CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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In February 2010, Tendai Biti, an official of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Zimbabwe's Minister of Finance, bluntly stated, 'ZANU-PF cannot continue to urinate on us'.[1] What Biti was complaining about was the penchant of the dominant Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front of President Robert Mugabe to ignore the opposition MDC in the governance of Zimbabwe, even though both parties were part of a supposedly inclusive unity government in Harare.

Indeed the frustration that caused Biti to utter these words is felt by much of the political opposition in southern Africa. These feelings are either arrogantly dismissed or condescending tolerated by incumbent parties across the region. In other cases, opposition political parties have no one else but themselves to blame as a result of internal divisions, poor party organisation and a concomitant lack of party discipline.

The generally ineffective and moribund nature of much of the political opposition points to a grave democratic deficit in southern Africa. The reason for this is not hard to fathom. Like it or not, the political party is the major organising principle of modern politics. Andrew Heywood[2] notes that political parties are, '…the vital link between the state and civil society; between the institutions of government and the group and interests that operate within society'.

Yolanda Sadie[3] goes even further and states that no democracy can function without political parties. She argues that democracies are based on the principle of representation of the people. It is political parties that represent and articulate the interests of the people through their duly elected representatives.

Both ruling and opposition parties play a crucial role here, with the party securing the most votes forming the government and executing the policies of its constituency whilst the political opposition serves to hold the ruling party accountable and provides inputs into the legislative process. In this way, too, both ruling and opposition political parties give the entire political process legitimacy. Dominant interests in society, through the various checks and balances in place, are not so dominant that they can ride roughshod over other segments of society. The opposition, meanwhile, despite their party not having won the election, can still play important roles in demanding accountability from the ruling party whilst at the same time playing an important role in the legislative process. Thus there is a

buy-in from all sectors of society into the political system. In this process, as Balefi Tsie argues in this volume, political parties contribute to political stability.

Political parties, operating within the context of electoral competition and within a liberal polity where a democratic political culture prevails through all segments of society, are therefore guardians of democracy. On the other hand, Heywood warns against regime parties that monopolise political power, giving rise to the so-called dominant party system where ruling political parties are often seen as 'instruments of manipulation and political control'[4]. In similar vein, Sadie argues that without rotation in office, dominant parties fail to distinguish between party and state interests, centralise power, and grow increasingly arrogant as they ignore criticism from other political parties and broader civil society.[5]

In southern Africa, this arrogance of power of the incumbent political parties, with its resultant democratic deficit, holds dire consequences for the region's people from poor policy formulation resulting in poor living standards to human rights abuses – most notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe.[6] Without a vibrant political opposition such poor policy formulation and human rights abuses will remain unchecked to the detriment of the region's people. More importantly, the authoritarian tendencies of ruling parties will be merely reinforced in the absence of such effective political opposition. Thus, a vibrant political opposition in each of the polities of southern Africa needs to be entrenched if the region's people are to enjoy a future of economic prosperity and political stability.

This is seen most graphically perhaps in feudal Swaziland, one of the most politically repressive states in the region and one of the most economically backward. We see this in the torture and unjustified use of lethal force by so-called law enforcement agencies as well as in the nearly 70 per cent of the population who live in poverty.[7] Indeed, as we shall see in this volume, Petros Magagula and Zwelibanzi Masilela point to the fact that part of the poor policy-making undertaken in Swaziland relates directly to the fact that opposition parties had not played a legislative role in the country since independence. To put it differently, the parliaments of the kingdom never had the benefit of learning from, or of being buttressed by, the contributions of the opposition parties.

This, of course, raises important questions. Why is the political opposition so weak and fragmented in the region? Are the challenges that they confront largely those of internal weaknesses or state repression? How does the political opposition relate to their constituencies as well as wider civil society? What is the legal framework in which they operate? How do the state and its constituent organs in their interaction with the political opposition interpret that legal framework? How does funding to political parties operate in each of the countries? How do political parties engage with the media to articulate the interests of their constituencies?

In seeking to answer these questions, this volume assembled a number of prominent scholars from the region to respond from the experiences of their

own country. This volume is unique in that it is the first time that a comprehensive survey of opposition political parties in southern Africa has been attempted. As Dirk Kotze notes in this volume, scholarly work on the subject is severely limited. Moreover, the diversity of countries included – from tiny island-state Mauritius to regional behemoth South Africa, from democratic Botswana to feudal Swaziland – allows one to draw comparative lessons and indeed generalisations about the region.

In the first chapter, Balefi Tsie examines opposition political parties in Botswana from the country's independence in 1965 up to the 2009 elections. He explores both the character of the political opposition and its contribution to democracy. Importantly, Tsie examines opposition political parties within the broader context of the political economy of the country. He concludes by looking into the future – examining pathways to a stronger political opposition and thereby a more vibrant democratic polity.

Jotham Momba, meanwhile, focuses his attention on Zambia from 1990 when Article 4 of the Zambian Constitution was amended to allow for the formation of political parties other than the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP). Whilst this opened political space for both the political opposition and civil society, Momba makes clear that the situation is far from a level playing field, with incumbents having the benefit of patronage networks and interpreting legislation to their benefit. At the same time, internal weaknesses also prevent the political opposition from playing as effective a role as they need to play in order to ensure accountability from the ruling party.

In their analysis of Namibia since 1990, Andre du Pisani and Bill Lindeke examine the genesis, nature and performance of the political opposition. In the process, they provide penetrating insights into the constitutional provisions for opposition politics, electoral systems, party performance, support bases and party funding. Despite the fact that Namibia has experienced 15 elections at three different levels of government since independence, the reality remains that the country experiences major challenges surrounding the dominant one-party system of the South West African Peoples' Organisation (SWAPO).

Francis Makoa's examination of Lesotho's opposition politics is also done through a historical lens and investigates the changing nature of the political opposition within a wider political and economic context. In a wide-ranging analysis he explores civil-military relations, the role of the king and trade unions, the development of political parties within Lesotho since the 1950s and the institutional framework in which these operate. Makoa's analysis also points to the role of dominant personalities within Lesotho's fragile polity since independence. In this way African politics differs very much from its counterparts elsewhere, because institutions have been historically weaker; personalities matter more at state and party level.

The issue of the personalisation of politics is displayed more evidently in opposition politics in Mozambique. In their chapter, Joao Pereira, Sandra Manuel and Carlos Shenga examine opposition politics in Mozambique since November 1990 when a new Constitution provided for a multiparty political system. In a comprehensive analysis, the authors critically discuss the electoral system in Mozambique, the ethnic basis of party support, issues of internal cohesion and the organisation of parties, party funding and intra-party democracy. As in Namibia, Angola, Botswana and increasingly South Africa, one-party dominance characterises politics in the country.

In his chapter on South Africa, Dirk Kotze examines opposition political parties since 1994, focusing on those opposition political parties with a national footprint. As he points out, 80 per cent of the official political parties registered with the Independent Electoral Commission focus only on municipal elections. By narrowing his attention to those political parties which stand a chance of unseating the dominant African National Congress (ANC), he adds a greater level of depth to his analysis. Very importantly, Kotze also examines how the opposition view themselves and how the ruling party views the political opposition.

At face value, Mauritius gives one the impression of a vibrant and democratic multiparty system with regular elections, the peaceful transfer of power and voter turnout in elections at a remarkable 80 per cent. Yet, in her incisive chapter, Sheila Bunwaree notes that the democratic deficit is also evident in Mauritian politics, largely on account of the dynastic nature of political parties. Moreover, she points to the need to de-ethnicise and de-racialise the party system as well as to ensure greater participation of women in the political process.

Opposition political parties in Swaziland, meanwhile, confront unique challenges. In their chapter, Petros Magagula and Zwelibanzi Masilela point out that Swaziland is the only southern African country to be ruled by a monarch wielding real political power and traditional authority and institutions to bolster his rule. Whilst opposition political parties cannot legally operate and there is a ban on political campaigning, these do exist and do operate. Magagula and Masilela provide fascinating insights into the nature of the Swazi system as well as a thorough examination of the various political formations in the country and their interaction with Swazi civil society from 1968 to 2009.

In the final case study, that of Zimbabwe, John Makumbe provides an erudite study of opposition political parties in the country since 1980, with an emphasis on developments since the establishment of the MDC in 1999. Like Swaziland, the political opposition in Zimbabwe operates under repressive conditions. Unlike Swaziland, however, the two MDC factions together with ZANU-PF are all part of a government of national unity. What has this meant for the MDC and its constituency? What has it meant for democracy in Zimbabwe? How have internal divisions hurt the political opposition? How has the international community engaged in promoting democracy in Zimbabwe? These are some of the questions

Makumbe attempts to answer in this important chapter.

Whilst the challenges confronting the political opposition are ultimately unique in each country, there are broad similarities too. These provide us with an understanding of not only the broad challenges but opportunities confronting the political opposition in southern Africa.

Sheila Bunwaree begins her illuminating chapter quoting two pre-eminent thinkers – Robert Dahl and Van de Walle. Both thinkers note how the quality of political competition and the power of the political opposition are closely related to how democratic a country is. For Dahl, no political opposition translates into no democracy. After all, as Dahl notes, without political opposition, there is no choice, and without choice, citizens cannot exercise their rule.

In similar vein Francis Makoa argues that a key hallmark of multiparty democracy is effective representation underpinned by strong political institutions founded on and guided by the principle of freedom and the right to choose. Pereira, Manuel and Shenga passionately argue that opposition political parties have a critical role to play in the governance process and are a key element in monitoring government performance and mobilising citizens to participate in public life.

Balefi Tsie also examines political parties' wider contribution to society by pointing out how they achieve societal cohesiveness. Indeed, this is the common thread running through all the chapters in the volume. Magagula and Masilela accept this position but take it a step further and point out how the lack of participation of the political opposition has resulted in mismanagement of finances, lack of accountability and poor policies. Dirk Kotze goes further still, and quotes Adam Przeworksi who made the observation that a democracy is not yet consolidated until the government has lost an election and handed power to the opposition who now forms the government.

Despite the importance of political opposition and resultant competition, the reality in the southern African region is a major democratic deficit resulting from the lack of a vibrant political opposition. The reasons for this are varied emanating from both the external environment and internal factors.

First among the external factors is the institutional framework in which political parties are compelled to operate. The institutional framework varies from the relatively benign as in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia to the highly repressive as in Swaziland.

In their penetrating chapter on Namibia, André du Pisani and Bill Lindeke point out how Namibia's 1990 Constitution is regarded as one of the most liberal in Africa, making provision for individual liberties, media freedom and a multiparty political framework. One would expect that under these conditions, multiparty democracy would be flourishing in Namibia. The reality though is that it is not, with opposition parties having been held to less than 30 per cent of the vote in elections since 1989. Amongst the reasons is the discrepancy between what is said

in the Constitution and the reality on the ground. Thus when the opposition Rally for Democracy and Progress was formed and broke away from the ruling SWAPO, its leaders were targeted with stinging verbal abuse and vengeful dismissals. The most serious violence post-independence then broke out.

In Botswana, whilst the political opposition welcomed the changes to the Constitution in 1997, allowing the formation of an Independent Electoral Commission, they were appalled to find that the supervisor of elections still reported to the Office of the President. Similarly in Mozambique, whilst the November 1990 Constitution allows for a multiparty political system with a minimum of five per cent electoral threshold in the national vote to gain representation in parliament, the reality is that FRELIMO benefits from the politics of incumbency so that it is far from a level playing field. The same could be said of South Africa.

In Zambia, whilst the amendment of Article 4 of the Constitution allows for the provision of political parties other than the then-ruling UNIP, other laws like the Public Order Act and its application by the police have worked against multiparty democracy.

Perhaps the difference between constitutional provisions and reality is seen most graphically in Zimbabwe where despite constitutional provisions for a multiparty democracy, MDC members have had to bear the brunt of state-sanctioned violence and repression. In Swaziland, the February 2006 Constitution does not define the principle of democracy and is unclear on whether political parties are allowed to operate in the kingdom. This ambiguity then allows the state to make use of such legislation as the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008 to infringe on the rights of people to freely form political parties and engage in political activities.

Another aspect of the institutional framework that impacts on political parties is the nature of the electoral system. In Mauritius, the first-past-the-post system runs the risk of a parliament without an opposition. This system has also resulted in parties forming coalitions or alliances to prevent annihilation at the polls. However the downside of these coalitions is that it robs citizens of choice and results in a tiny political elite being recycled from election to election. In addition, there is an absence of a culture of opposition politics – of wanting to ensure that government performance is monitored and accountability is enforced. Instead those parties not in power seek ways to get into the coalition in power.

The case of Lesotho demonstrates that jettisoning the first-past-the post-system and its replacement by the mixed member proportional electoral model has made little difference to the prospects of the political opposition to unseat the ruling party. The lesson learned may be that whilst the change of the electoral model towards one of inclusion is to be welcomed, other changes need also to be effected if the political opposition is to have any chance of replacing the ruling party. These range from rectifying intra-party problems to issues of neutralising the benefits of incumbency. Neither is the politics of incumbency a uniquely Lesotho affair.

We have seen how in Zambia, the ruling party uses loopholes in the Electoral Code of Conduct to gain an unfair advantage over the political opposition.

Closely related to the institutional framework is the issue of party funding. As Pereira, Manuel and Shenga remind us, the issue of party funding in Africa takes on increased urgency because of the poverty of party members, many of whom are unable to pay party membership fees. Without party funding, no political party can campaign effectively, mobilise its constituency and thereby stand a chance of unseating incumbents. This is a fact that ruling parties in the region understand well and they go out of their way to starve opposition parties of funding whilst at the same time building patronage networks for their own party, using state resources. In Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF uses state resources for itself whilst the political opposition has no access to the same resources. At the same time the Mugabe regime has been critical of any foreign donor agencies providing support to both civil society and the political opposition. However in Mozambique, where RENAMO has been the recipient of public funds as well as foreign donations, gifts and grants, such foreign support has made no difference to the party's political prospects.

In South Africa, too, opposition parties are relatively free to raise funds privately in addition to the public funds they receive. Despite this, there is little hope that these funds could translate into unseating the incumbent. The lesson here is also clear: additional funds do not serve to bolster the opposition's political prospects at the polls unless they are used effectively and the parties' internal problems are fixed.

In Lesotho, the Independent Electoral Commission provides R20 000 towards campaigning for all political parties having 500 members on registration. This token amount hardly covers the cost of the campaign. Thus opposition parties need to find funds to supplement the minuscule amount received from public funds. This, however, is extremely difficult in a context where society is poverty-stricken. Here, too, the politics of incumbency provides the ruling party with an unfair advantage.

In Mauritius public funding of political parties does not exist. Politicians however do receive so-called 'donations' from 'well-wishers'. The problem with this scenario is that such donations are unofficial and unacknowledged. Such a situation can only promote corruption since one has no idea what favours the 'well-wisher' may want in return for the 'donation'. Greater transparency is essential if this scenario is to be avoided.

The relationship between the private sector and party funding is also seen in Namibia, where businesses which seek to access government contracts and licences contribute to SWAPO coffers. Balefi Tsie's point on Botswana is however relevant to all dominant party systems in the region when he eloquently argues that private companies invariably support the ruling party in such systems, since this is where they get their tenders. Once more this is the politics of incumbency. In Zambia,

perhaps more malevolently, the Zambian Revenue Authority is allegedly utilised to harass those businesses seen to be making donations to opposition political parties.

Another key factor is the role of the media. When government has a monopoly over the media, greater advantages accrue to the ruling party, whilst the political opposition languishes in political obscurity – with the ruling party enjoying the limelight provided by public broadcasting authorities. This monopoly is seen most graphically in the tight control exercised by the Swazi Ministry of Public Service and Information over both the Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Service and the Swaziland Television Broadcasting Corporation. In Mozambique, meanwhile, publicly funded media organisations are deployed against the political opposition during elections. In Namibia, SWAPO's political dominance is reinforced by its dominance of the government-owned media where content bias as well as intensity of coverage reinforces the political status quo. Even in politically tolerant Mauritius, the incumbent government often abuses its power to access much more time on state-owned media than its rivals.

One way to break the ruling party's media dominance is the establishment of the private media outlets that we see in South Africa, which so successfully acts as a check on the ruling African National Congress (ANC). There are, however, three problems here:

First, there is the resource question. Given the distressed economic circumstances in tiny Lesotho or Swaziland, it is rather unlikely that they would be able to follow the South African example of creating a vibrant alternative media outlet.

Second, there is the problem of state repression. In Zambia, for instance, we have the example of a private radio station in the Copperbelt, which was deemed to be anti-government; the station was attacked by Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) cadres during the 2001 elections whilst police looked on. It is, however, Zimbabwe where state repression against any media critical of ZANU-PF is taken to its logical extreme – where journalists are beaten up, editors are arrested and printing presses are blown up.

Third, current media legislation on the table in South Africa suggests that the ruling party is flexing its muscle and raises questions for how long even private media can serve as an effective check on the ruling ANC.

The fourth external factor is the relationship between the political opposition and broader civil society. Given the dominance of the ruling party in many countries of the region and the politics of incumbency, a good relationship between the political opposition and broader civil society may serve as a force-multiplier effect, assisting in levelling the playing field somewhat. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the opposition MDC grew out of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and made use of ZCTU's organisational infrastructure to expand its reach as the political opposition.

In Swaziland, too, it is the labour movement that is assisting in the creation of a multiparty democracy, by challenging the authoritarian basis of the state. This is further cemented by the historically close ties between PUDEMO (People's United Democratic Movement) the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions. However the tensions emanating from PUDEMO's call for a blockade of the Swaziland-South Africa border in April 2006 has resulted in this relationship souring. If a democratic polity is to be achieved in Swaziland, it is imperative that the political opposition works together with other broader structures of civil society. Here, the formation of the Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations and the National Constitutional Assembly are good indicators that this might well be taking place.

In Mauritius, the current economic difficulties may well have a positive impact on the cause of political pluralism by opening up party processes and hopefully breaking the dynastic politics that has so come to characterise the political landscape. The economic uncertainties plaguing the island state are resulting in trade unions organising better, mobilising their members better and seeking to more effectively represent the interests of their constituency by lobbying political parties. For opposition political parties, taking on board organised labour's concerns might well provide them with a return ticket to power. This creates a win-win scenario for both labour and the political opposition. More importantly, though, it might well create the conditions where some of the labour leaders are incorporated into the leadership of political parties – thus breaking the hold of dynastic politics.

In Namibia, the positive role civil society could play in fostering genuine political competition and moving away from one-party dominant politics is undermined by the fact that most large civil society organisations are either affiliated to SWAPO or dominated by it. To a limited extent the same could be said of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in its tripartite relationship with the ANC in South Africa. However the diversity of civil society structures and the recent tensions between COSATU and the ANC might well prove positive towards the country's political health in the long-term. The overall point made by Francis Makoa in the chapter on Lesotho is an important one: that the political opposition needs to deepen their involvement with civil society if they intend to play a meaningful role in the political landscape.

Fifth, opposition political parties have an added difficulty going up against governments that emanate from liberation movements. Mugabe and ZANU-PF constantly remind the electorate that they rescued them from the evils of Ian Smith's minority rule. SWAPO in Namibia, FRELIMO in Mozambique and the ANC in South Africa all make similar claims. This allows incumbents to dress themselves in the garb of revolutionary righteousness whilst the opposition is cast as 'reactionaries'. Dirk Kotze demonstrates how this impacts on the attitudes of an ANC that refuses to call itself a political party and insists that it remains a national liberation movement – whilst members of the opposition are relegated

to being viewed as spokespersons of minority and sector interests.

However, this is changing across the region. With the passing of years, this talk of liberation politics has less resonance to a new generation of citizens who never experienced the ravages of the Portuguese in Mozambique or the brutality in Rhodesia or the excesses in South West Africa. Moreover, the development of opposition political parties that emerged from the liberation movements – SWAPO and the ANC – also serve to undermine the incumbent monopoly of this liberation legacy.

The sixth and final external factor is the role played by the international community. As was pointed out earlier, foreign donor support for an opposition political party like RENAMO in Mozambique will have no effect if there are no structural and personnel changes inside the party to make use of such foreign largesse effectively. But the role of the international community in furthering the cause of multiparty democracy may also be both positive and negative. Pressure from the international community might well have the positive impact of compelling a repressive state to change. This we have seen to a certain extent in Swaziland, where pressure from the International Labour Organisation, Amnesty International, the Southern African Development Community and the United States impelled King Mswati III to enact some reforms. Whilst the reforms certainly did not go far enough, the fact that the kingdom did bend under pressure is an important precedent that should be exploited further.

The case of Zimbabwe shows the limitations of what international pressure can accomplish. Robert Mugabe has made use of international support for the political opposition and civil society to accuse them of being agents of foreign 'imperialists'. On the other hand, the fact that the international community is so divided, especially on the axis between SADC and Western countries, has resulted in dispersed and contradictory international efforts. In 2009, under pressure from SADC, ZANU-PF was compelled to share power in a unity government with the two factions of the MDC. However, more than a year later, after the unity government came into effect, Robert Rotberg notes that there has been little unity, and even less partnership between the MDC and ZANU-PF.[8] ZANU-PF has thus effectively dismissed the MDC as junior partners to be co-opted despite the fact that the MDC won the March 2008 parliamentary elections outright.

In a blistering critique of such unity models of government John Githongo asserts, 'The unity model is an inclusive one, and has been championed in some academic and political circles as the new model for African democracy. It is no such thing. The coalitions are the result of democratic failures, not successes. Throughout Africa, uniting belligerents under one roof has resulted in policymaking paralysis and resentful voters, angry that the governments they have are not the ones any of them elected'.[9] It is, however, precisely this failed unity model that SADC has foisted on the hapless citizens of Zimbabwe.

It is not only external factors, but also internal factors – factors within the control of the political opposition – that prevent them from realising their potential. Jotham Momba brilliantly demonstrates how internal dynamics have served to undermine the Zambian political opposition – the jostling for leadership positions along with the concomitant 'big-man' syndrome in African politics have served to undermine intra-party democracy. This is also visible in Botswana politics where one witnesses the factionalisation of both opposition and ruling party. We see this phenomenon in Mozambique where the personalisation of politics is all too evident with the leader, Afonso Dhlakama, himself, is seen as embodying RENAMO. In Mauritius this is seen in the transfer of party leadership within the family. In Namibia, the tiring circulation of old elites as opposed to a renewal of leadership has seen the electorate growing increasingly disenchanted with the political opposition. All this suggests that if multipartyism is to be strengthened in the region, what is needed is not merely the strengthening of opposition political parties but also the instilling of a democratic political culture across all sectors of society. If this is not done, we might well see what happened in Zambia, with the opposition MMD toppling UNIP but then also behaving in an authoritarian style.

Ongoing quarrels and divisions within the opposition threaten to marginalise them ever further. In Zimbabwe, the October 2005 split inside the MDC has served not only to weaken the opposition but also to play into the hands of ZANU-PF. In Swaziland, the debate on whether or not to participate in the existing political system fractured the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress. In Namibia, meanwhile, an internal leadership battle in 2007 threatened to destroy the Congress of Democrats. In Botswana, the main opposition Botswana National Front split in April 1998 – sowing a new opposition party, the Botswana Congress Party – in the process diluting the opposition's weight and influence over the ruling Botswana Democratic Party. In South Africa, we have witnessed how the Congress of the People, launched with so much hope, has essentially failed to be a credible challenger to the ruling ANC on account of its internal divisions. The overall point is that such divisions reinforce the dominant political status quo.

Still another aspect of concern that negatively impacts on the performance of opposition political parties is ethnic politics. In Mozambique, for instance, RENAMO draws its support largely from the Ndaw, Sena and Makwa ethnic groups. In Namibia, too, much of the political opposition is ethnically based, such as the Kavango-based All Peoples' Party. The problem with such ethnic politics is that few opposition parties have a national footprint and are therefore in a position to realistically challenge the incumbent. Even the so-called 'rainbow nation', post-apartheid South Africa, has witnessed this phenomenon, which makes it unlikely that the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) will be able to capture another province beyond the Western Cape – precisely because no other province has the same demographic make-up as that province. In Mauritius we witness ethnicity, religion

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and caste coalesce in an unholy trinity. The two largely Indian and Hindu-based parties – the Mouvement Militant Socialiste Mauricien and the Labour Party – have always had a Hindu of the Vaish caste as their leaders. This once more reinforces the elitist nature of Mauritian politics.

Finally, the political opposition is also confronted with a set of organisational challenges. A vast array of opposition political parties exists in Lesotho. Of these only the Basotho National Party has a significant presence in the countryside. It might well be that it is more difficult to organise in the countryside than in the urban areas, but unless they start mobilising in the rural areas, there is no possibility of the opposition toppling the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy from power.

In Mozambique, the same problem persists but from the opposite side – RENAMO works in the rural areas but has no significant urban presence. Until the opposition party's political machinery is in place throughout the country, there is no chance of displacing the incumbent party.

One realises that the depth and penetration of party machinery is intimately related to issues like party finance as well as skill sets. On the latter point, it must be acknowledged that whilst the MDC in Zimbabwe as well as the DA in South Africa have been very successful in attracting talented professionals to assist in the running of the party, most opposition parties remain moribund because of an inability to attract such talent. Indeed, the elitist politics these parties pursue and the undemocratic nature of internal party processes result in a reluctance of intellectuals to be part of these parties.

Against all odds, though, it must be acknowledged that the political opposition continues to exist and, in some cases, even thrive in southern Africa. But at the same time it also needs to be acknowledged that the political opposition is not performing as well as it should be. In the process, democracy is undermined, as is the will of the region's people. Each country case study in this volume is rich with lessons for policymakers, politicians, scholars and members of civil society on how to entrench a vibrant multiparty democratic system in which the strengthening of opposition political parties is seen as a vital aspect of democratic consolidation. It is time to implement these lessons if we are to have a peaceful and prosperous region.

ENDNOTES

1 Quoted in Rotberg Robert 2010., 'Mugabe Uber Alles: The Tyranny of Unity in Zimbabwe'. Foreign Affairs, 89(4), July/August, p10.

2 Heywood Andrew 2002. Politics, 2nd edition. London: Palgrave Macmillan, p247.

3 Sadie Yolanda 2001. 'Political Parties and Interest Groups', in Venter Albert (ed) Government and Politics in the new South Africa. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, p277.

4 Heywood, op.cit., p251.

5 Sadie, op.cit., p294.

6 Amnesty International 2010. Amnesty International 2010: The State of the World's Human Rights. www.thereport.amnesty.org/en/download. [accessed: 31 May 2010]

7 Ibid

8 IRotberg, op.cit., p10.

9 Githongo John 2010. 'Fear and Loathing in Nairobi'. Foreign Affairs, 89(4), July/ August, p3.