STRUCTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL HURDLES TO OPPOSITION PARTY SUCCESS IN NAMIBIA: THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC DILEMMAS AND POLITICAL RHETORIC

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by

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acronyms and Names

ANC	African National Congress, the liberation movement-turned ruling party in South Africa.
APP	All People's Party, breakaway from CoD led by Ignatius Shixwameni and based in the Kavango regions
CoD	Congress of Democrats. Formed in 1999 and became the largest opposition after winning 10 percent of the vote.
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo.
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance. The first major opposition, received support from South Africa.
Frelimo	Mozambican liberation movement that, in power since independence.
Geingob, Hage	Namibia's third President, elected to the office in November 2014. The first President from a minority group.
Hamutenya, Hidipo	Founding President of the RDP, the most prominent politician to leave Swapo for another party.
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research, an independent Namibian think tank.
MP	Member of Parliament.
NA	National Assembly (of Namibia).
NEFF	Namibia Economic Freedom Fighters, newcomers in 2014
NUDO	National Unity Democratic Organisation. Broke away from the DTA in 2003, and relies heavily on support from the Herero ethnic group.
Nujoma, Sam	First President of Namibia. Led Swapo in Exile and retired after three terms in power.
Pohamba, Hifikepunye	Second Namibian President, in power during the collapse of CoD and the rise of RDP.
PR	Proportional Representation, an electoral system where parliamentary seats are determined by the overall national vote of the party.
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), ruled Mexico through most of the 20th century.
RDP	Rally for Democracy and Progress. Came to prominence around the 2009 elections, in which it succeeded the CoD as the official opposition.
RP	Republican Party, traditionally draws its support from the white electorate.
SWAPO	The ruling party of Namibia which has been in power since independence.
Ulenga, Ben	Founding President of CoD, former Swapo High Commissioner to the U.K.
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front. Former liberation movement that has ruled Zimbabwe since independence in 1980

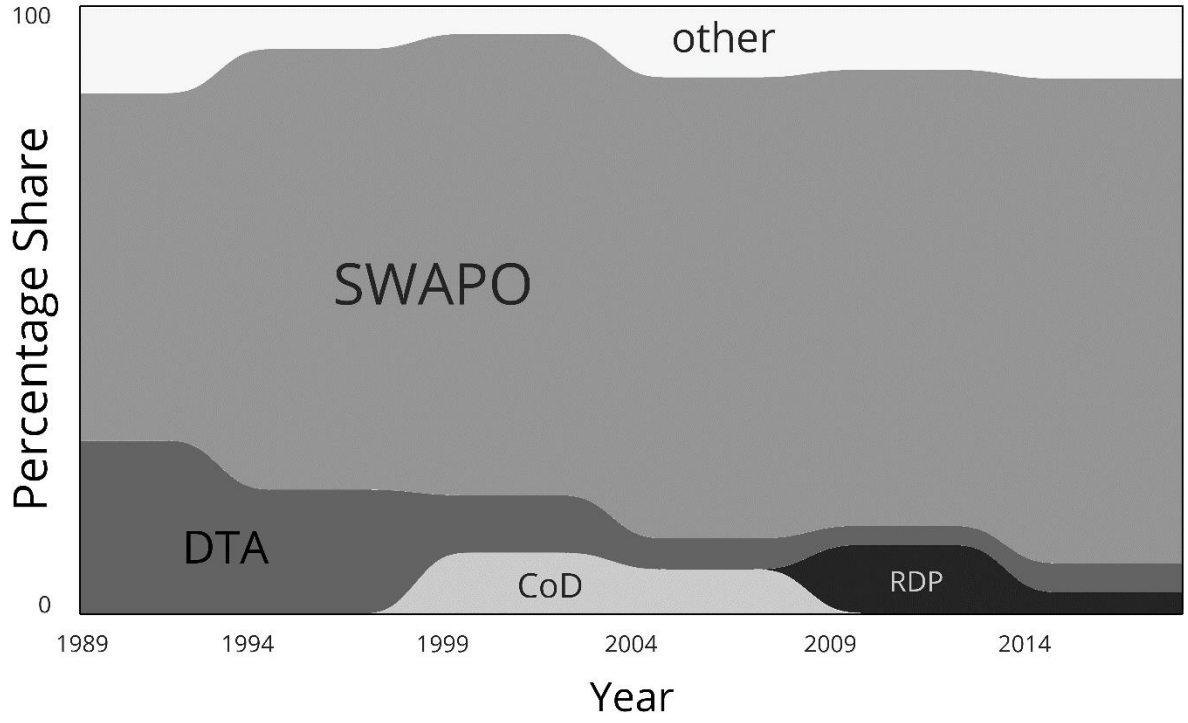
Prelude: A Brief Overview of Electoral Politics in Namibia

The ruling party since independence in 1990, Swapo, dominates politics in Namibia.[1] It is the only Namibian party that is what by Gunther and Diamond (2003) call a *mass-based nationalist* party, characterised by "mass-membership bases, extensive party organizations and collaboration with ancillary secondary groups" such as unions (Gunther and Diamond 2003, 181). The ruling party has been surrounded by a flock of small parties, most of which pick up one or two seats in parliament at best and appeal to highly concentrated support bases.

There is, however, another subset of opposition parties. Over the years, three larger opposition parties have tried to mount a national challenge to Swapo. Where these 'second parties' (Rakner and van de Walle 2009, 207) – the DTA, the RDP and the CoD successively – fit in is unclear. They appear to aim at building national support and seriously challenging Swapo. While several authors argue that these parties have drawn much of their support from one ethnic group, the picture is in fact more complex. For example, Cooper writes that the CoD and RDP "mobilize electoral support around ethnic identity" (Cooper 2014, 127), but also that they both managed to attract white support (Cooper 2014, 118) in addition to their bases. (More on this in Chapter 4). Despite winning more votes than the smaller groups discussed above, they have so far failed to trouble Swapo. As figure 1 shows, since independence they have mostly taken voters from one another without making inroads into Swapo's support.

[1] The South West African People's Organisation was formed in 1960 to fight against South African colonialism, growing out of the Ovamboland People's Organisation. In 1997, the organisation's name changed to simply Swapo, reflecting the change in the country's name from colonial 'South West Africa' to postcolonial 'Namibia.' In this thesis, SWAPO will be used to refer to the party before 1997, and Swapo to describe it afterward.

Figure 1: Vote Share across Time



The first free elections of Namibia's history occurred in November 1989. United Nations resolution 435, which brought about independence, provided for the election of a constituent assembly under UN supervision (Tötemeyer 1996, 81). The euphoria of independence resulted in a very high turnout figure, reportedly a world record at the time (Hopwood 2007, 39).[2] SWAPO carried the election, with 57.3 per cent of the vote, followed by the DTA with 28.6 per cent (Wallace 2011, 306). DTA had been part of South-African efforts to create an internal administration without Swapo pre-independence, and received heavy funding from the apartheid government, which helped explain its strong performance (Hopwood 2007, 57) Five other parties picked up a combined ten seats, though even more groups contested the election (Tötemeyer, Wehmhörner, and Weiland 1996, 209). The constituent assembly elected Sam Nujoma as president, and swiftly drafted the constitution, with SWAPO – having failed to

[2] The exact number is disputed: Hopwood has it at 97 percent (2007, 39) and Tötemeyer at 96 percent (1996, 81) – either way, an impressive achievement.

achieve a two-thirds majority – making several compromises to gain the support of the other parties in drawing up the document (Wallace 2011, 307).

In the 1994 National Assembly election, SWAPO greatly increased its share of the vote. The party won 72.72 percent of the vote and thus crossed the two-thirds threshold, a share which it has since comfortably maintained. The DTA, now without the support of the South African government, was reduced to 20.45 percent, while this time only three other parties gained enough votes to gain at least a seat (ECN 1994). Altogether, turnout stood at 76 percent of the registered population – greatly reduced from the inaugural election, but still very respectable (Hopwood 2007, 42).

In 1999, a potentially viable new opposition emerged for the first time. The DTA, despite its strong showing in the first election, had been weighed down by its association with the apartheid government. In late 1998 Swapo member Ben Ulenga resigned his post as high commissioner to the U.K. and formed the Congress of Democrats (CoD) with a handful of other relatively well-known Swapo members. They were motivated by SWAPO's decision to amend the constitution to allow a third term for Nujoma, the unilateral decision by Nujoma to involve Namibia in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the mistreatment of former combatants (Hopwood 2007, 52). Perhaps because they saw the CoD as more of a threat than they had the DTA, Swapo responded with excessive rhetoric. Hence, at least one observer said "the election was free but not completely fair due to intimidation and hate speech on the campaign trail" (Hopwood 2007, 40). Despite only being formed in May of that year, the CoD caught on immediately, winning 9.94 percent of the vote. Its success came at the cost of the DTA, whose support halved, to just below ten percent (9.48), while Swapo consolidated its hold on power with a tally of 76.15 percent. CoD only missed out on the status of the official opposition because Swapo brokered a deal between the DTA and UDF (Hopwood 2007)

In 2004, little changed. Perhaps the most notable development was that Nujoma retired after three terms as promised, with Hifikepunye Pohamba taking over as the Swapo candidate. CoD gained a few thousand votes more than in 1999, but actually received a lower percentage (7.29) and therefore fewer seats in parliament due to the increased turnout, which stood at 85 percent (ECN 2004). Their status as the official opposition went uncontested this time around, as the DTA's support had dwindled to below five percent – a result of two of its constituent parties, NUDO and RP, splitting off to contest the elections independently. Meanwhile, Swapo's dominance had become certain, and the ruling party once more garnered 76 percent of the total.

The period between the 2004 and 2009 elections proved eventful. First, the CoD was rocked by internal strife. At an extraordinary party congress in the southern town of Keetmanshoop in May 2007, hundreds of delegates staged a walk-out led by senior party members – among them parliamentarian Nora Schimming-Chase and prominent leader Ignatius Shixwameni (Weidlich 2007a). The protesting delegates claimed Ulenga's faction had rigged the presidential election and claimed that they were the authentic CoD party. The factions took each other to court in a costly proceeding, and the party never recovered from the upheaval.

Soon afterward a new split-off from Swapo set its sights on becoming the first opponent to trouble the ruling party. This time the leader was of even higher calibre than Ulenga: Hidipo Hamutenya had lost out against Hifikepunye Pohamba in the race to succeed Sam Nujoma, and he took several prominent supporters with him to form the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP). Many observers felt that RDP could trouble Swapo, seeing as it boasted several high-profile veterans of the liberation struggle, many of whom were Aawambo and could thus in theory gain support in the central north, Swapo's traditional stronghold which tends to provide more than half the party's votes. The ruling party seemed to agree, and the run-up to the 2009 election was unusually tense, with RDP supporters claiming harassment and even outright violence.

What happened in 1999 repeated itself, now with different actors. RDP won 11.16 percent of the vote. While some share of the vote came from the central north, where it performed better than any other opposition party had done before, the RDP still lost heavily in all constituencies in the region (ECN 2009). It appeared that most of its vote had come at the expense of the CoD, whose intra-party conflict shattered its support and left it with less than one percent of the vote. Meanwhile, the DTA continued to bleed supporters, and received only three percent of the vote. Swapo's dominance remained a constant – while support dropped by 20,000 votes, the party was more than comfortable with a return of 74.29 percent of the tally (ECN 2009).

2014 seemed like a good point in time to challenge Swapo, as the party had to contend with several stories that could turn off voters. Swapo pushed through of a long list of constitutional amendments which irked many – especially as several provisions were seen to benefit the party. Parliamentary seats increased from 72 to 96, which critics said was a way of ensuring fewer members of the old guard would lose out after the Swapo-internal gender quota pushed them further down the party list (O'Riordan 2014). The amendments also created the office of the Vice-President. Observers thought this would serve to clarify succession within the party, and even the official explanation noted that the office could be used to balance out the leadership in ethnic terms (!Gaeb 2014).

Despite these factors, the opposition failed to make a dent. In fact, 2014 saw a record result for Swapo, while the opposition suffered further. RDP lost a significant chunk of its support and finished with 3.51 percent. The DTA managed to halt its slide and regained some votes, bringing it back to the same levels of support it had enjoyed around 2004, with 4.8 percent. In the meantime, Swapo finished at a new high of 80.01 percent. Once more, any changes in the results for opposition parties seemed to come from the same pool of voters. None could threaten Swapo.

Introduction

In the winter of 2013, one year before Namibia's sixth democratic election, a former Swapo minister stood up to speak to fellow party members at a social evening organised by the ruling party. During his remarks, he uttered a phrase which in other countries might seem like a malicious statement of intent, but here just seemed to reflect reality. Addressing the attendees, he declared that "Swapo will rule Namibia forever; it will only die if Namibia is buried. That should be made clear to everyone, especially those who might think that maybe 25 years from now another party will take over" (Namibian Sun 2013). Few observers would disagree with this insight. Since the first election, where the liberation movement-turned party of independence, Swapo, won by a convincing margin, the party has ruled Namibia without ever losing a significant share of its votes.

Namibia's experience, with one party retaining dominance while others struggle to make inroads, is not unique in the region. While opposition parties have managed to dislodge the incumbent in some states (such as Ghana, Zambia, or Nigeria), the fact remains that incumbents rarely have to sweat: between 1990 and 2009, fewer than a quarter of countries on the continent saw changes in leadership (Nic Cheeseman 2010, 140). In Namibia, at least on the surface, there are reasons to believe that the opposition should do well. The country is generally counted as one of the more democratic countries in the region, is characterised by a robust and independent media and many civil society groups, and has played host to six national elections, all free and fair. While Swapo has a solid track record, maintaining a steady economic growth and continuous expansion of welfare services, Namibia remains one of the most unequal countries in the world and its aspiring middle class sees its hopes constrained by steep increases in the price of living. Given this, argues the director of an independent Namibian think tank, "there is scope for some party to try and really push Swapo" (Hopwood Interview).

The puzzle of opposition party weakness formed the starting point of inquiry for this thesis. Specifically, I ask: why have Namibian opposition parties failed to mount an effective challenge to Swapo's hegemony? To clarify: The main focus is not on why the ruling party gained Namibians' support in the first place (though that will be addressed), the question is why the opposition has not been able to undermine this popularity. Therefore, in addition to addressing Swapo, I will focus in particular on two opposition parties, the RDP and CoD, two parties which – unlike smaller parties happy with gaining a seat or two in parliament – have genuinely tried to build national movements and pose a real challenge to Swapo (see chapter 4). Still, even they have struggled to win more than ten percent of votes. The literature has established that dominance by one party is widespread in the African context. This study delves further into the issue to look at some of the mechanisms of how and why this is so.

The reasons for the poor performance of opposition parties, according to the literature, tend to revolve around the same issues: parties are under-resourced, and rather than representing mass-based movements they are usually based on narrow appeals, often merely serving as vehicles for ambitious individuals to gain parliamentary seats (cf Carothers 2006; Manning 2005). This thesis argues that while these factors play a role, they do not by themselves explain parties' poor performance. Rather, we need to consider the effect of Swapo's dominance – both in the high proportion of votes it wins and regarding its power to shape political discourse – on politics. The central idea of the thesis is that the overwhelming margins commanded by Swapo are not simply a result of electoral politics but feed back into politics. Dominance engenders dominance, power begets power.

This might sound obvious, but is not always so. The literature notes that incumbency is a factor in opposition weakness in the region, but too seldom investigates the mechanisms of how dominance – not just victory, but victory by large margins – affects politics. The most persistent explanation for opposition weakness, that incumbency bestows a financial advantage to the

ruling party and allows it to construct patronage networks, only partially satisfies in the Namibian context. Rather, I argue that *strategic dilemmas* of various sorts, as well as a powerful deployment of historical rhetoric by the ruling party, play a role. To understand strategic dilemmas, I draw a strong influence from Beatriz Magaloni, whose book *Voting for Autocracy* provides the first comprehensive theory of how dominant regimes sustain their rule in electoral autocracies. Magaloni's central insight is that dominance at the polls skews the political field, as opposition parties are constrained by strategic dilemmas of various kinds. These arise partly because voters do not have perfect information. Parties struggle to find momentum because voters think they will not win anyways and thus will not switch their vote around – even if, in reality, a far greater number of people *would* support the opposition if they knew their vote would count. Opposition parties struggle to coordinate because they do not know that they can win if they do so. At the same time, the ruling party encourages this dynamic by rewarding supporters and punishing defectors, making sure that supporters stay in line. The rulers will also try to run up high margins in elections as a signalling device to voters, letting them know that the opposition indeed has no chance. Thus the fact that one party wins by high margins helps ensure this stays so, by making voters believe there is no other viable political home and preventing the formation of broad opposing coalitions.

We can learn a lot by applying this approach to Namibia. Focusing on the strategic dilemmas faced by parties and voters, we can see that resources do not matter as much as the literature presumes. Opposition parties have had success without money and stagnation with it; opposition voters are swayed by the peculiar dynamics of a dominant state, as chapter 3 demonstrates. But I go beyond Magaloni's standard theory, and argue that we need to recognise the special character of liberation societies, where the incumbent draws from a rich reservoir of historical legitimacy. This interacts with strategic dilemmas and other forms of dominance to create a political field in which the opposition struggles greatly to make inroads. In chapter 4, I argue that extreme dominance can also give the incumbent the opportunity to shape the political

discourse to their advantage. This insight has so far been lacking from the strategic dilemma literature.

Chapter Outline

The remainder of this chapter considers the methodology of this study. The next chapter provides a review of the literature and outlines the theoretical framework of this thesis. It details how most of the literature has repeated the same few arguments about how dominance works – the incumbent stays in power either through outright fraud, or through the resource benefits derived from incumbency. In contrast, I draw on literature about strategic dilemmas to understand the difficult set of incentives faced by voters and parties, as well as literature on history-telling in liberation societies which argues that incumbents promote certain visions of history and nationhood that underline their legitimacy and discourage dissent.

The following chapter looks at the nature of the Namibian state. Most scholars dealing with strategic dilemmas specifically restrict their insights to electoral autocracies, making a concerted effort to distinguish them from democracies where one party happens to win by large margins. Chapter 2 tries to determine on which side of this classification Namibia falls. I argue that in many respects, there is enough ambiguity about the Namibian case that political actors could believe it is an electoral autocracy. Regardless of how we eventually classify the regime, for the strategic dilemma literature the beliefs of agents are key: if people think their party *cannot* win, this will shape their behaviour. This belief is present in Namibia, and so I argue that insights from this literature can be applied in this case. The chapter also shows that Swapo certainly acts like the incumbents described in the strategic dilemma literature, using a patronage network to discourage defections and deliberately running up high margins at elections as a signal of invincibility to voters. The latter shows the interaction between strategic dilemmas and liberation politics: winning by high margins not only discourages voters because it seems the opposition

has no chance, it also enhances Swapo's legitimacy by bolstering its historically-rooted claims of representing the whole nation.

Chapter 3 looks at how opposition voters and parties suffer from the dilemmas described by Magaloni and other related scholars. It first deals with the suggestion of the literature that parties' weakness is due to their own incompetence, lack of resources, and lack of links to grassroots constituencies. While this plays a role, the chapter also argues that it is an incomplete explanation of the dynamics of Namibian politics, as coordination dilemmas play a role too. Parties have not formed the coalitions they say they want to, because Swapo's dominance makes it unlikely for a coalition to have short-term benefits, and so the opposition sees few incentives to undergo the difficult process of negotiating a merger that might only pay off in the long run. Voters are affected too: I argue there is be a contingent of voters that might consider voting for the opposition, but are discouraged by Swapo's dominance. Another bloc of voters switches parties at short notice. I argue that both behaviours arise from the same coordination dilemma: voters are willing to vote for the opposition, but only if a challenger has a chance of success. Given limited information about a party's success, some risk the switch and others stay put. Notably, new parties attract voters because of their leaders' links to the liberation struggle: opposition-inclined voters believe these leaders can attract other voters and thus the party builds momentum. This is another example of Namibia's political discourse affecting strategic dilemmas.

While Magaloni and her colleagues are very useful in channelling our attention towards strategic dilemmas faced by voters and parties, their framework misses out on other aspects of political competition. Chapter 4 examines in more the role of political discourse touched upon in previous chapters. Again, Swapo's dominance plays a role as it has enabled the party to set the terms of political debate, establishing a frame for politics that is very useful in furthering the party's dominance. Swapo derives much of its legitimacy from its role in the liberation struggle.

But its dominance has allowed it to in turn make all politics about the struggle, ensuring a cycle of legitimation and support. Similarly, the party's focus on a nationalism where all ethnicities are accommodated means that opposition parties try to emphasise a paint-by numbers diversity within their own ranks, but without having the resources to actually accommodate everyone. This has led to opposition parties stretching themselves thin, and in the case of the CoD was a major factor in the tensions that broke the party apart. Thus chapter 4 shows that in Namibian politics, ideas matter. Finally, I conclude by providing an overview of the argument and suggesting avenues for further research.

Methodology

Approach

This study used semi-structured interviews to gather information on the performance of parties in Namibian politics. Interviews are useful because – as part of the tradition of qualitative research – they enable the gathering of "rich descriptions of the social world" (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, 6). Semi-structured interview questions were the appropriate form of interview to use: my research was not completely inductive because I had an idea of the type of questions I wanted answered, but I wanted to avoid the rigidity of a pre-set questionnaire. The semi-structured format allowed me to pursue new avenues of inquiry opened up by my interviewees' responses while giving me enough of a framework to ensure that conversations never became completely derailed. This ended up being useful: the study started off with a more narrow focus, looking at how the tendency of some opposition voters to "swing" their vote from party had influenced electoral politics. However, over the course of the research, the focus shifted: what began as the primary focus is now part of a broader work (see chapter 3 for a discussion of swing voting). The semi-structured format allowed me to adapt my questions as interviews progressed and helped refocus my research question.

My subjects were opposition party members, as well as journalists and observers with knowledge of the subject (a full list can be found at the end of the thesis). I interviewed several party operatives from CoD, DTA, and RDP, ranging from a party leader down to a 'foot soldier'. Namibian politics, as in many places, is more male than female. Four of my twelve interviewees were women – incidentally, a proportion very similar to that of women in parliament at the time (24 percent, IPPR 2013a). To find my sources, I used a variety of methods. I identified journalists knowledgeable on elections by seeing which staff members of newspapers focused on politics. I contacted parties, asking them to provide names and numbers of people tasked with electoral strategy. Finally, I asked all my interviewees for recommendations on whom to talk to. One question is whether more interviews could have provided more information. While it was never difficult to get an agreement to interview, frequent rescheduling and unpredictable interview length meant I was wary of scheduling too many interviews ahead of time out of fear of clashes. In retrospect, I erred too much on the side of caution and could have scheduled more interviews.

Political operators make for very useful sources, but they are a two-edged sword. By the nature of their position, they have access to information that is impossible to acquire otherwise; and their deep understanding of elections will greatly contribute to our understanding of the issue. However, their position also presents one of the greatest challenges of this project. Political actors want to present themselves and their party in the best light. There is a danger that I talked to a "particular section of local opinion" (Pratt and Loizos 1992, 88). A key challenge was to not overly rely on certain key informants, but to attempt to corroborate the information given. With the CoD, the party's situation had an in-built mechanism for this problem: the party had split a few years ago, and so I made sure to talk to people on both sides of the split. On some issues, even they agreed (e.g. the regional politics that led to the split in chapter 4), making the claims I make in regards to those matters very credible.

For other parties' claims, I cross-checked information given with that from other sources (Pratt and Loizos 1992, 80). For this, I used other interviews – particularly with journalists and observers, who never seemed to hold back criticism of the opposition or the ruling party– and, when relevant, newspaper reports. Every day, I consulted three newspapers: *The Namibian, Namibian Sun,* and *New Era.* In addition, I regularly bought the weekly *Observer. The Namibian* and *Observer* are private newspapers with a history of muckraking. *The Namibian*, in particular, has a sterling reputation for hard-hitting journalism: the paper drew the ire of the apartheid government for supporting independence, and then angered the Swapo government by criticising corruption and mismanagement, to the point where the party instituted a ban on buying the paper with government funds (Freedom House 2014). Still, I found it useful to view issues from several perspectives. *New Era* is state-owned, though it has editorial independence and does report even on internal issues with the ruling party. Nevertheless, its tone tends to be kinder toward Swapo. Finally, *Sun* can have a tabloid feel, but sometimes reports more on party-internal issues than other papers. Its owner, Namibia Media Holdings, once belonged to DTA leader Henk Mudge, but is now jointly owned by a South African conglomerate and a local firm (Wagner n.d., 56).[3] Consulting all three papers was important as, despite often reporting the same content, the tone of coverage could diverge (see figure 2 for a comparison of headlines after Swapo's disputed electoral congress).

[3] In fact, Democratic Media Holdings, as it was then called, served as the conduit for South African funds funnelled towards DTA's pre-independence election campaign (Boer 2004, 10)

Figure 2: Comparison of Headlines

Note: Swapo-friendly New Era *on the left, well-respected* Namibian *central, and sensationalistic* SUN *on the right*

The location of interviews has the potential to strongly affect the atmosphere and the quality of information given (Gorden 1998, 47). I offered all of my respondents their choice of location – realising that this would put them at ease, but also acknowledging the reality that given the social status of some my interviewees and the fact that I was asking them a favour I would have to accommodate their preferences in any case. I was acute of the power imbalance at the outset, as I sometimes felt my interviewees talked down to me as if I did not understand basic Namibian politics. Especially in the light of this dynamic, it was difficult to manage the tension between seeking to establish a rapport and maintaining the distance needed to maintain as much impartiality as possible, and to avoid becoming a spokesperson for a particular person or faction (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, 78). One of the weaknesses of this thesis is that I could have asked tougher questions, but seldom felt comfortable enough to do so, given the combination of my interviewees' position of power over me and my subconscious desire to get along. As for retaining a critical distance to what they were saying, this too is a challenge, as I grew to personally like a few of my interviewees and would be reluctant to criticise them harshly.

The same reluctance applies to criticism of Swapo. This is a crucial factor because a whole chapter of this thesis deals with whether Namibia should be classified as an electoral autocracy or a democracy, with Swapo's conduct and attitude naturally forming a key part of the

discussion. After several interviewees told me that very few people were willing to criticise Swapo, I felt myself becoming more careful – despite the fact that I do not believe I would suffer any negative consequences because I criticised the party. There is another, stronger reason I would be wary to classify Namibia negatively. As a Namibian abroad, I am acutely aware of the negative stereotypes surrounding African politics. Most people I meet have barely heard of the country; even those that have would associate it with it the well-worn tropes that have become irrevocably attached to all nations on the continent: dysfunction, autocracy, violence, and so on. I am no jingoist, but I cannot deny that the thought of calling my country – the place in which I have grown up and enjoyed a peaceful, free life – anything less than a democracy, in a document to be read by foreigners no less, fills me with dread.

This reluctance to harshly criticise opposition parties, whose representatives I grew to like, and Swapo, whose evaluation is linked to how the nation as a whole is viewed, remained in constant tension with my desire not to mince words. There is no simple fix for this issue; I hope that the serious reflection I have done resulted in the right balance. I have tried to give all actors the benefit of the doubt when reasonable, but to be direct in reporting their failures. I believe chapters 2 and 3 respectively demonstrate that I can be critical of the ruling party and opposition when needed, and was able to put aside my reluctance to be too critical.

My identity could have also affected the responses I received, in two ways. As a white Namibian, I already hold a peculiar status in Namibian society. White Namibians mostly withdrew from politics at independence; there is no discrimination against whites but it would be fair to say that there is some (historically highly justified) scepticism of whites' motives at times. Most of my respondents were not white, so one might be concerned that this would harm my rapport with them. Overall, however, I do not think my whiteness was much of a problem, as there is a lot more integration among the elites than in the nation in general. In fact, I do not know that all interviewees saw me as a Namibian. I introduced myself as an Oxford researcher

(fully aware that this institution's name opens doors for researchers), and a few respondents seemed surprised when it transpired I was a citizen myself. The identity I emphasised more strongly, as a researcher, is more likely to have caused them to present a certain image. Opposition party representatives would certainly have tried even more to present a good image of their operation, lest someone write something negative about them. To my advantage, there was a natural corrective to my interviews just a few months after they occurred, namely the election. While all parties had claimed to be organising effectively, the election results gave a good indication of the claims they had made regarding followership, for example.

All interviews were recorded with explicit written consent from my respondents. Interviews were transcribed in the field – usually within a week or two – and coded upon return to Oxford using Nvivo, as using the software made it easier to find corroborating statements and triangulating evidence. Audio, transcript, and Nvivo files were stored in a password-protected folder on a UK-based server. Two respondent asked me to have part of their interviews off the record; those sections of their transcripts were stored in separate files with no identifier whatsoever.

At certain points in this thesis (see chapter 3), I use survey data to illuminate some characteristics of the electorate. The data for this was drawn from the renowned Afrobarometer survey. The survey is conducted every few years, and asks a random sample of 1,200 respondents a variety of questions, many of which concern governance and democracy. I combined two rounds of the survey – from 2008 and 2012 – to increase the sample size on the question about whether voters feared violence. On other questions, where recent timing is more important, I used the most recent round.

Further Methodological Concerns

My study has a particular focus in that I never conducted in-depth with voters, only with party representatives. This is mostly due to the fact that I was interested in parties, not voters.

However, at times I seek to make claims about voting behaviour in Namibia. My concern was that any opposition voters I interviewed would not be representative of a national sample, especially as I was tied to the capital. In any political environment, but especially one with such a dominant majority, it will be difficult to find people willing to talk openly about their vote – attracting subjects through advertisements would not be feasible. Any potential respondents I would know would fall into a very particular demographic category – namely elite, highly educated voters. I doubt they represent the general profile of opposition voters in Namibia. Any claims I make about voters thus rely on secondary literature and prior survey data.

Another concern is that my interviewees represent the elite perspective on parties, given that I mostly interviewed relatively high-ranking party members around the capital (though I did not do so exclusively). Contacting people in more rural areas was not feasible for reasons of both language (as I only speak English, and this might not be enough outside the cities) and a lack of finances (for transport and translators). That said, Namibian parties tend to be highly centralised (Cooper 2014, 119), so I am reasonably certain that this focus did not lead to major omissions in my analysis.

Finally, I never spoke to representatives of the ruling party. My initial research question was very heavily focused on the opposition specifically and how they mobilise, but even then I should have done at least some exploratory interviews. I made the decision not to interview Swapo because I suspected that, especially so close to an election, the party would be wary of speaking to a researcher, as opposed to opposition parties who are looking to spread their message. Still, I should have tried, and this remains a shortcoming.

Ethical Considerations

Interviews are rife with potential ethical pitfalls. To a certain extent many of these will be assuaged by the fact that my interviewees form part of a social and intellectual elite. They are not vulnerable due to their position in society, and are capable of representing and asserting their

own interests. This does not negate ethical concerns, however, as power dynamics shift throughout the research process from the interview to writing up (Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, and Grace 1996). Bryman points out that to a certain extent, consent can never be fully informed (Bryman 2012, 139), as it is impossible to give informants all the information they might need to consent. Miller and Bell add that "'consent' should be ongoing and renegotiated between researcher and researched throughout the research process" (Miller and Bell 2002, 53). The relatively high profile of my interviewees also exposes them to great risks, and so ensuring confidentiality was a major concern (Bryman 136). I offered all of my interviewees to speak off the record, but none wanted to make use of this option. In fact, most emphatically wanted to speak on the record – I suspect it is in the nature of opposition politicians to want to spread their message as far as possible. When they opted out of anonymity, I also let them know that they could wish to say certain things off the record but have the rest of the interview on record. Two interviewees made use of this option. Two of my interviewees asked to see a transcript of our interview, but still consented to having their names used. Because they did not respond to me after receiving the transcript, I have anonymised their comments to be on the safe side. Attempting to maintain this anonymity means both keeping records confidential, but also ensuring that anything published is carefully checked to make sure that interviewees are not identifiable, both removing their names and changing personal details unrelated to the research.

Chapter 1. Literature and Theory

Much has been written about the wave of democratisation that swept Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s, ushering in an age of multi-party democracy. Many (cf Nic Cheeseman 2010; Rakner and van de Walle 2009) have also noted that democracy has not brought much turnover: Africa's opposition parties have been strikingly ineffective, winning only a handful of elections in the last few decades. Since 1989, they have only won around a quarter of votes in elections, and claimed less than 20 percent of seats on average (Nicolas van de Walle 2013, 321). The assessment by van de Walle (2013, 321), that parties tend to be "weak and poorly institutionalized" is widely shared in the literature (cf Carothers 2006; Manning 2005). This weakness has been a constant factor, despite the wide range of contexts within which these parties find themselves. What explains this ineffectiveness?

This chapter outlines the body of literature that seeks to explain poor opposition party performance in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some issues crop up persistently: the incumbent enjoys access to greater resources than challengers, while opposition parties often suffer from the fact that they serve as vehicles of individual politicians' ambition rather than representing broad movements. Explanations too often focus on structural factors – resources, the party system, outright fraud – instead of offering a more nuanced account of the agency of all actors. I note that Namibia is a somewhat special case: together with other countries in the region, it shares a particular history of military liberation that affects how politics plays out in the current day. Notably, liberation societies see a strong executive that promotes a history legitimising its rule, and tends to be distrustful of opposition (Dorman 2006).

I then move on to an examination of the literature on *strategic dilemmas*. This literature draws our attention to the effects of extreme dominance by one party on electoral politics. What I have grouped under the term 'strategic dilemma literature' actually contains a range of authors whose work focuses on the incentives different actors – voters, opposition parties, ruling party

operatives – face, and especially how these incentives change when one party enjoys overwhelming support from voters. A lot of this literature uses game-theoretical models to map these incentives and behaviours, but here I am concerned with the intuitive insights we can draw from the literature without getting caught up in formal models. In this section, I draw heavily on Beatriz Magaloni's work on electoral autocracies, as she develops the first comprehensive theory of politics in such contexts. The key insight from this literature is that the incumbent's dominance makes it harder for the opposition to mount a challenge – by discouraging parties from forming coalitions or preventing voters from throwing their support behind a party with momentum, among other effects.

This thesis is concerned with the mechanisms of *how* Swapo's dominance is reproduced, and these dilemmas provide an important part of the explanation. My contribution to the literature is threefold. First, I extend strategic dilemma literature to the Namibian context, showing that dilemmas matter in explaining the weakness of parties in addition to the usual reasons of resource imbalance and narrow party base. Secondly, I argue that ideas matter in Namibian politics, in stark contrast to a literature which still suggests that this is a rare phenomenon on the continent. In a rhetoric that is reminiscent of – but not quite a counterpart to – Zimbabwe's 'patriotic history,' the ruling party draws sustained legitimacy from a continuous emphasis on its role in the history of the liberation struggle, equating the Namibian state with Swapo and thus making dissent unpatriotic. Further, the ruling party's rhetoric around ethnicity has forced the opposition to copy its language and try to implement a form of diversity that has stretched their resources too thin. Thirdly, I argue that the strategic dilemma literature should be expanded to consider the subtle ways in which strategic dilemmas interact with political discourse, as the incumbent has the opportunity to set the terms of political discourse to their benefit.

Opposition Parties in Sub-Saharan Africa

The poor performance of opposition parties in Sub-Saharan Africa is by no means to be expected. "Given the region's significant economic problems, the persistence of poverty, and the poor performance of governments" write Rakner and van de Walle (2009, 206) "it is remarkable that incumbents have continued to do so well." While there has been a robust opposition in some countries – such as Ghana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe – it appears the most common configuration of parties in Sub-Saharan Africa is that of a dominant party combined with an array of much weaker ones (Manning 2005, 716). A caveat is necessary in discussing the opposition. In many countries it makes sense to distinguish between the opposition overall, and "second parties," seeing as many party systems feature one opposition party that does relatively well while the rest of parties remain nearly insignificant (Rakner and van de Walle 2009, 207). However, even they struggle across the board: in only 22 of 137 elections counted by Rakner and van de Walle did the second party even win a third of legislative seats (Rakner and van de Walle 2009, 207).

Opposition parties tend to be small, winning only a small share of votes and hardly ever boast anything even resembling mass membership (Rakner and van de Walle 2009, 210). Further, their political relevance is often short lived. While the ruling party can consolidate and grow support over time, institutionalising structures, opposition parties often fade away after a brief flash (Rakner and van de Walle 2009, 210). Across Africa, "parties that compete in elections today remain relatively young and inexperienced, and have not always proved able to survive more than one or two electoral cycles, fragmenting or consolidating with other parties" (Nicolas van de Walle 2013, 232). Small, poorly institutionalised, and short-lived organisations with little experience will naturally struggle to win elections. It takes time to learn about campaigning, mobilisation, and other crucial functions necessary to perform well (Nicolas van de Walle 2013, 232).

Some might caution for patience, noting that other democracies have had several centuries to institutionalise stable party systems by now, and that perhaps parties in new democracies simply need more time. However, Carothers points out that when looking at new democracies, there is often little difference between new and old parties in exhibiting dysfunctions. In fact, some negative features such as personalisation seem to be exacerbated with time (Carothers 2006, 50). The 'new-ness' of democracies might be a mitigating factor, but does not suffice as an explanation for party weakness.

Why are Opposition Parties Weak?

The Role of the Incumbent: Resources and Clientelism

It is an old stereotype of African politics, and truthfully does hold in some contexts: sometimes, the opposition cannot win because the incumbent will not let them. Governments have repressed the opposition in a variety of ways, from outright bans to intimidation, to subtly shaping electoral rules to their needs. The 'menu of manipulation' (Schedler 2002a) from which autocrats can choose is vast. But Magaloni rightly points out that pointing to fraud often obscures that regimes have a lot of support, and that they do not have to resort to this fraud all the time. In Namibia the issue of fraud is beside the point. For one, Namibia's elections are almost completely free and fair (with minor faults discussed in chapter 4) and certainly reflect the will of the people: both opinion polls and mere observation tell us that the party easily wins the support of the population. Outright fraud is not at play in Namibia, but other, more subtle forms of incumbency advantage are.

One obvious reason for the imbalance in electoral results is the disparity in resources. Overall, "parties have few or no resources" (Manning 2005, 720), so the state and its resources become central to party finance – especially as weak economies leave little room for other source of funding (Carothers 2006, 36). Thus it is no surprise that the ruling party is often wealthier than the opposition. This money helps run electoral campaigns and keeps party offices well-

staffed. Like many scholars, Manning thus describes the "logic of politics" as an "elite-driven enterprise for state resources" (Manning 2005, 716). Randall and Svåsand point to resource disparities as a key factor in maintaining the status quo (2002), as do van de Walle (2003; 2013) and Manning (2005).

This funding sometimes comes legitimately from the state, in the form of public party funding. The "tremendous disparity" in funding for electioneering is only the tip of the iceberg in this regard (Nicolas van de Walle 2013, 232). For example, the ruling party often has control over appointments to well-paying jobs in the government. More insidiously, government spending can be funnelled to strongholds and withheld from opposition areas. In these instances, "vote-rich but resource-poor constituencies receive selective material incentives before and after elections in exchange for surrendering their vote" (Kitschelt 2000, 849). These benefits can come in the forms of gifts in kind or entertainment to public housing, welfare benefits and government jobs (Kitschelt 2000, 849). Greene (Greene 2009, 807) argues that the key to the survival of dominant parties lies in the political economy of party politics: "dominant parties continue to win when they can politicize public resources, and they fail when privatizations put the state's fiscal power out of their reach." Simply put, if the ruling party can use state resources for patronage and to aid its campaign, it has a high chance of winning (Greene 2009, 828). Bauer (2001, 46) argues that state resources used for patronage are key to Swapo's continued dominance in Namibia. But this remains unconvincing as a singular explanation. Firstly, the disparity in resources is real, but does not bestow automatic victory: incumbents have lost elections in several countries, after all. How the incumbent uses its incumbency matters. In Namibia, resources are clearly not the decisive factor. As chapter 3 will show, opposition parties in Namibia have received millions of Namibian Dollars in funding. This is less than Swapo gets, yes. Consider, however, that these parties had received around 10 percent of the vote *without* funding, but failed to improve on results when the money rolled in. Chapter 3 shows that while a

mismatch in resources and the mismanagement of what they had played a role, there are other reasons why opposition parties struggled to consolidate their support.

Liberation Politics

A lot of literature on African politics perpetuates "the assumption that African elections are ideology-free zones" (N. Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009, 62). Recent scholarship has begun to chip away at this idea, for example work highlighting the importance of Michael Sata's populist ideology in determining his success in Zambia (cf N. Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009; Larmer and Fraser 2007). In Namibia, too, we should not underestimate the power of ideas. Our understanding of the incumbent's power to shape politics becomes a lot more subtle once we consider 'post-liberation politics,' the specific dynamics of politics in countries that were born out of a war of liberation (this includes Namibia, but also Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, among others). Dorman (2006, 1087) argues convincingly that these states share a particular political dynamic, that "the relationships within and between guerrilla movements are a significant legacy which affects the mode of governance."

Carothers (Carothers 2006, 37) explains that ANC, Frelimo and Swapo all "view themselves as the rightful inheritors of the state they fought to capture (boosting the tendency of the party to blur the line between state and party) and the rightful representatives of all the citizens of the country (weakening the rationale for the existence of other parties)." In short, these governments often see the state as rightfully theirs, and think they have earned the allegiance of the people in perpetuity. Importantly, across several states in the region, ruling parties play up their historical role in the struggle for independence in an attempt to renew their legitimacy with the electorate.

Terence Ranger coined the term 'patriotic history' to describe how the ruling party in Zimbabwe pushed a particular version of history that emphasises a distinction between "revolutionaries and sell-outs," (2004, 223). Similarly, "The ANC has steadily worked to reclaim

certain historic events as its own and exclude others from the liberation narrative, exaggerating some of its contributions" (Graham 2014). Some authors have voiced their concern that a form of patriotic history has been pushed by Swapo (cf Kössler 2007; Melber 2003; JS Saul and Leys 2003).

The one-to one comparison falls short. For example, land, "at the heart of Patriotic History" (Tendi 2010, 78) barely features in Swapo's rhetoric. Neither has Namibia seen the deployment of public intellectuals to make the regime's case, as Tendi has documented for Zimbabwe (Tendi 2010). Nevertheless, Swapo certainly has made use of history in ways that shape politics decisively. Chapter 4 shows that the regime emphasises its liberation history to continue claiming legitimacy, and has made itself synonymous with the Namibian nation. In addition, chapters 2 & 3 note that this liberation history interacts with and sometimes exacerbates the strategic dilemmas explained below. In chapter four, I also argue that the brand of ethnic inclusivity Swapo has elevated as an ideal has hamstrung opposition parties' efforts even when they have been at least as inclusive as the ruling party. Thus, I show in this thesis that Namibia, too, contradicts the view that sees African politics as devoid of ideas or ideology.

Narrow Appeals

Many opposition parties lack broad appeal, as they are simply "insignificant institutions consisting of little more than a leader and a few followers" (Carothers 2006, 49). They are centred around strong individuals, and characterised by a "leader-centric, top-down nature" (Carothers 2006, 49). They thus often have a narrow appeal (Olukoshi 1998, 30–2). Indeed, the party system in the region tends to be highly fragmented (Lindberg 2006a, 15). As opposition parties are small and disjointed, building a coalition to challenge the ruling party is nearly impossible, and most opposition parties rely on regional or outright ethnic appeals to maintain support (Randall and Svåsand 2002, 42). This might be true for some of the smaller opposition parties in Namibia, but not for the second parties. Chapter 4 shows that CoD and RDP tried to

appeal to a broad section of Namibians and build national movements, but that these efforts were unsuccessful.

The literature shows that the narrow appeal of opposition parties is a serious drawback. LeBas argues that strong parties in Sub-Saharan Africa are often those that "borrow the resources and organization of pre-existing institutional structures, especially those that span ethnic and regional cleavages" (2011, 5). Successful opposition parties create movements that benefit from trade unions, churches, or student movements. By piggybacking off these groups' networks and legitimacy, they manage to create a strong partisan identity that cuts across region or ethnicity (LeBas 2011, 6). Parties without such links to grassroots organisations, which are just "small and transient coteries behind aspiring individual politicians" (Randall and Svåsand 2002, 32). They often lack legitimacy with the population and are not taken seriously as an alternative to the incumbent (Olukoshi 1998, 29). As a result, opposition parties enjoy very low levels of trust across the continent in Afrobarometer surveys (Erdmann, Basedau, and Mehler 2007, 7).

From Votes to Seats

Regardless of their motivations and capabilities, parties will be constrained by what Schlesinger calls the "structure of political opportunities" (1985), specifically the party system within which they find themselves. Key to this is how voters' preferences are translated into power. A lot of literature focuses on the structural and institutional determinants of parties' support. As Cheeseman and Ford (2007, 6) explain, for a long time the image of elections Africa was that of an "ethnic census." In this view, the configuration of parties simply reflects the demographic characteristics of a nation; Swapo's dominance stems from the fact that it is supported by the majority ethnic group and so naturally smaller parties would not survive. While a lot of scholarship implicitly adopts this stance in Namibia, in reality there is little evidence of ethnic voting (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4).

Political institutions also play their part in enshrining the dominance of the ruling party. Many countries are characterised by a strong presidency and correspondingly weak legislature; with such great power in the executive there are few checks on the party's power to affect institutions. The ruling government determines the rules of electoral competition down to the electoral calendar (Rakner and van de Walle 2009, 219). These rules have a significant effect on parties' performance. For example, majoritarian systems tend to discourage the formation of new parties (Cox 1997), while term limits have been a boon for the opposition, as successors to founding presidents often receive a lot less goodwill from the population (Nic Cheeseman 2010, 142).

Bogaards (2008) argues that across countries, whether a majoritarian or PR system is used has little effect on whether one party dominates electoral returns. In contrast, several authors have written that it matters in Namibia. Cooper (2013) believes Namibia's extreme proportional representation has shaped parties' motivations and strategies, while Mac Giollabhui argues the system has shaped intra-party dynamics (Giollabhui 2011). Nevertheless, party systems are not deterministic, and neither are the demographic characteristics of a country. Parties might inherit a variety of different historical contexts and legal structures, but as LeBas (2011) convincingly argues, the agency of parties makes a crucial difference in determining their support: "it is not semi-fixed social cleavages that structure mobilization; instead, it is party mobilization that determines which cleavages will be activated and which identities become politically salient" (LeBas 2011, 36). Similarly, while institutions constrain action by parties, they do not determine it.

Theory: Strategic Dilemmas in a One-Party Dominant State

To understand the behaviour of opposition parties, we have to consider how the extreme dominance of Swapo, not just its incumbency, shapes parties' options and constraints. Namibia is usually described as a 'one-party dominant' system, or a 'predominant-party system,' in other

words a democracy where one party receives an overwhelming share of the vote and has ruled for a very long time. The literature distinguishes between predominant-party systems and electoral autocracies, where the ruling party allows elections but ensures it will not lose through a variety of mechanisms ranging from patronage and vote-buying, to control of the media and even outright fraud, if need be (Magaloni 2008). Which category Namibia falls into will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2, but for the opposition the distinction is often meaningless: in Namibia, elections are shaped by the fact that realistically speaking, the opposition cannot win. Whether they seek power for its own sake or to affect policy, "neither ambition seems completely credible" for these parties (Nicolas van De Walle and Butler 2007, 22). This bleak outlook affects both the people who would vote for the opposition and the parties themselves.

Magaloni (2008) develops a comprehensive theory of elections in electoral autocracies. She looks at Mexico, where the PRI oversaw the fourth-longest authoritarian regime of the twentieth century (2008, 1). While the PRI engaged in electoral malpractice, and used the resources of the state to its advantages, it also genuinely dominated electoral results – they only once resorted to fraud to change an outcome in their favour. Their dominance was aided by the strategic dilemmas the political system imposed on voters and the opposition parties.

A key concept for our understanding of voting patterns is *strategic voting,* a concept that traces back at least as far back as Duverger's (1954) pioneering work, and recognises that voters' decisions are influenced by their idea of how viable their choices are. For example, many left-leaning voters in the U.K. prefer the Green Party's policies to those of Labour. But they also know that the Greens have little chance of winning, and leftist voters' highest priority is that conservatives do not rule – so they end up voting Labour. Voters flock to a party that seems more likely to win, even if this party is not the voters' first choice, so as to not 'waste' a vote on a party that will not gain representation anyways (Ware 1995, 190). In chapter 3, I explain how

strategic voting in Namibia's system explains some of the voting patterns that have put opposition parties at a disadvantage.

Opposition parties in an electoral autocracy struggle to win over new voters. The key to this is voters' lack of good information on which to base voting decisions (Magaloni 2008, 56). Voters face a dilemma: unless it seems the opposition has a credible chance of winning, they have little reason to abandon the ruling party – especially if it doles out patronage to supporters and withholds it from opposition areas (Magaloni 2008, 198). It takes a critical mass of people supporting a party for most people to switch their votes around, but voters never know if there really is a groundswell of support. This is a catch-22: more people would vote for a party if it had momentum, but to gain momentum it needs voters to commit. Overcoming this dilemma presents a daunting challenge for the opposition, for as long as the ruling party will win, voters have little reason engaging in strategic voting. Chapter 3 suggests that a significant bloc of Swapo's voters is not strongly affiliated to the party, and might be caught by this dilemma. It also shows that Namibian elections feature a bloc of opposition supporters which keeps switching from one party to another, and argues that this is because this bloc is engaging in (unsuccessful) strategic voting.

Opposition parties face a coordination dilemma of their own: should they band together to defeat the ruling party? Again, this makes sense if they have a good chance of winning. Coalitions have costs for parties. Time and political capital have to be expended to make the deal and convince their own supporters to go along with it (Gandhi 2008). If they have little chance of winning, they have few reasons to put aside their differences – especially if their support is based on cleavages of ethnicity, region, or ideology (Magaloni 2008, 178). Ideological cleavages prevented the opposition from combining together in Japan (Pempel 1990) and Mexico in 2000**.** Finally, the electoral system too can encourage fractionalisation – systems with lower costs of entry allow small parties to be viable, rather than encouraging opposition forces to combine

(Magaloni 2008, 177). Chapter 3 shows that Namibian parties want to form a coalition, but have never done so. I argue that Swapo's vast margins mean there are few incentives to put aside differences, as predicted by the strategic dilemma literature.

The scholarship on strategic dilemmas offers many key insights that help us understand the electoral dynamics of systems where one party clearly dominates at the polls. One area in which it lacks explanatory power (at least in the Namibian context) is when considering the role of ideology. Magaloni does provide for a role of ideology, but it is circumscribed: to her, different ideologies of parties or groups of voters can make it harder for them to form a coalition against a government (2008, 176). In Namibian politics, where traditional left-right policy differences matter little, this effect is unlikely to play a role. But this does not mean that the content of parties' speech has no effect. As noted above, chapter 4 shows how the Swapo's rhetoric constrains the opposition. The party's dominance allows it to singlehandedly set the terms of political debate in the country, and it has used this agenda-setting power with skill.

Conclusion

This review established that opposition parties in many African countries are weak. The literature points mainly at two factors: the benefits of incumbency in terms of resources, and the narrow focus of opposition parties, which tend to centre on individuals and have tenuous links to grass-roots concerns and movements. The literature also tends to dismiss ideology as a non-factor in the politics of the region. I argued that, due to its nature as a 'post-liberation society,' Namibia's politics feature a powerful discourse that affects political actors. In Namibian politics, ideas make a difference.

I then introduced what I term the 'strategic dilemma literature,' a body of work that looks at the peculiar dynamics that arise when one party dominates all others resoundingly. This thesis adds to the literature by showing that, aside from resource and ego-driven politics, strategic dilemmas can help us understand opposition in Namibia. In addition, it seeks to add to

this literature in arguing that a further mechanism by which dominance engenders dominance occurs through the power of the incumbent to shape political debate to their liking. Strategic dilemmas interact with the rhetoric of liberation to produce an even stronger effect.

Having reviewed the pertinent literature and outlined the contribution of my thesis, I now turn to chapter 2, which considers whether it is appropriate to apply the strategic dilemma literature to the Namibian context.

Chapter 2. Authoritarian Politics

In *Voting for Autocracy,* Beatriz Magaloni creates a comprehensive theoretical framework that explains the constraints faced by voters and opposition parties in electoral autocracies, drawing on the work of Cox (1997), Gandhi (2009; 2014) and others. While she developed the theory in Mexico, she argues that it can be applied to other electoral autocracies (Magaloni 2008, 32). The question discussed in this chapter is whether her framework can also apply to Namibia, as Namibia is not often described as an autocracy in the literature. This question is not a trivial one. The authors writing about strategic dilemmas make it very explicit that they are talking about autocracies specifically: the title of Magaloni's book as well as Gandhi's articles specifically include the term, and Magaloni devotes almost a whole chapter in the beginning of her book to a discussion on how to distinguish electoral autocracies from other types of "hybrid regimes" (Diamond 2002).

This chapter argues that insights from the strategic dilemma literature can be applied to Namibia, despite uncertainty about its regime type. The first part tries to discern where Namibia would fall according to these authors. Such a question is almost impossible to answer definitively for most countries, and with Namibia too there is a lot of ambiguity. Lindberg (2006b, 126) and Carothers (2006, 70) do not class the country as an electoral autocracy, while Magaloni would. Magaloni's seems to be a very harsh assessment, however, in that it perhaps does not give enough credit to the aspects of Namibian democracy that do work. I argue that even if we do not want to call Namibia an autocracy, its situation is ambiguous enough in many aspects for us to use insights about strategic dilemmas. Key to the strategic dilemma literature is that political actors, from opposition parties to voters, act as if they cannot win. The first part of the chapter shows that this belief is warranted, regardless of how we formally classify Namibia.

The second part of the chapter looks at the ruling party's behaviour, finding that – in many crucial ways – Swapo acts in ways expected from the incumbent in Magaloni's framework.

Just like the PRI in Mexico described by Magaloni, Swapo deliberately tries to win by as high a margin as possible, far beyond the point where it would make sense in a regular democracy. This is done to signal strength, reminding voters and party cadres to stay in line. And just like incumbents in electoral autocracies, Swapo makes smart use of state resources to keep voters and elite members in the party fold and discourage them from abandoning ship. (Both of these messages are strengthened by Swapo's historical narratives discussed in chapter 4, which position the party as the only legitimate power in Namibian politics).That Swapo seems to act in accordance with Magaloni's theory is a further indication that we can use the strategic dilemma literature to evaluate Namibian politics.

Dominant-Party Democracy or Electoral Autocracy?

Electoral autocracies are systems "in which one political party remains in office uninterruptedly under semiauthoritarian conditions while holding regular multiparty elections" (Magaloni 2008, 32). For authors writing on these regimes, It is important to separate them from what Sartori called "predominant-party systems," which are just democracies where one party has repeatedly won power (Magaloni 2008, 33) – the classification that is usually applied to Namibia. The problem is that the line between the two types of regime is very blurry. This is not helped by the fact that several scholars have provided their own classificatory scheme to deal with this "foggy zone" (Schedler 2002b, 37), so that the political lexicon is now brimming with a multitude of regime types that often seem to differ only slightly. Knowing whether a regime is democratic or authoritarian can be very difficult, and pinpointing the point of transition even harder. Take Botswana: the country is usually held up as one of the few full democracies in Southern Africa, and van de Walle describes it as having a "genuinely democratic system" (Nicolas van de Walle 2002, 69). Still, in the run up to the 2014 election opponents complained about continued intimidation, while the authoritarian tendencies of President Khama became more evident as he "regularly uses coercion and his discretionary power to quell dissent"

(Poteete 2014) and "has used the techniques and capacities of personal, militaristic rule to an exceptional degree"(Good 2009, 4). Is Botswana on the slide to autocracy? Was it always an electoral autocracy, but hid behind a democratic façade? Or was this just (as most observers would contend) a blip in form and the country remains a true democracy? If regime classification is so difficult even for the poster child of African democracy, how can we categorise Namibia accurately? The following section seeks to answer that question, drawing heavily on Magaloni's (2008) and Schedler's (2001) discussion of the issue.

Structural and Institutional Issues

Many authors simply use common indices of democracy – usually Freedom House or Polity – to decide whether a country is autocratic or democratic (cf. Lindberg (2006b), Howard and Roessler (2006)), a simplistic method in which no rule is consistently applied (Bogaards 2009, 47). Nevertheless, the intuition behind an approach that focuses on institutions is reasonable: institutions "act as sets of rules that reward some kinds of actors and some types of conduct, while punishing others" (Schedler 2001, 81). So institutions can give us an idea of what sort of conduct is likely – or possible – in a given country.

On the face of it, the difference between electoral autocracies and democracies is clear: in electoral autocracies, "not only does alternation not occur in fact, it *cannot* occur," whereas in a predominant party system "even though no alternation in office actually occurs – *alternation is not ruled out*" (Sartori 1976, cited in Magaloni 2008, 33). This is the crucial difference, but it is not very useful as a rule to make our decision for a simple reason: we cannot know before the fact whether a party will give up power or not (Magaloni 2008, 33). In Namibia, some doubt there is a clear answer to this question (see below). Schedler argues that elections should form our litmus test: "under electoral democracy, contests comply with minimal democratic norms; under electoral authoritarianism, they do not" (Schedler 2002, cited in Magaloni 2008, 33). He proposes seven ways in which authoritarians may manipulate elections – if a regime is guilty of any one of

these, it cannot qualify as a democracy. However, Schedler's criteria are too stringent, and Magaloni points out that many established democracies have engaged in some of these manipulations. The point, she argues, should be "whether electoral manipulations are *potentially controllable* by existing political institutions, not whether they occur at all" (Magaloni 2008, 34).

Magaloni also thinks that meaningfully inclusive and free elections are crucial. To avoid difficult judgements about elections themselves, she focuses on "the nature of the existing political institutions" and whether they allow for such elections to take place. In her framework, regimes that have only had one party in power are by default classed as electoral autocracies. Once turnover has occurred, a retrospective assessment can be made on when the transition to democracy has occurred (Magaloni 2008, 38). She focuses on two criteria to evaluate whether institutions enable democracy. First, she looks at the extent of dominance: "hegemonic-party systems are far more overpowering than predominant-party systems, usually controlling more than 65 percent of the legislative seats – so that they can *change the constitution unilaterally*" (Magaloni 2008, 35). Without constitutional checks, it becomes more likely that the incumbent will erect authoritarian institutions: "the autocrat can stack courts, augment presidential powers, modify electoral rules, limit civil and political rights, and colonize the state security apparatus without constraint" (Magaloni 2008, 35). In democracies, on the other hand, institutions are contested and the ruling party has to negotiate with the opposition to change the rules of the game. Magaloni's second rule is that in electoral autocracies, "electoral malpractices are not *potentially controllable* because the hegemonic party has unilateral control over the institutions in charge of organizing, monitoring, and adjudicating elections" (Magaloni 2008, 36).

Magaloni presents a table (2008, 4) that shows quite clearly the institutional differences between the regimes she classes as democratic and those which she thinks are autocracies. Note that she does not use these numbers to make her decision. Rather, they were calculated after sorting countries based on her rules. As expected, predominant-party democracies have a higher

score on the polity index, a widely used measure of democracy. They usually feature more veto players, a higher turnover in the executive and usually have a parliamentary as opposed to a presidential system. The ruling party also tends to have a lower share of the vote in democracies than in electoral autocracies (Magaloni 2008, 41–2). Table 1 reproduces this table and compares her values with those for Namibia. Namibia has a notably higher polity score than the average electoral autocracy in Magaloni's classification, just making the threshold for democracy in the index, which stands at 6.0. In other respects, it seems closer to electoral autocracies in her classification. Because there has been no electoral turnover, she classes Namibia as an electoral autocracy by default (Magaloni, Chu, and Min 2013).

Table 1: Institutional Overview

Institutional differences between electoral autocracies and dominant-party democracies

Averages by Regime Type	Polity Score	% of Legislative Seats	Number of Veto Players	Executive Heads	Presidential
Predominant-party democracies	9.39	53	3.79	4.87	0%
Electoral autocracies	-2.64	76	1.87	2.64	66%
Namibia	6.0	76	1	1.92	Yes (Semi)

Source: this table is adapted from Voting for Autocracies (Magaloni 2008, 4)*.*
Note: polity score for Namibia is from Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers 2013)*, calculated from when SWAPO first took office until the present day. Effective Number of Executive Heads (ENEH) is "the inverse of the sum of the squared percentage of years each head of executive ruled"* (Magaloni 2008, 41)*, but this is skewed by the fact that Namibia is a very young. ENEH would be low regardless, and is just included for comprehensiveness. The percentage of legislative seats was rounded down from 76.99 to provide as conservative an estimation as possible. Veto Players from the 2012 Database of Political Institutions* (Keefer and Stasavage 2003) *represents the latest value; during the Constituent Assembly the number stood at 2.*

Behavioural Indicators

Cross-country studies of predominant-party regimes often rely on institutional factors to differentiate democracies from autocracies. Country-specific case studies, on the other hand, often focus on the behaviour of political actors. With this approach, the measure of what makes a democracy is simple: "democracy … settles down as 'the only game in town,' only if (and as long as) actors decide to play by its basic rules. It is as simple as that: no democratic players, no democratic game" (Schedler 2001, 70). Schedler uses the analogy of a doctor assessing a patient. As in the medical context, the first step to diagnose the state of democracy is to check whether

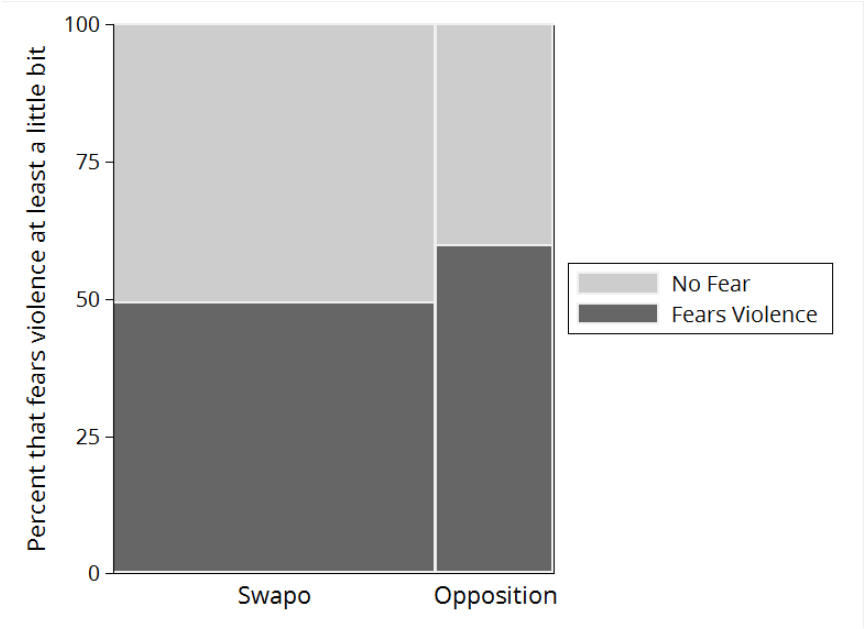
any symptoms of dysfunction have outwardly manifested themselves. In concrete terms, acts that put into question whether democracy has been consolidated include the use of violence, the rejection of elections, and the transgression of authority (Schedler 2001, 71).

Importantly, an absence of these behaviours does not automatically mean that all is well with democracy. To continue with the medical analogy, we should remember that not all illnesses are plainly visible. Thus the *logic of symptoms* should be combined with the *logic of testing:* "rather than trusting the apparent democratic normality under the radiant sun, we might want to know whether the regime is able to weather stormy crisis situations" (Schedler 2001, 73). It is easy for an incumbent to follow democratic rules as long as they are constantly, and easily, winning elections. In these situations there are no downsides to acting democratically. Turnover tests as described above, where only a change in ruler counts as evidence of democracy, are based on this line of thinking (Schedler 2001, 75): when the hold on power is at stake, political actors' real attitudes crystallise.

Turning to the Namibian case, even though Swapo has never been seriously at risk of losing an election, it several times appeared to lose its temper when a new opposition arose and the ruling party was unsure of how big of a threat it posed. RDP and CoD received especially harsh treatment because they featured Swapo defectors (more on that dynamic in chapter 4). When CoD emerged as the first viable post-independence opposition, started by high-profile Swapo members no less, observers noted that for the first time, campaigning became tense (Weidlich 2008). Bauer (2001, 47) counted 22 incidents where CoD supporters were intimidated by their Swapo counterparts. To be fair, those were conducted by supporters who were not acting on direct party orders as far as we can tell. RDP often struggled with their election materials being destroyed (see Haidula 2014; Hilukilwa 2014a, 2014b) and its rallies being disrupted, and in 2009 were told by the police that certain areas were no-go areas for campaigning because they were associated with Swapo (Melber 2014, 48). In the run-up to one

by-election, newspapers even reported a politically motivated stabbing (Grobler 2008). This sort of behaviour has an effect on the population: the Afrobarometer survey revealed that the majority of voters feared political violence, and opposition voters tended to fear violence more than Swapo supporters.

Figure 3: Fear of Political Violence



Source: Afrobarometer Rounds 4 and 5 combined dataset (Afrobarometer 2012)
Note: Figure shows responses to the question "During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?" Answers 'a lot,' 'somewhat' and 'a little' versus 'not at all'

Swapo has been at pains to distance itself from violence – in fact, the party always explicitly instructs supporters to conduct themselves peacefully (cf New Era 2014b). But the party is not innocent: while Swapo always makes statements supporting violence-free elections, the party is prone to thinly veiled threats when criticised. Notably, when allegations surfaced that Swapo had tortured and 'disappeared' inmates at its Lubango camp during the liberation war, the party's Secretary-General declared that "there could be a lot of bloodshed in this country. We are always reminded of the past and of being insulted and provoked and we have now reached a point where we can say "enough is enough" and can fight back" (cited in JS Saul and Leys 2003, 343). When RDP emerged, then-President Pohamba called them "Judas Iscariots" – a powerful term in a deeply Christian country such as Namibia. Others called RDP members "traitors" and

called for them to be removed from their positions in the private sector (Shivute 2008). There has even been a case of direct violence: in the run-up to the 2014 elections, a Swapo councillor stormed into a studio of the national broadcaster and assaulted a producer, accusing her of not reporting on the government enough (Confidente 2014b).

Some transgressions of authority have also occurred. Apart from President Nujoma, who sent troops to the DRC without approval from Parliament,[4] Swapo members have notoriously blurred the lines between party and state, for example by attending government events in party regalia. In 2009, President Pohamba defended this practice, noting that it is not prohibited by law: "sometimes when our party officers address public meetings as government officials they put on their party attire because they are talking about achievements made by government through the Swapo party" (IPPR 2014, 3). Similarly, the Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Affairs ministry saw nothing wrong with using government resources to help organise the party's manifesto launch before the 2014 election (Confidente 2014a).

Attitudes about Democracy: Establishing a Normative Consensus

When deciding whether a country is democratic or not, we should also look at the attitudes of political actors. The logic behind this is simple and powerful: if there is a normative consensus in society that democracy is necessary, the erosion of democracy becomes virtually impossible because "no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions" (Przeworski et al. cited in Schedler 2001, 77). A consolidated democracy "becomes routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life" (Stepan and Linz 1996, 16). Antidemocratic actions become unfathomable for most people in society, and citizens will not accept a violation of their democratic rights. This is why for many, "democratic legitimacy – the

[4] This was not technically illegal. As Bauer explains, "there were charges that President Nujoma violated the constitution by failing to consult with Parliament before sending Namibian troops to the DRC in August 1998, given that Article 96 of the constitution calls for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. This article, however, is merely one of several 'principles of state policy' and therefore is not binding" (2001, 38). Nevertheless, the action caused an outcry among civil society and opposition parliamentarians who felt Parliament should have been consulted.

genuine, non-instrumental, intrinsic support for democracy by political elites as well as citizens – constitutes the most important, and even defining element of democratic consolidation" (Schedler 2001, 75).

The problem in practice is that attitudes are difficult to measure. We do know that "high reserves of mass support provide a valuable cushion" against the erosion of democracy (Schedler 2001, 75), but few surveys include questions that would allow us to evaluate this question. In the absence of specific measures, the preference for democracy over other systems of government can act as a "thin indicator" of whether the normative foundations for democracy exist in a given country. For Schedler, this support should stand (somewhat arbitrarily) at 66 percent or higher (Schedler 2001, 84). Namibia just about makes this threshold: in the most recent round of the Afrobarometer survey, 63.9 percent of Namibians declared that they preferred democracy over other forms of government (Afrobarometer 2012).

By many accounts, Swapo has a "long-standing authoritarian culture" going back to the days when it was a liberation movement with a military character. This likely stems from the party's history as a military organisation. During the struggle for independence, leaders feared infiltration by South African spies at every turn. In times when the movement's bare survival – let alone success against the colonisers – was under imminent threat, loyalty to the party was prioritised above everything else. Thus, "SWAPO became dominated by a military culture, strongly hierarchical, authoritarian and closed" (Saunders 2007, 24). In 1976, youth who had just joined the struggle in Zambia rebelled and demanded a congress to review the activities of Swapo leadership and the progress of the struggle. The party promptly had thousands arrested by the Zambian army (John Saul 1999, 167). Loyalty with the party was seen as synonymous with loyalty to the Namibian nation (as I will explore in chapter 4). This has consequences even today, a quarter-century after independence. A former member of the party's central committee writes that the party "tends to be very touchy when criticised" and that "party members who dare to

challenge party authority … may easily end up in political wilderness" (Tötemeyer 2014, 109–10). During the 2004 selection process for the parliamentary list, the party president pushed out those that had not supported his preferred candidate for the next presidential election (Giollabhui 2011, 593). As discussed above, it seems the party lashes out when tested, and we should not ignore that real vitriol was reserved for previous party members who had broken loyalty by joining another party. As the RDP garnered headlines leading up to the 2009 election, Swapo became more agitated. At a rally, a politician instructed the crowd not to give RDP supporters water and to boycott their businesses (Weidlich 2008). When results from foreign missions indicated that some diplomats had voted against Swapo, this ignited a "hysterical tribunal" by Swapo against the "hibernators" in the party (Melber 2010, 211–12).

Opposition parties, meanwhile, should see a chance of winning office through elections. However, many opposition party members deny that Namibia is a democracy. During interviews, several of my respondents would steer the topic towards the rigging they perceived, often when the issue only connected marginally to the question asked. Nick Kruger, director of elections for the RDP, unequivocally stated his view: "If you go back and you look at the results of the 1999, 2004 and 2009 – my personal opinion is that all those three those elections was rigged in the same way" (Kruger Interview). When I followed up with his deputy Libolly Haufiku after the 2014 election, I asked him directly whether Swapo would ever give up an election if they lost. His answer was as succinct as it was telling: "Swapo already lost the election in 2009" (Haufiku Interview 2). Almost none of the opposition party members I interviewed believed that elections were free and fair, and trust in other institutions of the democratic state were similarly low. The important point here is not whether the election was in fact rigged, or whether the courts really just tow the Swapo party line (independent observers tend to disagree with both claims). Key is that opposition parties say they are not living in a democratic state.

I had the distinct impression that they were convinced of the truth of their claims, even though most observers agree that there is no systematic rigging, and it is clear that Swapo enjoys the genuine support of the majority of the population. Perhaps this was a P.R. ploy, an attempt to convince a researcher of their strength.[5] I do not think this is such an instance, as several of them knew I was a Namibian and soon learned that I was well informed on the issue. As for why competent and well-informed people would subscribe to such a theory, one possibility is that they simply overestimated their own support. A look at polling results shows that only about 50 percent of Namibians identify outwardly as Swapo loyalists (see chapter 3). Perhaps a large number of people promised opposition party representatives their vote, before voting for Swapo eventually. It is also true that recent elections have seen some irregularities (though courts ruled there was no systematic foul play, see chapter 4). In addition, there had been several incidents of RDP and CoD supporters being intimidated and sometimes violently treated by Swapo loyalists. All of these could have contributed to a sense of general conspiracy. Perhaps, though, this was simply their 'line'; defeat necessitated talking points for public relations, and the opposition chose to deploy the cliché of the African dictatorship. In reality it may well be a mix of the two. Chapter 4 discusses opposition cases against elections (which have all found the elections were fair), and how the opposition has used them to challenge Swapo's legitimacy and fight for their vision of a better democracy.

Making a Call

How do we classify Namibia? Is the country an electoral autocracy or a democracy with some deficiencies? While the institutional framework is often rated as democratic, in some respects it seems to fall in line with electoral autocracies. On a variety of factors – especially intangible ones, such as the intentions of actors – an independent critical assessment would

[5] Note that this would fit well with the strategic dilemma framework: recall that parties would want to seem strong to attract more support, as weakness acts as a strong disincentive for voters.

conclude that it is inaccurate to call Namibia an autocracy. Yes, Behavioural symptoms arise when Swapo's hold on power seems threatened, and the ruling party's attitude towards democracy seems less than guaranteed. And by Magaloni's (rather strict) standards, Namibia would be classed as an electoral autocracy, and in her database on regimes around the world, she has it classed as such (Magaloni, Chu, and Min 2013).

But calling Namibia an autocracy because it has not seen a change in power seems harsh. This chapter has mostly focused on the negative aspects of the regime, but there are many positives. The country has an independent judiciary, its media freedom was ranked 19th in the world in 2014 (Freedom House 2014), and all observers judge elections to be free and fair. Even Swapo's internal culture is not monolithic as its youth league regularly calls party leaders out in public. To call Namibia an autocracy because its voters so far have not wanted a regime change seems incongruent with everyday reality. However, there are good reasons to think we can apply insights from the strategic dilemma literature even without calling Namibia an autocracy. The key to that literature is that the impossibility of regime change affects the choices of opposition parties and voters. Disaffected voters will not change their votes to a new party because they do not think it can win; and the opposition will not form coalitions because they cannot see the effort paying off in the form of victory at election time (see the next chapter for a discussion of both). But does it make a difference why the opposition cannot win? Whether regime change is impossible because the incumbent controls the electoral body, or because the incumbent just enjoys overwhelming support from the population, in either case change is not foreseeable any time soon. In the following section, I discuss how it seems that the party does engage in some of the practices Magaloni argues are characteristic of ruling parties in electoral autocracies.

Swapo's Actions in Context

Running Up Tallies

According to Magaloni, ruling parties in electoral autocracies routinely try to "run up tallies," working hard to win by margins far higher than necessary. This runs contrary to a great part of the literature on party motivations: since Riker (1968, 33), most literature assumes that parties do not seek to maximise their votes, but rather try to construct a "minimum winning coalition" because that is more efficient. However, in an electoral autocracy the ruling party will often construct "oversized governing coalitions" (Magaloni 2008, 259), expending resources to win votes far above the threshold needed to win an election. The incumbent has two reasons for trying to get as many votes as possible, even if it is costly. Instrumentally, winning by high margins allows the party to change laws to its liking. In addition, overwhelming margins act as a signal of dominance, helping to maintain internal discipline, and discouraging voters from defecting to an opposition party (Magaloni 2008, 231).

Swapo has a history of trying to win very high percentages of the vote, in what Cooper calls "a considerable effort… to drive minor parties even further towards the margins of political life" (Cooper 2013, 223). High-level party leaders often call on supporters to effect a landslide, such as former President Sam Nujoma ("let the opposition get zero seats") in 2009, regional governor Nghaamwa ("We don't want to have only some of our [Swapo] people in parliament anymore; we want to take all the seats in parliament") and minister Ekandjo ("[give] Hage Geingob 100 percent victory. We do not want anything less than that") in 2014 (Ashipala 2014; Cooper 2013, 223; Staff Reporter 2014). The party also makes a concerted effort to break into the few remaining opposition strongholds (Cooper 2013, 223).

A higher percentage is useful because it allows the party to "control constitutional change and set the basic rules of the game" without having to negotiate with the opposition (Magaloni 2008, 231). Swapo has consistently demonstrated an appetite for constitutional changes. As the

Economist Intelligence Unit noted after the first such initiative, "the bill allowing Mr. Nujoma's candidacy [for a third term] was called the 'first constitutional amendment bill', suggesting that further changes to the constitution are on the agenda" (EIU cited in Bauer 2001, 38). This proved to be true in 2014, when Swapo pushed through a wide array of constitutional amendments in a short time, and without consultation (Mongudhi and Kahiurika 2014). Some of the amendments concerned housekeeping issues, but other changes were wide-ranging in their implications: the Bill increased seats in the National Assembly and National Council and created the office of the Vice-President (New Era 2014a). Both of these were seen to benefit Swapo rather than the government (recall the discussion in the prelude). The party would claim most of the newly created seats, and these, together with the Vice-President's office, would provide many opportunities to deliver spoils to party members.

Winning more votes helps maintain discipline among supporters and party insiders. Crushing margins discourage defection from voters and prevent 'mass bandwagoning effects,' especially as voters rely on patronage from the current regime (see below). With a ruling party that is so clearly invincible, few voters will see a benefit in switching their vote and the opposition will fail to build momentum. As for quelling internal dissent, this happens in two ways. Obviously, more votes translate into more seats – these bring prestige as well as generous remuneration to party insiders who will now be materially indebted to party leadership (Magaloni 2008, 231). But seats are not the only spoils the party distributes, and running up high tallies primarily act as a signal to party insiders that outside of the ruling party, opportunities are virtually non-existent (Magaloni 2008, 231). This certainly plays a role in Namibia, where 'jobs for comrades' has become a catchphrase as a Swapo membership card increasingly becomes part of the requirements for a job in government. This, in combination with tender and license distribution, means Swapo has created a "culture of silence" where very few dare to align with the opposition as it will hurt them materially (du Pisani and Lindeke 2009, 15).

The push for higher margins is also driven by – and itself then reinforces – Swapo's political discourse. During the struggle for independence, the movement was designated the "sole and authentic" representative of the Namibian people by the UN. As touched on in the literature review, and discussed in more detail in chapter 4, Swapo has made its history synonymous with that of Namibia, and wants all Namibians within the folds of the movement. Winning by large margins underlines that legitimacy; it is a public affirmation of Swapo's claims to be the only political force worth reckoning with. Swapo needs to win by high margins or else it cannot claim this exulted status. The strategic dilemma literature should take note of how political discourse can strengthen the signalling effect of high margins, and how these high margins then feed back into the same discourse with striking efficiency.

Punishment Regimes

Another activity Magaloni ascribes to incumbents in electoral autocracies is the implementation of a 'punishment regime.' This describes a system where the distribution of patronage to supporters goes hand in hand with the "threat to exclude opposition voters and politicians from the party's spoils system" (Magaloni 2008, 20). Loyalty is rewarded and defection punished, hence the name (Magaloni 2008, 19). This regime can take on various forms, and will be more or less explicit in different context, but plays a key part in determining a hegemonic party's mass support.

Several authors mention Swapo's effective use of the spoils of government to ensure loyalty (cf. du Pisani and Lindeke 2009, 15). Examples abound: two weeks before the 2009 election, the Ministry of Education doubled student loans (The Observer, cited in Cooper 2013, 219); the next week each traditional leader in the country received an SUV, "all fuel and maintenance costs, as well as a chauffeuring contribution" (Cooper 2013, 219). The handover of new houses built for low-income citizens in Walfishbay was wisely timed to occur shortly before

the 2014 election (Immanuel and Hartman 2014). It should be noted that there is no evidence that Swapo outright appropriates state money on a significant scale. Rather, legitimate expenses are cleverly timed to imply to voters that their services depend on Swapo's generosity. Sometimes politicians go beyond innuendo to make the connection clear: at a rally leading up to the 2009 election, President Pohamba warned the crowd: "if you make the mistake of [voting RDP] you will be giving away the newly constructed local authority and regional government buildings" (Weidlich 2008). Similarly, deputy minister of Information and Communication Technology Stanley Simataa told the audience at a rally in 2014: "We have a network tower now … soon we will officially open the tar road in this area … All that was brought by the Swapo-led government. Let's not interrupt the development plans of Swapo Party" (New Era 2014c). Such thinly disguised threats "are effective and reinforce the common perspective that [powers of patronage] are available and can be used, restricting public and private space for opposition parties" (du Pisani and Lindeke 2009, 15).

Conclusion

This chapter sought to establish whether insights from the strategic dilemma literature, especially Beatriz Magaloni's theoretical framework, can be applied to the Namibian context. This matters because these authors restrict themselves to electoral autocracies. The Namibian case, as so many others, defies easy categorisation. The ruling party often acts in undemocratic ways, showing disdain for the constitution and sometimes even threatening violence when it sees its hegemony threatened. That these episodes only occur when new parties arise, and the behaviour stops once Swapo has seen it has nothing to fear, should not assuage our concerns. Instead, the timing of these behaviours raises fears that Swapo's commitment to democracy is conditional upon continued loyalty to the party from Namibians, and can change when a win is not assured. In terms of actors' attitudes, the record is mixed: Namibian voters have shown a clear preference for democracy. However, Swapo's rhetoric indicates that not all of its members

have internalised democratic ideals, while opposition politicians think the deck is stacked against them. In any case, under Magaloni's criteria Namibia would be an electoral autocracy by default because there has not been a turnover of power and Swapo has a high enough share of the vote to potentially control elections. This chapter argued that even if we think this assessment is incorrect, we can still learn from this body of literature in the Namibian case. Key is that, as in electoral autocracies, political actors 'know' the incumbent will remain in power, and this belief shapes their actions.

The chapter further made the case by arguing that Swapo acts like the incumbents described in the strategic dilemma literature. The party has implemented a punishment regime just as described by Magaloni, equating state resources with those of the party and implicitly threatening voters that their welfare is dependent on continued support for the ruling elite. Meanwhile it has consciously tried to win by margins far above even the threshold needed to amend the constitution. This enables swift and unilateral changes to the 'rules of the game,' such as when Swapo pushed through more than 40 changes to the constitution as well as a new electoral law in less than two weeks. Another benefit of their dominance at the polls is that it acts as a powerful signal: voters know not to support a challenger to the regime because victory is unlikely, and party elites know to toe the line lest they end up in the political wilderness. As far as the ruling party's actions are concerned, Namibia fits Magaloni's framework rather well.

The ambiguous state of democratic consolidation, coupled with the actions of the incumbent, means it is reasonable that we analyse the behaviour of opposition parties and voters using this framework. The next chapter will do just that. After considering the standard reasons given in the literature for the weakness of opposition parties, I move on to examine how strategic dilemmas make it harder for opposition parties to build on their initial momentum and to form coalitions to broaden their reach.

Chapter 3. Why are Opposition Parties so Weak? The Role of Strategic Dilemmas

As discussed in the literature review, the general consensus on opposition parties in Africa holds that they are a liability to themselves. Parties are driven by individual egos rather than mass movements; they have few or no connections to civil society or the grassroots. Because they are centred around these prominent politicians (who tend to have regional support) they are "devoid of organizational extension and structure" (Manning 2005, 716). Given that they have very few financial resources, the incumbent finds it easy to outspend them in an electoral contest. This chapter shows that on all of these counts, Namibian opposition parties are guilty as charged. This holds true not just for smaller players, but just as much for the major challengers to Swapo over the years. They mismanage the few funds they have, show a distinct lack of organisation, and suffer from the fact that they are dominated by a few individuals with strong egos. But this alone does not explain why their fortunes have waxed and waned in such a brief time span.

The second part of the chapter thus examines how strategic dilemmas – which result from Swapo's dominance – contribute to the weakness of opposition parties. The first way in which this plays out is the tendency of voters to switch their allegiance at short notice. It sometimes appears that opposition parties have little control over whether or not voters align with them; this hurts the consolidation of these parties. This bloc voting is evidence of what Magaloni calls the regime cleavage. A certain amount of voters will strongly dislike the government and vote for whoever they think has the best chance of dislodging the incumbent. Their attachment to these parties is thus purely instrumental and completely devoid of loyalty. Their movement from party to party is based on a lack of information. Without any knowledge on how well different parties will do, voters have to base their decision on their estimation of a party's momentum. We learn that this is why prominent politicians matter: it is not that they

bring their followers into the fold; rather, followers flock to them because they think big names with liberation credentials are an indicator of the party's future success. Another strategic dilemma arises between opposition parties when they decide on whether to form coalitions. A coalition makes little sense when it cannot result in victory; Swapo's overall dominance thus prevents parties from grouping together and benefiting from a united front.

Party Weaknesses: Does the Literature Apply in Namibia?

A Democratic Deficit

The accusation that party politics are about individuals seems to ring true in Namibia. Ego-driven politics have been to the great detriment of both CoD and RDP. There are two key issues here: one is a tendency for parties to lack internal democracy, as party leadership tends to be unreasonably controlling. Another is that party leaders want to remain in power, and will go to some lengths to achieve this goal. The success of the party often comes second to the position of leaders and their authority.

Both of the issues are very apparent in the case of CoD, which disintegrated over a leadership dispute. After an extraordinary party congress, a large number of members walked out, claiming the incumbent party president, Ben Ulenga, had engineered his victory by bussing in supporters that were not legitimate delegates. (Schimming-Chase Interview). Ulenga refused to give up power. Despite the fact that a majority of the party's MPs had walked out, as well as 18 out of 27 local councillors and the party's secretary-general, he maintained that his victory was legitimate, changing the locks at the party office to deny the rival faction entry (Weidlich 2007b).

Members of the CoD had concerns about Ulenga from the beginning, and the founding congress already saw the formation of a "concerned group" that was unhappy with the leadership team he had assembled, with some rumours presaging a "looming split" before things had even begun in earnest (Amupadhi 1999). Criticism from within the party mounted, and

Ulenga's allegedly autocratic style was one of the main factors that necessitated the extraordinary party congress at which the party fell to pieces. In court documents filed in a subsequent court case, the former secretary-general of the party claimed that Ulenga would hold meetings only to then "interpret" the decisions in a matter he liked, and that he had inserted himself into virtually every decision-making organisation of the party, chairing the National Executive Committee, National Working Committee, Management Committee, and the Party Caucus (Gertze 2008, 10). Nora Schimming-Chase, a former MP for the party, mirrored these concerns: "it was a question of leadership style … what we find out later, or as we started working, Ben brooked no opposition." When the party split, Ulenga failed to mend it:

> Ben as the president was not either able, willing or prepared to speak to the other group because it was the top leadership, I mean, the majority in the politburo were on the other side. He did not make any attempt to call them, even one by one if not anybody else and say, people let us look at this, how do we salvage the party for the sake of the country (Schimming-Chase Interview).

Of course, this criticism is coming from the anti-Ulenga side. One of Ulenga's closest allies in the CoD thought Ulenga was "not so much autocratic as weak." His argument was that in fact Ulenga did not provide enough leadership, leaving the party adrift (CoD Member Interview). It is telling that even his allies cannot muster an outright defence of Ulenga.

Turning to the other main opposition party, the RDP is at least as much driven by big names. Nick Kruger, recalled a meeting at which the top four leadership came up with a way of ensuring they would be the first names on the party list, despite the party constitution not prescribing this order (Kruger Interview). Much like Ulenga in the CoD, The RDP's Hamutenya clung to his position in the party. Months before the 2014 election, newspapers reported that several party leaders had asked him to resign from his position (Ndimbira 2014). A journalist reporting on the story revealed that some leaders

> felt that Hidipo is a liability, and be it because of age, be it because of his line of thinking, his agenda politically, they had various reasons … as an individual, although he's party president, was really a big disadvantage to their entire campaign (Journalist Interview).

But this came after he had already been re-elected president, and he was unwilling to budge. And while much of the leadership wanted him out, he still had the backing of members in the regions: "because he was the founding president of the party – that always carries a lot of weight in politics. And in that regard yes, the foot soldiers, especially in the regions who, you know, still feel a certain way about him, they do a lot of work." (Journalist 2014). Hamutenya stayed on for the election, and the RDP lost a significant share of its votes to the DTA.

A few months after the election, newspapers reported that Hamutenya was to resign (M. Haufiku 2015). However, the party's political turmoil was far from over. Mere weeks after handing his resignation, Hamutenya made a u-turn, claiming he had been 'coerced' by the party leadership into resigning and that he was withdrawing said resignation. The party leadership refused to accept the withdrawal, stating that his resignation was permanent (Staff Reporter 2015). The standoff escalated further when Hamutenya instructed a regional coordinator to organise a meeting in his home region, and the party instructed its members not to cooperate.

Opposition parties have also seemed distant from civil society and broader social movements. Hopwood argued that CoD and RDP "were never movements emanating from the grassroots, so always split offs at the top level of Swapo," and cites this as a reason for why they failed to expand their reach. That said, civil society in general has not had a big impact on electoral politics. As Hopwood notes,

> Whatever has gone wrong with government in the sort of 24 years of independence … it's never sparked any kind of grassroots social movement to, you know sort of say something about poverty or inequality or unemployment …It's hard to explain in Namibia why that is because you see that quite a lot in South Africa kind of localised and national movements, that reacting to government policy and government inability to do certain things …. So there are probably very deep anthropological and cultural and social reasons why that is not happening in Namibia as well as political, but I think that just makes it hard for the opposition parties (Hopwood Interview).

Assessments of Namibia tend to praise its civil society. Lindeke points out that the country has scored highly on World Bank and Mo Ibrahim Governance Index indicators of 'voice and

accountability' and 'participation,' respectively (Lindeke 2012, 23 cf Freedom House 2014). In reality, there are few organisations that can actually pressure government. A protest against the constitutional amendments before the last elections did not attract many more than 150 protestors, a shameful turnout. Meanwhile unions – who have been a key source of strength for the opposition in countries such as Zimbabwe – are unlikely to play a role. Despite Ben Ulenga's background as a union organiser, CoD never benefited from this link as the umbrella union retains its close ties with Swapo (Hopwood 2008, Freedom House 2014). Meanwhile, churches have increasingly receded out of the political sphere since independence, and seem to pose no threat to the status quo at the moment (Soiri 2002).

Questionable Competence

Even in the absence of leadership disputes and autocratic practices by leaders, Namibian opposition parties would struggle to gain supporters. For one, opposition parties' number one complaint is being under-resourced. Many party members I asked to name their biggest challenge for the election pointed to money (Venaani and Kruger Interviews). The director of elections for the RDP explained that "in the RDP we are using our own private cars for everything we do – it limits you … the number of posters you print, and television" (Kruger Interview). In other countries, private business has financed opposition challenges to the incumbent (see Arriola 2013 for such an account). Opposition parties certainly fundraise from the community (Haufiku Interview), but they cannot raise nearly as much as Swapo. The party's fundraising galas can easily fetch hundreds of thousands of Namibian dollars each, some even millions as businesspeople around the country line up to make sure Swapo knows of their loyalty.[6] The party can also count on the support of its business arm, Kalahari holdings, which holds stakes in a variety of businesses from transport to communications and donated vehicles worth millions to

[6] Thus, one prominent businessman donated N$1 million, another 500 000, a company involved in construction projects 60 000 (Hartman 2014; M. Haufiku 2014a; Ngathjiheue 2014). These sums add rather quickly, and so even a brief online search turns up millions in donations that we know of, let alone undisclosed sums.

the party in late 2014 (Cooper 2013; M. Haufiku 2014b). And then there is the fact that state resources can be easily used, as happened with the manifesto launch (see above) or with the frequent use of government vehicles for party business (Melber 2014, 45). Funding from international sources cannot compensate for this disparity. While there has been some funding for the opposition from abroad – CoD reportedly received money from the British Westminster Foundation and some Scandinavian countries – these amounts are not large enough to put them on a par with Swapo (Boer 2004). In addition, the ruling party has also received funds from abroad, for example a $30 000 donation from the Chinese Communist party (Amupadhi 2003).

But the lack of resources alone cannot explain their struggles. For one, consider that both CoD and RDP managed to win around ten percent of the vote just months after being created, with minimal funding. To blame a poor performance in the next election on lack of funds seems at the very least an incomplete explanation. After all, once elected to parliament parties receive a great deal of money from the state (see table 2). True, the funding formula – which apportions money based on the share of seats in parliaments – benefits Swapo. Still, bigger opposition parties receive millions in funding, millions more than they had when they managed to make large inroads initially. Reading Table 2 from left to right shows that for the second parties, there is no correlation between the funds they possess and their vote share.

Table 2: Political Party Funding

Support to political parties in millions of Namibian Dollars compared to

Percentage of vote in National Assembly

	Pre-1999*		2000-2004		2005-2009		2010-2014	
	Funding	Result	Funding	Result	Funding	Result	Funding	Result
Swapo	N/A*	76.15	61.14	76.44	68.73	74.29	106.34	80.01
CoD	0	9.94	7.98	7.28	6.59	0.66	0.95	0.38
RDP	0	N/A	0	N/A	0	11.16	15.98	3.51
DTA	N/A*	9.48	7.61	5.12	4.66	3.13	4.48	4.80

Source: (Boer 2004) *and author's own calculations*
*Note: * numbers are not available because funding only began in 1997 and budget reports from that era were not available.*

The truth is that a lot of the money is mismanaged. This was most clearly evident in the case of the CoD, where some disgruntled party members even accused Ulenga of using party funds without properly accounting for them (Schimming-Chase Interview). But the party's finances would have been in shambles regardless of the honesty of its president. In a court affidavit, Reinhard "Kalla" Gertze, who had at one point conducted the party's financial affairs, noted that when he took over in 2005 the party was in heavy debt, with a conservative estimate of two million Namibian dollars in arrears (Gertze 2008, 7). The party spent what little money it had on its internal fights – the extraordinary congress alone was budgeted for around half a million dollars (Daniels et al. 2008, 6) and the court battles after the congress ate up whatever else was left. RDP has also not been immune to financial disputes. Reports emerged in July 2014 that the party owed Hamutenya N$600,000 in rent for an office they were renting in his house (Muraranganda 2014a).

It also appears that opposition parties tend to be poorly organised. The report on CoD's extraordinary congress made a special note of the poor quality of CoD's documents (Daniels et al. 2008, 3). In the RDP, according to a journalist with knowledge on the issue, "You're too busy dealing with issues in the leadership, you're too busy having internal fights, just even sometimes

deciding on your position on something … statements will be prepared, they are ready to take a stand and then leadership shuts it down" (Journalist Interview). When I interviewed the RDP's deputy director of elections, at the election headquarter across town from the main party offices, he said that "we tried to isolate ourselves from that main headquarters because here we can think properly without being disturbed" (Haufiku Interview). Perhaps this was an acknowledgment of the difficulty of getting work done in the party.

The Role of Strategic Dilemmas in Explaining Party Weakness

Forming Coalitions: the Classic Coordination Dilemma

Beyond its weaknesses, the Namibian opposition also suffers from dilemmas much like those described in the literature by Magaloni and her colleagues. The first is a coordination dilemma that is rife throughout the literature: the failure of parties to join together in a coalition before elections. This possibility is often mooted before the country goes to the polls. Few of these initiatives get off the ground, however.[7] In 2010 there were rumours that the opposition parties would form a coalition, but talks – which party representatives acknowledge happened – fell apart. In early 2014 newspapers reported that RP and RDP might merge, and RDP leader Hamutenya proclaimed his party was open to alliances (M. Haufiku 2014c). Again, nothing came of it.

Several opposition leaders have advocated for the idea of a unified opposition coalition. Nora Schimming-Chase said she advocated for a coalition during her days in the CoD:

> My position was that if we want to still play a significant role, we need to unite, we need to get the opposition parties together ... So we are going to pool all our resources and get our people to vote for your candidate. And we do that everywhere. And then we have, we break the two-thirds majority you know? (Schimming-Chase Interview).

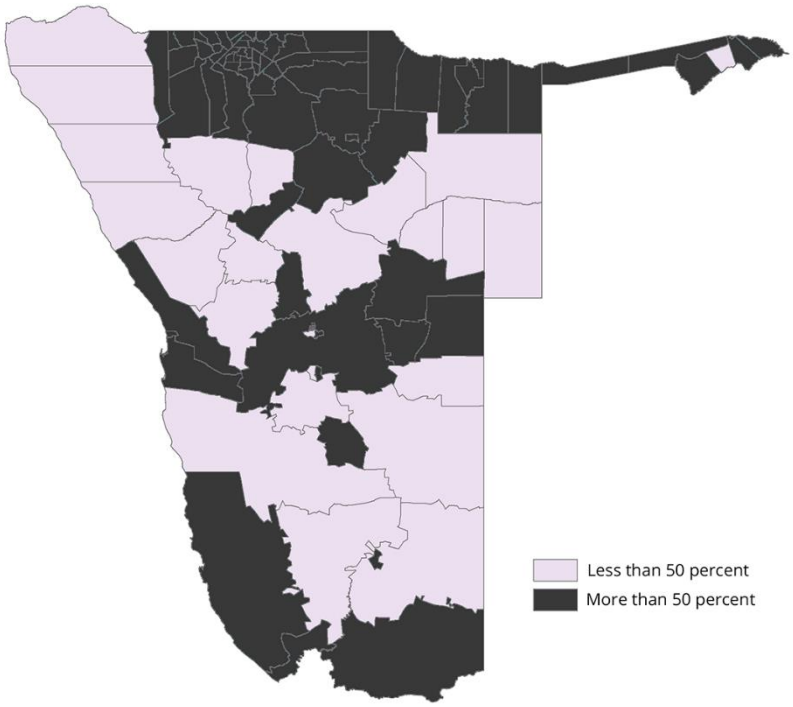
Libolly Haufiku of the RDP offered a similarly strong endorsement of coalitions:

[7] In the first election, a lot of smaller (unviable) parties formed together to contest as alliances; and there have been isolated attempts at mergers between smaller parties, but no major merger has ever taken off.

> Of course, eventually people are going to understand that us fighting in our small little corners won't make any difference. We must somehow find out, forget our differences and forget our little egos and what ... we are going to fight Swapo if we have to succeed (Haufiku Interview 1).

Numerically speaking, merely banding together will not stop Swapo from winning the two-thirds, let alone bring victory to the opposition. However, coalitions could have repercussions at a local level. Consider figure 4. This map shows all constituencies where Swapo won less than 50 percent of the vote in the 2009 National Assembly election, the last year for which such figures are available. While the map overstates opposition strength to some extent (Swapo happens to do poorly in some large, sparsely populated areas that take up a lot of space), it conveys the essential truth: in about a third of Namibia's constituencies, Swapo did not win the majority of votes in 2009. Yet when it came to local council elections, the opposition drastically underperformed because votes were split among different contenders. A coalition could mean that at least at the local level, Swapo sees some real competition. Success in some constituencies could convince voters that the party is a competent ruler and can thus be trusted – a good way to overcome the informational advantage Swapo enjoys. Further, while there might not be any initial benefits, a coalition might help the opposition in the long run. Aside from the economies of scale that could arise from a larger organisation in terms of mobilisation and public relations, a coalition might also help overcome a coordination dilemma: more voters might be attracted to a coalition of all opposition parties because it would seem more likely to be able to play a substantial role in opposing the incumbent.

Figure 4: Swapo's Vote Share, 2009 NA elections



Source: Map is an Extract from the GIS dataset of the Namibia Statistics Agency. Reproduced with the permission of Central Bureau of Statistics. Election results are from the Electoral Commission.

But these coalitions never get off the ground, despite everyone's stated intentions to join together. The reason for this is simple: party leaders cannot find common ground. Soiri (2002, 211) reports that a DTA and UDF merger for the 1998 local elections failed due to "personal disagreements," as they could not agree on a candidates to represent both parties in all constituencies. More recently, Schimming-Chase claimed that leaders would not agree on coalitions because they clung to their positions: "None of them would want to give that up … they would rather lose every single election" (Schimming-Chase Interview). Personal differences are always a problem in coalition-building, but they can be put aside if the incentives align. In Namibia, the political context (specifically Swapo's dominance) militates against opposition parties coming together.

Obstacles to coalition-building are discussed in quite some length in the literature on strategic dilemmas. Forming a coalition has costs: it takes time and resources to come to an

agreement and convince the base to come on board; everyone has to compromise on something, be it ideology or leadership positions (cf Magaloni 2008, 264). On the other hand, when there is no immediate benefit to joining forces (as in this case, where the opposition cannot block Swapo but can at best hope for benefits further down the line) there are few incentives to put egos aside. As Magaloni (2008, 265) bluntly puts it, "if only the ruling party can win, why bother to sacrifice ideology and internal party dynamics in order to create an opposition coalition?" In addition, Namibia's extremely generous proportional representation system means that even tiny parties can reach parliament, so there are few reasons to band together when parties can easily go it alone. Large egos have been the largest obstacle to coalition-building, but Namibia's PR system and the overwhelming dominance of Swapo mean there are few incentives to try and overcome this hurdle. Thus, the coordination dilemma of coalition-building prevents the opposition from building a united front from which to benefit in the long run.

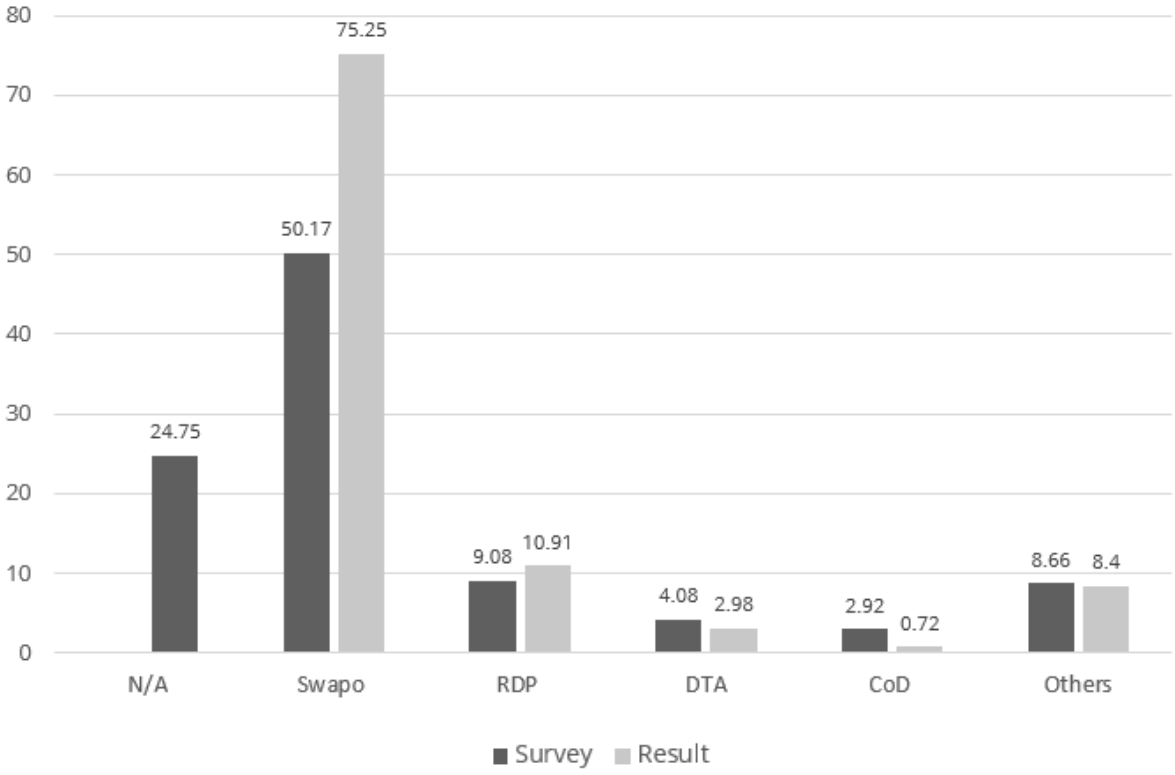
Hidden Opposition Sympathies?

The strategic dilemma literature focuses a lot of attention on voters. In regimes where one party dominates, the political field is distorted: many voters will stay loyal to the ruling party despite their dislike for it, because they do not see an opposition party winning and fear the consequences of switching their vote. Only when they see an opposition party with sufficient momentum to pose a significant challenge will they dare changing their preference at the ballot box. Does this phenomenon apply in Namibia?

There is little voting research on Namibia. Many authors explain voting in ethnic terms, reflexively assigning each party an ethnic group to explain levels of support. Chapter 4 will delve into ethnic politics in more detail. From what we do know, based on surveys, it appears the key to voters' choices is simply loyalty to a given party, based for the most part on historical attachments (Keulder 2010, 279). But something interesting crops up when we compare Afrobarometer survey results with election totals (Figure 5): the survey a year before the 2009

election predicted all parties' votes almost perfectly (always within the margin of error), but understated Swapo's support by 25 percent. This is counterintuitive: we know that respondents sometimes hide their preferences, but usually that happens when they favour the opposition – there is no downside to identifying as Swapo. Still, it seems about 25 percent of Namibians voted for Swapo even though they said they had no preference, or were not aligned with a party.

Figure 5: Comparing Survey Responses with Election Results



Source: Afrobarometer Survey, Round 4 (2008).
Note: The survey had 1200 respondents, yielding a margin of error of +/- 3 percent.
Presidential results were estimated using Question 97: "If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?" The category N/A combines the responses "not applicable," "don't know," and "refused to answer." Survey responses are compared with election results from 2009 (ECN 2009).

Why does this happen? There is a good change they simply default to Swapo because there are few compelling alternatives. We know that unaffiliated voters are younger, suggesting they do not have the history-based affinity with the party of liberation older voters do. This does not make them automatic opposition voters, however. When one party dominates so convincingly, it is hard for the challenger to entice voters. Of course, "the challenger has every incentive to tell potential defectors [from the ruling party] anything if it will encourage them to

defect" (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, 62). In fact, given that all they can compete with is promises (other than the incumbent, which has a track record), these promises can be extravagant. This explains the DTA's promise that it would distribute free urban land and provide free education for doctors if elected (Nembwaya 2014). But precisely because the opposition parties have never been in office, voters have few reasons to trust them that they will deliver on these promises. The ruling party, meanwhile, benefits from the fact that, even if it has not been perfect, its performance has been solid. As far as voters are concerned, Swapo brought peace to the war-ravaged northern regions, ended the dehumanising discrimination of apartheid and introduced a welfare system that provides the elderly with monthly pensions and allows most Namibians some form of healthcare. Many voters have experienced only two governments, brutal apartheid rule and the current disposition. Without any precedent of a democratic succession of power, there is simply no reason for them to trust that a different party would do this well, whereas Swapo has, if not earned their trust, then at least established a solid reputation. Many voters would think it irrational to risk this for an unproven challenger. In the Namibian context, that attitude is entirely reasonable.

"New Kids on the Block Syndrome"

There is a proportion of the Namibian electorate that is decidedly not supportive of Swapo, but this contingent of voters has been quick to change its allegiance when it comes to the official opposition. Since 1999, no party has been the largest opposition for two parliaments in a row, and voter loyalty to the new parties is clearly low – in stark contrast to the base of Swapo, whose support has been unwavering. There seems to be a contingent of voters – numbering between 30,000 and 50,000 – that swing their vote back and forth between the opposition parties: from DTA to CoD when the party emerged in 1999, then to the RDP in 2009, after the CoD's internal squabbles (see figure 1).

It is hard to tell who these voters are, and why they keep switching their vote. Some of my interviewees pointed to white Namibians as a demographic that tends to switch its votes around (Links, Venaani Interviews).[8] There is also a regional concentration: much of the south is opposition heartland, but has switched its support from election to election. Urban areas – around Windhoek and the coast – also have a tendency to swing their vote. Nora Schimming-Chase of the CoD thought a lot of support would come from wealthier Namibians, singling out highly educated voters (Schimming-Chase Interview). Afrobarometer data bears some of this out. The small size of minority groups makes it difficult to establish a connection, but it appears that whites indeed show a higher level of support for the opposition than for Swapo (given the nation's history, this should surprise nobody).[9] Similarly, a higher level of education was also strongly associated with voting for the opposition (Afrobarometer combined survey).

The strongest factor seems to be what Magaloni terms the 'regime dimension' (see figure 6). For her, one of the most consistent features of electoral autocracies is that there is a strong split between those who view the system as legitimate and those who do not. They are not merely dissatisfied voters; they are dead set against Swapo. My interviewees argued that the swings in voting were driven by voters who valued any opposition more highly than loyalty to any particular party. In chronological order:

> People got tired about an opposition that was not robust and so CoD with a hope of challenging the ruling party [won support]. McHenry Venaani, DTA president (Venaani Interview).
>
> I think Namibians are looking for a viable alternative. And I think so many people thought the CoD was going to be that, before CoD's own self-destruction in May 2007 in Keetmanshoop. Now, exactly [as we become] involved in this process of self-destruction comes RDP on the horizon. People say oh, probably, but maybe, it is the alternative we are looking for. CoD Member (CoD Member Interview).
>
> People I think were just disillusioned with what the CoD [breaking up] … And eventually, when the new kid came on the block, the RDP, with prominent people known that had been party

[8] To be clear, we are talking about the opposition vote. Swapo still wins clear majorities, but whatever vote goes to opposition parties switches from one to another in elections.
[9] Cooper (2013, 141) cites informants who posit that whites switch their support based on whoever can counteract Swapo best in their estimation.

> members of Swapo people felt ok, let's try this maybe we'll make a difference. Libolly Haufiku, RDP deputy director of elections (Haufiku Interview).

What is happening here is not that voters are enticed by the rhetoric of a new party, or that they share an ideology with that particular one. Rather, these voters want a counterpoint to Swapo and will do the most pragmatic thing they can. Graham Hopwood thought that "it's probably people who have no particular faith in one opposition party, but who choose to vote for the opposition party that looks strongest or has the most momentum at any one point" (Hopwood Interview). Parties recognise this tendency in voters. That is why the CoD member I interviewed referred to the "New Kids on the Block Syndrome" in Namibia. RDP tried to exploit this in 2009 with their slogan of "don't throw away your vote." It seems a substantial bloc of voters followed that call, breaking away from the CoD to throw in their lot with the RDP. It is likely because they realise the importance of momentum that Namibian opposition parties have made it a habit of grandly welcoming new members into their organisation at specially organised press conferences. For example, the DTA proudly announced that 14,000 ex-soldiers had joined the party, while RDP claimed before 2009 that it had 90, 000 supporters on the books (Hopwood Interview). This can be interpreted as a signal to other voters that this is the party others are flocking to, so they should follow suit in their choices.

It mattered that these breakaways were led by ex-Swapo politicians, as voters were attracted partly by their prominence. Frederico Links, editor of a current affairs magazine, explained that a known face acts as a signal to voters that this party is serious: "these are recognizable faces from within the ruling party and they broke away and they formed, so there's this idealism that, yeah, finally there is going to be a real opposition. And people throw themselves at this" (Links interview). More than the fact that they were well-known, it mattered that they had been participants of the struggle for liberation. Cooper writes that "in opposition politics a new party's mobilisational capacity is positively correlated with the strength of its

liberation narrative … the CoD and RDP were uniquely placed in 1999 and 2009 respectively to appropriate the dominant political discourse" (Cooper 2013, 143, emphasis added). As detailed in the next chapter, liberation rhetoric is absolutely central to Namibian politics, as all issues are parsed through the lens of the anti-colonial struggle. Swapo receives an immense amount of goodwill and legitimacy from its connection to the struggle, and voters thought CoD and RDP could tap into this source of support to build a legitimate challenge to the incumbent.

Recall that the dilemmas faced by voters are often driven by a lack of information. This 'swing' tendency is a reflection of the informational deficit driven by Swapo's dominance. The fact that both Ulenga and Hamutenya were prominent Swapo members ensured they could draw support. But unlike what the literature suggests, the driving factor is not just that these politicians have natural constituencies that follow their lead. Ben Ulenga did not personally deliver CoD's voters (though some of the RDP's support does draw from Hamutenya's clout in his home region). Rather, their prominence matters because voters think it will make them effective candidates against Swapo. These voters are trying to make the best decision in a situation where they have very limited information about which opposition party is best poised to challenge Swapo. A prominent member with liberation credentials acts as a signal to voters that the party might do just this.

Even if they could not add more voters beyond the ones they already had, opposition parties suffer from voters' fickleness. Without sustained support, it is hard to grow an organisation. One of my respondents bemoaned this tendency: "here we have this here ... killing ourselves ... and then [this other group]" arrived on the scene and attracted voters (CoD member Interview). This 'double whammy,' as he put it, hurt the party. In other contexts, voters might have stayed loyal and waited out the storm. In this case, where voters had no loyalty to the party and switched as soon as another challenger came along, the CoD had no chance to get back on track.

What these voters are engaging in is strategic voting. This is curious: the literature predicts that when one party dominates we will see little strategic voting because there is no chance of the opposition winning. Perhaps voters switch their preference in Namibia because they have imperfect information, and miscalculated. With the benefit of hindsight it becomes clear that Swapo was never close to losing in 1999 or 2009. But voters could not have known that – and consider also the possibility that voters knew Swapo would win, but were hoping that an opposition party could attract enough momentum to push Swapo below the two-thirds threshold.

Voters were not the only ones unsure about how elections would pan out. It is also likely that Swapo's strong reaction to CoD and RDP was partly driven by their poor knowledge of the support levels these challengers enjoyed. Certainly, as discussed in chapter 2 in greater detail, part of the vitriol directed at Ulenga and Hamutenya stemmed from Swapo's anger at what the party saw as an act of betrayal. But the party also had genuine concerns about how these parties would do – especially the RDP, which counted a sizeable fraction of Swapo defectors among its early members (and got a correspondingly harsher treatment than the CoD, whose members were prominent but not *that* much). Yes, part of the ruling party's rhetoric stems from its historical siege mentality, which prioritises loyalty above all. But for this protective reflex to become activated the party had to feel under threat. Uncertainty about CoD and RDP's electoral chances produced this perceived danger. Thus Melber describes the reaction to CoD as "a sign of uncertainty and lack of self-confidence by the party's leadership and activists" (Melber 2014, 41). Strikingly, the second election CoD and RDP contested were free from the heightened rhetoric Swapo directed at them after their formation. Once election results confirmed that the new challengers were not a threat, the ruling party relented. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that other newcomers with Swapo defectors but without much momentum – for example the NEFF in 2014 – have not faced this sort of language. The strong rhetoric from Swapo, as

much as it may be based on its historical views on loyalty, also acts as a deterrent for potential opposition voters.

Of course, not all people who refuse to vote for Swapo follow this pattern of vote-switching. Many stuck to their smaller parties. Presumably, many did so out of loyalty or because they simply did not like the newly formed contenders. But Magaloni suggests that many also did not vote for the newcomers precisely because information was so hard to come by, because of this coordination dilemma. If they had thought CoD or RDP could challenge Swapo they might have engaged in strategic voting after all. "Swing voters" decided one way, other opposition voters differently, and perhaps some people also stuck with Swapo for the same reasons. But all were constrained by the information they had about whether the opposition could gain a foothold.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to describe how Namibia's opposition parties find themselves constrained by strategic dilemmas resulting from Swapo's dominance. First, however, I addressed the reasons traditionally put forward in the literature for why parties are weak, and found they do apply to some extent: opposition parties are dominated by the egos of their founders and show a lack of organisational skill. They also receive less funding than Swapo regardless of source.

In contrast with the literature, though, this chapter argued that the advantage of incumbency did not express itself mainly in the fiscal realm. RDP and CoD both won ten percent of the vote without significant funds, and did as well (or worse) once they received millions in state funding. A large part of this is due to mismanagement of their funds; but again they cannot have been totally incompetent given that they won such a large share initially.

Rather, it appears that their fate has been heavily shaped by momentum, as voters switch their vote from party to party, flocking to the "new kids on the block." This party switching results from Swapo's dominance: interviews as well as Afrobarometer results suggest that these are people who tend to view the current regime with disdain. Their primary objective is change; unconstrained by loyalty to a party they support whoever they think has a good chance of winning (or undercutting Swapo's two-thirds dominance). Perhaps one day there could be a larger swing: surveys suggest that almost a third of the people who vote for Swapo are not as closely affiliated to the party as the rest, which is striking in an environment where loyalty is usually an 'all or nothing' affair. As these parties are new, voters know little about them, especially how successful they will be. Prominent members act as a signal that this is a worthy contender and help build momentum. This differs slightly from the literature, which often argues that politicians bring constituents with them (usually from their home region). That element might apply to some extent here, but mostly these 'big men' act as a signal of potential success in an information-poor environment. Opposition voters thus follow the logic proposed by Magaloni – they are momentum voters, throwing their weight behind whoever seems to have the best chance of winning.

Another insight from the strategic voting literature that applies here regards the difficulty opposition parties face in trying to form coalitions. While all pay lip service to the desirability of coalitions, no such deal has ever come to fruition. This is simply due to the strategic dilemma inherent in the situation: why band together when there is so much to lose and (apparently) so little to gain? The chances of a coalition paying off in the long run would seem very remote to a politician concerned with his party's continued survival.

The last chapter argued that we could usefully apply some lessons from the strategic dilemma literature in the Namibian case; this chapter gave some examples of how we can better understand electoral politics in Namibia through such a lens. Voters of all stripes make decisions

based on how they think different parties will do. Arguably this has driven the choices of a section of Swapo voters, who stick with the party rather than risking a switch, supporters of smaller opposition parties who do not see the worth of the new parties, and the bloc of voters who switches their vote around, hopeful that this time the challenger will gain enough momentum. In the next chapter, I will elaborate how the strategic dilemma literature on electoral autocracies still overlooks some ways in which Swapo's dominance helps it maintain its grip on power. I will argue that Swapo's dominance does not just create strategic dilemmas for voters and parties, but also helps it control the language of politics, limiting the political space for the opposition in a subtle way which the strategic dilemma literature does not account for.

Chapter 4. Ideas Matter: How Political Rhetoric Constrains the Opposition

In this chapter I will demonstrate how powerful ideas shape the Namibian political field to the opposition's detriment. The literature on African politics often either neglects the force of ideas, or denies that they play a role in politics at all. But in Namibia, ideas are crucial to the ways in which politics is played out and a key to Swapo's continued rule. Because of Swapo's dominance – of the airwaves, at election time, and as a social force – it gets to singlehandedly set the terms of political debate. The incumbent decides what is talked about in politics, and uses its agenda-setting ability to great effect. While policy differences matter little, political speech is crucial. National discourse focuses on the armed struggle against South African control of the territory, which glorifies Swapo and leaves little space for any other political actors, as leadership is parsed through the lens of the struggle.

In a similar vein, Swapo has defined itself as a paragon of nationalist politics, vilifying other parties as ethnically-based. To some extent, this description is accurate, as a lot of the smaller parties are undoubtedly based on locally concentrated constituencies that overlap with a particular ethnicity. This chapter shows that Namibia's 'second parties,' CoD and RDP, have consciously tried not to follow this pattern and have instead attempted to construct a genuine national party. To achieve this, they have tried to accommodate everyone even when that was not feasible, often to the detriment of their performance.

This chapter begins by describing Swapo's dominance of the airwaves, which allows it to shape political dialogue single-handedly. It then moves to Swapo's use of rhetoric and how it focuses on the armed liberation struggle against South African rule. I will explore how this marginalises other groups and closes political space, making it hard for the opposition to advocate for themselves. Then I move to another tactical use of rhetoric by Swapo, this time in the realm of identity politics. We will see how Swapo has consistently emphasised the

importance of a non-ethnic polity, instilling a language that opposition politicians must use. This is followed by a discussion of how this has been a challenge for opposition parties.

Framing Politics: All about the Struggle

Swapo began its life as a political party with a tremendous amount of political capital and social legitimacy. As the organisation credited with bringing about independence from the dreaded rule of the Apartheid government, Swapo had earned the gratefulness of a great swathe of the population. Despite all of its achievements since, the party seems to remain fixated on the past in its rhetoric.[10] More than twenty years have passed since Namibia won independence from South Africa, but listening to the way politicians speak one could get the impression that this is not the case. The liberation struggle, more than just a memory, has become a "state-sponsored myth of the nation's origins and ideal form that legitimizes the present power constellation" (Metsola 2010, 602), extending the legitimacy derived from the struggle into the current day. Indeed, Swapo politicians barely miss an opportunity to mention the struggle for independence. In 2008, prominent political scientist Joseph Diescho complained that "most speeches are still about liberation and the glory of Independence, as if life and history came to a standstill at Independence" (Staff Reporter 2008). This rhetoric is pervasive, on display in a variety of forms. Some are physical: the *Heroes' Acre,* a monument outside of the capital, celebrates those fallen in the struggle, and a prominent new Museum in the centre of town focuses on the liberation period too. Then there is the national anthem, which exults: "glory to their bravery/whose blood waters our freedom!" Media also keep reminding Namibians of that period. The government subsidised a film version of Sam Nujoma's autobiography at great cost and recently supported a documentary on the early period of PLAN, SWAPO's armed wing (Melber 2014, 32). The state-owned daily newspaper, *New Era*, contains a regular feature on heroes of the liberation era where

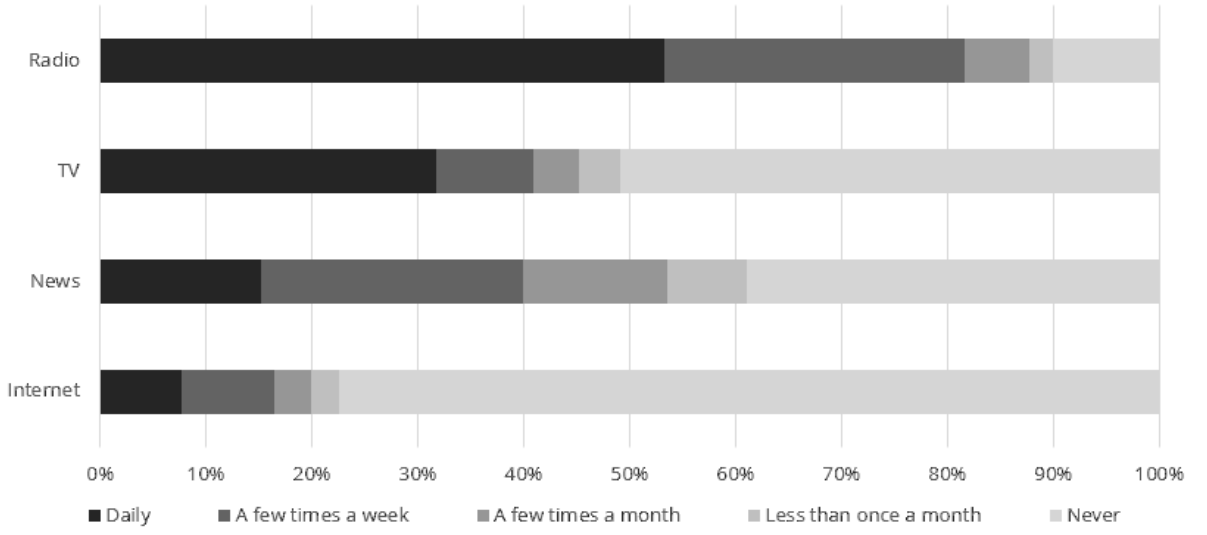
[10] Note that, as discussed in the literature review, this is a feature of other liberation regimes, seen also in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and (to some extent) in South Africa.

readers can learn about the life histories of anti-struggle heroes (many of whom are still active Swapo politicians).[11] Overall, though, this focus on the liberation struggle "most often appears in statements by Swapo politicians and supporters in Parliament, public events or interviews" (Metsola 2010, 601).

Swapo's narrative dominates the airwaves. As Afrobarometer data show (figure 7), the more dominated by government a medium is, the higher the percentage of the population using it regularly for news. Newspapers and internet forums can be very critical, but are not read frequently by most of the population. Meanwhile, radio and television – dominated by the national broadcasters, especially outside cities – form the mainstay of most Namibians' media diet. State-owned media have the furthest reach and are quite biased towards Swapo. For example, in 2009 the party regularly received between 70 and 80 percent of the coverage devoted to parties in the run-up to the elections (IPPR 2009). This went down in the last election (to around 50 percent), but still represents a large advantage against the opposition, which already struggles to reach out to a broader audience (IPPR 2014). Naturally, the sitting government will receive a lot of coverage; it would be strange for newscasters not to be present at a presidential press conference, for example. Still, Swapo is very intelligent about using state events to promote the party (see chapter 2).

[11] For example, "How we crossed the border into Angola" (New Era Staff Reporter 2015a) or "Justina Amwaalwa: The 'Mother of SWAPO' and Staunch Supporter of the Liberation Struggle" (New Era Staff Reporter 2015b)

Figure 6: Media Consumption Habits in Namibia, 2012



Source: Afrobarometer Round 5 (2012)
Note: Graph compiled from questions 13 a-d: "how often do you get news from the following sources?"

The issue is not just that Swapo gets more airtime than other parties; their dominance goes a lot deeper. When it came to power, Swapo naturally received the chance to present its version of history as the national story. Its dominance has allowed it to continue pushing this narrative. As a result of its predominance, Swapo "obtained the power of definition in the political area and [to] shape public discourse" to their liking (Melber 2007, 61). This means they determine the frame through which Namibians view politics.

As stated above, Swapo has emphasised a certain kind of history throughout its time in power, so that "at present, the hegemonic version of Namibian history centres on SWAPO's military struggle for liberation, more specifically the 'glorification of the history of liberation warfare'" (Kössler 2007, 362). The focus on this aspect of history drowns out other perspectives. Thus, the government long neglected the genocide on the Hereros and Namas by the Germans in the early 20th century(Zuern 2012). Even in terms of the liberation struggle, the focus is very narrow, usually centring on those who went into exile and waged the military campaign: "the workers' and trade union movement, student activism, the role of churches and activities of

traditional communities and their leaders" (Kössler 2007, 372) are often left out from this account.[12]

This obsession with the liberation struggle has implications for 'real' politics in contemporary Namibia. If Swapo continues to focus on a history that takes the anti-South African struggle to be the central story of Namibia, and valorises its own role in that story, there is an obvious downside to this as far as the opposition is concerned. A Namibian history that focuses on Swapo's achievement makes Swapo synonymous with Namibia. Anything that falls outside of this history is irrelevant, and those who did not fight for liberation do not deserve inclusion in this new Namibia: "the supposedly unifying language of the nation paradoxically becomes a way of defining who authentically belongs to 'the people' and who does not" (Metsola 2010, 591). This serves the party's purposes: during the struggle, the United Nations formally recognised the party as the "sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people," and the party has seemingly assumed this to be true in the post-independence era as well. In this context, the party slogan "One Namibia, one Nation" is transformed from aspiration to directive.

Because there is no space for people outside Swapo opposition supporters are often called "back home" by the ruling party. Then-prime minister Geingob's reasoning for this call was telling: "come back home. You will be welcomed back, because Swapo wants to build a united nation" (Iileka 2014). This example makes it explicit: loyalty with Swapo is equated with nation-building. This is the crux: Not being with Swapo might be possible, but critiquing it becomes unthinkable. Thus, "critical voices on [a variety of] issues were and continue to be labelled as unpatriotic elements. Loyalty to Namibia is equated with loyalty to Swapo's policy and

[12] The focus on only recognising the war and exile communities seems to have lessened. At a recent funeral for a former liberation fighter, Swapo Secretary-General Nangolo Mbumba said that people who remained in Namibia had also contributed to the struggle (Shaanika 2015). Still, this is an example of how the struggle remains paramount and is brought up at any occasion, and Metsola argues that broadening the category of struggle hero "heightens rather than diminishes the significance of the struggle" (Metsola 2010, 609).

in particular the party's president" (Melber 2007, 68), and an attack on Swapo means an attack on the values it has claimed for itself – democracy, internationalism, reconciliation and so on (du Pisani and Lindeke 2009, 12).

This effect is aided by the ideology of reconciliation. Swapo has emphasised an interpretation of reconciliation that is synonymous with moving on without looking back. The one historical issue the opposition could bring up, Swapo's wartime mistreatment of prisoners (in a climate of paranoia and authoritarianism, many 'spies' were detained, tortured, or disappeared) cannot be brought up because reconciliation as defined by Swapo forbids it. The party vigorously shuts down any debate by arguing that 'opening wounds' would threaten reconciliation and put continued peace and reconciliation at risk.[13]

When elections come around, rhetoric around history benefits Swapo at the expense of the opposition. As du Pisani and Lindeke contend, "not only do voters repeatedly recreate the 1989 election at all levels of government, but the emotional and symbolic features of liberation and independence redound to the advantage of SWAPO" (du Pisani and Lindeke 2009, 11). Because a lot of its legitimacy is derived from the struggle, Swapo is sure to mention its anti-colonial achievements at every turn. Secretary Mbumba told voters to stay with Swapo as

> it is the only party that liberated Namibia from colonialism and oppression … Namibia is free, politicians are free as well as other individuals and people are no more afraid to be imprisoned because of their political views and opinions about politics, and let us respect those people who sacrificed their lives to liberate this country (New Era 2014d).

Geingob used the struggle to emphasise that loyalty to Swapo had always been rewarded:

> Swapo is a tested party which delivered on its promises. I will tell you what Swapo did. First Swapo promised to fight for the liberation of this country and Swapo delivered. It's not a promise, it was done … Namibia now enjoys peace and there is national unity (Inambao 2014).

At a 2009 Rally, Pohamba made clear the difference between Swapo and RDP:

[13] And then there is the fact that Hamutenya was one of the few senior SWAPO commanders who were physically at the Lubango prison camp, due to his role as director of security (JS Saul and Leys 2003, 336). He therefore would not have been able to use this issue as an attack on Swapo.

> They (the RDP) are betraying the people who sacrificed their lives for Namibia's freedom. We (of Swapo) will never betray you … These people (of RDP) say Swapo is 'no good' - does that mean the people who died for our freedom died for nothing? (cited in Weidlich 2008).

Independence rhetoric has suffused political language to such an extent that everything becomes connected to the struggle. I attended a protest against the proposed constitutional amendments in August 2015. At the rally, at which several opposition leaders took the microphone, the attendees sang old struggle songs, chanted "aluta continua" (the struggle continues), and several expressed sentiments along the lines of "this is not what we fought for." When Swapo introduced a gender quota for its party list, Pohamba justified it by explaining that women deserved representation as they had fought against colonialism (Immanuel 2013). Sure, the opposition tries to talk about other things, peppering their speeches with issues ranging from promises of free land to homophobia (Haushona-Kavamba 2014; Nembwaya 2014). But given the ubiquity of the language of liberation, other issues do not tend to stick.

The opposition thus have to try to play up their liberation credentials. Leading up to the last election, Hamutenya said at a rally: "so what are they (Swapo Party leaders) talking about when they boast to have liberated this country? That's a joke! We all liberated Namibia and we never wavered until the country was liberated," going on to provide a list of RDP members who were in active combat or exile (The Namibian 2014). At a 2009 rally, McHenry Venaani "appropriated Swapo's famous struggle-era phraseology, claiming that 'We are fighting to win as One Nation, One Namibia'" (Cooper 2013, 139). These efforts are futile for parties with ties to the apartheid government such as DTA. The hope would have been that the CoD and RDP, as they were formed by Swapo stalwarts, could derive some legitimacy from the struggle history (Cooper 2013). But their efforts have failed: while the party memorialises individual heroes, Swapo's history never loses track of the organisation. Struggle heroes who leave the party might command respect, but they will not gain followers; they may have *fought* for freedom, but Swapo won it.

Desperate Times, Desperate Tactics: Fixated on the Courts

Unable to gain any credit from their tenuous links to the struggle, opposition parties have turned to the courts to challenge the legitimacy of the ruling party. This sustained tendency towards litigiousness has perplexed observers of Namibian politics, as these cases have often resulted in little in the way of an outcome, at great expense of time and money (Links Interview). In 2004, after counting votes took several days longer than planned, CoD and another party sued for the election to be set aside, or alternatively a recount with the objective of challenging the result (Damaseb, Maritz, and Mtambanengwe 2005). A recount was granted, but did not change the outcome of the election. Similarly, as soon as the 2009 results were released, the RDP filed a claim in the high court, convinced that foul play was the reason why they had won ten percent of the vote rather than the majority they had publicly predicted. The party asked for "an order declaring the election for the National Assembly held on 27 and 28 November 2009 null and void" (Isaacs 2010). After sustained legal wrangling that included an appeal at the Supreme Court, the High Court finally ruled in 2011, dismissing the RDP's claims (Damaseb and Parker 2011).

These cases cost the parties dearly. They cost millions, and took many months to be resolved, time in which the party's resources were tied up in litigation instead of building party structures. It is no surprise parties were never granted a re-run of the elections. One of my interviewees, a journalist with a privately-owned paper that has a history of criticising the government, responded scathingly when I asked why parties kept going to court: "there's a level of naivety that I just can't comprehend that they actually think they're going to get anywhere with these court cases" (Journalist Interview). This is for simple reasons: they did not really have a case. Graham Hopwood, director of the IPPR, thought that "they've sort of convinced themselves that they've gathered enough evidence and they don't seem to be able to realise, a lot

of what they have is circumstantial and there's very little in the way of a smoking gun pointing to serious manipulation of the results" (Hopwood Interview).

A look at the court documents supports this argument. In the founding affidavit for the RDP, Haufiku pointed to the fact that there were two versions of the voters' roll, and claimed that 'verification centres' in the capital where results were tallied up had not been provided for the law (L. Haufiku 2009). Both of these might raise suspicions, but they are not evidence of fraud by themselves. For that, the RDP submitted a host of affidavits by its poll monitors. But this evidence tended to be very small-scale, such as the filing by one member who noted that four people voted twice, that the Electoral Commission counted a different number of rejected ballots than she did (15 versus 22), and that an unused poll book was placed in an envelope instead of the box in which it should have gone (Angula 2009). These matters are concerning, but the RDP never managed to show evidence of large-scale fraud. It is no surprise that the case was dismissed, and decisively too: Chief Judge Damaseb accused the RDP of "[hiding] behind generalizations and non-specific allegation" without providing concrete proof and ruled that

> [The] disturbing feature of the present election application is – in respect of several complaints – an attempt to set aside a national election in which hundreds of thousands of people participated to elect those to lead them… and asking the Court to make inferences as to the existence of corrupt stuffing of ballot papers to influence the outcome of the election without one single proven case of actual ballot stuffing (Damaseb and Parker 2011, 157).

Why, given the costs involved and the low likelihood of winning, did opposition parties sue? For one, all of my respondents, across all parties, said that at the time, they believed they had a case (Kruger, Dienda, Haufiku interviews). Aside from their legal chances, they also seemed to genuinely believe that they had been cheated (recall chapter 2). But there is a contradiction here: if they think they are living in a country where elections can be systematically rigged, what makes them think that a court will give them justice? This tension was not lost on my interviewees. Libolly Haufiku of the RDP himself said that "the system is that in Africa, the

[all the] institution cannot be trusted" – but still maintained that "it was worth it, because we wanted to prove a point that Swapo do rig elections" (Haufiku 1).

The simplest explanation is simply that they were hopeful. As Thompson writes, perhaps the law derives its legitimacy from the *possibility* of justice (Thompson 1975). Victory might be unlikely, but given the great injustice they thought they had suffered, perhaps just the chance was enough of a reason to proceed. This would have been aided by the fact that they might have overestimated their chances, as at least one of my interviewees thought they had been poorly counselled by their lawyers (Links Interview). Schedler posits that from the view of political actors, democratisation is a 'nested game' (Schedler 2002b). What this means is that parties do not only have to worry about how they will do in the imminent elections, but are also concerned about the institutions of democracy overall. Sometimes maximising immediate gains is harmful to democratisation in the long run – for example, stirring ethnic tensions might be a low-cost way to mobilise voters but it discourages measured democratic discourse in the long run. Similarly, it is conceivable that parties do things that damage them in the short run, but which are beneficial for democracy in the long run. Is this an example of such a trade-off? Consider that – as we discussed in chapter 2 – it is possible that opposition party members genuinely believe that the system they are living in is not currently free. It is clear that, while some might be opportunists, others are also genuinely convinced of their cause. People who left Swapo for other parties took severe pay-cuts (such as Ben Ulenga or Tsudao Gurirab) or suffered losses in their businesses endeavours (Haufiku of the RDP).

The fact is, while the court cases were extremely costly, both CoD and RDP got *something* out of them. The CoD were granted a recount of the vote – while nothing came of this, they could afterwards claim, with backing of the court, that the conduct of the election had been unsatisfactory. The court agreed that thousands of votes had not been verified (potentially up to 17,000), enough to potentially change the allocation of seats in the National Assembly (Damaseb,

Maritz, and Mtambanengwe 2005, 90–1). Even worse, some tendered votes and votes from abroad were not included in the total. The judge ruled the electoral commission "effect disenfranchised those voters and made a mockery of the arrangements made and expenses incurred to make it possible for Namibians abroad to have their votes cast and counted" (Damaseb, Maritz, and Mtambanengwe 2005, 92).

Meanwhile, both Haufiku and Kruger both stressed to me the long-term positive benefits of the 2009 challenge. Of course, all of RDP's claims were dismissed. However, the judges ruled that "the law is very scattered… that is an unsatisfactory state of affairs and something must be done as a matter of urgency and before the next round of elections to consolidate the electoral law of Namibia (Damaseb and Parker 2011, 160). Indeed the IPPR writes that the ruling "has been cited by many as the impetus" for electoral reform, and the RDP's Haufiku was keen to stress the influence RDP had had in shaping the new bill. (IPPR 2013b, Haufiku Interview).

So perhaps the simplest explanation is the best. These parties wanted a rhetorical weapon to use in the battle for public opinion. A journalist I interviewed thought parties simply wanted to have something to show for their efforts in the face of supporters who had been promised victory (Journalist Interview). Keeping existing supporters happy might be a part of the puzzle, but apart from that these court cases are best understood as an attempt by opposition parties to chip away at Swapo's legitimacy. They would not have been immune to the fact that this was a public case. That is why the RDP staged a public protest when the High Court wanted to dismiss the case on a technicality, and why Haufiku told me after the election that a court case would not be forthcoming this time, because "even if there were indications that some things were not right, I don't think it will reflect well on our membership and the public at large always to be going to court every time there's something" (Haufiku Interview 2). In a post-election newspaper interview he was even more blunt: regarding some RDP members who had sought to have the elections stopped due to issues with Electronic Voting Machines, he said "this put off many

voters who felt that RDP is just a party of cry-babies" (New Era 2015a). The above evidence suggests that opposition parties are aware that these cases play out very publicly. It is not a stretch to interpret them as a political theatre intended to delegitimise Swapo.

Ethnic Politics

I now turn to another example of Swapo's effective deployment of political rhetoric. Part of Swapo's vision of the nation includes a particular brand of inclusiveness. Despite the perception of close links with the Aawambo population group, Swapo has consistently been very conscious about describing itself as a national movement. In this sort of rhetoric, the party denounces tribalism as a threat to the unified, peaceful and stable Namibia which it has created. The party's commitment to a multi-ethnic Namibia can be very explicit: when tabling a constitutional amendment that would create the office of the Vice-President, Presidential Affairs Minister Albert Kawana argued that the position was necessary to accommodate all groups: "We are still building and reconciling this nation of ours. Positions like the vice-president allow for those leading us, particularly the president, to be able to appoint persons from the diverse spectrum of the people of Namibia, so as to foster nation building" (New Era 2015b). The emphasis on its own inclusivity comes with a flip-side, as Swapo also makes it clear that it sees other parties as ethnically based. A deputy minister made this accusation at a rally before the last election: "Swapo brings unity and peace because we are a party encompassing all ethnic tribes. Other parties are just tribal-based parties" (New Era 2014c).

Beyond "Bantustan Politicking": Second Parties Go National

Are opposition parties ethnically-based, as charged by Swapo? There are two sides to the question. Firstly we need to consider whether voters are ethnically motivated, and secondly we should consider whether parties appeal to specific ethnic groups in trying to mobilise support. In Namibia, voting behaviour is usually explained in ethnic or racial terms. Throughout the literature, parties are often named hand in hand with a corresponding ethnic group: Swapo is the

Aaawambo party, NUDO Herero, the RP is white, while the APP is "predicated upon Kavango ethnic support" (Cooper 2013, 118). Not just party affiliation, but changes in voting behaviour are explained using the language of ethnicity. Thus Cooper writes about how the CoD took "white, Baster and Mafwe" voters away from the DTA upon its debut (Cooper 2014, 117).

But does ethnicity really matter that much? Unfortunately, aside from sweeping statements and received wisdom, there have been few studies of voting behaviour in Namibia. A University of Namibia exit survey after the 1992 local elections (Pendelton et al. 1993), which argued the presence of ethnic voting, had severe methodological weaknesses.[14] In fact, there is much evidence to support the idea that ethnicity is not the main determinant of voters' decisions. During a qualitative study in Windhoek's townships, experts and politicians interviewed stressed the importance of ethnic identities to voters, while only one of the people in the camps actually mentioned that their party affiliation was due to ethnicity (Häggeborg and Tillander 2009, 54). The researchers never asked about ethnicity directly, so it is possible that their respondents assumed ethnicity was a given and did not bother naming it because it was obvious to them (Häggeborg and Tillander 2009, 66). Cheeseman and Ford (2007, 9) use survey data to find that "the maturing of democracy … has reduced the importance of ethnicity in determining party affiliation across the whole party system". This means that, both for Swapo and opposition parties, party support falls less and less along ethnic lines, and parties are becoming more multi-ethnic (Cheeseman and Ford 2007, 12).

The quote from Cooper about DTA and CoD support cited above is a telling one: Cooper relies on Hopwood for the assertion that white, Baster and Mafwe voters moved from DTA to CoD. The passage he cites actually reads: "the party did particularly well in areas where

[14] Strikingly, the only options respondents had to explain their choice beside ethnicity and party loyalty were that they were voting for friends or relatives, or had been told how to vote by friends or relatives – motivations which actually outweighed ethnic voting in this survey (Pendelton et al. 1993, 34). Voters never got the chance to say they had voted for a candidate because they liked their policies.

sections of the population had become disaffected with Swapo rule, such as Caprivi and Rehoboth" (Hopwood 2007, 52) – Caprivi indeed has a large Mafwe population and Rehoboth has traditionally been the Baster capital. But the implication that people vote on an ethnic basis does not follow from the fact that voting patterns overlap with demographics in some areas. Simply put: just because a lot of people of the same ethnic group support a given party does not mean they support the party *because of their ethnicity*.

Stroh (2009) argues for "the power of proximity:" region matters, not ethnicity. In Namibia, there are compelling reasons for why inhabitants of some regions would prefer one party over another. The most obvious one is the central north, which famously favours Swapo. The party regularly wins over ninety percent of the vote in the "four Os," [15] and these (highly populous) regions have often provided more than 50 percent of Swapo's total votes (See figure 6). During apartheid, the central north of Namibia bore the brunt of the South African war across the border in Angola. For years, Namibians in this area of the country lived in constant terror. It is no surprise – and very reasonable – that "the end of terror by South African troops in their villages and homesteads was sufficient to win their voting loyalty" (du Pisani and Lindeke 2009, 13).

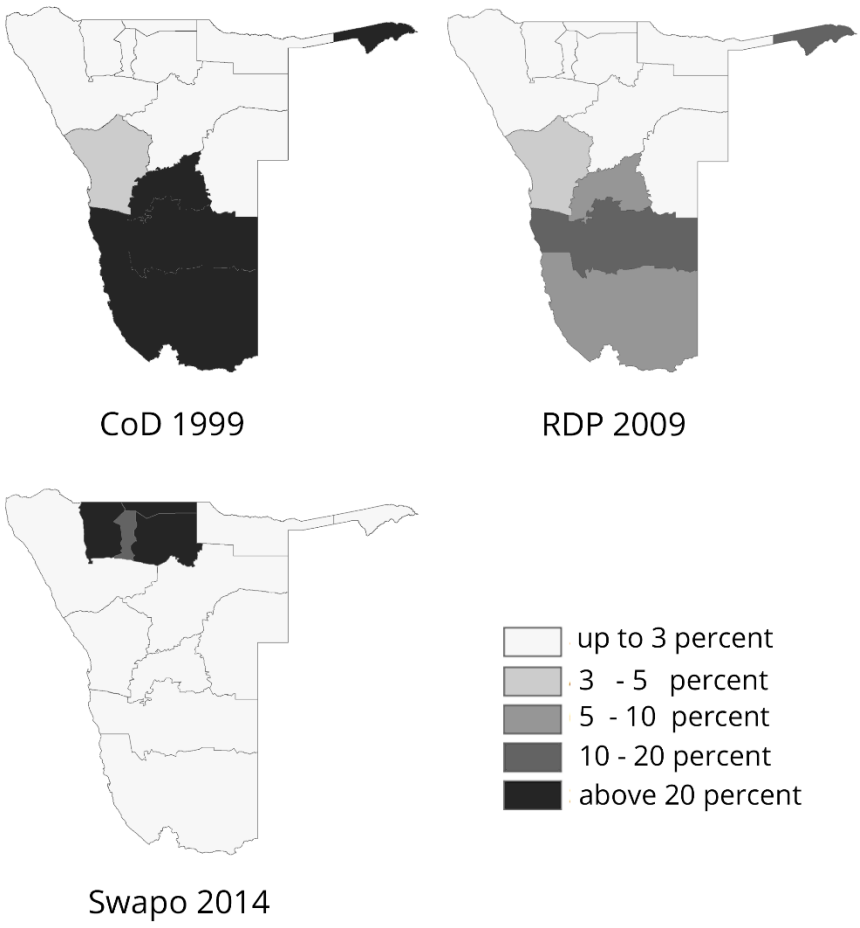
A regional concentration of support is indeed clear for several parties. Figure 7 shows how some parties performed in different regions. The calculation is simple: I simply subtract the party's national vote share from the amount of votes it received in a region. If a party's support is equally spread across the nation, it should perform roughly the same everywhere. But if the party draws its support from one particular region, then its vote tally will be higher than the average it receives across the nation. For many of the smaller parties, this is clearly true: UDF received around 2 percent of the vote nationally in 2014, but won 9 percent of votes in the Erongo region, its traditional stronghold. It thus overperformed its national vote by 7 percent.

[15] The four northern regions of Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto.

The following maps show the difference between national and regional votes for CoD in 1999, RDP in 2009, and Swapo in 2004 – the years in which they were at full strength, respectively (Figure 4.1). They show that despite its denouncements of other parties, Swapo has its own regional base. It may not be worse than other parties, but it certainly does not do better than them.

Figure 7: Party Strongholds Compared

Percentage points above national vote



Source: Map is an Extract from the GIS dataset of the Namibia Statistics Agency. Reproduced with the permission of Central Bureau of Statistics. Election results are from the Electoral Commission (2009, 2014) *and Hopwood* (2007).

Tensions in Coalitions

While voting is not directly ethnic, voters might not want to support a party which they do not think represents them. Thus, all parties with national ambitions place a great deal of emphasis on how diverse their party is. Monica Nambelele, youth league leader of the RDP, said:

> If you look at our top four, strategically, it's the ideal Namibia I want to contribute to. The president is from, he's Oshiwambo-speaking. The vice is from the south. He's coloured. The third one is Mike Kavekotora, he's a Himba. And then the fourth one is our, she's a woman in parliament, Agnes Limbo, she's a Caprivian (Nambelele Interview).

Nick Kruger of the RDP claimed that "we are the most inclusive party in the country at the moment" (Kruger Interview). All of the second parties have tried to build coalitions that represent as much of Namibia as possible. Unfortunately, this comes with a lot of challenges, as a small party based in one constituency is easier to manage than a larger one that is trying to cater to several interest groups. LeBas notes that opposition parties want to have large constituencies – "the challenge is how to manage the diverse interests that make up the party while preventing the defection of elites and constituencies" (LeBas 2011, 43).

Congress of Democrats

The CoD faced internal tensions between different constituencies from the start. Rumours of dissatisfaction kept surfacing, until tensions exploded in 2007 as the CoD imploded at its extraordinary party congress. The conflict was partly about Ulenga's leadership style but the politics of coalition-building played a role too, with discontent simmering under the surface until the issue came up explicitly and explosively at the congress. It turned out the factions did not just disagree about Ulenga's leadership style. The issue was the following: since its inception, CoD had won most of its votes in the southern regions of Hardap and Karas (recall figure 7). However, as discussed above, the party was very consciously concerned about portraying a diverse image to the electorate. This meant that prominent figures in the leadership were from the north. The reason for this strategy is clear: Aawambo-speaking people are by far the largest

population group. Without their support, the party would never have a shot at overall victory. As the CoD saw itself as a legitimate contender, it would need to construct a broad coalition.

But this strategy came at the cost of representatives from the south, who felt underrepresented in the party's leadership. Elma Dienda, who walked out of the Congress, said that:

> The Oshiwambo people was actually saying that they are the majority in the country so they must be represented. But they were not the one supporting the party, the voters, they were not the people who were voting for CoD … And the people of the south were saying but it's us who are CoD. So we don't want it. We want somebody, our own person (Dienda 2014).

At the extraordinary congress, this tension broke into open hostility. The breakaway group claimed that Ulenga had bussed in supporters from the North who were not accredited to vote but ensured his victory (Dienda and Schimming-Chase Interviews). My interviewees did not deny this tension. A high-ranking CoD member aligned with Ulenga thought that the opposition faction had consciously tried to sow division: "I think the people from the south are simply, [let us say] abused. They were told all these things" (CoD member Interview 2014). Even though he downplayed the importance of it, he acknowledged this issue played a role:

> So southerners were being told no but the votes come from you but you are not represented in parliament, anywhere, why should an Owambo be a leader of the party, we don't get any votes from Owamboland (CoD member Interview 2014).

The split destroyed the CoD. In the following election, almost all their voters defected to the newly formed RDP. Whereas it had garnered almost 60, 000 votes in 2004, in 2009 the party only retained five thousand votes, barely managing to win one seat

RDP: A Story Still Unfolding

While the RDP has seen its fair share of internal conflict, there has been no indication that this was based on regional or ethnic tensions. Still the party has struggled with the task of trying to become a national organisation. When it was formed, RDP was widely described as a "Kwanyama party." Kwanyama is one of the languages grouped under the Oshiwambo umbrella,

and several prominent founding members spoke this dialect. RDP was formed by a number of Kwanyama-speaking politicians after their candidates had lost out in the race to become the next Swapo president and in the contest for spots on the party list (Giollabhui 2011, 593). They broke away from Swapo to form a new party, and were thought – before the election – to have great potential to win the Kwanyama vote (du Pisani and Lindeke 2009, 18).

This ended up not quite being the case. Ohangwena, the heartland of Namibia's Kwanyama population, did end up providing a significant chunk of RDPs vote. But the party only won 7.9 percent of the votes in that region, and did just as well in others, contradicting the idea that it was a Kwanyama party. In fact, the party's performance in the north was widely considered disappointing, especially given its pre-election claims of boasting tens of thousands of supporters (Hopwood interview). It was in the south, an area traditionally sceptical of Swapo, where the party won the most percentage points (though given the sparse population, this did not translate into many seats).

In the 2014 election, the party consciously tried to make inroads into the central north. Its director of elections, Nick Kruger, maintained that

> We are not going to use a lot of resources in areas like Hardap, Karas, Omaheke, Kunene, we are going to do targeting, professional targeting of voters … there's seven regions that we are going to spend most of our resources, human resources and financial resources will be where the voters are. That's Khomas, the four O regions, the Kavango, and Erongo (Kruger Interview).

This strategy did not work. Faced with strong mobilisation efforts by Swapo, and in the general context of opposition voters abandoning the RDP for DTA, the party did worse in every region compared to the 2009 election. It is hard to say whether this funding allocation was particularly unsuccessful amid the general failure of the RDP to rally support in 2014. It certainly did not spare them any loss; the party lost as many votes in the north and central areas as it did in the south, as voters swung back to the DTA which had just gained momentum. Arguably, focusing on the south, where the party would face a more receptive audience, would have helped RDP in

reducing the losses they took – especially as the DTA deployed experienced organisers for a door-to door campaign months before the polls in the area (Dienda Interview).

Bifurcated Strategies

Despite their disavowal of ethnic politics, opposition parties have not neglected this realm entirely. In the 2014 election, rumours suggested that RDP activists in the north were reminding voters of Hamutenya's Aawambo identity – in contrast to Geingob, who is Damara. As Frederico Links put it succinctly: "what some among the ground in the north told me is that they're going very tribal" (Links Interview). He did, however, go on to say that "a lot of them don't like it and have expressed reservations about this," but the strategy was used nonetheless (Links interview). Nick Kruger, RDP's director of elections, claimed: "[ethnic appeals are] not official policy. But that it can happen, yes it can happen … we must be honest with ourselves," adding that "We really strive to be very inclusive" (Nick Kruger interview).

This sort of blatant ethnic appeal would be rare in any case. Far more, we can see more subtle approaches. Again, it seems that there is seldom a simplistic voting based on ethnicity. Rather, parties try to sway traditional leaders, who often have some influence over their communities. Ethnicity can be incidental in this dynamic. For example, Keulder (1996, 165) describes a case in which two groups – related by blood – in the south, the Isaacs and the Goliaths, support the DTA and Swapo respectively, despite being of the same ethnicity. This sort of process is not unique to Namibia (or Africa) – in the U.S., for example, candidates running for office spend a great deal of time and energy on winning the endorsement of other actors who can deliver constituencies, courting politicians as well as newspapers. Thus, it is common practice for party leaders to attend the funerals of traditional leaders (Friedman 2005). And before the 2009 election, RDP tried very hard to court the queen of Oukwanyama, Martha Mwadinomho, for her endorsement – though this did not work in the end (Hopwood Interview). Rather, it appears the queen remained with Swapo, who – just like any other party –

has itself been all but innocent when it comes to ethnic appeals, and the queen thus attended a Swapo rally in the north before the 2014 election (Muraranganda 2014b).[16]

The ruling party has often acted in a way that ensures support from traditional leaders. Swapo's patronage regime often works through traditional authorities, securing the party implicit or even explicit support from traditional leaders with great sway over their subjects. In Namibia, traditional leaders are officially recognised under the Traditional Authorities Act of 2000. Official recognition brings many perks: "state-funded remuneration for its chief and twelve of his councillors, as well as an annual administrative operating budget" accrue to each traditional authority, and each authority gets two seats in the Council of Traditional Leaders, which advises the president (Friedman 2005, 44). More direct overtures include the vehicle donations to Traditional Authorities discussed in chapter 2.

This is an optimal strategy for Swapo. One the one hand, the party constructs a broad tent – through both policy and rhetoric – with which it can attract voters of various stripes, without alienating those who might be put off by too overtly ethnic politics. At the same time, it has maintained enough links with traditional forms of authority that those to whom their traditional identity matters continue to lend it support. The opposition on the other hand struggles to appeal so broadly, and certainly cannot compete with Swapo in mobilising the support of traditional leaders.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to show several ways in which ideas around history, nationalism and ethnicity shape Namibian electoral politics. Because of its dominance, Swapo determines *what politics means* at a very fundamental level. Almost all political issues are framed in terms of the

[16] The RDP's failure to make inroads into Ohangwena further show that there is no automatic ethnic voting. Absent the queen's endorsement, the fact that RDP leaders were Kwanyama was not enough to convince Kwanyama-speakers to vote for them en masse.

liberation struggle, leaving opposition politicians at a serious disadvantage. Unable to introduce other issues that resonate as strongly with the electorate, they either try to co-opt the language of the liberation struggle or seek to undermine Swapo's legitimacy by portraying Namibian democracy as a sham. Similarly, all major opposition parties try to follow the broad-tent strategy Swapo emphasises, even if they cannot afford to do so to the same extent as the incumbent. Meanwhile, Swapo emphasises its identity as a modern, non-ethnic movement, but is still able to draw on traditional authorities in mobilising voters. Second parties struggle to match this inclusive language but certainly cannot deploy such bifurcated strategies as effectively as the ruling party.

This focus on rhetoric is often missing from the strategic dilemma literature. In Magaloni's account, ideology's only role is in making it difficult for opposition voters of different ideological persuasions to combine their support behind one candidate. That is not the problem here, but in Magaloni and other authors on these regimes, there is little to no discussion about how the dominance by one party allows it to affect political discourse in a way that shuts out the opposition from making inroads. This is unfortunate, because one directly affects the other: as discussed in chapter 2, Swapo's claim to represent all Namibians both motivates its drive for higher winning margins and derives legitimacy from results; as discussed in chapter 3, voters cast strategic votes for Swapo break-away because they think the claim to struggle legitimacy will enable the new party to build momentum and overcome the coordination dilemma. Liberation discourse and strategic dilemmas feed into each other.

Conclusion

Beatriz Magaloni bemoans the narrow focus of the literature on electoral autocracies. "When analysing why hegemonic parties are so resilient," she writes, "journalists and scholars normally focus on electoral fraud" (2008, 4). But this explanation ignores that very often the ruling party actually wins elections by large margins and does not resort to fraud (Magaloni 2008, 5). Because of this narrow focus on fraud, scholars miss out on many other dynamics at play. The literature on opposition party weakness in Africa is similarly focused. It tells us that ruling parties often dominate smaller ones (Rakner and van de Walle 2009), and explains that incumbency bestows an advantage on the ruling party, especially in terms of resources (Greene 2009). Opposition parties, we are told, are weakly institutionalised (Randall and Svåsand 2002) and driven by individuals (Carothers 2006). All of these are true, and apply in Namibia. Still, this account is more descriptive than explanatory.

Yes, opposition parties have access to a lot less funding than Swapo.
Yes, opposition parties have shown weak organisation and ego-driven politics.
Yes, opposition parties have few links to grassroots movements or civil society.

But limiting our analysis of why ruling parties stay in power to the aforementioned factors, or even the cliché of fraud and repression, misses both the tremendous impact and various sources of Swapo's dominance. This narrow focus fails to acknowledge the subject this thesis sought to examine: the fact that in both obvious and subtle ways, Swapo's dominance shapes political incentives and encourages opposition dilemmas, buttressed by a specific historical legacy and resulting political discourse.

I began by looking at Namibia's regime type. For authors in the strategic dilemma literature, it is important to distinguish electoral autocracies from other types of hybrid regimes. The second chapter argued that under Magaloni's definition, Namibia would qualify as an electoral autocracy – but also that the insistence on looking only at electoral autocracies

is too strict. This is a fine, but relevant point: it matters not whether the incumbent actually prohibits others from voting; rather the key is whether political actors *think* there is no way of a challenger winning. This is certainly the case in Namibia. The chapter then went on to show that Swapo acts very much like the incumbents described by Magaloni, making use of a 'punishment regime' where voters come to believe that the state's services are contingent upon support for the party, and running up high margins at election time to signal to voters and party insiders to stay loyal as there are no alternatives. While the strategic dilemma literature only briefly touches on the subject of ideology, I argued that Swapo's narrative – where it is presented as the only authentic representative of Namibians – both depends on high margins of victory, and encourages the party to seek such decisive victories.

In chapter 3, I discussed how strategic dilemmas negatively affect the ability of opposition parties to challenge Swapo. First, I addressed the claims of the literature on opposition party weakness in Africa, which focuses on financial imbalances and narrow support bases. These reasons are certainly part of the problem in Namibia; but I argued they do not offer a full explanation of the situation. CoD and RDP won around ten percent of the vote with barely any funds; and could not improve on their lot once millions streamed in to their coffers. This is not just down to mismanagement. The money could not help them, because opposition party voters are fickle due to the nature of the regime. Namibia, as Magaloni would predict, has a notable contingent of voters who are purely motivated by anti-Swapo sentiments. They change their vote based on momentum, and are devoid of any partisan loyalty. In this sense it mattered that the parties were headed by prominent politicians with links to the struggle. It mattered not because they had personal followers (as the literature often implies), but because in an information-poor environment, their prominence and liberation credentials signalled to voters that this was a party to be taken seriously. I also argued that a substantial portion of Swapo voters might be amenable to voting for some opposition party, but have so far not seen a reason to engage in strategic voting. Strategic

dilemmas also prevent opposition parties from forming a united front against Swapo, which means they miss out on long-term benefits such as economies of scale. With no immediate upside to such a cooperation, as Swapo victory is assured for a while, incentives to put aside differences are small. Overall, this chapter argued that there is a lot more potential than opposition parties are utilising, and that a lot of this wasted potential is down to the decisions voters make based on strategic dilemmas arising from Swapo's dominance.

While the strategic dilemma literature offers useful insights on how dominance by the incumbent shapes political incentives, it remains incomplete. In chapter 4, I argued that its dominance has allowed Swapo to shape discourse in such a way that political issues advantageous to the party are now inherent in the very language of politics. Talking about politics is almost unavoidable without playing into Swapo's hands. Magaloni is concerned with how regimes sustain themselves, not how they gain their power in the first place. But with Swapo, those two concerns cannot be separated. The liberation struggle is the source of its initial power and now, because its dominance lets it shape discourse, keeps renewing and maintaining Swapo's legitimacy. In this case history, and language, matter. Swapo's emphasis on the liberation struggle as the focal point of Namibian history and politics has forced other parties to try and legitimise themselves by the same route; an endeavour that is bound to end in failure. Attempts to differ in other realms of policy have not worked, and so the opposition has turned to court cases in an attempt to undermine the ruling party's legitimacy. Further, the emphasis on multi-ethnic politics has been interpreted in a specific way: parties try to explicitly cater to *all* groups. That this is not feasible with scarce resources soon becomes apparent, and the CoD suffered a split partly because of this factor. Both of the above examples show that *ideas matter* in Namibian politics, and that the incumbent has deployed ideas astutely to remain in power. Little of the literature acknowledges the role of ideas in African politics; this chapter thus offers an important counterpoint.

While I contributed to the literature in several ways, the themes I explore call out for further research. This study focused on the perspective of opposition parties. However, many insights from the strategic dilemma literature focus on the decisions voters face in systems with a dominant party. Further research could help us understand why a significant share of the Namibian electorate does not profess loyalty for Swapo, but votes for the party anyways. Are these voters willing to vote for a different party but just waiting until one comes along that seems to have a chance at winning? Or are these loyalists who merely did not use the language to describe party attachment the survey preferred? More can also be done to understand the incumbent's behaviour. Swapo has been accused of conflating party with state and encouraging voters to believe their well-being depends on loyalty to the party. Is there evidence that the party uses patronage in systematic ways, other than isolated accusations of improper conduct? Finally, the strategic dilemma literature makes use of game-theoretical models, which were only dealt with informally here. Exploration could be done on whether (and how) these models change if affinity is given a greater role in voters' decisions than economic preferences and if 'victory' is redefined from taking the legislature to breaking the ruling party's two-thirds majority.

Despite the fact that more research must be done, I believe my work has made important contributions to our understanding of what constrains the opposition in Namibia. The central argument of this study is that Swapo's extreme dominance – not just the fact that it wins, but the sheer extent of its crushing margins – shapes the political incentives faced by opposition party leaders, voters of all stripes, and even ruling party elites, and discourages the emergence and growth of a significant challenger to the ruling party. Swapo's overwhelming margins mean that voters think challengers are unviable, opposition party leaders will not put their differences aside because they see no benefit to doing so, and ruling party insiders know not to step out of line. All of these tendencies are fortified by Swapo's powerful usage of political rhetoric. As inheritor of the liberation movement, the party can draw upon a

powerful well of legitimacy. It has – much like other regimes in the region – made itself synonymous with the nation, discouraging dissent and thus further exacerbating the trends brought upon by the strategic dilemmas outlined above. The literature recognises that ruling parties are dominant in Africa, but too seldom investigates the complex mechanisms through how incumbents sustain and reproduce this dominance. This thesis offers part of the answer to this problem.

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List of Interviewees

Name	Position when Interviewed
Frederico Links	Editor, *Insight Namibia* Magazine
Nick Kruger	Director of Elections, RDP
Elma Dienda	Volunteer, DTA; former MP, CoD
Monica Nambelele	Youth League president, RDP
Graham Hopwood	Director, Institute for Public Policy Research
McHenry Venaani	President, DTA
Female Journalist	Reporter at private newspaper
Nora Schimming-Chase	Former MP, CoD
Bill Lindeke	Researcher, IPPR; Director, Namibia's Afrobarometer survey
Kalimbo Ipumbu	Mobilization Commissar, NEFF
Libolly Haufiku	Deputy Director of Elections, RDP
CoD Member, Male	High-ranking member of CoD