – including

3 In 1998 the principal author of this paper organised and chaired a conference at the University of Cambridge in the UK on the land question in Zimbabwe. The conference recommended a land reform exercise that would not disturb food production and in which White farmers and new farmers would coexist. A copy of the conference report was given to Dr Chideya, the Zimbabwean Ambassador to the UK at the time, who was the guest of honour at the conference.

former ministers Moyo and Kasukuwere – have had their land offer letters withdrawn. This is yet another example of how land is typically used as a resource for rewarding supporters and punishing rivals.

With some of the farms laid to waste and lying derelict, the country lost its status as Africa's breadbasket and degenerated into becoming Africa's basketcase. Much needed, but haphazardly implemented, land reform is failing to feed the nation: by 2020, 7.7 million people – half the population – were said to be facing food insecurity at the peak of the lean season, while 63% of the nation currently live below the poverty line (WFP, 2023). Now, in the second republic, efforts are under way to make farming productive and profitable again.

## *Economic decline*

At the celebrations marking Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Julius Nyerere – the late President of Tanzania – is said to have told Mugabe, "You have inherited a jewel" (@ TanzaniaHistory, 16 November 2017). With a strong manufacturing sector, second only to South Africa's at the time, which had grown rapidly as part of an import-substitution economic strategy during sanctions against the colonial regime; a robust commercial agriculture sector, and a sound education and health system, Mugabe had indeed inherited one of Africa's crown jewels. However, barely a decade after independence, and partly due to factionalist economic mismanagement, the country started experiencing an economic decline that has worsened progressively over the years. Between 1980 and 1990, gross domestic product grew by about 4.5% on average; after parochial factionalists had taken over control of the economy at that, however, economic performance was persistently negative, with growth registered at 2.9% between 1990 and 1999, and -2.8% between 2000 and 2008 (World Bank, 2020).

To address the mounting economic crisis, in 1990 the government adopted an economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP) prescribed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The ESAP's official objective was to (Simpson & Hawkins, 2018:65) –

> … improve living conditions, especially for the poorest groups, by increasing real incomes and lowering unemployment by generating higher economic growth.

Far from achieving these objectives, the ESAP worsened an already bad situation. It cut the budget for social welfare, education and health; it streamlined the public service; and it removed price controls. After the ESAP's dismal failure – and partly due to the government's scepticism over the liberal free-market approach, which threatened ZANU PF's populist and patronage networks – market-driven reforms were rejected in 1996.

In February 1996, the government introduced the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation, 1996–2000 (ZIMPREST), whose focus was economic growth based on investments in health, education and infrastructure (Simpson & Hawkins, 2018). However, like its ESAP predecessor, ZIMPREST failed because it was politics – especially the need to maintain ZANU PF's hold on power – rather than economic and developmental imperatives that dominated government decision-making (Simpson & Hawkins, 2018). In 1997, Mugabe abandoned all pretence at fiscal consolidation and approved an unbudgeted pay-out of Z$420 million for war veterans and plans for accelerated land resettlement (Simpson & Hawkins, 2018). The pay-outs to the war veterans, promised land acquisitions, and the word on the street that the Treasury was printing money, precipitated on 14 November 1997 what became known as Zimbabwe's Black Friday when the Zimbabwean Dollar crashed, losing 73% of its value (Coltart, 2016).

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, with Tsvangirai as its secretary-general, called for a general strike (Coltart, 2016). The action resulted in shops being looted, property being destroyed, and confrontations between civilians and the police. Notably, in the early days of independence and before the onset of the economic crisis in the 1990s, the relationship between the ZANU PF government and the trade unions was rather cordial. At the time, the government championed workers' rights through legislative amendments and by declaring International Workers' Day, 1 May, a national holiday.

By 2008, the Zimbabwean economy had undergone a veritable meltdown, with all indicators signifying a country in severe distress – as evidenced by inflation rates that were estimated in percentages of hundreds of millions, while the country's currency, now denominated in quintillions, became virtually worthless (Raftopolous & Mlambo, 2010). The crisis became manifest in multiple ways. These included confrontation over land and property rights; contestations over the history and meanings of *nationalism* and *citizenship*; the emergence of critical civil society groupings campaigning around trade union, human rights and constitutional questions; the restructuring of the state in more authoritarian forms; the broader pan-African and anti-imperialist meanings of the struggles in Zimbabwe; the cultural representations of the crisis in Zimbabwean literature; and the central role played by Mugabe (Raftopolous & Mlambo, 2010).

Today the enthusiasm and euphoria that surrounded Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 has turned into anguish, as economic stagnation, rising unemployment, inflation, water shortages, power outages, corruption and repression of dissent continue to frustrate popular dreams of happiness and prosperity. Everyone is trying to survive by any means, legal or illegal, moral or immoral. Many are fleeing poverty and migrating to other countries, mainly South Africa and the United Kingdom. Today, the Zimbabwean diaspora is estimated at about 4 million.

How, specifically, have division, factionalism and purges within the ruling party and government, directly or indirectly contributed to economic decline? Firstly, in a context of factional rivalries, unqualified, underqualified or incompetent allies are often appointed to or voted into influential party and government positions. Having allies and loyalists in key strategic positions helps bolster one's position and consolidate power. However, lacking the requisite skills set for the job, these loyalists often underperform, make ill-informed decisions, and are inefficient, all of which contribute to national economic decline. A case in point was Mugabe's appointment of Joice Mujuru as the country's Vice President. While the decision was laudable for promoting gender equality, many felt that Mujuru – who landed the post through behind-the-scenes scheming by her late kingmaker husband, General Solomon Mujuru – was too junior and underqualified for the top job. Continued economic deterioration and party factionalism during her tenure as Vice President seem to prove her critics right. In several other cases, unsuitable political appointees, allies and loyalists, have contributed immensely to economic decline and crisis through their economic mismanagement.

Secondly, fighting factionalist battles diverts energies and resources away from development, thereby contributing to economic decline. Such energies and resources are then directed to winning elections and consolidating power. Often, consolidating power means fighting and/or eliminating opponents. Thus, much time, talent and resources are expended on crafting legislation and strategies to out-manoeuvre rivals.

Thirdly, and relatedly, in a context of factionalism, rivalry and mistrust, it would be foolhardy not to invest in security. Unsurprisingly, the security sector consumes the largest chunk of the national budget. Again, allocating so much to security means forgoing development: the money needed to buy one military tank is roughly enough to build a high school. Even so, a big army is not the best guarantee for security either. Costa Rica, for example, the only country in the world without an army, remains one of the most peaceful. Nonetheless, the point is that division and factionalism necessitate huge investments in security, which in turn are a drain on the economy.

Finally, disagreements on how best to stop economic decline and spur growth have fermented divisions and factionalism among the political elite. Some believe looking East will help revive the economy, while others think opening up to the West is the solution. In a nutshell, division, factionalism and purges within the ruling party are partly to blame for economic decline. In Zimbabwe's case, this economic decline precipitated the formation of the MDC.

### *Formation of new political parties*

The most fundamental unintended consequence of division and factionalism within Zimbabwe's ruling party and with respect to citizens' increased disgruntlement was the

MDC's formation in 1999. This political development marked the end of ZANU PF's dominance. Many of those who joined the MDC had been members of the ruling ZANU PF whose hopes of a better life had been frustrated by continuing economic decline and pauperisation. Nonetheless, the MDC, like its arch rival ZANU PF, has also had its share of division, factionalism and purges; similarly, these have weakened it and diminished its chances of election victory.

## *The political party*: An anachronism?

In a groundbreaking book, *American Civilization*, CLR James (1993) argues that the idea of a political party, which can be traced to the formation of the Conservative Party of the UK, had run its course and had become an anachronism. Documenting the rising political apathy characterised by falling numbers of people who vote in elections and actively participate in politics, James (1993) concludes that the political party system has not only become irrelevant to modern politics, it has also become the principal obstacle to setting free a new emancipatory vision for the reorganisation of society and the reordering of politics.

The ubiquity of division and factionalism within both the ruling party and the opposition parties in Zimbabwe, and the failure of ruling parties to deliver on election promises, supports the notion that the political party has become an anachronism in that country at least because it is no longer the best tool for good, effective and transformative governance there. As a matter of fact, improvements in, for instance, workers' rights, women's rights, and animal rights have been achieved not through political parties, but through issue-specific interest groups and civil society organisations.

Notwithstanding James' insightful conclusions, in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, the masses are still animated, if not entranced, by political parties. They are a relatively novel development on much of the continent. South Africa's African National Congress, which was formed in 1912, is Africa's oldest party. Today, the political party is still a very popular organ, and remains the dominant actor on the political landscape. This popularity is not surprising, given that it was political parties that brought independence and political education to the continent.

However, the track record of political parties in Zimbabwe, which currently number up to about two dozen, is rather dismal and seems to confirm James' fears. The increasing number of domestic political parties – which are effectively a vehicle for the circulation of elites in positions of power – has led to a polarisation of politics and the creation of a toxic political environment. Among the ills associated with political parties is, firstly, that they have fostered a counter-productive culture of opposing simply for the sake of opposing. Thus, members of opposing political parties will always oppose

motions proposed or positions held by their opponents. Secondly, and with disastrous consequences for informed political debate and decisions, political parties have tended to encourage the elevation of ideology over reason as well as a situation where chiefs think for party cadres: the latter must unquestioningly follow orders from above. Thirdly, and relatedly, political parties have effectively become factories for the manufacture of enemies and for turning brother against brother, as it were. Fourthly, with many political enemies manufactured daily, the inevitable has happened: an increase in politically motivated violence and deaths. Finally, the progress and development achieved by one party may be reversed when a party with a different ideology and vision takes over power. This clearly supports the case for a no-party system. With all these disturbing shortcomings, the political party has undeniably become an anachronism.

To extract ourselves from the historic quagmire in which we find ourselves – and to save lives, an alternative to the parochialisms of the political party system is urgently needed. As pointed out above, many remarkable political developments in rights and services have been initiated or campaigned for by affected stakeholders rather than political parties; therefore, a new system of political representation should be based on stakeholder participation and consent. For instance, in choosing a Minister of Education, all stakeholders – parents, teachers and students – should participate in a vote, from the grass roots to the national level, to choose the best-qualified candidate. Such a meritocratically based vote could be conducted at district, provincial and national levels, with candidates at a higher level chosen in a manner akin to the soccer league champions selection through elimination (for the modalities of such a system, see Chingono, 2001). In a similar vein, Sibanda (2017) argues persuasively that political parties do not fit the definition of democracy: they tend to mislead people, they are by nature not democratic organisations, and they are not good for democracy. He adds that there are alternatives to political parties, that political-party-free governments are very possible, and that political-party-free governments work. In a word, the political party is blunt tool for the job of promoting democracy and development and, therefore, needs to be supplanted by a better alternative (Sibanda, 2017).

## Civil society

Labour unions, more than other civil society organisations, have played a leading, if not militant and decisive, role in agitating for democracy, human rights and, especially, better working conditions. In the early years of independence, with the new ZANU PF government enacting labour-friendly legislation such as minimum wages, pension and other benefits for the formerly disadvantaged Black workforce, the relationship between the government and labour was rosy. Government's anti-imperialist rhetoric, its socialist orientation and its declaration of International Workers' Day, 1 May, as a national holiday cemented its cordial relationship with labour.

However, with the onset of the economic crisis in the early 1990s, the honeymoon ended and the marriage of convenience (both were anti-imperialist) collapsed – rather acrimoniously. With labour demanding better wages and working conditions and government seeking stability, the former partners started fighting against each other. Increased activism by civil society in general, and labour in particular, has contributed to ruling party fragmentation. Thus, members of trade unions which are opposed to the ruling party are likely not to vote for it. A case in point, as mentioned above, was the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, which played a particularly fundamental role in the decline in ZANU PF's dominance.

## Democracy, development and division

Ironically, democracy can promote division, factionalism and, even, purging both between those who embrace such a system of government or between those who oppose it. Traditionalists tend to oppose democracy as Westernisation, while modernists embrace it as the path to development. Among its detractions is that democracy may also lead to an explosion of popular demands that can fuel factional competition; however, these demands cannot be met at the present level of development in poor African countries. Failure to satisfy popular demands can fuel factionalist jostling for power and can lead to political instability, which in turn further undermines development. Since democracy is about popular participation in deciding who gets what of the national cake as well as when and how, it is not surprising that such participation can become violent if the national cake is too small. Wallerstein (1999:18) rightly notes the following in this context:

> Everyone speaks of it … But democratization will not diminish, but add to, the great disorder.

In this regard, former United States (US) President Barack Obama reasoned as follows (*Al Jazeera*, 14 November 2016):

> Democracy is simple when everyone has similar tastes, beliefs and values. It is more complex when people have different backgrounds and belong to different political factions.

Those promoting democracy tend to overlook this complexity. The relationship between democracy and development is not as obvious as it is presented in popular discourses. Instead, it is multifaceted, and in some cases, quite counterintuitive. In fact, there are five distinct possibilities when it comes to this relationship, depending on historical context: (i) democracy promotes development; (ii) democracy undermines development; (iii) development promotes democracy; (iv) development undermines democracy; and (v) there is no correlation.

The popular view that democracy promotes development assumes that allowing different ideas to flourish will unleash people's creative and innovative potential, thus propelling development and prosperity. This position is theoretically very sound and logical. However, the evidence to support this view is rather scant. Historically, none of the most developed countries arose through democracy. For example, the US built its industrial economy on the back of slave labour, the UK and France through colonial loot and imperial extraction, Russia through dictatorship and brutal suppression of dissent, and China through communist party oppression of the masses. In France, the UK and the US, development preceded democracy, so it seems development made democracy possible and not the other way round. It is puzzling, therefore, that, as champions of democracy in the Third World, these very members of the United Nations Security Council are resisting the Council's democratisation.

Democracy can also undermine development – as the growing political instability in some African countries trying to embrace democratisation suggests. In Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Gambia and Kenya, among others, calls for democratisation have been destabilising and have even led to many deaths. Part of the problem is that democratisation is seen by some African leaders and factions as a threat to their power and ill-gotten wealth. To defend their privileges, they often suppress democratic forces through political violence, generating counterviolence and increasing political instability.

The position that development promotes democracy seems plausible too, because improving the quantity and quality of goods and services increases citizens' choices, which are a core element of democracy. By making production more efficient and cost-effective through science and technology, development ensures that there is more of the national cake to share democratically. Development also capacitates individuals, communities and nations to participate effectively in democratic deliberations. From this standpoint, development certainly seems a necessary condition for democracy.

Yet, paradoxically, the position that development undermines democracy is also defensible. As a manifestation of the fundamental ambivalence of civilisation, in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, development has simultaneously undermined certain traditional forms of democracy while creating new quasi-Western ones. Specifically, as Mkandawire (2002:102) notes, as a socio-economic process of transformation and a cultural discourse, development entails the "creative destruction" of the "old order" and replaces it with a new one. Such creative destruction empowers certain groups while disempowering others, however. It divides people into different groups, such as traditionalists and modernists, rural dwellers and urbanites, the older and the younger generations, and feminists and patriarchs, and undermines the scope for democratic engagement between them. Escobar (1995:38), critiquing Western development discourses and practices, argues that development has increased unhappiness and

entrenched post-colonial dependency on the countries of North America and Europe, and thus –

> … the struggle against developmentalism is nothing less than a struggle for reclaiming the dignity of cultures that have been turned into a set of experimental subjects, waiting to be sacrificed at the end of a defined set of operations … .

In a nutshell, by denigrating local cultures, beliefs and practices, Western forms of development have not only undermined traditional democratic practices and values, they have also divided society.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the relationship between democracy and development is problematic and ambiguous. Indeed, it can also be argued that there is no correlation between democracy and development. Moreover, critics of democracy fear the minority can be subjected to the sometimes tyrannical pressure of a majority – which need not always be right.

## Prospects for the future

The implications for democracy and the democratic consolidation of division, factionalism and purges are both ambiguous and contradictory in the case of Zimbabwe. On the one hand, democracy seems to be in the intensive care unit within both the ruling party and opposition parties. On the other hand, it is flourishing in new spaces. Nonetheless, division and factionalism within the ruling ZANU PF and opposition parties are threatening to tear the country apart, as brother turns against brother in the name of party or party faction. For example, in late 2021, the ruling party had to suspend district coordinating committee elections because of bloody factional violence. The intensification of fatal factionalism and increasing purges do not augur well for democratic consolidation and development in the country. Indeed, judging by current trends, its future of democracy and democratic consolidation seems bleak and gloomy.

As regards purges, however, so far they have led to the formation of new political parties, the growth of opposition parties, and the emergence of independent candidates contesting elections. Moreover, they have contributed to an increase in the range of democratic voices being heard and an expansion of the democratic space. The rise in the number of new political parties, the strengthening of opposition parties, and the swell in independent legislators could help entrench democratic values and ethos in the body politic. Equally important, these new political agents also offer a platform for alternative voices, ideas and visions. By taking some votes from the ruling party, new political parties and independent legislators have weakened ZANU PF's dominance. In fact, had it not been for division, factionalism and purging within the ruling party, Zimbabwe might have been a one-party state. Thus, one unintended positive consequence of stifling democratic voices within the ruling party has been to increase democratic voices outside it.

This reality of a negative development with positive results offers a glimmer of hope for future democratic consolidation. To give this hope a material form, a new kind of politics of love, empathy and forgiveness is needed that accommodates difference and diversity, and in which dissenters are not automatically labelled enemies and/or traitors to be eliminated. Such politics should be undergirded by strong institutions and a meritocratic system of governance that is both scientifically informed and based on a holistic policy framework.

One way of mitigating the negative impacts of division, factionalism and purges would be to move away from the high-stakes, winner-takes-all approach and replace it with the more accommodating proportional representation system. Another way would be to treat political parties as anachronisms and counterrevolutionary forces, abolish them, and replace them with a technocratic, meritocratic democracy, in which all stakeholders vote to choose their leaders democratically on the basis of their expertise and merit rather than according to an ideology or party affiliation.

## Summary and conclusion

Division, factionalism and purges within the ruling party and government as well as within opposition political parties have been a defining feature of Zimbabwe's political landscape. The failure to constructively address conflicts within the ruling party, as evidenced by the increasing number of purges, has led to a plethora of other problems. Among these challenges have been the fracturing and reduced dominance of the ruling party; the constant formation of new political parties; dwindling support for the ruling party as many join the new political parties; and economic decline. In a word, division, factionalism and purging have contributed to dominant party decline as well as to the fragmentation of opposition parties.

Paradoxically, however, efforts to suppress democracy have also had the opposite effect – of strengthening the resolve of democracy activists. Thus, an important unintended positive consequence of the fracturing of the ruling party is that Zimbabwe has not become a one-party state, as the purged have formed new opposition political parties and have strengthened democracy in this way. Similarly, economic decline, precipitated by factionalist politics and economic mismanagement, has led to increased labour union action, demonstrations and riots, all of which help expand the democratic space. Nonetheless, in conclusion, while more political parties, increasing labour militancy, and a vibrant civil society can contribute to democracy and have indeed done so in Zimbabwe, the polarised and toxic political environment in the country is not conducive to democratic consolidation.

## References

*Al Jazeera*, TV, *News*, 14 November 2016.

Chingono, M. 2001. Women, knowledge and power in environmental and social change. In Rwomire, A (Ed.). *African women and children: Crisis and response*. London: Praeger.

Coltart, D. 2016. *The struggle continues – 50 years of tyranny in Zimbabwe*. Pretoria: Jacana Media.

*Daily Maverick*. 2019. A predatory elite has brought Zimbabwe to its knees: Zimbabwe situation. 28 June 2019.

eNCA/eNews Channel Africa. [n.d.]. *Unforgettable Mugabe quotes*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCq0wwvb3Wk&ab_channel=eNCA, last accessed 25 May 2023.

Escobar, A. 1995. *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

James, CLR. 1993. *American civilization*. Oxford: Blackwell Publications.

Kriger, N. 1992. *Zimbabwe's guerrilla war: Peasant voices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kunambura, A. 2022. Mudha was fired for defying Mnangagwa. *New Zimbabwe*, 11 January 2022. https://www.newzimbabwe.com/mudha-was-fired-for-defying-mnangagwa-violence/, last accessed 23 January 2023.

Makumbe, M. 2002. Zimbabwe's hijacked election. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(4):87–101.

Mbiriyamveka, J, & Muchinjo E. 2021. Mystery deaths deepen in Zim. *The Zimbabwean*, 4 December 2021.

Mkandawire, T. 2002. The terrible toll of post-colonial rebel movements in Africa: Towards an explanation of violence against the peasantry. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40(2):181–215.

Muchena, O. 2022. *Next generation African political leaders: The power of preparation*. Harare: Weaver Press.

Mwatwara, W & Mujere, J. 2015. Corruption and the Comrades: Mugabe and the fight against corruption in Zimbabwe. In Ndlovu-Gathseni, SJ (Ed.). *Mugabeism? African histories and modernities*. New York: Palgrave.

Nkala, S. 2022. New political outfit rallies Gukurahundi victims. *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 14 January 2022. https://www.pressreader.com/, last accessed 22 January 2023.

Pindula. 2022a. Edgar Tekere. https://www.pindula.co.zw/Edgar_Tekere, last accessed 23 January 2022.

Pindula. 2022b. Margaret Dongo. https://www.pindula.co.zw/Margaret_Dongo, last accessed 23 January 2022.

Pindula. 2022c. Joice Mujuru. https://pindula.co.zw/Joice_Mujuru, last accessed 23 January 2022.

Raftopolous, B, & Mlambo, AS (Eds). 2010. *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history form the pre-colonial period to 2008*. Harare: Weaver Press.

Runyanga, N. 2022. When it gets cold outside ZANU PF. *The Herald*, 27 January 2022. https://www.herald.co.zw/when-it-gets-cold-outside-zanu-pf/, last accessed 27 January 2022.

Sibanda, C. 2017. *There is no democracy at all in government by political party representatives*. Mbabane: African Occupational Health Doctors (AFROHD).

Simpson, M, & Hawkins, T. 2018. *The primacy of regime survival: State fragility and economic destruction in Zimbabwe*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sithole, M. 1979. *Zimbabwe's struggles within struggles*. Salisbury: Rujeko Publishers.

Spark Notes. 2023. *The Prince* – N Machiavelli. https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/prince/, last accessed 25 May 2023.

Tafirenyika, M. 2021. ZACC boss calls for judicial integrity and impartiality. *Daily News*, 28 May 2021. https://dailynews.co.zw/zacc-boss-calls-for-judicial-integrity-and-impartiality/, last accessed 18 January 2022.

Tanzania History (@HistoryTanzania). 2017. "You have inherited a jewel in Africa, don't tarnish it." – President Juluis #Nyerere's words to Robert #Mugabe of #Zimbabwe in March 1981; tweeted on 16 November 2017. https://twitter.com/TanzaniaHistory/status/931036475881385990, last accessed 25 May 2023.

Tigere, P. 1994. State reporting to the African Commission: The case of Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Law*, 38(1):64–66.

Wallerstein, I. 1999. *The end of the world as we know it: Social Sciences for the twenty-first century*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

WFP/World Food Programme. 2023. *Zimbabwe*. https://www.wfp.org/countries/zimbabwe, last accessed 25 May 2023.

World Bank. 2020. *GDP growth (annual %) – Zimbabwe*. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=ZW, last accessed 23 January 2023.

Young, DJ. 2009. Is clientelism at work in African elections? A study of voting behavior in Kenya and Zambia. *Working Paper No. 106*. Accra: Afrobarometer.

ZBC/Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. 2017. *News*, 13 December 2017.

# Critical Theory (Frankfurt School) and the political crisis in Eswatini

**Albert K Domson-Lindsay**

> Philosophy confronts the existent, in its historical context, with the claim of its conceptual principles, in order to criticize the relation between the two and thus transcend them.
>
> Max Horkheimer (1947:182)

Eswatini experienced unprecedented violent protests in June 2021 marked by deaths, destruction and loss of property. In a press briefing held on 29 October 2021, the Eswatini Commission on Human Rights and Public Administration/Integrity reported that 291 people had been shot by the police and that 46 people had died (*Eswatini News,* 30 October 2021, p 2). The actual figure on the number of people who died from the unrest remains contested, however. For example, while some unofficial sources claim the number was 70, others claimed it was 100, while a government source had earlier reported 27 deaths (*Swaziland News,* 6 July 2021). The immediate trigger of the unrest was that the delivery of petitions by youth groups to parliamentarians was banned in various electoral districts of the country. The government justified the prohibition on the grounds that the (*Times of Eswatini*, 25 June 2021, p 3) –

> … exercise [the delivery of petitions] has created a breeding ground for anarchy and has been intentionally hijacked to sow seeds of division among Emaswati in complete disregard of public safety, the rule of law and COVID-19 regulations.

The petitions followed the murder of a University of Eswatini law student, Thabani Nkomonye, allegedly by the police. The petitions centred on a raft of grievances and demands such as poor service delivery, the lack of infrastructure development, youth unemployment, police brutality, and a call for constitutional and political reforms (*Times of Eswatini*, 2 May 2021, pp 2–3). In short, the content of the petitions shows public cry for people-centric government. After the June unrest, thousands of Emaswati marched at different times to deliver petitions for political change to the European Union (EU), United Nations (UN) and United States (US) missions in Eswatini. There were class boycotts (ending in the closure of schools for several months) by primary and high school students across the country. Among the demands from this second major wave of

protest action were the call to release two parliamentarians held in custody for allegedly instigating the unrest and the call for the right of the people to directly elect their Prime Minister. Indeed, calls for political change have been going on since the repeal of the pre-independence Constitution in 1973, which banned political parties. Opposition groups in the urban centres have consistently called for a return to multi-party political order. However, the most recent political unrest marked a spectacular escalation of the legitimation crisis in Eswatini. It affected the entire country, in both rural and urban areas, with the youth at the centre of the movement for change.

How might we explain or rationalise the growing legitimation or systemic crisis in Eswatini and how might it be resolved? Certainly, there have been many commentaries since the unrest on the political crisis, particularly on the various media platforms. However, these commentaries treat the subject at a rudimentary or superficial level. What is missing is a deeper level of analysis or understanding. The chapter takes a theoretical path to fill this gap. As is well known, theory helps us understand the social world, i.e. why it is as it is, and offers a guide as to how we wish that world to be and what steps or action can be taken to realise that vision. Using Critical Theory (Frankfurt School), the chapter basically argues that the scale of the crisis shows that the prevailing social order faces legitimation problems, and that normative and rational content of that order has become problematic because of the disjuncture between its claims and realities.

The chapter takes the view that, since the legitimacy and stability of social structures are based on an inter-subjective understanding, discourse offers a way out of the unfolding systemic crisis in Eswatini. The first section discusses those assumptions of Critical Theory relevant to the subject of the chapter. Guided by the methodological device of immanent critique, section two focuses on the claims undergirding some of the structures and institutions that are central to the prevailing order in Eswatini. Section three relies largely on sources such as media articles, comments, views and opinions from an array of actors to expose the contradictions and weaknesses of existing social structures in the country. The discussion then makes the claim that it is this disjuncture that explains the tensions or legitimation crisis being expressed through marches, boycotts, protests and petitions.

The fourth section reflects the normative dimension of [Critical] Theory. A core aspect of Critical Theory is the belief in reason as the basis on which to realise a new social order. The Theory grounds the way out of social conflict on the rational organisation of society. This rationalism places inter-subjectivity – or the collective moral learning experience – at the centre of social transformation. Habermas (1987, 1997) locates this rational experience in the linguistic media of discourse. The rational element of discourse is in turn based on a notion that what emerges from the dialogic process is meaningful and acceptable to all participants. It is consensual. Thus, the fourth section shows, among other things, how the ethics or principles behind discourse can help address social conflict.

The following section begins the discussion by offering the theoretical guide to the chapter and anchors it in the conceptual assumptions of Critical Theory (Frankfurt School).

## Critical Theory (Frankfurt School)

There are two categories of theory, namely the positivist (traditional theories) and the post-positivist (normative or reflexive theories). The positivist tradition legitimises and reifies existing social structures as values, traditions, beliefs and practices that are characteristically passed off as interest-free, as reflecting universal truth, and as immutable. Positivism sees "history (human affairs/events/ behaviour) as merely a recurrent play in which the future will always be like the past" (also Cox, 1981:129). Thus, this category of theory only sees systemic or structural reproduction. Given this orientation, positivist theories are labelled as problem-solving. Such theory "takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social order and political power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized as the given framework of action" (Cox, 1981:129). The aim, according to this approach, is not to change the status quo or the prevailing order but to use instrumental means to address problems within the existing order. The approach focuses on finding solutions to particular problems or troubles emanating from the prevailing order in order to smooth its function. Put another way, the positivist approach concentrates on the technical management of particular aspects of the sociopolitical complex (Cox, 1986; Reus-Smith & Snidal, 2008:15). For example, in the economic sphere, neoliberal standard or ritualised responses such as growth before redistribution and the privatisation of basic amenities and services are offered as strategy to revamp an economy. However, this selective response ignores the fundamental problems within the neoliberal economic order.

If positivist theory tells how things are, critical or "normative theory tells us how things ought to be" (Brown, 2002:147–148). It is, therefore, oriented towards change. Brown uses *critical theories* (lower case) in reference to all approaches that are critical of positivist theory and *Critical Theory* (upper case) in its Frankfurt School setting or orientation (Brown, 1994; Williams, 2005:137). The original exponents of Critical Theoretical ideas were German sociologists/philosophers such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm and Jürgen Habermas from the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research in Germany in the 1940s (Müller-Doohm, 2016). In fact, it was Horkheimer who "coined the term Critical Theory" (Müller-Doohm, 2016:1). Then, Critical Theoretical praxis was aimed at critiquing modern conditions, particularly bourgeois society, and its contradictions and tensions at the national level. In contemporary times, adherents of the praxis include scholars such as Robert Cox (a neo-Gramscian Critical Theorist), Andrew Linklater, Mark Hoffman, David Held, Richard Devetak, Stephen Gill, Ken Booth and John Hobson.

The works of these writers and others reflect a broadening of the subject of Critical Theory to include issues of security, world orders, globalisation/international political economy, state and sovereignty, humanitarianism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism. For example, Cox's (1981, 1986) work reveals the impermanence of world orders and exposes the synchronic and diachronic currents within economic globalisation. Linklater (1998, 2002, 2006), a Habermasian Critical Theorist, bases his normative project on the possibilities or potentialities within the prevailing international order to set social relations and international life on a more progressive or cosmopolitan path. Linklater's cited work also explores ways to transcend the parochialism, narrowness, discrimination and exclusivity of the notion and practices of *state* and *sovereignty*. These explorations focus on how we might build a more inclusive international order – one that embraces the interest and concerns of humanity.

Critical Theory, therefore, belongs to the normative/reflexive theoretical tradition. It rejects the universal, neutrality or objectivity claims of traditional or positivist theories on the grounds that they advance particular world views and social agendas. According to Max Horkheimer (1972, cited in Brincat, 2016:7), there is "no theory of society … that does not contain political motivations". Indeed, every theory – in whatever field – reflects a particular viewpoint, i.e. there is a relationship between knowledge and (human) interests. In this regard, all theories have a perspective deriving from their position in time and space, a particular standpoint which must be revealed. This view echoes the claim by Cox (1981:128–130), who belongs to the neo-Gramscian branch of Critical Theory, that "theory is always for someone and for some purpose". In other words, theory reflects the ideological bias of those comfortable with a given order.

Unlike traditional theories, Critical Theory neither reifies nor ascribes permanence to social structures because all things undergo transformation (Ashley, 1987; Calhoun, 1996; Cox, 1981; Linklater, 1990; Mittelman, 1998; Rengger, 1995). Critical Theory calls for theory (Cox, 1981:129) –

> … to stand apart from the prevailing world order and ask how that order came about … its origins, its contradictions, and how and whether they might be in the process of changing.

Whiles positivism selectively focuses on specific problems or troubles emanating from the existing order, Critical Theory concentrates on the emancipatory transformation of the "social and political complex as a whole" (Reus-Smith & Snidal, 2008:15).

The Critical Theoretical project also deploys the method of immanent critique to unearth the shortcomings of what exists in order to transcend it. Horkheimer (1947:182) expressed this telos of Critical Theory, i.e. its normative foundation, with the following remark:

> Philosophy [Critical Theory] confronts the existent, in its historical context, with the claim of its conceptual principles, in order to criticize the relation between the two [ideas and reality] and thus transcend them.

Thus, the goal of immanent critique is to reveal the contradictions within the social order, the disjuncture between its conceptual claims/assumptions and reality, and to show the "immanent trends towards the removal of socially-created constraints on human freedom" (Devetak, 1996:157). The theory, thus, looks for the emergence of rival structures that express alternative possibilities of social development (Cox, 1986:208, 210).

A core aspect of Critical Theory is the belief in reason as the basis for social transformation. Reason grounds the way out of social conflict in a rational organisation of society. In the Critical Theory tradition, a *rational society* is one that abhors domination and takes into account the life of the entire community (Horkheimer, 1947). Such a society places inter-subjective relations at the centre of the transformation process. This inter-subjectivity is a collective (moral) learning experience in which acceptable social practices/norms are the results of mutual recognition by self-conscious beings. Habermas (1987, 1997) argues that this rational basis of society is anchored in the principles or ethics of discourse, and that the legitimacy of political norms, values, institutions and practices rests on this linguistic medium. On discourse, Habermas' (1987, 1997) view is that since interlocutors often do not reach an agreement in dialogue, this necessitates that they step into a higher form of communication, namely discourse. In *discourse*, interlocutors enter into a communicative community purposively to reach a consensus or common ground. Discourse creates a communicative community because dialogic partners meet as equals and freely exchange views and counterviews. Without equality, therefore, it would be impossible to achieve the objectives of discourse.

Communicative subjects have equal rights to advance claims about any decisions or issues that affect them and possess the same entitlement to influence the deliberative outcome (Linklater, 2007:144). Participants have the unconstrained right to question or defend any validity or normative claims (Bernstein, 1995:50). All forms of inhibition to discourse, such as manipulation and the existence of one-sided binding norms, are removed (Bernstein, 1995:50). These three requirements are necessary to ensure the equality of participants and to discourage the influence of powerful actors (partisan influence) on the deliberative process. The claim is that the equality criteria and the elimination of partisan influence create an "empty space between decision and interests" (Kutay, 2015:2). Discourse fosters a mutual learning experience in which the participant listens and comes to understand the point of view of the other. This social learning process leads dialogic partners to shift from a particular to a general interest. Participants are obliged to provide rational justifications for claims and counterclaims, and the affirmation or negation of their views, claims and opinions should be based on the "force of the better argument" (Müller-Doohm, 2016:382). That is, only the non-coercive coercion of the

better argument determines the affirmation or negation of the participants' views (Dews, 1992:260; see also Bernstein, 1995; Calhoun, 1996; Held, 1980).

Critical Theory, in the search for a viable alternative or transformation of social structures, "does not pronounce upon the good life or offer advice on what should be done" (Eckersley, 2008:348). Therefore, discourse "ethics set out the procedures to be followed"; discourse does not "offer putative solutions to the substantive moral debates, envisage historical end points or circulate political blueprints" because, "if dialogue is to exist, no particular outcome can be anticipated or presupposed" (Linklater, 1998:8). The decision regarding what should be done has to be made by the affected social agents in a practical discourse. Discourse ethics is "universalistic because the moral principles behind it are not culturally specific but universally valid" (Müller-Doohm, 2016:381).

In brief, the above discussion has revealed the following:

- As a normative theory, Critical Theory is oriented towards change. That is, it allows for a normative choice in favour of a social and political order that differs from the prevailing one.
- Social structures/institutions/norms/values are not neutral or permanent; instead, they reflect particular interests and are subject to change.
- The problem-solving method does not deal with problems or crises within the existing order holistically or effectively.
- Critical Theory adopts the method of immanent critique to show the disjuncture between the normative claims of the prevailing order and its realities, and
- Critical Theory deploys reason in the form of inter-subjective relations as a basis of reordering society and posits that the linguistic medium of discourse offers a rational way out of contested political norms, values, institutions and practices.

Following the methodological path of Critical theory, the next section discusses the ideational and normative claims of the Swati political system. The discussion centres on the governing ideology and its institutional manifestations.

## The ideological basis

The preamble to the 2005 Swati Constitution sums up the ideological basis of the political system as the "blending of good institutions of tradition, law and custom with those of an open and democratic society" (Kingdom of Eswatini, 2005). Simply put, a combination of local and modern values, institutions and practices have infused government in Eswatini. Notwithstanding this polycentric idea, the reality is that the local elements are stronger – as they constitute the core or base of government. This dominance is based on the belief that the institutions and practices of government should primarily reflect the ideational and institutional legacies that already exist in the local environment (Clark et al., 2015; Haang'andu & Beland, 2019).

The task is for society or local actors to selectively borrow useful and progressive exotic ideas, practices and institutions and embed them into the locally-grown ones. What emerges from the process is the creation of something new – or what Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) calls *bricolage*. The political system in Eswatini is therefore based on an ideology that rejects the exclusive adoption of exotic or modern ideas or the displacement of valued and shared normative, ideational and institutional bases of indigenous political life. Some claim that such displacement often leads to a loss of identity as well as sociopolitical problems (Haang'andu & Beland, 2019). In fact, however, the borrowing or adoption of exotic/modern elements can be seen as a problem-solving device to inject dynamism into a prevailing order by helping it deal with new or modern demands and challenges.

The analyses below focus on the institutional manifestations of the governing ideology in Eswatini.

## The neo-patrimonial system

Formally, the basis of government in Eswatini rests on two of Weber's (1978) ideas of authority, namely the traditional/patriarchal/patrimonial forms on the one hand, and the modern/legal-rational/bureaucratic forms on the other. In the patrimonial order, the ruler organises or exercises political power – domination over the ruled or the public realm – in the same way as patriarchal power is exercised (i.e. in the private sphere or household) (Bruhns, 2012:113; Erdmann & Engel, 2007:105). Thus, under patrimonial rule, political and administrative relations are personalised: there is no distinction between public and private realms. In this order, political and administrative decisions are personalised or reflect private interests.

As Weber (1978) asserts, in the pre-modern phase of political development, there is compliance with patrimonial authority. The legitimacy of this authority is based on shared traditions, practices, norms and values. However, in the legal-rational order, decisions and actions are taken without regard to persons. According to Weber (1978), compliance with the legal-rational form of authority flows from an assumption that those in charge of making decisions and implementing them follow laid-down, acceptable or universal rules, norms and procedures. For example, bureaucrats have specialised knowledge on issues and adopt techno-rational (value-free) methods in executing tasks and resolving societal problems. As a result, society defers to bureaucratic authority.

King Mswati III of Eswatini is the *Ingwenyama* (patriarch or traditional head) of the Swati nation, according to section 228 of the Swati Constitution (Kingdom of Eswatini, 2005). The nation itself is held together by traditional institutions, principles, norms, values and practices. Thus, for example, the Swati nation comprises chiefdoms headed by chiefs, who function as representatives of the King, and institutions, such as the

*Liqoqo* and *Ludzidzini* (which are advisory bodies of the King and Queen Mother, respectively). Compliance with personalised authority, therefore, occurs to a significant degree. This legitimisation of patriarchal power comes from various sources. Acceptance of patriarchal or monarchical rule emanates from the practice of selecting wives from different clans. This practice, it is claimed, makes all Swazis part of the monarchy and, by extension, part of the same patrimonial domain. Compliance is based on the strong ties between the monarch and key social actors, including "royal notables within the Dlamini clan", chiefs and political appointees (Woods, 2012).

The land is central to the legitimation of patrimonial domination and compliance. For example, village chiefs, as representatives of the monarchy, allocate land to their subjects in return for those subjects' loyalty. Compliance with patriarchal authority is also based on the claim that Swazis have a common ancestry. Lending credence to this view is that Eswatini is a mono-ethnic state, i.e. the state and the nation emerged in tandem. Thus, the monarch is seen as the hereditary head of one big, unified, extended family, which is the nation (Debly, 2011). In fact, the very existence of the Swati nation-state is attributed to the leadership of successive Swati kings – as seen through public comments such as "without the king we will no longer be a people" (Woods, 2012). Most Swazis defer to monarchical authority: the King's word is held sacrosanct in most matters.

The exercise of authority in Eswatini in the patrimonial domain also follows the Hobbesian principle. Hobbes (1968:218) argues that, when persons act with authority, they exercise rights that were originally held by others. Once authorities are thus created, their actions should be understood as the actions of those who authorised them (Hobbes, 1968:218). For Hobbes, therefore, whatever sovereigns choose to do can be no injury to any of their subjects (Hobbes, 1968:232). Authority is, therefore, created by licence or commission, which suggests that all authority is grounded in the consent of those for whom authorities act. This idea finds resonance in the assumption that the King is the "mouth piece" (Mzizi, 2002:173) of the Swati nation and therefore infallible – his actions or decisions cannot be challenged or questioned because they are based on the popular will or consent. As we will see, this belief has several impacts on governance in the country.

The legal-rational/bureaucratic form of authority is exercised through, and anchored in, various modern political and administrative institutions of the central or modern Swati state, such as the judiciary, the legislature, the executive and the civil service. However, according to section 64 of the Swati Constitution, the King is the head of the (modern) state and exercises executive authority over the various modern institutions (Kingdom of Eswatini, 2005). For example, he appoints the Prime Minister and the rest of the Cabinet; he appoints the justices of the court in consultation with a judiciary committee; he appoints 20 of the 30 members of the upper chamber of parliament (the Senate) and 10 of the 65 members of the House of Assembly; and he appoints the administrative heads

of the various government departments or ministries as well as the members of statutory bodies. In addition, he is the head of the state security forces. Moreover, the office of the monarch possesses extensive discretionary powers to call and dissolve parliament, to hire and dismiss ministers of government, and to assent to and veto legislation (The Commonwealth, 2014:5).

The existence of the two forms of authority and the King's pre-eminent roles in both domains invariably lead to what Erdmann and Engel (2007) opt to call *neo-patrimonialism*. Although the two systems are separate in terms of differing logics, they coexist and permeate each other. While no distinction is made in personalised power relations between the private and public realms, such a distinction exists under neo-patrimonial relations. However, this separation is not always observed because the two logics – the patrimonial and legal-rational – intersect in various ways. For example, personalised power permeates the legal-rational order and twists its logic when informal politics invade formal institutions. Nonetheless, such power does not take complete control of the formal system (Erdmann & Engel, 2007:105). Moreover, the formal system is devoid of the certainty, predictability or calculable exercise of power embedded in universal rules of legal-rationalism (Erdmann & Engel, 2007:114). The neo-patrimonial system is, therefore, characterised by insecurity. Thus, actors within the system strive to overcome their insecurity by operating at both levels. For example, to keep their jobs and privileges, technocrats may take decisions or pursue goals which reflect a private interest. In this pattern of social-political relations, formal state institutions cannot fulfil their potentially universalistic purpose of public welfare (Erdman & Engel, 2007:105). There is a high degree of deference to patriarchal authority and the institutions tend to be weak and subject to capture or control by powerful social actors.

## Sibaya

The political system retains traditional political practice of communal deliberation, consensus or collective decision-making. The deliberative form is the *Sibaya*, an annual meeting of the nation or so-called People's Parliament. As a constitutional provision (section 232(1); Kingdom of Eswatini, 2005), The Sibaya is a forum for publicly deliberating national or controversial issues. The forum offers people an opportunity to exercise influence over national affairs. In this deliberative space, everyone – regardless of gender or age – has the equal right or opportunity to stand up and express their views and opinions and to criticise the government. Ideally, in this public arena, each individual is politically free and equal, and the individual's voice and counsel is heard and respected, regardless of socio-economic status (see also Busia, 1967). It is believed that the consensus formed in this public arena helps to shape national decisions. It is normally convened once a year, but also whenever there are pressing and controversial national issues. For example, in 2008, King Mswati III convened the People's Parliament to "discuss how the nation could be developed economically and how the general

elections should be conducted" (*Times of Swaziland*, 12 June 2008, p 2). Indeed, some national reforms or changes have come through the Sibaya process in Eswatini.

The Sibaya is similar to the classical model of democracy practised by the Greek city-states. The Athenian democracy was based on government by mass meeting; all major decisions were made by the Assembly or Ecclesia, which was open to all citizens (Heywood, 2007:76; see also Held, 2006). This direct popular participation in political life is practised in some contemporary Western societies. Examples are the Town Hall meetings in the US and the communal assemblies of the smaller Swiss cantons (Heywood, 2007). In Africa, Botswana, like Eswatini, integrates the *Kgotla*, an indigenous, communal deliberative practice in the national policymaking process (Gyekye, 1997; Van Binsbergen, 1995).

## Vuselas

Closely related to the Sibaya is the Eswatini political culture of the *Vusela* (literally, "greeting" in Siswati) or public consultation. This practice is founded on the premise that political initiatives and processes of change need to be based on popular consultation and consent. For example, the prevailing electoral system represents a democratic improvement on a previous one. Whereas in the past, the members of the Legislative Assembly were largely elected by an electoral college, now they are directly chosen by the people. The prevailing electoral system was the result of Vuselas – the solicitation of views from the public at various chiefdoms (see The Swati Electoral Order of 1992). Through this consultative exercise, the people overwhelmingly favoured an electoral system in which constituents directly chose their representatives. The Swati Constitution of 2005 was also brought into being through a consultative process. Prior to the promulgation of the Constitution, Emaswati lived in what could be labelled a post-constitutional order: the independence Constitution was abrogated in 1973 and the country was instead governed by decrees and proclamations. In response to popular calls, a Constitutional Review Commission was set up to solicit views from the general public on the form of a new Constitution.

## Electoral system

Elections are modern practice. At the heart of elections is the idea of popular sovereignty and self-determination. Democratic elections are a clear manifestation of popular political power. They are a means through which the people exercise control over their government. The people, in elections, mandate politicians to govern on their behalf; elections are also the means through which the public "accept or refuse the men [and women] who are to rule them" (Heywood, 2007:253). Thus, elections help foster accountability and legitimacy. The legitimacy of government centres on elections because, by voting, the people express their consent to the existing political order.

Through electoral campaigns, the electoral system provides citizens with the opportunity to learn about candidates' policies, the incumbent government's record of service, the political system, and so on (Heywood, 2007). Importantly, elections give citizens the opportunity to participate in the political process. Simply put, as a political principle, representation is a relationship through which an individual or group stand for or act on behalf a larger body of people (Heywood, 2007:268). Thus, elections play a pivotal role in legitimising the representation of people.

Section 79 of the Swati Constitution states that individual merit is the basis of election or appointment into public office (Kingdom of Eswatini, 2005). The people's representatives are chosen directly by the people themselves rather than via political parties. That is, individuals contest for parliamentary seats independently instead of as representatives of political parties. Each electoral district (or *nkundla*) comprises a collection of chiefdoms. Each chiefdom, in turn, is administered by a chief, with the aid of an administrative council or *bucopho*. Parliamentary elections take place in two stages, referred to as primary and secondary elections. In the primary elections, candidates compete at the chiefdom level. The winners at this level compete in the secondary elections, at *nkundla* level. Whoever wins the plurality of votes in the secondary elections represents the electoral district concerned in the National Assembly (parliament). The electoral system in Eswatini therefore exhibits a blending of traditional and modern values and principles.

The electoral system purportedly creates a clear link between representatives and constituents, which ensures that constituency interests or duties are performed. King Mswati III, the reigning monarch, described the electoral system as follows (*The Nation*, April 2017, p 38):

> … a true demonstration of [what he termed] monarchical democracy, where people get to vote for people of their choice to serve the nation and make an impact.

The electoral system both challenges and adopts elements of modern electoral ideas, norms, institutions and practices. This innovative system blends indigenous ideas, norms, institutions and practices of representation with modern ones. The prevailing order borrows useful modern ideas, practices and institutions such as elections, representation, universal suffrage (which is at the core of electoral democracy), the parliamentary system and electoral campaigning. However, there are divergent points. The system, as stated, breaks with the Western practice of political party representation; instead representation is non-partisan. There are normative and ideational notions behind this divergence.

The proponents of the Swati electoral system say the idea of an opposition party is alien to the Swati political culture (Matsebula, 2000; Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland, 1973). They argue that political parties normally represent sectional interests, contrasting world views, ideologies and values and that, culturally, these characteristics are at odds with

the collectivist or communal basis of Swati society (Matsebula, 2000). Therefore, the core mandate of the representative is the pursuit of the national interest. Swati custom prescribes that "members of parliament should be concerned with the interest of the entire nation, rather than with those of particular region or group" (see Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland, 1960). King Sobhuza II alluded to this normative view of representation when he said the following before the dissolution of parliament in 1973 (*Times of Swaziland*, 24 March 1972):

> One thing emerged that members of Parliament were guided by one single motive throughout – the interests of the Swazi nation as a whole. No one member has acted on behalf of just one section of the country, say Shiselweni District or the Hhohho District, but you have had in Parliament a member from Hhohho speaking for the Shiselweni District and vice-versa and this I consider to be a very healthy state of affairs. This is the Swazi way of life; the Swazi custom of doing things for the whole country.

Again, the claim is that the idea of an opposing or alternative viewpoint inherent in a political party is incompatible with the consensual mode of decision-making and problem-solving in the culture of the Swati nation, which examines problems and questions together like members of one family. Political parties are regarded as divisive; they engender "hostility, bitterness and unrest" (for this view, see Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland, 1973). Such parties are incompatible with the pacifist Swati social order. The trustee model of representation is, thus, the central idea behind representation. In the trustee system, the core mandate of the representative is the pursuit of the national interest.

The analyses below examine the validity of the ideational and normative claims of the existing order as shown through the governing ideology and its institutional manifestations.

## Limits of the prevailing order

Following the praxis of Critical Theory, this section utilises immanent critique as its methodological guide or framework. As stated earlier in the theoretical part of the chapter, the objective of immanent critique is to unearth the shortcomings or contradictions of the existing order to transcend them. The analysis largely relies on sources such as media articles, views, opinions or comments from an array of social actors such as parliamentarians, government officials or ministers, representatives of trade organisations, youth movements, political organisations, religious groups and international bodies. The reliability of this source of information is grounded in the fact that it represents the experiences of actors familiar with the existing order.

## Effects of neo-patrimonial relations

There is a widely shared view that the patrimonial element dominates the affairs of the Swati state. A member of one of the traditional advisory bodies expressed this dominance as follows (*Times of Swaziland*, 29 July 2007, p 2):

> … as leaders we are like people standing on top of a mountain. We can therefore see an enemy from afar and advise what should be done.

It is a view shared by former parliamentarian and Minister, Mfomfo Nkambule (*Times of Swaziland*, 31 July 2001, p 36):

> Those who understand Swazi politics say we do not have a dual system of governance … We have a paternal system of governance. So in Siswati, as small boys, there are issues that we can deal with, but serious issues are left to the elders to [take] action.

The late editor of the *Times of Swaziland,* Vusi Ginnindza, expressed patriarchal domination and its effects in this moving imagery (*Times of Swaziland,* 25 October 2000, p 17):

> As Swazis we find ourselves trapped in the oscillating cosmic drama. We are the tragic others. But unlike animals that have no imaginative knowledge of their fate, our great disadvantage is that we know where we are going – hurtling at great speed down the slippery slope without the voice to influence those in the vanguard. We are helpless and powerless, not any amount of shouting not even sabotage or hostile graffiti will ever change the way we are ruled. We are bred in a farm; we can only graze where we are driven. We shall be seen and never be heard.

Some commentators claim that modern political and administrative institutions are extensions of the monarch's patriarchal power or patrimonial domain – his patriarchal power, as noted, permeates the modern political, legal and administrative institutions and leaves some negative imprints on them. The Commonwealth Observer Mission to Eswatini in 2013 observed that the extensive and discretionary powers of the King make "respect for the principle of the separation of powers a great challenge in the country's governance framework" (The Commonwealth, 2014). Bluntly put, it contradicts the principle of separation of powers in the Swati Constitution. The Constitution stipulates that the executive arm of government should be accountable to parliament and, by extension, to the public. The accountability task is delegated to the House of Assembly, the people's chamber.

The House of Assembly is a scrutinising body whose vocation is to help promote a responsible and accountable government. However, there is a growing perception or

concern about the legislative body's limits to institutional independence, transparency and accountability. The public perception is that the parliament – the government writ large – is not accountable to the public and is a weak institution. Parliamentarians are seen as people who are "easily employed by those in authority to serve the interest of the elite" (*Times of Swaziland*, 28 January 2008, p 25). The parliament has attracted derogatory comments, being described as a "rubber stamp", "pseudo", a "circus", "powerless" and an "irrelevant" body (The Commonwealth, 2014; *Times of Swaziland*, 28 January 2008, p 25). In fact, some commentators on Swati affairs claim that candidates for parliamentarian seats are vetted by chiefs to determine their loyalty to the monarchy. They must "swear allegiance to the local chief" in order to receive the "royal assent" (Woods, 2012:360). This is how one commentator put it (*Times of Swaziland*, 7 May 2008, p 5):

> Before one can be elected into Parliament one has to be a known member of the community. One has to wake up every weekend and go to the Chief's kraal to either weed his fields or fix the kraal. Before one does that, one will never see a parliamentary seat.

There is a growing conviction, strong among the progressive wing of the House of Assembly, that the members of the executive arm of government largely reflect the royal or the personal interest of the King since they are his appointees. Mfomfo Nkambule, who was a parliamentarian and former Minister, wrote the following on this topic (*Times of Swaziland*, 28 January 2008, p 25):

> In the eyes of the Swazi people, the cabinet is the King's making. If cabinet fails the masses, there is nothing that can be done by the majority except to murmur why is the King not removing this team of loafers?

Some believe that the neo-patrimonial relations invariably create an extensive patrimonial network, a culture of impunity in which state actors or government act without fear of reprisal or the need to justify governmental decisions or action, corruption, nepotism and institutional weakness (*Times of Swaziland*, 22 June 2008, p 14). High-level public servants and others close to the King often invoke his name to justify their actions and inactions and to intimidate or silence critics (*Times of Swaziland*, 30 January 2008, p 5).

Indeed, the neo-patrimonial system can constrain the attainment of the country's development objectives. One of the consequences of this constraint is the endemic nature of corruption in the country – particularly individuals enriching themselves at the state's expense. Some believe that it will be difficult, for example, for the Eswatini Anti-corruption Commission and supporting institutions such as the police and the judiciary to deal with serious cases of corruption because they often involve actors with strong patrimonial ties. The *Times of Swaziland* (7 June 2013, p 19) comments as follows on this point:

> [T]he ACC has always been described as toothless towards people deserving of apprehension [especially those in positions of power within the government] but it becomes extremely dangerous to the small fish or those labelled enemies of the state.

A former Finance Minister lamented that the country was losing a lot of money through corruption and imagined "how wealthy the country would be if it was not for this sickness" (*Swazi Observer*, 24 February 2011). The Minister disclosed that the culprits were known, but they were powerful elites – which made it difficult to take action against them. Certainly, corruption is anti-developmental because resources for publicly beneficial programmes, where they are required, are diverted to politically and socially connected elites. Corruption as a social malaise deprives government of the key resources needed to discharge its social obligations. This deprivation generally creates alienation and resentment towards government.

## Contestation over electoral system

As previously noted, section 79 of the Swati Constitution establishes individual merit as the basis for election or appointment to public office. Therefore, formally and institutionally, there is no role for political parties in government. However, this exclusion exposes a democratic deficit in the electoral system and a contradiction in the Swati Constitution. On the one hand, section 25 of the Constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, on the other, section 79 requires that individual merit be the sole basis of election and appointment to public office which (Kingdom of Swaziland, 2005) –

> … effectively prohibits the registration and operation of political parties as the basis for election and access to political power or public office.

Political parties have launched legal challenges, on constitutional grounds, against the restriction, but have not succeeded.

Both civil society and political party groups see the prohibition as a violation of the basic human rights recognised by the Swati Constitution. For example, the prohibition is a violation of the right for people to determine freely how they wish to be ruled or represented. An Afrobarometer (2021) survey on democracy in Eswatini in 2021 reported 59% of Swazis saying many political parties were needed to give voters a real choice on who governed them. This figure represented an increase of 28% on that of 31% recorded during a similar survey in 2015 (Afrobarometer, 2021). Only 37% of participants in the 2021 survey said political parties were divisive and unnecessary – down from 64% in 2015 (Afrobarometer, 2021; *Times of Eswatini*, 31 January 2022, p 17). In addition, some 59% (i.e. six out of every ten citizens) said that people should be "free to join any organization they want" (Afrobarometer, 2021).

Indeed, the rejection of political opposition or parties in modern politics in Eswatini is problematic. The rejection is akin to arguments advanced for the one-party/non-party systems in Africa in the past. Busia (1967), a leading critic of the one-party/non-party system in Africa, argued that there were no political parties or opposition in the African political tradition on account of the relatively homogeneous nature of the tribal society. For example, all members in the traditional African societies held the same religious belief, shared in the same rituals, and held the same views about the universe. He contrasted this highly valued solidarity of traditional society which was based on conformity with the pluralistic nature of modern African counterpart. For Busia (1967:97), "it is old fashioned to hope to achieve solidarity on the basis of conformity in the circumstances of today". Indeed, the modern African state contains groups and individuals with diverse interests and world views. They hold different ideas on politics, science, religion, ideology and philosophy. These divergent identities have been made possible by exposure to the external world and the ideas and beliefs associated with it. Therefore, a pluralistic society has the democratic responsibility to be tolerant of other political expressions.

The resistance against the electoral system in Eswatini intensifies during every election cycle through protests and boycotts of parliamentary elections by opposition parties and their supporters. Although opposition groups mostly use pacifist means to challenge the electoral system and the monopolisation of political space, the radical fringe of the opposition sometimes resorts to violence. In the past, this has taken the form of arson/bomb attacks on public institutions and homes of known supporters of the prevailing order.

## The critique of deliberative practice

There have been criticisms of the deliberative practice in the country. The critics, which include political parties, trade unions and civil society organisations, say Sibaya remains a mere "talk show" and a "waste of time", and has no capacity to influence national decisions (Matsebula, 2000; *Times of Eswatini*, 7 November 2021, p 3). These critics also claim that "recommendations coming out of Sibaya are not implemented" or that there are no "concrete solutions coming out of Sibaya" (*Times of Eswatini*, 7 November 2021, p 3). Furthermore, they argue that a deliberative exercise supervised by traditional authority is inhibitive, intimidating and "without rules that are consistent with a modern democratic process" (*Times of Eswatini*, 25 January 2022, p 5). According to a representative of the Multi-stakeholders' Forum, for example (*Times of Eswatini*, 7 November 2021, p 3), –

> Sibaya is where the king and those close to him feel they have an upper hand and could use the space to intimidate the people … [T]hose who previously spoke strongly against the

> royal family during Sibaya have been subjected to persecution and prosecution for expressing views that are unpopular with the system.

Thus, the existing deliberative practice constrains the autonomy of participants to honestly express both their individual and common interests, wants and needs. It is claimed that Sibaya has been used for the "wrong political reasons to denigrate, undermine, mock and insult the intelligence of the nation" (*Times of Eswatini*, 7 November 2021, p 3). The critics also see the Sibaya as a "monologue rather than a dialogue" because "it only encourages people to make submissions to an individual [the King] instead of a two-way process between two equal partners" (*Times of Eswatini*, 7 November 2021, p 3). For others, Sibaya – as a deliberative forum – is inappropriate in contemporary societies with big populations. The common view emerging from the criticisms of the deliberative practice is that its procedure does not match its normative claims.

## The problem with the Vuselas

The Vuselas have also been criticised. One of its detractors (Mzizi, 2005:18) argues that behind the veneer of the public consultative process is –

> … a false democracy, a stage managed method of consensus rule and a general deception that the will of the people determines all political initiatives and processes of change.

To support their views, critics have drawn attention to the process that brought the Constitution into being when a Constitutional Review Commission was established against the demands of civil society and political groups for a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution for the country. The critics alleged that the "King handpicked the members of the commission … and set its terms of reference" (Mzizi, 2005:18). They complained that the 1996 decree which established the Commission mandated it to solicit opinions restrictively from individuals at Tinkhundla centres, while group submissions were barred – as were the press when they wanted to cover the solicitation exercise (Mzizi, 2005:18). These critics also regarded the consultative process as "a royal project designed to serve royal interests" rather than being "people-driven initiatives" (*Swazi News*, 2 December 2000, p 6). The detractors note that the Constitution reaffirms the status quo: it retains the monarchy's executive control of government and its prerogatives, and it continues to exclude political parties from the political process. Therefore, in spite of the people-centric suppositions, the claim is that the Vusela, as a consultative process, is manipulated to serve a narrow agenda.

The above analyses have shown the limitations, tensions and contradictions within the institutional structures of the prevailing order. As already noted, the objective of immanent critique is not just to point out contradictions within an order, but also to transform it. The discussion will now turn to this idea of transformation.

## A guide to action

Overall, the chapter has revealed that the existing sociopolitical order in Eswatini faces legitimacy problems because of the breakdown of its rational and normative core. The prevailing order is challenged on the grounds that it promotes private rather than public interests. Furthermore, the order is marred by institutional weaknesses; it constrains meaningful national development; and it stifles individual autonomy because it stops citizens from carrying out what they would freely choose to do. For example, the monopolisation of the political space suppresses alternative forms of political practice or expression. The sociopolitical order is also contested because of the disjuncture between its claims and realities. The marches, petitions, boycotts and protests by popular forces – which sometimes turn violent – are physical manifestations of the legitimation troubles facing the prevailing system. So, how might these legitimation crises be addressed?

As shown in theoretical section, Critical Theory has a normative orientation. A core aspect of Critical Theory is the belief in reason as the basis for social transformation. Critical Theory grounds the way out of social conflicts in a rational organisation of society. This rational basis of society, for Habermas (1997), is anchored in the ethics of discourse. The value of discourse is that it is a communicative procedure used to resolve social conflict over norms and practices that have become problematic. It is encouraging to note, therefore, that there have been calls for political dialogue in the aftermath of the violent political unrest in the country. These calls have been made by external entities such as the EU, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the UN, the United Kingdom and the US, as well as internal entities such as domestic business groups, trade organisations and church groups within and outside the country. For example, the South African government urged "all political actors and civil society to engage in meaningful dialogue in order to resolve the current political challenges facing the country" (*Swaziland News*, 6 July 2021); *Business Eswatini* called for "constructive dialogue" as a means to avert further violence, destruction and damage to the economy (*The Nation*, July 2021); and the EU, UK and US missions in Eswatini issued a joint statement calling on "both sides to refrain from violence" and urged leaders to "act at once on calls for peace, calm and dialogue" (Embassy of the Government of the United States in Eswatini, 2021).

These trenchant calls culminated in a meeting between the incumbent South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, then Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and King Mswati III. Addressing the press after the meeting, Ramaphosa reported that the SADC Secretariat would work closely with the government of Eswatini to draft terms of reference for the national dialogue forum, adding that the process towards the national dialogue "will take account of structures and processes enshrined in the constitution of the Kingdom of Eswatini, including the role of parliament of the Kingdom and the Sibaya convened by His Majesty King Mswati III"

(The Presidency, Republic of South Africa, 2021). However, there have been concerns by opposition groups with the format of the dialogue proposed by President Ramaphosa.

As already established, opposition groups reject Sibaya as a useful dialogic forum. They describe the forum as intimidating, inhibitive, undemocratic, a monologue, and bereft of the equality principle. To them, the Sibaya is skewed towards the status quo rather than being people-centric. They also demand an inclusive process that affords opportunity to all relevant parties in the formulation of terms of reference. They argue that the Constitution in its current form favours the status quo. For example, the composition of parliament gives numerical advantage to those loyal to the King. On account of these concerns, the Multi-stakeholders' Forum, which is the umbrella body of civil society and political party organisations, advocates for an all-inclusive and internationally mediated political dialogue. The organisation also proposes other preconditions for dialogue, such as the unbanning of political parties, the return of all political exiles, the release of incarcerated MPs, the establishment of a transitional government, a new democratic Constitution, and a multi-party dispensation. (For the views expressed in this paragraph, see *Eswatini News*, 30 October 2021, p 7.)

There are also disagreements on the preferred form of government. As expected, the government and its supporters argue to retain the prevailing political system, while all political parties favour a multi-party-centred form of government. There are some, mostly individuals, who prefer a non-partisan political system that allows for the election of the Prime Minister directly by the people: they say the King should not be involved in the day-to-day administration of the country, but that the Prime Minister should assume full responsibility over administrating government affairs and should be accountable to parliament. While most groups call for a constitutional monarchy with a ceremonial role in government, others prefer the establishment of a republic. (For the preferences listed in this paragraph, see *Times of Eswatini*, 16 January 2022, p 12.)

As provided for in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland 2005, Chapter XII, Section 211(1), the King is the custodian of Swati national land (which excludes privately held title-deed land) and all mineral resources. These resources are vested in the King "in trust for the Swazi nation" (Kingdom of Swaziland, 2005:111–112). As representatives of the King, chiefs in the rural areas are empowered to allocate communal land to their subjects on a use rather than outright ownership basis. However, political opponents argue that the King's custodial role in both land and mineral resources should be removed and brought under the "direct control of government" (*Times of Eswatini*, 16 January 2022, p 2). These opposition groups also want all royal investment companies held by the King in trust for the Eswatini nation, such as Tisuka Taka Ngwane and Tibiyo Taka Ngwane, to be administered by government. The demand for the removal of the King's custodial roles is based on the claim that the resources and investments largely serve royal rather than public interests.

Recognising the imperative for dialogue as well as the contestations and diversity of positions as established above, this chapter makes two propositions that are informed by the ethics of discourse. Given the concerns over the format of dialogue, SADC ought to play a central role in the drafting of terms of reference while relying on inputs from the government and all other relevant societal groups and individuals. In fact, SADC or any other neutral body ought to preside over the transformation process. This responsibility cannot be assigned to the government. If it were, then it would make government both convenor or facilitator and participant – which would defeat the ends of discourse.

If one follows the ethics of discourse, it cannot be assumed that the outcome of the deliberative process will be based on any of the various positions, preferences or blueprints already offered by the various actors. No particular outcome can be anticipated or presupposed. Instead, it is expected that, subject to the conditions of discourse, the outcomes will be based on "rationally motivated agreement" (Müller-Doohm, 2016:382). Such an outcome is free-standing and is not based on factional foundations, private insights or partisan views; yet it gains the support of all because it expresses fundamental commitments/ideals acceptable to all.

## Conclusion

The chapter set out to explain the cause of the systemic or legitimation crisis in Eswatini and to offer a way out of it. Deploying the assumptions of Critical Theory (Frankfurt School), the discussion showed that the unrest in the country in the form of protests, boycotts, petitions and marches represents physical manifestations of the breakdown of the normative and rational core of the prevailing order. The chapter has also shown that this breakdown has come about largely because of the disjuncture between the normative and value claims of existing structures and their realities. The discussion further highlighted the contradictions and tensions embedded in these structures by juxtaposing their claims and the arguments against such claims. The chapter suggested that dialogue – in the form of discourse ethics – offers a way out of the legitimation crisis. Dialogue is emancipatory because it recognises the equality and freedom of all and is oriented towards the general interest.

## References

Afrobarometer. 2021. Dissatisfaction with Eswatini's democracy rises. Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 495. https//www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad495-disatisfaction_with_democracy_rises_in_eswatini-afrobarometer, last accessed 1 June 2023.

Ashley, R. 1987. The geo-politics of geo-political space. Towards a Critical Social Theory of international politics. *Alternatives*, xii:403–434.

Bernstein, JM. 1995. *Recovering ethical life: Jürgen Habermas and the future of Critical Theory*. London/New York: Routledge.

Brincat, S. 2016. Traditional, problem-solving and Critical Theory: An analysis of Horkheimer and Cox's setting of the 'Critical' divide. *Globalizations*, 13(5):563–577. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2015.1130204

Brown, C. 1994. Turtles all the way down: Antifoundationalism, Critical Theory and international relations. *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, 23(2):213–236.

Brown, C. 2002. The normative framework of post-Cold War international relations. In Lawson, S (Ed.). *The new agenda for international relations*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Bruhns, H. 2012. Weber's patrimonial domination and its interpretation. In Bach, DC, & Gazibo, M (Eds). *Neopatrimonialism in Africa and beyond*. London/New York: Routledge.

Busia, KA. 1967. *In search of democracy*. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul.

Calhoun, C. 1996. Social theory and the public sphere. In Turner, B (Ed.). *The Blackwell companion to social theory*. Oxford/Cambridge, MA.: Blackwell Publishers.

Clarke, JD, Lendvai, N, & Stubbs, P. 2015. *Making policy move: Towards a politics of translation and assemblage*. Bristol: Polity Press.

Cox, RW. 1981. Social forces, states, and world orders: Beyond international relations theory. In Keohane, RO (Ed.). *Neorealism and its critics*. New York: Colombia University Press.

Cox, RW. 1986. Social forces, states, and World Orders: Beyond international relations theory. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 12(2):126–155.

Debly, TM. 2011. *Culture and resistance: Swaziland 1960–2011*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada.

Devetak, R. 1996. Critical Theory. In Burchill, S, & Linklater, A (Eds). *Theories of international relations*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Dews, P. 1992. *Autonomy and solidarity. Interviews with Jurgen Habermas*. London/New York: Verso.

Eckersley, R. 2008. The ethics of Critical Theory. In Reus-Smith, C, & Snidal, D (Eds). *The Oxford handbook of international relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Embassy of the Government of the United States in Eswatini. 2021. *Joint Statement: EU, UK and US: Dialogue needed to calm tensions*. Mbabane: US Government.

Erdmann, G, & Engel, U. 2007. Neopatrimonialism reconsidered: Critical review and elaboration of an elusive concept. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 45(1):95–119.

*Eswatini News*, 30 October 2021, pp 2, 7.

Gyekye, K. 1997. *Tradition and modernity: Philosophical reflections on the African experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haang'andu P, & Beland, D. 2019. Democratization without Westernization? Embedding democracy in local African cultures. *Politikon*, 46(2):219–239.

Habermas, J. 1987. *The theory of communicative action, Vol. 2. Life world and system: A critique of functionalist reason*. Cambridge: Polity.

Habermas, J. 1997. *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy* (translated by W Rehg). Cambridge: Polity.

Held, D. 1980. *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Held, D. 2006. *Models of democracy*. Oxford: Polity.

Heywood, A. 2007. *Politics*. New York: Palgrave McMillan.

Hobbes, T. 1968. *Man and citizen*. Garden City, NY: Anchor.

Horkheimer, M. 1947. *Eclipse of reason*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kingdom of Swaziland. 2005. *Constitution.* Mbabane: Kingdom of Swaziland. https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/africa/SZ/CONSTITUTIONOFTHEKINGDOM OF SWAZILAND2005.pdf, last accessed 1 June 2023.

Kutay, A. 2015. A critical transnational public sphere: Bringing back common good and social ontology in context. *Globalizations*, 13(1):47–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2015.1037125

Lévi-Strauss, C. *The savage mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Linklater, A. 1990. The problem of community in international relations. *Alternatives*, 15(2):135–153.

Linklater, A. 1998. *The transformation of political community: Ethical foundations of the post-Westphalian era*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Linklater, A. 2002. Cosmopolitan political communities in international relations. *International Relations*, 16(1):135–150.

Linklater, A. 2006. The harm principle and global politics. *Global Society*, 20(3):329–343.

Linklater, A. 2007. Towards a sociology of global morals with an emancipatory intent. In Rengger, N, & Thirkell-White, B (Eds). *Critical international relations theory after 25 years*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matsebula, JSM. 2000. *A history of Swaziland*. Cape Town: Longman.

Mittelman, JH. 1998. Coxian historicism as an alternative perspective in international studies. *Alternatives*, 23(1):63–92.

Müller-Doohm, S. 2016. *Habermas: A biography*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mzizi, J. 2002. Leadership, civil society and democratization in Swaziland. In Bujra, A, & Buthelezi, S (Eds). *Leadership, civil society and democratization in Africa: Case studies from southern Africa*. Addis Ababa: Development Policy Management.

Mzizi, J. 2005. King or party? Swazi conflict smoulders on. *Global Dialogue,* 10(3):16–18.

Rengger, N. 1995. *Political theory, modernity and post-modernity: Beyond enlightenment and critique*. Oxford/Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Reus-Smith, C, & Snidal, D. 2008. Between utopia and reality: The practical discourses of international relations. In Reus-Smith, C, & Snidal, D (Eds). *The Oxford handbook of international relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland. 1960. *Speech on Constitutional Development in Swaziland: April 23rd, 1960*. Mbabane: Kingdom of Swaziland.

Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland. 1973. *Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II: April 12, 1973*. Mbabane: Kingdom of Swaziland. https://oxcon.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:ocw/law-ocw-cd24.regGroup.1/law-ocw-cd24, last accessed 26 May 2023.

*Swazi News*, 2 December 2000, p 6.

*Swazi Observer*, 24 February 2011.

*Swaziland News*, 6 July 2001.

The Commonwealth. 2014. *Swaziland National Elections 20 September 2013: Report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission.* London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

*The Nation*, April 2017, p 38.

*The Nation*, July 2021.

The Presidency, Republic of South Africa. [November] 2021. *Statement by Chair of SADC Organ Troika on Engagement with His Majesty, King Mswati III of Eswatini.* Pretoria: South Africa.

*Times of Eswatini*, 2 May 2021, pp 2–3.

*Times of Eswatini*, 25 June 2021, p 3.

*Times of Eswatini*, 7 November 2021, p 3.

*Times of Eswatini*, 16 January 2022, pp 2, 12.

*Times of Eswatini*, 25 January 2022, p 5.

*Times of Eswatini*, 31 January 2022, p 17.

*Times of Swaziland*, 24 March 1972.

*Times of Swaziland*, 25 October 2000, p 17.

*Times of Swaziland*, 31 July 2001, p 36.

*Times of Swaziland*, 29 July 2007, p 2.

*Times of Swaziland*, 28 January 2008, p 25.

*Times of Swaziland*, 30 January 2008, p 5.

*Times of Swaziland*, 7 May 2008, p 5.

*Times of Swaziland*, 12 June 2008, p 2

*Times of Swaziland*, 22 June 2008, p 14.

*Times of Swaziland*, 7 June 2013, p 19.

Van Binsbergen, W. 1995. Aspects of democracy and democratization in Zambia and Botswana: Exploring African political culture at the grassroots. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 13(1):3–33.

Weber, M. 1978. *Economy and society* (translated by G Roth & C Wittich). California: University of California Press.

Williams, P. 2005. Critical security studies. In Bellamy, AJ (Ed.). *International society and its critics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Woods, D. 2012. Patrimonialism (neo) and the Kingdom of Swaziland: Employing a case study to re-scale a concept. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 50(3):344–366.

# PART IV:
# Conclusion

# The future of dominant parties, the challenge to electoral authoritarianism, and possible changes in political dynamics in the monarchy: What lies ahead for southern Africa?

**Lesley Blaauw and Dennis U Zaire**

In this volume, an effort has been made to illuminate the challenges that southern African countries continue to face in their respective manifestations of democratisation. Theoretically, it can be concluded that southern Africa has both electoral democratic states and electoral authoritarian states. In this context, the monarchy in Eswatini is a theoretical outlier. The assertion is also made that factions and factionalism in both the democratic and non-democratic settings are changing the dynamics of ruling parties in the respective countries. In almost all cases, these changes challenge the dominant party states in democratic and non-democratic states in the subregion alike. In addition, these changes give opposition parties at national as well as local level unprecedented opportunities to change the dynamics of politics in the countries concerned. However, given the divergence in regimes in southern Africa, it is difficult to draw generalisations about all the case studies presented. As such, conclusions are drawn from each case study.

## Case studies: Concluding remarks

In the case of **Botswana**, **Tshepo Gwatiwa** argued that the popularity of both the ruling and opposition movements has risen and plateaued due to various aspects of voter alienation. His entry point was to examine the role of the ruling and (old) opposition parties that were involved in the negotiation of Botswana's transition from its colonial administration to democratic rule. He also argued that factionalism and competition for power have nurtured a specific type of politics: one that is tied to the interests of various groups controlling a range of economic sectors since the 1960s. His chapter further posited that the Ian Khama presidency, which was quasi-autocratic, created splinters and an exodus of ruling party followers that boosted the popularity and electoral gains

of the opposition. The author contends that, during that presidency in particular, the rise of political princelings in Botswana's ruling party as well as in the oldest opposition movements affected the parties' popularity. The perceived cross-pollination of economic interests between ruling and opposition parties alienated voters further. The author concluded that splinters of both the ruling party and opposition parties have maintained a status quo where the Botswana Democratic Party remains in power, but with a diminished share of the popular vote.

In the next three cases in the volume, the divine right to rule in perpetuity was invoked to describe the level of dominant party status in Namibia and South Africa. Indeed, Namibia is yet to experience a transfer of power, after more than three decades and six national elections.

**Henning Melber** reflected on the first 25 years of the former liberation movement – the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) – as the independent state of **Namibia's** legitimately and democratically elected governing party. He described its subsequent trajectory, during which the party became a hegemonic agency in the country's political sphere, and the ideological narratives underpinning this dominance. Melber argued that SWAPO's ascent to being the only internationally recognised anti-colonial agency before Namibia's independence arguably marked a decisive threshold that granted the party a sense of national exclusivity. The anti-colonial movement turned into a kind of family taking care of its members (or punishing them), assuming ultimate responsibility over Namibians' perspectives on life. After the country's independence in 1990, the SWAPO Party became the principal agent in charge of the new political power relations, and became equated with the government and the state. Melber noted that Namibia's multi-party democracy displayed all the features of competitive authoritarianism, with the SWAPO Party consolidating its all-embracing influence during the first 25 years. At the same time, such exclusivity, while not being in any way meaningfully challenged by opposition parties in the absence of a level playing field, carried the risk of non-sustainability. This risk owed itself to the heroic narrative of the liberation gospel – as translated into patriotic history – having become increasingly anachronistic with regard to the new generations of so-called born frees. Melber summarised the status quo as being the exceptional consolidation of power, which based on the self-assurance neglecting transparency and accountability to the wider community carried and cultivated at the same time the risk of later decline.

In his contribution on **Namibia**, **Christiaan Keulder** noted that the national elections of 2019 saw the ruling party's electoral dominance decline, and that the trend had continued with the Regional Council and Local Authority Council elections in 2020. Using primarily public opinion data, Keulder showed that this may well be the beginning of the end to the SWAPO Party's electoral dominance. Social changes, poor performance, growing perceptions of corruption, and changes in public trust have all contributed to large-scale

dealignment from the party. However, he also illustrated that opposition parties have made some progress. Nonetheless, they had thus far failed to convince prospective voters that they presented a viable alternative to the ruling party. Dealignment from the ruling party had also not led to a realignment with opposition parties, but rather to disengagement from the party system – leaving the majority of the voting age population without a political voice.

**Annemie Parkin** argued that the democratic health and survival of **South Africa** hung in the balance as a result of the decline of the African National Congress (ANC) as the ruling party. The ANC's liberation legacy had initially led to big electoral victories which had, in turn, led to the establishment of a dominant party system for almost 30 years. However, as Parkin noted, the ANC's support had declined steadily due to poor governance, corruption, and costly factional splits. South Africans' support for and trust in democracy were also in decline. The author therefore asked what the ANC's future as South Africa's ruling party was, and what the future held for the country in respect of its democratic consolidation. In her opinion, for South Africa's democratic prospects to improve would require political will and sound governance. The author concluded that, if the answers to the two questions were not in the affirmative, the continued survival of South Africa's democratic regime was in danger.

According to the case study on **Zambia** by **Aaron W Siwale and Biggie Joe Ndambwa**, the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) stood out as a good example in southern Africa of a political party formed out of unity of purpose by all anti-colonialism campaigners in the country. However, the fact that the late President Kenneth Kaunda had purged his liberation struggle compatriots such as Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe and Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula from the party after Zambia's independence disturbed the unity of purpose in the subsequent UNIP-led government, and foreshadowed Kaunda's resorting to authoritarian strategies to govern. This, the authors reveal, resulted in high levels of discontentment among the population, and was especially acute among those that were not happy with the status quo of a one-party state with one leader. However, the party failed to reorganise itself after losing elections for the first multi-party dispensation. The authors contended that UNIP failed to adapt its functions as a ruling party after Zambia's independence, focusing on liberation struggles within the region instead. It also failed to devise a fundraising mechanism after losing control over and access to state resources, which hobbled its mobilisation efforts. The authors concluded that UNIP's inability to select, from time to time, leaders that belonged to different generations greatly contributed to the party's lack of vision in meeting the population's new needs.

In his contribution on **Angola**, **Alex Vines** argued that the ruling party – the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA, or People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) – had become the main provider of benefits and goods, driven by its ideological belief as a liberation movement that it was a people's vanguard party. Although the

MPLA showed signs of elitism from an early stage, grand corruption was not initially in evidence. When José Eduardo dos Santos assumed the presidency in September 1979, he took the already highly authoritarian party to another level, reflecting instincts that remain powerful today. Vines noted that, from 1980, Dos Santos began to draw into the presidency responsibilities that had previously been under party control, such as foreign affairs and the economy. Under his presidency, from the late 1990s the MPLA elite was increasingly weakened, as Dos Santos developed an even more personalised neo-patrimonial structure of government, supported by an effective security system designed to protect his and his supporting elite's interests. This structure was protected by the Presidential Guard, loyal securocrats, intelligence services, political militias and a militarised police force. The entire system was lubricated by revenues from extractive industries and, after 2002, reconstruction funds – particularly from China. Over time, as Vines recorded, the system adapted to the personalisation of power: a shadow government operated autonomously and accountable only to the presidency. When João Lourenço became President after the August 2017 elections, the office weakened slightly and the MPLA regained some power as a representative of the electorate, but it became increasingly factionalised. The August 2022 election results, which saw the opposition – the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA, or National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) – win a majority in Luanda for the first time. Vines related that the MPLA simultaneously lost its two-thirds majority in the Assembly, which came as a shock. Thereafter, the MPLA has found it difficult to comprehend a state where it does not occupy a hegemonic role and where it may have to share or lose power. Deeply embedded in the MPLA's Marxist–Leninist roots, its self-definition is fundamentally opposed to those of liberal democracies, where parties are instead seen as vehicles for contest between opposing ideologies and policies. Vines therefore pointed out that the MPLA had continued to prevail in many rural areas (including formerly UNITA strongholds), but no longer in urbanised areas such as Luanda. He maintained that, if this trend continued, the MPLA would face increasing challenges to its authority.

In his case study of **Mozambique**, **Alex Vines** noted that the *Frente de Libertação Moçambique* (FRELIMO, or Mozambique Liberation Front), the party of government since independence in 1975, ended the one-party system in 1990. Yet, 30 years on, the party had continued as the dominant force in state and society, winning all six presidential and parliamentary elections to date. Mozambique was not formally a one-party state, Vines noted, but the ruling party was still so deeply entrenched in the state apparatus that, in practice, it was still hard to separate one from the other. As had occurred in other so-called liberation-movement states in southern Africa, Vines pointed out, FRELIMO had blurred the interests of the movement, the state, and the personal interests of key individuals. Indeed, FRELIMO had always sought to keep a tight grip on political power, but this trajectory was unsustainable, the author argued. He charted FRELIMO's evolution since independence and evaluated how efforts to promote political pluralism through national and local elections had fared since 1990, and how the country's colonial

and post-colonial history had impacted that journey, since Mozambique's history was intertwined with complex regional politics and other regional failures in nation-building.

Tortuous and treacherous: this was how the **Zimbabwe** post-independence political landscape had been characterised because of its division, disunity, factionalism and violence, as authors **Mark Chingono and Alexander Rusero** contend. The Gukurahundi genocide, the chaotic land reform, corruption and, more recently, the poorly managed COVID-19 pandemic had compounded the problems already facing the country. Feeding on each other, these factors had precipitated a socio-economic and political turmoil of considerable proportions. The authors identified the causes and impacts of division and factionalism within the governing elite in general, and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) in particular. Their analysis showed that crude power struggles, nepotism, ideological differences, economic decline, corruption and sanctions had fuelled division and factionalism within the ruling elite. A sad reflection of the intellectual laziness of the age, the monumental failure in both conflict and economic management had led to the creation of a toxic political environment which was antithetical to democracy as well as democratic consolidation. The authors concluded by proposing policy options for getting out of the political quagmire and setting free a new emancipatory vision for the country.

According to the case study by **Albert Domson-Lindsay** on **Eswatini**, the violent political protests in June 2021 in the kingdom pointed to a growing legitimation crisis. Although there had been many commentaries on the political crisis since the unrest, particularly on the various media platforms, such commentaries treated the subject at a superficial level. What was missing, in the author's view, was a deeper level of analysis and understanding. Domson-Lindsay therefore offered a theoretical path towards fill this gap. For him, theory helped to understand the social world and offered a guide to how that world could be imagined and what steps or action could be taken to realise it. Using the assumptions of Critical Theory (Frankfurt School), the author argued that the scale of the crisis showed that the prevailing social order in Eswatini faced legitimation problems, and that its normative and rational content had become problematic because of the disjuncture between its claims and realities. He believed that, since the legitimacy and stability of social structures were based on an inter-subjective understanding the linguistic medium of discourse, this medium could offer a way out of the unfolding systemic crisis in Eswatini.

## What lies ahead for southern Africa?

The overall conclusion is that southern African states, both democratic and non-democratic in nature, face challenges. Indeed, socio-economically, the dominant party status of the governing classes is being challenged. In the case of Botswana, political fracture has not yet impacted severely on the BDP's dominant status. Similarly, the political and electoral

fortunes of the ANC in South Africa and that of the SWAPO Party in Namibia seem to be being influenced negatively by socio-economic challenges and corruption. Arguably, in South Africa, the political fracture in the ANC which gave rise to the formation of the Economic Freedom Fighters led by former ANC youth leader Julius Malema, is partly responsible for the erosion of some of the ANC's electoral support at national level. The corruption that cripples most of the provinces in the country is another contributing factor for its poor performance at local government level. Similarly, in Namibia, the former liberation movement that has been governing since the country's independence in 1990 has suffered significant losses at both national, regional and local levels. Apart from the country's socio-economic challenges, a huge corruption scandal and the formation of new political parties (Affirmative Repositioning and the Landless People's Movement) from youthful, breakaway leaders, account for the ruling party's diminishing support at all levels of elections. The electoral democratic regime of Lesotho continues to be troubled by factionalism from within the ruling party. This factionalism, by and large, accounts for the political instability that continues to trouble the country despite changing its electoral system and notwithstanding numerous regional interventions by the Southern African Development Community. The case of Zambia illustrates that democratic gains made cannot be assumed to be irreversible or sustainable. Corrosive corruption and socio-economic hardship are two salient factors pointing to the country's urgent need for an economic developmental component to sustain its democracy. Addressing the economic concerns of the population would move democracy in Zambia beyond the procedural act of simply electing leaders. In Mozambique, FRELIMO has been able to maintain its dominance through the fusion of state, party and the personal interest of certain individuals. Moreover, the ruling party has used its electoral success to further political polarisation in the country. However, will FRELIMO's dominance hold in the absence of receding political control and diminished access to economic resources? In Zimbabwe, regular but contentious elections have meant that the country has become a classic example of an electoral authoritarian regime. The ruling ZANU PF has also lost considerable support in recent elections. The challenge to its dominance is accelerated by socio-economic difficulties and intra-party factionalism. Moreover, crude power struggles, nepotism, ideological differences, economic decline, corruption and sanctions have fuelled division and factionalism within the ruling elite. All of these have implications for the both the Zimbabwean state and its ruling party. The weakening of political control over the latter two institutions severely undermine the continued dominant party state and ZANU PF's ability to mediate factionalism in Zimbabwe. Eswatini, on the other hand, remains a closed political system despite the incremental changes that have recently been made by the regime. Thus, the country introduced constitutional changes in 2005 and elections under the new system were held in 2008, 2013 and 2018. However, the dominance of the monarchy in electoral politics means that elections in Eswatini remain a farce.

This book discusses the subject of former liberation movements in southern Africa. By way of case studies, the volume interrogates a range of socio-economic and political issues, challenges and developments confronting governments in the region since its liberation. The case studies range from liberal democracies and semi-authoritarian governments to the monarchy in Eswatini. A review of the political trajectory is provided in each case, along with comparative lessons worth exploring for the region's future.

The book aims to be useful to students, researchers, academics, and practitioners such as government officials and policymakers in the region and beyond. It is also hoped that the publication will contribute towards enhancing knowledge of the current political discourse in the region, as expressed by notable academics in the field.

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

ISBN: 978-99916-39-66-6