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Political Culture and Democratic Governance in Southern Africa

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Abstract

The interface of political culture and democratic governance has not been thoroughly explored and problematised in the democracy debate in Southern Africa today. The current debate has tended to focus more on elections and electoral systems and, by default, leaving out culture in the discourse. This article is, thus, an attempt to bring political culture back in. This is extremely crucial for democratic practice and is also highly dependent upon a particular political culture prevailing in a given country or region. The main thrust of the paper is that a culture of political violence and instability in the region is explicable in terms of the structural make-up of the region's political economy (a la structuralist theorists) and not so much by the level of institutionalization of governance itself as some modernization (read institutional-functionalist) theorists would like us to believe. Although elections and electoral systems do, to some degree, have a bearing on stability or lack of it, political culture does play a role in regime legitimacy or lack thereof. Political violence and multivariate conflicts that have marked the region's political landscape and prompted by resource distribution, ideological contestation, social differentiation along class, gender, ethnic and racial cleavage, clearly have an enormous impact on the prospects for nurturing and consolidation of democratic governance in Southern Africa.

Introduction

Culture is undoubtedly a crucial determinant of the history, identity and destiny of any given society (Prah, 2001). The dynamics of a social fabric of any society, therefore, revolve principally around the culture of that society. A renowned modernization theorist acknowledges that culture is currently

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such a vital force and postulates that due, in part, to globalisation, the fundamental source of conflict is likely to be cultural, rather than ideological or economic. In his words "nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future" (Huntington cited in Jackson and Jackson, 1997:98). Although a contentious observation, this statement by Huntington quite clearly suggests the centrality of culture in the current global political economy.

It is worth emphasizing at the onset that the importance of a culture to societal development, identity and destiny is as critical as that of political culture to a political system. One of the most significant factors that have enormous impact on the political system and current efforts towards democratic governance in the Southern African region is political culture. Political culture has both direct and indirect bearing and permutation on political and economic governance processes and as such has influenced to a considerable degree, instability or stability of the political systems in the region. This paper conceives of political culture as a concept that denotes a broad array of norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and traditions that shape systems, institutions and processes of governance.

These cultural conventions directly and indirectly impact on the efficacy of all organs of the State (i.e. executive, legislative, judiciary, bureaucracy, security establishment etc.) and society at large in the extent to which political stability and democratic governance is assured, nurtured and consolidated.

Policy initiatives and actions of key agents in any political system at any particular time can justifiably be traced in part, to the nature of the political culture prevailing in a given polity. This explains why Jackson and Jackson poignantly observe that "political culture is one of the most powerful influences that shape a political system. It creates norms – beliefs about how people should behave – and these norms influence social behavior" (1997: 98). Heywood corroborates the above observation by arguing that political culture, which he also terms 'politics in the mind' is crucial for democratic governance and stability given that it builds societal perceptions and expectations regarding the running of national affairs (i.e. governance) by governments. He further argues that popular beliefs, symbols and values structure both the peoples' "attitudes to the political process, and, crucially, their view of the regime in which they live, most particularly, whether or not they regard their regime as rightful or legitimate. Legitimacy is thus the key to political stability and it is nothing less than the source of a regime's survival and success" (1997: 185).

Surely political culture is heavily embedded in the process of political socialization and, as is well-known, the key agents of political socialization in Southern Africa, as elsewhere in the world, are: (a) the family (b) educational institutions (c) religious institutions (d) the mass media (e) political parties (f) civil society organisations and (g) the government (Jackson and Jackson, 1997; Heywood, 1997).

This paper grapples with the complex interconnection and interface of instability and democratic governance in Southern Africa. The first section presents a conceptual framework for an understanding of instability and political violence in the region. The second section assesses the form and content of the current political liberalisation (or what others term democratisation) in the region since the last decade. The third section unravels the essence of elections and electoral systems in so far as they either enhance or inhibit political stability and democratic governance. The fourth section outlines problems and prospects for democratic local governance. The fifth section explores efforts toward institutionalisation of democratic local governance. The sixth section highlights the key issues in the sphere of economic governance and the implications for stability and democratic governance. The seventh, and final, section maps out the conflict situation in the region and its implications for democratisation.

Instability and Democratic Governance: A Conceptual Framework

A plethora of literature perceives instability as one of the major challenges for democratic governance in developing societies in general and Southern Africa in particular. According to Mandaza, for instance, "the perception is widespread that Africa is not a good business address, thanks to political instability and weak governance" (2000:377). Two prominent schools of thought in the debate on instability-governance nexus are (a) institutional-functionalism and (b) structuralism. The former explains instability and political violence by focusing primarily, if not exclusively, on the interface between the level of institutionalistion of the state and the degree of political participation by the citizenry. The former gives pride of place to the structural configuration of society and constant contestation over (i) state power (ii) resource distribution and (iii) social stratification based on identity and ideology.

Institutional-Functionalism

The main proponent of the institutional-functionalism as an analytical tool for our understanding of instability and political violence in developing countries is Samuel Huntington who in his *Political Order in Changing Societies* propounded an interesting thesis that in societies where political

participation is high, yet the process of political institutionalisation is low and weak, there is bound to be political instability or what he termed political decay. Political decay, therefore, is, argues Huntington, "in large part the product of rapid social change and rapid mobilisation of new groups into politics coupled with the slow development of political institutions" (cited in Matlosa, 1997:98). He perceives political institutionalisation in a Weberian sense as the process by which organisations and procedures acquire value and stability over time through a political culture based not on politics of patronage, but on legal-rational norms. Traditional societies are seen as premised more on the culture of patronage politics thus less institutionalised, yet with high levels of political mobilization whereas developed countries are seen to be highly institutionalised and allow high political participation. Instability and political violence is therefore a dominant feature of the former due to the disequilibrium between institutionalisation and participation while the latter enjoy stability because of the fine balance between institutionalisation and participation. True to its modernisationist origins, this thesis assesses levels of institutionalisation and participation through the following dichotomies which approximate the traditional-modern classifications of the classical modernisation theorists:

(a) Adaptability-Rigidity
(b) Complexity-Simplicity
(c) Autonomy-Subordination
(d) Coherence-Disunity

The Huntingtonian thesis then suggests that the current problem of political instability and violence in Southern Africa can better be explicated by low levels of institutionalization among SADC countries marked in the main by rigid, simple, subordinate and fragmented state institutions under conditions of high political mobilization and participation of the citizens. A post-modernist institutional-functional paradigm of political crisis in Africa has been advanced by Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz in their 'Africa Works'. The analysis of these two scholars is simply that the crisis (or what they prefer to term variously as political economy of disorder, moral economy of disorder, informalisation of politics), is fundamentally "a crisis of modernity". In this context, states have not institutionalized the governance process, but rather "the political instrumentalisation of disorder". According to these scholars "although there are obviously vast differences between countries in this respect, we would argue that what all African states share is a generalized system of patrimonialism and an acute degree of apparent disorder, as evidenced by a high level of governmental and administrative inefficiency, lack of institutionalization, a general disregard for the rules of the formal political and economic sectors, and a universal resort to personal

(ized) and vertical solutions to societal problems" (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:xix). Valuable as both the modernist and post-modernist institutional-functionalism approach to African political crisis may be, its major deficiency is that it reduces the heart of politics in this part of the world merely to institutions and how they function and respond to political mobilization. It thus fails to capture the role of political culture and other actors in the political system in moulding the state and how it undertakes the task of managing national affairs. The approach does not acknowledge the importance of power, resources and identity/ideology. Given these severe limitations of modernist and post-modernist approaches to our understanding of political instability and violence and the consequent impact of these on democratic governance in Southern Africa, a much more useful approach is the structuralist paradigm.

Structuralism

The more appealing and fairly plausible explanation of the culture of violence and instability in Southern Africa is proffered by structuralist theorists. Structuralist approaches to the study of the political culture of violence and instability in developing countries in general and Southern Africa in particular, center on the triangle of conflict comprising: (a) contestation over state power; (b) struggle over distribution of resources; and (c) social stratification and diversity premised upon identity, gender and ideology. This approach clearly debunks the simplistic notion of the "End of History" thesis by Francis Fukuyama and is a telling critique of modernization theories of political culture and instability propounded forcefully by Samuel Huntington and various other institutional-functionalists. This approach recognizes that African politics center principally around state power, hence the fierce contestation over the state as an end in itself (see Ake, 1996; Ake, 2000, Lumumba-Kasongo, 2002).

The capture of state power is perceived by the African political elite as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Political power is seen as a guarantee or licence for economic power through accumulation aimed not at sustainable national development but at self-aggrandizement by the elite. The combination of both political and economic power is surely meant to ensure the hegemony and self-reproduction of the ruling elite and the dominant party in politics both within and outside the state sphere. This in part explains the pervasive tendency of authoritarianism of both civilian and military varieties in Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular during the three decades of 1960s up to the 1980s. Claude Ake, aptly observes that "although political independence brought some changes to the composition of the state managers, the character of the state remained much as it has in the colonial era. It continued to be totalistic in scope, constituting a

statist economy. It presented itself as an apparatus of violence, had a narrow social base, and relied for compliance on coercion rather than authority" (1996:3). Thus, in corroborating Ake, Lumumba-Kasongo concludes aptly that in its current form, the African state "is not an agent for positive social change because the state was created to advance the interests of metropolitan capitalism. Development has not started in Africa for many reasons, despite the good will of many Africans and African social movements" (Lumumba-Kasongo,2002:80).

The violent political tension in Lesotho in 1998 had more to do with the fierce contestation over state power and the benefits that go with that for the political elite than with the simple outcome of the election of the same year. This is understandable from a structuralist point of view for Lesotho has a narrow economic base and the elite is perfectly aware that the state provides a critical avenue for accumulation. Thus, the contestation over the largesse that comes with control over state power is bound to be both fierce and violent at times. The 1997 split of the ruling Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) led to the emergence of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). This in turn, instantly became a ruling party without recourse to the ballot, thus replacing, by fiat, the BCP, which had won a landslide victory in the 1993 general election. This formed more of the major cause of the political turbulence in the tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho than the election outcome per se. There were compelling structural factors that propelled the 1998 political conflict in Lesotho than the often simplistic reference in uncritical literature to the electoral process as such.

The recent political crisis in Namibia and Zambia over the extension of the tenure of the President Sam Nujoma and President Fredrick Chiluba into third term suggests the same tendency by the political elite to have an insatiable 'lust' for power and often not ready to facilitate succession of leadership. Although Nujoma succeeded and attempted rather abortively a fourth term, Chiluba suffered an irreparable political damage when he ultimately lost both state power and became severely marginalized within the party following the 2001 election that saw him completely eclipsed by the new party leader and president, Levy Mwanawasa. It is also noteworthy that President Bakili Muluzi of Malawi has already attempted twice rather dismally to coax and exhort the Malawian legislature to endorse his political bid for a third term of office by having the constitution amended to give effect to what is clearly self-serving political machination.

Similar trends of political culture of violence linked primarily to control over state power are manifest in other parts of the SADC region. The violence that attended the challenge of the 1999 election outcome by RENAMO in Mozambique a year after the event which led to the killing of more than 50 people was certainly more about state power and a subterranean culture

that bullets are more important than ballots in solving political differences. The meager resources available to the state lead to conflicts over their distribution for survival of various actors in the political system. Incidentally, most of the violent conflicts in the region are in fact resource-based intrastate conflicts. This is so with protracted violent conflicts in both Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The former is driven by the proceeds from oil on the part of the MPLA and the diamonds on the part of UNITA (see Harris, 1999). Violent conflict arising out of identity-based (particularly racial) social stratification have beset the former white-settler colonial states such as Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe more than the rest of the former non-settler colonial states. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, although important, has not really helped much in uprooting racial prejudice in that country (Boraine, 2000; James and de Vijver, 2000; Alexander, 2002). This is, in essence, the main thrust of the structuralist perspective of the political culture of violence and instability in Southern Africa. The next section turns to the linkage between political culture and the political transition in Southern Africa today.

The Essence of the current Political Transition in Southern Africa

The political history of Southern Africa bears testimony to the widely accepted notion that the region is in a constant state of transition. It is abundantly evident too that the region's political culture is in a state of flux. The current transition has had a profound bearing on political and economic governance. Whereas the political systems in the region were marked by centralization through the adoption of the one-party rule and authoritarian political culture since the 1960s, major transformations are currently opening up the political market-place to broader contestation over state power, increased participation of the citizens in the political process and empowerment of disadvantaged social groups. The current political dispensation surely bears some semblance of a democratic political culture.

Immediately after political independence of the 1960s, a number of Southern African states adopted the one-party system under the guise of the ideology of developmentalism and nation building. This was, in and of itself, a particular type of political culture that was dominant in the region for over three decades. It was an authoritarian political culture of sorts. The most vehement proponent of the one-party state was Julius Nyerere of Tanzania who argued strongly that "where there is one-party and that party is identified with the nation as a whole, the foundations of democracy are firmer than they can ever be when you have two or more parties each representing only a section of the community" (cited in Wanyande, 2000a: 108). The single party would not only exercise unfettered political hegemony over

the state and society, but it would also subsume organs of civil society such as trade unions and farmers' associations under its hegemonic political wings. The justification for the one-party political system revolved around the following:

- The quest for national unity to ensure national consensus, nation-building and political stability following political independence.
- The ideology of developmentalism which geared attention and energies of the populace more towards economic development and de-emphasised politics; hence the strong argument that these countries, being underdeveloped, needed to concentrate on economic development rather than divisive multi-party politics (Wanyande, 2000a).
- Pervasive perception of one-party as a truly African democracy deeply rooted in pre-colonial political tradition and history and thus justifiable as an indigenous political system.
- The widespread belief that the Western multiparty system premised upon liberal democracy and bequeathed from colonial administrations was alien and foreign to the African political setting.
- The assumption that differences and divergence in political opinion among the populace would be assured "through what African leaders called opposition from within the party" (Wanyande, 2000a); hence the shortlived politics of accommodation which was quickly replaced by politics of patronage and repression in the 1970s.

However a far-reaching political sea of change, which swept the entire globe in the 1990s did not spare Southern Africa. The 1990s witnessed significant changes in the mode of governance in Southern Africa. Political centralization, which had pervaded the region assuming various forms such as mono-party (e.g Tanzania), one person (e.g. Malawi) and military rule (e.g. Lesotho), has been increasingly replaced by political liberalisation. The political liberalization essentially represents a new set of political culture in the region which emphasizes pluralism as against centralization of power which was the hallmark of the one-party era.

Whereas the end of the Cold War as well as the current globalisation have surely given greater impetus to this political transition, other important external stimuli include the adoption by a majority of the regional states of economic adjustment programmes through which economic liberalisation and political liberalisation are supposed to be implemented in tandem under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (See Gibbon, et.al, 1992; Ake, 1996; Olukoshi, 1998; UNDP, 2002). Taking cue from these two international financial institutions, aid donors to Southern African states also imposed stringent political conditionality to their development assistance including political pluralism and holding of

regular elections (see Carlsson, et al, 1997). Due mainly to the overbearing external influence on the democratisation process in the region, Mkandawire argues that "one can even talk of the emergence of 'choiceless democracies' who have to accept the conditionalities of policies concocted by international technocracies. To 'signal' foreign capital, governments must demonstrate their "autonomy from local politics" (SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998:36). Evidence abounds suggesting that implementation of economic liberalisation and political liberalisation has weakened the capacity of the state to deliver basic socio-economic services (SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998; Olukoshi, 1998a). This has led to the legitimacy crisis of the state, which has responded to social demands of the citizens through repressive measures. Claude Ake aptly observes that "structural adjustment programs that African countries have been obliged to adopt are compounding the weakness of the state in Africa owing to their one-sided emphasis on privatisation, denationalization, and reliance on market forces. These problems are weakening the state even politically. They are so drastic and so severe in their impact that they engender hostility to the state and undermine its limited legitimacy" (Ake, 1996:133). A combination of a weakened state, disjointed civil society and an enfeebled domestic bourgeoisie in the region is a major challenge for development, democratic governance and political stability in Southern Africa. Given the weakness of civil society organisations, the level of political participation by the ordinary citizen in the region has severe limitations even within the confines of liberal democracy that most states have adopted.

At the regional level, the demise of apartheid in South Africa was also a very crucial factor for the region's transformation away from authoritarian rule (centralist and hegemonic political culture) towards multi-party political pluralism (decentralized and pluralist political culture). The apartheid-driven regional destabilisation of the 1970s and 1980s led to the militarisation of politics and provided part of the justification for one-party rule which was linked to the nation-building project by the ruling elite. The one-party, it was argued, would forge a national unity required to face up to external threat of apartheid aggression. The end of apartheid helped facilitate the process of political liberalisation. This phenomenal development which led, inter alia, to majority rule in both Namibia (1990) and South Africa (1994), as well as the sustainable peace in Mozambique (1994), was also accompanied by internal political pressure in a majority of Southern African states for democratic rule and democratisation mounted by civil society organisations. Despite their weaknesses and disjointed organisation, civil society "in the form of trade unions, women's organisations, churches, civil and human rights groups, media associations, lawyers' associations and other professional and non-professional groups" (SAPES/UNDP/SADC,

1998: 95) have contributed to the emergence of a multi-party political pluralism in the region.

Democracy in Southern Africa is limited to neo-liberal political reforms which some consider to be tantamount to "good governance" (World Bank, 2000). Whether "good governance" means democracy still remains a moot point. However, it is abundantly evident that the common usage of the term by donors, in particular, takes good governance as synonymous with liberal democracy. Nkiwane corroborates this observation by arguing that "good governance is often viewed as the outcome of the democratization process. Conceptually, it remains extremely fluid, and is often associated with the World Bank discourse on governance as applied in the context of political conditionality" (Nkiwane, 2000:1).

Whereas all the SADC countries have steered their political systems towards some form of liberal democracy, varieties of the system differ with Namibia and South African systems being closer to social democracy and Botswana and Mauritius operating the system in its classical/conventional sense (Good, 1997). While SADC states have embraced liberal democracy lock, stock and barrel, others are still steeped in authoritarian rule. An ostensibly resilient dynastic authoritarian rule anchored upon executive monarchy and traditionalism is still deeply entrenched in Swaziland. Protracted violent conflicts in both Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have acted as major impediments for democratic governance and stability in these countries.

Some scholars have questioned the relevance and utility of liberal democracy in Africa, and argued strongly for adoption of social democracy as a better system that could deepen democratic governance (Ake, 2000; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2002). Social democracy is premised primarily upon close co-operation among the state, capital and labour in the process of governance. It thus lends itself to broader political participation and empowerment of the citizenry than liberal democracy. Liberal democracy or political pluralism places emphasis on multi-partism and protection of the basic civil liberties. While "it is understood that multi-partism is not synonymous with democracy (...) the relative opening up of political systems by governments in response to people's struggle and demands is a welcome step in the direction of democratic practice, and the creation of participatory societies in Southern Africa" (SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998: 84). The three basic elements of liberal democracy are:

- a meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organised groups (especially political parties) for all effective position of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force;
- a highly inclusive level of participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and

- a high level of civil and political liberties – freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organisations – sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (Sørensen, 1993: 13).

It is important to note that the neo-liberal democratisation process in Southern Africa is driven more by the ruling elite with insignificant impact of opposition parties and minimal contribution of civil society organisations. This point is significant for it explains in part the current entrenchment of a dominant party system in the region despite regular elections (Giliomee and Simkins, 1999). The dominant party system is more entrenched in Botswana where the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has ruled the country since 1996 (Molomo, 2000; Molomo, 2003). The trend of a dominant party system, however is not confined to Botswana's long-enduring liberal democracy. It is the case in all others following the liberal democratic model including Lesotho, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The 2000 election in Zimbabwe presented, for the first time, a major challenge to the political tradition of dominant-party model when the ruling ZANU-PF won 62 parliamentary seats (49% of the total valid votes) and the main opposition, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) secured 57 seats (46% of the total votes) and ZANU-Ndonga got 1 single seat. Be that as it may, ZANU-PF still retains political dominance in the legislature through the 30 more parliamentary seats most of which are filled by the President's own appointees in the 150-member legislature. The big constitutional question, though, is whether Zimbabwe will evolve into a two-party system which may enhance further the competition over state power and stimulate greater political participation necessary for the legitimacy of the state and political stability or it is likely to revert back to the one-party system with dire consequences for legitimacy of the state, deepening democratic governance and political stability (Makumbe and Companion, 2000). The dominant party system also ensures and sustains the overbearing dominance of the ruling party in the legislature as Table 1 clearly shows.

Considering the overwhelming control and influence of the executive organ of the state over the legislature, the dominant party system, which is explicitly evident in Table 1, undermines the checks and balances among key institutions of government. In a majority of states, the dominance of the ruling party in the legislature approximates "a de facto one-party state without effective opposition entrenched in parliament, large majority party regimes share some of the weaknesses of one-party systems. The opposition, which normally comprises parties and independent candidates, hardly ever control more than 30% of seats in the legislature even though the average opposition vote in most countries is around 35%. In general, only one or two of the average four

Table 1 Political System, Size and Composition of the Legislature in the SADC Region

Country	Political System	Nature of legislature	Size of Legislature	No. of Ruling Party Seats	No. of Opposition Seats	% Ruling Party Seats	Appointed Seats
Angola	Liberal Democracy	Unicameral	220	129	98	53.7	0
Botswana	Liberal Democracy	Bicameral	47	33	7	54.2	7
DRC	Military Rule	Dissolved	210	–	–	–	–
Lesotho	Constitutional Monarchy	Bicameral	112	79	1	60.7	33
Malawi	Liberal Democracy	Unicameral	192	93	95	47.3	0
Mauritius	Liberal Democracy	Unicameral	66	54	8	51.7	4
Mozambique	Liberal Democracy	Unicameral	250	133	117	48.5	0
Namibia	Liberal Democracy	Bicameral	104	55	17	76.1	6
Seychelles	Liberal Democracy	Unicameral	34	30	4	61.7	0
South Africa	Liberal Democracy	Bicameral	400	266	134	66.4	0
Swaziland	Executive Monarch	Bicameral	85	–	–	–	30
Tanzania	Liberal Democracy	Unicameral	274	244	24	89.1	42
Zambia	Liberal Democracy	Unicameral	158	127	20	60.8	8
Zimbabwe	Liberal Democracy	Unicameral	150	63	57	53	30

Source: SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998; IFES Election Today, 2001.

political parties contesting elections in the individual countries ever find their way into the legislature" (SAPES/UNDP/ SADC, 1998: 89). It should also be noted that ruling parties dominate not only in the legislature, but, more importantly, the executive organ of the state too. The hegemony of the ruling parties in both the legislature and the executive give impetus for their undue influence and control over the judiciary as well. The recent conflicts between the executive arm and the judiciary organ of the state in Zimbabwe are clear

testimony to the tensions among the key organs of the state as a result of the overwhelming hegemony of the one-party executive even within the context of the current political liberalization process.

The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) enjoys a comfortable 76 per cent dominance in the Namibian legislature, while the African National Congress (ANC) has 66 per cent of the legislative seats in South Africa. Despite the vibrant, albeit fragmented opposition in these two countries, it is likely that SWAPO and ANC will remain ruling parties for decades ahead. In fact, in the case of Namibia, President Sam Nujoma has gone to the extent of manipulating the constitution in order to secure a third term for himself and attempted rather dismally to make another bid for a possible fourth term. The constitutional manipulation in Southern Africa suggests that although SADC countries have constitutions, constitutionalism is not yet irreversibly embedded in the region. In Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe stood for and won another six-year presidential term in 2002 amid criticism for slow progress on leadership succession in the country. Not only does this regional trend suggest lack of constitutionalism, but it also brings into sharp relief the crisis of both leadership and political succession in the region, which in part, is explicable by reference to the long pedigree of one-party political culture.

In the entire SADC region, dominant party system assumes the following forms (a) electoral dominance for an uninterrupted and prolonged period; (b) dominance in the formation of governments; and (c) dominance in determining the public agenda (Giliomee and Simkins, 1999: xxi). The dominant party system in Southern Africa is also symptomatic of the weakness, fragmentation and disorganization of opposition parties. According to recent studies (Olukoshi, 1998a; SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998) many factors explain the ineffectiveness of oppositional politics enhancing competition, participation and empowerment. First, opposition parties in all SADC countries are poorly endowed with resources and receive little or no public funding through the state.

According to Sachikonye:

> In Southern Africa, different countries have taken different positions on party funding. While some countries have provisions for public funding of parties, a few do not: The countries which provide state funding of parties are Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Those which do not provide public or state funding are Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia (2000: 4).

Although forms and scale of party funding vary from country to another, it has been established that state funding largely favours the ruling party and reinforces the dominant party system. Second, deliberate strategies have been used by the ruling parties to undermine opposition parties including

limited or even total lack of access to public media, suppression of opposition through the security forces and reliance on patronage politics to divide and disorganise the opposition. Thirdly, the dominant electoral system in Southern Africa, viz. the First-Past-the-Post inherited from British colonial rule largely works in favour of the dominant ruling party and disadvantages weak opposition parties. Fourthly, external dependence of the opposition parties on donor support has tended to compromise their national agenda and image and the ruling parties have been quick to exploit this even though they themselves depend on one form or the other of foreign assistance including economic adjustment programmes. Olukoshi argues that:

> Certainly external support was useful in getting some of the parties established; it, however, sometimes resulted in the neglect of the local avenues that were available for tapping finance, and more importantly, building a strong and national membership base. Furthermore, it lay some of the opposition elements open to nationalistic attacks which, though self-serving, struck a chord with some sections of the local population that are sensitive to external domination of the African political-economic space. Indeed, not too infrequently, incumbents who had themselves taken IMF/World Bank loans pointed opportunistically to the dependence of their opponents on foreign money in a bid to undermine their nationalist/patriotic credentials (1998a:32).

Fifthly, the lack of inner-party democracy and the entrenchment of the personality cult around the leader of an opposition party have contributed to the weakness and fragmentation of opposition in a majority of Southern African states. This is more glaringly evident today in Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia. In Lesotho one of the major opposition parties, the Basotho National Party (BNP) has experienced internal leadership squabbles including a split since the death of its founder and leader, Leabua Jonathan. The Malawi Congress Party (MCP) had built such a strong culture of personality cult around the late Kamuzu Banda that without him it faces major leadership problems as an opposition party. Zambia's United National Independence Party (UNIP) without Kenneth Kaunda is unlikely to pose a major threat to the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

Under conditions of the pervasive culture of dominant party system, elections have provided voters with limited menu for choice of national leaders and electoral systems (especially the FPTP) have facilitated prolonged and uninterrupted rule by dominant parties.

Elections and Electoral Systems

Elections constitute one of the most important ingredients of democratic governance. They assure political participation of the citizens in the political system and the determination of the national leadership. Ideally, therefore, elections are supposed to ensure the deepening and consolidation of

democratic governance and political stability. Although multi-party elections are crucial to democratic governance, they, on their own, are not tantamount to or synonymous with democracy. Since the transition from authoritarian rule to democratic governance, "the holding of elections is becoming common practice and a major indicator of political participation by citizens and their political organizations" (SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998: 84). Elections are important to a democratic governance process in more ways than one:

• they help establish a representative government;
• they bestow legitimacy and credibility on the government;
• they assist the process of institutionalizing orderly succession of governments;
• they compel elected representatives to be accountable to voters.

With the exception of Swaziland and the DRC, all SADC countries have institutionalized the practice of regular multi-party general elections for choosing national leaders at central and local government levels. Table 2 depicts the recent record of multi-party elections in Southern Africa. Although the region has done relatively well in the conduct of regular general elections for both the legislature and presidency, the record is abysmally poor in respect of the conduct of local government elections. This suggests a major weakness in the political system; namely the continuing tendency towards centralization of power. Generally, the outcome of elections and the extent to which they add value to democratic governance and political stability are inextricably intertwined with the type of electoral system each country has adopted. Whereas election refers to a process of choosing national leaders, a method that each country uses for elections is referred to as an electoral system. There are many electoral systems throughout the world and there is little consensus as to which is the best with regard to representation, broader participation, democratic governance, stability and legitimacy of rule (Jackson and Jackson, 1997). The two dominant electoral systems in Southern Africa are the First-Past-the-Post or the Single Member Plurality system and the Proportional Representation. Of the 14 SADC states, 7 operate the British style First-Past-the-Post system. These are Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Only Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa have adopted the Proportional Representation system. Mauritius and Seychelles operate a mixture of the First-Past-the-Post and Proportional Representation systems. The principal function of an electoral system is to translate votes cast into parliamentary seats (Matlosa, 2000). There is abundant evidence that with the exception of Angola (1992), Proportional Representation system has helped some countries in the region

to manage their protracted violent conflicts by broadening representation, enhancing participation and entrenching democratic governance. This is surely evident in the political transitions in Namibia (1990), Mozambique (1994) and South Africa (1994).

On the contrary much of violent election-related conflicts have wreaked havoc on most of those states operating the First-Past-the-Post including Lesotho (1998), Zimbabwe (2000) and Tanzania (2000). Kadima concludes:

> the list PR is the most suitable system of representation as far as the fair representation of minorities is concerned. In addition, when well-designed, PR can be effective in nation building efforts, as it tends to encourage political parties to seek votes and membership across communities. This limits the attractiveness of mono-ethnic, racial or religious and prevents the political instability that would result from the *de facto* exclusion of some communities from parliament or government (2003: 43).

The PR has been found to be more inclusive, representative and participative than the FPTP system. The FPTP is more exclusionary and entrenches the hegemony of either one or two dominant parties whilst marginalising smaller parties. In conflict-ridden societies, this system may not help much in the constructive management of conflicts as the Lesotho case has clearly demonstrated. The outcomes of the last elections in Lesotho and Botswana (Tables 2 and 3) illustrate how exclusionist the FPTP system is and this often leads to dissatisfaction and bitterness on the part of losing parties. The system, therefore, tends to exaggerate the electoral dominance of the dominant party effectively leading to one-party parliament. In cases like this, opposition parties usually feel excluded from the political system and where they are not represented in parliament, they then resort to protest politics that further destabilizes the political system and undermine efforts towards democratization.

Conversely, the same system tends to lead to a minority government with a weak mandate to rule a country from less than 50 per cent of the total votes cast in a general election. The 1965 election in Lesotho delivered a minority government of the Basotho National Party (BNP), that ruled the country on the basis of a less than 50 per cent of the total votes cast. The 1999 election in Malawi delivered the UDF government that rules on the basis of less than 50 per cent of parliamentary seats (see Table 1). Where a party rules on the basis of a minority of votes, a major challenge that it faces is a severe legitimacy crisis.

This explains in part why Lesotho has recently undergone a process of electoral reform which led to the adoption of a mixed-member proportionality (MMP) system in 2002 (see Elklit, 2002). The inclusivity of the PR system has also been found to be conducive for enhancing gender equality in politics and increasing participation of women in the legislature. In a recent

Table 2 1998 Lesotho Parliamentary Election Results:
Party Votes Achieved and Seats Won

Party	Votes Achieved	% of Votes	Seats Won	% of Seats
LCD	360 665	60.51	79	98.75
BNP	145 210	24.36	1	1.25
BCP	61 995	10.40	0	0
Others	19 050	3.20	0	0
MFP	9 129	1.53	0	0
TOTAL	**596 049**	**100.00**	**80**	**100.00**

LDC: Lesotho Congress for Democracy; BCP: Basotho Congress Party; BNP: Basotho National Party and
MFP: Marematlou Freedom Party.
Source: Matlosa, 2002

Table 3 1999 Botswana Parliamentary Election Results:
Party Votes Achieved and Seats Won

Party*	Votes Achieved	% of Votes	No. of Seats Won	% of Seats
BDP	192,598	54.34	33	82.50
BNF	87,457	24.64	6	15.00
BCP	40,096	11.31	1	2.50
BAM	15,805	4.46	0	0
Independent Candidates	1,004	0.28	0	0
MELS	22	0.01	0	0
Rejected Ballots	17,481	4.93	-	-
TOTAL	**354,463**	**100.00**	**40**	**100.00**

***BDP**: Botswana Democratic Party: **BNF**: Botswana National Front; **BAM**: Botswana Alliance Movement
and **MELS**: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin Movement of Botswana.
Source: Somolekae, 2002

study, Molokomme argues that although PR, in and of itself, is not a suffi-
cient condition for increased women's participation in the legislature, it has
been a catalyst for this. Table 4 depicts women's participation in parliament
in the SADC region and from this table it is clear that those countries using
the PR system are more advanced than those operating FPTP, in terms of
women participation in the legislature and the Cabinet. In terms of the 1997
SADC Declaration on Gender and Development which aims at enhancing
women's participation in decision making institutions, it is quite clear that

Table 4 Women in Parliament and Cabinet in the SADC Region

Country	No. of Women in Parliament	% of Women in Parliament	% of Women in Cabinet	% of Women Deputy Ministers
Angola	34	15.5	14.3	11.6
Botswana	8	18.0	20.0	50.0
DRC	-	-	-	-
Lesotho	10	10.6	8.3	0
Malawi	18	9.3	9.0	12.9
Mauritius	5	8.0	4.0	-
Mozambique	75	30.0	14.2	12.1
Namibia	19	19.0	14.2	22.7
Seychelles	8	24.0	21.4	-
South Africa	119	29.8	29.6	61.5
Swaziland	7	7.3	13.3	-
Tanzania	61	22.3	13.0	13.0
Zambia	16	10.1	8.3	7.1
Zimbabwe	13	9.0	5.0	28.5

Source: Molokomme. 2000; SAPES/UNDP/SADC. 2000: Kandawasvika-Nhundu. 2001.

a majority of these states still have a long way to go. The main objective of the Declaration is "to ensure the equal representation of women and men in the decision making of SADC member states and SADC structures at all levels and the achievement of at least 30% target of women in political and decision making structures by the year 2005" (cited in Kandawasvika-Nhundu, 2001:3).

Although a majority of regional states have held regular general elections for the legislature, not many have held regular local elections. This suggests that the constitutional and institutional foundations for democratic local government are still weak. Table 5 illustrates the record of local government elections held in the region in comparison to general elections for the legislature.

Democratic Local Government: Decentralisation for Political Participation and Stability

Democratic governance entails empowerment and political participation of the citizens to influence and shape the policy making process at both central and local levels of the political system. Thus the establishment and institutionalisation of democratic local government in Southern Africa is part of the agenda for the wider democratisation process and political stability. Local government denotes a transfer of power and authority to plan, make decisions and manage well-defined functions from central government to lower-tier public institutions. This implies effective decentralization

Table 5 SADC Electoral Systems, Elections and Election Outcome

Country	Electoral System	Latest Gen. Election	Next Gen. Election	Latest LG Election	Next LG Election	% Voter turn-out in Gen. Election
Angola	FPTP	1992	Not known	Not known	Not known	–
Botswana	FPTP	1999	2004	1999	2004	77
DRC	FPTP	1993	Not known	Not known	Not known	–
Lesotho	MMP	2002	2007	Not known	Not known	58
Malawi	FPTP	1999	2004	Not known	Not known	78
Mauritius	FPTP	2000	2005	2000	2005	80
Mozambique	PR	1999	2004	2004	1998	70
Namibia	PR	1999	2004	Not known	Not known	62
Seychelles	Mixed	1999	2004	Not known	Not known	86
South Africa	PR	1999	2004	2000	2005	80
Swaziland	FPTP	1998	2003	Not known	Not known	60
Tanzania	FPTP	2000	2005	Not known	Not known	80
Zambia	FPTP	1996	2001	1996	2001	53
Zimbabwe	FPTP	2000	2005	1996	2001	50

of state power from central government to local authorities. This is essential for democratisation because "effective and participatory governance requires that government structures be brought closer to the general population and that local institutions become channels through which people can both participate, contribute their own resources for development and express their needs to the central authority" (SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998: 93).

While centralization of state power and authority has been the hallmark of the authoritarian era of the one-party political culture, the current era of democratic governance must be premised upon decentralization. Mawhood defines the term decentralization in strictly political sense "implying structures of administration whose power base is, to some extent, not central but local; in which decision-making is partly based on the knowledge and desires of the local populations and not only on those of the central ruling elite. The institutions set up to express this organising principle are nearly always called local government or local self-government" (1987: 10).

The four important variants of decentralization are (a) deconcentration (b) devolution (c) delegation and (d) privatisation. Whereas deconcentration refers to the transfer of authority (not power) and workload from central to lower-tier levels (Makumbe, 1998), devolution entails a transfer of both authority and power from the center to statutory, autonomous local authorities. Delegation simply entails a horizontal and vertical distribution of decision-making authority to local, and regional agents of central government.

Privatisation denotes the transfer of functions, authority, power and management of a public enterprise to individuals or other privately owned companies.

Much of the current efforts towards establishing and institutionalizing democratic local government have yielded little result mainly because the central state has opted for deconcentration, delegation and privatization rather than devolution. Besides, contradictions and conflicts between modern and traditional institutions of governance loom larger at the local level with negative impact on democratic governance and political stability. This is more so in the two kingdoms of Lesotho and Swaziland, but the same phenomenon has affected South Africa's local government elections of 2000. Southern African states have not yet striven towards devolution as a preferred mode of institutionalizing democratic local government in part due to conflicts and mutual suspicion between the modern and traditional elite and in part also due to reluctance to accord local authority the required relative autonomy from central government.

Democracy and the democratisation process are not merely confined to the political realm of social organisation. Both extend to the economic sphere too in terms of how the economy of a country is managed, the level of participation of various forces and the degree of empowerment of the citizens through ownership and control of the key factors of production. Thus economic governance is crucial too for assuring and deepening democracy and maintaining the stability of the political system. It is to this that we now turn.

Economic Governance

In the immediate aftermath of political independence, economic nationalism constituted the hallmark of economic governance in Southern Africa. Although the state-centric management of the economy had its own weaknesses, it was extremely helpful in the development and expansion of the social welfare sector, especially education, health employment, housing, etc., for the benefit of the majority of the populations which had been economically marginalized by years of colonial economic neglect. State intervention in economic production was also a catalyst for the emergence of the African middle class (domestic capital) which although still remains weak is crucial for sustainable management of the economy. It is highly risky to leave economic management totally to the vagaries of market forces and in the hands of highly mobile foreign capital. This is the major challenge posed by economic adjustment and globalisation for economic governance in Southern Africa. Both economic adjustment adopted by most states since the 1980s and the current process of globalisation have weakened the state and reversed drastically the social welfare gains of the

1960s and 1970s (SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 1998; Wanyande 1998b). After much criticism of its neo-liberal model of economic governance that had emphasized the importance of marketisation and privatisation over statism and nationalization, the World Bank has recently begun to recognise the importance of state's role in the economy (World Bank 1997). An appropriate model for economic governance in Southern Africa must conceive of state and markets as complementary agents in economic production and exchange. More importantly, state-market interaction in the process of economic governance must improve people's livelihoods. To this end economic governance must be premised upon Sustainable Human Development (SHD) if democracy and stability is to be ensured and the social livelihoods of people improved. In other words, Southern African states must deliberately steer their economic governance models away from Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) towards Sustainable Human Development (SHD). Five important components of SHD are that people must be able: (a)to eke out long, creative and healthy lives; (b) to acquire appropriate knowledge to better their lives; (c) to access the necessary resources to meet their basic needs; (d) to eradicate poverty; and (e) to protect and sustain their environment. Table 6 below illustrates the record of Sustainable Human Development index (HDi) in the SADC region:

Table 6 SADC Specific Human Development Index (HDi) and Income Value, 1998

Country	HDi	GDP per Capita (PPP $)	HDI Rank	GDP per Capita (PPP $ rank)
Seychelles	0.808	10 600	1	1
Mauritius	0.782	8 312	2	3
South Africa	0.618	8 488	3	2
Swaziland	0.672	3 816	4	6
Namibia	0.651	5 176	5	5
Botswana	0.613	6 103	6	4
Lesotho	0.583	1 626	7	9
Zimbabwe	0.570	2 669	8	7
DRC	0.440	822	9	10
Zambia	0.429	719	10	12
Tanzania	0.422	480	11	14
Angola	0.419	1 821	12	8
Malawi	0.393	523	13	13
Mozambique	0.350	782	14	11
SADC	**0.538**	**2 663**	–	–

Source: SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 2000: 63

It is widely accepted that the conduct of regular general election is a positive indicator for democratic change and practice. However, it has been observed that democratisation should also extend to economic governance. It is worth noting that both political and economic governance face a major threat in the form of widespread conflicts, especially violent conflict, that have marked the general instability of some states. The next section turns spotlight on this critical issue for democracy and stability.

Conflict and Democratisation

One of the major challenges and threats to the on-going democratisation process in Southern Africa relates to the conflicts of various forms that mark the region's political landscape especially violent conflicts (Ohlson and Stedman, 1994; Adedeji, 1999; Matlosa, 2000). Conflict is part of social change in all societies and as such it is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. Conflicts become destructive and counter-productive once they escalate into violence and belligerents resort to violent means of resolving them. It could be argued, therefore, that the major problem facing the region is not so much that there are conflicts (overt and covert, violent and non-violent), but rather that no effective regional mechanisms have been built for constructive management of the conflicts. Ohlson and Stedman observe that "domestic conflict resolution in Southern Africa generally occurs on an ad hoc basis, in response to crises. Southern Africa's countries, with the exception of Botswana, lack the basic institutions for resolving conflict steadily and preventing conflict from turning violent" (1994: 228). Whereas during the cold war and apartheid, the Southern Africa region was engulfed in violent inter-state conflicts mainly propelled by ideological polarization, the current era is marked by the prevalence of resource-based intra-state conflicts. Our analysis of the root causes of conflict and instability in Southern Africa is influenced more by structuralist perspectives. Major violent conflicts in the region are propelled and driven by (a) contestation over state power (b) distribution of resource, and (c) cleavages based on ideology and social identity. It is within this framework of the triangle of conflict that various scholars (Ohlson and Stedman, 1994; Ohlson, 1993) have identified the following profile/classification of conflicts that have engulfed Southern Africa:

- Conflicts associated with war termination and reconciliation – (Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique and Angola);
- Conflicts over distribution (Angola and DRC);
- Conflicts over political participation (Lesotho, Mozambique, Zimbabwe);
- Conflicts over identity and societal insecurity (in most SADC states especially former settler colonies));
- Armed Conflicts over control of government or territory (Angola and DRC).

These various types of conflicts are not mutually exclusive from each other but are inextricably intertwined. As Ohlson points out "they feed into each other in complex webs of interdependence specific to each state. In their various manifestations all of them also have one thing in common: they concern legitimacy or, more specifically, the loss of popular legitimacy by state apparatuses due to the unwillingness or inability of government to meet expectations of citizens. They all illustrate the tendency towards a weakening of the state relative to other actors" (Ohlson, 1993: 247).

The most costly and complex of these violent conflicts are found in Angola and the DRC with dire consequences for democratisation. Sporadic violent conflicts have also occurred in Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, all linked to their recent elections. In the case of Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana intervened militarily to quell the violent conflict in 1998. Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia have undertaken a joint military intervention in support of the Kabila government in the DRC war since 1998. The external military intervention in both Lesotho and the DRC has provoked debate around modalities and mechanisms for security co-operation in the region. This debate has brought to the spotlight the crisis that has so far beset the SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security as a supranational structure for collective management of conflicts and promotion of democratic rule. Although the recent SADC Summit in Windhoek did not discuss the way forward for the SADC Organ following bitter disagreements over its mandate between South Africa and Zimbabwe, SADC member states are yet to decide the future status and mandate of this structure.

The most important decision of the 2000 SADC Summit in Windhoek regarding the SADC Organ revolved around the following:
- A unanimous decision that the organ be subsumed under the SADC Summit and answerable to the Chairperson of the Summit.
- Selection of the Chairperson of the Organ on an annual and troika basis.
- The current Chairperson of the Organ (President of Zimbabwe) will hold the position until August 2001 when the SADC Summit is held in Malawi.
- A draft protocol on Security will be drafted to lay out the institutional and procedural framework for the organ and presented during 2001 Summit.

As has already been argued earlier, a majority of States operating the Proportional Representation electoral system have held elections under a political condition marked by stability while those that have adopted the FPTP have experienced considerable instability.

Conclusion

The political transition in Southern Africa since the 1990s in particular, has steered the regional states towards democratic governance. The mono-party rule of the 1960s up to the 1980s has been jettisoned in most of the SADC

states. Although these are positive developments for enhancing political participation, democratic culture and political stability, controversy still surrounds the relevance, form and content of the democratic model that most regional states have adopted. To what extent is western liberal democracy a sufficient political model for enhancing political participation, deepening democratic culture and ensuring political stability in Southern Africa? Although this system has ensured regular elections thus encouraging some amount of political participation, liberal democracy is evidently insufficient for the kind of democratic culture and practice that the SADC region needs. As Ake aptly observes in a liberal type of electoral democracy, "more often than not, people are voting without choosing" (1996: 137). The minimal representation provided by liberal democracy and the exclusionary tendencies of the dominant FPTP electoral system have had limited impact in containing conflicts and ensuring stability in a majority of countries.

A number of scholars have argued that Africa in general and Southern Africa specifically require more than liberal democracy and to this end have pointed out possible political dividend that could be ripped if these states adopted social democracy (Ake, 1996; Ake, 2000; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2002) For Ake, Africa "requires somewhat more than the crude variety of liberal democracy that is being foisted on it, and even more than the impoverished liberal democracy that prevails in the industrialized countries" (1996: 129). The Southern African region will need to develop its democratisation programme beyond liberal democracy in order to enhance political stability and participation of its publics in the governance process. Profound constitutional reforms are required in order to strive towards some form of developmental/social democracy in the region and efforts made so far by Namibia and South Africa in this direction (Good, 1991) are encouraging. A number of scholars (Ake 1996; Olukoshi 1998; Ake, 2000; Tsie, 2002; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2002) are agreed that developmental/social democracy will serve Africa well in its current democratisation efforts. This will require a strong state and a vibrant and resilient civil society as well as fairly controlled markets. According to Ake, the democracy suitable for Africa has to assume the following characteristics:

- A democracy in which people have some real decision-making power over and above the formal consent of electoral choice (powerful legislature, democratic local government, etc.).
- A social democracy that places emphasis on concrete political, social and economic rights as opposed to emphasis on political rights by liberalists.
- A democracy that puts as much emphasis on collective rights as it does on individual rights.
- A democracy of incorporation and power sharing which ensures as much, participation inclusivity and representativity as possible (1996: 132).

In a nutshell, the pre-requisites for democratic governance and political stability in Southern Africa include:
- a strong state;
- vibrant competition among parties;
- vibrant and resilient civil society;
- Strong endegenous entrepreneurial class with effective control over economic governance;
- controlled markets for private sector operations;
- regional integration that transcends economic cooperation and strives toward political cooperation too (Ohlson, and Stedman, 1994; SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 2000).

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