

# Journal of African Elections

EDITOR  
Denis Kadima

ARTICLES BY  
Isaac Owusu-Mensah  
Kjell Hausken  
Mthuli Ncube  
Richard F Weisfelder  
Tlohang W Letsie  
Bontle Masilo  
Batlang Seabo  
Eric S McLaughlin  
Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju  
Mojeed Adekunle Animashaun

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Fax: +27(0)11 482 6163  
e-mail: [publications@eisa.org.za](mailto:publications@eisa.org.za)

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Auckland Park 2006, South Africa

Tel: +27(0)11 381 6000 | Fax: +27(0)11 482 6163 | e-mail: [jae@eisa.org.za](mailto:jae@eisa.org.za)

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# AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT TO GHANA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: ASSISTANCE OR ENCUMBRANCE?

*Isaac Owusu-Mensah*

Isaac Owusu-Mensah is a lecturer in  
the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana  
email: iomensah@ug.edu.gh

## ABSTRACT

*The end of the Cold War ushered the world into a new era of democratic governance. Citizens in developing countries began to actively contribute to the democratic process, by demanding probity and accountability in existing governance structures. The international donor community added to these efforts by responding to the challenge of the new wave of democratisation in the late 1980s, by embracing 'democracy assistance' as a core priority. In January 1993, Ghana inaugurated its Fourth Republic. It was a transition fraught with challenges – which continue to blight the development of a democratic culture. In response, the American Government stepped in with financial and technical support in the hope of helping Ghana to avoid a stall in the country's democratic development. This aid for democratic development has received plenty of criticism with regard to issues such as conditionalities imposed by America. The current study used a matched-area comparison to examine the effects of aid programmes. The findings show that the USAID-initiated ECSELL and GAIT programmes have increased local-level democratisation in Ghana by strengthening the capacities and abilities of civil society.*

**Keywords:** America, Ghana, democracy, democratic support, civil society.

## INTRODUCTION

The people of Africa wholeheartedly supported the struggle for independence against colonial rule and foreign domination. The notion of African independence

was full of promises and hopes that Africans would become the masters of their own destinies and fulfil their dreams for a better life. Independence was expected to boost socio-economic development and put an end to squalor, superstition, avoidable disease, ignorance, malnutrition and poverty. Africans would be in charge of their own affairs, and decisions would be built on African ways of building consensus. Such hopes, however, have shown themselves to be dependent on the ability of a country to democratise itself. This is because economic growth requires a certain level of sustained income and productivity (Mobarak 2005, p. 1).

Ghana became independent in 1957. Since then, the country has embarked on four attempts to achieve a workable democratic government. In 1959, it emerged as one of the first (de facto) post-colonial one-party states in tropical Africa. In 1969, after experiencing a military coup d'état, Ghana led the region by returning to constitutional government in its Second Republic. In 1979, it transitioned to its Third Republic. In January 1993, the country again set a precedent when it became the first sub-Saharan country to elect a democratic government for the fourth time. With the establishment of Ghana's Fourth Republic, a true democratisation process had begun. However, the process was – and still is – fraught with challenges which blight the development of a democratic culture.

Ghana was not alone in this process of democratisation. By the end of 1990, as a result of the end of the Cold War, most African countries with autocratic regimes had begun to liberalise themselves. The impetus came either from domestic or international pressure. These countries were moving towards participatory democracy, where citizens could, through periodic elections, hold leaders to account for their action or inaction (Clapham 1993, p. 424). However, despite the desirable prospects of good political governance thriving in Africa, the continent has failed to reach its full potential. This failure is the result of the huge demands in terms of human, material and technical resources required within the democratic process (Chabal 1998, p. 191). Such resources have failed to be attained by many African governments because of a wide range of social, political and economic problems.

These problems include continual war, extreme poverty, worsening terms of trade, drastic reduction in social welfare programmes, rising unemployment, rampant corruption and economic mismanagement, inadequate and inappropriate policies and practices, poor distribution mechanisms, deteriorating infrastructures, and the ravages of AIDS and other pandemic diseases (Boafo-Arthur 2008, p. 52). These social, economic and political demands and realities greatly impinge on the national governance budget in respect of institutions that are mandated to develop democracy. This situation leaves political actors

with limited funding options for supporting state governance institutions. As a result, civil society groups must step in to support the flagging performance of governance institutions.

In an effort to address these resource constraints and to support the process of democratisation, international aid has become a constant – and in many ways necessary – support mechanism. Historically, Africa has received more per capita aid from the international community in the form of official development assistance than any other region in the world (Leonard & Straus 2003). According to Diamond (2004, p. 263), by the late 1990s, well over half of all African states were receiving 10% or more of their Gross National Product (GNP) from foreign aid. Foreign aid accounted for over 50% of African government revenue, and for 71% of public investment. Leonard and Straus (2003) calculated that most African countries received more in development assistance than they collected in tax revenue.

Such dependence on external financial aid to support government processes remains a stark reality for several African countries that are transitioning to, or are maintaining, democratic rule. This fact has created a split in opinions about whether external support in the form of donor aid is a help or a hindrance to the process of democratisation.

The United States of America (US) is a major player in providing donor aid to support the democratisation process in other countries. The US began channelling funds and resources to Ghana's democratisation process in the form of USAID-funded projects. However, questions have arisen over American interventionist strategies and actual intent because of conditions attached to aid (Brown 2005, p. 180). Some scholars (Djankov et al. 2008, p. 169; Goldsmith 2001, p. 125; Knack 2004, p. 252) argue that foreign aid does little to promote democracy. However, others (e.g. Finkel et al. 2007, p. 405) continue to affirm that American aid strategies do promote democracy.

The central issue examined in this paper is the effect that democracy assistance has had on the democratisation process in Ghana's Fourth Republic. The specific research question was as follows: what effect has American support designed to promote civil society had at the local level in Ghana? In addressing this question, three main factors were considered:

- the extent to which such resources can mobilise civil society into political action;
- the extent to which these funds support the effectiveness of civic groups to function at the local level; and
- the extent to which this assistance supports capacity building and networking by civil society within local governance.

Despite criticisms of American aid initiatives, such support for Ghana's democratisation process has proven to be successful at the local level of governance. The author reached this conclusion after studying two USAID-funded programmes, both of which were designed to increase transparency and accountability in District Assemblies (DAs) and to increase the ability of Civic Unions (CUs) to advance the cause of other members of civil society in Ghana. The two programmes in question were Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level (ECSELL) and Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT).

### METHODOLOGY

The study used a sequential mixed-methods approach to solicit information from the selected respondents. Strict methodological standards were applied when selecting the respondents, to increase the likelihood that views expressed by the sample group would reflect widely held views among the Ghanaian general population. Some stratification and multi-phase sampling procedures were used to identify suitable respondents.

Two methods of data collection were used to gather data during the fieldwork stage. These methods were, respectively, a questionnaire survey and structured interviews. This primary data collection was divided into three phases as follows:

1. Interviews were held at the offices of USAID and other implementing agencies, such as the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and the Cooperative League of the United States of America (CLUSA). This leg of the investigation used structured interviews. Fifteen Respondents at the American Embassy and USAID offices in Accra, as well as other democracy-assistance bodies in Ghana, were interviewed.
2. The second phase involved the administration of 200 questionnaires (i.e. the survey), of which 165 questionnaires were returned fully completed, at the DA level. The survey was targeted in areas of Ghana where USAID had implemented democracy assistance programmes. The country was divided into three clusters for the purpose of this study, as follows:
  - Cluster 1: Northern Ghana – made up of Upper East, Upper West and the Northern Region.
  - Cluster 2: contained the middle belt, comprising the Brong-Ahafo Region and the Ashanti and Eastern Regions.
  - Cluster 3: Southern Ghana – made up of the Volta, Greater Accra, and the Central and Western Regions.



Purposive sampling was used. Respondents were drawn from the Nadowli, Wa and Damango districts to represent the Northern cluster; from Berekum and Techiman to represent the middle belt; and from Ga, Dangbe East and Dangbe West to represent Southern Ghana. The selection of the districts was determined after critical demographic and political assessment of the features of the districts. The district selection process was also influenced by voting patterns, by the vibrancy of civil society activism, and by overall relations between DA and society. The selection of districts was further influenced by the implementation of the ECSELL and GAIT programmes. For each cluster, one district that benefited from both programmes was selected, as well as a district that benefited from a single programme only. Structured interviews and the survey questionnaire were done at both the community and district levels.

3. The third phase involved interviews with eighteen DA staff made up of District Coordinating Officers, Planning Officers and Finance Officer. The researcher sought the views of Assembly staff who were directly involved in the project as well as staff who were not connected to the project. The aim of the interviews was to gain holistic information about the project. A secondary aim was to appropriately integrate the official perspectives, representing the state, with data collected from civil society, to ensure a balance. The interview data collected were then systematically analysed through coding and categorising of the information solicited from the district offices across the country.

Secondary sources of data collection included official documents at the Assemblies, offices of IFES, GAIT and USAID, certain Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), implementing agencies, and other stakeholders who contributed to the democratic transition and consolidation in Ghana. These documents were reviewed for relevant information. Annual reports, evaluations and various assessment reports were also reviewed.

The following perspectives outline the direction and framework of this paper.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Democratisation theories are central debates within political thought (Dahl 1997; Drah 1993; Ninsin 1993). Democratisation theories which focus on the relationship between a country's level of democratisation, or its ability to democratise, and the mechanisms that support this process are especially important (Dahl 1997; Drah 1993; Ninsin 1993). Theorists have examined specifically the conditions which make regimes or political systems more vulnerable to manipulation by the political elite, and whether such factors affect the level of democratisation.

Generally, theories are divided into those that focus on internal or external factors, and theories about factors that influence democratic development.

### *Domestic / Internal Theories*

Structural theory suggests that the existence of structural prerequisites disposes a society towards democracy (Lipset 1959; Vanhanen 1990). Once certain conditions are met, democracy flourishes. The corollary is that the absence of these fundamentals undermines the growth of democracy. Accordingly, a country's democratisation can be accelerated by developing aspects of complex characteristics of economic and social structures within the context of legitimate economic development (Lipset 1959). For example, there is a significant relationship between the educational, religious and income levels of a country and that country's expected democratic progress or level of democracy. Thus, it is argued, democratisation is best achieved by internally developing social structures (Midlarsky 1997; Olson 1993).

By comparison, proponents of cultural theory (e.g. Almond & Powell 1993; Almond & Verba 1963; Diamond 1992; Inglehart 1988) explain the emergence and growth of democracy – or the lack thereof – in a country by identifying three types of political culture. These are i) parochial culture, which refers to a situation where citizens are not aware and do not participate in the political system; ii) subject culture, where people are aware of the political process but do not participate in the system; and iii) participant culture, where people are aware of the political process and system, and participate in them. A mix of these scenarios constitutes the civic culture of a society, which determines 'associational behaviour, tolerance, and interpersonal trust' (Al-Momani 2003, p. 45).

Thus, certain cultural practices promote democracy whereas others obstruct its growth. In contextualising the cultural perspective, Maxwell Owusu (1972) observed that 'political culture' encompasses the total environment of ideas, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, values, judgments, sentiments and expectations. All these factors shape, define and sustain the relationship between the leaders and the led, and between politicians and constituents.

By contrast, process theorists (e.g. Huntington 1993; Przeworski 1986; Rustow 1970) explain democracy as the end product of several developmental stages. Economic growth is seen as leading to political development, which in turn transitions into modernisation and ultimately democracy. Such processes require a country to follow these sequenced transitions, which according to Huntington (1993, p. 5) take a long time. Deviation from this process would impede the growth of democracy.

Within process theory, Rustow (1970) and Przeworski (1986) emphasise the catalytic role of elites in the democratisation process. The power held by elites ensures their influence on societal conditions and rules and on changes to formal and informal structures of the political system. Thus, for democracy to thrive, elites must agree on democratic goals and norms as a mechanism for the distribution of power and resources in society. They must also agree on an effective system through which to institutionalise conflicts (Przeworski 1986, pp. 41-63).

More relevant to this study, however, are theoretical perspectives which focus on external dimensions of democracy promotion.

### *International / External Theories*

The external dimension of democratisation is explained by two theories: military interventionism and financial theories of democratisation. These two theories are the principal blocks to explain how external support can aid the democratic development of a country. American support for Ghana's democratic development must be explained within the context of one of these theories.

Military intervention theory is based in realism. It views the behaviour of states as the pursuit of national interests governed by the use of power; specifically, democracy is obtained through external intervention (Talentino 2005, p. 19). The use of power by an external force to bring about regime change is justified by the contention that the regime is illegitimate. According to military intervention theory, a state can employ any means to pursue its foreign policy objectives, so long as such means are in line with the overriding goal of security and survival (Evans 2006). Direct military intervention is mainly used for the purpose of national survival or high-priority goals, such as humanitarian grounds and the promotion of human rights. Usually, direct military intervention is a last resort to achieve foreign policy objectives, as it is seen as both expensive and risky to implement (Evans 2006).

The theory of military interventionism has its roots in Thucydides through Machiavelli. However, it has been discredited in democracy literature as a coercive tactic used by rich, powerful, industrialised states to exert power over poorer or less powerful states (Lowenthal 1991). The aim is to compel the poorer states to act in a manner that is in the interests of rich countries or to behave in a manner that powerful nations consider permissible in the international system (Jamieson 2005). This stance is supported by Lowenthal (1991), who studied America's use of military intervention as a foreign policy tool. According to Lowenthal (1991, p. 261), American 'efforts to promote democracy through military intervention have generally yielded negligible, often counterproductive, and only occasionally positive results'. Similarly, Whitehead (1991, p. 234) argues that there is a grave

contradiction in one state trying to compel other independent states to be free. According to Whitehead (1991), democracy must be built on the foundation of popular sovereignty and freedom of the people to determine their own future, rather than being imposed by outsiders.

By comparison, theories of financial transfer examine the use of financial and technical aid by an external agent to stimulate the growth of democracy (Al-Momani 2003). Financial transfer theory suggests that states are able to determine and influence the political systems and classes of other states, without the use of military intervention, even to the extent of changing a regime (Al-Momani 2003). Thus material resources rather than military might are capable of changing ideas, ideals and values. Financial transfer theory includes two strategic theories of democratisation: foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign aid.

Foreign direct investment is an investment which a foreign individual or organisation makes towards the productive capacity of another country. It involves the transfer of assets or intermediary products within the investing enterprise, without any change in ownership. The theory of FDI suggests a direct correlation between a country's level of democratisation and FDI made into that country (Quan & Resnick 2003). While FDI itself does not initiate democracy, it facilitates the development of democratic institutions, such as structural features of the recipient country, as a dividend of good governance.

A country's ability to attract FDI depends on the nature of its political system or governance (Quan & Resnick 2003). Investors generally consider a political system whereby established institutions, such as an independent judiciary, work to protect the economic system – including their investment – through adjudication of cases. As a result, developing African nations have acceded to assessments such as the African Peer Review Mechanism to advertise their democratic credentials. This is one way to persuade investors. Olson (1993, pp. 567-576) argues that criteria such as an independent judiciary and electoral programmes help to guarantee property rights, and hence ensure that investments are secure in the long term. Investors favour such regimes because their assets are shielded from predatory dictators.

By contrast, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) suggest that rather than supporting democratisation, FDI hinders such growth. This is due to the intimate relationship between investors and political leaders. Competition for investment ensures that investors receive preferential treatment with regard to wage, labour and taxation leeway, at the expense of the rights of the country's own citizens (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986).

The second component of financial transfer theory is foreign aid. This aspect of the theory posits that developed democracies provide direct and indirect material and technical assistance to transitional countries to sustain the latter in

building a democracy. Such assistance would include the development of credible elections and democratic institutions, with the aim of invigorating democratic growth (Garvey 1966). Williamson and Haggard (1994, p. 526) considered foreign aid to be an external incentive to reward new and growing democracies during the embryonic stage; foreign aid also supports regimes in stabilising their internal politics and thus supports citizen rights.

Apodaca and Stohl (1999, pp. 185-198) examined the relationship between human rights and American bilateral foreign aid over a period of nineteen years (1979 to 1996). They used 'foreign aid' as the independent variable and 'human rights record' as the dependent variable. They concluded that with the exception of the Clinton administration, human rights played a critical role in determining whether a country qualified as a good candidate to receive aid and the amount of aid received (Apodaca & Stohl 1999, p. 197). Regan (1995, pp. 613-628) used a similar framework to investigate the effect of aid on changes in human rights records among countries supported by the Reagan and Carter administrations. Regan's study showed that neither economic nor political aid had a discernible effect on the human rights record of a recipient country, and did not determine its political system.

Similarly, Al-Momani (2003) assessed the effect of American foreign aid on emerging democracies over an eighteen-year period (1976 to 1994). The scope of the study was large: 174 developed and developing countries were included. The findings showed that international financial transfers had relatively little effect on a country's level of democracy (Al-Momani 2003). Finkel et al. (2006) also studied the effects of American democracy assistance on democracy-building, specifically the growth of democratic values and institutions. The scope of this study was again broad, with 195 countries studied over thirteen years (1990 to 2003). Finkel et al. (2006) concluded that there was general growth among all the countries studied, and that foreign aid had only a modest effect on democratisation (Finkel et al. 2006).

Despite these findings, the author posits that foreign aid theory is best suited to evaluate the effect of American aid on Ghana's democratisation process. The role of American aid is evaluated by regarding it as the independent variable, and growth in democratic development in Ghana is regarded as the dependent variable. Using this model, conclusions are drawn about the effectiveness and validity of such support.

## DEMOCRACY AID DEBATES

The funding of democratisation is the international donor community's response to the challenges of the new 'wave' of democratisation which started in the

late 1980s (Santiso 2000, p. 1). By embracing democracy assistance as one of its core priorities, the international donor community actively shapes national democratisation processes. Diamond et al. (1999, p. 171) suggest that such molding is proactive:

[p]erhaps the most distinctive feature of the third wave ... is the considerable contribution that international actors have made to democratic development by enhancing the resources, skills, techniques, ideas, linkages and legitimacy of civil society organisations, civic education efforts, the mass media, legislatures, local governments, judicial systems, political parties, and elections commissions in the developing and post-communist worlds. The prospects for democracy in the world will be much brighter if these many currents of practical engagement are sustained, refined and widened.

The catalogue of programmes targeted by democracy assistance is extensive. It ranges from assistance to support free and fair elections to the reform of government institutions through constitutional engineering, and from security sector reforms to the strengthening of civil society organisations (Crawford 2001, p. 89). While certainly each of these can be proactive steps towards democratisation, motives behind their implementation and the way in which such programmes are carried out determine the actual benefit to the recipient country and its citizens (Carothers 1997, p. 110).

According to Diamond (2004), international donors have increasingly provided aid to support democracy since the end of the Cold War. Diamond theorises that aid to the developing world is driven by a long-standing development model which assumes that the missing key ingredient for development is finance. This developmental economic model further postulates that if external donors provide the needed resources to fill the gap between a country's own capacities and the required level of investment, economic development will take place (Diamond 2004, p. 264).

By contrast, Karl (1997) cites examples from Nigeria, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon to argue that the core problem which obstructs economic development in Africa is not a lack of resources, although that is indeed a grave quandary for many African countries. Karl posts that the main challenge is the inefficient management and allocation of available resources to ensure equal benefit among citizens. What is required is therefore a well-developed system of checks and balances rather than a continual influx of funds (Karl 1997).



Despite the differences between these theories about the democratic process, what is apparent in both positions is the idea that a country's democracy is intricately linked to its ability to develop economically. This position was certainly the basis for policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) of the 1980s. However, the results of such programmes suggest that this type of development practice may be at odds with the knowledge-based economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. None the less, the funding of democracy by stimulating the economic development of a country has continued across the world. According to Carothers (2000), since the mid-1980s the American Government has devoted US\$ 500 million per year to fund programmes that promote democracy globally. The resources that are given range from small-scale civic education assistance to massive multilateral collaboration. These resources are meant to fund programmes to strengthen democratic institutions, processes and ideals in the target countries.

#### AMERICAN DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND FOREIGN AID

The genesis of America's international development assistance can be traced to the end of World War II. At that time, the European Recovery Programme of 1948, also known as the Marshall Plan, was formulated. The Marshall Plan was motivated by a mix of humanitarian concerns, strategic efforts to limit Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, and the need to restore the European market for American goods (Zimmerman 1958, as cited in Hanson 1991).

By October 1951, America's focus had shifted to providing military aid and defence assistance. To a lesser extent, economic and food aid were given in the form of the Mutual Security Administration (MSA). Fears about communism, both real and imagined, fuelled the growing importance of the MSA (*ibid*). Economic project components of the MSA were designed to subvert the spread of communist ideals, with large sums of money being spent on building the economic structures and political allegiances in other countries that were deemed necessary to support this goal (*ibid*). It was not until the start of the 1980s that democracy promotion became one of the four core priorities of America's foreign aid programmes (Carothers 1997, p. 120). While the rise of democracy aid during that period was the result of President Reagan's anti-communist policies, all successive American governments have followed the same foreign policy.

#### *Models of Implementation*

The programme of democracy embarked on by America is characterised as institutional modeling. The philosophy of institutional modelling is to nurture socio-political institutions of democracy in a developing country, in a manner that resembles the counterpart of those institutions in western countries (Carothers

1997). According to Carothers (1997, p. 116), democracy assistance is meant to facilitate such modelling processes. However, the strategy of institutional modelling faces two limitations to democratic development: Americanisation and the failure to recognise local political structures. Campbell et al. (2004, p. 11) define Americanisation as follows:

The cultural, political and economic influence of the USA which shapes the way in which people perceive and understand difference. Thus, democracy assistance aims to strengthen endpoints of institutions to function with the requisite inputs and resources in a form similar to that in the US without consideration of alternative forms and types of democracy suitable peculiar country.

American democracy support promotes an independent and robust legislature, which oversees the responsibilities and actions of the executive branch of the government. According to Campbell et al (2004), further elements of the American model of democracy promotion abroad include –

- increasing accountability through avenues such as alternative media outlets (that is, private ownership of media as an alternative to government-owned operations);
- detaching race and religion from political affiliation; and
- strengthening the capacity of trade unions to increase their bargaining power.

However, adhering to this framework of power division and the separation between state and private concerns means that policy-makers discard and devalue the distinctive qualities of cooperation between the legislature and the executive. Bofo-Arthur (1998) argues that such cooperation is essential in the early stages of democracy promotion. Thus, adopting the American framework can be detrimental to a country's successful transition to democracy. This was the case in Ghana in 1979, where as a result of the separation of power, the national budget and economic policy were not approved by Parliament. In addition, privatising a broadcasting system detracts from the citizens' inputs obtained through public ownership.

The second flaw in the democracy-support framework is its lack of recognition of and appreciation for the local power structures of the recipient country. Evaluating the local structures of beneficiaries which receive democracy aid is an essential step in ensuring appropriate outputs (Carothers 1997). This step, however, is often missing in the American strategy. The sociological, economic and



political factors and actors which shape local institutions are typically relegated to the background in pursuit of democracy promotion activities. Instead of evaluating and working with local institutional structures, American democracy assistance is given under conditions defined by American roles and strategies. This paper looks critically at the above issues in American democracy aid to evaluate such aid to Ghana's Fourth Republic.

### AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AID TO GHANA

The success of Ghana's transition to the Fourth Republic, compared with its previous three attempts, is credited to the huge financial support the country received from the international community (Boafo-Arthur 1998, p. 16). Boafo-Arthur (1998, p. 17) argues that the extent of support from external partners raises doubt as to whether the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) would have continued with the transition programme without the involvement of the donor community. Although such assistance seems to have been necessary for the transition, its impact continues to be debated, especially in the face of a simultaneous growing economy and rising inequality among Ghanaians.

As Ghana moved towards democracy, civil society and state institutions both played a significant role in the process. Pro-democracy projects and programmes with the aim of contributing towards free and fair elections had to be organised, and citizens had to be educated about their fundamental human rights, and about their responsibility to strengthen governance institutions. Programmes run by state and non-state actors required huge resources from various stakeholders (Hearn 1997, p. 11). But local stakeholders' internal structures were frail, and financial resources for pro-democracy actors to realise their objectives were limited. This necessitated external support for the country's democratisation process.

Gyimah-Boadi (2004, p. 126) argues that international development partners refocused development assistance, shifting a pro-state focus to one which supported the development of civil society and other non-state institutions. This refocus resulted from the growing importance that civil society plays in holding the state accountable (Gyimah-Boadi 2004, p. 126). Bilateral and multilateral agencies used the opportunity to enhance democratic development. According to Carothers (1997, p. 121) during the post-Cold War era, the funding arena changed. Previously aid had been given directly to state institutions for economic development, whereas now civil society organisations were encouraged to actively participate in the democratic process. As a result, the American Government and various US-based organisations provided support to promote democracy in Ghana through civil society organisations (CSOs) and the American State Department.

One example was the American Embassy in Ghana and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Table 1 below is based on a USAID report, and shows how democracy aid given by America to sectors in Ghana was refocused between 1994 and 2003. Initial democracy funding was targeted at the electoral system development, with USAID and its implementing agencies investing vast resources to build a credible electoral platform for democratic development and growth after several years of military rule. The controversies which had surrounded the 1992 presidential and parliamentary elections had contributed to this need. Assistance to civil society started with small amounts in 1995 and gradually climbed to compete with other sectors of democratic development.

**Table 1**  
**Sectoral distribution of democracy support to Ghana, 1994-2003**  
**(US\$ million)**

Year	Elections	Rule of Law	Civil Society	Governance
1994	2.55	0	0	0
1995	4.35	0.39	0.2	0
1996	2.24	0.39	0.31	0.01
1997	0.44	0	0.38	0.64
1998	0.07	0	0.51	1.02
1999	0.54	0	0.59	0.83
2000	0.47	0	0.63	0.82
2001	0	0	0.49	0.93
2002	0	0	0.58	0.76
2003	0	0.04	0.86	0.51

Source: USAID *Report of Assessment of Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building 1990–2003*

Although the inclusion of CSOs in democracy-funding initiatives was a welcome shift in funding arrangements, it remained rhetoric rather than reality. The funding agency rather than recipient still largely controlled the implementation of such programmes. American non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) became the implementing agencies of USAID democratic support to Ghana. The office of USAID argued that there were

no developed, experienced and credible local pro-democracy NGOs in Ghana which could implement its programmes (Hansen 1996). This understanding of the capacity of Ghanaian NGOs and CSOs coupled with the new focus in funding led the USAID to initiate, through its partners, two projects to enhance the development of civil society at the local level. These projects were started between 1996 and 2009, and were called Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level (ECSELL) and Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT).

### *Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level (ECSELL)*

ECSELL was a project designed by USAID and implemented by the International Foundation of Elections System (IFES). The project was a follow-up to political and election-related programmes that had been implemented by IFES on behalf of USAID under a cooperative agreement called 'Supporting the Electoral Process' (STEP). The ECSELL project was a political capacity-building venture which aimed to increase the capacity of civic groups to achieve their primary goals, and to advocate and improve local government responsiveness to citizens' demands. Its main aim was to strengthen the link between civil society and local government units in selected districts through training and small grants.

The project also aimed to help groups to create civic engagement programmes with their respective DAs. Through IFES, USAID gave democratic assistance to civil society groups in all of Ghana's ten regions, working in twenty of the 110 districts. The beneficiary organisations and groups had limited contact with the main benefactor (USAID).

For the purpose of implementing its broad national programme, USAID-Ghana classified civil society groups into the following categories: development organisations, trade unions, advocacy groups, and service providers. This classification was adopted by IFES because it promoted the inclusion of a broad segment of civil society.

The IFES conducted a baseline study to evaluate challenges to the development of civil society at the local level, in particular. They also evaluated problems in local governance in Ghana with reference to DAs. The IFES reviewed civil society with regard to levels of funding, the degree of internal democracy, and relations with the DAs. The IFES also examined the status of CSOs' internal operations, the quality of their relations with national government, and the extent of their engagement with civic groups in the district.

After the assessment stage, the IFES addressed problems that were impeding the development of civil society at the local level. It provided training in basic management skills for civic leaders and local government officials, to facilitate their collaboration in solving problems facing the district.

### *Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT)*

The GAIT project was a continuation of the USAID civil society empowerment programme which had begun with the implementation of ECSELL in selected districts. The aim of GAIT was to strengthen the management and organisational capabilities of civil society organisations so that they could become effective partners in local governance and contribute to national policy formulation. The GAIT project was implemented by the Cooperative League of the United States of America (CLUSA).

The name change (ECSELL to GAIT) resulted from a shift in the policy direction of the project. In ECSELL the focus was on the regular participation of civic groups in the decentralisation process, but with GAIT this focus shifted to include the accountability of public office-holders in the districts. The GAIT project aimed to continue the work of ECSELL, but with the added element of increasing the accountability of government stakeholders. The project was implemented in two phases, Phase One being 2011 to 2004 and Phase Two being 2005 to 2009.

The second phase of GAIT (GAIT II, 2005–2009) progressed from fostering partnerships between civil society and local government to include community participation in education. The selection of districts to participate in GAIT II was based on competitive bidding to encourage full participation of CUs and DAs. Proposals were jointly submitted and defended by a team made up of CUs and the DA. The overall aims of GAIT were as follows:

- to increase the capacity of Ghanaian CSOs to advocate the interests of their members at local government level;
- to promote transparency, accountability and anti-corruption in local governance institutions;
- to increase voter turnout; and
- to increase political participation of CSOs at all levels of government.

Strategies to meet these objectives involved boosting the capacity of CSOs in the areas of planning and management; promoting CSO networks; establishing discussion platforms between key CU members, DA members and citizens; and providing modest matching grants by GAIT to CUs.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

### *ESCELL Project*

#### **Strengthening the capacity of civil society to meet primary goals of members**

Despite the importance of a strategic plan to the development of a civic entity

(Pearce et al. 1987, p. 658), fewer than 5% of the civic groups that IFES met with across the country had prepared strategic plans prior to the ECSELL project (Baseline Report of Civil Society Organisations–IFES, 1999). As a result their management practices were precarious.

As a first step, IFES offered management training programmes to the leaders and members of civic groups, at different levels, with modules on strategic planning and implementation. The Hair Dressers and Beauticians Association of Nadowli and Fian Women's Groups were among the beneficiaries. The aim was to give the groups basic management tools. The IFES asked the civic groups to assess how well their operations worked in the absence of strategic plans. The IFES then supported the groups to draw up strategic plans so that they would be able to assess and articulate the concerns of citizens in their regions. By the end of the project, 79.2% of the civic groups which had participated had drawn up modest strategic plans for their organisations to ensure they could achieve their main objectives.

### **Strengthening the capacity of CSOs to advocate**

The capacity of civic groups and CUs to advocate was measured by the following three indices: improvement in internal democratic practice, linkages with other civic groups, and ability to mobilise resources.

#### *Improvement in internal democratic practice*

Civil society organisations which promote democracy as part of their external goals must also demonstrate internal democratic practice within the organisation; this gives a necessary political legitimacy for their activities (Brysk 2000, p. 151). This study examined the committee elections and decision-making processes as a way of measuring the extent of a CSO's internal democracy. The study assessed the electoral process of each association that was a member of the CUs in the selected districts.

Of the 28 associations interviewed, 75% selected their leaders through elections. About 25% of the associations indicated that before the projects had intervened, their organisational elections had been irregular or absent. The researcher was unable to ascertain how free and fair the internal elections were. However, secondary sources from the respective district electoral offices suggested that Electoral Commission (EC) officers had supervised all of these elections.

A second feature of liberal democracy is the decision-making structure of an organisation, which indicates the extent of articulation and aggregation of individual voices (Owusu 1972, cited in Bofo-Arthur 1993, p. 114). An organisation is undemocratic when the leadership controls the decision-making process. This study finding shows that members are actively participating in

decision-making within their organisations. There were comprehensive decision-making arrangements within the civic group:

- 3.6% of the civic groups made decisions through their executive committees and by consensus;
- 21.4% of decisions were made by the entire membership of an association (averaged across all associations studied);
- 71.4% of members of the associations studied said that general members in association with the executive committees made decisions.

Participation in the decision-making process increases people's sense of ownership of that process. Additionally, it allows the organisation's leaders to educate members about current conditions and the results of decisions. The findings of this study suggest that civic organisations that had implemented the ECSELL programme had developed internal organisational democracy, and provided the required space for their members to participate in governance.

#### *Development of networks and linkages*

This study showed that 55.6% of civic groups had belonged to a vertical network before ECSELL was introduced. After participating in ECSELL, 87.5% of these civic groups were integrated into at least one network, either horizontal or vertical. As part of ECSELL, artisans and professional group bodies had joined their resources to champion a common cause, such as the collection of revenues on behalf of the DA. The networks equipped members with skills and knowledge to improve their efficiency, and broadened their understanding of governance through events such as visits to Parliament.

Through ECSELL, a number of civic groups such as Feo Leather Workers Association in Bongo and the Butchers Association in Wa established intra- and inter-professional networks. Although some professional groups had already belonged to relevant national associations, participating in ECSELL provided organisations with new impetus to redefine their mandate and direction. Civic groups from the ECSELL districts were able to properly articulate and aggregate interest among their members.

#### *Ability to mobilise resources to promote primary objectives*

The ECSELL project fostered collaboration between the state and civic groups. The small grant component of the project, for example, was jointly administered by civic groups and their respective DAs. Following various training programmes

conducted by IFES, small grants of roughly US\$ 400 per grant (on average) were disbursed to 78 civil society groups, representing 36% of civic groups that had applied for support in the 20 selected districts in the country.

The IFES provided a total of US\$ 32 000 in small grants to civic groups (IFES 2006). Six CUs and 72 individual civic groups benefited from the support. The objectives of the awards were to strengthen the capacity of civic groups to advocate and implement the ideas and knowledge acquired during the training programmes, and to support their fund-raising activities. Civic groups and unions used the small grants for various projects, ranging from civic education programmes – such as the Parliamentary Candidates' debates in 2000 – to projects that focused on the need to prevent bush fire outbreaks and mechanisms to prevent such fires.

### **Enhanced local government responsiveness to citizens' demands**

The third aim of ECSELL was to improve local government's response to citizens' demands. Local priorities differ between DAs and citizens, especially where citizens' participation in DA programmes is minimal. Consequently, ECSELL supported the DAs to be responsive to the demands of the local population, while also strengthening the capacity of civil society groups to engage with DAs through advocacy programmes.

Before the start of the ECSELL project, the DAs viewed civic groups as important stakeholders in good governance. The civic groups in these districts were seen as development partners that could provide alternatives to programmes modelled and implemented by DAs. The DAs had the discretion to recognise and legitimise such groups. For a group to be considered legitimate, it had to meet all DA-stated conditions of a patron-client relationship, such as the willingness to support the ruling political party and its programmes.

After the implementation of the ECSELL project, and as a result of the cordial interaction between CUs and DAs, in certain districts the CUs were given the mandate to mobilise taxes and DA rates from their members on behalf of DAs, on a commission basis. In Nadowli, this system worked very well. Each party adhered to the contractual agreement outlined in a memorandum of understanding (MOU), and the system served the interests of both parties. By contrast, in Ada, the Dangbe East DA did not adhere to the agreement. The CU members collected taxes on behalf of the DA but were not paid the agreed commission. This resulted in a series of incidents of civil disobedience by the CU. For example, during the 2000 financial year, no CU members paid taxes or other rates to the DA. According to the Dangbe East DA, the problem arose from poor communication between the outgoing and incoming District Coordinating Directors.



### *Government Accountability Improve Trust (GAIT) Project*

#### **Improved collaboration between DAs and CUs to support good governance**

Before the GAIT project, most DAs and CSOs worked separately to achieve their primary objectives. Findings from the analysed data collected from the field showed that an estimated 56.8% of CSOs had no direct working relationship or official business with DAs. Among the respondents, 25% said that there was a hostile relationship between the CSOs and the Assemblies, whereas only 20.3% reported that some level of cordial relationship existed between the CSOs and the Assemblies.

After the start of GAIT, the relationship between the DAs and CUs improved. Only 14.9% of the CSO respondents reported that the CUs and DAs did not interact. This was a decrease of 41.9 percentage points from the 56.8% who had said the same thing before GAIT implementation. Reports of a hostile relationship between CSOs and DAs dropped from 25% to 2.7%. Correspondingly, the atmosphere of cordiality improved tremendously, from the initial reported 20.3% to 82.4%. The growth of cordial relations between DAs and CUs was mutually beneficial. It enabled civic groups to articulate their interests more easily, and ensured that DAs saw civic groups as valuable stakeholders for implementing government programmes and effective channels for mobilising revenue for the Assemblies.

#### **Participatory decision-making in development planning**

The GAIT project offered leadership training to CSOs and DAs as a way of involving stakeholders at the district level in the development process. As part of the training, leaders were educated about community opportunities and key responsibilities to benefit the community. The DA staff and CUs attended workshops together, which gave the CUs a chance to articulate community concerns to the DA. Once GAIT stopped operating in certain districts, post-intervention evaluations by the study confirmed that the DAs had continued to work with CUs to consolidate the gains that had been achieved.

#### **Formation of networks and coalition-building among CSOs**

The GAIT project encouraged CUs to form networks beyond their communities to advocate on issues of mutual community concern. As a result, the Northern Network of Civil Society was established for the three Northern Regions: Upper East, Upper West and Northern. In the Volta Region, the Volta Regional Network of CUs (VONCU) was established to facilitate cooperation, the sharing of ideas, and regional problem-solving. The VONCU developed and signed an MOU with MPs from the Volta Region.

The National Network of CUs also emerged to campaign on issues raised at the regional or zone level, and brought them to the attention of the state. Networks



also developed with specific organisations. In Wa and Bole, for example, CUs teamed up with Plan International and Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) respectively, to undertake joint civic education programmes.

### **Demanding accountability from the DAs**

Civic unions initiated several programmes aimed at promoting vertical accountability in local communities. These CUs began the process by actively contacting public office-holders, either individually or collectively, and communicating specific demands; at times this was backed by financial contributions.

Before the GAIT project, only 12.2% of CU members had a basic knowledge of the internal accountability structures of the DAs, and 12.3% of CU members directly demanded accountability from DAs (according to the Baseline Study conducted by IFES). Both transparency and accountability improved in various districts as a result of GAIT. For example, after GAIT advocacy programmes were set up in Techiman, the municipal DA began displaying the cost of all development projects from 2001 to 2004 on public noticeboards, to inform the general public about DAs' expenditure. The CU in Damango organised public information-sharing on various government policies, such as the Youth Employment Programme and the National Health Insurance Scheme.

The CUs used the most pragmatic means available to get answers from the DAs. These methods included letters and demand notices to their respective DAs, questions during 'Peoples DA' sessions, and questions during DA programmes. Such methods were used either individually or in combination. Findings from the survey indicated that letters written to DAs made up 55.8% of all requests made to DAs. The CUs favoured letters because they allowed for easy follow-up, and helped to form relationships because discussions were held before the letters were actually sent. Some CSOs continued to use DAs' internal accountability structures – such as those on procurement, budgeting, and auditing procedure. However, there are legal limits to the involvement and extent of the use of such internal accountability structures.

### **Participatory budgeting**

A participatory budgeting process has become an integral part of public administration, especially in developing countries. Integrating diverse interests is critical to successful budgeting. In a study of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre in Brazil, Mehrotra (2006, p. 12) observed that such a process deepens democratic decentralisation, and improves output indicators of services delivered by the state. Although the GAIT project did not satisfy all the requirements for participatory budgeting, it made a significant contribution to the DAs' budgeting process.

### **Revenue mobilisation and financial dynamism**

The CUs introduced dynamic financial measures to bolster the DAs' revenue bases. In Bole, for example, government officials who lived in state bungalows without paying the requisite rent were compelled by CUs to honour their obligations to the DA. The DAs involved CUs in revenue mobilisation to show that CUs were seen as partners in development, and to emphasise the importance of working together. Findings from the study showed that the contributions made by the CUs to revenue mobilisation strengthened the relationship between those CUs and the DAs, and highlighted their progressive contribution to the communities which they served.

### **Contributions to Districts' revenue bases**

The CU advocacy programmes administered through GAIT contributed a great deal to the Internally Generated Fund (IGF) of some districts. These CUs signed MOUs with their respective DAs to help in collecting revenue, with the CU receiving a small commission. This arrangement resulted in mutual revenue increases. As an incentive to CUs, the Assemblies appointed executive committee members of CUs into various DA committees.

### **Promoting women in governance**

The women's wings of CUs took part in education campaigns on issues related to the Domestic Violence Bill. Women organised sensitisation workshops on topics affecting the well-being of women and children. These included testing for breast cancer, and girl child education. These advocacy campaigns by women were considered by the CSOs as successful because they created the required awareness of issues which had not previously been prioritised in the community.

The GAIT project encouraged equal opportunity for men and women to contribute to advocacy programmes. Findings from the study showed that 97.1% of survey respondents felt that GAIT was sensitive to the plight of women and provided equal opportunities for both men and women to engage the DA. This finding is highly commendable compared with the national governance matrix ratio of 1:9 in favour of men.

### **Dialogue between citizens and Assemblies**

Through the CUs, the GAIT project bridged the gap between DAs and citizens. The initiative gave citizens information from the district level, and implemented programmes. In Wa, Nadowli, Bongo and Damango, suggestion boxes were placed in specific areas so that individuals could share their views on governance in the district with the DA (in the language of their choice). Public noticeboards were erected in Bole so that citizens could be kept in touch with progress and

development in the district. In various districts, CUs engaged their DAs to provide social services to improve people's quality of life. Water was an engagement issue which permeated most districts and heightened the dialogue between citizens and DAs.

## ANALYSIS

An impressive amount of funding was provided to IFES from USAID to implement both the ECSELL and GAIT programmes. However, the key results from these programmes arose from the practical outputs which CSOs gained from participating, rather than strictly economic development. The emphasis on skills development and increasing transparency and collaboration were clear benefits of the programmes. These outcomes highlight the importance of funding when channelled in the appropriate avenues.

While significant progress has been made in improving the democratic process in Ghana, questions remain about the sustainability of such progress. These questions arise because the projects have ended and so has the support – both technical and financial – which they provided. What is evident from this study is that the financial aspect of the projects was highly important. Not only did they provide the funds and resources for people to participate in the programmes but they also offered clear objectives to work towards, and guidelines for targeting this work. Two pertinent questions are the following:

- Were the support mechanisms put in place by both projects strong enough to ensure continuation at the individual community level, or did temporary funding lead only to temporary success?
- Did project participants invest in the programme objectives to the extent that they will promote its longevity post-funding?

Ultimately, such questions emphasise the importance of effective project planning regardless of where the project's funding may originate. The success in implementing both projects illustrates the importance of a number of elements related to both project management and funding, especially with regard to sustainability. This study found discrepancies in the levels of transparency and collaboration between communities that were involved in the projects and those that were not. Such discrepancies highlight the need to implement project elements on a large scale and ensure that key lessons are well learnt and reinforced.

The CUs proved highly effective at bridging the gap between the DAs and the citizenry. They served as a common platform where divergent opinions based on occupational and sectional interests could be aggregated. The CUs also made

it easier for citizens to demand accountability from public office-holders who had been elected and appointed, and facilitated dialogue between the DAs and citizens to ensure transparency. Generally, the CUs became an umbrella body through which civil society could engage with the state and participate in local governance. This led to greater accountability, transparency, and improved governance.

Institutionalising the CU concept throughout the country, and extending the concept to all 170 districts in Ghana, could have been an essential part of initial project planning. That the project did not incorporate this aspect, but instead gathered data for reporting on democracy growth within civil society in Ghana, seems to demonstrate the short-sighted nature of some US aid projects.

Bräutigam (2000) argues that aid programmes require clear leadership if they are to be sustainable. According to Bräutigam providing such leadership is challenging, especially in a constrained donor and resource environment. Both the ECSELL and GAIT projects showed that although people were often eager to take on CU leadership roles, sustaining the enthusiasm and momentum of civic interaction in local governance was extremely challenging. Arguably, some leaders were merely seduced by the power and stature of their prospective positions. Over time, fervour in demanding accountability tended to wane as leaders began to taste the benefit of integrating into the inner DA systems.

Currently, CU leaders do not have tenure of office and are seen as 'emperors' who are unwilling to share their power or hand over their responsibilities, irrespective of their ability and availability. Additionally, the transfer of power and responsibilities within CUs poses a huge challenge for CU leadership. In Bole, for example, four key executive members left the town to pursue personal development opportunities (education, marriage, and employment) without handing over their responsibilities. In Berekum, three core executive committee members left the union without being replaced. Such events created a vacuum and caused the loss of institutional memory for future generations of CU leaders. As a result the new executive committee had to reinvent the dialogue process with DA.

Thus, it is important to have a defined tenure of office for CU leaders and a mechanism of transfer of power and responsibilities amongst CU members. Without these clear leadership roles and terms of reference for exchanges of power, the same corruption that plagues many national governments across Africa will continue to exist at the local level too.

A further challenge to the continuity and independence of a successful project is the issue of sustainable funding. Critics of donor aid projects cite the sudden loss of resources at a project's end, without adequate avenues for potential support or self-sustaining resources, as a major oversight among development practitioners (Dichte 2003; Kosack 2003; Riddell 1987). Both the ECSELL and GAIT projects ran into this problem.

A possible solution would have been to integrate economic opportunities into the projects, with the aim of building the economic capacity of CU members. This could have improved their financial status and ensured a higher level of commitment to the programme. For example, in similar local governance programmes such as the Local Regional Economic Development (LRED) implemented by German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), suitable methods of harnessing local resources to generate income were integrated into the programme; this empowered the communities economically as well as politically. The integration of economic opportunities into programmes would ensure that CU members who invest their time in advocacy programmes will reap economic dividends. This would be an incentive to continue their efforts. The narrow focus of both IFES projects (ECSELL and GAIT) on political transparency, accountability and collaboration has neglected the interdisciplinary reality of political systems. Political systems do not stand alone, but function in an interconnected way with social and economic systems.

In addition to programme-specific concerns, central to the debate on democratisation aid is the issue of an exit strategy. This study found that America's contribution to Ghana's development process was not only substantial, but in the case of the ECSELL and GAIT projects was highly effective in building active collaboration and transparency, and helping citizens to understand their rights to such processes. However, there is little evidence of sustainable and systemic change strategies after the end of the project cycle. Stark criticism of quick exit strategies, which lead to limited project outcome follow-through, continues to plague many American-funded projects in Africa.

Engagement with the staff of USAID showed that the current exit strategy implemented by USAID is detrimental to the development of a dynamic civic advocacy culture, because it lacks three key exit processes:

- a mutually agreed upon end date, and a procedure for exit by key stakeholders;
- strategies and supports for project sustainability; and
- effective transfer of responsibilities through selecting a new project leader.

Both the GAIT and ECSELL projects were withdrawn without concern for the above processes. This led to a mass layoff of staff and national service personnel. Without developing a clear exit strategy which is effectively communicated to successive leaders, avenues for growth and further development remain limited at best.

Khang and Moe (2008) argue that an effective project management cycle is one that, overall, represents clarity – specifically in terms of leadership, terms of reference, and subsequent funding. In the case of both ESCELL and GAIT, these elements were overlooked. To build on the programmes' successes, new project leaders should have been identified and training needs should have been appropriately provided. Subsidiary stakeholders should also have been identified, and relationships and terms of reference between stakeholders and clear monitoring and evaluation systems should have been developed. In addition and perhaps quite obviously, opportunities should have been determined for funding the project after the withdrawal of American funds. Thus the issues surrounding democracy aid are not so much funding in the case of Ghana's ESCELL and GAIT projects, but their limited focus on sustainability, and their limited scope.

## CONCLUSION

This study has shown that foreign financial and technical support can serve as a catalyst for empowering CSOs to become more active participants in development and democratic processes. In both the ECSELL and GAIT programmes, this contribution and collaboration was the driving force to achieve a higher level of democracy, such as improved transparency and accountability from government stakeholders to their constituents.

The ECSELL project also led to the formation of CUs. These CUs bridged the gap between the community and DAs, and served as a link between the DAs and various civil society groups. This led to a convergence of interests between various decentralised departments and communities' needs. The effective formation of CUs, their contribution to communities, and the community and local government support they received seem to address a long-held challenge to democratic development. Ninsin (1993, p. 184) articulates this as the notion that low economic status prevents sovereign citizens from ensuring that their representatives are responsive and accountable. Certain aspects of Ninsin's (1993) proposition – such as mass illiteracy, ignorance and superstition – continue to remain threats to democratic development in Ghana. However, the financial and technical support which CUs received from USAID greatly enhanced the participation of those CUs in the democratic process at the local level, and thus enhanced the country's overall democracy.

Ultimately, the support given by USAID, both financial and technical, ensured the active formation of CUs in project districts. This in turn enhanced the democratisation of those districts. The formation of CUs is yet to be seen in non-project districts, and the spectrum of democracy remains limited. This fact alone suggests the importance of such aid and programme planning.



The gains made in democratic development by civil society through CUs further challenge those theorists who suggest that granting democracy aid to civil society yields poor results. For example, Carothers and Ottaway (2000), Hearn (2003, p. 22) and Brown (2005) suggest that the democratic outcomes and dividends derived from such investments are disappointing. By contrast, this study showed that the advocacy responsibilities entrusted to CUs by civil society actually helped to improve the relations between CSOs and DAs in the project's districts. These improved relationships enhanced the local government's responsiveness to citizens' demands and community concerns.

In the districts of Techiman and Berekum, the CUs and DAs would collaboratively bid for projects. This type of enhanced relationship affirms Gaventa's (2004, p. 10) assertion that with appropriate support, citizens and governments can collaborate in new ways. By doing so they are able to participate, deliberate and develop solutions to pressing social, economic and community development issues. Such collaboration improves citizens' ability to make informed political choices. It also provides a platform for civic education programmes on various government policy directions.

In the ECSELL and GAIT project areas, the CUs participated in preparing district budgets and in revenue mobilisation. The improved relations between DAs and CUs contributed to the strengthening of local governance in these districts. Budgets were based on the needs of the community. Challenges to revenue mobilisation were addressed as CSOs and DAs became partners, and CSOs became community agents to sensitise citizens about revenue mobilisation. Ultimately, the level of transparency and accountability in project-area DAs was considerably improved.

This study identified several areas of engagement between the CUs and the DAs, ranging from participation to financial mobilisation and from performance monitoring to accountability. The GAIT project rejuvenated an effective accountability system in DAs through the CU programme. Budget hearings were conducted with diverse stakeholders before DAs' approval. As part of the drive to improve accountability through transparency, as espoused by Broz (2002, p. 1), analyses of various DA budget estimates were made by relevant stakeholders. The CUs were able to monitor and assess the implementation of various components of the budget. This contributed to the prudent use of public resources, which in turn led to greater effectiveness and efficiency – which are critical virtues in public administration.

The CUs further encouraged the DAs to publish, on public noticeboards, the cost of projects they had executed. This publication served as the basis to investigate projects which might, in the view of civil society, give public office-holders the chance to engage in financial malfeasance. Access to such critical

information enabled civil society to hold DAs accountable for the use and management of public resources. The DAs responded to the CUs' demands by providing a number of social services to communities. Fulfilling community aspirations is a critical index to measure whether democracy is on track (Papadopoulos 2007, p. 2). The formation of CUs strengthened civil networks and made sure that community needs featured in the political schema.

As this paper has shown, USAID support in the form of technical and financial resources has contributed significantly to the democratisation of Ghana's civil society. What is emphasised is the importance of foreign aid in the democratisation of Ghana's Fourth Republic. Despite this conclusion, however, further research is needed on certain aspects of democracy aid. For example, there are 'missing elements' that require better understanding, such as the impact and influence of donor assistance on the priorities of governments and citizens alike. As noted earlier, there is a real propensity for people to take advantage of positions of power, and such enticement is serious in a constrained donor and resource environment.

Leaders in developing countries have to make difficult choices between either financing democracy and its related institutions, or financing other pressing social services such as security, education, health, water and infrastructure. The picture is complicated by the rampant corruption that has plagued many nations' pasts, and in some cases continues to constrain democratic development. Thus, foreign aid is especially critical where the cost and sophistication of democracy have become extremely high.

The hypothesis of this study was that USAID democratic support, in the form of ECSELL and GAIT projects at the local level, enhanced the formation and operation of CUs; and that this in turn improved civil society activism at the local level in Ghana. After weighing the evidence presented in this paper, the author believes that this hypothesis has been supported. This would affirm the position held by financial transfer theorists. Financial transfer theory posits that aid is able to influence the governance structure of a society and country by enlarging the political space for citizens to participate in their own affairs.

Ghana, as it officially becomes a middle-income country, is faced with the additional challenge of managing a fast-growing economy, indeed the fastest-growing in West Africa. This growth must be balanced against equally fast-growing inequalities in the social, political and economic spheres. Faced with these realities, democratic principles – such as transparency, accountability, and collaboration between civil society and the state – are all the more pertinent. If Ghana is to continue to hold its successful international designation as a 'stable democracy' and middle-income country, it must ensure that the aid it receives is tied to the conditions of sustainability, longevity and skills development for



a 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy. Without these elements, real and practised democratic processes will be limited to the funding that promotes them. The far more preferable option is to grow a culture and constituency that is self-sustainable and self-empowering, with people who are active agents in their own development processes.

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# PRODUCTION, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CONFLICT IN RISKY ELECTIONS

*Kjell Hausken and Mthuli Ncube*

Kjell Hausken is a Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the  
University of Stavanger, Norway  
email: kjell.hausken@uis.no

Mthuli Ncube is a Professor of Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government  
and Fellow of St Anthony's College, University of Oxford  
email: mthuli.ncube@bsg.ox.ac.uk

## ABSTRACT

*This paper analyses typical situations which exist before and after an election. First, the incumbent and his or her challenger make choices that affect the election results. Second, the election itself determines who wins. Third, the loser may or may not accept defeat. If the defeat is not accepted, either a standoff or a coalition between the incumbent and challenger follows. We assume that the incumbent directs his or her resources into the following activities, which affect the chance of winning an election: production, fighting with the challenger, and providing public goods. Similarly, the challenger directs his or her resources into production and fighting with the incumbent. We examine six possible election outcomes based on whether the incumbent wins, the challenger wins, and whether a standoff or coalition arises after either one of the players wins. We draw conclusions about the effect of the various choices which the incumbent and challenger make. Our analysis is mapped to and tested against empirical data from 51 African elections held between 2006 and 2011 (including one in Eritrea in 1993), which are classified into the six outcomes. A variety of regression results are determined. For example, the current empirical material shows that the election outcome depends crucially on fighting between the incumbent and challenger, and less on public goods provision to the population.*

**Keywords:** election, fighting, production, risk, game, conflict.



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## INTRODUCTION

This paper models the pre- and post-election processes between an incumbent and a challenger. Linking the situations before and after an election is essential, because before an election the players make choices that will affect the election outcome. Similarly, after the election, the players face various consequences depending on who wins – and on how the winner and loser each react to the election results. Historically, incumbents have often failed to fully acknowledge the link that exists before and after an election. They also tend to over-estimate their ability to manage the adverse consequences of an election.

Before an election, the incumbent typically chooses between the following three avenues: production (to ensure economic growth); fighting with the challenger to remain in power, with such fighting either including or excluding actual violence; and providing public goods to appease the population. The results of the election will depend largely on how the incumbent makes these choices, and how the challenger chooses between fighting and production. After the election, the incumbent may accept the election result, or a coalition or standoff may ensue. These potential election scenarios affect the choices which the players make before an election. However, extremely few studies have analysed such pre- and post-election linkages.

Ellman and Wantchekon (2000) examine situations where a single strong party controls sources of political unrest. Such a party is likely to win if asymmetric information exists about the party's ability to cause unrest.<sup>1</sup> The cost to citizens of violent elections is high, and may include loss of life, physical and mental injury, suppression of free speech, and human rights violations. Lindberg (2006) argues that democratising nations learn to become democratic through repeatedly behaving in a democratic manner, even if their elections tend to be flawed. Collier (2009) shows that the election process is meant to strengthen democratic institutions, but could in fact worsen conflict. Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) argue that the strength of democratic institutions does seem to have colonial origins, and that violent elections and post-election reactions may similarly have a colonial

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1 See, for example, the studies by Alesina (1988), Alesina and Rosenthal (1995), and Calvert (1985). Schmitter (1978), Schedler (2007), Ashworth and De Mesquita (2008) and others have similarly analysed flawed elections, typically those which are held by autocrats and involve violence and manipulation.

legacy. Gandhi and Przeworski (2009) and Fearon (2011) analyse government decisions to comply with an electoral outcome.

Our study focuses on Africa, which has been slow to establish democratic institutions and has experienced reversals of democratic processes. Election outcomes in most African countries have been challenged as being not free and fair. Some elections have been violent, followed by more violence after the election. Even democracies which are considered well-established, such as Kenya, have experienced some violence during the electoral process. Among sub-Saharan African countries, elections have established democracy in certain countries but caused reversals in others. The model which we used as the basis for our study is also relevant beyond Africa. For example, the fall or transformation of autocracies in North Africa and the Middle East has so far caused unsteady transitions to democracy after various revolutions in 2011 and 2012. Similarly, the fall of communism in the late 1980s paved the way for democratic election of new leaders.

Between 2006 and 2011 there were 50 African elections, plus one held in Eritrea in 1993, making a total of 51 relatively recent elections.<sup>2</sup> In 34 of these 51 elections the incumbent won, compared with 17 in which the challenger won. Of the 34 wins, 21 were uncontested, 11 caused a standoff, and 2 resulted in a coalition. Of the 17 losses, in 11 the incumbent conceded defeat, there were no (0) standoffs, and 6 resulted in a coalition. In terms of the effect of an election on the real economy, the GDP growth rates before and after each election are unclear. Fosu (2008) found that indexes of electoral competitiveness are U-shaped in terms of GDP growth.

Election disputes are more common in Africa than on other continents. As shown in Table 2 later in this paper, some African coalitions stand out. Kenya, Zimbabwe and the Ivory Coast were characterised by violent elections and more violence after the election, with the incumbent spending resources on fighting, production, and public goods provision. In the 2007 Kenya elections, the incumbent did not win outright but won 102 out of 210 parliamentary seats. The close election results meant that both parties claimed victory and the right to form a new government; these competing claims resulted in violence. Some leadership individuals in both parties were later named by the International Criminal Court (ICC) as having instituted such violence. However, after the violent dispute, the two parties came together to form a coalition government.

The 2008 Zimbabwe election was similar. A stand-off between the two leading candidates should determine the winner, but in this case the opposition party

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2 Libya (no elections during this period) and Swaziland (no political parties) were excluded from this study.



refrained from competing due to fear. A coalition government was negotiated. The 2010 Ivory Coast election was more extreme. Despite a seemingly professional pre-election, after the actual election the losing incumbent refused to cede his power. An armed civil conflict ensued and was resolved partly by military intervention.

These contests of power have economic consequences. In Zimbabwe, the economy grew at minus 5% on average over an 8-year period during the political standoff (2000 to 2008). The incumbent, realising he had a lot to lose, compromised and co-opted the challenger into a government of national unity; this resulted in a degree of economic recovery and shifted the effort from fighting to production. The economy recovered after this political resolution, and grew at roughly 8% annually between 2009 and 2011. However, further effort was needed to keep the coalition going. In 2011, the incumbent broke the coalition because he discovered new natural resources and received rent for these. This increased his appetite and resources for fighting so as to keep the rent.

The Ivory Coast economy also experienced a sharp drop in GDP growth due to a political standoff. In 2011 the Ivory Coast experienced an external agent of restraint, namely the United States and the international community, which refused the coalition and cooption option. These external agents tried to force the incumbent to leave power.

For the above three countries and indeed in many others, one situation was evident before the election and a new situation arose after the election. In addition, political institutions can affect the choices made by an incumbent and his or her challenger. For example, one expects parliamentary systems to provide greater incentives than presidential systems for coalition formation (Cheibub 2007; Diermeier 2006; Laver and Shepsle 1990; Strom 1984). Electoral rules can also have an impact (Cox 1997; Persson & Tabellini 2003).

## THE MODEL

As already mentioned, before an election both the incumbent and a challenger have to make choices. These choices include whether to focus on production to ensure economic growth, and/or to fight with the opponent, and/or to provide public goods to the population. After the election, it is determined whether the incumbent or challenger wins. The two possibilities are shown in Table 1 below, in the second column from the left. Thereafter the loser must decide whether or not to accept defeat; this is shown as four possibilities in the third column of Table 1. The six final possible election outcomes are shown in the right column, where 'W' stands for 'incumbent wins' and 'L' stands for 'incumbent loses'.

**Table 1**  
**Situations pre- and post-election, and six outcomes**  
**(WP, WS, WC, LP, LS, LC).**

Before election	After election result is known	After incumbent and challenger have assessed the election result	Final outcome
The incumbent and challenger make choices	Incumbent wins	Challenger accepts defeat	Incumbent remains in power: Outcome WP
		Challenger does not accept defeat	Standoff: Outcome WS
			Coalition: Outcome WC
	Incumbent loses	Incumbent does not accept defeat	Coalition: Outcome LC
			Standoff: Outcome LS
		Incumbent accepts defeat	Challenger becomes new incumbent: Outcome LP

If the election loser accepts defeat, the result is an orderly process. The outcome is described as WP if the incumbent remains in power (top right cell of Table 1), and as LP if the challenger becomes the new incumbent and takes over power (bottom right cell of Table 1). If the election loser does not accept defeat, either a standoff or a coalition occurs. This gives four additional outcomes, as shown in the far right column of Table 1. If the challenger does not accept defeat, either a standoff (WS) or a coalition (WC) occurs. Similarly, if a losing incumbent does not accept defeat, either a standoff (LS) or a coalition (LC) occurs.

We assume that both the incumbent and the challenger have resources that can be directed or converted towards various purposes. Fighting with a challenger can take the form of violence, intimidation, persuasion, bribery, lobbying, fraud and so on. Providing public goods means providing security, education, health care, and other services which the population expects or hopes to get. Similarly, the challenger can direct resources into production or fighting with the incumbent. However, because the challenger is not in power, we assume that he or she cannot provide public goods for the population.

The incumbent and challenger have to strike a delicate balance in directing their resources. These choices will determine who wins the election. One

unrealistic benchmark is that the incumbent and challenger do not fight. In this scenario, the incumbent directs the bulk of his or her resources into generating public goods and the remaining resources into production, which should mean that the incumbent wins the election and stays in power. By contrast, if the incumbent directs ample resources into production but directs limited resources into public goods and into fighting with the challenger, the incumbent can expect to lose the election. Because the challenger is likely to fight with the incumbent in the hope of gaining power, the incumbent has little choice but to match this fight. However, the incumbent must also provide public goods to prevent the population from turning against him or her. Yet if the incumbent directs all resources to fighting and public goods provision, no resources will be available for production. This would mean that economic growth is impossible, which is detrimental for the country.

In other words, the odds of the incumbent winning the election increase when the incumbent spends more on fighting and public goods provision. However, limits exist to the incumbent's fighting and public goods provision, since without production everyone loses. Similarly, the odds of the incumbent winning the election decrease when the challenger's fighting increases. Once again, however, limits exist to the challenger's fighting, since without production everyone loses.

### EMPIRICAL MAPPING OF OUTCOMES

Table 2 below shows the results for 51 African elections between 2006 and 2011. The 1993 election in Eritrea is included. Libya is excluded as there were no elections during this period, and Swaziland is also excluded as its elections do not involve any political parties.

The table shows the election date, the winner (I for incumbent and C for challenger), the outcome (six possible outcomes), whether the dispute was violent, the population size, the GDP, and whether the press is free. We label the incumbent's fighting as  $F_i$ , the incumbent's public goods provision as  $G$ , and the challenger's fighting as  $F_c$ . These three variables each have four possible values: h for high, m for medium, l for low, and 0 for none. The column titled 'W' shows whether the incumbent (I) or challenger (C) won the election. The column titled 'outcome' refers back to Table 1, and shows which of the six possible outcomes applied.

Of the 51 elections which we studied, the incumbent won 34 and the challenger won 17. Of the 34 wins, 21 were uncontested, 11 resulted in a standoff, and 2 resulted in a coalition. Of the 17 losses, in 11 outcomes the incumbent conceded defeat, there were 0 standoffs, and 6 resulted in a coalition.

**Table 2**  
**Outcomes of Elections in Africa 2006–2011 (including Eritrea 1993)<sup>1</sup>**

N°	Country	Election Date	F <sub>i</sub>	G	F <sub>c</sub>	W	Outcome	Dispute Violent	Population 2012 (million)	GDP 2012 (US\$ billion)	Free Press
1	Algeria	4/9/2009	h	h	m	I	WP	No	35 980	187 412	No
2	Angola	9/6/2008	h	h	m	I	WP	No	19 618	103 930	Semi
3	Benin	3/13/2011	h	h	m	I	WP	No	9 100	7 504	Semi
4	Botswana	10/16/2009	h	h	m	I	WP	No	2 031	15 031	Semi
5	Burkina Faso	11/21/2010	h	h	m	I	WP	No	16 968	10 132	Semi
6	Burundi	6/28/2010	h	h	m	I	WP	No	8 575	1 678	Semi
7	Cameroon	9/30/2007	h	h	m	I	WP	No	20 030	26 414	Semi
8	Cape Verde	2/12/2006	h	h	m	I	WP	No	501	2 228	Semi
9	Central African Rep.	1/23/2011	m	l	h	I	WS	No	4 487	2 042	Semi
10	Chad	4/25/2011	m	m	h	I	WS	No	11 525	11 959	Semi
11	Comoros	12/26/2010	l	m	h	C	LP	No	754	633	Semi
12	Congo, Dem. Rep. of	1/19/2007	h	h	m	I	WP	No	67 758	15 176	No
13	Congo, Republic of	7/12/2009	m	l	h	I	WS	No	4 140	15 777	Semi

1 Source: African Development Bank Statistics Department, 2012.

14	Côte d'Ivoire	11/28/2010	h	l	h	C	LP	Yes	20 153	22 413	Semi
15	Djibouti	4/8/2011	m	m	h	I	WS	No	906	1 244	Semi
16	Egypt	11/28/2010	h	h	m	I	WP	No	82 537	228 958	No
17	Equatorial Guinea	11/29/2009	h	l	h	I	WS	No	720	19 041	No
18	Eritrea	5/24/1993	h	h	0	I	WP	No	5 415	2 596	No
19	Ethiopia	5/23/2010	m	h	m	I	WP	No	84 734	34 613	No
20	Gabon	8/30/2009	m	l	h	I	WC	Yes	1 534	16 992	Semi
21	Gambia, The	9/22/2006	h	l	h	I	WS	No	1 776	1 239	Semi
22	Ghana	12/7/2008	l	m	h	C	LP	No	24 966	39 220	Semi
23	Guinea	11/7/2010	l	m	h	C	LP	No	10 222	5 911	Semi
24	Guinea-Bissau	7/29/2009	m	m	h	C	LC	Yes	1 547	0 976	Semi
25	Kenya	12/27/2007	m	m	h	C	LC	Yes	41 610	37 059	Semi
26	Lesotho	2/17/2007	m	m	h	C	LC	No	2 194	1 854	Semi
27	Liberia	10/11/2005	l	m	h	C	LP	No	4 129	1 662	Semi
28	Madagascar	9/23/2007	l	m	h	C	LC	No	21 315	9 484	Semi
29	Malawi	5/19/2009	l	m	h	C	LC	Yes	15 381	5 890	Semi
30	Mali	7/22/2007	h	l	h	I	WS	No	15 840	10 770	Semi
31	Mauritania	7/18/2009	l	m	h	C	LP	Yes	3 542	5 409	Semi
32	Mauritius	5/5/2010	l	m	h	C	LP	No	1 307	11 319	Semi
33	Morocco	9/7/2007	l	m	h	C	LP	No	32 273	105 575	No
34	Mozambique	10/28/2009	m	l	h	I	WC	No	23 930	14 314	Semi
35	Namibia	11/28/2009	h	h	l	I	WP	No	2 324	12 859	Yes
36	Niger	3/12/2011	l	m	h	C	LP	No	16 069	6 478	Semi

37	Nigeria	4/16/2011	m	l	h	I	WS	Yes	162 471	241 517	No
38	Rwanda	8/9/2010	h	h	0	I	WP	No	10 943	6 090	No
39	Sao Tomé & Príncipe	8/7/2011	l	m	h	C	LP	No	169	253	Semi
40	Senegal	2/25/2007	h	l	h	I	WS	No	12 768	12 875	Semi
41	Seychelles	5/21/2011	h	h	l	I	WP	No	87	1 114	Semi
42	Sierra Leone	8/11/2007	m	m	h	C	LP	No	5 997	2 220	Semi
43	Somalia	1/30/2009	h	l	h	I	WS	Yes	9 557	5 896	No
44	South Africa	5/6/2009	h	h	m	I	WP	No	50 460	378 135	Yes
45	Sudan	4/15/2010	h	l	h	I	WS	No	44 632	63 329	No
46	Tanzania	10/31/2010	h	h	0	I	WP	No	46 218	25 562	Semi
47	Togo	3/4/2010	h	h	l	I	WP	No	6 155	3 345	Semi
48	Tunisia	10/25/2009	h	h	0	I	WP	No	10 594	47 123	No
49	Uganda	2/18/2011	h	h	0	I	WP	No	34 509	18 907	Semi
50	Zambia	10/30/2008	h	h	m	I	WP	No	13 475	23 411	Semi
51	Zimbabwe	3/29/2008	h	m	h	C	LC	Yes	12 754	6 368	Semi

Source: Department of Statistics, African Development Bank group, 2014.

A good starting point for empirical determination is Table 2, which is based on history. From this empirical data we attempted to establish trends. One may then proceed to collect or estimate data about election results and related characteristics, using the historical trends to try and predict which of the six outcomes (WP, WS, WC, LP, LS, LC) is likely for a specific election. From Table 2 one can therefore glean insight to predict future election outcomes.

In terms of the six possible outcomes, the most frequent outcome is an outright win for the incumbent (21 wins, unchallenged). A standoff (S) is the second most likely outcome, regardless of whether an incumbent either wins (W) or loses (L). A coalition (C) is the third most likely outcome, again regardless of whether the incumbent wins or loses. The least likely outcome is that the challenger becomes the new incumbent (outcome LP).

We now analyse in more detail the 36 events in which the incumbent won. First, for 22 countries, the incumbent remained in power (WP). This often meant that the incumbent won with a clear margin or was otherwise able to suppress the challenger. Second, for 11 countries, a standoff (S) followed. Although the incumbent won, the margin was lower. The challenger challenged the incumbent, who refused to back down. The standoff could be costly. Third, for Gabon, Mozambique and Madagascar, a coalition (C) was formed. Again the margin by which the incumbent won was low, but the circumstances were such that a coalition was formed rather than a costly standoff.

We now consider the 15 events in which the incumbent lost. First, for 11 countries where the challenger became the new incumbent, the incumbent usually lost with a clear margin. Often public goods had not been provided, and fighting with the challenger was unsuccessful. Second, in four countries where a coalition was formed, the incumbent had generally lost with a less clear margin. In such cases, circumstances often prompted the incumbent to challenge the results fiercely. Third, no countries in this group experienced a standoff.

### TESTING THE MODEL EMPIRICALLY

Identifying all parameters and variables in the scenarios of interest to this study was empirically challenging. We therefore chose to use three independent variables in the analysis, namely the incumbent's fighting ( $F_i$ ) and public goods provision (G), and the challenger's fighting ( $F_c$ ). The three independent variables each had four possible values: zero (0), low (l), medium (m) and high (h). The dependent variable was the final election outcome, which had six possible codes: WP, WS, WC, LP, LS and LC.



*All possible outcomes*

From Table 2, we constructed a 6×51 matrix. The rows showed the African countries, and the columns contained the election outcomes (WP, WS, WC, LP, LS, LC). The abbreviations for the election outcomes have been explained earlier in this paper and the information is not repeated here. For each country, only one of the six outcomes was possible, and that outcome was assigned a dummy code of 1. The remaining five outcomes (which had not occurred) were assigned 0 for that country. For example, if WP had occurred it was assigned 1, whereas WS, WC, LP, LS, LC were all assigned 0. One of the authors (Mthuli Ncube) used the available data from the African Development Bank and rated the fighting variables  $F_i$  and  $F_c$  according to his own expert judgment. The ratings were assigned on an ordinal scale (i.e. rank-ordered) from 0 to 3 according to the intensity of fighting. The same author rated the public goods provision (variable G) ordinally from 0 to 3, according to the degree of public goods provision.

Table 3 below shows the results of the correlation analysis, using a Spearman rank correlation, which is appropriate for categorical and ranked data. The analysis showed that a positive and statistically significant relation exists between a higher level of  $F_i$  and the incumbent's chances of staying in power (WP). The corollary is that higher  $F_i$  is associated with a lower chance of the challenger taking power. Similarly, higher  $F_c$  increases the challenger's chance of either winning or of forming a coalition with a victorious incumbent. However, although higher  $F_i$  raises the incumbent's chance of winning, it also lowers the odds of a successful coalition if the challenger does not accept the incumbent's victory.

**Table 3**  
**Correlation coefficient (Spearman rho) between**  
**election outcome and  $F_i$ , G and  $F_c$**

Independent variables	Election outcome (dependent variable)					
	WP	WS	WC	LP	LS	LC
Incumbent's fighting effort ( $F_i$ )	0.684**	-0.120	-0.009	-0.683**	–	-0.120
Public goods provision (G)	0.705**	-0.216	-0.549**	-0.241	–	-0.068
Challenger's fighting effort ( $F_c$ )	-0.902**	0.137	0.421**	0.573**	–	0.137

**Note:** Asterisks (\*\*) indicate statistical significance the 1% level.

### Scenario 1: The incumbent wins

Table 4 below shows the findings of our analysis of elections where the incumbent won ( $n=34$ ). First, a high level of fighting  $F_i$  by the incumbent is quite strongly related to the incumbent's success ( $\rho=0.56$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Second, fighting  $F_c$  by the challenger shows a strong inverse relationship with the incumbent's success ( $\rho=-0.77$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and is positively correlated with an eventual standoff ( $\rho=0.67$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). However,  $F_c$  is not associated with the formation of a coalition. Third, a high level of public goods provision  $G$  by the incumbent shows a massive positive correlation with the incumbent's success and the challenger accepting defeat ( $\rho=0.97$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Similarly,  $G$  shows a strong inverse relationship with a standoff; that is, the higher the level of goods provision by the incumbent, the lower the chances of an eventual standoff ( $\rho=-0.8321$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Also,  $G$  is slightly related to the development of a coalition ( $\rho=-0.3499$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Table 4 was based on our  $3 \times 51$  matrix, with African countries shown in rows and the election outcomes (WP, WS, WC) shown in columns.

**Table 4**  
**Incumbent wins: rank correlation between election outcome and  $F_i$ ,  $G$  and  $F_c$**

Independent variables	Election outcomes		
	WP	WS	WC
Incumbent's fighting effort ( $F_i$ )	0.5623***	-0.3575**	-0.4507***
Public goods provision ( $G$ )	0.9705***	-0.8321***	-0.3499**
Challenger's fighting effort ( $F_c$ )	-0.7646***	0.6721***	0.2430

Note: Asterisks indicate statistical significance at the 5% (\*\*) and 1% (\*\*\*) levels.

### Scenario 2: The challenger wins

Table 5 shows the findings of our analysis of elections where the incumbent lost ( $n=17$ ). The strongest two correlations both involved  $F_i$  and each had a magnitude of 0.39 (rounded). The incumbent's fighting  $F_i$  showed a modest positive relationship with the challenger's ability to assume power, and a modest negative relationship with the formation of a coalition. However, neither of these associations was statistically significant, and nor were any other correlations between the tested variables. It is possible that the relatively small sample size ( $n=17$ ) affected this result, which should therefore be interpreted with caution. Table 5 was again based on our  $3 \times 51$  matrix.

**Table 5**  
**Challenger wins: rank correlation between election outcomes and  $F_i$ ,  $G$  and  $F_c$**

Independent variables	Election outcomes		
	LP	LS	LC
Incumbent's fighting effort ( $F_i$ )	-0,3849	–	0,3849
Public goods provision ( $G$ )	-0,1846	–	0,1846
Challenger's fighting effort ( $F_c$ )	–	–	–

### *Regression analysis*

In the empirical analysis so far, we tested for the strength of the correlation between the election outcome and each of the variables individually. Next we test for all of them together. We are particularly interested in understanding the relative importance of fighting by the incumbent and challenger in determining the election outcome. For example, does the provision of public goods matter as an election-winning strategy, compared with intensified fighting?

We assigned the values 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 to the six outcomes WP, WS, WC, LP, LS, LC respectively. We also assigned the dummy codes 0, 1, 2, 3 to 0, l (low), m (medium) and h (high) respectively, as shown in Table 2. We then performed categorical regression analysis of the election outcomes on  $F_i$ ,  $G$  and  $F_c$ . The categorical regression method is appropriate for this study, given that we are utilizing categorical and qualitative data. The equation to be tested is

$$Y = a + b_1 F_i + b_2 G + b_3 F_c + u_i \quad (1)$$

where  $Y$  denotes the election outcome,  $a$  is constant,  $b_1$  is the coefficient for  $F_i$ ,  $b_2$  is the coefficient for  $G$ ,  $b_3$  is the coefficient for  $F_c$  and  $u_i$  is an error term. The results are shown in Table 6.

The results in Table 6 show that the regression coefficient between the degree of fighting by the incumbent and the election outcome is positive (0.07, rounded). This suggests that as an incumbent increases his or her effort to fight for power, he or she is more likely to win and retain that power. However, the result was statistically not significant and the coefficient was very small, which means that no firm conclusions can be drawn and further studies are needed to clarify this finding. The only statistically significant result was for the degree of fighting by the challenger (significant at 1%). This coefficient was large (0.986) and had

a negative sign, which implies that a higher level of fighting by the challenger greatly increases the chance of defeating the incumbent and attaining power.

**Table 6**  
**Drivers of election outcomes: coefficient, F-value and significance as calculated by categorical regression**

Variable	Coefficient	F-value	Significance
$F_i$	0.066	0.245	0.623
G	-0.125	0.492	0.690
$F_c$	-0.986	71.855	0.000**

R-Squared is 0.923; adjusted R-squared is 0.913; (\*\*) means significant at 1%

One clear conclusion that can be drawn is that by comparing the coefficients, we note that increased fighting by the challenger is more likely to result in victory than is increased fighting by the incumbent. The coefficient for the provision of public goods was negatively related to the election outcome but was not statistically significant. Thus, the presence of fighting by the incumbent and challenger are more important variables.

## CONCLUSION

In this study we analysed the choices which an incumbent and his or her challenger make before and after an election. Our analysis accounted for six election outcomes. Before an election, the incumbent and challenger make choices about whether to produce, fight, or provide public goods. With regard to election outcomes, post-election the winner is first determined, and thereafter it is determined whether the election loser accepts defeat. If the election loser refuses to be defeated, a standoff or coalition ensues. The various combinations of these factors give six possible election outcomes, which we analysed and the results of which are presented in this paper.

We assume that the incumbent invests his or her resources into production to ensure economic growth, into public goods to appease the population, and into fighting to oppose the challenger. The challenger invests his or her resources into production and fighting with the challenger. The incumbent's chance of winning an election increases when he or she provides public goods to appease the population and fights successfully with the challenger; however, resources

must also be directed to production to ensure the country's economic growth. The incumbent has to strike a delicate balance between these opposing concerns.

Considering 51 countries, the model we used helped us to evaluate countries that try to seek legitimacy by holding fraudulent elections while providing some level of public goods. We analysed the variables 'fighting' and 'public goods provision' according to the three outcomes that may arise if the incumbent loses an election.

The relationship between the choices of the incumbent and challenger on the one hand, and the six post-election outcomes on the other hand, was tested by Spearman rank correlational analysis. Although the data was ordinal rather than numerical, the results showed certain distinct trends. First, a positive and statistically significant relationship was found between the incumbent's fighting effort and his or her chances of staying in power. Second, the challenger's fighting effort similarly increased his or her chances of winning the election, or of reaching a coalition if the incumbent won. Third, a higher fighting effort by the incumbent lowered his or her chances of obtaining a coalition if the challenger did not accept the incumbent's victory. The fourth finding was complex: if an incumbent won the election, a higher level of pre-election spending (by the incumbent) on public goods provision was associated with a better chance of winning the election. Such spending was also associated with a greater chance that the challenger would accept defeat. Similarly, it decreased the chances of a standoff or coalition.

The regression results showed that as an incumbent fights harder to retain power, he or she is indeed more likely to win an election. Similarly, as a challenger intensifies his or her fighting, he or she is also more likely to win against the incumbent. However, increased fighting by the incumbent is more likely to result in victory than is increased fighting by a challenger.

Our analysis also showed that based on the available data, fighting (by either the incumbent or challenger) is more important than the provision of public goods in determining an election outcome. The implication of this finding seems to be that politicians should focus solely on fighting rather than on the provision of public goods if they want to win elections. This is how politicians have won elections in Africa so far. However, the global environment is becoming increasingly democratised, and we do not expect this approach to be publicly acceptable for much longer.

Future research could focus on the decision by an autocratic regime to hold an election in the first place. In addition, an econometric analysis could be extended to include other countries. Furthermore, research could focus on analysing the incidence of revolutions in countries where public goods are provided for the benefit of a select few, and where the voice of citizens and the accountability of those in power are suppressed.

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# FREE ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN LESOTHO

*Richard F Weisfelder*

Richard Weisfelder is Professor (retired) in the Department of Political Science  
at the University of Toledo  
email: richard.weisfelder@utoledo.edu

## ABSTRACT

*Since 1993, Lesotho has had six free elections. Five have been followed by episodes of coercive regional diplomacy or military intervention to maintain order or sustain the elected government. Two of these interventions have occurred as Lesotho's electoral system was being transformed from a first-past-the-post dominant party system to a mixed member proportional pattern, and a third intervention is presently underway. This essay contends that the effort to remedy the prior lack of inclusiveness in Parliament has accentuated the fissiparous proclivities within Lesotho's political culture. Following the 2012 and 2015 elections, greater fragmentation among political parties led to hung parliaments and coalition governments with minimal parliamentary majorities. This essay questions whether Staffan Lindberg's conceptual model regarding the link between the consolidation of democracy and the experience of successive free and fair elections can adequately explain Lesotho's trajectory. Remarkably, the transfers of power by Pakalitha Mosisili to Motsoahae Thomas Thabane in 2012, and by Thabane back to Mosisili in 2015, were the first such exchanges between an incumbent government and an opposition party in southern Africa during the post-liberation era. Whether this positive development might be translated into more effective governance and regard for democratic norms will be explored.*

**Keywords:** electoral systems, proportional representation, Lesotho, SADC, coalition governments.



## HISTORICAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT OF LESOTHO'S CONSECUTIVE TRANSFERS OF POWER

Within a three year period, Setsoto Stadium in Maseru was twice the scene where political power was peacefully transferred. In the first event, power was transferred from Lesotho's long-serving Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili to Motsoahae Thomas Thabane, and in the second event it was returned from Thabane to Mosisili. Each man had cobbled together a coalition government commanding a small majority of seats in the National Assembly following the 2012 and 2015 elections, respectively (Rosenberg & Weisfelder 2013).<sup>1</sup> The dominant Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) had prevailed in the 1998, 2002, and 2007 elections. Hence the 2012 election was the first instance of an opposition victory, and the 2015 election was the second. The exchanges of pleasantries by these seasoned political rivals during their public transfers of power were hardly routine; they were regional breakthroughs.

In Africa south of the Zambezi, there had been no prior instance where the incumbent party voluntarily and peacefully transferred power to an opposition party. Among Lesotho's peers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the party that overturned colonial or white minority rule has prevailed in every election. New heads of government from the incumbent parties have assumed office. However, these ruling parties have yet to meet a crucial test of democracy, namely to surrender their power and the perquisites of office after an electoral defeat. This challenge is harder when the successful opposition party has previously been derided as incompetent, disloyal or worse.

Peaceful transfers of power in Lesotho may be easier in the absence of significant ethnic, religious, and ideological differences among the contesting parties. However, both the 2012 and 2015 elections were preceded by simmering conflicts that prompted the SADC to intervene. In 2012 the ruling LCD was split by a bitter internecine conflict just three months before the election. In 2015 Prime Minister Thabane's fragile coalition government collapsed during an even more intense struggle that compromised Lesotho's stability. Like prior splits in the ruling party prior to the 1998, 2002, and 2007 elections, the precipitating factors in 2012 and 2015 were not ideological or policy driven. Access to power, succession to party leadership, and personal rivalries have predominated – in a context where government employment is the primary source of wealth and opportunity.

Despite the precarious character of Lesotho's coalition governments after the 2012 and 2015 elections, these transfers of power reversed a malign precedent.

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1 The National Assembly is the popularly elected lower house of Parliament. Entries on each political party, the electoral system, and elections as well as biographies of major political figures appear in Rosenberg & Weisfelder (2013).

Lesotho had failed its first test disastrously in 1970 when Leabua Jonathan's Basotho National Party (BNP) lost the election decisively to Ntsu Mokhehle's Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), but retained power with the help of the Lesotho security forces and the South African apartheid regime. The result was sixteen years of authoritarian civilian rule under Jonathan. This period was followed by seven years of military government after a successful coup in 1986.

Defeated parties strongly challenged the results of the 1993, 1998, and 2007 elections after Lesotho returned to constitutional civilian rule. Such challenges echoed the disruptive electoral disputes in 1965 and 1970 under Lesotho's original democratic constitution. The turmoil after the 1993 election was contained only after King Letsie III's abortive coup was reversed through coercive diplomatic intervention by Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Similarly, opposition protests after the 1998 election created anarchy. This led Botswana and South Africa to intervene militarily under SADC auspices to restore Mosisili's elected LCD government, and to demand the reform of Lesotho's dysfunctional first-past-the-post electoral system.

By contrast, after the successful 2002 election – which was conducted under the new mixed member system, even the disgruntled BNP joined nine other parties in the National Assembly. However, the 2007 election generated renewed turmoil because of a dispute about the allocation of the compensatory proportional seats in the National Assembly. This conflict persisted up until the 2012 election, with controversial reforms to the electoral system being enacted only in late 2011.

Despite the intercession of international, regional, and local mediators in both the 2012 and 2015 elections, prospects for legitimate outcomes seemed dim. However, these two elections altered the old paradigm of virulent partisan struggle in the aftermath of an election in Lesotho. Previously, the dominant party – with its substantial parliamentary majority – would be left wrangling with an aggrieved but marginal opposition. What has emerged instead is a pattern of intense partisan struggles within a weak multiparty coalition government, under constant duress from a substantial coalition of parliamentary opponents.

## OBJECTIVES

This essay will merely note in passing the events and extensive literature regarding Lesotho's 1993 and 1998 elections, conducted under the first-past-the-post system, and their tragic aftermaths (Weisfelder 1999 & 2001). It will not replicate sound published analyses of the 2002, 2007 and 2012 elections. Instead it will focus on the characteristics, outcomes, revisions and gaming of Lesotho's mixed member electoral system between 2002 and 2015. It will treat partisan manipulation of that system in 2007 as a crucial turning point. That episode signalled Lesotho's

transformation from a single party dominant system into a multi-party pattern, typical of electoral systems with proportional representation and resultant coalition governments.

A key element in Lesotho's post-electoral conflicts has been the roles played by South Africa, SADC and other external actors. This intervention has been possible because of Lesotho's impacted geopolitical position and resultant economic and political vulnerabilities. The impact of those external players was accentuated in 2014 as they tried to prevent the collapse of Lesotho's first coalition government. Their activities expanded when that domestic conflict morphed into a quasi-military coup that included confrontations between elements of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) and the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS), aligned with rival parties.

Both the SADC presence and the politicisation of Lesotho's security services demand careful evaluation. The processes of coalition formation in 2012 and 2015, the nature of the component political parties and leadership, and the consequences of government by coalition all require attention. This essay evaluates Lesotho's recent experiences in the light of Staffan Lindberg's (2006) and Andrew Reynold's (1999) analyses of the relationships between elections and democratisation. Afrobarometer data for Lesotho are used to update Wonbin Cho and Michael Bratton's (2005) analysis of the impact of electoral reforms on 'citizen support for the country's state and regime.' (p. vii). Whether proposed electoral, constitutional and parliamentary remedies could be enacted and effect change will also be considered.

#### CREATION OF THE MIXED MEMBER ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND ELECTION OF 2002

Following their military intervention in 1998 to prevent the ouster of Mosisili's elected government, Botswana and South Africa, backed by SADC, insisted that his LCD accept the formation of an Interim Political Authority (IPA). The IPA was intended to restructure the dysfunctional electoral system. The presumed cause of the 1998 insurrection and of Letsie III's aborted coup in 1994 was that free and fair elections, under the first-past the-post constituency-based electoral system, had denied parliamentary representation to lesser parties. Yet these smaller parties had collectively gained as much as 40% of the vote. Hence their supporters had created anarchy through extra-parliamentary demonstrations, to press their claims that electoral chicanery had denied them their rightful place in Parliament. The IPA was intended to create and implement an alternative electoral system that would be more inclusive, have wider popular acceptance, and be perceived to be free and fair. It was also expected to create norms for appropriate behaviour among political parties (Rosenberg & Weisfelder 2013, pp. 188-190, 266-268, 417-420).

After protracted wrangling, the IPA agreed to a mixed system of first-past-the-post plurality elections in 80 constituencies, with compensatory proportional representation for 50 additional seats (Likoti 2009, p. 58-62). The membership of the prior Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was replaced. Claiming that its constitutional authority was being usurped, the LCD majority in Parliament reduced the number of proportional seats to 40. The LCD reluctantly accepted the compensatory principle for the proportional component. As the dominant party, the LCD preferred a parallel system where constituency and proportional seats would be contested separately. This arrangement would permit the LCD to benefit from the proportional component, whatever its results in the constituencies.

The agreed upon system gave each voter two votes: one for a local constituency candidate and one for a political party. The compensatory proportional seats were allocated to parties, whose share of constituency seats was less than their proportion of the nationwide party vote. This scenario would ensure that the National Assembly would reflect the range of opinion nationally. Table 1 below shows the results of the 2002 election.

**Table 1**  
**2002 Election Results**

Parties	Constituency Seats	% Party Vote	Compensatory PR Seats	National Assembly Seats	% Assembly Seats
BAC	–	2.9	3	3	2.5
BCP	–	2.7	3	3	2.5
BNP	–	22.4	21	21	17.5
LCD	79	54.8	–	79	65.9
LPC	1	5.8	4	5	4.2
LWP	–	1.4	1	1	.8
NIP	–	5.5	5	5	4.2
NPP	–	.7	1	1	.8
MFP	–	1.2	1	1	.8
PFD	–	1.1	1	1	.8
Others	–	1.5	–	–	0.0

As in the disputed 1998 election, the LCD was the dominant party, winning all but one of the constituency contests. This time, the LCD's opponents accepted the legitimacy of the 2002 outcome because the proportional component permitted nine opposition parties to participate within the system rather than demonstrate in the streets. Election observers viewed the process and outcome as free and fair (Southall 2003). Freedom House's annual assessment of Lesotho's performance regarding civil liberties and political rights immediately improved from a 'partly free' rating to the 'free' category.

Despite internal conflicts within his party, this electoral legitimacy provided Prime Minister Mosisili with popular support. His stable parliamentary majority meant he had little need to court the opposition parties. However, what had an unexpected impact in the 2007 election was that the unheralded National Independent Party (NIP) led by Anthony Manyeli had gained five National Assembly seats through proportional representation. Manyeli himself acknowledged that this was probably a case of mistaken identity. The LCD had told its supporters to 'vote the bird' in the party vote. Many of them had apparently mistaken the NIP dove for the LCD eagle!

#### THE 2007 ELECTION AND MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL ELECTORAL DISPUTE

The conduct of the 2007 election generated little controversy and was deemed free and fair by domestic and international observers. Long-simmering grievances within the LCD, however, had been accentuated by several factors. These included Mosisili's failure to address festering corruption; growing politicisation of the civil service; and the grievances of urban workers, especially in the textile industry. These concerns were exacerbated by the rise of the mercurial Monyane Moleleki in the struggle to succeed Mosisili, should he retire.

On 13 October 2006, Motsoahae Thomas Thabane led a bloc of 18 members of the National Assembly to break with the LCD and form the All Basotho Convention (ABC). What made the new party formidable was the likelihood of its cracking the phalanx of LCD constituency seats, the extensive political experience of its leader, and the security provided by proportional seats should its support in constituencies prove less than expected. With his parliamentary majority reduced to two, elections pending, and poor prospects for regaining the lost seats, Mosisili dissolved Parliament. He called a snap election before the new party could organise and campaign effectively. Incumbents gain from choosing when to seek a new mandate whenever Parliament has a maximum rather than fixed term of office.

Mosisili's next move threatened the legitimacy of the mixed member system and led to five years of post-election turmoil. Recalling the voter confusion of

2002, the LCD forged an alliance with the NIP. The LCD ran only constituency candidates and instructed its supporters to 'vote the bird' – namely for the NIP dove – in the party vote. The resultant NIP list for proportional representation was an amalgam of LCD and NIP members who had pledged to support the LCD in Parliament. The NIP participants accepted the alliance as a survival strategy, understanding that the 2002 'accident' would not otherwise be repeated. This stratagem transformed the compensatory format of proportional representation into the parallel system which the LCD had preferred. The LCD had gained no compensatory proportional seats in 2002 because constituency victories gave them more seats than justified by their share of the national vote. The LCD hoped the alliance would fend off the ABC challenge by adding proportional seats without regard for constituency victories. To counter this ploy, the ABC formed a similar alliance with the Lesotho Worker's Party (LWP), fielding only constituency candidates itself, and telling its supporters to vote for the LWP party list. Table 2 below shows the results for the 2007 election.

**Table 2**  
**2007 Election Results**

Parties	Constituency Seats	% Party Vote	Compensatory PR Seats	National Assembly Seats	% Assembly Seats
ABC	17	–	–	17	14.2
ACP	1	4.6	1	2	1.7
BBDP	–	1.9	1	1	.8
BCP	–	2.2	1	1	.8
BDNP	–	2.0	1	1	.8
BNP	–	6.8	3	3	2.5
LCD	62	–	–	–	51.7
LWP	–	24.3	10	10	8.3
MFP	–	2.1	1	1	.8
NIP	–	51.8	21	21	17.5
NLFP	–	.9	–	–	–
PFD	–	3.5	1	1	.8
LCD/ NIP	62	51.8	21	83	60.8
ABC/ LWP	17	24.3	10	27	22.5

The strategy worked. It gave the LCD alliance a large parliamentary majority with 62 constituency seats and 21 additional seats through proportional representation. Seven smaller parties were the big losers. They won ten proportional seats, but would likely have gained 28 if the IEC had treated the alliances as two unified parties rather than four separate ones. The opposition parties took their seats in the National Assembly, but vehemently disagreed with the IEC interpretation of the law and allocation of proportional seats. Independent observers expressed concern that the IEC decision had violated the spirit and intent of the mixed member format and threatened the ongoing democratisation of Lesotho (Elklit 2008; Makoa 2008; Matlosa 2008). The Freedom House rating for Lesotho fell back to 'partly free.' By contrast, the American ambassador saw no problem when techniques that were not legally prohibited were used to gain an electoral advantage (Fulbright-Hays group briefing, July 2008).

A parliamentary 'sit-in' by five opposition parties protesting the allocation of proportional seats led to their forcible ejection by the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF). When dissent spilled into the streets, Maseru was paralysed by a general strike, with most opposition groups joining in. The strength of the ABC/LWP alliance within Maseru and other urban areas posed a huge challenge for the rurally based LCD government. Alarmed by this new bout of instability in Lesotho, the executive secretary of SADC launched what would become a multi-year initiative to examine the causes of the conflict and promote its resolution. With that assurance, opposition leaders suspended their strike, perhaps wary of replicating the 1998 post-election debacle.

A troika of ministers from SADC states arrived in Lesotho to evaluate the sources of the problem. Prime Minister Mosisili denied that there was anything to discuss with the opposition. However, after the troika had met with government and opposition leaders, it identified the main causes of the dispute as being party alliances, manipulation of the electoral system, and flawed communication among political leaders. The troika's report led to a SADC-sponsored 'dialogue' about the allocation of the compensatory proportional seats. Ketumile Masire, a former president of Botswana, was the designated mediator.

When these talks yielded no progress, a rash of inchoate violence ensued, targeting LCD cabinet ministers and even ABC leader Thabane. With curfews in effect, security forces treated opposition supporters roughly, with threats, arrests, and alleged incidents of torture. Although the disturbances produced only temporary disruptions, the dispute became a source of renewed factionalism and indiscipline in the LDF. The result was charges of sedition and other offenses against perpetrators. One of the officers who fled to South Africa was later involved in a bizarre plot to assassinate Mosisili. He recruited the Mozambican mercenaries who penetrated an LDF base in April 2009 and used captured arms



and vehicles to attack State House, the prime minister's residence. The mercenaries were eventually repulsed by LDF guards. The challenges to the legitimacy of the LCD parliamentary contingent undoubtedly facilitated these disquieting events.

Masire's mediation was derailed by an electoral challenge bought before Lesotho's High Court. When the Court ignored the clear intent of the mixed member system and affirmed the IEC allocation of the proportional seats on largely technical grounds, momentum toward a negotiated settlement ceased. Masire eventually halted his efforts when the ruling LCD declined to proceed further, stating that the dialogue had 'run its course.' Mosisili condemned Masire's final report to SADC as having done nothing to bring resolution but merely adding fuel to the fire. Masire (2009) had criticised the way electoral alliances had been created and the mixed member electoral model had been applied. He called for legislative action to remedy those problems, to permit courts to hear election petitions, to create criteria for selection of the leader of the parliamentary opposition, and to foster prevalence of national interests over partisan interests (Bane 2009).

Following the failure of Masire's mission and of subsequent SADC delegations to produce rapprochement, leadership passed to the Christian Council of Lesotho, working together with civil society organisations, foreign donors, and the UN Development Programme's Democratic Governance project. Initial agreements foundered when the protagonists seemed more committed to keeping their old vendettas alive than reaching a settlement. Infighting persisted within the opposition ranks. Nevertheless, the chairman of the Christian Council, Bishop Phillip Mokoku, kept the discussions going until April 2011, when he announced that agreement about needed reforms had been reached.

## THE 2011 ELECTORAL REFORMS AND 2012 ELECTION

The Electoral Reform Act of 2011 ended the 2007 electoral dispute with changes that were acceptable to the major parties. Voters would simultaneously choose a local constituency candidate and that candidate's party for compensatory proportional representation, through a single ballot. Voters could no longer vote for a party other than that of their favoured constituency candidate; nor could they vote for their preferred party if it lacked a local constituency candidate. Electoral pacts were precluded unless registered with the IEC and treated as a single party slate for both constituency and proportional purposes. Parties could question the allocation of proportional seats in court. All parties were required to submit 'zebra' lists in which men and women's names were alternated for proportional representation, thereby guaranteeing greater gender equality in Parliament. New reporting requirements to the IEC were required of registered parties as well as a set of standardised provisions to be included in party constitutions. Contributions

of more than M200 000 (\$20 000) to any party had to be reported. External election observers were guaranteed free access to all electoral participants and to local and international media.

Both external and domestic electoral observers considered the 2012 general election to be free and fair, and congratulated the IEC on a well managed process (Commonwealth Observer Group 2012). No party rejected the overall outcome. The 2013 Freedom House ranking moved Lesotho back to its 'free' category. The prelude to the election, however, had shown up the highly contentious interactions between parties and the internecine conflicts within them.

Had it remained unified, the LCD would have had a huge victory. But in February 2012, years of recrimination between Monyane Moleleki's 'Fire-eater' faction and Mothetjoa Metsing's 'Fire-extinguishers' finally tore the LCD apart. Mosisili, like Mokhehle in 1997, responded to the loss of control over his party executive by forming a new party, the Democratic Congress (DC). He continued to govern through controversial parliamentary manoeuvres (Letsie 2013, p. 71-72). After passing last-minute legislation to facilitate the election, Parliament was dissolved, leaving the prior Cabinet intact, including rival LDC and DC ministers. Struggles between the factions to control the fractured LCD party apparatus and financial resources remained unresolved until those issues were rendered moot by the election results.

Post-election commentaries have typically ignored the internecine strife within the other parties – although this boded ill for an effective coalition government. Tom Thabane's leadership had been criticised as authoritarian, and was blamed for defections of party members and the loss of two parliamentarians from the ABC fold. The ABC/LWP alliance had ended bitterly in 2010 when Macaefa Billy, the LWP leader, was ousted as ABC secretary general. Failure to compete effectively with the LCD in several parliamentary by-elections added to the rancour. Billy may have been prescient when he denounced Thabane as an authoritarian who would head a 'rotten administration' should he become prime minister (*Lesotho Times* 2011). Conflict within the BNP over Metsing Lekhanya's leadership dated back to 2001, and had resulted in a split in 2006.<sup>2</sup> That conflict had intensified following the collapse of BNP electoral support in 2007, culminating in Lekhanya's hotly contested ouster in 2010. Thesele 'Maseribane eventually prevailed to lead the BNP, an outcome confirmed only after lengthy legal battles. Several smaller parties also suffered damaging internal conflicts. Table 3 below shows the results of the 2012 election.

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2 Metsing Lekhanya was the general who led the coup that overthrew Leabua Jonathan in 1986 and headed the Military Council thereafter. Ironically, in 1999 he became leader of the BNP, the party he had ousted.

**Table 3**  
**2012 Election results**

Parties	Constituency Seats	% Party Vote	Compensatory PR Seats	National Assembly Seats	% Assembly Seats
ABC	26	25.18	4	30	25.0
BBDP	–	.44	1	1	.8
BCP	–	.46	1	1	.8
BDNP	–	.62	1	1	.8
BNP	–	4.31	5	5	4.2
DC	41	39.58	7	48	40.0
LCD	12	21.94	14	26	21.7
LPC	–	.91	1	1	.8
LWP	–	.44	1	1	.8
MFP	–	.60	1	1	.8
NIP	–	1.24	2	2	1.7
PFD/K	1	2.02	2	3	2.5
Others <sup>1</sup>	–	2.20	–	–	–
Coalition <sup>2</sup>	38	51.43	23	61	50.83
Opposition <sup>3</sup>	41	40.02	8	49	40.83
The Block <sup>4</sup>	1	6.29	9	10	8.34

<sup>1</sup> Included four small parties and nine independents with PR lists

<sup>2</sup> Included ABC, BNP, and LCD

<sup>3</sup> Included DC and BBDP

<sup>4</sup> Initially supporting the coalition: BDNP, BCP, LPC, LWP, MFP, NIP, and PFD

Source: Compiled by the author from Independent Electoral Commission data (2012)

The 2012 election outcome was not a straightforward popular repudiation of Mosisili and his government (Ambrose 2012a, pp. 11-22; Letsie 2013, pp. 67-70, 72-75). A plurality of Basotho voters preferred that Mosisili continue to lead the country. Thabane's claim to coalition leadership rested on only 25.2% of the vote for the ABC. His party had gained a majority only in his own constituency,

compared with majorities for the DC in 20 constituencies and for the LCD in three. Fifteen of the 26 ABC constituencies were carried by pluralities of less than 40% of the vote, and in 22 constituencies the combined vote for the DC and LCD was greater than the ABC total. The 26 LCD seats versus ABC's 30 gave Metsing almost as strong a claim to coalition leadership and the expectation of being treated as an equal partner. With only five proportional seats, no constituency victories, and only 4.3% of the party vote, 'Maseribane's BNP seemed destined to play a lesser role.

The composition of the new National Assembly closely tracked the percentages gained in the party vote, lessening the prior disparities which had favoured any party that won a large block of constituency seats. The entrenched political class still dominated ministerial positions, and Prime Minister Thabane – the oldest constituency representative – had served in every government since independence. Almost unnoticed, the greatest change was the election of 75 new members to the National Assembly, compared with the retention of only 45 incumbents: an unprecedented infusion of new blood (Ambrose 2012b, p. 4). Half of the winning candidates in constituencies were younger than 50 years, while only 15 candidates were older than 60. Women garnered 31 seats in the National Assembly, five among the 23 Cabinet posts, and three of seven appointments as assistant ministers.

The voter turnout was a mere 50.4% of registered voters. This scenario was aggravated by the continued failure to provide absentee voting for Basotho residing in or visiting South Africa (Weisfelder 2014). Eighteen parties entered constituency candidates and party lists, with four of them contesting almost every seat. An additional eight parties competed in at least 50 of the 80 constituencies. To qualify for proportional representation, parties had to field constituency candidates. That requirement encouraged more than 1 000 constituency candidates to stand for election, including 55 independents.

The 2012 general election perpetuated the preponderance of fragments from the LCD, which collectively gained almost 88% of party votes. Party manifestos reflected a paucity of ideological and policy differences among the competitors, and confirmed that the key sources of division were personal conflicts, factional rivalries, and struggles to control governmental posts and assets. The election results also revealed a huge urban/rural divide, with the DC dominating the rural southern and mountain districts, the LCD dominating the more rural segments of the northern districts, and the ABC dominating most of the urban areas. Urban voters may have been more aware of government deficiencies, whereas rural voters possibly gave greater support for government poverty alleviation programmes, including old age pensions and free primary education (Letsie 2013, p. 80).

## FORMATION, FUNCTIONING, AND FAILURE OF LESOTHO'S FIRST COALITION GOVERNMENT

The 2012 election produced an unprecedented coalition government that held a bare majority of 61 seats, but its composition presaged the strains that led to its demise. Thabane, as leader of the coalition's largest parliamentary contingent (ABC), became prime minister. However, his dependence on LCD support was evident in Metsing's appointment as deputy prime minister and in the distribution of Cabinet posts. The LCD received ten ministries versus eleven for the ABC, but the LCD ministers had far more extensive Cabinet experience than their ABC colleagues. Moreover, retired LCD parliamentarian Sephiri Motanyane became the influential Speaker of the National Assembly. Although the five BNP parliamentary seats were essential to the coalition majority, the BNP gained only two Cabinet posts, which were not highly prestigious.

Support from the 'Bloc' – a group of nine parliamentarians from six small parties that were not part of the coalition but were eager for emoluments – gave Thabane's government a working majority. With three seats in the Bloc, PFD leader Lekhetho Rakuoane was appointed Deputy Speaker. Vincent Malebo, the Bloc's spokesperson, was rewarded by being appointed to the Council of State that advises the King, and became chair of the influential parliamentary Public Accounts Committee.

Mosisili alleged that discussions of an LCD/DC coalition had failed when Metsing insisted on becoming prime minister despite the DC's larger parliamentary delegation. Mosisili claimed that he and Monyane Moleleki would have stepped aside in favour of a less controversial DC candidate, with Metsing as deputy prime minister. But the LCD stood to gain fewer ministries in coalition with the DC than with the ABC. Moreover, the wounds from the recent split between the LCD and DC were too raw for any immediate rapprochement. Reconciled to opposition status, Mosisili alleged that his former LCD compatriots had 'sold out' to the ABC and BNP 'nationalists' instead of joining with their natural DC allies who had won more seats and votes (Ntaote 2012). Thereafter he played on rifts among the coalition members, much as Ntsu Mokhehle's obdurate opposition had done after Leabua Jonathan's 1965 electoral victory. Collapse of the coalition would lead to a new coalition that could include the DC, or to an early election held under inauspicious circumstances for the quarrelling incumbents.

Internal friction was immediately evident within the coalition itself. Though eager to assert its newfound importance, 'Maseribane's BNP bonded with Thabane against the far deeper rift between Thabane and Metsing. To transcend disagreements that threatened its survival, the coalition participated in workshops organised by the United Nations Development Programme governance section.

The coalition also sought advice from Commonwealth consultants and other experts on conciliation and negotiation, as well as local groups like the Christian Council. The coalition partners had never melded their priorities into a substantive working agenda (Zihlangu 2013). Their differences centered on Thabane's alleged failure to consult the LCD on his appointments to the Cabinet, senior civil service and judiciary.

Foreign Minister Mohlabi Tsekoa of the LCD claimed that the 'foundations of the coalition government' were being undermined by Prime Minister Thabane applying political criteria to the appointment of diplomats instead of depoliticising the process (*Lesotho Times* 24 October 2013). Prosecutions that stemmed from Thabane's longstanding crusade against corruption were questioned as politically motivated. Top civil servants and ministers from the former government were targeted, as were certain people serving within the coalition, including LCD minister Tim Thahane. To his credit, Thabane encouraged the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences to pursue corruption wherever it was found, and immediately fired an ABC minister who had assaulted a civil servant. However, the lack of shared priorities within the coalition was evident in September 2013 when the President of the Senate deplored the minimal amount of legislation emerging from the National Assembly (Ambrose 2013, p. 22).

Another portent of the cycle of recrimination within the coalition and the conflagration ahead occurred when the LCD publicly denounced Thabane's attempt to move the critical Highlands Water Project from an LCD-held ministry to his own office (*Sunday Express* 14 September 2013). Partisan conflict between the army (LDF) and police (LMPS) emerged when Thabane appointed Khothatso Tšooana, a 35-year-old from his constituency, as Police Commissioner. Later forensic investigation blamed the Special Forces Unit of the LDF for explosions at Tšooana's house and nearby at the home of Thabane's long-term mistress (Ambrose 2014a, pp. 1, 3-4). LDF Commander Tlali Kamoli's refusal to permit questioning of the suspects fuelled the dispute with the police. When a Cabinet committee failed to resolve the conflict, the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation was asked to intervene. But the deadlock persisted even though the chairperson, Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba, flew to Maseru to mediate the dispute between the security forces and to try and resolve the escalating crisis among the coalition partners.

Meanwhile, the dismissal of Thahane and changes in the composition of the ABC national executive prompted Thabane to reshuffle his Cabinet twice. Two dismissed ministers bolted from the ABC, took shelter in South Africa after alleged death threats, and joined with the DC and the small but increasingly disgruntled parties in the Bloc. This 'grand coalition' sought an immediate a vote of no-confidence in Thabane's government. Procedural issues deflected the vote



when, on 26 March, Metsing – still operating within the coalition – managed to guide the passage of a motion to adjourn Parliament indefinitely. Soon thereafter, Thabane terminated several senior civil servants, some of whom faced corruption charges, and appointed new principal secretaries to head the bureaucracy in several ministries. Metsing's public criticism of Thabane's removal of DC-oriented personnel fuelled rumours that he had agreed to form a new coalition government with Mosisili's party (Koloi 2014b). Parliament reopened briefly and recessed after another unproductive session.

To prevent the collapse of his administration, Thabane advised King Letsie III to prorogue Parliament from 10 June through 27 February 2015. Some observers argued that prorogation would provide a cooling-off period for the coalition partners to 'iron out their differences' (Zihlangu 2014). In reality, it intensified the conflict by removing any moderating element of parliamentary deliberation, triggering sustained intervention by SADC and South Africa, and accentuating the struggle among the politicized security forces (Ambrose 2014b, pp. 18-27 & 2014c, pp.1-6, 18-19, 22-23). Immediately thereafter, Metsing condemned Thabane for having acted without the consent of his LCD coalition partners. Metsing announced his plans to join with the DC and small parties to form an alternative coalition government – but how that could occur with Parliament closed remained unclear. Moreover, several key LCD ministers were absent at Metsing's press conference, suggesting their continued loyalty to Thabane's coalition and an impending split within LCD ranks (Zihlangu & Ntaote 2014).

As the stalemate persisted, the Commonwealth Secretariat arranged for a long-postponed study tour to New Zealand finally to take place. The delegation included 25 parliamentarians, including Metsing. Their objective was to examine the functioning of New Zealand's mixed member electoral system and processes for forming coalitions. At a press conference on 25 July 2014, the contending coalition leaders all agreed that the 50-page report prepared by Commonwealth expert Rajen Prasad would provide the basis for improved working relationships and governance (Ambrose 2014c, p. 1-3). However, the planned discussion of that report foundered at peace talks among the coalition parties when the LCD insisted on revocation of the prorogation of Parliament, and both the ABC and BNP demanded an end to the new LCD coalition agreement with the DC (Ntaote 2014a).

On 29 July 2014, South African President Jacob Zuma arrived in Lesotho to consult King Letsie III and to help the protagonists 'address the challenges as seriously and as amicably as possible' (Chimombe 2014). Zuma persuaded the leaders to visit Namibia immediately for further mediation. As a result, Metsing agreed to renounce his coalition with the DC, which he did publicly; and Thabane consented to recall Parliament within fourteen days, a promise he did not fulfil.



Upon their return to Lesotho, Metsing was served at the airport with a summons to answer pending charges of corruption. Although the indictment was temporarily withdrawn after being read in court, the public venue and timing of the summons and proceeding seemed designed to humiliate him, and exacerbated the crisis (Tefo 2014).

Thabane continued to make controversial decisions that raised LCD hackles. He granted diplomatic passports to Zuma's allies, the controversial Gupta family; and attempted to force out the incumbent Attorney General and Director of Public Prosecutions. Thabane's most daring action was to dismiss LDF Commander Tlali Kamoli on 29 August and, rubbing salt in the wound, replacing him with Maaparankoe Mahao. Mahao had gained regional recognition for competently heading the SADC Planning Unit in Botswana for the Joint Standby Force. Upon his return to Lesotho, Mahao had been suspended, pending the outcome of a court martial, for rebuking a subordinate who had questioned the right of civilian authorities to replace the LDF commander.

On 30 August 2014, Thabane, Mahao and numerous ABC and BNP leaders fled to South Africa after a quasi-coup led by Kamoli, in which the LDF attacked the LMPS headquarters. They wrecked the premises, seized many vehicles and weapons, and caused one death and serious injuries to other people. They confiscated arms alleged to be destined for ABC supporters, and dockets about soldiers who were suspected of carrying out the earlier bombings. They also seized the prime minister's residence and attacked Mahao's home. However, they did not take control of the government.

As the new chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, Zuma summoned the coalition leaders to Pretoria. There they gave their commitment to a joint declaration to lift the prorogation of Parliament and to work to restore law and order. Thabane returned to Lesotho guarded by a substantial contingent of South African police, which – together with other SADC security contingents – would protect him and BNP leader Maseribane until after the 2015 election. Prorogation was lifted, but Thabane declined to reopen Parliament until security was restored, because Kamoli refused to relinquish command of the LDF.

On 15 September 2014, 72 members of Parliament issued a joint statement that identified Thabane as 'the sole source of Lesotho's problems' (Ntaote 2014b). The statement also supported Kamoli's retention as LDF commander, and condemned the presence of foreign forces protecting the prime minister as a violation of Lesotho's sovereignty (Ntaote 2014b). On that same day, an Extraordinary SADC Summit produced regional consensus that South African Vice President Cyril Ramaphosa would serve as the facilitator to assure the reopening of Parliament and the holding of early elections in Lesotho. He would be supported by a SADC

politics, defence and security observation mission. This observation mission ultimately included personnel from Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Namibia and South Africa.

Under strong pressure from Ramaphosa, Lesotho's major parties assented to the Maseru Facilitation Declaration on 2 October 2014. The declaration provided for an immediate session of Parliament to be held to deal with urgent business, followed by its dissolution and an election in late February 2015. Parliament reopened on 17 October with unprecedented security provided by South Africa police, armoured vehicles, scanners and sniffer dogs (Ntaote 2014c). In his opening speech, King Letsie III, free to express his own concerns, denounced the failed political leadership, deplored the resultant politicisation of the security agencies, and noted the need for Lesotho to 'put its own house in order instead of expecting others to do it for us' (Ambrose 2014c, p. 3-4). Before its dissolution on 5 December, Parliament failed to resolve the budgetary matters and electoral questions for which it had been convened, concluding its dismal performance under the leadership of Thabane's coalition.

Endemic insecurity persisted, with further confrontations taking place between LDF special forces and LMPs special operation units. To resolve this impasse, Ramaphosa persuaded the major parties to accept the Maseru Security Accord, which sent Kamoli, Mahao and Tšooana on leave of absence to SADC and other African states. These three men pledged to do whatever they could to ensure that their subordinates would not engage in further hostilities, and to cooperate with the SADC Facilitation Mission in Lesotho in maintaining law and order (Ntaote 2014d).

Although there was one serious incident in early February and other lesser ones, the deployment of 475 police from the DRC, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland during the week prior to the election guaranteed security. The LDF remained in its barracks while SADC police and election observers monitored every aspect of the electoral process (Ambrose 2015a, p. 17). Unfortunately, rogue behaviour within the LDF was merely suspended rather than being investigated or resolved, and re-emerged after the election.

Except for the initial weeks of September 2014, life in Maseru and the countryside remained surprisingly normal during the slow disintegration of the coalition government, the long period of security force confrontations, and the subsequent election campaign. One convincing explanation is that most citizens were spectators at what they perceived to be a game largely confined to the political class and security services. While observers closely linked to the political scene feared a descent into total chaos, ABC supporters doffed their gold apparel, and DC partisans their red, to cheer on their favourite 'teams' in the contest between the two strongest parties.

## THE 2015 ELECTION AND SECOND COALITION GOVERNMENT

Foreign and domestic observer missions found the conduct of the election on 28 February 2015 to be free and fair. Despite the partisan cast of members of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and misgivings in the commission's own ranks about its ability to manage a credible election at such short notice (*Lesotho Times* 15 January 2015), the IEC delivered a remarkably clean poll (Koloi 2014a). The report of the SADC mission (Interim Mission Statement 2015) listed fifteen positive findings, but was critical of unbalanced media coverage, poor representation of women among the constituency candidates, and the absence of a code of electoral conduct for the security services and media. Its foremost criticism was the need for institutional, political and legal reforms to improve governance and the formation and functioning of ruling coalitions in the aftermath of elections. The large disparities in numbers of registered voters per constituency and the national turnout of less than 50% of eligible voters should also spur concern.

Because this was a 'snap' election held two years ahead of schedule, the electoral system and constituency boundaries remained unchanged from 2012. This facilitates comparative analysis. In 2015, a record 23 political parties entered candidates in some or all of the 80 constituency contests, a necessary step to be eligible for compensatory proportional representation under the single ballot system. Most parties, however, lacked manifestos. The few which made their manifestos available showed minimal ideological or policy differences, with the main variation between the parties being the degree of emphasis they placed on particular government programmes (Election Special 2015). More than 1 100 candidates competed, 30% of who were women, with only ten female winners. The chance of gaining a well-paid parliamentary sinecure through proportional representation seems to have motivated leaders of the many tiny parties. Twenty women were elected through the zebra ballot lists required for proportional representation, so that 30 women presently constitute 25% of the new National Assembly. Table 4 below shows the results of the 2015 election.

Thabane's ABC dominated the urban and northern lowland constituencies. It gained seven seats in the Leribe District from Metsing's LCD. It won the two DC-held constituencies in remote Mokhotlong, which were likely to be affected by construction of the Polihali Dam, a project initiated by the former Mosisili administration. Elsewhere, the ABC gained two additional seats from LCD, one from PFD, and four more from DC, but lost two to DC. Compared with 2012, the ABC's net gain was fourteen seats.

The DC retained most of its rural, mountainous, southern base, gaining one seat from LCD, losing one to BNP and suffering a net loss of four to ABC. Compared with 2012, the DC's seats dropped by four from 41 to 37.

**Table 4: 2015 Election Results**

Parties	Constituency Seats	% Party Vote	Compensatory PR Seats	National Assembly Seats	% National Assembly Seats
ABC	40	38.13	6	46	38.33
BCP	–	.48	1	1	.83
BNP	1	5.59	6	7	5.84
DC	37	38.76	10	47	39.17
LCD	2	10.01	10	12	10.0
LPC	–	.35	1	1	.83
MFP	–	.61	1	1	.83
NIP	–	.96	1	1	.83
PFD	–	1.74	2	2	1.67
RCL	–	1.19	2	2	1.67
Others <sup>1</sup>	–	2.18	–	–	0
Coalition <sup>2</sup>	39	52.91	26	65	54.17
Opposition <sup>3</sup>	41	44.91	14	55	45.83

<sup>1</sup> Includes 13 small parties and about 5 500 votes for independents not included in the party vote percentages

<sup>2</sup> Includes BCP, DC, LCD, LPC, MFP, NIP and PFD

<sup>3</sup> Includes ABC, BNP and RCL

Compiled by the author from Independent Electoral Commission data (2015)

The largest loser was Metsing's LCD. Party members who opposed his break with the Thabane coalition had created the Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL), which took away LCD votes and captured two proportional seats. The LCD was annihilated in its former Leribe base and fell from twelve to two constituency seats. Had Metsing entered a pre-election coalition with Mosisili, their combined votes could have reduced the ABC victory by seven seats and would easily have held the seat won by the BNP. Standing for the first time as incumbents augmented the ABC and BNP's credibility, and swelled their bases of support.

With a slight edge in the total vote, the DC gained 47 parliamentary seats compared with 46 for ABC, twelve for LCD, seven for BNP, and eight seats divided among six minor parties.

When the results were announced, Mosisili declared that he had assembled a coalition that would command a majority. It included his DC (47 seats) and Metsing's LCD (12), plus PFD (2), NIP (1), BCP (1), LPC (1) and MFP (1) – a total

of 65 seats. On 17 March 2015, Mosisili was sworn in at a colourful ceremony in Setsoto Stadium with the ABC yellow and DC red predominating. For the second time in three years, power was peacefully transferred to the former opposition, this time by Thabane. Thabane, Mosisili and Zuma all praised Ramaphosa for his resolution of the intractable obstacles to the creation of the newly elected coalition government.

The process of allocating positions in the new Cabinet, however, was not completed until 27 March. This led pundits to name the coalition 'the coat of many colours' or '7de Laan' – the latter after a popular South African soap opera (Ambrose 2015a, p. 31). On 30 March, the 27 new ministers and seven deputy ministers, including eight women, were sworn in. With its objectives realised, Ramaphosa officially closed the SADC mission in Lesotho on the same day.

The new Cabinet had five more ministries than its 2012 predecessor, and awarded each of the minor parties a full ministry. Despite having caused a split in his party, losing over half his 2012 parliamentary contingent, and being primarily responsible for destroying the 2012 coalition, Metsing was again appointed as deputy-prime minister. His party gained five ministries (counting three appointed Senators) and one deputy minister. The DC was clearly dominant, gaining 16 ministries and 5 deputy ministers, but still depended on the smaller parties to sustain the coalition majority. The ABC, BNP and RCL – with a total of 55 seats – constituted the opposition bloc.

Mosisili claimed that he had learned from Thabane's 'many blunders' how to keep his coalition functioning for its five-year term (Mohloboli 2015a). Neither he nor Metsing would be 'burdened' with leadership of specific ministries like Thabane and Metsing had been, but would 'monitor' the performance and effectiveness of all ministries (Mohloboli 2015a). Some commentators questioned whether Mosisili would bring in enough 'new blood' for a fresh start and resist the clamour from DC colleagues who were eager 'to return to their cabinet posts and the prestige, and sense of power'; or whether he would merely recycle the 'deadwood' from his prior cabinets (Mohloboli 2015a). On the campaign trail, Mosisili had conceded that he needed to be more sensitive to popular interests than he had been in the past, rather than just being informed by his inner circle (Zihlangu 2015a).

How well did Mosisili succeed in bringing in new blood? Only seven of his 27 full ministers appear to have served in recent Cabinets. The five ministers from minor parties have all had prior parliamentary experience, as have ten other ministers. Five are wholly new to either the National Assembly or Senate. Of the five appointed senators in the Cabinet, two appointed to Finance and Defence are old ministerial hands, whereas four others seem to bring special expertise from administration and the private sector. Within the DC National Assembly

delegation, 35 of 47 members have prior parliamentary experience; within the LCD delegation, six of twelve have such experience. Within the opposition ranks, only 24 of 55 members appear to have had prior experience in Parliament (Ambrose 2015a, pp. 18-20, 23, 30-33).

Mosisili's immediate decision to dismiss and demote Maaparankoe Mahao and reinstate Tlali Kamoli as LDF commander was far worse than the 'missed opportunity' noted by the US Ambassador. This dreadful beginning reinforced the spectre of lawlessness, which threatened Lesotho's eligibility for trade preferences under the US African Growth and Opportunity Act and for renewal of its Millennium Challenge grant, putting tens of thousand of jobs in jeopardy (Ntaote 2015c). Kamoli's reappointment was followed by the murder of a leading ABC stalwart, the flight of the leaders of the ABC, BNP and RCL to South Africa in fear of their lives, and the arrest and torture by the LDF of officers associated with Mahao. This sorry tale culminated in the assassination of Maaparankoe Mahao by LDF personnel, who were allegedly trying to arrest him on the bizarre charge of 'plotting a mutiny' while he was the LDF commander (Mohloboli 2015d).

The widespread condemnation of Mahao's death, globally, in southern Africa, and by most elements of civil society in Lesotho, has created a renewed crisis and SADC intervention. Less noted but also questionable was the appointment of DC stalwart Monyane Moleleki as Minister of Police and Public Safety, given that he had yet to answer charges of corruption. To be sure, Moleleki's critics in the ABC and BNP had themselves politicised the police (Ntaote 2015b). But throwing the fox among the chickens was another odd way for the new coalition government to fulfil its promise to depoliticise the civil service and security forces. As a result, Police Commissioner Khothatso Tšooana also sought refuge in South Africa following Mahao's assassination.

#### LINKAGES AMONG ELECTIONS, DEMOCRATISATION AND GOVERNANCE IN LESOTHO

This evaluation of Lesotho's electoral trajectory includes six key elements, namely: 1) inclusiveness, 2) successive fair elections, 3) alternate power holders, 4) external interventions, 5) institutional problems, and 6) public perceptions.

Andrew Reynolds (1999, p. 268) argued that 'those [sub-Saharan African] countries with institutional mechanisms which create an atmosphere of *inclusion* are doing considerably better than those states that have opted for more exclusionary structures.' This perception seems validated by the disruptive consequences that followed Lesotho's 1993 and 1998 elections with their first-past-the-post system, where opposition parties were excluded from Parliament. However, the greater threat to stable and effective government and viable opposition in Lesotho now



derives from too much inclusiveness, which has resulted from the proliferation of tiny parties with little pretence of broad national support.

To be sure, the current single-vote system puts smaller parties and independent candidates at a disadvantage (Commonwealth Observer Group 2012, p. 42). For example, if separate votes had been allowed for constituency candidates and parties, independent candidate Frisco Khomari would likely have won his seat in 2012. Voters could have supported him without having to desert their favoured party. Despite this disadvantage, four small parties – each gaining less than 1% of the 2015 vote – each received one proportional seat in the National Assembly. As Cabinet members, their leaders can actually determine the fate of the coalition government. Under a two-vote system, other tiny parties that did not field enough constituency candidates to qualify for compensatory proportional representation in 2012 and 2015 would likely have gained proportional seats. The result would have been even greater fragmentation in the National Assembly.

Many states that use the proportional representation system require a minimum threshold to gain representation; Lesotho has no such requirement. The rationale for such a threshold is to ensure that a party has a credible following and to prevent extreme fragmentation that may promote instability. A threshold of even 1% in Lesotho would encourage tiny parties and independents to make compromises before an election and to amalgamate with more viable parties that command a larger voice in national affairs. At this stage, creating a threshold is unlikely, because the leaders of five small parties have gained not only substantial parliamentary stipends but also the emoluments of ministerial posts. Moreover, those leaders' desire to sustain their newly-acquired power could enhance the durability of their otherwise vulnerable coalition. Their success will likely encourage other tiny parties to keep competing or even more to join the fray.

Deposits intended to deter frivolous candidacies are presently set at too low a level to achieve this objective. The fees are M200 (\$20) for a constituency candidate and M8 000 (\$800) for a party list. A party need gain only one constituency or proportional seat to avoid forfeiture. Few constituency candidates reach the required 10% of the vote, but the amount at risk is hardly onerous. Moreover, the IEC financed the 2012 and 2015 campaigns such that each registered party was entitled to a basic amount plus a substantial addition, which was calculated on the party's total vote in the prior election.<sup>3</sup> Hence any disadvantage to smaller parties under the single-vote system is quite minimal – though the two-vote system would indeed serve small parties better.

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3 Letsie (2013:70) seems not to have noticed the extra funding provided under a belated amendment to the electoral law in March 2012, so his data are incorrect.



A greater potential problem for electoral finance relates to external contributions. These must be reported to the IEC if they exceed M200 000. Muammar Gaddafi allegedly supported the ABC campaign in 2007. Monyane Moleleki admitted that Nikuv, the Israeli corporation accused of corruption in the awarding of Lesotho's M292 million contract for identity documents, had contributed funds for the 2012 DC campaign.

Lesotho has had six successive free elections since returning to civilian rule in 1993, though some parties perceived the outcomes in 1993, 1998 and 2007 to be unfair. By contrast, Staffan Lindberg (2006, pp. 2-3, 84) argues that the 2002 poll under the new mixed member system was a 'first' or 'founding' election because of the 'breakdown' of the prior system in 1998. Using his logic, the 2012 election was a 'third' election where 'turnover' of the party in power, rare in African elections, becomes more likely (Lindberg 2006 p. 15). Lesotho's 2011 electoral reforms, which resolved the problems of 2007, seem to support Lindberg's (2006, p. 42) observation that such a turnover is facilitated when 'more experienced opposition and more international pressure' force incumbents 'to accept a more level playing field.' The 2015 election and the second transfer of power might seem to provide further validation of this view. Both the 2012 and 2015 elections met Lindberg's criteria for evaluating democratic elections. They were deemed free and fair, opposition parties participated readily, and the manager was an independent commission. Competition was intense. Only minor disruptions occurred, and the result was accepted by winners and losers alike (Lindberg 2006, pp. 2, 29-33, 100-101). The victories of DC in rural areas, which declined somewhat after that party lost access to government largess, support Lindberg's (2006, p. 12) observation that rural voters 'continue to choose representatives based on how good they are as "patrons" of their respective constituency.'

The 2002 election mirrored Lindberg's (2006, p. 146) view that 'First elections not only signify democracy; they breed democracy, through the self-reinforcing, self-improving quality of repetitive elections.' The 2007 controversy illustrates electoral problems caused by 'oligarchic tendencies' in political parties and by difficulties in managing and utilising power (Lindberg 2006, pp. 126, 130). Those who despair for Lesotho's democratic future after 2007 could learn from his assurance that useful networks can emerge from problematic elections: 'By testing the rules and even by breaking them, actors learn... and decide whether to agree and play by them or not' (Lindberg 2006, pp. 97, 125). Controversy created space for civil society and the media as well as non-governmental, regional, and international organisations to assist in altering the political perceptions and behaviour of both government and opposition parties.

Lindberg (2006) argues further that leaders make alternative calculations when electoral patterns are reiterated several times under a stable set of rules, rather

than being a 'one shot' phenomenon. As in the game of the prisoner's dilemma, cooperative strategies emerge through repeated or prolonged encounters. Strategies of participants become 'mutually dependent on expectations of how others will behave' Lindberg (2006, pp. 109-110). In both 2012 and 2015, pre-election agreements among the parties to abide by the results had been made publicly in the presence of prestigious brokers, including individuals, civil society groups and representatives of international organisations.

According to Lindberg (2006, p. 23), the willingness to turn over power is 'the ultimate indicator of [electoral] competitiveness'; such willingness provides 'unambiguous evidence that the election results have been accepted by the losing incumbents.' Moehler and Lindberg (2009, pp. 1451, 1463) endorse Samuel Huntington's 'two-turnover-test' as evidence of the consolidation of democracy. Repeated turnovers, they argue, narrow the gap between the winners' and losers' perceptions about electoral legitimacy. In addition, alternation in office helps to lessen corruption by rooting out the 'rascals' (Lindberg 2006, p. 152). But in counties like Lesotho with a weak economy and politicised civil service, losing power means losing access to wealth and other perquisites of office, which augments the stakes of electoral success. Yet Lesotho has now experienced that crucial second turnover of power.

If the congruence between Lesotho's electoral trajectory and Lindberg's theory sounds too good to be true, it is. The special circumstances of Lesotho's geopolitical encapsulation within South Africa make it a unique case. The aptness of Lindberg's theory must be qualified by noting that Lesotho's second transfer of power occurred in the presence of both the South African president and vice president – and this only after a considerable period in which SADC monitors (dominated by South African personnel) had shaped events. Thabane had little choice. Without those external players, a military takeover or forcible ouster of Thabane in favour of Metsing or Mosisili might well have occurred. The four SADC post-election interventions since 1993 have affected political behaviour in Lesotho far more extensively than suggested by Lindberg's comment that regional and international 'pressure' creates 'space'. It is highly unlikely that Lindberg could have anticipated a newly-elected coalition government being held hostage by elements of the LDF and its appointee as commander.

During the post-election interventions by South Africa and SADC, almost all Lesotho's past and present leaders have, at one time or other, denounced South African interference with Lesotho's sovereignty. Nevertheless, the same leaders have not hesitated to call for assistance when their own power has been threatened, often asking for more extensive engagement than SADC and South Africa permitted. They have, perhaps unintentionally, drifted into a dependent mindset where they allow their political battles to push Lesotho to the brink of

disaster, knowing that under SADC auspices, South Africa would bail them out to prevent having a failed state within its borders. King Letsie III's comment was wholly on the mark when he told Parliament that 'Lesotho should put its own house in order instead of expecting others to do it for us' (Ambrose 2014d, pp. 3-4).

Despite King Letsie III's sentiment, the fifth SADC intervention is now in progress. This intervention was necessary because of the flawed assumption of the previous mission that Lesotho's instability could be solved by a new election, without resolving the security crisis. SADC forensic teams and pathologists have investigated the circumstances of Maaparankoe Mahao's death. The report by Cyril Ramaphosa and an initial fact-finding mission to the Special SADC Summit on the Lesotho crisis, held on 3 July 2015, led to three important initiatives (Zihlangu 2015b). The Mosisili government has accepted a SADC Commission of Enquiry, chaired by Botswana High Court Judge Mpathi Phumaphi, to examine in depth what precipitated Mahao's death and, hopefully, the series of events which led up to it – including the August 2014 quasi-coup. A SADC Oversight Committee, consisting of two politicians, two military officers, two police officers and two intelligence officers was established 'as an early warning mechanism' to head off further instability; and if necessary, to 'intervene in consultation with SADC Facilitator Cyril Ramaphosa'. Finally, SADC will try to promote 'a conducive environment for the safe return of Lesotho's three exiled opposition leaders' (Zihlangu 2015b).

The worst missed opportunity occurred when chaos in Lesotho early in the post-apartheid era precluded vigorous efforts to work out a new socioeconomic relationship with South Africa (Weisfelder 1997). More recently, the South African past and current presidents, Mbeki and Zuma, have opted for the lower-cost palliatives of successive coercive interventions. Both Mbeki and Zuma have avoided addressing the more challenging issue, namely that Lesotho's geopolitical situation demands the negotiation of a special dispensation. Lesotho requires a unique relationship with South Africa, one that would be distinctive compared with South Africa's relationships with other SADC states.

Barring the unlikely merger of either ABC or DC with their smaller partners, or the even less probable setting of a minimum threshold for representation, coalition governments with small majorities seem to have eclipsed the prior dominant party pattern. Nqosa Mahao<sup>4</sup> has argued that only a grand coalition of the major parties could provide the 'inclusivity and focus on national healing' needed to end the current impasse, make necessary reforms, and bring a modicum of political stability (cited in Ntaote 2015a). Given the shared origins of ABC,

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4 Nqosa Mahao is Vice Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho and brother of the late Maaparankoe Mahao.

DC and LCD and the absence of any ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious or even significant policy differences among them, such a dénouement might seem feasible. However, their legacy of bitter personal rivalries and their propensity to share the spoils of office narrowly have created great barriers to a consensual outcome.

A more modest route to stability may lie in the enactment of institutional reforms outlined in two reports issued by Commonwealth envoy Rajen Prasad (2014a & 2014b). Prasad's reports were issued after the 2014 New Zealand visit by the Lesotho parliamentary delegation. Because partisan appointments within the civil and security services became a major source of conflict, Prasad urged the reestablishment of an independent professional civil service. He suggested that Parliament make changes appropriate to the mixed member environment, including requirements to lessen the destabilising effects of members 'crossing the aisle' to another party. He recommended returning to the previous two-ballot electoral system. Without there being any thresholds for representation, and with minimal deposits, public funding, and high returns from winning even one parliamentary seat, one wonders if this slightly more inclusive method would be a step in the right direction.

Prasad's main focus was the urgent need for a standardised set of rules and procedures for creating and maintaining a governing coalition. He listed seventeen points to be considered in negotiating a coalition, and fourteen elements that are typically included in coalition agreements. These essentials include 1) statements about shared values, goals and policy objectives; 2) clauses on consultation, management, and dispute resolution; and 3) provisions permitting parties to maintain separate identities and the ability to 'agree to disagree'. A final essential feature was transparency, so the public can ascertain the structure and programmatic objectives of the new government. The coalition agreement that was formally signed and published in April 2015 included almost all these elements (Ambrose 2015b, pp. 6-9). However, prospects for coherent, effective and stable coalition government in Lesotho have been dimmed by Mosisili's having purged Thabane's appointees from the top ranks of civil and security forces – well ahead of the enactment of promised reforms to restore criteria for professionalism, merit and transparency (Mohoboli 2015c; Mokheti 2015).

Public perceptions are vital to the success of Lesotho's mixed member electoral system and its ability to promote effective democratic governance. Moehler (2013, p. 223) found a gap in support for democratic institutions between electoral winners and losers that often narrowed when power changed hands. Winners were frequently too willing to accept undemocratic constraints. They could become as problematic as disgruntled losers who didn't hesitate to destabilise the political system. Cho and Bratton (2005, p. 9) showed that the gap in 'satisfaction

with democracy' between winners and losers had narrowed in Lesotho after the mixed member system replaced the first-past-the-post system. A comparison of Afrobarometer survey data on 'support for democracy' from 2006, 2008, and 2012 respectively showed a decline in public support after the controversial 2007 election, and higher levels of support after the widely accepted 2012 election and resultant transfer of power. Compared with 2007, far more people who were interviewed in 2012 said that Lesotho was a democracy (*Afrobarometer* 2013a, pp. 6-7). Trust in most government institutions had increased, while perceptions of corruption had declined (*Afrobarometer* 2013b, pp. 2,4).

However, the Afrobarometer data also showed that polarisation persisted: 36% of people who were interviewed agreed that Tom Thabane was doing a good job, 32% disagreed, and the remainder were undecided. Most likely the recent turmoil may have lessened Basotho confidence in government effectiveness and public support for democracy. A survey of popular reactions to Prasad's findings provides further insight (Report of the Community Voices Project 2014, p. 22). Respondents affirmed most of Prasad's recommendations, and supported greater public accountability regarding the processes of coalition formation and operation. On a key question, 56% of respondents preferred single-party over coalition rule, suggesting that people were concerned about the failure of the first coalition to address their needs.

All in all, the mixed member electoral system has served Lesotho well. Variations of this system have been used since 2002, and appeared in slightly revised form in the 2012 and 2015 elections. The system has permitted a wide range of parties and individuals to participate and to have a realistic chance of gaining representation, though low voter turnout remains a problem. The issue needing attention is whether the present system can create stable and effective majority or coalition governments, and a coherent opposition that is able to articulate alternatives and assume power if called upon. A system with reasonable minimum thresholds for representation could provide the electorate with greater influence over the composition of the government. In 2015, the likely composition of various possible coalition governments was known in advance. But the more fragmented the political party system becomes, the more discretion party leaders gain in determining who will govern.

In both 2012 and 2015, the 40-member proportional component ensured that the composition of the National Assembly closely paralleled the national distribution of partisan support. Unlike South Africa's completely proportional system, citizens of Lesotho had a specific Member of Parliament from their area to contact or hold accountable. Party bosses use the composition and ranking of party lists to determine who will likely become proportional members and therefore command their loyalty. By contrast, constituency members have greater

independence because they typically require local support to win nomination. To be sure, there are many complaints that, once elected, even constituency members fail to report back sufficiently. Nevertheless, the present system permits a remarkable balance between the direct accountability of some parliamentarians to citizens, on the one hand; and, on the other, the composition of the legislature commensurate with national levels of support for various parties. It has provided an effective remedy to the exclusionary results of the first-past-the-post system. However, the current system has yet to demonstrate that it can promote better governance, greater accountability, and stronger commitment to democratic values. Unfortunately, intimations that the Mosisili administration may be hostage to a renegade military clique do not bode well. Hopefully the renewed SADC intervention and threatened loss of external assistance will compel the Mosisili coalition to reassert civilian supremacy and engage with the opposition in a substantive programme of reform.

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# LESOTHO'S FEBRUARY 2015 SNAP ELECTIONS: A PRESCRIPTION THAT NEVER CURED THE SICKNESS

*Tlohang W Letsie*

Tlohang W Letsie is a PhD candidate in the Peacebuilding Programme  
at the Department of Public Management and Economics,  
Durban University of Technology, South Africa.  
email: [tlohangletsie@gmail.com](mailto:tlohangletsie@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*Within just two years of its existence, Lesotho's first coalition government experienced serious internal conflicts. These conflicts were mainly the result of the coalition leaders' failure to balance coalition agreements against the country's Constitution. The conflicts paralysed the government and the National Assembly, and polarised security establishments. These political developments required mediation by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which in turn led to holding 'snap elections' in February 2015. This paper discusses the snap elections. Although the elections helped to form and legitimise a new coalition government, they did not resolve the structural challenges that had paralysed the first coalition government. By calling for an early election, SADC mediation failed to prioritise a solution to the security crisis in Lesotho. Security agencies remain polarised, and some politicians have aligned themselves with those agencies to enhance their influence in national politics. The paper concludes that the snap elections provided only a short-term solution to Lesotho's political and security problems. The new coalition government is likely to experience the same fate as its predecessor. Furthermore, rule of law is likely to be compromised by the new coalition government for the sake of internal stability.*

**Keywords:** 2015 snap election, coalition government, conflict, security crisis.

## INTRODUCTION

This article examines the February 2015 snap elections in Lesotho, and the likely effects of the election results on the political stability of the country. The paper includes descriptive and predictive analyses. The information was drawn from secondary sources, including academic journals; textbooks; official documents from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the government, and political parties; political parties' agreements; and newspapers.

The paper is divided into five sections. The first section provides a theoretical explanation of elections. The second section gives a brief overview of the post-2012 coalition government and the build-up to the February 2015 snap elections. In the third section, the February 2015 snap elections are examined in detail. In the fourth section, the scenarios likely to face the new coalition government are examined. The fifth section offers some concluding remarks.

## BACKGROUND

On 28 February 2015, Lesotho held its third 'snap election' in 13 years. The others were held in 2002 and 2007 respectively. Normally, Lesotho's Parliament has a five-year tenure. The 2002 snap elections arose from a dispute over the 1998 election results, which prompted the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) government to bring the 2003 elections forward by a year. The disputes had caused political uprisings in which members of opposition parties had revolted against the LCD government. The opposition members had forcefully closed government offices and confiscated government vehicles.

The next elections were scheduled for May 2007. These elections were also 'fast-tracked' by three months to February 2007. This decision was made after the then Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili advised King Letsie III to dissolve Parliament and call for an early election. Mosisili's move came after the split of his party – the LCD – and the subsequent formation in Parliament of the All Basotho Convention (ABC). The split had left the LCD with a slim majority of two seats. By calling for the dissolution of Parliament, Mosisili avoided a vote of no-confidence, as there were signs that more members of Parliament (MPs) intended to leave the LCD for the ABC.

The February 2015 snap elections happened just over two years earlier than scheduled, after the premature dissolution of the eighth Parliament. The eighth Parliament was dissolved midway because of a falling-out between leaders of the three-party coalition government, which was formed after the May 2012 elections failed to produce an outright winner. The coalition government had consisted of the ABC, the LCD and the Basotho National Party (BNP). These three parties

had secured 30, 26, and 5 parliamentary seats respectively – a total of 61 seats for the coalition. The Lesotho Parliament consists of 120 seats. To form a government by a party, or coalition of parties, a minimum of 61 seats is needed (Constitution of Lesotho 1993, Section 87 (2)). Thomas Thabane of the ABC became the prime minister and was deputised by Mothejoa Metsing of the LCD. The BNP's Thesele 'Maseribane became the Minister for Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation.

The coalition government was generally seen as a positive step in the country's democratic journey. It marked the end of fourteen years of rule by Pakalitha Mosisili, first under the LCD and later under the Democratic Congress (DC). Mosisili had left the LCD to form the DC in February 2012, and continued as the prime minister under the new party until he was ousted in the May 2012 elections.

Despite the coalition government being widely celebrated, cracks began to show soon after it came to power. The conflict mostly pitted Prime Minister Thomas Thabane and Minister Thesele 'Maseribane on one side versus Deputy Prime Minister Mothejoa Metsing on the other. Metsing accused Thabane of taking major decisions arbitrarily and without consulting him as his deputy. Thabane, on the other hand, justified his alleged 'arbitrariness' as being in line with the country's Constitution.

The conflict between the coalescing parties intensified with time, and began to affect other political institutions such as the National Assembly and the armed forces. Metsing and his party (LCD) received sympathy and support from the main opposition party (DC) and smaller opposition parties. Together, the opposition parties tried to pass a 'no confidence' motion on Prime Minister Thabane. Thabane thwarted this attempt by advising King Letsie III to prorogue Parliament for nine months. However, despite being the minister responsible for defence and national security, Thabane had lost control over the country's defence force. The defence force commander, Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli, had obvious sympathies towards Deputy Prime Minister Metsing. When Thabane realised this, he fired Kamoli for alleged insubordination, and in August 2014 he replaced Kamoli with Lieutenant General Maapara-nkoe Mahao. But Kamoli refused to step down and Mahao never had the chance to resume his appointed role.

#### INVOLVEMENT OF THE SADC

As the army continued to show sympathy to Metsing and his party (LCD), the police came to be associated with Thabane and his party (ABC). Relations between the two security organs – the police and the defence force – quickly soured and at times became violent. Coupled with these deteriorating relations, the prorogation of Parliament intensified the political instability and security crisis to a level that

required intervention by the South African Development Community (SADC). Various forums were held. Eventually the SADC Troika mandated South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa to help Lesotho regain political normalcy and stabilise its security situation.

Political stability was partly restored after Ramaphosa facilitated the signing of the Maseru Facilitation Agreement (MFA) and the Maseru Security Accord (MSA). The MFA enabled Lesotho's Parliament to re-open in September 2014, four months before the initially planned nine-month period. It also allowed the elections to be brought forward by two years to February 2015. The MSA called for the two Defence Force generals and the Commissioner of Police, Khothatso T'sooana, to take leave of absence outside Lesotho. This move was intended to allow the army and police to reconcile and re-establish good relations.

Despite the reopening of Parliament in September 2014 and the fast-tracking of elections, relations between the feuding coalition partners remained antagonistic. The government literally collapsed, although the three parties' ministers remained in their respective positions. Despite this dark cloud hovering over their country, the Basotho people remained hopeful that the elections would usher in a new era of peace and stability. They hoped for better circumstances that would develop the country and improve citizens' well-being.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Representative democracy is intrinsically linked to elections and voting. The two processes are so linked that some thinkers have portrayed elections as the very heart of democracy. For instance, Schumpeter (cited in Heywood 2007, p. 253) views democracy as an

institutional arrangement – a means of filling public office by a competitive struggle for the people's vote. As he [Schumpeter] put it, democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men [sic] who are to rule them.

In this sense, Schumpeter equates democracy with elections, particularly competitive elections. However, many contemporary writers, such as Schedler (2002, p. 37 cited in Masunungure 2014, p. 97), have challenged Schumpeter's view of democracy, arguing that democracy means far more than elections and includes various interactions between the electorate and the government. These theorists draw a distinction between democracies by naming one type 'electoral democracy' and the other 'liberal democracy'.

Electoral democracies, typified by Schumpeter's view of elections as democracy, are a common feature in some Third World countries. In these countries the role of the general public in national affairs ends at the election booths. According to Schedler, however, such electoral democracies 'manage to get elections right, but fail to institutionalise other vital dimensions of democratic constitutionalism, such as the rule of law, political accountability, bureaucratic integrity, and public deliberation' (Schedler 2002, p. 37, cited in Masunungure 2014, p. 97).

Elections fulfil various functions, including the making of governments. Elections can form governments both directly and indirectly. They form governments directly only in presidential systems where the political executive is directly elected. In parliamentary systems, elections influence the formation of governments mainly where electoral systems such as the 'first past the post' tend to give a single party a clear parliamentary majority. However, under systems such as proportional representation and mixed models, such as in Lesotho, governments are usually formed through post-election deals. This implies that governments can be made and unmade without the need for elections.

Another important function of elections is to build legitimacy for a government. This is mostly the case in troubled systems where elections are organised and are typically rigged to produce a pre-determined outcome, usually in favour of the incumbent party. In such cases the elections merely provide justification for the party's prolonged rule. Elections, even those that are not free and fair, are always labelled as the manifestation of the people's will. These claims are usually accompanied by slogans such as 'the people have spoken'.

## CONTEXT OF THE 2015 ELECTIONS

It is crucial to discuss and illustrate the context within which the February 2015 snap elections were held. To do so, one must first understand the logistics of the dissolved first coalition government and the eighth Parliament. This overview provides the basis for a comparison from which a premise can be drawn, to predict the challenges likely to be faced by the new Parliament and government born out of the 2015 snap elections.

### *The Rise and Fall of Lesotho's First Coalition Government*

The short-lived eighth Parliament of Lesotho and its offspring government resulted from the May 2012 elections, the results of which are shown in Table 1 below.



**Table 1**  
**Final Seat Allocation in Lesotho's 8th Parliament**

Party	Total Party votes	Party's quota's of votes	Constituency seats won by the party	Party's provisional allocation of PR seats	Total number of seats
ABC	138,917	30.21	26	4	30
BBDP	2,440	0.53	0	1	1
BCP	2,531	0.55	0	1	1
BDNP	3,433	0.75	0	1	1
BNP	23,788	5.17	0	5	5
DC	218,366	47.49	41	7	48
LCD	121,076	26.33	12	14	26
LPC	5,021	1.09	0	1	1
LWP	2,408	0.52	0	1	1
MFP	3,300	0.72	0	1	1
NIP	6,880	1.50	0	2	2
PFD	11,166	2.43	1	2	3
Others	12,400	0	0	0	0
Totals	551,726		80	40	120

Source: IEC Lesotho National Assembly Elections Final Seat Allocation (May 2012).

The allocation of seats meant that the elections produced a hung Parliament, with no political party winning an absolute majority of more than 60 seats. Thus the parties were compelled to negotiate with a view to forming a coalition government. From the start it was clear that these negotiations were driven by the desire to access office rather than by policy goals. Essentially, political parties in Lesotho have no substantial differences in their policies. This lack of policy differentiation was evident in the parties' manifestos, which were virtually replicas of one another.

With a relative majority of 48 seats, the DC was best placed to find a partner. The DC needed just 13 more seats to reach the constitutional 61 seats needed to achieve a party or coalition so as to form a government. The second-placed ABC had 30 seats, which meant it needed another 31 to take over in government. The DC and the ABC were thus the two 'favourites' to lead a potential coalition government. With 26 seats, the third-placed LCD became the 'key-holder' in deciding the new coalition government. It was clear that the ABC and DC would not join together to form a government, given the antagonistic relations between

their leaders and members in general. Based on their pole positions, the ABC and DC both approached the LCD in the hope of forming a coalition government.

The 'horse-trading' to form a coalition government became pressured and had to be completed within two weeks. The Constitution of Lesotho states that the National Assembly must convene and a new government must be formed within a maximum of fourteen days after the announcement of an election's results. Ultimately the ABC won the support of the LCD. These two parties became the leading parties in a three-party coalition that included the BNP. This situation is an example that contradicts the assumption that a party having the most representatives will become central in the legislature when a coalition government is formed. Other examples have been Mauritius after its 1976 general elections, and South Africa's provincial elections in the Western Cape in 1999. In both cases, parties that had won the most seats were kept out of government by the coalition of smaller parties (Kadima 2006, p. 8).

The coalescing parties (ABC, LCD and BNP) formalised their agreement in a document titled 'Agreement to Form a Coalition Government of Political Parties: Subsequent to the May 26 2012 National Elections'. It was signed by the leaders of the three parties. Collectively, the three parties had 61 seats, implying that their government had a precarious one-seat majority. To minimise the risks associated with such a slim majority, the three coalescing parties solicited the support of six other smaller opposition parties represented in Parliament. These six parties formed an alliance that came to be known as 'the Bloc'.

Although the Bloc formally remained outside the coalition government, the six parties pledged to vote with the coalescing parties. Collectively the Bloc had seven seats, which meant the overall coalition was assured of 68 votes during parliamentary polls. This development meant that although the DC had won a relative majority of 48 seats, it was pushed to the opposition benches. This scenario can largely be explained by the insistence of the DC's leadership, before the elections, that the party was going to win outright and would not need to form a coalition government. Furthermore, it was always going to be difficult for the DC to woo other parties, because among the opposition parties, the general (though unofficial) theme of the 2012 elections had been 'change'. This would mean ending Mosisili's fourteen-year rule.

Thus, from the start it was clear that the country's new coalition government was not the result of ideological considerations. It was largely a marriage of convenience determined by the desire of the parties to bring about change. The electorate itself wanted a change in government; fourteen years of rule by Mosisili had failed to rid the country of social ills such as poverty, unemployment, crime and corruption. Although the LCD was by now also calling for Mosisili's departure, Mosisili had ruled for more than 13 years as the leader of the party. Only three months of his rule were under his new party, the DC.

In handing over the reins of government to incoming Prime Minister Thabane on 8 June 2012, Mosisili acknowledged that his administration had failed to deal with a number of problems, most notably corruption within government structures. Thabane had always been vocal about fighting corruption, and his party had this aim as one of the core points in its electoral manifesto.

### *Trouble in the Coalition Government*

Thabane was sworn in as the new prime minister, and as per the coalition agreement he was deputised by Metsing of the LCD. 'Maseribane of the BNP became the Minister for Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation. Thabane later announced his Cabinet. The ABC received eleven ministries, the LCD received ten, and the BNP received two.

Notable in the Cabinet allocation was that the LCD had taken what can be described as the most strategic ministries. These included Finance; Foreign Affairs; Public Works; Communications, Science and Technology; Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs; and Education. Among others, the ABC received Defence; Police and National Security; Justice; and Mining. The BNP gained Home Affairs and the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation – which was headed by its leader. It was clear that the LCD had wisely used its 'kingmaker' position as a bargaining tool in negotiations with the other two parties.

Interestingly, as the three parties were partitioning the government ministries and ambassadorial posts among themselves, the Bloc did not feature anywhere. This was despite it being a pillar of strength for the coalition government. It later came to light that the Bloc parties had expected to be awarded influential posts such as District Administrators. This never happened. The anger and vengeance of the Bloc against Thabane's coalition government became a decisive feature in the formation of the post-2015 elections coalition government, as discussed later in this paper.

After only two years in power, the coalition government began to experience serious internal squabbles. Deputy Prime Minister Metsing began to accuse Prime Minister Thabane of running the tripartite coalition like a one-man show and making crucial decisions without consulting other partners. The other partner, 'Maseribane, however, did not level the same accusations.

Some of the alleged unilateral decisions Thabane was accused of included firing the Government Secretary, Motlatsi Ramafale, and the Commander of the LDF, Tlali Kamoli; trying to take control over the management of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project; and advising King Letsie III to prorogue the eighth Parliament. Tensions within the coalition government were further fueled when the Lesotho Mounted Police Services and the Directorate on Corruption

and Economic Offences (DCEO) brought criminal charges against certain high-ranking officials, including ministers of the coalition government and those of its predecessor under the leadership of Pakalitha Mosisili. They included the following officials:

- Former Minister for Natural Resources and deputy leader of the DC, who was also the official leader of the opposition: Monyane Moleleki;
- Deputy Prime Minister Mothejoa Metsing;
- Minister of Natural Resources, Timothy Thahane; and
- Minister of Communications, Science and Technology: Selibe Mochoboroane.

Thahane was later relieved his duties as the Minister for Natural Resources. The cases listed above formed the core of the dispute that led to the collapse of the coalition. Those which are most relevant to this paper are briefly discussed in the next paragraphs.

Metsing and his party said that some of the charges had been initiated by Thabane, whom they accused of using state organs to fight his political battles and humiliate his opponents (Tefo 2014a, p. 3). Thabane defended himself against these alleged misdeeds. With regard to charges instituted against people suspected of criminal activities – mostly corruption, he emphasised in his speeches that he was not responsible for laying charges against anyone and that this was the duty of the relevant state arms, such as the police and DCEO. He was consistent in arguing that such state arms should be free to arrest and charge anyone (including himself) irrespective of the person's position, if those bodies felt such a person had a case to answer. Thabane also defended his alleged non-consultation by referring to the sections of the country's Constitution that gave him, as the 'Chief Executive' of the government, the power to make decisions.

### *High-profile Corruption Charges*

In June 2013, former Minister for Natural Resources and incumbent deputy leader of the DC, Monyane Moleleki, was charged with fraud and corruption. This was for 'allegedly diverting M15 million meant for a mining electrification project in Kao, Liqhobong and Lemphane mines and a nearby village of Kaonyana, to villages in his Machache constituency' (Molomo & Tlali 2013, p. 6).<sup>1</sup>

Moleleki is Thabane's bitter rival from their days in the LCD. Indeed, Thabane had spoken openly at his party's electoral campaigns about the alleged corrupt

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1 Lesotho's currency Maloti is pegged to the South African Rand on 1:1 basis

tendencies of Moleleki. Moleleki had equally lambasted Thabane during his own party's rallies. Moleleki's appearance before a court of law in June 2013 was his second in four months. In March 2013 he had appeared before the High Court together with four directors of the company Refela Holdings. In the earlier case, according to Molomo and Tlali (2013, p. 6), Moleleki had faced three charges for allegedly

helping the four men and their company to acquire a prospecting mining lease without having applied for it. The second charge was that he abused his ministerial position and violated the provisions of Mines and Minerals Act 2005 "for the purposes of obtaining an undue advantage for himself and / or for the" four men and their company.

The two cases against Moleleki were yet to be heard at the time of writing. They were postponed on numerous occasions due to his gravely ill health, from which he has since recovered.

Timothy Thahane, an LCD MP for Likhetlane Constituency, became one of the high-profile politicians to be charged with corruption under Thabane's administration. Thahane, who was also the Minister for Natural Resources, was fired from his ministerial position after his brief appearance before the Maseru Magistrate's Court in November 2013. He had appeared in court on two accounts of fraud and bribery totaling more than M43 million (Ntaote 2013, p. 8). His firing was announced by the then Acting Prime Minister and LCD leader, Mothejoa Metsing.

During his official announcement about the firing, Metsing said that Thahane faced serious charges, and that it was necessary to relieve him of his duties to preserve the integrity of the Cabinet. Interestingly, Metsing was also not spared the wrath of the Thabane administration's 'anti-corruption crusade'. Metsing later made several appearances in Lesotho's courts in connection with alleged fraud and corruption.

In August 2014, Metsing and the Minister for Communications, Science and Technology, Selibe Mochoboroane, together with three other people, appeared before the Maseru Magistrate's Court. They were all accused of allegedly contravening the provisions of the Penal Code Act 6 of 2010. Their charge sheet read as follows:

during or about 15<sup>th</sup> March ... the accused did unlawfully and with intent to defraud, misrepresent to the Government of Lesotho and /or Minister of Finance that the M53,095,027.00 they requested from the Ministry of Finance and was allocated, was for the procurement of

yellow plant and its insurance on behalf of the Maseru City Council ...

(Tefo 2014b, p. 2)

The same newspaper report goes on to state that soon after the charges were read aloud before the court, Crown Counsel Advocate Kananelo Khoboko surprised the packed courtroom when she announced that the case was being withdrawn. The reason given was that this would enable the prosecution to reconsider its position in the case, and allow the investigations to be completed.

The withdrawal of the charges was not all that surprising given the tension within the coalition government, which had begun to split the public service apart. The Office of the Director of the Public Prosecutions (DPP) had also been affected, as it was clear that the DPP Leaba Thetsane was in the LCD camp. Thetsane had completely lost the trust of Prime Minister Thabane and his followers, who accused Thetsane of not taking high profile cases in his office to the courts. Thabane had tried to push both Thetsane and the Attorney General out of office on the grounds that they had passed the retirement age of 55 for public servants. Thetsane challenged his dismissal, and the Court of Appeal ruled in his favour.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to infer that the withdrawal of charges amounted to political sabotage aimed at aiding LCD politicians. This inference is supported by the fact that in a similar twist of events in November 2014, DPP Leaba Thetsane withdrew charges against the fired Minister for Communications, Science and Technology, Selibe Mochoboroane. Thetsane complained that the charges had been preferred behind his back as the head of prosecution (Tefo 2014b, p. 2). After the withdrawal of the case, Metsing pledged support to Thetsane. Metsing 'told the supporters that if Advocate Thetsane could be threatened by any political leader for withdrawing the charges he and his allies would protect the DPP, fight for him and die along with him if need arises' (Tefo 2014b, p. 2)

In yet another interesting legal twist, Metsing filed a case before the Constitutional Court in August 2014. He asked the court to declare as illegal the seizure by the DCEO of his banking particulars from three local banks. The banks were listed together with the DCEO as respondents in the application. However, on 25 February 2015, three days before the snap elections, a panel of South African judges dismissed the application and said that the anti-corruption agency had acted within the parameters of the law (Tefo 2015, p. 2).

Two of the country's top judges, Nthomeng Majara and T'seliso Monaphathi, had earlier recused themselves from the case after Metsing's application to have only foreign judges presiding over his case. The DCEO had wanted Metsing to shed some light on alleged dodgy tenders and strange deposits into his bank accounts between April 2013 and January 2014. The total deposits made at the three banks amounted to M328 000, M118 000, and M524 965 respectively (Tefo



2015, p. 2). In turn, Metsing accused the DCEO of having violated his privacy and family life by seizing his banking particulars without his consent in its investigation to probe the corruption charges against him (Motopi 2014, p. 6).

As mentioned earlier, these are just a few examples of corruption cases that were brought before the courts against government officials, under Thabane's administration. The fallout between the coalition partners was not limited to the executive branch; it also became evident in the National Assembly. This is discussed in the next section.

### *Trouble Extends to Parliament*

An incident that marked the start of a dramatic turn of events in the Lesotho Parliament was when two ABC MPs, Thabiso Lit'siba and Mophato Monyake, crossed the floor. Their departure left the coalition with 59 seats. Lit'siba joined the main opposition party (DC), and Monyake became an independent MP and launched his own party, the Progressive Democrats (PD) in November 2014. Both men claimed to be disillusioned with the ABC over a number of issues, among them Thabane's alleged autocratic leadership. Interestingly, Monyake only complained about Thabane allegedly autocratic leadership after Thabane had fired him as Minister for Law and Correctional services. Lit'siba, by contrast, had reportedly been unhappy with his leader for overlooking him for ministerial posts. A former university lecturer who had resigned from academic life a few months before the 2012 elections, Lit'siba had probably had high expectations. He was understandably unhappy to be overlooked for individuals who had far lower academic qualifications.

Lit'siba and Monyake had won constituencies and were therefore eligible to cross the floor in Parliament; the country's Constitution allows only constituency MPs to do so. When it became clear that the ABC could no longer hold on to the two MPs, the opposition parties forged an alliance to move a no-confidence vote in the government. Lit'siba and Monyake attached their signatures to the agreement forming this alliance. All but one party within the Bloc signed the agreement, apparently in protest over the unfulfilled promises of rewards for supporting the government. The no-confidence motion was filed by Geremane Ramathebane, leader of Basotho Batho Democratic Party (BBDP). The BBDP was a small party that had gained a single compensatory seat after the 2012 elections.

In an effort to save their government, three MPs from the ruling alliance challenged the legality of the motion in the High Court and asked the court to stop the motion. The application gave the coalition government a life-line, as the Speaker denied the tabling of the motion pending the outcome of the case. In the face of this uncertainty, the government moved for Parliament to be



closed *sine die*. During the period in which Parliament remained closed, the mover of the no-confidence motion, Ramathebane, was arrested and locked up for 48 hours before he appeared in court. On appearing before the Maseru Magistrate's Court, Ramathebane was charged for allegedly registering his party fraudulently in 2006. The court granted him bail, and at the time of writing the case was yet to be finalised.

Parliament was finally opened again. In the midst of the deepening rift between the two largest parties in the coalition, in June 2014 the LCD leader (Metsing) announced his plans to remove his party from the ruling coalition and form a new government, together with former Prime Minister Mosisili's DC. In announcing the planned withdrawal at a press conference in Maseru, Metsing said they had decided they could 'no longer endure the humiliation that the Honourable Dr Thabane is inflicting upon the LCD by his unilateral and undemocratic conduct' (Zihlangu & Ntaote 2014, p. 1).

Sensing the imminent ouster from government, Thabane advised King Letsie III to prorogue Parliament for nine months. Thabane's move was in line with Section 83(1) and (4) of the Constitution. Section 83(1) reads: 'The King may at any time prorogue or dissolve Parliament.' Section 83(4) states that 'In the exercise of his powers to dissolve or prorogue Parliament, the King shall act in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister.' Parliament was accordingly prorogued in June 2014. It was at this juncture that the opposition parties, in concert with the LCD, sought intervention from the SADC.

As noted earlier, the SADC Troika appointed South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa to facilitate the return of Lesotho to political normalcy and to help stabilise the country's deteriorating security situation. Ramaphosa held various meetings that led to the reopening of Parliament in September 2014, to prepare for holding new elections in February 2015. While all these developments unfolded, there was not a single effort to officially gauge the opinion of the general public. Everything was to be decided by members of Parliament alone, in line with Lesotho's system of representative democracy. As in other electoral democracies, Lesotho's system sets an electoral minimum for the electorate. Whatever the MPs decide is assumed to be the view of the constituencies they represent.

One of the conditions upon which Parliament was reconvened in September 2014 was that its business be restricted to the passing of an elections budget and amendments necessary for the elections. The first of these conditions was upheld but the second was not. In opening the parliamentary session, King Letsie III strongly advised the MPs to place their personal interests after the nation's interests. The King was visibly infuriated, and contrary to the norm he delivered an unwritten speech. He repeatedly reminded the MPs that they had the power to

amend clauses of the Constitution which they no longer wanted. This was clearly a response to accusations levelled against him by the opposition, namely that he had used the country's Constitution to approve the 'advices' made to him by the incumbent Prime Minister Thabane.

Parliament was finally dissolved in October 2014 and the elections were set for 28 February 2015. However, the failure to effect constitutional and electoral amendments in preparation for the new elections, and the failure to adequately address security concerns, implied a lost opportunity for Lesotho. These circumstances have kept the country on a knife's edge. Later sections of this paper deal with this argument further.

A number of points can be observed from the conflict discussed above, which rocked both the executive and Parliament. First, it is clear that the anti-corruption crusade by Thabane's administration was the main source of conflict. There are two schools of thought about this crusade. On the one hand, the LCD saw it as a witch-hunt that targeted only LCD ministers. On the other hand, Thabane and his ABC disputed the LCD's claim, saying that the crusade targeted anybody who engaged in corruption, regardless of his or her background.

Although the genuineness of most of the charges is debatable, it seems likely that the charge against Ramathebane was politically motivated. The timing of the charge was suspect; it was laid immediately after he filed a no-confidence motion against the government. Most interesting about Ramathebane's charge was that the alleged crime had been reportedly committed in 2006, almost a decade before he was charged.

A second observation is the ease with which the DC and other small parties that were part of the Bloc were willing to join forces with the LCD to remove Thabane from power. This illustrates how Lesotho's politics are determined more by leaders' selfish interests and opportunism than by policy considerations. Just before the 2012 elections, Metsing and Mosisili had spoken ill of each other at their respective parties' campaigns. Metsing vowed never to work with Mosisili and said that doing so would undermine the wishes of his followers. This was after Mosisili had stated that his party would win the elections and would not need a coalition with any other party.

Similarly, the parties constituting the Bloc had initially supported the ABC-led coalition, because they agreed with the calls for Mosisili to be removed from power. That all these parties were now willing to come together, without any substantial policy changes being made, showed that their leaders were more interested in personal gain than in the kind of stability that is vital to service delivery.

The next section of this paper discusses in detail the February 2015 snap elections.

## THE FEBRUARY 2015 SNAP ELECTIONS

Despite being held at short notice, the 2015 general elections went smoothly and had no major problems. This smooth transition can be attributed to, among other things, the experience which the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) staff have gained since the Commission's establishment in 1997. Since 1997 the IEC has run five general elections, two local government elections, and many by-elections. For the 2015 elections, the IEC kept most of the temporary staff it had engaged in 2012. This paid dividends because there was no need for extensive training.

One incident nearly compromised the smooth preparations for the elections. In October 2014, the IEC reported that 21 computers which had been used to register voters had been stolen from its storage rooms. Many political leaders reacted with shock to the news, fearing the theft would affect the authenticity of the registration process and the voters' roll. The IEC, however, assured the nation that the missing computers could not affect voter registration.

After intense police investigation, 17 of the stolen computers had been recovered by February 2015. Evidence showed that the computers had not been used to tamper with the voters' roll. The computers had been sold to unsuspecting students, who had used them for academic work. The supplier's report showed that the recovered computers had been formatted with normal software to make them operate like normal computers (Ntaote 2015a).

The disappearance of the computers led to the suspension of the long-serving Director of Elections, Mphasa Mokhochane, by IEC Chairman Justice Mahapela Lehohla. The suspension was 'for failing to timeously report the incident of the missing electoral machines to the Commission, raising suspicions of foul play' (Mokhethi 2015a). 'Mamatlere Matete was then appointed acting Director of Elections and was thrown into the deep end to run the 2015 elections. This scenario meant that the top brass of the IEC was mostly new. Lehohla had taken up chairmanship of the IEC only in December 2013, together with two new commissioners, Dr Makase Nyaphisi and Advocate 'Mamosebi Pholo. However, inexperience among the Commission's top officials did not impede the elections in any way.

Twenty-three political parties contested the elections. Despite the high number of registered parties, it was obvious from the start that the elections would be a 'two-horse race' between the ABC and the DC. Four other parties – the BNP, the LCD, the Popular Front for Democracy (PFD), and the newly-formed Reformed Congress for Lesotho (RCL) – were set to become 'kingmakers' for either the ABC or DC, because it was clear that neither would win an absolute majority. The RCL was a splinter group of the LCD, led by the LCD's former secretary general, Keketso Rant'so. Rant'so had left the LCD together with some

party stalwarts few months before the elections, accusing LCD leader Metsing of dictatorial tendencies. The rest of the parties merely added numbers, with their leaders trying their luck and hoping to get compensatory seats in Parliament through the proportional wing of the country's Mixed Member Proportional model. Table 2 below shows the final allocation of seats in the Lesotho's ninth Parliament after the 2015 elections.

**Table 2**  
**2015 Election results and Final Seat Allocation**

Party	Total votes	Constituency seats	PR seats	Total seats
ABC	215 022	40	6	46
BCP	2 721	–	1	1
BNP	31 508	1	6	7
DC	218 573	37	10	47
LCD	56 467	2	10	12
LPC	1 951	–	1	1
MFP	3 413	–	1	1
NIP	5 404	–	1	1
PFD	9 829	–	2	2
RCL	6 731	–	2	2
Other 13 parties	12 353	–	–	–
Total	563 972	80	40	120

Source: IEC Lesotho. National Assembly Election 2015 Results

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The aim of this paper is to show how the 2015 snap elections failed to address the structural problems that had led to the collapse of the first coalition in Lesotho. At this point it is worth giving a brief overview of how the main parties fared in the 2015 elections. After that, the main issue will be discussed.

### *Performance of Main Parties*

This section focuses on the three parties that had formed the first coalition government: the ABC, the BNP, and the LCD. The DC is also discussed because it had obtained the most seats in the 2012 elections, but had been relegated to the status of official opposition because it failed to earn support from other parties. The scope of this paper precludes a discussion of the factors responsible for the performance of the parties in the 2015 elections and is limited to the actual election results.

### **Democratic Congress**

Overall, the DC got more seats than any other party. As shown in Table 2 above, the DC won 47 seats, just one more than the ABC's 46 seats. Table 2 also shows that the DC won 37 constituency seats compared with 40 for the ABC, but the DC had ten PR seats – four more than the ABC's six. The reason was that the DC won more national votes than the ABC.

In terms of the overall number of seats, the DC's performance reflects a very small decline relative to the 2012 elections. The party had won 48 seats in 2012, losing just one seat in 2015. In 2015 the DC obtained 218 573 actual votes compared with 218 366 in 2012, an increase of 207 votes. However, as a percentage of the national vote, the DC showed a huge decline. In 2012 the DC won 47.5% of the national vote, but in 2015 this dropped to 38.8%. Another interesting point about the DC's performance is the pattern of its votes. The party's loss of urban constituencies continued in the 2015 election. The DC again failed to win even one of the eight Maseru city constituencies. In the other nine districts, it retained only three of the five mountain town constituencies that it had won in 2012.

### **All Basotho Convention**

The ABC showed the greatest growth compared with other parties. It won 46 seats in the 2015 elections, 16 more than the 30 seats it had gained in 2012. In 2012 the ABC had won 26 constituencies, and in 2015 it managed to win 14 more – a total of 40 constituencies. The ABC also dramatically increased its national votes from 138 917 in 2012 to 215 022 in 2015. This meant the party increased its share of national votes from 30.2% in 2012 to 38.1% in 2015.

The ABC has consistently maintained its dominance in recent years. This trend started in 2007 among urban constituencies, with the ABC winning all Maseru city constituencies and six other urban constituencies in six other districts. In addition to reclaiming the Hlotse town constituency which the LCD had won in 2012, in 2015 the ABC captured the Mokhotlong town constituency – which it had failed to win in all previous elections. Another highlight of the ABC's performance in 2015 was that it captured all eleven constituencies in the Berea district.

### **Lesotho Congress for Democracy**

Although the LCD ranks number three of the four parties under discussion and has twelve parliamentary seats, this party was the biggest loser in the 2015 elections (relative to 2012). The LCD captured twelve constituencies in 2012 but managed to win only two in 2015. Overall, the LCD had 26 seats in the eighth Parliament, dropping to 12 seats in the current (ninth) Parliament. Actual LCD national votes fell from 121 076 in 2012 to 56 467 in 2015, a fall of almost 50%. The overall percentage share of LCD national votes fell dramatically from 26.3% in 2012 to 10% in 2015.

### **Basotho National Party**

Generally the BNP achieved slight growth in 2015 compared with 2012. The party managed to increase its share of parliamentary seats from five in 2012 to seven in 2015. Most importantly, in 2015 the BNP won one constituency; the party had last won a constituency seat in 1998. The BNP marginally improved its percentage share of the national vote. In 2012 it had 5.2% of all votes, and in 2015 it obtained 5.6%. The actual number of votes rose from 23 738 in 2012 to 31 508 in 2015.

### *Formation of the Second Coalition Government*

Despite their varying performances, the four parties discussed above remained central in the horse-trading that led to the formation of Lesotho's second coalition government. Unlike in 2012, the post-election negotiations of 2015 were not very intense. This was because it was evident even before the elections that the country was headed for another coalition government. As a result, parties had already decided on potential partners before polling day. For instance, it was clear from the start that the ABC, BNP and RCL would continue the relationship that they had enjoyed in the first coalition government. The RCL was officially launched just months before the elections. However, the party's leader, Keketso Rant'so, had begun to work closely with the ABC and BNP as soon as it became obvious that her relationship with Metsing (Rant'so's former leader in the LCD) was beyond repair.

By contrast, the DC/LCD alliance had already been formalised through an agreement which the two parties signed in June 2014. The agreement had been prompted by the LCD threatening to leave the coalition government. The DC had even at one stage suggested that the two parties should field only one candidate in the constituencies won by the ABC in 2012, to increase the alliance's chance of victory. The suggestion was rejected by the LCD on the grounds that the arrangement would minimise its PR seats. Sympathetic to the DC/LCD alliance were the five other small parties that had formed the Bloc in the eighth Parliament, as well as the Basotho (formerly Basutoland) Congress Party (BCP) – which had remained on cross benches in the eighth Parliament. All these parties had signed the no-confidence motion that was aimed at dethroning Thabane. For the five Bloc parties, supporting the DC/LCD coalition meant they could punish Thabane for failing to reward them for parliamentary support they had given his coalition.

These two pre-determined coalition partnerships were one way in which the 2015 elections failed to remedy Lesotho's political problems. Both partnerships were mainly marriages of convenience, based more on the desire to punish rivals than on principled ideals. Also, these partnerships left no room for the two biggest parties, the ABC and the DC, to work together. This scenario prevented



the grand coalition that some analysts believe was needed to improve Lesotho's political situation.

For instance, in his preliminary statement after the elections, Dr Raila Odinga warned that a 'grand coalition of the biggest parties would unite Basotho and "heal the wounds" thereby ensuring long-lasting peace in Lesotho' (Ntaote 2015b). Odinga was the head of the African Union Observer Mission during the Lesotho 2015 elections. Odinga's sentiments were later echoed by Professor Nqosa Mahao, who noted that 'with the ABC and DC in government, you would have consensus on institutional and constitutional reforms as they would be built around inclusivity and focus on national healing' (Ntaote 2015b).

Section 87 (2) of the Constitution of Lesotho states that 'the King shall appoint as prime minister the member of the National Assembly who appears to the Council of State to be the leader of the political party or coalition of political parties that will command the support of a majority of the members of the National Assembly'. The alliance of the ABC, BNP, and RCL had managed to pool together only 55 seats, whereas the DC/LCD had 59. Thus, neither of the two alliances was in a position to form a government on its own.

The absurdity of Lesotho's electoral model was once more exposed when smaller parties, some of which could not even win 0.5% of the national vote, were now able to decide the future of Lesotho's rule. For instance, the LPC had only managed to win only 0.4% of the national vote (IEC Lesotho: National Assembly Election 2015 Results). Of the two pre-determined coalitions, the DC/LCD alliance was better placed to woo these smaller parties. It came as no surprise when, a few days after the announcement of the election results, the DC/LCD alliance stated that it had gained the support of five smaller parties and would therefore be able to form a seven-party coalition government. Together, the seven parties had 65 seats.

The new government was to be led by Pakalitha Mosisili of the DC as the prime minister, and Mothejoa Metsing of the LCD was to become deputy prime minister. The five smaller parties that were included in the coalition government were the Popular Front for Democracy (PFD), Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP), Lesotho People's Congress (LPC), the BCP, and the National Independent Party (NIP). The PFD brought two seats into the new coalition, and the other four parties each contributed one seat.

The arrangement of the new seven-party coalition meant that Mosisili would return to the post he had lost in 2012 after having been in power for fourteen years. Metsing was able to retain the post he had occupied in the previous coalition government. The formation of the seven-party coalition government represents what Kadima (cited in Makoa 2008, p. 52) calls the 'office-driven approach'. In this approach, the main goal of political parties is to access power rather than necessarily being driven by fundamental similarities in their principles.



Mosisili announced his Cabinet on Friday 27 March 2015. All seven parties were represented in the Cabinet. What is unique about the seven-party Cabinet is that neither Prime Minister Mosisili nor his deputy Metsing head any ministries. This situation was intended to ensure that ‘the two leaders would not be “burdened” by ministerial posts that could “interfere” with the “supervisory” roles of ensuring an effective government’ (Mohloboli 2015a, p. 2). The working relationship between the seven parties was formalised through a document titled ‘The Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform: Lesotho’s Second Coalition Government Agreement’, which was signed in April 2015. According to this agreement, the DC has sixteen ministers and five deputy ministers, and the LCD has five ministers and one deputy minister. Each of the four smaller partners that have one seat in Parliament has one minister, while the fifth (PFD) has both a minister and a deputy minister.

The composition of the new Cabinet showed that consideration of merit and capacity to perform were of secondary importance; more important was the desire to appease one’s coalition partners in allocating the ministries. Also notable was Mosisili’s failure to shrink the Cabinet, as he had promised to do on various occasions during the time he was excluded from the government. He had earlier been very vocal in criticising Thabane’s 30-member Cabinet, saying it was a waste of resources to have such a large Cabinet in a small country like Lesotho. However, instead of reducing the Cabinet as promised, Mosisili increased it to 35 members. Also noteworthy in the new Cabinet was the placing of the Ministry of Defence away from the prime minister’s portfolio. This literally implies the prime minister is no longer the commander-in-chief, as was always previously the case. All these developments are likely to pose challenges for future governance in the country.

### *Elections Test Passed, but Dilemmas Lie Ahead*

The analysis in this article is made within the context of electoral democracies. According to Schedler (2002, p. 37, cited in Masunungure 2014, p. 97), electoral democracies do hold free and fair elections. However, they do not ensure other vital dimensions of democratic constitutionalism such as the rule of law, political accountability, bureaucratic integrity, and public deliberation. This paper argues that although Lesotho has managed to hold undisputed elections that legitimise the resultant government, such elections have not ensured the other aspects that are central to functional democracies. For instance, Lesotho has a precariously volatile security situation and a somewhat loose Constitution that is vulnerable to abuse by politicians.

When Parliament reconvened in September 2014, the feeling among some sectors of the Basotho Nation was that laws regulating floor-crossing in Parliament

needed to be reviewed. Similarly, the Constitution was said to require amendment to provide for coalition governments. As Raila Odinga of the African Union Observer mission rightly observed, 'the Lesotho Constitution does not provide for a robust mechanism for the operationalisation of a coalition government, nor does it effectively anticipate the dynamics of coalition politics' (Kabi 2015, p. 7). There was also a need to clarify the prorogation clause, as there were some suggestions that it was amenable to abuse.

These legislative reviews were not done, as noted earlier in this paper. The omission has left the country with challenges similar to those that led to the collapse of the first coalition government. The possible future scenarios for Lesotho politics are discussed below in relation to each of these points.

### **Floor crossing**

Of the 120 members of Lesotho's National Assembly, only 80 – who had won constituency seats – are legally allowed to cross the floor in Parliament. Floor-crossing has over the years been accompanied by controversy. It has always been a central feature in the collapse of governments, dissolution of Parliaments, and subsequent holding of snap elections in Lesotho.

In 1997, controversy erupted over the LCD's usurpation of rule. The controversy arose from the fact that the party was declared government by the Speaker after 41 MPs, including then Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle, crossed the floor from the then ruling Basutoland Congress Party (BCP). The party had been formed and registered few days earlier. Similarly, the 2007 snap election followed the floor-crossing by 17 LCD MPs and one independent legislator, all of whom crossed over to the ABC. There was again a serious controversy in 2012 when the DC relegated the LCD to the opposition benches after 45 MPs left the LCD to join the DC that was registered days earlier. The instability that led to the dissolution of Parliament in 2014 was a direct result of the floor-crossing by two ABC MPs.

Based on this history, some sections of Basotho feel that for the sake of stability and to grow the country's shaky democracy, floor-crossing needs to be regulated. In discussing the challenge of floor-crossing, Matlosa and Shale (2008, p. 148) pointed out that 'floor crossing in Lesotho, as elsewhere, takes place without the consent of the rank and file membership, hence some observers perceive it as unfair and a betrayal of the voters.' For this reason, floor-crossing undermines the accountability of MPs to the electorate.

Failure to amend the law on floor-crossing means that the most crucial element that has destabilised Lesotho's Parliament in the past remains unresolved. The consequences are likely to continue to be bitter for the Basotho Nation. Firstly, the government may collapse if MPs defect from the ruling alliance at any point. Secondly, the constituency MPs can hold their respective alliances – in both the

opposition and ruling parties – to ransom simply by threatening to defect to rival alliances. The status quo also means that the prime minister has very little, if any, control over his ministers who gained parliamentary seats by winning constituencies, because they could threaten him with defection if he reprimands them. The repeat of Monyake's case remains a possibility. As already noted, Monyake crossed the floor and left the ABC after he was fired as a minister by Thabane. Limited control over ministers by the prime minister can only lead to poor service delivery for the ordinary Mosotho on the street.

### **National Constitution versus coalition agreements**

There were suggestions, during the tension under the ABC-led coalition, that the Lesotho Constitution was not suitable for coalition governments. This became evident whenever opposition members called during phone-in programmes held by some local radio stations, to argue that in a coalition there are as many prime ministers as there are coalescing parties. However, the eighth Parliament never took the time to address this concern. To date, the Constitution still grants the prime minister executive powers to advise the King to make several crucial decisions.

It is important to note that the Constitution does not necessarily require the prime minister to consult with his party, in the case of a one-party government, or with his partners in the case of a coalition government. Because Thabane applied this power, Metsing accused Thabane of taking arbitrary decisions without consulting him. In one of his public statements after the announcement of the seven-party coalition, returning Prime Minister Mosisili promised to 'avoid Thabane's "blunders" by ensuring that all the seven parties in his coalition government obey the principles that govern coalition governments' (Mohloboli 2015b).

In relation to the country's Constitution, which is the supreme law, Mosisili stated that 'in as much as we would be expected to obey the Constitution and rule of law in this country, as partners, we should abide by our coalition agreements and not consider them as mere pieces of paper' (Mohloboli 2015b). The coalition agreement which regulates relations within the coalescing parties emphasises the elements of trust and respect, but says little about the constitutional powers of the prime minister. This omission is likely to pose serious problems should the relations sour, which is almost certain to happen considering the dynamics of Lesotho's politics. For instance, clause D10 of the agreement says that parties may agree to disagree. By contrast, clause E6 says that any minister can be dismissed if he or she loses the confidence of his or her party. The same clause states that if a minister loses the prime minister's confidence, the minister will be dismissed after consultation with his or her party. This clause directly contrasts the Constitution, which gives the prime minister full powers to appoint and fire ministers.

It remains to be seen how Mosisili will effectively balance his constitutional powers as prime minister against the coalition agreement, particularly where the two are in conflict or when he cannot get consensus from his partners. It will also be interesting to see how Mosisili will act if he wants to fire any of the five ministers from the five smaller parties. All these ministers are leaders of their parties, and according to the coalition agreement Mosisili can fire a minister only after consulting that person's party. This implies that he would have to consult these ministers over their own dismissals.

The author contends that balancing the need for stability among the seven-party coalition against the constitutional provisions will be an uphill battle, and that this balance can be achieved only at the expense of the ordinary Basotho. Stability within the coalition can ideally be maintained through consensus. The reality, however, is that such consensus is extremely difficult if not impossible to achieve. It is for this reason that the Constitution does not require evidence of consultation before prime ministers make their final decisions.

Mosisili's attempts to balance the stability of his seven-party coalition and his constitutional prerogatives as prime minister will be further complicated by his deputy, Metsing, who previously accused Thabane of being non-consultative and authoritarian. Indeed, Metsing made the same accusation against Mosisili during the latter's days as the leader of the LCD. Metsing complained that Mosisili did not consult him as the party's secretary general. Based on his history, one might expect that Metsing will continue to demand that Mosisili should consult him when taking decisions. Metsing's claims of non-consultation by Thabane, were made perhaps because he was frustrated to once again be the bridesmaid and not the bride, which seems to be the story of his political career (Allison 2014, p. 8). Coincidentally, Metsing finds himself to be a 'bridesmaid' yet again in the new coalition government.

### **Prorogation law**

Following the outcry by the LCD and other opposition parties when Parliament was prorogued in June 2014, there was a need for Parliament to review the prorogation section (83) of the Constitution of Lesotho. This review should have happened when Parliament reconvened in September 2014. The parties had complained that Thabane had abused the law to ensure he stayed in office. Such a review might have resulted in repealing the law or at least specifying conditions under which it can be applied. However, the embattled Parliament never took the opportunity to do this review.

Although the topic was never officially aired in Parliament, Thabane did not support the call to review the prorogation law. Dismissing the opposition parties' call to scrap the law, Thabane insisted the call was unfounded and was being made

only by leaders of small parties, who knew they had no chance of becoming prime minister. Probably because they shared a similar view with Thabane, the DC and LCD did not call for the outright repeal of the law in question but complained about it being amenable to abuse.

To date, prorogation of Parliament remains constitutional in Lesotho. It seems fair to expect that Mosisili – despite his protests when Thabane applied the same law – will apply it whenever his rule is under threat. Indeed, Mosisili has previously used both the prorogation and the dissolution clauses to save his rule. He prorogued Parliament in 2001 and 2009. In both cases, the prorogation of Parliament allowed for processes that would ensure the continuation of Mosisili's rule. As mentioned earlier in this paper, he also dissolved Parliament prematurely in 2006 to avert a no-confidence vote.

### *An Opportunity Missed*

The above paragraphs have described how the 2015 elections have brought temporary relief rather than a cure for Lesotho's political 'sickness'. A true remedy, or at least a reduction in the country's problems, would require comprehensive reforms in both the constitutional and institutional realms. This does not imply being overly pessimistic or ignoring the capability of Lesotho's politicians to maneuver around situations, including the Constitution, to achieve their objectives. They have done so before and are likely to continue to do so if circumstances permit such maneuvering. It is therefore important that all possible steps be taken to tighten up the country's Constitution to minimise its abuse.

The period just before the elections would have been the best time to develop lasting solutions for Lesotho's political problems. Undertaking most of the necessary reforms needs a two-thirds majority. Obtaining this majority would have been relatively easy in the pre-election period, because no party stood to lose directly from reforms – at least not immediately. Now that the elections are over and a new government is in place, it is unthinkable that the ruling coalition and the opposition will give each other the required parliamentary support to pass bills aimed at reform. The previous Parliament also failed to introduce reforms.

An alternative that would have provided the required majority would have been the coalition of the two largest parties. However, that was also not to be. Lesotho's predicament is summarised by Professor Nqosa Mahao (Ntaote 2015b) as follows:

the other reason why a grand coalition would have been ideal for Lesotho was constitutional and institutional reforms ... Now the interesting thing is some of those issues that need to be

constitutionalised require a much bigger consensus by the public and parliament. For instance, there are issues such as parliament's prorogation which, according to the constitution, cannot be amended unless you refer them to a referendum. The constitution says you may only avoid a referendum if you win two-thirds majority for the amendment in parliament. Now the likelihood that any of this patched mandate comprising many parties would attain a two-thirds majority seems to be a little bit of wishful thinking.

### *Precarious Security and Compromised Rule of Law*

Political stability in Lesotho might have been restored at least in the short run, and the new coalition government has the legitimacy which was lacking in its predecessor – to the point of virtually obliterating the previous regime. However, the security crisis and challenges to the rule of law are likely to persist. Tension between the army and the police was briefly reduced by sending the three security chiefs on leave of absence under the Maseru Security Accord. But serious issues relating to national security and the rule of law remain unresolved.

For instance, the perpetrators of bombings at the homes of Police Commissioner Khothatso Tsooana and Thabane's partner Liabiloe Ramoholi in January 2014 have not yet been charged. The police have complained that the army refuses to hand over eight officials for questioning in connection with the bombings. Disagreements about the release of these officials illustrate the souring in the relationship between the two security institutions. The conflict culminated in attacks on three Maseru police stations by the army in the late hours of 30 August 2014. During the raid, army members reportedly ransacked the police headquarters and demanded dockets and files pertaining to high-profile cases which the police were investigating (Ntsukunyane 2014, p. 4). One police officer was killed and nine were severely injured in the attacks.

During the same night, the army raided Thabane's official residence in what many observers have labelled as a coup attempt, only to find Thabane had fled to South Africa. No-one has appeared before a court of law in connection with any of these crimes. Only when the perpetrators of such attacks are brought to book can there be any hope for restoring normal security and the rule of law in Lesotho.

The rule of law was also compromised during the tenure of the ABC-led coalition. Certain ministers and high-ranking officials of the LCD defied legal decisions taken by the then Prime Minister Thabane, and at times vowed publicly to disobey national laws that did not suit their party's interests. One example was when former Minister of Communications, Sedibe Mochoboroane, forcefully remained in office despite being fired by Thabane. These officials could get away



with what were clearly illegal acts because of the support they had from the army. For as long as army members 'remain above the law', rule of law will not be restored any time soon in Lesotho.

One of the two main terms of reference for the facilitation which Ramaphosa was asked to provide was to prioritise resolving the security issues that had precipitated Lesotho's political instability. He failed to do so, focusing instead only on a quick-fix solution: the elections. The security crisis remains a time-bomb that will certainly explode in the face of Basotho.

At the the time of writing, the issue of the command of the Lesotho Defence Force remains unresolved. The new coalition government has not yet publicly stated its official stance about the future of Lieutenant Generals Tlali Kamoli and Maapara-nkoe Mahao in the army. Commenting on Lesotho's security crisis, former member of the Military Council during the military regime, Colonel Sekhobe Letsie (Mokhethi 2015b, p. 4), said:

the facilitator should have worked on security even before suggesting the lifting of the prorogation of parliament. Now the February 28 general election has not brought any solution but total destabilization of the country. The confusion within the army should have first been settled so that it was clear who the commander was before going for the polls.

Recent developments in Lesotho suggest that the army's influence in the country's political affairs is set to continue under the new government, with the possible return of General Tlali Kamoli. This possibility became evident soon after the agreement forming the seven-party coalition was announced. Mosisili and Metsing corroborated each other in media statements, saying that Kamoli would be recalled as the commander of the Lesotho Defence Force. Metsing had enjoyed the support of the army during the troubled era of the first coalition government, and Mosisili is a well-known admirer of Kamoli. It was Mosisili who had appointed Kamoli to head the army just weeks before the 2012 elections. During Kamoli's leadership, the army had refused to hand over to the police those army officials who were wanted for questioning in relation to the criminal acts described earlier.

Kamoli himself reportedly had a case of high treason investigated against him after the events of 30 August 2014 (*News 24* 14 September 2014). With certain high-ranking government and army officials having existing and potential cases to answer before the courts of law, it is likely that these cases will be swept under the carpet by the new coalition government. The Basotho Nation might never learn who the perpetrators of some of those crimes were. Had Ramaphosa's facilitation



treated the security crisis as a priority and given it thorough attention, the current uncertainty over the rule of law could have been averted.

This failure to normalise the security situation in Lesotho, and the possibility that high-profile criminal cases will be swept under the carpet, is observed as follows:

Not once, during the six months of SADC “facilitation” efforts, up through today, have SADC officials – particularly its lead mediator in Lesotho, South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa – touched on the mutinous army revolt on 30 August last year. ... The enduring mystery of what exactly happened that day – who did what and why – would, if exposed, likely destabilize Lesotho once more. It would also rattle surrounding South Africa, which relies heavily on Lesotho’s water. And it’d unravel the desperate, quick-fix efforts by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – the region’s diplomatic bloc, led by South Africa itself – to restore “peace and security” to Lesotho. In other words, it’s in no-one’s interest to unlock the truth.

(Jordan 2015)

The centrality of the army to the political survival of certain politicians in the Lesotho government is already plain to see. Metsing is on record as having said that his party regretted not having demanded control over the security and judicial ministries when it joined the coalition government in 2012. Interestingly, the defence ministry is now under the control of the LCD, and Metsing’s right-hand man, T’seliso Mokhosi, is the new Minister of Defence. This arrangement deviates from the old tradition of having the prime minister also act as the Minister for Defence. It is a novel arrangement to have a head of government who does not have direct access to the security forces. This scenario itself implies limited powers for Mosisili, should he devise policies that are unfavourable to Metsing and his party or to individuals in the army’s top brass. It suggests a vulnerability to a potential security crisis, which could be similar to the one Thabane went through when he lost the control and respect of the army.

## CONCLUSION

The hurried (‘snap’) February 2015 elections succeeded in forming a new government of Lesotho. The elections gave this government the legitimacy that its predecessor had completely lost. But as Schendler has noted in his description of electoral democracies, simply holding an election does not ensure the existence of all the elements necessary for a functioning democracy. Lesotho appears to be

a case in point. The new coalition government still faces the emergence of the same problems that paralysed the first coalition government. Failure by political parties to implement the legal and institutional reforms that would reconcile the coalition agreements with the national Constitution has left the new prime minister in an awkward position, and threatens the sustainability of his new government.

In addition, Ramaphosa's focus on the seemingly quick solution of holding an election, rather than on solving the security crisis in the country, has created serious uncertainty about upholding the rule of law. The relations between the police and defence forces remain sour. The alliance between political leaders who face criminal charges and the military – whose top command also faces possible legal charges – will surely block any efforts to bring these high-profile suspects before the courts of law. All these factors suggest that the 2015 elections have failed to provide a long-term solution to Lesotho's political and security problems. Ironically, the search for such a solution was the main reason that the snap elections were held in the first place.

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# FACEBOOK: REVOLUTIONISING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN IN BOTSWANA?

*Bontle Masilo and Batlang Seabo*

Bontle Masilo is a lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Botswana  
email: bontle.masilo@mopipi.ub.bw

Batlang Seabo is a lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Botswana  
email: batlang.seabo@mopipi.up.bw

## ABSTRACT

*Political candidates and parties harnessed Facebook as a tool for political mobilisation and communication at the time of the Botswana 2014 election. This paper explores the use of Facebook as a campaign tool in the 2014 Botswana general election. It argues that the extensive use of Facebook in political campaigning has added a new dimension to electoral campaigns in Botswana, by allowing political parties a relatively cheap means of transmitting information.*

*Furthermore, Facebook has democratised media access, and has afforded people who have previously been side-lined by traditional media an important platform for political mobilization. Accordingly, Facebook has widened the democratic space and reduced the disparities in the electoral arena. Most importantly, it has generated interest in politics among young people. The intersection between Facebook and traditional media and other social media has augmented their efficiency by amplifying their reach. However, Facebook does not replace traditional campaign approaches but rather serves to augment them.*

**Keywords:** democracy, Botswana, electoral campaigns, social media, political parties.

## INTRODUCTION

Initially meant for social networking and interacting with acquaintances, social media – in the form of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube – are now becoming crucial instruments in political communication. The 2008 Barack Obama election to the White House is partly attributed to his extensive use of social media to canvass support and raise funds. The successful use of Facebook and Twitter in mobilising revolutionaries who ousted the East African dynasties has demonstrated the efficacy of social media as a tool of mobilisation.

Following these events, considerable academic attention has been directed at understanding the role of social media in political campaigns. The use of Facebook in election campaigns and political communication has arguably widened the democratic space, allowing previously marginalised groups to participate in the democratic process (Javuru 2013; Wasswa 2013). Most importantly, social media have facilitated political communication for parties that were struggling to reach potential voters.

However, questions remain about the efficacy of Facebook as a political communication medium. Questions abound regarding the manner in which people view information shared through social media, and whether this can be used to predict the outcome of elections and gauge the atmosphere on the ground. Taking these concerns as a point of departure, we seek to examine the use of social media in Botswana's 2014 general election campaign. Focusing mainly on Facebook, we argue that social media have revitalised election campaigns in Botswana by expanding political communication avenues. To some extent, social media have addressed the problem of unfair access to the media, as previously side-lined opposition parties can tap into social media to talk to their voters.

The efficacy of Facebook derives from features such as sharing pictures and information, status updates, posts, tags and the 'like' function. However, social media do not replace the traditional medium of political campaigning but rather serve to compliment it. We argue that the integration of traditional media and new media has enhanced political communication, which therefore presents a great opportunity for all parties to reach out to their voters. Unlike traditional media, new media are accessible at less cost, and are insulated from excessive editorial interference and state censorship.

The first section of the paper broadly discusses the use of social media in politics. Drawing on the experiences of the 2008 presidential elections in the United States, and some African elections, we then examine the role played by social media in election campaigns. To provide some context, the section that follows briefly shows the evolution of election campaigning in Botswana, with a focus on freedom squares, house-to-house campaigns, and the use of billboards.

In the final section of the article, we focus on the role of social media in the 2014 general election campaign in Botswana.

### *The Efficacy of Social Media in Politics*

Broadly referred to as Web 2.0 applications, new media applications come in different forms. YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are the most popular, but social networks such as Tumblr, Pinterest and many others are also important (Vergeer, Hermas & Sams 2011). Social media rely heavily on internet-based social networks that allow people to develop profiles and link with other users who have also signed into the networks. Vergeer et al. (2011) describe these networks as 'weblogs', and comment that such social networks use a 'bottom-up approach, focused on sharing content online, collaboration among people and enabling socializing online...' (p. 3). Users can view the profiles of other users, interact through blog posts visible to the subscriber's Facebook friends, and post pictures, messages and links to other sources (Wasswa 2013).

Unlike more traditional internet sites, Web 2.0 applications have been able to draw a lot of attention because of their interactivity. These applications promote online expression because the online community can post their views and engage in debates (Kushin & Yamamoto 2010). The applications allow for the formation of social communities and groups, which facilitates the exchange of ideas and discussions on many issues of public concern. Through their picture and video posting facilities, they are able to engage subscribers in political events that are happening far away, even as those events unfold.

Viewed from this perspective, the internet promotes deliberative and participatory democracy. It is, without doubt, becoming one of the dominant political communication tools. Realising the potential of social media, political parties and politicians have sought to tap into the networks and social communities to canvass political support. As a result, recent elections across the world have seen an increased use of social media to raise funds for campaigns and to solicit votes.

Wasswa (2013) claims that campaigns play a role in influencing voters, by setting the agenda and by reminding voters about issues of concern and the performance of serving officers. To some extent they determine what needs to be discussed and perhaps how it must be discussed. Wasswa (2013, p. 1) writes that 'Today, political victories are determined by the quantity and quality of information that campaigns can access with regards to political rivals and constituents.' Those who fail to join the social media hype will therefore fall behind in the political game.



The utility value of Facebook derives from its huge subscription base. Effing, Hillegersberg and Huibers (2011) state that in April 2011 Facebook had 600 million registered subscribers, and people spend more time on Facebook than any other website. This makes it one of the most effective mediums for delivering messages. Facebook has bridged the digital divide, and most importantly it has democratised media access, particularly to less-resourced candidates and political parties. It has also enhanced political competition. Because of these strengths, social media present a prime opportunity to democratise election campaigns, by allowing groups that could have been disadvantaged by a lack of resources to reach their potential voters (Vergeer et al. 2011).

Despite this great potential and some evidence of extensive use of social media in certain political communications, Effing et al. (2011) observe that the use of social media in electoral campaigns tends to lack a strategy or comprehensive plan. This hinders political parties and candidates from obtaining maximum benefit. Vergeer et al. (2011) acknowledge that the liberal nature of social media is not without risks, because although candidates might not have public relations skills they assume a leading role in their online campaigns.

Vergeer et al. (2011) highlight that social media have reduced party control over candidates' campaign strategies and interactions with supporters. Generally this means that candidates express their position and views independently of party influence. Candidates are directly accountable to the Facebook community for their decisions. This creates a strong bond between the electorate and the candidate (Vergeer et al., 2011). Crucially, unlike traditional media, which do not permit immediate feedback or allow a candidate the chance to immediately clarify a comment if they are misinterpreted, Facebook allows such instant feedback.

Conveniently, traditional media, including newspapers and radio stations, have joined the Facebook hype to expand their audiences. This means that in addition to traditional channels, news is transmitted today through social networks in a way that allows for conversations and dialogue about issues. According to Javuru (2013), this interaction encourages deliberation and debates on different public matters. In this way, social media can promote citizenship and deliberative democracy (Javuru 2013).

Furthermore, Javuru (2013) observes that accredited and affiliated journalists can use their own Facebook pages to upload news and reports, with little restriction imposed by laws such as those which regulate formal journalism and newspaper editorial policies. In this way, Facebook promotes independent reporting. Accordingly, Javuru (2013) concludes that

... new media is seen by some as an antidote to the heavy handed approach with which the government sometimes handles criticisms



from the media largely because one can be anonymous and there are no premises to raid and close down. (p. 361)

Although social media are widely credited for promoting political engagement, Makala (2014) claims that relying excessively on social media to mobilise voters is often viewed as elitist, because people without internet access are left out. However, the integration between the traditional and social media suggests that the new media can have as much influence as traditional media. It is not clear whether Twitter and Facebook politics reflect offline political moods. However, just like the traditional media, they can provide an important measure of public sentiment.

### *Social Media and Election Campaigns*

Not much is known about the actual effect of social media on election outcomes, or its intersection with other factors in influencing voter decisions. However, the effectiveness of social media in mobilising political action should not be underestimated. Although not the only factor, social media certainly played a critical role in bringing down Middle East and East African dynasties.

According to Bosch (2013), the online 'event' of the Egyptian revolution saw more than 80 000 people being mobilised by social media, mostly Facebook. Evidence also suggests that the Arab revolution and Philippines upheaval, which culminated in the resignation of the president, were both facilitated by social media. This indicates that social media are becoming very useful tools for political mobilisation (Bosch 2013).

The 2008 American presidential elections also saw an increase in the use of social media to rally voters. President Obama, in particular, relied heavily on various social networks to reach out to supporters, individuals and organisations (Johnson & Perlmutter 2009). Twitter, Flickr, Digg, YouTube, Myspace and Facebook were among the Online Social Interactive Media (OSIM) that he used. Indeed, some people attribute Obama's success in the 2008 election to his extensive use of social networking websites. Obama's use of web 2.0 technology has sparked much debate and academic interest in the relationship between social media and election campaigns.

Similarly, the 2014 Indian election saw an increased use of Facebook. In view of the extensive use of social media, CNN referred to the election as 'India's first social media election' (Makama 2014). Politicians in African countries have also used Facebook extensively in election campaigns. President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria and his cabinet, as well as the Rwandese President, Paul Kagame, were among the first heads of state to interact with people through Facebook (Makama 2014).

Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta also used social media to engage young people (Tracey 2013; Wasswa 2013). Kenya has more than 14 million internet users, many of whom make use of social media sites. Uhuru Kenyatta's Facebook page had an enormous following, with over 500 000 'likes'. Without doubt, many comments or items of information reached more than just these 500 000 followers. According to Portland Communications, Kenya ranks second after South Africa in the use of mobile social networking. Wasswa (2013) states that social media profoundly contributed to Kenyatta's success.

Tracey (2013) claims that political parties were visible in social media in the build-up to the 2014 election in South Africa. By 13 November 2014, the Economic Freedom Fighters had the most likes on Facebook, followed by the African National Congress and Democratic Alliance (Tracey 2013). According to Bosch (2013), South African political parties, the Electoral Commission, and civil society are all stepping up their use of social media to drive the masses to the polls. Facebook is one of the most widely used social network sites in South Africa, and with 3.2 million users it ranks as the most popular of all social network media in South Africa. If the number of followers on Facebook pages is anything to go by, it seems safe to conclude that messages communicated on Facebook would reach a considerable number of people.

A 2012 study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the 'South African mobile generation' found that South Africa is one of the leading nations in the use of mobile technology and social networking in Africa. This wide access has facilitated citizen participation and engagement in politics, and can generate interest in voting and other democratic processes. According to Wasswa (2013), most young adults develop an interest in politics by interacting with politically engaged friends on social media. In this way, they help to transmit up-to-date information through blogs and online posts.

Although social media are definitely becoming an important factor in political campaigning, some experts dismiss social media dialogue as 'pointless babble' (Pearanalytics 2009, in Tumasjan et al. 2010). However, experiences across the world suggest that the potential of social media should not be underrated. According to Javuru (2013), some scholars of democracy and participation question the diversity of views and the quality of arguments advanced on social media. Such scholars posit that social media involves interactions between people who already share common positions and views on public matters, and therefore do not serve to broaden debates. Javuru (2013, p. 370) states that 'These commentators argue that much online interaction simply involves the meeting of "likeminded" people leading to a fragmented public sphere of insulated "deliberative enclaves" where group positions and practices are reinforced rather than openly critiqued.'

Javuru (2013) also claims that the potential of social media to act as an engine for public debate and engagement is compromised by people having limited internet access. While it may be true that the effectiveness of social media could be compromised by the digital divide, the increasing sophistication of mobile phones has greatly improved many people's access to the internet and therefore to social media. Bosch (2013), writing about South Africa, confirms that mobile internet will bridge the digital divide, and comments that the same holds true for most developing countries.

### EVOLUTION OF ELECTION CAMPAIGNING IN BOTSWANA

Election campaigning has evolved over time in the politics of Botswana, since the country's first elections in 1965. Before the advent of modern tools of participation, notably social media, freedom square platforms and 'house to house' campaigns defined election campaign strategies for political parties. As Charlton (1993, p. 351) puts it,

political rallies, known in Botswana as 'freedom squares' since their inception in the late colonial period by the BPP (which in turn was following South African practice and terminology), overwhelmingly dominate the electoral campaign tactics of all Botswana's political parties.

Freedom squares still dominate the campaign environment, and provide a platform for political parties to campaign and canvass votes for their candidates. However, they sometimes degenerate into forums where candidates heckle and insult each other. Molomo (2000) states that political rallies, the so-called freedom squares, are characterised by abusive language and character assassination, and on some occasions insults are hurled at the state president. Parties and candidates attack and discredit their opponents. Charlton (1993) writes that freedom squares are characterised by a high degree of informality and a tendency to personalise political arguments. In the same vein, Lekorwe (1989, p. 222) observes that 'in general, freedom square audiences clearly prefer speakers who heap abuse on the opposition and glorify their own party.'

But this is not to suggest that policy issues are never discussed at political rallies or freedom squares. These platforms provide parties with an opportunity to reach out to a large audience and sell their programmes and manifestoes. Indeed, there is some policy discussion. For instance, according to Molutsi and Holm (1990, p. 335), 'cabinet decided without any consultation with the Ministry of Education

to provide free secondary education because the BNF was calling in freedom squares for the abolition of these fees and gaining considerable popularity thereby.'

In addition, freedom squares have enabled parties to better appreciate the problems that bedevil local communities – more so because they are usually held at a relatively central point within a constituency. This has helped parties to draft their programmes in a manner that reflects the needs of the people. Molutsi and Holm (1990, p. 335) state that freedom squares 'can show the relation between their organizations and particular local developments or problems and parties formulate their programmes anew for each community, specifying for instance that a dam, bridge or school will or should be built.'

Freedom squares create hype and excitement around elections, thus helping to mobilise support for political parties and provide voters with election-related information. In this regard, the effect of freedom squares on election campaigns was highlighted by a Democracy Research Project survey in 1987, in which 31% of respondents said they mainly received information about issue positions through freedom squares (Molutsi & Holm 1990). The same survey showed that 28% of respondents received most of their information about political parties from freedom squares.

Previously ignored by parties, billboards came into vogue in the 1999 elections as parties geared up their campaign strategies. Mokopakgosi and Molomo (2000) observe that in the 1999 elections there was much affection for billboards, and calendars and timetables bearing candidates' photos were distributed to university students. Radio stations also played a crucial role during electoral campaigns, with parties airing their messages through both private and public radio stations. According to Mokopakgosi and Molomo (2000), political parties took advantage of a new private radio station called Yarona FM, which broadcast advertisements for those parties.

None the less, traditional campaign strategies are limited in terms of their reach, affordability and accessibility for all political parties. According to Mokopakgosi and Molomo (2000, p. 11), 'these methods, especially public rallies, though effective to some extent, fail to reach certain segments of the population, especially professionals and the elderly'.

Ntsabane and Ntau (2006) claim that the use of strategies that blend entertainment and political campaigning could go a long way in mobilising young adults. Indeed, Facebook campaigns in particular contributed profoundly to mobilising the youth in the 2014 general elections. However, despite the advent of social media as a new form of participation and a new political platform, traditional campaign strategies remain relevant and are an important aspect of campaigns during elections. Social media have not eclipsed them into history, but have rather augmented them – particularly to reach young people. Political

parties are moving towards an intersection between traditional and new campaign strategies to amplify their reach. An example is billboards that display social media icons for websites where voters can access parties' messages.

### BOTSWANA 2014 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The 2014 general election in Botswana was arguably the most hotly contested election in the history of Botswana's democracy. Stakes were high in both the opposition and ruling parties, as well as civil society. Ordinary Botswana, young and old, joined the fray. Talk about the elections dominated many conversations. The media – both electronic and print, traditional and the new – were awash with reports on political campaigning.

For the first time in the history of Botswana, political analysts could not speak with certainty about the outcome of the elections. The political landscape had changed compared with previous elections. The elections were contested by only three parties: the Botswana Congress Party (BCP), the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), and the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) – which had suffered a split in 2010. The contesting parties were led by young and vibrant leaders. However, adding a twist to this scenario was the large number of independent candidates who also contested the elections.

By any measure, the euphoria of election time and the events preceding it, including the sudden death of opposition leader Gomolemo Motswaledi, certainly made the 2014 elections markedly different from previous ones. The campaign strategies, the nature of issues raised, and the interest of young people in politics were additional features that made the 2014 election unique.

One outcome of young people's interest in politics was the increased use of social media as a mobilising tool. Traditional media started making use of social media to amplify their reach. This extensive use of social media, in particular Facebook, added a new dimension to the campaigns. Candidates did not have to rely on traditional media to communicate with the electorate; their messages could be delivered undiluted and in real time. This ignited excitement among many subscribers, whose attention was drawn to election debates and issues related to the upcoming elections.

The three main political parties and their candidates all had a presence in social media. Individual candidates also created their own pages, each bearing their party colours and listing the principles for which they stood. Altogether, the Botswana 2014 general election saw an unprecedented use of social media as a campaign tool. Facebook pages of Botswana youth were dominated by pictures taken at political rallies and portraits of political candidates. Certainly social media had become an important platform for political campaigning.

On the opposition front, parliamentary candidate Ndaba Gaolathe had his own Facebook page called 'Ndaba Gaolathe-Gaborone Bonnington South 2014'. By 22 September 2014, this page had accumulated more than 8 000 likes. The page showed his contact number and the constituency he was contesting. It also contained various political messages directed at electorates. The same page was used to update the public about Gaolathe's schedule and the activities of his party. Many posts attracted numerous positive responses.

Gaolathe's page also displayed a message about the UDC presidential launch rally in Khuduga grounds. His friends and followers could therefore follow his on-the-ground campaign and attend political rallies, as well as sharing their ideas and concerns on Facebook. Most importantly, he posted photographs taken during his campaign, showing him interacting with the masses in the streets of his constituency. This was important. The Gaborone Bonnington South constituency comprises locations that are generally occupied by low and middle income residents, who would typically vote for a 'people's person' or somebody they can identify with – and especially if they could interact directly with that person.

Other Facebook accounts included that of UDC Gaborone Central constituency, which was named 'UDC Gaborone Central'. It showed a photo of the late Gomolemo Motswaledi, who had been the party candidate for the constituency, Secretary General of the UDC, and the President of the Botswana Movement for Democracy. Despite his death – and after it – the page remained active. Thus, evidently the page was administered by his campaign team. What is particularly intriguing is the basis for which the page was established. According to a pinned post, 'This page is about assurance of a better Constituency under the representation of Gomolemo Motswaledi in Parliament and updates thereof.' By September 2014 the page had accumulated 8 195 likes, which suggests that messages would have been viewed by thousands of people, well beyond the number of 'friends' of the page.

The page was packed with messages of condolences, and eulogies for Motswaledi that had been delivered by various speakers at his funeral. Former President Masire's speech, which some people believed endorsed the UDC, was among the many shared on this page. The page was also dominated by pictures of UDC rallies. In addition, the page was used to invite people to the launch of the candidacy of Gaborone Central candidate, Phenyio Butale, who had replaced Motswaledi.

The use of Facebook allowed the UDC to connect with many people it otherwise would not have been able to reach, especially because Phenyio Butale had entered the race rather late. With the help of Facebook, UDC supporters were able to mobilise quickly, which they could have not done with mere posters or newspaper adverts. Even more crucially, Facebook was cost-efficient. Other



UDC pages included 'UDC 2014 Francistown', 'UDC Mogoditshane' and 'UDC Serowe branch'.

It is important to note that voters do not focus only on policies that are presented; presenting a winning image is also important. Facebook, with its photo-upload function, has afforded many politicians – who would not be able to buy airtime on television or advertisement space in newspapers – an opportunity to present themselves to voters.

Social media were used to complement the campaigns 'on the ground'. For example, both the UDC and BCP announced their bus tours on social media. The UDC presidential candidate's launch, during which the buses were unveiled, was widely publicised on Facebook. The party combined two campaign approaches that were both appealing to young people. Hence the large youth turnover at rallies can partly be ascribed to the use of Facebook, as well as to posters and flyers (which also contained information about social media links).

With their limited resources, opposition parties could not afford either radio or television adverts. Facebook was surely their main tool of mobilisation. Vergeer et al. (2011, p. 9) state that

By utilizing new media such as social network sites, and Twitter in particular, new and fringe parties generally lacking substantial media attention might create more online attention and interest among people on the web and, as such, leveling the political playing field.

This statement could not be more apt, especially in a democracy where opposition parties have consistently blamed their poor performance on a lack of funding and limited access to the media. Urban dwellers are especially important in this scenario, as they are technologically literate and possibly the most active Facebook users. An opposition political activist who was quoted in *Africa Review* (2014) confirmed that because the opposition's supporters are generally urban dwellers and young people, Facebook campaigning is paramount.

Writing fifteen years ago, Mokopakgosi and Molomo (2000) commented that studies had shown that political parties in Botswana had not been highly innovative in their campaign strategies. Given what transpired during the past election, this view cannot hold anymore. The 2014 elections show an improvement in campaign approaches. As Gabathuse (2014) observes, 'the political parties are proving to all and sundry that the campaign methods are not static but dynamic and are changing with times'.

Specifically, the use of social media, bus tours, choppers, and other methods created excitement about the elections, especially among young adults – whose level of participation in politics had previously been worrisome. Branding and



slogans were a trend in the 2014 election, and most people had some form of contact with the election craze. Attesting to this, Gabathuse (2014) wrote that 'The BCP and UDC taglines of "Ready to Lead" and "Embrace Change" respectively have been given sufficient exposure and are almost known to every Motswana. These new innovations have ensured that the parties' slogans imprint upon people's minds.'

Dumelang Saleshando, the presidential candidate for the BCP and Gaborone Central parliamentary candidate, was among the politicians whose Facebook accounts were active. His page contained many updates on his bus tour schedule as well as his messages. Hence his messages were accessible not only to people who attended his rallies, but also to thousands of Facebook users. Through his Facebook page, he updated his 5000 'friends' about the famous bus tour. On 26 September, a week after the bus tour started, his posts on the page received more than 203 likes. All the Facebook friends of those 203 subscribers could have seen Saleshando's messages too. This translates in an audience of potentially thousands of people.

Several people commented on the posts and shared them with others. He also uploaded photographs. Among the pictures on his page was one he took with a boy in Kavimba, who was wearing a T-shirt that said 'I was Born Intelligent, Education Ruined Me'. Saleshando used this message to lash out at government education policy. Once again, the value of Facebook as a medium of communication is linked to its facility for uploading pictures, and its accessibility to a great number of people through smart phones.

The ruling party also created several Facebook pages, with each candidate using Facebook to mobilise supporters. The official party page was 'Botswana Democratic Party 2014 Elections', which bore the slogan 'Together we can strive for a better Botswana'. This page had approximately 9 000 likes. The page was coloured red and showed photos of the party at various rallies. As with other parties, the page was used to notify subscribers of the rallies and of messages delivered at the star rallies. The star rallies of 3 October 2014, in support of Gaotlhaetse Matlhabaphiri and Daniel Kwelagobe – candidates of the Molepolole South and North constituencies respectively – as well as the Mogoditshane and Kanye star rallies were captured. The president of the party was shown welcoming defectors from opposition parties. The significance of such images in political campaigning should not be underestimated.

Interestingly, the same page featured an audio-video clip of a beneficiary of the Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) programme, talking about how the BDP had rescued her from poverty. This was a new development in Botswana's election campaign. Government policies had never before been used explicitly to lure voters in the manner evidenced in the run-up to the 2014 elections.

The President of the Republic, Lieutenant-General Ian Khama Seretse Khama, also joined the social media bandwagon. In his opening post, he declared as follows:

Welcome to my official Facebook page, where I look forward to interacting with you as we share experiences and more importantly ways through which, together, we can move our country forward. I will from time to time be available for live chats with you. Looking forward to engaging in debates with everyone.

Within a few days of its existence, this page had received more than 19 000 likes, meaning that at least this number of people were viewing the president's posts and comments. The first post was shared by over 84 subscribers. Notably, the account omitted Khama's official title and used only his first and second name. The deliberate informality facilitated communication and removed formalities that could have hampered easy conversation and free engagement. This approach opened up dialogues between the president and Facebook subscribers.

Although the administration of the account had been outsourced to one Bridget Mavuma, the page itself created an illusion of engagement and participation. It gave the ordinary Motswana, who otherwise would not have had a platform to engage the president, a feeling of participation and activism. Crawford (2009) calls this 'delegated listening'. However, Crawford points out that this arm's-length engagement thwarts genuine communication. While this may be true, a Facebook profile creates the illusion of interaction and accessibility, which in turn creates a sense of involvement for the electorate. Whether people's concerns and opinions were actually considered or not is somewhat immaterial. The point is that mere subscription to Facebook demonstrates that the high office was beginning to appreciate the power of social media.

The timing of the creation of the Botswana Democratic Party 2014 Facebook page also shows that the party hoped to use Facebook to lure voters. This, too, is an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of traditional media, especially in reaching young people who would generally not be interested in state media. According to Kushin and Yamamoto (2010, p, 614),

Attention to social media would be positively associated with political self-efficacy, because use of media-rich social media applications for political information such as micro blogs updates and streaming live video of campaign events would give users the perceptions of increased engagement with preferred candidates or parties.

If Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) are correct, it can be argued that the presence of candidates, both parliamentary and presidential, on Facebook would have generated a fresh interest in politics. This would drive young people to seek information from other sources to enhance their understanding of politics, and to participate actively in the democratic process.

Yushin and Yamamoto (2010) also claim that studies have shown a correlation between online political participation and, firstly, political efficacy, and secondly situational political involvement. The former indicates confidence that one's effort can shape the political process, and the latter indicates the level of interest in social issues at a given time. Drawing on this theory, it appears that Facebook generated a lot of interest and confidence in the power of the vote, which resulted in a greater interest in voting. Hence Facebook can be an effective tool to aid political parties with relatively few resources to mobilise young people.

However, not only did the ruling party see social media as an efficient communication tool, they also viewed it as a threat. The contents of a highly publicised tape-recording that was leaked from a BDP strategy meeting confirm this. In the recording, a high-ranking BDP official can be heard urging members to open pseudo social media accounts, to rebut any criticism aimed at the party by private media or individual subscribers. It would seem the BDP had read an anti-BDP mood in the social media. In addition, to ensure control and perhaps to instil fear, the Botswana Police Service issued a statement warning Facebook subscribers not to commit crimes through Facebook, such as defamation, use of insulting language, and blackmail. This can be seen as a way of silencing people who were speaking out strongly against the BDP government and other politicians on social media.

The presence of radio stations and newspapers on Facebook created a partial fusion between the new media and traditional media. In particular, Gabz FM had a page titled 'Gabz FM elections 2014', which had more than 14 171 likes by September 2014. It was dedicated to the parliamentary candidates' live debates that were held across the country. The page offered participants the chance to present their ideas to the electorate, and gave subscribers a platform to give feedback to both the radio station and the candidates about the debates. This public input allowed candidates to reflect on and improve their campaigns. Most importantly, the feedback gave candidates cues about which public matters to focus on in their campaigns. Based on comments and debates among the Facebook community, candidates could alter their campaign strategies; they could also assess public opinion and perceptions about their policies.

According to Windeck (2010, p. 19), 'Thus, it can be said that political communication by the population is greater today than the mere expression of will in polls. The new technologies have promoted citizens' position to that of equal

partners in the communications structure.’ The presence of Facebook therefore widened the democratic space and brought candidates closer to their potential voters. Many people who could not attend the live debates were able to see the highlights on Facebook. This merging of mainstream media and new media has profoundly improved access to political information.

However, it is crucial to point out that only private radio stations rose to the occasion in terms of embracing social media, especially Facebook. The state media failed to keep pace with the new tools of political communication. Perhaps one would have expected the BDP government to use Radio Botswana and Botswana Television vigorously and in all ways possible, including Facebook, to gain leverage against the Gabz FM countrywide debates, which the BDP had shunned and vowed not to participate in. But neither Radio Botswana nor Botswana Television had official Facebook pages. If such pages had existed, they might have provided an avenue through which the government could counter opposition and advertise government programmes to lure voters.

In hindsight, however, this seemingly odd gap is not all that surprising. The listenership of Radio Botswana consists mostly of aged voters, who rarely if ever access Facebook – or even have access to the internet. Nevertheless, we observe an oversight and lack of diligence and innovativeness on the part of the BDP government, which failed to use resources (including state media) at its disposal to counter the opposition and redirect the many young and middle-aged voters’ attention to government programmes and the ruling party’s electoral promises.

That said, we acknowledge the existence of a government Facebook page titled ‘BWGOVERNMENT’. The page provides updates about government programmes and policies, as well as any information that the government needs to impart to the nation. Although it was not explicitly set up for active political campaigning, this page could be seen as partly an attempt by the government to counter opposition on Facebook. Its efficacy was, however, limited by its formal appearance. It lacks the vibrancy of opposition pages, and in this regard failed to measure up to the opposition’s efforts.

Apart from the unbalanced coverage by state media of campaign rallies and events, intended to side-line opposition parties, the only other strategy that government employed just before the elections was the airing of a documentary on ‘Political Tolerance’. It was aired on Botswana Television and portrayed the UDC as politically intolerant. This followed a chaotic invasion of the pitch by angry UDC supporters, who wanted to prevent a BDP representative from speaking at the memorial service held for the late Gomolemo Motswaledi.

The documentary first featured a brief historical background of Botswana as a nation acclaimed for its political tolerance and stability under the auspices of BDP governments. Then followed several interviews with political commentators

and analysts on political (in)tolerance, punctuated by a clip of UDC supporters charging towards the podium, and the BDP representative being whisked away for his own safety. Evidently the BDP government sought to capitalise on the incident to discredit the UDC in the eyes of voters, while presenting the BDP as a politically tolerant party. Whether the strategy worked or not is somewhat irrelevant. The point is that the BDP government failed to use its control of the state media in more innovative ways, such as reaching out to young voters and also in countering the opposition.

Print media also established a presence on Facebook. Newspapers, including the state-owned *Daily News*, created accounts and news blogs to disseminate the news. The private newspapers *Mmegi*, *Gazette*, and *The Voice* all had their own blogs, in which news that appeared in print was also shared on Facebook. This allowed some live coverage – which had previously been the preserve of broadcast media. People's access to the daily news was expanded. Most importantly, journalists were now able to report events as they unfolded, providing immediate information and updates on important political matters.

Kushin and Yamamoto (2010, p. 614) convincingly write that

Attention to social media would also be positively associated with situational political involvement, because social media offers users new channels for political information. With social media, young adults can rely on friends and the internet for political news rather than merely receiving political information from traditional news media sources. Users can experience politics on a more familiar, personal level through the postings of friends and acquaintances. Such experiences would make news more accessible, bringing it into the daily lives of young adults and affecting their interest in political situations.

This comment is particularly important given the continued declining public confidence in traditional media, both private and public, caused by the drop in quality of news reporting.

Facebook subscribers can form groups based on common interests, and can then interact as a group. Various unofficial groups related to Botswana politics were visible on Facebook. One that had a huge number of subscribers was called 'There is no alternative: an unofficial BDP group'; it had 29 974 members as of September 2014. Formed to counterbalance the BMD during its nascent stages, this group was one of the most animated in the run-up to the 2014 elections. The opposition and ruling parties' sympathisers clashed in debates about various issues pertaining to the elections. Such debates centred around party manifestos

and the suitability of candidates for office. The group's biggest rival was called 'Umbrella for Democratic Change', which also had a huge following of more than 24 000 members.

Several other groups were also visible, including 'Change-Moono Generation', 'BMD Aspirations of the People Platform', 'Botswana Congress Party', 'Botswana National Front', 'Umbrella party', 'President Duma Boko for Gaborone Bonnington North 2014', 'Perspective: Anchoring BMD's Aspirations' and 'Botswana National Front Group'. These groups facilitated engagement and debate among citizens about the various parties, candidates, and campaign strategies.

The groups gave an ordinary Motswana the opportunity to share his or her opinions and benefit from learning about the ideas and perspectives of other people. Most importantly, the groups were able to counteract ideas or commentaries not well presented by the traditional media. Essentially they acted as supplements to the traditional media. In view of this, Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) write that

Social media create venues where users can express political views and interact with others. Political use of interactive internet features has been shown to have a greater impact on gains in political information efficacy for young adults than simple unidirectional internet content. This suggests that 'accomplishing interactivity on a web site offers youth a means to engage democracy' (Tedesco, 2007, p. 1191).

(Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010, p. 615)

The new media sparked debates on many issues that were critical in the 2014 general elections. As already mentioned, these intense debates between subscribers enhanced people's political knowledge, and stimulated a wider interest in politics. Interactions on Facebook strengthened the relationship between voters and candidates. Vergeer et al. (2011) claim that Facebook posts move beyond purely political communication to include messages about candidates' personal experiences and activities that do not necessarily involve politics. Vergeer et al. (2011, p. 5) further state that

through these messages people get some insight into private life and interests of a politician. The assumption is that, by doing so, politicians create a stronger bond with people, going beyond the professional one, thus closing psychological distance between politicians and citizens.



This strategy also affects voting decisions. Because it is candidate-centred, voters tend to develop a strong attachment to a candidate rather than his or her party, resulting in a weaker identification with the party. This has implications for voter behaviour and could weaken partisan voting in Botswana; it could also draw previously unaffiliated voters to the polls. Indeed, the success of the opposition in areas that were traditionally BDP strongholds could partly be a result of this tactic. Opposition candidates' visibility on Facebook lured unaffiliated voters to their fold.

The use of new campaign strategies, tailor-made to suit the various constituents, evoked excitement and euphoria at a level never seen before in the history of Botswana elections. This was largely a result of the intense competition that arose through the greater availability of resources for all political parties. For the first time in Botswana politics, the opposition was visible across the country, thanks to funds sourced from sympathisers. The UDC, partly because it had brought together the resources of three cooperating parties, had an edge over the BCP. This access to resources, though still limited, allowed the opposition to strongly challenge the BDP. The use of social media demonstrated that with resources and equal access to media, the opposition could indeed challenge the ruling BDP.

## CONCLUSION

It is apparent that Botswana's 2014 elections were caught up in a social media frenzy. Political parties and individual candidates alike sought to exploit the opportunity presented by social media to woo voters to their fold. Similarly, to expand their reach and amplify their voices, traditional media joined the Facebook hype, a move that legitimised communication through social media.

Most importantly, social media have widened access to political information, and have ensured that parties compete at a lower cost than was previously possible. The use of social media in Botswana has made information on elections available to the public at a lower price, and has effectively democratised electoral competition by ensuring that domination by the BDP state media does not simply leave opposition parties out of the running. However, although social media dominated the 2014 general election campaigns, it has not entirely phased out the utility of freedom squares. Political parties utilised social media to complement and augment these political rallies, as a way of reaching out to young people.

In light of the discussion presented in this paper, there can be little doubt that the advent of social media has added a new dimension to Botswana politics. However, the causal relationship between Facebook and voting behaviour in Botswana has yet to be studied in depth.



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# LANGUAGE POLICIES AND VOTER TURNOUT

## Evidence from South Africa

*Eric S McLaughlin PhD*

Eric S McLaughlin is a lecturer at the Department of Political Science  
University of Redlands, California  
email: eric\_mclaughlin@redlands.edu

### ABSTRACT

*While many studies have probed the relationship between ethnic diversity and voter turnout, few have examined how voter turnout might be influenced by state policies that afford ethnic groups differing levels of official recognition. This study draws on theories at the intersection of political science and sociolinguistics, to develop and test an argument about the effect that language recognition practices in multilingual democratic societies have on voter turnout. Using data from South Africa, the study finds evidence that inclusive language recognition is linked to higher turnout rates for targeted groups. The study utilises aggregate data collected at ward level, but assesses the results in a preliminary fashion with individual-level data from Afrobarometer.*

**Keywords:** Africa, elections, language, language policy, voting, political participation, turnout.

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## INTRODUCTION

Most of Africa is characterised by a linguistic gulf between government elites and the ordinary citizens they govern. To observe patterns of language use today is to see the scars of colonial rule rendered in sharp relief. Elites – even those elected in free and fair elections – administer the affairs of state predominantly in the European languages of former colonialists, while to most citizens these languages are foreign. The languages of the ‘high politics’ of the capital city rarely match up with the languages used in the ‘low politics’ of the village council and at the kitchen table.

This gulf is present even in a country such as South Africa, arguably the continent’s most heralded democratic ‘experiment’, however imperfect. Members of the governing African National Congress (ANC) and most other parties conduct debates, deliver speeches and manage affairs of state in English. As of 2005, however, sociolinguistic surveys show that only 22% of South Africans fully understand their leaders’ speeches in English and that, on average, a citizen of South Africa has no more than a 30% chance of finding printed information on governmental affairs in his or her mother tongue, even in urban areas (Markdata 2001).

Sociolinguists have written extensively on the social, economic and political consequences of this ‘linguistic gulf’ in Africa. They have emphasised the importance of language in achieving noble goals such as justice, equality, self-determination and freedom (Bamgbose 1991, 2000; Mazrui & Mazrui 1996).

Politically, a linguistic divide between rulers and ruled presents a clear threat to democratic governance (Fishman 1996). One such threat is ‘elite closure’ (Myers-Scotton 1990), a phenomenon in which knowledge and command of a European language becomes a ticket to entry into the elite political class. In this case, language barriers can produce (and reproduce) significant social, political and economic inequalities, especially in the African context (Bamgbose 1991, 2000; Mazrui & Mazrui 1999). Political scientists have developed arguments along similar lines, contending that language barriers between citizens and governments could suppress political participation (Weinstein 1983) and undermine elite accountability (Pool 1992). Many have advocated the importance of language policies that accommodate many languages (Fishman 1996; Webb 2002), while others in the field of education have argued vociferously for the importance of mother-tongue education in Africa (Alexander 1989).

Despite these arguments, few analyses of the language divide have explicitly considered the effect of language barriers and governmental policies (or the lack thereof) in addressing those barriers to mass participation in African elections. In political science, our understanding of democratic participation comes primarily

from evidence collected in older, established democracies in the West, where linguistic heterogeneity is not as pervasive.

This study considers the most readily observable measure of democratic participation, namely voter turnout, in South Africa – a society typically diverse in the context of Africa. It presents evidence to suggest that the choices governments make about which languages to recognise as official are observably important to voter participation in elections.

Using aggregate and survey data, the study presents evidence that voter turnout in South African elections is higher in areas where provincial and local governments recognise and utilise the mother tongue of the local population. By drawing a connection between the politics of language in Africa, until now primarily the concern of sociolinguists, and the politics of elections in Africa, studied primarily by political scientists, it highlights an under-studied component of African elections.

The next section provides a brief discussion of the literature on comparative voter turnout, with particular attention given to existing theory that links linguistic diversity and minority-language recognition to political participation. The paper continues with a brief introduction to the sociolinguistic context in South Africa, and a history of the development of language policy since the country became a democracy in 1994. Next, the results of empirical tests to assess the relationship between language policy and voter turnout are reported. Data from across South Africa were analysed, followed by a more focused analysis of three particularly interesting municipalities. The paper concludes by presenting the results of an analysis of data from the Afrobarometer survey project to compare the aggregate findings with those at individual level. Finally, it presents a discussion of the findings and their implications.

## VOTER TURNOUT IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Studies designed to produce generalisations about the determinants of voter turnout collectively identify many important variables. At the individual level, factors such as socioeconomic status, education, occupation and trust have been repeatedly shown to matter for turnout (Verba, Nie & Kim 1978). More recent studies have even focused their attention on the role of human genetics (Fowler et al. 2008; Fowler & Dawes 2008). At the aggregate level, seminal studies by scholars such as Powell (1986) and Jackman (1987) emphasise contextual and institutional variables such as the competitiveness of electoral districts, multipartyism, electoral disproportionality, unicameralism and the positive effect of compulsory voting laws. Many studies have built on these initial efforts and the result is a large

literature with diverse findings. Recent cross-national studies confirm that many of the usual constructs (competitiveness, multipartyism, compulsory voting) do influence turnout. However, other factors are often also highlighted, for instance aggregate levels of wealth (Blais & Dobrzynska 1998), the age of democratic institutions (Endersby & Kriekhaus 2008) or the characteristics of presidential systems (Dettrey & Schwindt-Bayer 2009). Scholars have recently recognised that this diverse body of findings falls short of producing generalisations. We have yet to sort out, for instance, the complex relationship that appears to exist between aggregate indicators of socioeconomic status and turnout (Blais 2006).

Remmer (2010) highlighted how political scale affects generalised trust levels, the density of networks, and thus voter turnout. Remmer complains that 'the sheer disparity of results among studies points to the failure of macro-level research to generate much cumulative knowledge about turnout' and 'the literature has converged around relatively commonsensical observations' about the effect of, for example, compulsory voter laws (Remmer 2010, p. 277).

The waters become more muddled when one compares the findings of comparative studies from different regions. If this muddiness is yet to occur in the study of turnout in African democracies, it is only because the inquiry is so new. Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) claim to offer the first substantial cross-national analysis of turnout in sub-Saharan Africa. They argue that many broader findings can be generalised to Africa, but that certain individual- and aggregate-level characteristics – age, media exposure, electoral formula and concurrence of elections – make a particularly large difference to turnout in the African context. Young (n.d.) finds that individual-level variables thought to predict turnout in the West 'take on a unique pattern of significance in Africa' (p. 26) and that many generalisations about voter turnout relate imperfectly to Africa.

Because most of the existing work has used data from elections in the West, more studies are needed to understand turnout and political participation generally in Africa's relatively new and often troubled democracies. The historical processes of state formation and institutional development in most African countries are so different from those in countries that generate most of the electoral data that populations in the newer states are bound to encounter different incentives, disincentives, rewards and obstacles to political participation, including voting. This paper has already suggested one such obstacle, language diversity. The rest of the paper is devoted to assessing the contention that language plays a role in facilitating or hindering electoral participation.

Language, clearly, is highly political. It has been a source of major debate in many countries. The Indian struggles over language politics are well documented (Dasgupta 1970, 2003). Europe is no stranger to the challenges of language

diversity, nor, of course, is the European Union (Pool 1996). Language connects to identity in important ways and can trigger often emotional and sometimes even violent responses. For instance, DeVotta (2004) identifies language decisions of the Sinhalese majority as a major cause of Sri Lanka's civil conflict.

There are two routes through which government's recognition or non-recognition of a particular language might affect the propensity for speakers of that language to participate in democratic politics. The first is identity. Language is often considered among the most important ethnic 'markers', and having one's language officially recognised and used (or not) is likely to carry a strong message regarding which groups are important, influential and valued within a given polity (Obeng & Adegbiya 1999). The second route is communication and information sharing. Language is critical to the conduct, operation and day-to-day functioning and survival of any representative democracy. To the extent that democracy depends on open communication among citizens, and their collective capacity to monitor their own government and hold it accountable for its actions, democracy also depends on shared linguistic codes (Albaugh 2014). Sociolinguist Moleleki (2003, p. 13) writes that democracy 'is inextricably bound up with language'. He argues that when government functions in a language not well understood by many citizens,

A situation arises where democracy is inverted. Instead of ideologies emanating from the rank and file, and representatives then being mandated to implement them, the contrary becomes true. The elite fashions the ideologies and throws them to the people in a language that is baffling to them. Without a clear understanding of the issues involved, the people, in turn, throw the ideology back at the elite without tinkering with it, in the raw state in which it came to them. Needless to say, it would be incorrect to speak of democracy as inclusive in such an instance (ibid.)

When it is difficult, inconvenient, laborious or frustrating for a citizen to access information about government, communicate to government, or receive and understand communications from it, the vital link between rulers and ruled is severed.

Fishman (1996) developed the concept of 'ethno-linguistic democracy', built on an inherent understanding of the interrelatedness of language and democracy. He writes that 'just as all people should be considered equal before the law, so all languages should somehow be considered equal as well' (p. 8). He acknowledges that language groups are seldom equal in political power, but in a 'moral universe'



members of less powerful language groups 'should be equally entitled to use their own language if they are so inclined, rather than necessarily expected to constantly show deference to some language associated with greater power' (ibid.).

Fishman ultimately defines ethno-linguistic democracy as 'the right of both parties in an interaction to use their own language and receive in their own language in return, regardless of the power or size differentials that distinguish between them' (ibid.). A polity is ethno-linguistically democratic to the extent that the right broadly applies to all citizens. Much of the world, certainly the developing world, is far from meeting this standard. Instead, a pattern of 'elite closure' predominates, as elites who owe advancement and position in part due to their knowledge of an ex-colonial language have every incentive to keep this linguistic passport to privilege out of reach of those they govern (Myers-Scotton 1990).

As far as political participation is concerned, one might expect groups whose mother tongue is not officially recognised or used by the state to have one of two reactions. On the one hand, they might find in their exclusion sufficient cause and motivation for substantial collective action or even ethnic violence. A lack of linguistic recognition by the state could, in other words, drive up levels of political participation for groups seeking more.

When groups' languages are clearly excluded (*de facto* proscribed in public life), as with ethnic Tamils in Sri Lanka under Sinhalese-only language policies, it stands to reason that such a slight could be a mobilising factor (DeVotta 2004). On the other hand, less overt linguistic exclusion might have the opposite effect. As Moleleki (2003) writes, citizens in a representative democracy who are linguistically isolated from government or from other groups of citizens are also politically isolated, and are more likely to be alienated from a system that depends on peaceful contestation and debate through shared languages. Laitin (2001) has argued that for a variety of strategic reasons, language grievances are associated with lower levels of collective action on the part of aggrieved groups.

It was beyond the scope of this research to interrogate the relationship between language grievances and group collective action, protest or rebellion. The study focused on participation at the voting booth – the most direct and routine way for citizens in democracies to enact their citizenship and hold governments accountable. Because the exercise of democracy depends on this voluntary participation, when government functions exclusively in a language that is not a group's mother tongue, individuals from that group may either lack access to the information necessary to perform the task of voting or, due to the sense of alienation from the political system (as described by Moleleki), find themselves lacking the interest or will to vote.

Could language policies adopted by governments ameliorate this isolation

and facilitate voter participation? Much theoretical work suggests that language policy should indeed help to shape political realities. Pool (1990) has written that *language* regimes – formal rules and informal norms that govern the use of language in the public sphere – constrain and influence *political* regimes. Language regimes that, to use Fishman's term, are relatively ethno-linguistically democratic might produce different outcomes for factors such as democratic participation. However, in political science it has been far more common to look at language regimes or policies as dependent variables (Laitin 1988, 1992, 1998; Liu 2011).

Generally, political science literature on language and politics neglects the role governments play in determining whether the linguistic playing field is level or provides access to some language groups at the expense of others. There is substantial variation globally in types of official language choices (some more inclusive than others) across democratic countries and sometimes within them (in states where subnational governments are empowered to make official language choices). However, there has been no effort to marshal empirical evidence to identify a relationship between official language choice and the process and outcomes of democratic politics in those countries.<sup>1</sup> Why should this be the case?

Comparative empirical research on the consequences of official language policy choices is hindered by the fact that most states in the world (with notable exceptions) make their main language policy decisions at national level. Research seeking to uncover patterns in the consequences of state choices through comparison can be clumsy. Because states' official language choices are tightly bundled with historical, cultural and economic forces, teasing out the effects of language choices is difficult in a study that uses 'the state' as the unit of analysis.

Furthermore, research on the consequences of language policy is slowed by many of the world's most multilingual states being part of the developing world – in other words, most of the states that are theoretically interesting and empirically important in this field. The developing world is notoriously less democratic than the advanced industrial world, and less-developed countries that have built and sustain democratic rule often lack reliable sources of empirical data. These realities make comparative research on the relationship between official language choice and democratic performance a formidable challenge.

One way to surmount this challenge and make official language policy recognition credible is to look at subnational variation within a single country. South Africa appears to be an ideal candidate for such an analysis.

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1 The work that comes closest to explicitly addressing these questions in political science is arguably David Laitin's. His *Identity in Formation* (1998) examines how language policies play a role in identity formation, rather than democratic participation, in the post-Soviet world.

## SOUTH AFRICA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGE REGIME

South Africa is a linguistically diverse country, in which an estimated 31 languages are spoken. Unlike in African states such as Tanzania, which was largely unified by the Swahili language under the leadership of Julius Nyerere, none of these 31 languages serves in practice as a *lingua franca* (Gordon 2004). English might seem a clear choice, but sociolinguistic research reveals that most South Africans might not understand the language well enough to use it for sophisticated purposes (Markdata 2001). The language that has the greatest number of mother-tongue speakers is Zulu (22%), but Zulu is not well understood by many other citizens (*ibid.*).

When South Africa made its lauded transition to democracy in 1994, it began a nearly three-year process of constitutional negotiation that led to the lengthy and progressive document adopted in 1996. The Constitution declared eleven languages – English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, Ndebele, Sotho, Pedi (Northern Sotho), Tswana, Venda and Tsonga – official languages of the new republic.<sup>2</sup> English and Afrikaans were retained as official languages and nine others, previously marginalised, were added. Together, these eleven languages account for the mother tongues of more than 97% of the South African population. Under apartheid, all languages other than English and Afrikaans were marginalised. The new Constitution laid the groundwork for a compensatory policy in which the linguistic human rights of all citizens would be respected and protected.

For many advocates of ethno-linguistic democracy in South Africa, celebration turned to frustration only a few years after 1996, when it became clear that implementing a language policy that acknowledged full and equal rights for eleven different language groups would not be easy (Makoni 2003; Webb 1999, 2000). The South African Languages Bill, legislation to begin the process of requiring local governments throughout the country to take concrete steps to accommodate the needs of non-English speakers, languished before Parliament.

Sociolinguists complained about the 'lack of political will' that kept things from moving forward (Webb 2002, p. 312). The Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB), a constitutional body established in 1995 to monitor language rights and function as a government watchdog on issues of language equality, proved toothless and ineffective (Perry 2004). Some scholars argued that democratic South Africa was, in some respects, even more 'English only' than it had been during apartheid (Maphalala 2000). The decision to name eleven languages as official and mandate their 'promotion' and 'protection' was an encouraging first step,

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2 I have used the English versions of these languages' names, not the indigenous versions.

but a mere decade after the end of apartheid, many people were concerned that this was only cheap talk (PANSALB Act 1995).

In South Africa, the story at national level may be one of general failure to pass laws and policies legally requiring government to take concrete steps to provide information in languages other than English. However, lower levels of government have, in certain regions, taken steps to make government accessible to non-English speakers by providing information in non-English languages and making government itself more multilingual. Each of the nine provinces has chosen a subset of the eleven official languages to serve as provincial languages, although the extent to which these choices are backed by the force of law varies. Likewise, a handful of municipalities have developed language policies, although the vast majority have not (Strydom & Pretorius 1999).

South Africa therefore exhibits rich internal variation that makes it, as sociolinguist Alexander (1989) writes, 'a social laboratory of the utmost importance for the future of Africa and the world.' There is internal variation in terms of the level of actual language diversity, with some areas being fairly homogenous linguistically and others diverse. There is also variation, because of the decentralised manner in which decisions on language policy are taken, in terms of language policy and how broadly or narrowly policies in different parts of the country recognise and utilise first languages.

### LANGUAGE POLICY AND VOTER TURNOUT IN THE PROVINCES

Despite South Africa's progressive, egalitarian constitutional position on language equality, many scholars have lamented that the principles in the Constitution were not paired with a strong legal framework for implementation (Webb 2002). This is true at national level, while at provincial and local level there is more variation.

Of South Africa's nine provinces, only a few have language policies naming official languages that have been passed as Bills, thus assuming the force of law. By 2005 each province had some form of language policy, Act or Bill at least under consideration, which named a subset of the eleven official languages as 'provincially' official. Those that were not formally considering such a Bill had, somewhere in writing, identified 'provincial languages' or 'languages of the province', even if they were not codified as official in the legal sense (see endnote on p. 159 for references).

There is murky variation across the nine provinces in terms of how well and to what extent principles are translated into practice. It is difficult to determine, for instance, whether the official recognition of a set of languages in a given province necessarily means that clear and decisive steps are taken there to make information and communication accessible to someone who speaks only one of the languages.

Even South Africa's constitutionally established PANSALB, charged with serving as a 'language watchdog' and monitoring implementation of multilingual policies across all levels of government, has limited information about the actual state of language policy development in the provinces. Nevertheless, the fact that all provinces had, by 2005, at least engaged in discussions about official languages gives at least a cursory sense of which languages are privileged and used by the government in each province. This is useful as a starting point for exploring the effect of official language choices on voter behaviour.

Table 1 lists the languages named in each of the nine provinces. Notably, all provinces continue to use the dual colonial languages, English and Afrikaans, as provincial languages. A striking diversity is also evident across the provinces in terms of additional languages chosen. While all provinces may not have formal codified language policies, a multilingual environment basically forces the choice of one or another language. Thus, all governments have at least an informal language policy, even if it manifests only as prevailing patterns of language use by citizens and government.

**Table 1**  
**Official languages in South Africa's nine provinces**

Province	Languages
Eastern Cape	English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Sotho
Free State	English, Afrikaans, Sotho, Xhosa
Gauteng	English, Afrikaans, Pedi, Zulu
Kwazulu-Natal	English, Afrikaans, Zulu
Limpopo	English, Afrikaans, Pedi, Venda, Tsonga, Ndebele
Mpumalanga	English, Afrikaans, Ndebele, Swazi
Northern Cape	English, Afrikaans, Tsonga, Xhosa
North West	English, Afrikaans, Tswana
Western Cape	English, Afrikaans, Xhosa

Source: see endnote on p. 159

The smallest geographical unit in South Africa for which data on voter turnout and language diversity are available is the municipal ward. South Africa is divided into 284 municipalities, 237 of which are local or metropolitan municipalities.<sup>3</sup> Each municipality in turn is divided into wards. These wards exist to facilitate

<sup>3</sup> The remaining 47 are 'district' municipalities, each of which contains a number of local ones. District municipalities are therefore higher levels of aggregation than local or metropolitan municipalities.

the mixed-member proportional system used in South African local elections, in which half the members of municipal legislatures are elected using a proportional representation (PR) system and the other half using plurality rules in single-member districts (wards). Using turnout data from the local elections of January 2006 and demographic and social data from the population census of 2001, I compiled a dataset of 3 846 South African wards.<sup>4</sup>

Does a relationship exist between language policies adopted by the nine provinces and voter turnout at ward level? Specifically, do wards where more voters are 'accommodated' by the language choices of their provincial governments show a higher voter turnout? A relatively simple statistical model, specified with important control variables, can test these research questions. An OLS regression model is estimated, in which voter turnout as a percentage is the dependent variable. The independent variable is the percentage of each ward's residents who speak one of the province's official languages as their mother tongue. If language choices that accommodate more citizens encourage and facilitate higher turnout, the mother-tongue variable should positively predict voter turnout.

Several variables are included as controls. Where possible, ward-level data are used. In other instances, data are aggregated at the level of municipality (the 237 geographical units in which several thousand wards are nested).<sup>5</sup> It is necessary to control for factors known generally, in Africa and elsewhere, as influencing turnout. The log of each ward's population is included in the model. The percentage of households in each ward receiving electricity, and the percentage of households in each ward with no source of income, are included to control for socioeconomic status. Ethno-linguistic diversity is controlled for in the model by using the ethno-linguistic fractionalisation index (ELF), defined here as the probability that any two randomly selected individuals in a ward will have different first languages. While the ELF measure is imperfect and controversial (Posner 2004), here it is used as a rough indicator of the degree of mother-tongue diversity in an area.<sup>6</sup> Mother-tongue diversity will likely be negatively related to the percentage of accommodated voters in each ward, since more diverse populations require more official languages to accommodate.

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4 Census data are collected and published by Statistics South Africa. The data that form the basis of following sections were collected in 2005, so although there have been elections since the January 2006 municipal elections, these turnout data were chosen to ensure temporal consistency.

5 A hierarchical random intercept model is estimated, since wards nested in municipalities should not be treated as completely independent observations (Steenbergen & Jones 2002).

6 The measure is controversial mainly because it assumes all ethnic cleavages recorded by the index are equally salient. Posner (2004) notes that this is not so, and proposes another measure that captures the 'political relevance' of groups within the diversity measure. For the current analysis (where the measure is not of great theoretical interest but is used as a control for interest's sake), the simple probability index will suffice.



Any measure of a province's official language choice should not simply reflect the level of pre-existing diversity in that province. A fractionalisation index for race group is included in addition to a fractionalisation index for language group. The race index reports the probability that any two randomly selected individuals in a ward will come from different race groups (using the four race groups reported in the South African census of 2001: 'white,' 'black,' 'coloured' and 'Indian'). While both indexes are measures of diversity, they measure two distinct but important aspects of diversity in South Africa. They have a very low statistical correlation ( $r=.039$ ).

The competitiveness of an election is known to be a factor that influences turnout, with more competitive elections drawing more voters. Hence, a municipal-level variable is included to account for the competitiveness of the proportional representation part of the 2006 local elections. It is relatively easy to quantify competitiveness in plurality elections simply by looking at the percentage of votes captured by the winner (Franklin 2004). Measuring competitiveness is less straightforward for proportional representation. I use the measure 'vote fractionalisation', a number between 0 and 1, defined as the probability that any two randomly selected voters in each municipality will have voted for different parties in the PR portion of the 2006 local elections. Higher scores represent a more dispersed pattern of votes and hence a more 'competitive' or uncertain election. The literature on comparative voter turnout suggests that higher vote fractionalisation scores should be associated with higher turnout.

A second, municipal-level control was educational level, another factor known to be associated with turnout. This municipal-level variable is included to account for the percentage of citizens in each municipality with no formal schooling. Finally, dummy variables for eight of South Africa's nine provinces are included to control for provincial effects that might influence voters to be more or less likely to vote. Local elections are not held concurrently with national and provincial elections in South Africa, but provincial political issues may nevertheless influence turnout rates across regions.

The model is estimated using a hierarchical structure (since the wards are clustered in municipalities), and each municipal grouping of wards is allowed to have a random intercept. For reference, summary statistics for all variables are reported in the Appendix. Coefficients for the hierarchical regression model discussed above are reported in Table 2.

The model provides preliminary evidence that the official language choices made by provincial governments may indeed affect voter turnout. The percentage of voters in a ward accommodated by the provincial language policy is positively related to turnout, at a high level of statistical certainty. Holding other variables' values constant, a ward where no voters have a provincial language as their



**Table 2**  
**Provincial language policy and voter turnout across all wards: Random intercept model**

Independent Variables	Voter Turnout
Population (logged)	.1960 (.3554)
% Homes Electrified	-4.336 *** (.4835)
% Homes w/ No Income	3.151 *** (.8343)
Racial Fractionalisation	-.0353 (.0488)
<i>Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalisation</i>	-8.282 *** (.7285)
<i>% Voters Accommodated by Provincial Language Selections</i>	.0331 *** (.0092)
Vote Fractionalisation (municipal level)	-6.055 * (2.686)
% Municipal Population w/ No Formal Schooling (municipal level)	3.581 (3.115)
[9 Dummy Variables for Provinces Included but Not Reported]	
Constant	52.82 *** (3.995)
N (wards) =	3 828
n (municipalities) =	230
Wald Chi-Squared (16 d.f.) =	660.52 ***

\*\*\* p<.001

\* p<.05

mother tongue would be expected to show a turnout of nearly 4% lower than a ward where all residents' first languages are recognised in the provincial policy. While the magnitude of the effect might not be large and a 4% difference in turnout levels may not seem politically important, the statistical certainty of the effect is of interest.

The electrification variable and the income variable are significant in directions that are predictable for South Africa. Other research has confirmed that wealthier neighbourhoods in South Africa are likely to have *lower* rather than higher turnout (Fauvelle-Aymar 2008). Similarly, the ethno-linguistic fractionalisation index for each ward is, unsurprisingly, negatively related to voter turnout. That is, even when the percentage of linguistically 'recognised' voters is held constant, more diversity results in lower voter turnout.

How governments respond to linguistic diversity is potentially an important part of the picture in understanding turnout, but further analysis is necessary. As noted above, it is difficult to determine the degree to which provinces actually gave 'teeth' to their putative selection of provincial languages when the 2006 local elections happened. Secondly, a simple alternative hypothesis could also explain the current study's results. Provincial governments, in selecting their provincial languages from the eleven national languages, are likely to choose those most commonly spoken in a province. If it is also the case that local majority groups are more likely to vote than local minority groups, then the relationship shown in the regression model can be explained without reference to language at all. I therefore supplemented the above analysis with a finer-grained examination of *local*-level language policy, using a purposive sampling method. I selected places where field research would provide information about the 'on-the-ground' implementation of language policies.

### THREE MUNICIPAL CASES: POLICY AND TURNOUT IN CAPE TOWN, MANGAUNG AND TSHWANE

The countrywide analysis was unable to highlight a clear causal relationship between governments' language choices and electoral turnout. This section addresses the issue by focusing on a small subset of 'outlier' (atypical) municipalities that were actively working on developing their own municipal language policies as early as 2005, when the vast majority of South Africa's often corrupt and ineffectual local governments were paying attention to anything but language issues (Strydom & Pretorius 1999).

The three municipalities shown in the map in Figure 1 were included in the analysis. They are Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality (Cape Town) in Western Cape, Mangaung Local Municipality in Free State, and Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (also called Pretoria) in Gauteng.

**Figure 1**  
**Cape Town, Mangaung, and Tshwane on a map of South African**



Base Map Source: [commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

Cape Town was among the first municipalities in South Africa to adopt a language policy, and its advantage in this regard stemmed from one important factor. In 2005 the municipality was translating its communications to the public – including newspaper advertisements, some signage and a newspaper ‘municipal page’ – into three languages. These were English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. Cape Town operated in the context of a supportive provincial government and its language policy had been formed by the old National Party government, which had considered the protection of Afrikaans a worthy priority. It was thus arguably easier for Cape Town to implement a multilingual policy than it was for most other cities in South Africa (Western Cape Provincial Language Committee 2004).

Mangaung municipality, home to the city of Bloemfontein in Free State, also proved an exception to the rule in South Africa by forging ahead with its own

municipal language policy. Mangaung benefited in the design and implementation of its language policy from the presence of a large, dedicated research group at the nearby University of Free State, which consulted with members of city government and helped to design surveys of the public to ascertain where the biggest language barriers were; steps were then taken to address and overcome such barriers (Pelser & Botes 2002).

Although Johannesburg and Tshwane, neighbouring cities in Gauteng, are both large and linguistically diverse urban centres, by 2005 only Tshwane was quickly moving toward a formalised policy. Tshwane had dedicated city personnel working on implementing a multilingual language policy. By 2005 it had begun to implement a language policy that used English, Afrikaans, Zulu and Pedi (Northern Sotho) as official languages of the municipality (Fritze 2005).<sup>7</sup> The Tshwane language office and the resources allocated to it were the envy of other municipal language offices countrywide. As of 2005, Tshwane's government was among the best in the country in terms of working to use all four official languages.

In short, Cape Town, Mangaung and Tshwane had each taken significant strides toward functional multilingualism by the time of the 2006 municipal elections. Hence it is possible to use the working languages of each of these municipalities to assess the degree to which citizens in each municipal ward had their home languages accommodated by the municipalities' selection of official or 'working' languages. Table 3 summarises languages in each of the municipalities.

The fact that all three municipalities are urban areas does not create problems for the study. First, the question at hand is whether language regimes influence participation across wards *within* these municipalities. It is the intra-municipal variation that is important, so as far as this analysis is concerned it does not matter if the three municipalities are not fully representative of all municipalities in the country.<sup>8</sup>

What makes these three wards useful for present purposes is not just that they developed and committed resources to making official choices about language, but that they were *outliers* in doing so. It is possible to use municipal-level language policies to address causality in a way that using provincial language policies could not. Specifically, one can compare populations living in municipalities that do have active language policies to similar populations living in municipalities without such policies.

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7 The final policy adopted by Tshwane (Pretoria) included Tsonga and Tswana as well. Because these two languages were not discussed when the 2006 local elections were held, only the four languages discussed in 2005 are used in the models presented here.

8 In terms of the most relevant characteristic – mean percentage of voter turnout – the three municipalities were fairly typical. Countrywide, mean voter turnout in the 2006 municipal elections was 50.81%. Cape Town had a higher turnout, at 56.5%. Mangaung was close to the national mean, at 50.67%. Tshwane was below the national mean, at 45.57%.

**Table 3**  
**Working languages of three 'outlier' municipalities in 2005**

Municipality	Languages
<b>Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality (Cape Town)</b>	English, Afrikaans, Xhosa
<b>Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (Tshwane)</b>	English, Afrikaans, Pedi, Zulu
<b>Mangaung Local Municipality (Bloemfontein)</b>	English, Afrikaans, Sotho

Source: see endnote on p. 159

Table 4 presents the results of two standard OLS regressions with 2006 local voter turnout as the dependent variable. The first of the two models predicts voter turnout only in the 224 constituent wards of Cape Town, Mangaung and Tshwane. It replicates the analysis presented earlier but uses wards only from the three selected municipalities. Since the earlier analysis using all South African wards revealed a relationship between official language choice and turnout, it would be surprising (and damaging for the argument) if this smaller model did not.

Control variables are almost identical to those in earlier models, with a few exceptions. First, no dummy variable for provinces is included. Instead, dummy variables for two of the three municipalities (Mangaung and Cape Town) are included in the model to control for municipal-level effects on voter turnout. Secondly, education data are not available at ward level. However, the three municipalities are all urban areas and education levels across the three are comparable. Electrification and lack of income (both as percentages of ward households) are again included to control for socioeconomic status. To control for competitiveness, the ward elections are used.

Local election voters in South Africa have both a PR party vote and a vote for an individual ward councillor elected by the plurality rule. The model includes the percentage of votes won by the winning candidate in the 2006 ward election (plurality rules). Higher values of this variable represent lower levels of electoral competitiveness. The preponderance of research on comparative voter turnout suggests that higher values of this variable are associated with lower values for turnout. The ethno-linguistic fractionalisation index and racial fractionalisation index remain in the model as controls. The percentage of ward voters accommodated by their municipality's official language choices is, of course, the independent variable of interest.

Table 4  
Language policy and voter turnout in selected municipalities: OLS regression

Independent Variables	Voter Turnout, 2006	Voter Turnout, 2006
	(Using only Wards from Cape Town, Mangaung and Tshwane)	(Using only Wards from Compari- son Municipalities)
Population (logged)	2.791 (1.884)	-3.063 *** (.5422)
Vote % of Winning Ward Candidate	.2641 *** (.0324)	.0551 ** (.0187)
% Homes Electrified	--.3792 (3.383)	-.2913 (1.339)
% Homes w / No Income	-12.74 ^ (7.233)	-.2110 (1.361)
Racial Fractionalisation	.1271 (3.236)	2.500 * (1.130)
Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalisation	.6323 (2.776)	-6.056 ** (1.951)
% Voters Accommodated by Municipal Official Language Selections	.0699 * (.0281)	-.0132 * (.0183)
Cape Town	7.058 *** (1.669)	–
Mangaung	5.699 ** (1.785)	–
Western Cape	–	6.314 *** (1.333)
Free State	–	.7948 (1.0334)
Constant	-7.337 (21.81)	73.75 *** (5.613)
N =	224	819
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =	.4193	.2975

\*\*\* p<.001  
 \*\* p<.01  
 \* p<.05  
 ^ p<.10



The results for the three municipalities with well-developed language policies in place by 2006 confirm the results from the larger model. This provides further evidence that the accommodation of linguistic diversity through language policy does have a positive, statistically significant effect on voter turnout. Apart from the dummy variables for some provinces, the only significant control variable is the one included to measure competitiveness; again, as in the previous model where a measure of vote fractionalisation was used, the results contradict common wisdom. In South Africa more competitive elections have the lowest public participation. This result, confirmed in other research (Fauvelle-Aymar 2008), is worth noting in its own right, as it represents an exception to a key principle in the current understanding of voter turnout.<sup>9</sup>

If left at that, the municipal analysis would be nothing more than a replication of the analysis presented in Table 2, but on a smaller scale, with questions of causality still unaddressed. How can one be certain that language policies are the cause of turnout – rather than the high turnout of certain groups leading to language policies that favour them?

One way to address this question would be to extend the analysis longitudinally. That is, one would expect that language policies enacted and implemented at a given point in time would help to predict turnout in subsequent elections, but not in prior elections as well. If a policy enacted at time  $t$  predicts voter turnout at time  $t-1$ , this obviously would undermine the validity of the presumed causal chain. Unfortunately, the young age of South Africa's democracy makes an assessment of this type difficult, since one need not go very far back to when its elections excluded more than 70% of the population.

Ideally, one should examine how turnout in different neighbourhoods increased or decreased over time as provinces or municipalities implemented and committed more resources to equitable linguistic practices. But the data on linguistic practices are too hazy and difficult to verify, especially to an extent that would permit longitudinal analysis. Furthermore, even if one wished to look back to the 2000 or 1995 local elections, the redrawing of municipal and ward boundaries in the interim makes it impossible to compare like geographic units. Thus a longitudinal strategy is unlikely to yield dividends.

It is possible, however, to adopt a cross-sectional approach that still addresses problems of causal inference. One can compare wards in the three selected municipalities with wards in all other municipalities in the same province. Most of those other wards have a similar ethno-linguistic makeup to the sample, but

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9 Fauvelle-Aymar, in her analysis of turnout across Johannesburg, attributes this anomaly to the dominant party system in South Africa and the resultant fact that many voters 'participate in order to demonstrate their right to vote and not really to make a political choice', because 'they do not have to think about the contestational consequences of their vote' (2008, p. 163).

none had well-developed language policies by 2006. If language policy has a causal effect on variation in political participation and not the other way around, the official language selection of municipalities having language policies should not have any effect on turnout in wards outside that municipality.

If this argument is valid, the language choices made by Cape Town should predict voter turnout only in Cape Town and not elsewhere. If the language choices of Cape Town, Mangaung or Pretoria predict voter turnout in other municipalities, even though we know those municipalities had no comparable policies, it would suggest the results so far are spurious.

The second model, shown in Table 4, analyses 819 comparison wards from Western Cape, Free State and Gauteng. These were substituted for the wards of Cape Town, Mangaung and Tshwane.<sup>10</sup> All other aspects of the model remained the same. As expected, the official languages of the three outlier municipalities do not have the same effect on turnout in neighbouring municipalities. A coefficient that was positive and statistically significant in the first model is now negative and statistically close to zero. This empirical exercise helps to address issues of causal primacy and causal direction. The results suggest that the official language selections of Cape Town, Mangaung and Tshwane may have some causal impact and that language recognition does indeed help to shape voter turnout patterns.

One might still argue that the analysis suffers from an endogeneity problem. That is, what if Cape Town, Mangaung and Tshwane have language policies only because the language groups in those areas were active in demanding such policies? If this were the case, it could be that politically involved groups shaped the language policies rather than language policies shaping patterns of group electoral involvement. The reality, however, is different. The push for language policy development in the three selected municipalities was exogenous to the populations meant to benefit from the language policies.

Cape Town benefited from the presence of a well-organised, wealthy and linguistically aggrieved Afrikaans-speaking community, and a provincial government committed to protecting cultural space for Afrikaners. These Afrikaans groups may not have been concerned about the linguistic rights of Xhosa speakers in the area, but their presence no doubt played a key role in ensuring that Cape Town pursued a formal multilingual policy.

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10 In a separate analysis not reported in the text above, the wards of Cape Town, Tshwane and Mangaung were replaced not by wards from other municipalities in the same province, but by wards drawn from adjacent municipalities that had similar profiles in terms of ethno-linguistic groups. In this unreported model, the coefficient for language accommodation in comparison wards was not statistically significant and was negatively signed.

Mangaung, by contrast, benefited from the attention of language activists, most of whom were academic linguists affiliated with the nearby University of Free State. Mangaung municipal officials began to realise the need for a multilingual policy in the early 2000s, but it was ultimately the Unit for Language Facilitation and Empowerment (ULFE) at the university that provided the city with the energy, organisation and drive it needed to move toward making multilingualism a reality (Pelser and Boates 2002). The ULFE was a multidisciplinary centre for academics who conducted research and advocacy on multilingual issues.

Tshwane's multilingual policy was also the result of top-down entrepreneurship rather than expressed citizens' demands. Here, too, academic language activists played a role in pushing the city toward a formal multilingual policy. During fieldwork conducted in 2005 (just before the January 2006 elections), linguists and language activists around the country lauded the innovative and tireless entrepreneurial efforts of the directors and staff at the city's dedicated language office. Many of them were trained linguists with a commitment to multilingualism.

In short, much of the energy behind language policy development, perhaps especially at the municipal level, came from sources other than the populations those language policies were being designed for. Because South Africa's linguistically progressive Constitution was of interest to so many sociolinguists and other language professionals, it is not surprising that much of the impetus and drive toward language policy development came from academic institutions. Although it would be erroneous to suggest that language policy development was an entirely exogenous process, it would also be incorrect to claim that Cape Town, Mangaung and Tshwane were further along in the language policy development process because their citizens were more vociferous in advocating multilingual language policies. Indeed, there is no reason to believe the citizens in these three 'outlier' municipalities were any different from citizens elsewhere in the country in their language attitudes and preferences. In the next section, the aggregate results are compared with findings at the individual level.

#### INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL DATA: AFROBAROMETER RESPONDENTS, MOTHER-TONGUE RECOGNITION AND VOTING

Despite the previous two analyses, a clear picture has not yet emerged of possible causal mechanisms that may underpin a relationship between government language choices and individual voting behaviour. This section presents a straightforward analysis of South African Afrobarometer data collected at around the time of the 2006 local elections. The aim was to determine whether individuals

whose home languages are recognised as official in their province of residence were more likely to vote than their 'unaccommodated' counterparts.

In the third round of the Afrobarometer survey in South Africa, 2 400 people were surveyed. Respondents were asked questions about various social, political and economic attitudes as well as basic demographic and personal information.

One question asks respondents whether they voted in the 2004 provincial and national elections. While the aggregate analysis discussed above relies on dependent variables based on the 2006 municipal elections, the Afrobarometer survey was administered just before the January 2006 municipal voting took place. The 2004 election was therefore the most recent election at the time the survey was administered. Because the survey includes questions identifying respondents' mother tongues and provinces of residence, it is possible to determine whether each respondent lived in a province that upheld his or her mother tongue as an official provincial language. Are these 'accommodated' citizens more likely to have voted?

Because all nine provinces recognise English and Afrikaans, all mother-tongue English and Afrikaans speakers would be considered 'accommodated' in the dataset. This is one reason that the results shown below include only respondents who identified an African (non-Afrikaans) language as their mother tongue. The second reason was that questions about the extent to which minority language recognition can improve voter turnout in South Africa clearly have the greatest resonance for the black population.

Table 5 presents two models, the first of which (A) is a probit model with a dichotomous (yes/no) dependent variable indicating whether a respondent reports voting in 2004. The independent variable is also dichotomous (yes/no), and indicates whether the respondent's mother tongue is accommodated in the province of residence. Several control variables are included. Sex, age, interest in politics (rated on a 4-point scale), and closeness to a political party (yes/no) are included.

Because education is such an important predictor of turnout decisions, three variables are included to capture respondents' education levels. One dichotomous variable indicates whether respondents have no formal schooling (about 5% of respondents) or any schooling. The other educational categories that are included in the model are 'primary education or less' and 'some high school or completed high school'. The category of 'more than high school' (less than 10% of the surveyed population) is excluded.

Dummy variables are included to control for province of residence. These are not reported in the table as they are of no real theoretical interest, and the analysis indicated no statistically significant results. Finally, Afrobarometer data include geographic locators that allow researchers to place respondents in their

**Table 5**  
**Linguistic accommodation and voting among black Afrobarometer**  
**respondents in 2005: logistic regression (odds ratios reported)**

Independent Variables	A	B
Male	.8508 (.1165)	.8439 (.1159)
Age	1.070 *** (.0072)	1.069 *** (.0071)
Linguistic Fractionalisation	1.321 (.4930)	1.335 (.4985)
Interest in Politics	1.277 *** (.0848)	1.287 *** (.0857)
Close to Political Party	2.156 *** (.3161)	2.162 *** (.318)
No Formal Schooling	.2699 *** (.1097)	.0999 *** (.0622)
Completed Primary Only	.4174 *** (.1145)	.4272 ** (.1172)
At Least Some High School	.5570 ** (.1268)	.5622 * (.1279)
Mother Tongue 'Official' in Province of Residence	.8666 (.1737)	.8010 (.1650)
<b>No Formal Schooling x Mother Tongue Official</b>	---	<b>4.197 * (3.017)</b>
Constant	.2049 *** (.1009)	.2189 ** (.1083)
N =	1551	1551
Pseudo R-Squared =	.1414	.1438

\*\*\* p<.001

\*\* p<.01

\* p<.05

Included but Not Reported  
Controls for Provinces

respective municipalities. So, as in the aggregate models discussed above, the ethno-linguistic fractionalisation index for each respondent's municipality is included as a contextual variable, to control for the diversity in the respondent's linguistic environment.

Due to the inclusion of this municipal-level variable, the models estimated in Table 5 must account for the hierarchical structure of the data. Since respondents are grouped by municipality, a random intercept model was estimated. Because a likelihood ratio test suggested there was no meaningful difference between a random intercept model and a standard logistic regression, and because the results were the same in both specifications, a standard logistic regression with odds ratios is reported below for ease of interpretation. Odds ratios are an intuitive way to express the effect of an independent variable on the odds of the dichotomous dependent variable – in this case, the decision to vote – occurring.

Model A shows little that is unexpected in the South African context. Older South Africans are more likely to vote, with each additional year of age increasing the odds of voting by about 5%. The same is true for those who are interested in politics or are close to a political party. The results related to education are also not surprising. Consistent with most cross-national research (Blais 2006), South Africans are more likely to vote at higher education levels; the results in model A reflect this trend. The model also shows, however, that being linguistically 'accommodated' by one's provincial government has no discernible effect on voting participation.

While these results seem to contradict the earlier findings, and could be seen as a blow to the hypothesis that governmental language recognition affects political participation, the test in model A neglects the reality of multilingualism in South Africa. Specifically, the model fails to account for the reality of *plurilingualism*. Most South Africans are able to speak and understand more than one language. Knowing a person's 'mother tongue', then, tells us little about the full repertoire of languages he or she can utilise. Because many people, especially educated individuals, speak languages beyond their mother tongue, language recognition policies should have the greatest effect on individuals who have the *least* access to languages beyond their mother tongue. In other words, an educated Zulu speaker who is fluent in several additional languages – including, likely, English – would be less affected by whether or not his or her province recognises Zulu compared with someone for whom Zulu is the primary means of information exchange. For the latter person, language might also perhaps be an important building block of individual identity.

The Afrobarometer survey regrettably lacks questions to probe individual language repertoires beyond a self-reported mother tongue. Hence it is not possible to be sure which respondents could utilise English or other South African



languages. There is no direct way, therefore, to estimate a respondent's personal language repertoire. One variable already in the model, however, is likely to correlate strongly with *smaller* language repertoires. South Africans with no formal schooling and non-English mother tongues are less likely than those who have experienced some formal schooling (even at the lower levels) to have gained meaningful exposure to English – the language of the country's 'high politics'. This is particularly true since public education in South Africa does not switch to 'English only' until the third year of primary school.

Model B differs from model A only in that it includes an interaction term, in which the variable for 'no formal schooling' and the variable for 'accommodation' under the province's language regime are multiplied. Model A shows there is no significant evidence that living in a province that does not use the respondent's mother tongue makes him or her less likely to vote. Model B examines the proposition that such an effect might be found only for individuals who have had little to no formal schooling. Individuals with limited access to English would be most deeply affected by government decisions about which indigenous languages to recognise and/or utilise. A regular logistic regression is estimated and odds ratios reported for ease of interpretation.

After estimating the model, the interaction term in model B is positively signed and statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Overall, individuals with no formal schooling are much less likely to vote than more educated individuals. Indeed, the model suggests South Africans with no formal schooling are only about 10% as likely to vote as South Africans who have received at least some primary education.

While the language choices of provincial governments do not necessarily matter for all South Africans, the odds ratio attached to the interaction term in this model suggests that uneducated individuals living in provinces that recognise their mother tongue are about *four times* as likely to vote as uneducated individuals living in provinces that do not recognise their mother tongues. Even though the rate at which uneducated voters turn out is low across the board, the language effect is significant. In short, the model suggests that provincial language choices do matter for a small class of individuals: those without any formal education and, therefore, those unlikely to have come into extensive contact with English.

Despite this fascinating result, it is important to remember that the test offered in model B relies on an indirect or proxy measure for estimating the language repertoires of respondents. Even so, the finding is consistent with the notion that one's propensity and ability to participate meaningfully in democratic politics may be tied to the ability to comprehend and feel connected to the languages in which those politics unfold.



## CONCLUSION

The findings presented in this analysis of official language choice and voter turnout in South Africa are of interest not only to students of South African politics, but also to scholars interested in understanding political participation more generally. South Africa is a good example of an African country in which language diversity and language barriers are common. Furthermore, this analysis is only the tip of an iceberg that encompasses broader questions about the politics of ethno-linguistic diversity, democracy, and the processes of democratisation and consolidation in the linguistically diverse world.

The study's importance can be summarised in two central statements. First, the results suggest that the choices governments make about language can make a difference to democratic participation. Because the dependent variables here were limited to measures of turnout at formal elections, this finding should be of interest to those who seek to generalise about comparative voter turnout, especially in the hope of developing generalisations applicable to the so-called Third World.

All governments adopt language policies, even if those policies are not formally codified or written down. To use language, which governments must do in order to govern, is to choose language. More voters turn out to vote if their home languages are linguistically accommodated by the official language choices of the provincial or municipal government, regardless of the region's linguistic diversity and many other factors. The evidence suggests that the selection, recognition and use of minority languages matters to turnout in linguistically diverse states.

Secondly, while this paper focuses on the relationship between a particular measure of political participation (voter turnout) and a particular type of language policy (official language choice), the study identified a broader area where the science of comparative politics could benefit from further and more focused inquiry. What is the role of language in facilitating democracy? Democracies depend on open, public and peaceful contestation. In a democratic society such as South Africa – and most of the post-colonial world where citizens have highly variegated language repertoires, many of which do not include the ex-colonial language – it can be hard to imagine this kind of open, inclusive contestation.

Political scientists interested in the democratisation of political regimes should also be interested in the democratisation of language regimes. Political scientists have worked for years to understand the role of structure and process in guiding political transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, but only a handful have considered the process that might influence changes in the rules about language.

As a corollary, we should devote more focused attention to analysing the nuts and bolts of how democracy might work differently under conditions of

linguistic diversity. How does language affect partisanship, voting behaviour, or the behaviour of office-seeking elites during political campaigns? Theorising on subjects such as these is rare in our discipline, but the results presented here suggest the answers could be interesting and important. Given the high level of linguistic diversity in the developing and still democratising world, understanding the political consequences of language barriers will become increasingly important. Even in the United States, where a rapidly growing population of non-English mother-tongue speakers will play an important role in shaping the future, questions about democratic governance and language difference will become increasingly relevant.

Although South Africa is set apart from the rest of the African continent and, indeed, many other developing countries by a number of factors, the linguistic divide between rulers and ruled in South Africa parallels that seen throughout much of the developing world. There is no apparent reason to suspect that core findings about the relationship between language diversity and turnout, or the effect of the intervention of language policy, are not generalisable to other countries. Certainly, a study of this kind has limitations that can and should be addressed in other studies. The first two sections rely on aggregate data and, because of well-known problems of ecological inference, can only hint at individual-level causal mechanisms and cannot claim to directly test them (Robinson 1950).

More detailed individual-level research on these questions would require, at the least, survey instruments with more detailed items to probe an individual's language abilities and habits than are currently available. None the less, the findings from this cross-sectional study are highly suggestive that language, language policy and political participation are intertwined in important and interesting ways.

The contention is certainly not that participating in democratic governance is limited to merely casting a vote, nor that mother-tongue diversity necessarily or always leads to language barriers, nor that 'language policy' is as simple as declaring official languages. More research is needed to explore the multitude of nuances that questions about language and democracy entail, and to address the limitations inherent in a study of this kind. What this study does suggest is that the choices governments make about language recognition and language use may have important consequences for democratic governance, in ways that have not been adequately explored.

We have much to learn about how language regimes and political regimes shape and constrain one another. This study suggests strongly that a research programme of this nature would be worthwhile. In places such as Africa, the use and recognition of multiple non-European languages may help broaden political

participation, enrich citizens' feelings of belonging, and advance – in however small a way – the democratic ideal.

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APPENDIX  
Summary statistics for variables included in the analyses

**Ward level variables (n=3829)**

Variable	Median	Mean	S.D.
Turnout (%) in 2006 Local Elections	50.07	49.67	9.33
Population (natural log)	9.10	9.17	.567
Households Electrified (%)	75.19	65.92	31.25
Households with No Income (%)	25.71	25.31	16.52
Racial Fractionalisation (0-1)	.011	.069	.194
Linguistic Fractionalisation (0-1)	.245	.304	.265
Population Accommodated by Provincial Language Choices	97.6	84.69	25.23

**Municipal level variables (n=232)**

Variable	Median	Mean	S.D.
Vote Fractionalisation (0-1)	.444	.425	.131
Population with No Formal Education (%)	24.36	24.66%	12.19

**Individual level variables for Afrobarometer respondents with mother-tongue other than English or Afrikaans (n=1551)**

Variable	Median	Mean	S.D.
Male (1=yes, 0=no)	.5	.5	.5
Age (in years)	37	39.38	15.33
Interest in Politics (0-3)	2	1.76	1.06
Close to Party? (1=yes, 0=no)	1	.63	.48
No Formal Education (1=yes, 0=no)	0	.05	.22
Primary Education Only (1=yes, 0=no)	0	.21	.41
High School Education (1=yes, 0=no)	1	.57	.49
Province Recognises My Mother Tongue? (1=yes, 0=no)	1	.85	.36



# NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC (1999-2015) AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES:

How long can Patronage or 'Politics of the Belly' Last?

*Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju, PhD*

Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju is a senior lecturer in the  
Department of Political Science at the University of  
Ibadan, Nigeria  
email: aswaj2003@yahoo.com

## ABSTRACT

*The relationship between elections and the vitality of a democratic society is clear. Elections have proven to be the best means of strengthening the mandate of a performing administration or removing a non-performing one. This paper argues, however, that the outcomes of several elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic have proved contrary to the common trend in most advanced democratic systems, in which electoral outcomes are based on performance. While in some cases, especially in political party primaries, candidates with little or no democratic credentials have emerged during general elections, in other instances administrations with relatively high records of infrastructural development have been voted out. This study traces the most probable causes of this paradox to Nigeria's money politics and a possible misinterpretation of the concept of development. It is essentially a literature-based study, descriptive but also analytical. The paper concludes that the country will have to contend with the politics of underdevelopment for as long as immediate and pecuniary benefits constitute the expectation of the generality of followers.*

**Keywords:** electoral outcomes, patronage politics, stomach infrastructure, development, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Elections are among the most ubiquitous phenomena in many parts of the contemporary world, particularly in political systems that have embraced competitive politics. In light of this, it is widely held that the linkage between elections and democracy is clear; so far, no better method has been found for selecting the leadership of a democratically governed society (Ogunsanwo 2003, p. 11). Similarly, it is notable that the emergence of democracy as the 'most preferred form of government' is partly linked to 'the power that periodic and credible elections give the electorate to determine who will rule over them' (Iwayemi 2014, p. 1). Thus elections should ideally provide an opportunity to make yesterday's winners today's losers and vice-versa (Jinadu 1997, p. 1).

In their ideal form as described above, in which ordinary people matter, elections therefore make it possible for the electorate – especially commoners – to participate in the selection of their representatives and those who govern them. In addition, elections should help to limit the scope of politicians, other elected officials, and political appointees who might want to give great weight to narrow private interests (Bates 2008, p. 348-390; Iwayemi 2014, p. 1; Lewis 2006, p. 8).

It is arguable, therefore, that elections in which performance and political accountability are considered provide the best mechanism for inducing 'elected politicians to govern in the public interest' (Iwayemi 2014, p. 1).

To what extent has Nigeria's Fourth Republic conformed to this theory, particularly in terms of electoral outcomes? The main motivation for this question is those paradoxical instances of aspirants with relatively higher democratic credentials losing to aspirants with lower credentials in primary elections, and administrations with relatively strong evidence of infrastructural development being removed – while others with little or no evidence of such development are retained in general elections. There are also cases where administrations generally regarded as having performed well have struggled to be re-elected.

In the case of an aspirant with relatively higher democratic credentials losing in a primary election to an aspirant with lesser credentials, I found the 1999 presidential primaries of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) useful for illustration. Against general expectations among the party's founding fathers, General Olusegun Obasanjo, a military former head of state, defeated Dr Alex Ekwueme, the Second Republic's vice-president. To illustrate other instances of administrations with relatively high levels of attainment, especially in terms of physical and infrastructural development, either not being re-elected or struggling for re-election, I selected Osun, Ekiti and Lagos states in the 2003, 2014 and 2015 governorship elections, respectively.

In all of these, the core issue of interest is the probable connection between the electoral outcomes and patronage, or politics of the belly – described in the contemporary political lexicon of Nigeria as ‘stomach infrastructure’ (Iwayemi 2014). Obviously, this warrants some pertinent questions. For example, in line with the general notion of the fundamental difference between economic growth and development, what factors should be regarded as the basis for running government in the public interest in Nigeria? Usually these factors are the building of physical infrastructure that is supposed to enhance ultimate development, or patronage in the form of occasional sharing of money, food items and other materials.

In other words, how important are economic factors in voters’ decisions? To what extent have high poverty and illiteracy levels, particularly since the days of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and other similar economic programmes, affected the voting behaviour of ordinary Nigerians – and, on the other hand, the opportunistic behavior of many of the country’s political elites? How and where did core community values such as integrity, hard work and accountability, among others, get so badly eroded?

Are there correlations between Nigeria’s identity, clientele and prebendal politics, the general notion of a supposedly welfaristic state, and recent electoral outcomes? This question is particularly relevant to electoral outcomes that seemed to have favoured ‘big spenders’ or ‘highest bidders’. How long can or should the current system, which is clearly not fully altruistic, public-spirited, or – in a real sense – development-oriented, be sustained? These questions and other similar ones will shape the direction and focus of this paper.

The rest of the paper is divided into four sections: conceptual prologue, theoretical explanations on elections and politics of the belly in Nigeria, selected cases, and the conclusion.

### *Conceptual Prologue*

By way of consolidating the content of the introductory section of the paper, I devote this section to explaining some basic concepts that are germane to a deep understanding of the paper’s subject matter. These concepts include elections, electoral outcomes, and patronage or politics of the belly. Although I never intended to construct universal definitions for these terms, I will attempt to offer explanations that should be useful for the purpose of this paper.

In broad terms, elections refer to ‘the process of elite selection by the mass of population in any given political system’ (Anifowose 2003, p. 21). Although Birch (1972) and a host of other prominent scholars have debated the nature of representation, a point of consensus is that the representation process is intrinsically linked to elections and voting.

The concept of political representation is implicit in the very idea of constitutional government, and elections are essential to the functioning of a truly representative government. In other words, at the centre of the democratic idea of representation is the notion of participation, which describes the extent to which individual members of society share or become politically involved in the life of that society. Thus democracy cannot be conceived, whether in theory or created in practice, without the creation, recognition, encouragement and expansion of opportunities to participate – especially through elections (Agbaje 1999; Anifowose 2003, p. 21).

New democracies, such as Nigeria, face an immediate challenge of survival as governments 'struggle to maintain constitutional rule and electoral processes that are threatened by conflicts, military coups, or aspiring dictators waiting in the wings' (Lewis 2006, p. 10). In addition, *all* democracies are confronted by several other important tasks. These include 'broadening personal freedoms; encouraging genuine political participation; promoting the accountability of leaders; resolving conflicts; advancing a general rule of law; and building efficient and effective public institutions' (ibid.).

Added to these challenges is the uphill task, particularly in societies such as Nigeria and others with long encounters with military rule and abuse of office generally, of achieving quick economic advancement, prosperity and general economic wellbeing for ordinary citizens, through democracy. In many ways, elections constitute a crucial factor in meeting almost all these challenges, by creating regular channels for political competition and opportunities for citizens to evaluate and change leaders.

Elections do not have a single universal character, just as they are neither simple mechanisms of public accountability nor a means of ensuring total political control (as I will analyse later, in the case of Nigeria's Fourth Republic). However, elections represent a 'two-way street' of political communication, especially in providing the government and the people – the elite and the masses – with the opportunity to influence one another. In this regard, the central functions of elections may be summarised as follows:

- Recruiting politicians and public decision-makers
- Providing representation
- Influencing policy decisions
- Educating voters
- Building legitimacy
- Strengthening elites
- Providing succession in leadership
- Extension of participation to many people

(Anifowose 2003, p. 24).

With reference to this list, I should note that elections provide essential validation for democracy by increasing the confidence of individual citizens in their ability to participate meaningfully in public life. In other words, when the majority of people feel that their personal interest in politics and their engagement in elections make a difference, and citizens share feelings of personal political efficacy, they are more likely to value the democratic system (Lewis 2006). Invariably this enhances the vitality of the system and increases the probability of sustainable development.

For the purpose of this paper, I have chosen to define electoral outcomes simply as the result and probable consequences of an electoral exercise. This could also mean the decision of the electorate in an election, which is often based on the fears or hopes of voters. Is that decision, for instance, based on some altruistic purpose such as accountability, competence and good governance, or on particular self-serving, clientelistic and prebendal interests?

On a more general note, it may be useful to ask the question: Do elections decide or shape policy direction and outputs in contemporary Nigeria? Obviously elections alone do not decide policies, because they are not referendums but rather a method of choosing candidates or parties.

While elections or electoral outcomes should ideally enable a democratic society to translate the preferences of its citizens into wise policies, they do not, in reality, always produce such results. The opinions of Magstadt and Schotten (1988, p. 10) and Anifowose (2003, p. 27) on the inherent limitations of elections as vehicles of public choice are useful in this regard. These authors noted that

- Candidates might find they cannot carry out their promises once elected to office. Certain pledges might prove impossible to implement, either because candidates deliberately overstated what could be accomplished or because they simply underestimated the forces of resistance.
- After being elected to office, a candidate might simply have a change of heart about the desirability or feasibility of a policy. The influence of new interest groups, exposure to more and better information, or the realisation of the intricate relationship between various domestic and foreign policies can have a profound influence on a newly elected official.

All of these issues, depending on the capacity of the incumbent office-holder to manage them, will also affect the outcomes of subsequent elections.

Finally, on the conceptualisation of key terms in the paper, I take the liberty to explain the concept of patronage politics in line with several extant explanations on related issues, such as oligarchy, *bossism*, machine politics, and several other terms.

All these terms describe the activities of individuals with strong personalities, who command personal loyalties and may use corrupt inducements to gain or retain power for themselves or others (Leeds 1981, p. 139; Michels 1915).

Although this phenomenon and related ones – such as clientele and prebendal politics, and patrimonial rule – are often associated with Nigeria and other countries in the less developed world, it should be noted that until the 1970s bossism still characterised the political activities of then mayor Richard Daley of Chicago (USA). Daley controlled many city appointments and was re-elected for a fifth term in 1971 (Leeds 1981). His accomplishment was, however, generally regarded as exceptional in the United States at the time.

To my knowledge, the expression ‘politics of the belly’ was popularised by Francois Bayart in his 1993 publication *The state in Africa: the politics of the belly*. This work could, however, be regarded as an adaptation of several prominent scholarly works produced before it, all related to the abuse of official privileges and the personalisation of the state and its institutions in many parts of Africa. It is, for instance, in this sense that the understanding of governance and politics in Africa is generally argued to be devoid of the pursuit of public interest or service. Rather, it entails the pursuit of private ends.

Similarly, Williams (1980) cited Nigeria as an instance in Africa where a narrow conception of politics, one that reduces politics to the contest for political office and its spoils, largely exists. It is also in this sense that Dudley (1975) notes that politics in Nigeria ‘is not about alternative policies but about the control over men and resources’ (cited in Okunade 2008, p. 20).

The introduction to the 1979 Nigerian Draft Constitution declared that the ‘preoccupation with power and its material benefits’ was a major interest, and that political ideals ‘as to how society can be organized and ruled to the best advantage of all, hardly enter into the calculation of the Nigerian ruling class’ (cited in Okunade 2008, p. 20).

I now turn to the next section of the paper, in which an attempt is made to offer theoretical explanations of elections, electoral outcomes, and the politics of the belly in Nigeria.

## THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS ON ELECTIONS AND POLITICS OF THE BELLY IN NIGERIA

How best can Nigeria’s political society be conceptualised? Stretched a bit further, this question can read: What is the best theoretical framework to analyse the political economy of democratic elections and their outcomes in Nigeria?

Several scholars have analysed Nigeria’s politics with emphasis on the activities of the dominant class and, in particular, its consumerist behaviour patterns (Joseph 1987). Others find the ‘loyalties’ of Nigerians to linguistic,



regional and ethnic groups to be so prevalent and salient to political life that they make these sentiments the main focus of their analyses. While Sklar (1965), Nnoli (1978) and Kasfir (1979), among others, adopted and profoundly advanced the arguments on ethnic politics and the politicisation of ethnicity, the seminal essay by Ekeh (1975) on the concept of the 'two publics' remains a classic.

A third set of scholars prefers to look beyond the internal dynamics of the Nigerian society, and emphasises 'the dependent nature of the country's political economy, treating domestic politics as subordinate to the activities of external forces and agents' (Joseph 1987, p. 45). Yet, borrowing from the principal-agent model that has a wide range of applications in the field of economics, political science and beyond (Olopoenia 1998, p. 20; Besley 2006), others apply the theory of incentives and strategic behaviour to explain the political economy of democratic elections in Nigeria.

These apart, several studies during colonial rule, in the immediate post-independence years and, to a lesser extent, many years after, have emphasised the colonial origins of the modern state of Nigeria. Such studies also examine the effects of colonialism on almost all facets of life, including competitive elections and other processes in which individuals aspire to hold sensitive public offices. In other words, the colonially contrived state was generally regarded as an alien structure, good only for exploitation by indigenous officials for the benefit of their primordial communities.

Other scholarly efforts have adopted the classic Weberian explanation of the dangers of patrimonial tendencies in modern political administration to advance the neo-patrimonial model of analysis. This model is found, for instance, in the efforts of Weber (1978), Clapham (1985), Ergas (1987), Callaghy (1987), Theobald (1990) and Ikpe (2005), among others, to show how beneath the layers of administration, legal procedures and constitutional order inherited from the colonial state, neo-patrimonial administrative states have been organised 'through an array of personal linkages and patron-client networks' (Ikpe 2005, p. 13). In these regimes, power is concentrated and personalised, and rulers have broad discretion over almost all aspects of public life – including democratic elections, which are either outright rigged or whose outcomes are determined by inducement of voters. There can, however, be occasional changes in voting behaviour and patterns, just as Nigeria witnessed in its 2015 presidential election.

At this point I should note the interconnections between these theoretical frameworks and clientelism as well as prebendalism, the latter which Joseph (1987) popularised in Nigeria. In other words, neo-patrimonialism, clientelism and prebendalism produce similar consequences in any political system where they thrive.

In Nigeria, as in other similar examples, the personal prerogatives of rulers typically override the rule of law and organisations, giving rise to weak and



unstable institutions. It should be noted, however, that in addition to other peculiarities of military rule there are great tendencies for neo-patrimonialism, clientelism and prebendalism to worsen under it.

The foregoing gamut of theoretical explanations is supplemented by others, such as the theory of 'state capture'. The World Bank (2000) used this model to analyse the activities of weak, sensitive public institutions under 'individuals who are egoistic, rational and prone to the pursuit of self-centred goals' (Olopoenia 1998, p. 16).

I have found it apposite to adopt an eclectic framework of analysis in this paper. It combines profound explanations of the effects of the colonial beginning of Nigeria, the politicisation of ethnicity, leadership failure across the civil-military political cycles, inconsistent followership, and the exploitation of the dark sides of governmental powers by people saddled with the performance of the basic functions of government. The paper also focuses on the manipulation of certain cultural elements, particularly in the traditional patrimonial system (which, incidentally, had its own 'safety valves'), and on the abuse of the culture of gift-giving among almost all ethnic and tribal groups in the country.

The eclectic framework also emphasises the inherent dangers in the possible trivialisation of the politics of 'stomach infrastructure' or politics of the belly. Such politics were popularised in Ekiti State during the 2014 governorship election, and appear to have enjoyed widespread acceptability less than a year later. Take for instance Adedayo (2015, p. 29), who is of the opinion that although this brand of politics is described in some quarters as *jejune*, un-intellectual and elementary, the Ekiti people – as reflected in their voting pattern in the 2015 general elections – seem to say it is what they want. In a way, such politics might become desirable in other parts of the country before long.

But can it be sustained, and for how long? Can it be regarded partly as an affirmation of the assertion by Jeremy Bentham, British philosopher and jurist, who said that government is government only if it seeks the happiness and good of the greatest number of citizens? In view of the probability that most beneficiaries of this brand of politics are acolytes and praise singers, is this not a continuation of the sycophantic followership – which coincided with the high levels of poverty and despondency under General Ibrahim Babangida, and which the Fourth Republic inherited?

Finally, I quote from a section of the inaugural speech of President George Bush of the United States in 1989, in which he alluded to the need for a refinement of the old ways of dealing with issues of governance, jurisdiction and even economy. He said, 'We can't turn back the clocks... but when our fathers were young... our differences ended at the water's edge'. In light of this sentiment, is it not necessary to reconsider certain humane qualities and values, especially in

terms of the welfare of the ordinary people, in our bid to attain developmental goals in Nigeria?

I will attempt to address these questions in my explanations of the selected cases that are analysed in the next section of the paper.

#### SELECTED CASES: PDP'S FIRST PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES AND OTHER ELECTORAL EXERCISES

To start with, the list of my selected cases is made up of the PDP's first presidential primaries in 1999, the Ekiti State 2014 governorship election and the outcome of the 2015 general elections there, and the 2014 and 2015 governorship elections in Osun and Lagos States respectively. A minor reference will also be made to the outcome of the 2003 governorship election in Osun State.

##### *PDP's First Presidential Primaries*

I consider it logical to commence the analysis of the PDP's presidential primaries in 1999 with a critical examination of the Abubakar transition programme, which paved the way for the reintroduction of civil rule that gave birth to the Fourth Republic. The programme brought out one of the points made in the comparative literature about most transitions from authoritarian rule being 'pacted affairs' (Adekanye 2014). This involves arrangements 'for power transfer negotiated by cartels of elite group interests, be they ethnic, social class-based or both' (ibid.).

The Nigerian example, in this case, was uniquely characterised by the ethnic factor, in which the then Abdulsalami Abubakar military regime needed to address the logjam in the aftermath of the annulled 12 June 1993 presidential election results, by ensuring that a particular geographical zone presented the next president of Nigeria in the 1999 elections. What is probably unique about this agenda was the preponderant influence of a special class of retired military generals, 'acting no doubt in concert with other dominant elites particularly from the "far" North and probably under some prodding from certain Western powers' (Adekanye 2014, p. 164).

As reported in *The Guardian* newspaper on 5 October 1998, the decision to adopt a particular candidate was probably thought out and formulated at the private luncheon parley held by General Abubakar with most of the country's former military heads of state, top retired generals and former police chiefs. This lunch was held on Saturday 3 October 1998.

The only two ex-military heads of state reported to have been conspicuously absent from that meeting were retired Generals Olusegun Obasanjo and Muhammadu Buhari. Although no explanation was provided as to why the

two did not attend, the unfolding events, particularly Obasanjo's subsequent declaration of interest in the presidency – an action which appeared to many discerning minds as an end product of pressure – revealed that Obasanjo had not been invited. Similarly, subsequent events revealed that General Buhari either turned down the invitation or was not invited because of his longstanding character, which abhors corruption and corrupt tendencies.

Thus, in line with the focus of this paper on patronage politics and politics of the stomach, it did not take too long to know that Obasanjo would most probably defeat his most formidable opponent in the presidential primaries, Dr Alex Ekwueme, who was vice-president in the Second Republic and one of the most prominent founders of the PDP. In my view, apart from the fact that Ekwueme's place of origin – Anambra State, south-east of Nigeria – was not favoured by the then military's political calculation, which zoned the presidency to the south-west, the financial capability of the supporters of the two aspirants made a huge difference.

Ekwueme probably enjoyed the financial and moral support of such 'old political horses' as Adamu Ciroma, Abubakar Rimi, Bamanga Tukur and Solomon Lar, as well as relatively younger people such as Jerry Gana and Sule Lamido, all of whom were not only democratic enthusiasts but also part of the PDP's formation. However, powerful financiers, especially notable retired generals such as TY Danjuma, Ali Mohammadu Gusau, Mohammadu Wushishi and IB Babangida, supported Obasanjo and, subsequently, the PDP's presidential campaign in the 1999 election (Adekanye 2014).

Thus it was perhaps not accidental that Obasanjo and his PDP won the presidency and an overwhelming majority of seats in the National Assembly, as well as more than half the 36 state government seats. That was in spite of the accord between the then All People's Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD), in which Olu Falae, a prominent Yoruba from the south-west (like Obasanjo) and Umaru Shinkafi were presented as presidential and vice-presidential candidates respectively.

Before rounding off on the connection between the Abubakar transition, the election of Obasanjo in 1999, and Nigeria's politics of the belly, the influence of some of those dominant interests behind the political scene should be noted. This is particularly true of the exclusionary character (*a la* social closure, see Parkin 1982) of inputs into the end product. What the involvement of those dominant elite interests signalled was that 'Obasanjo's rise to civilian presidency could scarcely be regarded as having marked the end of the democratic struggle', but just its beginning – and 'a necessary one at that' (Adekanye 2014, p. 164).

An important implication of this kind of democratic transition, which Adekanye (2014) likens to Latin America's *democraduras*, is the supposed goal of

a struggle to broaden and deepen the stakes and interests in such a way that they become more inclusive and sustainable with the passage of time. Judging by the outcomes of almost all the primaries in Nigeria's 16-year-old democratisation, the country's 'experiment' is still significantly unlike Latin America's democraduras. This, for instance, was exemplified by the PDP's 2014 presidential primaries in which all other aspirants, except President Goodluck Jonathan, were tactically prevented from participating.

Even in the primaries of the All Progressives Congress (APC), it is hardly possible to argue that Buhari's personal attributes of honesty, doggedness and dutifulness alone, excluding the financial muscle of some backers and supporters, won him the overwhelming votes from party delegates.

### *Ekiti State 2014 Governorship Election*

The 2014 governorship election in Ekiti State, in which Governor Ayodele Fayose was brought back to the office he first occupied in 2003, will probably be the first to mind in any discussion or analysis of 'stomach infrastructure or politics of the belly' in contemporary Nigeria. However, Fayose seemed to rekindle and adopt the populist agenda of the late Adegoke Adelabu and Lamidi Adedibu, both of Ibadan, Oyo State, origin. Part of my subsequent analysis will dwell more on this point.

It should be noted that although the urbane and courteous personal attributes of the then incumbent, Kayode Fayemi, and the better-than-average performance of his administration in terms of road and other physical infrastructural development as well as some social security services were regarded as sufficient for his re-election in some quarters, several other factors probably accounted for his defeat. Chief among these were the widely reported inaccessibility of Fayemi to a large section of the downtrodden masses, and his cat-and-mouse relationship with the State's Workers' Union and a few other important sociopolitical groups.

Although it cannot be overemphasised that governance requires seriousness, discipline and possibly stepping on toes, the peculiarity of the African continent – especially in terms of poor economies and disturbing levels of underdevelopment – requires a sort of balancing. This balancing is between strict compliance with best practices found, for instance, in the United Kingdom, Canada, America and other well-managed economies, and the broad welfarism that often takes the shape of patronage or redistribution of resources which large sections all over Africa and several other parts of the less developed world still need.

In the case of Nigeria, a country reported by *Sunday Punch* on 4 August 2013 as 'habouring one of the largest populations of the poor in the world', the point on poverty cannot be overemphasised. As I note elsewhere, it may not be

controvertible that up to 70% of Nigeria's entire population still lives on less than the United Nations poverty threshold of \$2 a day. This figure is obtained if the ₦18 000 (less than \$120) a month minimum wage for workers in the public sector of the economy is considered (Yagboyaju 2014, p. 37).

The point raised here should be better understood when it is remembered that quite an insignificant population in the country is employed by the government, and another fraction by the organised private sector. A huge part of the population is either unemployed or engaged in various forms of informal business activities, for which incomes and earnings are unstable because of generally harsh economic conditions.

Ekiti State is peculiar in the sense that it is one of the smallest and it also receives the smallest allocation from central government. To compound its challenges, the state – like so many others – is agrarian and predominantly rural. Thus almost all its inhabitants look to the government for sustenance. Although the Fayemi administration's social security package (in which aged indigenes of Ekiti State and widows collected monthly stipends of ₦10 000 each) was novel and commended, the direct effect was not felt by many other needy groups. These included unemployed people and jobless youths, artisans no longer patronised as before, and commercial drivers and bikers (*okada* riders), among others. Yet for obvious reasons, members of these groups formed the bulk of the electorate. These reasons included the fear of continuity that forced them to register and obtain their permanent voters' cards (PVCs); their joblessness, which afforded them the ample waiting time required for registration as voters and the collection of PVCs; and similar others.

Ayodele Fayose, with his populist style – unlike the polished and refined approach of Kayode Fayemi, which made Fayemi appear somehow elitist – cashed in on the vulnerability of the army of jobless young people and others not gainfully employed, but whose votes counted.

Although the PVCs and card readers were not utilised during the 2014 Ekiti State governorship election, it is not out of place to argue for the possibility of electoral fraud and abuse in general. In this connection it is not inappropriate to link the PDP and Fayose's victory to the subtle intimidation of APC stalwarts, within and from outside the state, who were to attend a mega-rally organised for Fayemi about 72 hours before the election. Captain Koli, of the Nigerian Army, allegedly fingered several people as having hatched a plan to rig the 2014 Ekiti governorship election in favour of PDP in a yet to be fully investigated audio tape. The people concerned were Musiliu Obanikoro, erstwhile minister of state for defence; Iyiola Omisore, the PDP candidate in the 2014 Osun gubernatorial election; Ayodele Fayose; and several top military and paramilitary officers. This tape, if confirmed, is also an indication that Fayose probably won by fraud.

However, at a second look, particularly in view of the outcome of the 2015 National Assembly and State House of Assembly elections in Ekiti, it appears the majority of Ekiti people are saying that whether 'politics of stomach infrastructure' is jejune, un-intellectual or elementary, it is what they want for now (Adedayo 2015, p. 29). This is obviously in spite of any theorising about high-sounding concepts of good governance and dividends of democracy, which are not directly felt by the majority of the common people of Ekiti State.

Similarly, while it is logical that the Ekitis, generally classified as part of the well-educated in Nigeria, should know better, most educated elites in today's Nigeria prefer to live in big cities such as Abuja, Ibadan, Lagos and Port Harcourt, among others, and do not participate in voting as much as the commoners. Obviously, this was also a factor in favour of Ayodele Fayose, whose populist agenda largely accommodated the immediate needs and aspirations of local artisans, labourers, drivers and other categories of transporters, as well as lower-cadre public servants, all of whom formed the bulk of the electorate in a rural state such as Ekiti.

### *Osun State 2014 Governorship Election*

The outcome of the 2014 Osun State governorship election is the next selected case. Governor Rauf Aregbesola's re-election is widely linked to his competence and widespread concrete deliverables in terms of schools and educational facilities, as well as modern roads and other infrastructure provided by his administration. However, there were other factors that worked in favour of the re-elected governor and which, in the light of this paper's major focus, exemplified patronage politics, stomach infrastructure and politics of the belly.

The frosty relationship between the governor and various workers' unions and the Association of Pensioners in the state – which, among other factors, delayed workers' salaries and pensioners' monthly entitlements for several months – was sufficient reason for these sections of the electorate, their dependants of voting age and sympathisers to vote against Aregbesola. This is regardless of the fact that this class of voters also enjoys many of the public facilities provided by the Aregbesola administration. Furthermore, many of them with children at public schools in the state must have benefited from the free school uniform, free students' i-pad and free school meals for some categories of students, as well as the administration's payment of fees on behalf of another category of students for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

In addition, despite longstanding controversies surrounding Christopher Iyiola Omisore, the PDP candidate in the electoral exercise (particularly in respect of his alleged involvement in the 2001 assassination of Bola Ige, then the minister



of justice and attorney-general), he was able to cash in on his closeness to many influential members of the Senate and Presidency. He served in the Senate as chairman of the sensitive Committee on Appropriation, and the Presidency was then controlled by the PDP.

All these factors meant unrestrained access to sensitive material, and, more importantly, to resources pivotal to Nigeria's patronage system and politics of the belly. They obviously accounted for Omisore's relatively good showing in the electoral exercise. In addition, Omisore's electoral victory in all the local government areas of Ife, his place of origin, arguably exemplified identity politics more than any conviction in his ability to deliver tangible development goals as governor of Osun.

In line with many of the prominent works on clientelism, it is never in doubt that identity politics, which negates all elements of performance politics such as political accountability, transparency and healthy competition, is a clear manifestation of a patronage system and the politics of the belly. As it is for the whole of the country, the effects of identity politics on voting behaviour are stronger at the state and other lower levels. This is more so in sections of any particular community characterised by low social capital, higher levels of poverty and illiteracy, and low levels of political education and information dissemination and assimilation (Iwayemi 2014, p. 8).

For Aregbesola, whose spread of votes in the 2014 election and the repeat performance by his party in the 2015 general elections showed him to be the most preferred candidate, I note that there are lessons to draw. First, although he probably also enjoyed the effect of identity politics, he had evidence of concrete deliverables that endeared him to elite voters and many other discerning minds.

Second, he ensured that the electorate got proper positive signals about his performance by regularly mingling with them and through his general accessibility, which placed him far higher than Fayemi of Ekiti State and many of his peers. It is, for instance, on record that Aregbesola – the 'home boy' – went around all the local government areas of the state, several times over, during his monthly endurance trek throughout his first four-year tenure.

Third, as is typical of most Nigerian politicians with a populist agenda, Aregbesola probably did not forget to take care of many of the personal needs of the ordinary people by way of patronage and politics of the belly. These included the O-Meal, the free feeding programme in which 254 000 students enjoy free meals at the cost of ₦250 a day (Adelakun 2015, p. 64). There was also the O-YES recruitment exercise that led to the employment of 20 000 youths in the first 100 days of Aregbesola's stay in office as Osun State governor, monthly stipends for widows and the aged, and the provision of free railway services to those travelling home to Osun during festivities.



Aregbesola probably also did not leave out traditional rulers and other community and religious leaders, many of whom conduct regular prayer sessions and other forms of solidarity that are often broadcast in the mass media.

Looking back at the 2003 Osun State governorship election in which the then incumbent, Bisi Akande, lost to Olagunsoye Oyinlola, it should be noted that Akande's defeat, in spite of his frugality, transparency and relatively high-level performance of his administration, could be linked to his failure to embrace patronage and money politics. The controversy and widespread fraud (as confirmed by the over-turning of many results by the election tribunals and courts of law) that characterised the general elections of that year, however, probably also helped to account for Akande's unfavourable electoral outcome.

### *Lagos State 2015 Governorship Election*

Finally, the outcome of the 2015 general elections in Lagos State, Nigeria's commercial headquarters warrants an analysis for a number of reasons. First, its strategic commercial position makes it one of the very few states that can survive for a considerable length of time without financial allocation from the centre. This has long made it attractive to most parties during competitive politics in Nigeria.

Second, being the only state in the whole of the south-west that never fell under the control of the then dominant PDP during its 16-year (1999–2015) control of the presidency and the National Assembly, it looked important to the then ruling party at the centre. Meanwhile, Bola Ahmed Tinubu and other 'progressive elements' who since their days in the Alliance for Democracy (AD), Action Congress (AC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and up to the APC in 2014/2015 had been in charge of the state's administration, would not let go without a fight.

Third, in view of its cosmopolitan nature and the high number of non-indigenous residents, Lagos State had all along been regarded as home for all Nigerians (no man's land) and probably the best example of a place where any Nigerian regardless of place of origin could seek and win electoral office. Thus residents of Igbo origin, particularly known for their huge involvement and investments in the commercial activities of the state, became the 'beautiful bride' whose attention was important to all the major parties in the elections.

Fourth, and particularly for the presidential and National Assembly elections, the huge population of the supposed registered voters in the state, second in the whole country only to Kano, was another key factor too strategic to be overlooked. Thus it should not be surprising that President Jonathan, as widely reported by most leading newspapers in the country and other sections of the mass media, shifted his campaign base to Dodan Barracks (the country's

former seat of government) in Lagos for about two weeks during preparations for the general elections. Similarly, Muhammadu Buhari of the APC followed the party's campaign train to Lagos on at least three occasions, unlike during his three previous presidential attempts when he was hardly seen in Lagos.

However, a more pertinent reason for which the outcome of the elections in Lagos State should compel an analysis has to do with the developmental strides of the Babatunde Raji Fashola administration between 2007 and 2015. What impact, for instance, did the administration's efforts in infrastructure-building in the areas of education, health, road networks, public transportation and other similar social services have on the performance of Fashola's party (the APC) in the elections?

To what extent did patronage and politics of 'stomach infrastructure' affect the general outcome of the elections? Is there any link between the PDP's improved performance in Lagos State (so far its best in the governorship and National Assembly elections in the State since 1999) and the widely reported financial inducement of traditional rulers and some other stakeholders by President Jonathan? Could this have won the governorship and far more assembly seats for Jonathan's PDP if Tinubu, the APC's most prominent financier in Lagos and nationwide, was not so favourably disposed to Akinwunmi Ambode, the winner of the governorship seat, and several other APC candidates who won?

These questions are important because of this paper's concern with the issue of election finance and campaign funding, particularly in its crude and elementary form called 'stomach infrastructure' in contemporary Nigeria.

In my opinion, although Lagos State has many better-informed elite voters than Ekiti, Governor Raji Fashola's urbane nature and polished administrative style would put him in the mould of Fayemi, one-time governor of Ekiti State. In addition, although Fashola was probably not as guilty as Fayemi in terms of inaccessibility, he cannot be likened to his predecessor, Bola Tinubu, in the way Tinubu related to the teeming local community supporters in their successive political parties, the AD, AC, ACN and APC respectively.

Drawing from this analogy, it should not be surprising that Fashola, as far as is known, did not control any distinctive political structure either at his own ward, local government or even state level. For me, this partly accounted for the narrow defeat of Fashola's APC in his Surulere residential community during the 2015 general elections. Obviously, this indicated that his administration's urban renewal efforts may not have been sufficient to win elections even in cosmopolitan Lagos.

In other words, Akinwunmi Ambode's emergence as the APC's candidate in the party's primaries that were characterised by subtle infighting in respect of alleged imposition by Bola Tinubu, and the former's subsequent emergence as the winner of the 2015 Lagos State governorship election appear traceable to clientele politics more than to outstanding performance.

For the PDP's improved performance, particularly in the outcome of the governorship and assembly (national and state) elections, it is logical to argue that the strategic numerical strength of the Igbos and probably the commercial influence of many members of the ethnic group in Lagos partly accounted for this. The Igbos' mainstream organisations and groups all along identified with the PDP. The party, apart from its various promises such as more recognition for the people and their traditional institutions, possible reduction in taxes and other levies and, above all, addressing incessant harassment by local and indigenous urchins (popularly called 'area boys') also fielded Igbo as its flag-bearers in many contested state positions.

All of these issues, as well as the widely criticised 'death in the lagoon' remarks by Rilwan Akiolu, Oba or king of Lagos, added to the tension and heating up of the political landscape in the buildup to the governorship and State House of Assembly elections in Lagos.

However, the effect of the widely reported relocation of President Jonathan and the alleged extensive distribution of money to party stalwarts, traditional and other opinion leaders in Lagos State and other neighbouring communities in the south-west cannot be overemphasised. While it could be argued that financial inducement partly accounted for the closeness of the '659,788 votes won by Jimi Agbaje of PDP to APC's Akinwunmi Ambode and the eventual winner's 811,994 votes' (*The Punch*, 13 April 2015, p. 1), it also possibly accounted for several other incidents, particularly within the PDP in the aftermath of the 2015 general elections. These, as widely reported by *Sunday Punch* newspaper on 19 April 2015, included the alleged mismanagement of ₦2-trillion in election funds and the request for an audit by President Jonathan.

Other incidents included allegations that many top-notchers of the party responsible for sharing the funds utilised most of them for personal cars and houses. There were several calls for the resignation of Adamu Muazu, then national chairman of the PDP, as well as his national working committee and, of course, Muazu's and Anenih's subsequent resignations respectively as national chairman and board of trustee chairman.

In the particular case of Lagos State, post-election squabbles set the Bode George-led group in the PDP against another group loyal to Musiliu Obanikoro, a leading governorship aspirant who lost to Jimi Agbaje in the party's primaries in 2014. The most important of these crises, which also had to do with allegations of election-fund mismanagement and the lingering cat-and-mouse relationship that worsened during the 2014 primary elections, eventually led to the purported removal of Tunji Shelle of the George group as state chairman of the party. And Kamaldeen Olorunoje, a known loyalist of Obanikoro, was named replacement, in an acting capacity.

Although unconfirmed, the allegations of campaign-fund mismanagement and similar others associated with the wrangling within the Lagos PDP were widely reported by *The Punch* newspaper of 12 May 2015 as well as across the electronic media in and around the state.

In the case of the APC in Lagos State, although Ambode's well-publicised academic qualifications and his many years as a public servant in the state were probably sufficient to sell his candidature, they probably would not have helped him defeat the better-known (at least on the political turf) Jimi Agbaje if not for the well-heeled machinery of the APC that was obviously controlled by Bola Tinubu (Olukotun 2015, p. 64).

### *Other Important Aspects of the 2015 General Elections*

To round off this section on the probable effects of the abuse of money and other forms of inducement in the 2015 general elections, particularly in Lagos State, a possible link with the several violent acts by members of the Oodua People's congress (OPC) shortly before the commencement of the electoral exercises in March should be noted. This, for instance, included the OPC's violent march on the streets of Lagos and the tearing down of posters and billboards, especially those of APC candidates.

Although the OPC claimed it demonstrated as concerned citizens against the use of PVCs and card readers by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as well as for the removal of INEC boss Attahiru Jega, one might argue that the group merely attempted to cause confusion and probably intimidate prospective voters because of the widely reported contract for the surveillance of oil pipelines in the Lagos area and other such inducements that the group enjoyed from the PDP-led federal government.

It is quite disturbing that neither the widely reported allegations of mismanagement of the PDP's ₦2-trillion election funds, the controversial and widely criticised presidential fund-raiser of December 2014 in which the party raised ₦21.27 billion (*The Punch*, 23 December 2014, p. 1), other suspicious acts that had to do with election finance and campaign funding, nor the open acts of violence by OPC and many others, seem to have concerned the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), INEC, police or other relevant regulatory agencies enough to warrant proper investigation and prosecution if necessary.

In the case of the PDP's ₦21.27-billion presidential fund-raiser, several laws on campaign expenses were violated. For example, Section 221 of the 1999 Constitution states:

No association, other than a political party, shall canvass for votes for

any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses of any candidate at any election.

Similarly, the Companies and Allied Matters Act forbids companies in Section 38(2) from funding or donating gifts, property or money to any political party or association. Furthermore, the Electoral Act of 2010 specifies in Section 91(2) that the 'maximum election expenses to be incurred by a candidate at a presidential election shall be ₦1 billion'.

As noted by Simbine and Yagboyaju (2015, p. 18), even if there had been violations all along since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999, President Jonathan, the PDP and its 21 state governors took such violation to a new height. During the December 2014 fund-raiser, 'Tunde Ayeni, leading other donors, gave ₦2 billion on behalf of himself and his unnamed partner and friends', and Jerry Gana, a permanent fixture in any government in power since the late 1980s, under General Babangida 'announced ₦5 billion on behalf of his equally mysterious friends and associates in the power sector' (Simbine & Yagboyaju 2015, p. 18; *The Punch*, 23 December 2014, p. 26).

Not to be outdone, oil and gas 'friends' also pledged ₦5 billion, the real estate and building sector ₦4 billion, the transport and aviation sector ₦1 billion, food and agriculture ₦500 million, power ₦500 million, construction ₦310 million, road construction ₦250 million, the National Automotive Association ₦450 million, and Shelter Development Limited ₦250 million (Simbine & Yagboyaju, *ibid.*).

Obviously these donations warrant salient questions around transparency in terms of, for instance, the Electoral Act, which caps individual donations at ₦1 million. Questions are raised such as: What are the identities of the 5000 donors behind Gana's ₦5 billion gift? Where did the board of the Niger Delta Development Commission derive the power to donate ₦15 million to the PDP? Having done this for the PDP's presidential campaign, and since its budget draws from the national purse, did it make similar donations to other political parties? Did the shareholders of the sectoral donors, among them quoted companies, approve the spending spree? And finally, how did the power sector, which is yet to muster enough investible funds, come up with a ₦500 million donation?

In view of the economic realities in Nigeria's 16-year old Fourth Republic, it is quite difficult to defend or justify many of these donations and several others. Yet such toxic donations have the propensity to further poison the country's electoral process and shore up the system of patronage and corruption. Indeed, only in an environment of endemic corruption such as Nigeria's Fourth Republic can such flagrant violations go uninvestigated and, more importantly, unpunished even if offenders are caught.

In democracies such as the United States of America and France, elements of

corruption may also exist, but they are effectively addressed so as not to fatally injure the system. Laws there demand transparency and specificity in campaign financing, just as other anti-corruption regulations are effectively implemented for the good of the system. In the United States, for instance, campaign contributions from government contractors, personal or business funds, individuals or sole proprietors that have entered into a contract with the government are prohibited by law. Infractions or suspected questionable behaviour are promptly and thoroughly investigated and punished if necessary.

In a similar vein, the case of Nicolas Sarkozy, the immediate past president of France who has since 2013 faced investigations by French authorities over allegations that he received '50 million euro from [the] late Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya as financial help for his 2007 presidential campaign' (*The Punch*, 23 December 2014, p. 26) is useful for illustration.

The implication of all these scenarios is that financial or other material inducement of the electorate is remote, because aspirants and candidates are denied access to slush funds as much as possible. This is apart from the fact that a huge section of the populace in these well-developed democracies lives in relative comfort, which makes such primitive inducement less attractive.

## CONCLUSION

In Nigeria's 16-year-old Fourth Republic (1999–2015), electoral outcomes have so far generally been dominated and characterised by the effects of the country's clientele and prebendal politics. A worrisome aspect of this brand of politics, which obviously stunts democratic growth and impedes developmental attainment, has to do with the phenomenon of money politics or the inducement of vulnerable voters *a la* 'stomach infrastructure' or politics of the belly.

This paper has attempted to address fundamental questions as to where Nigeria is today – for instance, how it got here, where it should be, the strategic steps to take, and who to involve in getting where it ought to be in terms of escaping from the crude politics of financial and common material inducement. The paper notes that although many aspects of the politics of immediate material gains have been part of Nigeria's politics since colonial days, it generated a lot more concern right from the 2014 Ekiti State governorship election up to the 2015 general election, which was won by Ayodele Fayose, the main proponent of the modern-day jejune 'stomach infrastructure' – and his political party, the PDP.

The paper analysed the outcomes of some primary elections (PDP presidential in 1999 and APC presidential in 2014) as well as the Osun State 2014 governorship and 2015 general elections in Lagos State, with illustrations from the Ekiti State template.



In other words, the combined effect of crushing poverty and high levels of illiteracy and unemployment, all of which had worsened under Nigeria's long encounter with military rule, made the populist agenda of Ayodele Fayose of Ekiti State quite attractive. This is quite unlike the elitist and probably exclusive administrative style of his predecessor, Kayode Fayemi. Obviously, despite private transfers to some sections of the electorate ('stomach infrastructure') by Fayose, the antagonism of public-sector workers and even some members of Fayemi's APC contributed to his defeat.

Thus the lesson learned is that the electorate must receive the proper positive signal about the performance of an administration which either seeks re-election for its principal candidate or others from the same political party. And in line with high poverty levels in the country, a democratic and development agenda must be pursued to ensure redistribution of wealth. It is pointless, and negates Bentham's calculus of the greatest good and happiness of the greatest number, if most of the general population for whom an administration supposedly labours to build infrastructure remains impoverished.

It is on this note that the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) promised by the All Progressives Congress (APC) in its manifesto is commendable. In its bid to initially take care of 25 million of the poorest Nigerians, the APC can draw lessons from *Bolsa Familia*, Brazil's version of the programme, with which that country 'lifted tens of millions of people out of poverty in the past two decades' (Ogunlesi 2015, p. 35). However, while welfarism has its own uses in economies where people's lives could be easily imperiled by economic forces that leave the poor and vulnerable behind, Nigerian states need 'to be wary of wholesale mimicry of such programmes' (Adelakun 2015, p. 64).

Osun State under Aregbesola, particularly between December 2014 and mid-June 2015 when salaries of public workers were not paid because of the drastic reduction of allocations from central government, is a clear example of how unsustainable such a programme is. Indeed, the long-term sociological consequences can be more devastating, especially in a rent-seeking economy such as Nigeria's.

These consequences that are generally inimical to Nigeria's democratic process and the wellbeing of its people are multidimensional. First, if well-meaning individuals are not elected as candidates or performing administrations are not re-elected because of their inability to turn the politics of 'stomach infrastructure' into a sustainable programme of wealth redistribution, then it is highly probable that shady characters – such as looters and possibly drug barons – will soon take over governance and public affairs in general. Several cases of elected public officials who have at various points in time, in the course of the Fourth Republic, been extradited or threatened with extradition to England,



America and other places that have more effective legal systems than Nigeria's, provide useful illustrations of this point.

Secondly, a political system in which electoral outcomes negate the principle of political accountability – a basic requirement for re-election in most advanced and even emerging democracies around the world – implies sustenance of a vicious cycle of underdevelopment. Such continuity in Nigeria today can only mean higher levels of despondency among ordinary citizens, many of whom appear to have lost confidence in the successive leadership, particularly over the past 16 years of democratisation.

In conclusion, Nigeria's politics of 'stomach infrastructure' or politics of the belly, which mainly consist of private transfers to a section of the electorate connected to the 'big man', cannot endure or last much longer. It is a disturbing reminder of the politics of settlement under the Babangida military regime. As at that time, the current system has a propensity to breed sycophancy and hero-worshipping among beneficiaries, while many of the people who are excluded are likely to become despondent, irritable and possibly violent.

Professional organisations and other specialised interest groups, and civil society in general – particularly at the local community level, where committed and progressive-minded individuals can be easily identified and supported – can play a pivotal role in addressing these problems. Such people and organisations can keep the phenomenon of 'politics of the belly' in check, and redirect Nigeria's focus towards a more sustainable programme of wealth redistribution.

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# NIGERIA 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: THE VOTES, THE FEARS AND THE REGIME CHANGE

*Mojeed Adekunle Animashaun*

Mojeed Adekunle Animashaun is a lecturer and Head of Department  
in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at  
Fountain University, Osogbo, Nigeria  
email: kunlemashaun@yahoo.com

## ABSTRACT

*Nigeria's 2015 presidential election has been a landmark in the country's political history. As the fifth round of elections since the restoration of constitutional rule in 1999, it not only resulted in an alternation of power for the first time in the democratic history of Africa's largest democracy, but its outcome is widely acknowledged as substantially reflecting the wishes of the electorate. This paper reviews the 2015 presidential contest in Nigeria. It observes that, while the election conferred broad legitimacy on the post-election regime, the expectations that accompany the electoral outcome are a huge challenge for the Buhari administration. The paper identifies some factors that may challenge the aspirations of the new government. It also identifies useful lessons that can be drawn from the outcome of the election. These lessons have implications not only for the management of future elections but, more importantly, for efforts at deepening democratic rule in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** election, presidential election, Nigeria, political parties, electoral violence, alternation of power.

## INTRODUCTION

Between March and April 2015, Nigerians went to the polls to cast their ballot in national and state elections. These elections were the fifth round of general elections since the country's democratic rebirth in 1999, in which constitutional

rule was restored after a military dictatorship that lasted 15 consecutive years. The intense anxiety that preceded the 2015 elections, the global interest they generated, and the alternation of power which the presidential vote engendered, all combined to make the election a landmark in the chequered political history of Nigeria.

Through the elections, Nigerians had the opportunity either to choose 'continuity', as represented by the incumbent President Dr Goodluck Jonathan and his ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), or to embrace 'change', as symbolised by the opposition candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC). These two leading candidates in the 2015 challenge had also encountered each other at the ballot in the 2011 presidential contest, although at that time General Buhari was running on the ticket of the defunct Congress for Progressive Change (CPC).

Analysts believe that the peaceful, transparent and credible manner in which the elections were organised, and the regime change which the presidential election produced, have launched Nigeria onto the path of democratic sustenance. The winner of the presidential election, General Buhari, has taken up the presidency with discipline, honesty, reliability and doggedness – rare attributes among the current crop of Nigerian leaders. Such qualities are urgently needed to confront the daunting challenges facing the oil-rich nation.

These rare personal attributes of the General may be put to the test as he faces the task of national rebuilding, a task thrust on him by the historic mandate he secured at the historic election. Nigerians expect him to chart an entirely new course for the country that will usher in a new beginning in the nation's troubled 55 years of formal independence.

This paper reviews the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. It examines the fluid and volatile environment in which the election was conducted, the electoral strength of competing parties, and the character of the election campaigns. The paper discusses the regime change that accompanied the presidential vote, the historical significance of the governmental turnover, and the inherent rising expectations within the polity. Lessons drawn from the election and their implications for democratic sustenance in Nigeria are also discussed.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Scholars have employed diverse theoretical models to study or explain the determinants of voting behaviour and electoral outcomes. Each of these approaches seeks to identify factors that shape the attribute of 'indeterminacy' associated with elections as a mechanism for recruiting leaders within democratic contexts.

Three main theoretical perspectives on voting decision have been identified in the literature on voting behaviour. These are the sociological theory or the Columbia school, the psychosocial theory or the Michigan school, and the rational choice theory. The framework for this study is the psychosocial approach, but all three approaches are briefly outlined here.

At the heart of the argument of each approach is the attempt to establish the main driver of voters' choices. What influences voting decisions of the electorate? Are such decisions based on a rational evaluation of the accomplishments of the candidates on offer, the record and performance of a regime, and the issue positions of competing political parties? Or are voters' choices influenced more by non-evaluative sentiments, such as ethnic, family or clientelistic ties?

The sociological theory suggests that social factors, such as socio-economic variables, religion and location, are key factors in determining voting decisions (Lazarfeld et al. 1948, p. 27). The rational choice model has two main perspectives, namely evaluation and non-evaluation. Evaluative voting rationale is premised on voters' evaluation of regime performance. By contrast, the non-evaluative perspective is based on clientelistic considerations such as patronage, ethnic and family ties (Lindberg & Morrison 2008, p. 95).

The psychosocial perspective seeks to account for why and how electoral change occurs. This model provides a framework that combines sociological and psychological approaches to study voting decisions (Agomor & Adams 2014, p. 3). The central argument of the psychosocial theory is that voters' political affiliation or party identification – which is understood as being a socio-psychological product – shapes those voters' evaluations of relevant matters. Thus, according to Erdman (2007, p. 63), voters evaluate the electoral candidates, campaign issues, and the expected capacity of political parties to solve governance problems.

According to this perspective, party identification is assumed to influence both the attitudes of the voters and their actual vote (Eulau 1960, p. 993). Party identification in this context refers to 'the sense of personal attachment which the individual feels toward the party of his choice' (Campbell et al. 1954, p. 88).

The theoretical argument of this paper is anchored on the assumptions of the psychosocial approach to voting behaviour. I argue that the increasing affiliation of Nigerian voters with the APC as an electoral platform, particularly as the elections approached, ensured victory for that party at the polls. The party was perceived as being a credible alternative to the incumbent party, and was credited with the capacity to midwife the much-needed national rebirth.

The growing popularity of the party was facilitated by two main factors. The first was the declining legitimacy of the PDP-led national government. The second was the general perception that the APC candidate was a man of integrity



and discipline, who was capable of initiating the process of national rebirth and an agenda for governance renewal.

#### PRE-ELECTION ANXIETY AND SPECTRE OF VIOLENCE: BASIS AND IMPACT ON POLLING

The 2015 general elections in Nigeria took place within the local context of insurgency arising from the brutal activities of the extremist Islamist group, Boko Haram, in the north-eastern part of the country, and the global context marked by declining global peace. In its 2014 Global Peace Index (GPI) report, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) stated that since 2008, among the countries which it ranked worldwide, 111 countries had deteriorated in their levels of peace, while only 51 countries had increased in peace during the same period (IEP 2014, p. 41).

The Boko Haram menace has resulted in the death of thousands of innocent Nigerians, massive destruction of property, and the displacement of thousands of people. This challenge conspired with the global context of declining peace to render the environment in which the Nigerian elections were conducted highly volatile. Indeed, in its special report on the Nigeria 2015 polls, the International Crisis Group (ICG), an international conflict research organisation, noted the volatile environment in which the preparations for the elections took place. This environment was marked, on the one hand, by acrimony between the two leading parties, and on the other hand by deep ethnic and religious polarisation. In its report, the ICG cautioned that if the hardening of positions among the key actors in the elections intensified, the tensions could degenerate into violence (ICG 2014, p. 3).

As Nigerians approached the polls, they were troubled by two things. First, many Nigerians were apprehensive about the much-publicised prediction that the 2015 election, and its outcome, would lead to the disintegration of Nigeria as a united territory. Second, sad memories of the 2011 post-election violence and its accompanying heavy casualties created fear among many Nigerians. The 2011 post-election violence, acknowledged as the bloodiest election-induced violence in the political history of Nigeria (Bekoe 2011; NAPEN 2011, p. 26), had resulted in the death of more than 800 people (HRW 2011).

If the prediction that Nigeria would cease to be a unified territory did not provoke national anxiety, the same cannot be said about electoral violence. Kurfi (2003, p. 8) describes such violence in Nigeria as a 'war of succession'. In a national survey conducted by Afrobarometer in December 2014, the research organisation reports that 50% of the 2 400 respondents surveyed expressed fear of the likelihood of violence during the elections.

Indeed, in the period before the 2015 polls, the spectre of violence was so overwhelming that people feared that the much-celebrated 2014 Centenary might

be the last to be organised by Nigeria as a corporate entity (Bakare 2014, p. 302). Thus, beyond the question of who would win the election, the fear of violence and the precarious status of the country as a united entity remained major concerns.

The bitter experience of Nigerians who have witnessed electoral violence has caused them to approach elections with trepidation (Yaqub 2003, p. 23). This situation apparently informed Adekanye's (1989, p. 11) counsel that a state of emergency be declared during periods of election, with the military taking charge at such times. Omitola (2011, p. 232) states that having risen to the point of becoming the 'de facto language of communication among political gladiators', the democratic system risked coming to grief under the weight of electoral violence.

However, the vulnerability of Nigeria to implode from within, and the entrenchment of violence in its politics, do not in any way diminish the transformational possibility and human potential that abound in Africa's largest democracy. Joseph (1991, p. 43) calls this contradiction 'the Nigerian paradox'.

The above discussion has shown that the primary basis of the pervasive fear and anxiety that preceded the elections derived from the fact that elections in Nigeria have often been violent and turbulent (Albert 2007, p. 38; Anifowose 1982; Elaigwu 2003; ICG 2014, p. 2; Nwolise 2007; Ochoche 1997, p. 16). In the case of the 2015 polls, the fear of violence was largely driven by the irresponsible conduct of politicians in the way they sought votes. Inflammatory comments and hate-laden speeches by political gladiators created tension across the polity. This was aggravated by the activities of some former militants from the Niger Delta region of the country, who not only framed the presidential election in terms of North/South or majority/minority, but also threatened to go back to the creeks and resume militancy against the democratic state if President Jonathan lost the election.

Also, as the elections approached, growing animosities and hostilities between the ruling PDP and opposition APC heightened countrywide apprehension about the elections. For instance, the PDP criticised the APC for promoting religious favouritism as a result of Muslim domination of the leadership structure of the party, labelling the party 'Nigeria's Muslim Brotherhood'.

The APC, on the other hand, described the PDP-led federal government as a huge failure particularly on account of its poor handling of the national economy and security. It also accused the PDP and its leaders of playing divisive politics that, according to the party, further deepened ethnic, regional and religious mistrust within the national society.

While ethno-linguistic and religious diversities may not drive political conflicts in other ethnically segmented contexts, in Nigeria they have become important factors in explaining political conflicts (Azeez 2004, p. 160;

Ibeanu 2012, p. 7). Because the Nigerian state lacks autonomy from the ruling faction of the governing elite, the state is perceived as an institutional expression of private and sectional interests, leaving many groups politically and economically excluded. This exclusion tends to generate tension that often translates into politically pertinent conflicts.

The impact of this trenchantly-charged environment on the 2015 elections manifested in the generally poor voter turnout that marked both rounds of the elections. We shall return to the issue of voter apathy later in the paper.

### POLITICO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE POLLS

It is imperative to understand the politico-economic context in which the 2015 elections were organised. The ecology of the polls not only shaped the character and intensity of election campaigns, but also influenced the outcome of the election.

The election took place at a time of worsening material conditions for the Nigerian citizenry. According to official records from the National Bureau of Statistics, poverty incidence grew to 69% in 2010 and was projected to rise to 71% in 2011, while the rate of unemployment in the country was estimated at 24%. Add to this the effects of decaying public infrastructure and 'punitive' tax regimes introduced by government at all levels, and one can better appreciate that the elections were conducted at a most difficult juncture in the material circumstances of the Nigerian masses.

Falling oil prices on the international market and the attendant declining national revenue have thrown the oil-dependent economy into a serious crisis. One of the major consequences of the declining revenue accruing to the state as a result of oil crashes, and the attendant negative impact on state capacity for social provisioning, was the inability of government to pay emoluments of public sector workers at all levels. This included retired public servants timeously receiving their pensions from the government.

While unpaid or delayed salary payments did not constitute a serious threat to the electoral fortunes of the presidential contestants, partly because federal government is remote from citizens, the salary deficit was a strong electoral and campaign issue at state level. Many state executives, particularly those seeking mandate renewal, were pitched against public workers. Indeed, there were fears that if oil prices continued their downward spiral, elected executives might not be able to redeem their campaign promises, which would negatively affect relations between the state and civil society.

It was the former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) governor, Professor Chukwuma Soludo, who raised a deafening alarm about the state of health of the

national economy. In an insightful and incisive article that provoked national debate, the former university teacher drew attention to the parlous state of the economy, with its inherent uncertainties and hard times. While lamenting that management of the troubled economy did not form a prominent issue in the election campaigns of the two leading presidential gladiators, he described the economic management approach of the Jonathan presidency as 'an empty slogan without content or direction' (Soludo 2015).

In its response to the Soludo challenge, the APC, through a rejoinder by Dr Kayode Fayemi – the Head of Policy, Research and Strategy Directorate of the party – acknowledged the concerns of the former CBN governor, outlining measures that have been designed by the party for enhancing economic growth and generating employment. Among other strategies, these included weaning Nigeria off its 'dangerous addiction to oil which currently provides 80% of our spending leaving us at the mercy of volatile international oil prices' (Fayemi 2015).

*Punch* reported that in the response of the federal government to the article, a senior administration official, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala – the country's Minister of Finance and Co-ordinating Minister of the Economy – described Soludo's piece as 'intellectual hara-kiri' coming from an 'embittered loser in the Nigerian political space' (*Punch*, 29 January 2015).

Security, with its two distinct dimensions, was another defining element in the ecology of the 2015 elections. The first dimension was the challenge posed by the murderous activities of the Boko Haram insurgents in the north-east of the country, and the implications of insurgency for the successful conduct of the elections in the affected states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. The second and more controversial dimension was the deployment of soldiers to police the elections. The ugly experience with the use of military personnel for the 2014 governorship election in Ekiti and Osun states in the south-west geopolitical zone of the country had raised huge doubts within the polity about the neutrality and professional conduct of state security workers.

Ruling on a litigation matter inspired by the controversy, the Sokoto High Court, presided over by Justice RM Aikawa, overruled the deployment of soldiers for election duty. Aikawa's judgment was upheld by the verdict of the Court of Appeal, Abuja Division, on 16 February 2015. The two courts held that the use of the military for election purposes constituted a gross violation of both the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, and the Electoral Act 2010, as amended.

The rating of the two main contestants in the presidential election by foreign media was another important issue that preceded the elections. The analysis of the foreign press on the chances of the two frontline candidates expectedly spawned wide reactions across the polity.

In its editorial column on 18 January 2015, the popular British newspaper *The Observer* strongly criticised the incumbent Jonathan administration for lacking the right strategies to contain the challenge of insurgency in the north-eastern part of the country. The paper further accused the administration of not telling the nation, in concrete terms, how it planned to end suicide bombings, kidnappings and other nihilistic atrocities going on in the three north-eastern states. By contrast, the newspaper wrote positive comments about General Buhari, such as 'Buhari earned a reputation for strong leadership and intolerance of corruption during his brief period in power in 1983-1985' (*The Observer*, 18 January 2015).

Another United Kingdom newspaper, *The Guardian of London*, described the two leading contestants for the presidency as 'flawed leaders'. According to this newspaper's editorial,

President Jonathan stands accused of inertness and procrastination in dealing with Boko Haram, and of ineffective performance in office generally. General Muhammadu Buhari, his rival, has a reputation as one of the more honest and well-intentioned of the country's military rulers, but not one of the most astute.

(*The Guardian of London*, 16 January 2015)

The influential United Kingdom magazine *The Economist* went a step further in its analysis, by endorsing one of the candidates. In an editorial titled 'Former Dictator is a Better Choice than a Failed President', the magazine noted that while it was unfortunate to have these two candidates running for presidency, General Buhari was the better candidate. The magazine wrote:

Start with Mr Jonathan, whose party has run the country since 1999 and who stumbled in to the presidency on the death of his predecessor in 2010, the PDP's reign has been a sorry one. Mr Jonathan has shown little willingness to tackle endemic corruption. When the governor of the central bank reported that \$20bn had been stolen, his reward was to be sacked. He has shown little enthusiasm for tackling insecurity and even less competence.

(*The Economist*, 6 February 2015)

On the other hand, the magazine opined that

Buhari is a sandal-wearing ascetic with a record of fighting corruption. Few nowadays question his commitment to democracy or expect him to turn autocratic: he has repeatedly stood for election

and accepted the outcome when he lost. He would probably do a better job of running the country, and in particular of tackling Boko Haram. As a northerner and Muslim, he will have greater legitimacy among villagers whose help he will need to isolate the insurgents. As a military man, he is more likely to win the respect of a demoralised army.

*(The Economist, 6 February 2015)*

There were other less prominent issues of context that received attention in the build-up to the election. These included the threat by the former Niger Delta militants to unleash violence in the country if President Jonathan lost at the polls. Members of the outlawed Oodua People's Congress (OPC) staged a pro-government rally in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital, on 16 March 2015. The violent protesters, who were under security cover provided by state agencies, demanded the non-use of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and Smart Card Readers (SCRs) for the 2015 elections. They demanded the removal of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Professor Attahiru Jega, even as they endorsed the candidacy of President Jonathan.

There was also the allegation by the governor of Rivers State, Mr Rotimi Amaechi, who headed the presidential campaign committee of the APC, that the Jonathan presidency had bribed the leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) with a whopping sum of N7-billion to campaign against General Buhari. Although the national leadership of CAN rejected the allegation, the Executive Director of the Voice of Northern Christian Movement, Pastor Kallamu Musa-Dikwa, insisted that the national office of CAN had received the money and disbursed it to state chapters of the religious body.

This volatile context in which the elections were organised deepened local and external interest in the elections, and heightened the electoral uncertainties that confronted the two leading parties as they marched towards the historic elections.

## COMPETING PARTIES AND PROSPECTS OF ACCESSING POWER

According to an official release by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on 29 December 2014, fourteen political parties fielded candidates for the 2015 presidential election. The parties were: Action Alliance (AA), African Democratic Congress (ADC), All Progressives Congress (APC), African People's Alliance (APA), Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Alliance for Democracy (AD), Citizens Popular Party (CPP), Hope Democratic Party (HDP), Kowa Party (KP), National Conscience Party (NCP), People's Democratic Party (PDP), People's



Party of Nigeria (PPN), United Democratic Party (UDP), and United Progressives Party (UPP).

The names of the political parties and those of their presidential and vice-presidential candidates were published on the INEC website on 13 January 2015. Of the 26 registered parties in Nigeria before the elections, twelve did not compete for the highest elective office in the country. However, two of those parties, the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and the Labour Party (LP), adopted Dr Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP as their presidential candidate. The names of the parties and their candidates are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
**Names of parties and candidates that contested 2015 presidential election**

	Party	Candidate	Gender
1.	Action Alliance (AA)	ANIFOWOSHE-KELANI, Tunde	M
2.	African Democratic Congress (ADC)	AHMAD, Mani Ibrahim	M
3.	All Progressives Congress (APC)	BUHARI, Muhammadu	M
4.	African People's Alliance (APA)	ADEBAYO, Ayeni Musa	M
5.	Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN)	GALADIMA, Ganiyu	M
6.	Alliance for Democracy (AD)	SALAU, Rafiu	M
7.	Citizens Popular Party (CPP)	EKE, Sam	M
8.	Hope Democratic Party (HDP)	OWURU, Ambrose	M
9.	Kowa Party (KP)	SONAIYA, Oluremi	F
10.	National Conscience Party (NCP)	ONOVO, Martin	M
11.	People's Democratic Party (PDP)	JONATHAN, Goodluck	M
12.	People's Party of Nigeria (PPN)	ALLAGOA, Kelvin	M
13.	United Democratic Party (UDP)	OKOYE, Godson	M
14.	United Progressives Party (UPP)	OKORIE, Chekwes	M

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, 2015

In terms of electoral prospects, of the fourteen political parties that competed in the presidential election, only two – the PDP and APC – had a real chance of winning the election. The PDP was one of the three parties that had registered to contest the 1998/99 transition elections which had preceded the inauguration of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In the national elections of 1999, the candidate of

the party, Olusegun Obasanjo, won the presidential election, and the party won governorship election in 21 out of the 36 states.

The All People's Party (later renamed All Nigerian People's Party, ANPP), which was the second largest of the trio, won governorship election in nine states. The AD won in six (Aina 2004, p. 91). Since 1999, PDP has remained the ruling party in the country, having consecutively won the 2003, 2007 and 2011 presidential elections, and controlling the majority in the national legislature.

The APC was the product of a merger by four political parties. In February 2013, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the ANPP, and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) fused to form the APC. The formation of this party through a merger of leading opposition parties raised the hope that Nigeria would not descend into a one-party democracy.

In November 2013, five sitting governors elected on the platform of the ruling PDP defected to the mega opposition party. They were Muritala Nyako (Adamawa), Rabiu Kwankwanso (Kano), Abdulfatah Ahmed (Kwara), Rotimi Amaechi (Rivers), and Aliyu Wamako (Sokoto). The party drew further public attention when 37 members of the lower chamber of the federal legislature, the House of Representatives, joined the party. Some serving members of the upper legislative chamber – the Senate – also later pitched tent with the nascent party.

Perhaps the most celebrated of the series of defections to the APC was that of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Aminu Tambuwal, in the last quarter of 2014. The APC thus went to the 2015 presidential elections not only as the most formidable challenger to the PDP, but also as the likely winner of the contest.

The low electoral appeal and followership of the other twelve political parties was reflected in the poor electoral performance posted by the parties. As the final result of the election shows, the twelve parties together recorded less than 5% of all votes cast. The low level of affection for these parties can be ascribed to the fact that many of them are not well established within the polity, and lack the resources to take their message to the voters or establish a national presence.

Indeed, most of these parties could be regarded as 'electoral machines' created for the purpose of contesting elections rather than to register a significant presence in the electoral space. For example, the AA, ACPN, ADC, and APA had been formed just before the 2011 general elections, largely as a result of crises that engulfed state chapters of the PDP. It should, however, be pointed out that some of the founders of these fledgling parties have since negotiated themselves back to the PDP, leaving the parties organisationally and materially weak.

While the AD is one of the oldest parties in the current republic, the crisis that hit the party in the build-up to the 2007 elections led to the fragmentation of

the party, with a faction forming the Action Congress (later the Action Congress of Nigeria). Today, the AD, which produced six state governors in the 1999 elections, has no state under its control.

The NCP, formed by the late human rights lawyer, Gani Fawehinmi, is another relatively old party in the current democratic dispensation, which first contested elective office during the 2003 general elections. Though a modest party at its formation, drawing the bulk of its membership from the human rights community, the small electoral value attributed to the party further diminished with the death of its founder.

The UDP, UPP, PPN, HDP and KP were late entrants into the politics of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, having been formed barely two years before the 2015 polls.

#### NATURE OF CAMPAIGNS AS A WARNING SIGNAL OF VIOLENCE

Three major issues dominated the campaigns for the 2015 presidential election: violence, hate campaigns, and low emphasis on issue-based and developmental politics.

Hate campaigns, which manifested through hateful and abusive speeches during campaign rallies and in media advertisements, became so absurd that some eminent Nigerians – including John Cardinal Onayeikan, Catholic Bishop of Abuja; and the Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka – counselled politicians to tread the path of honour in their electioneering activities. It was not too surprising that the campaigns were bereft of issue positions and developmental politics.

While Nigerian politics have historically been issue-free (Animashaun 2014, p. 17; Fayemi 2003, p. 130), the crash in oil prices and its implications for the national economy apparently cautioned the presidential contestants against unrealistic promises. To the extent that violence remains a salient characteristic of electoral politics in Nigeria (Omitola 2011, p. 233), it is not surprising that the 2015 elections were marked by a fear of violence and the actual outbreak of violence.

Theoretically, democracy and violence should not have any relationship, because democratic rule is associated with institutionalised mechanisms for conflict resolution. Whereas Reyhler (1999, p. 59) has shown that the *democratisation process* is risk-laden, Eckstein & Gurr (1975) suggest that *democracy* delegitimises violent acts that threaten the entire political / democratic system.

The political elite in Nigeria and other newly-democratising countries competes for state power within the context of what Quantin (1998, p. 13) calls a normative vacuum of a 'market place where all participants try to maximise their profits'. Such context engenders violence that can only be checked by linking electoral competition to non-market values (Quantin 1998, p. 15). Seized

by the obsessive urge to acquire returns from politics guaranteed by a primitive accumulation and patronage system, politicians regard electoral competition as warfare that they must win at all costs. This urge manifests in the desperation to access state power, retain power, and the tendency to reject election results that do not favour them.

Electoral violence involves riots, thuggery, kidnapping, arson and politically-motivated assassination, consciously organised and targeted at influencing or altering the electoral or voting process in favour of a particular party or contestant (Ugoh 2004, p. 164). Electoral violence is executed through, among others, the intimidation of voters and candidates, killings, forceful displacement and unlawful or politically-induced detention.

Perpetrators of such violence, according to Laakso (2007, p. 225) include the ruling regime and its supporters, opposition groups, spontaneous rioters, and extremist organisations that wilfully exclude themselves from formal political activities. Reflecting on the interface between politicking and violence, Anifowoshe (1982, p. 5) suggests that violence is a critical instrument in the hands of both power-seeking and power-holding groups, and is also a strong weapon for groups faced with the prospect of losing power.

There are three main types of electoral violence, namely pre-election, election day, and post-election (Mehler 2007). Of these, Mehler (2007, p. 217) believes that post-election violence, usually caused by flawed or disputed elections, remains the most rampant across sub-Saharan African democracies. Ready instances of this variant include the confrontation that greeted the 1996 municipal elections in Cameroon, the mass protests that followed Kenya's presidential election of 2008, the violent uprising that followed the declaration of General Robert Guei as the winner of the massively-rigged 2000 presidential election in Ivory Coast, and the political and sectarian crisis that erupted in northern Nigeria following the announcement of official results of the 2011 presidential election.

When violence is deployed to influence the electoral process, the aim is to access what Tilly (1999, p. 337) calls 'established places in the structure of power'. When it is used to reject alleged irregularities in the democratic process, the aim is always to forestall being (unjustly) shut out of the structures of power. Prempeh (2008, p. 109) noted that democratic politics in Africa is dominated by 'access' issues, including the right of the opposition to capture power and the desire of the incumbents to retain power at all costs.

As the 2015 elections approached, the spectre of violence was so strong that competing presidential candidates were made to sign a peace agreement tagged 'the Abuja Accord'. The peace pact was facilitated by former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Anan, and former Commonwealth Secretary General, Sir Emeka Anyaoku. By endorsing the peace document, all the candidates pledged

to, among others, conduct issue-based campaigns, refrain from inflammatory language and hate speech during campaigns, accept the outcome of the elections in good faith, and refrain from acts of violence or incitement to violence.

However, indications that the Abuja peace pact might be a farcical effort were evident in the outbreak of election-related violence across the country shortly after the peace deal was sealed. President Goodluck Jonathan, for example, was attacked during his campaign visits to Bauchi and Katsina States in the last week of January 2015.

Indeed, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in its pre-election report on the 2015 general elections, found that 58 people were killed in more than 60 reported incidents of election-related violence between December 2014 and February 2015. In its pre-election report, the NHRC (2015, p. 9) warned that if the trend continued, electoral violence 'could pose a clear and present danger to the stability of the country and its neighbours'.

The urgency of the issue was further underlined by a statement issued on 16 March 2015 by the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, indicating the readiness of the global human rights oversight institution to 'prosecute individuals responsible for the commission of ICC crimes whenever necessary'.

This unfortunate turn of events compelled another peace initiative. The two major presidential contenders, President Jonathan and General Buhari, signed a fresh peace accord on 26 March 2015 in Abuja. The new peace accord (which was a follow-up to the 14 January 2015 agreement) was initiated by the National Peace Committee on 2015 Elections, headed by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, Nigeria's former military ruler. The committee was convened by Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, founder of the Kukah Centre for Faith and Leadership Research and the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese.

Members of the committee were General Abubakar; Alhaji Aliko Dangote; Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe (retired); Catholic Bishop of Abuja Diocese, John Cardinal Onaiyekan; Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence Sa'ad Abubakar; Alhaji Muhammad Musdafa; Primate of Anglican Church, Most Reverend Nicholas Okoh; President of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Pasto Ayo Oritsejafor; Professor Ibrahim Gambari; Justice Rose Ukeje; Professor Bolaji Akinyemi; Professor Ameze Goubadia; Professor Zainab Alkali; Mr Sam Pemu-Amuka; Dame Priscilla Kuye; and Bishop Kukah. The committee was essentially formed to ensure full compliance with the Abuja Peace Accord that had been signed in January 2015.

The intervention of the committee, however, and the earlier efforts of other peace builders, could not prevent pockets of violence that marred the presidential election in some states of the Federation. For example, on 17 February 2015,

gunshots and explosions boomed at the APC governorship rally held at Okrika National Secondary School, Okrika Rivers State. The incident resulted in the death of one policeman, with several other people being wounded.

On 1 March 2015, two members of the Accord Party (AP), Kehinde Bello and Sarafa Adedeji, were shot dead, while 15 other people sustained varying degrees of injury in Odinjo area of Ibadan, capital city of South Western State of Oyo. On 14 March 2015, unknown assailants killed two chieftains of PDP in Abomena town, Akuku-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. Two days later, on 16 March 2015, the convoy of Mrs Aishat Buhari, wife of the presidential candidate of APC, was attacked in Ilorin, Kwara State.

On 18 March, Mr Okon Uwah, a House of Assembly APC candidate seeking to represent the Ukanafun Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, was killed by unknown assailants. Two people were killed in Oyo town on 23 March 2015 during the campaign rally of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), organised to drum up support for its gubernatorial candidate, Seyi Makinde.

There were also media reports that the Governor of Rivers State, Chibuike Amaechi, was attacked by unidentified people during a door-to-door campaign in Rumuolumeni, Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers State on 26 March 2015. Two people were killed by gunmen on the polling day of presidential elections in Nafada Local Government Area of Gombe State, and another two people were killed in Ife and Ikirun areas of Osun State on the same day. Twin explosions also rocked Enugu on the day of the presidential election.

It should be stressed that though these unfortunate incidents happened despite the peace efforts, the relative post-election peace in the country can be largely attributed to those peace initiatives.

## THE VOTE AND THE REGIME CHANGE

On 28 March 2015, Nigerians cast their ballots in the presidential election – which had initially been slated for 28 February but had to be shifted by Nigerian authorities (who cited ‘security concerns’). Voting took place in 119 973 polling units, with 56.4-million registered voters collecting PVCs.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) accredited 117 local and foreign election monitors to observe at the polls. According to media reports, 300 000 police officers, 60 000 civil defence personnel, and an unspecified number of sniffer dogs were deployed for the election.

In the official results of the presidential election released by INEC, General Muhammadu Buhari of the APC received a total of 15 424 921 votes, emerging victorious in the keenly-contested election. Incumbent President Jonathan of PDP received 12 853 162 votes, clinching second position.



General Buhari won the election with a 2 511 759 margin of lead. General Buhari's votes translate to 52.4% of the total votes cast at the election, which stood at 29 432 083, whereas Jonathan's votes translate to 43.7% of the national votes.

The election recorded a disappointing voter turnout of 47.1%, lower than the 51.7% recorded in the 2011 presidential poll. Tables 2 and 3 below present a summary of the detailed results of the election.

**Table 2**  
**Summary of official results of 2015 presidential election**

S/N	Candidate	Party	Votes Received
1.	BUHARI, Muhammadu	APC	15 424 921
2.	JONATHAN, Goodluck	PDP	12 853 162
3.	AYENI, Musa	APA	53 537
4.	GALADIMA, Ganiyu	ACPN	40 311
5.	EKE, Sam	CPP	36 300
6.	SALAU, Rafiu	AD	30 673
7.	AHMAD, Mani	ADC	29 666
8.	CHINEDU, Kelvin	PPN	24 475
9.	ONOVO, Martin	NCP	24 455
10.	ANIFOWOSE-KELANI, Tunde	AA	22 125
11.	OKORIE, Chekwas	UPP	18 220
12.	SONAIYA, Oluremi	KOWA	13 076
13.	OKOYE, Godson	UDP	9 208
14.	OWURU, Ambrose	HOPE	7 435

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, 2015

**Table 3**  
**Breakdown of votes cast**

Total Number of Registered Voters	67 422 005
Total Number of Accredited Voters	31 746 490
Total Number of Valid Votes	28 587 564
Total Number of Rejected Votes	844 519
Total Number of Votes Cast	29 432 083

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, 2015

Of the fourteen candidates who contested the 2015 election, only three, namely President Jonathan, General Buhari and Chief Martin Onovo, had been in the 2011 race. While General Buhari had run on the platform of the CPC (one of the four parties that later merged to form the APC), Onovo had been the standard bearer of the AA in the 2011 presidential vote, which was won by President Jonathan of the PDP.

The 2015 presidential election recorded a total of 844 519 rejected or voided votes. This represented 2.87% of all votes cast. While this figure may seem statistically trivial, it is electorally consequential as it is higher than the total number of votes recorded in about 24 states of the Federation, including the Federal Capital Territory.

Kano State recorded the highest number of votes cast, at 2 172 447, while the Federal Capital Territory recorded the lowest number at 316 015 votes cast. Lagos State had the highest number of rejected votes at 52 289, representing 3.49% of the total votes cast for the state. Total votes cast in Lagos State stood at 1 495 975. Bayelsa State, home state of President Jonathan, had the least number of rejected votes at 4 672, representing 1.26% of total votes for the oil-rich state. Total votes cast in Bayelsa State stood at 371 739.

Gender analysis of the results shows that among the fourteen presidential contestants, only one was a woman: Comfort Oluremi Sonaiya, a professor of French and applied linguistics. She ran on the platform of KOWA Party, and came twelfth in the election with a total of 13 076 votes, representing 0.04% of all votes cast. Mrs Sonaiya's performance paints a grim picture of the prospects of mainstreaming gender in Nigerian politics.

Three main reasons can be advanced for the defeat of President Jonathan and his party at the presidential election. First, and arguably the most important reason, was the apparent declining popularity of the Jonathan presidency. The failure of the administration to decisively tackle bureaucratic corruption or manage the national economy, in a manner that would effectively arrest the worsening economic conditions of the masses, seriously challenged the legitimacy of the regime. In addition, the seeming helplessness of the administration in the face of the growing insurgency in the north-eastern parts of the country was another contributory factor in the defeat of Jonathan. It was widely believed that Boko Haram insurgents had comprehensively overwhelmed government troops and that without external assistance, the extremist group could have seized the entire north-eastern states.

In addition to the regime-specific failures of the Jonathan presidency, the PDP went into the crucial elections as an organisationally-distressed party. The party had been seized by a severe internal crisis shortly after Alhaji Bamanga Tukur assumed national party chairmanship in 2012, and never recovered from this

crisis – despite the forced resignation of Alhaji Tukur in 2014. The crisis deepened with the adoption of President Jonathan as the sole presidential candidate for the PDP by its National Working Committee (NWC).

Perhaps the most damaging fallout of the crisis was the exit of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo from the party, touted by its members as the largest political party in Africa. After drawn-out speculations about his commitment to the party, the former leader finally dumped the PDP a few weeks prior to the crucial 2015 elections, and he did so in a dramatic manner: he tore up his PDP membership card in public! To keen observers and analysts of the politics of the 2015 elections, Obasanjo's action was both symbolic and ominous, coming on the eve of a crucial election.

The third contributory factor that could explain the defeat of the PDP was the penetrating manner in which the opposition APC carried its message of 'Change' to Nigerians. They depicted the PDP as a corrupt party formulating harsh economic policies that have unleashed untold hardship on most Nigerians. From one campaign rally to another, and through the use of social media, leaders of APC urged voters to support 'Change' to a better Nigeria and to reject a continuity of national woes.

Thus, in a profound way, the performance deficit of the Jonathan administration fed into the deafening shout of 'Change!' across the polity. The consequence was the resounding victory of the APC.

Analyst Lasisi (2015), for example, attributes Buhari's electoral success to his personal qualities of 'integrity and doggedness', which he used as weapons in the electoral battle. These sterling qualities became handy to survive the barrage of hate campaigns mounted by President Jonathan's support groups, including his wife, Patience.

In stark contrast to the pre-election apprehension, the country did not witness any serious breakdown of law and order in the post-election period. President Jonathan, even if reluctantly, conceded defeat and congratulated General Buhari.

Worth mentioning are the efforts of the international community, including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, and the International Criminal Court, aimed at ensuring post-election stability in the country.

## THE TRIUMPH, THE EXPECTATIONS AND THE CHALLENGES

The electoral victory of General Buhari is significant for two main reasons. One, his triumph marks the first time the phenomenon of power alternation took place in the democratic history of Africa's largest democracy. Two, it was also the first time an incumbent president would lose a re-election bid.

The nationwide jubilation and celebration that accompanied the declaration of General Buhari as the winner of 2015 presidential election points to an important fact: the outcome of the election substantially reflected the pattern of voting during the election. Indeed, the Nigerian voters could be regarded as the most critical faction of the national alliance that ousted the Jonathan presidency from power. Having consciously and strongly used their franchise to effect the regime change they desired, it is legitimate that they expect dividends from that electoral revolution. Having waited a long time for the change, they may have little patience to wait any longer.

Thus, the incoming Buhari presidency needs to be proactive in managing the expectations of the Nigerian people before they degenerate into rising frustrations, which could result in the breakdown of the pre-election alliance. A crisis of expectations, if not creatively managed, could adversely impact on the legitimacy of the new regime. One analyst aptly captured the contradiction, saying:

... given the scale of the rot left by Dr Jonathan and his team, and the drastic remedies the winner will need to administer very deeply and quickly, the infatuation between the voters and the APC could very well quickly turn into frustration, or worse, repudiation.

(Akinlotan, 2015)

It is gratifying that the enormity of the issue at hand was not lost on the person who symbolises democratic revolution in Nigeria. General Buhari, in his post-election acceptance speech, said:

I realise that the expectation of our people today is as high as their commitment to change has been strong, and their belief in us, unshaken. While we pledge to begin doing our best without delay, we would like to appeal to them to appreciate the gravity of our situation, so that we become more realistic in our expectation.

Among their other expectations, Nigerians expect the new regime to design policies aimed at improving their material conditions, having been impoverished by the economic agenda of the Jonathan administration. They also expect the new government to embark on institutional renewal, wage a strong war against corruption, initiate the reform of the justice sector, work for increased constitutionalism and more responsible governance, and encourage greater government–citizen engagement.

Improving the material conditions of the citizenry requires repositioning of the national economy. Rated as Africa's biggest economy, Nigeria paradoxically

remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Growing poverty in the country challenges official claims of impressive economic growth. It will also require fixing the power sector and ensuring adequate protection of lives and property.

Institutional rebirth is imperative against the backdrop of institutional decay that has been witnessed in the country over the years. The zero-sum character of Nigerian politics, the 'do or die' approach of the Nigerian politicians, and the desperate bid to retain power demonstrated by the Jonathan presidency have greatly compromised many public institutions, particularly the military and public media. Corruption, as a national challenge, has not only diverted public resources that could have been deployed into infrastructural and other pro-poor projects into private pockets, but has also rendered ineffective, or comatose, other critical sectors of the economy.

For instance, in spite of the billions of naira invested to improve the power sector by successive administrations, rather than this huge investment translating into light, darkness has been unleashed on hapless Nigerians. In a probe instituted by the lower chamber of the Federal Legislature on the power sector in 2009, the House Committee on Power found that many of the Independent Power Projects (IPP) never took off, despite huge contract sums paid by the government (Animashaun 2010, p. 44).

Crackdowns on independent media, disregard of court orders, and misuse of state instruments for coercion were among the assaults on constitutionalism that were perpetrated by the Jonathan administration. Such occurrences almost put the nation on the road to fascism. It is interesting to note that the new Vice-President, Yemi Oshinbajo, is a professor and teacher of law. He will be expected to bring his deep knowledge and practise of the law to bear in the conduct of government business. Indeed, he will be expected to moderate the dictatorial instincts of the president as a retired army general.

It would be naïve to assume that the efforts of the Buhari presidency at national rebirth would not be marked by challenges. Paths to governance renewal in all climes are beset by challenges. The parlous state of the Nigerian economy will be a potent challenge to the aspirations of the new government. The regime inherited a sick economy that was troubled by dwindling national revenue, occasioned by low oil prices. This scenario is further aggravated by a drop in the external savings of the country. Nigeria's external reserve was placed at \$29.79-billion in March 2015, down from \$31.35-billion (4.9%) in February of the same year.

The second challenge is how President Buhari will assemble a team comprising nationalistic, altruistic, patriotic and committed individuals imbued with a deep sense of public service. This unusual time demands an unusual team, populated by people of proven integrity and tested competence, who will approach the national rebuilding project with an uncommon passion.

The new men and women of power would have to redefine the essence of state power and shift away from the entrenched perception of state power as an instrument of primitive accumulation. If the new government is able to overcome these challenges, the country may well be on the path of economic and political renaissance.

### LESSONS LEARNT

The most important lesson to be drawn from the 2015 presidential vote in Nigeria is that when a people resolutely decides to effect revolutionary change, no amount of effort by the reactionary forces can abort such a determined move. The outcome of the 2015 presidential election profoundly demonstrates the strength of the collective will of the Nigerian people to put a stop to the old order. They did so emphatically and successfully in spite of the overwhelming odds.

Another major lesson from the presidential and parliamentary elections is that having access to considerable funds does not always win elections. Despite the massive material resources at the disposal of President Jonathan, including the electoral advantage offered by the power of incumbency, he lost his bid for re-election. The same fate befell some sitting governors who contested but lost parliamentary elections in their respective states. These governors included those of Bauchi, Benue and Niger States. What these electoral upsets suggest is that financial muscle alone does not win elections (Ojo 2015).

Furthermore, the success recorded in the management of the 2015 Nigeria elections has shown that with sufficient resources and the requisite institutional autonomy, INEC could deliver credible elections whose outcomes reflect the voting preferences of the people. The series of reforms undertaken by the election oversight body, including the use of PVC and SCR, and the transparent manner in which the elections were managed, not only ensured that the votes were properly counted but also enhanced the integrity of the elections. This was confirmed by the reports of both local and foreign election observers who monitored the polls.

For instance, in its First Preliminary Statement on the 2015 Nigeria Elections issued on 30 March 2015, the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM) reported that, while the elections tested the Nigerian electoral arrangements, INEC made commendable efforts at strengthening the electoral arrangements and there was 'no evidence of systematic manipulations'.

In the same vein, in its preliminary statement released on 30 March 2015, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) noted that voting and counting of ballots showed remarkable improvements in efficiency and adherence to procedures that enhanced the transparency and integrity of the exercise.

*Punch*, in its editorial titled 'Buhari, Dawn of a New Era', described the



2015 general elections as 'a marked improvement on past elections where logistical, ethical and administrative issues dented the integrity of polling and made Nigeria a laughing stock around the world...' (*Punch*, 1 April 2015). The institutional efficiency exhibited by INEC in respect of the 2015 elections, if sustained, would serve as an asset for the election management body in its management of future elections.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Two issues should bother the scholarly community as the euphoria of the success of the 2015 elections winds down. First, the disappointing voter turnout at the election should be a subject of intellectual scrutiny. There is a tendency to explain away the poor voter turnout that marked the presidential and parliamentary polls by reference to the apprehension that preceded the first round of the 2015 elections. However, given the relative peace and low incidence of violence during the national elections, 'voter disappearance' – which characterised the second leg of the elections (state elections) – suggests that little importance should be attached to a single factor, such as violence, in explaining voter apathy.

The challenge to political scientists is to understand the overarching explanatory variables that influence political participation, specifically that of voting during elections. Thus, empirical investigations need to be undertaken in order to offer scientifically valid explanations for the voter apathy in such historic elections. The central objective of the empirical study should not only be to explain decreasing voter turnout, but to establish why voter turnout was so low in the first instance. Fewer than 50% of accredited voters supplied General Buhari's mandate.

Admittedly, global democracy is facing a crisis of participation, deriving largely from voter disillusionment with party democracy. The consequence of this, as observed by Newton and Norris (2000, p. 71) is the disengagement of citizens from the political process, and a decline in levels of citizen confidence in political leadership and democratic institutions. However, in respect of the 2015 Nigeria elections, the disappointingly low voter turnout is worrisome especially because the presidential election was the most closely and keenly contested since the re-inauguration of constitutional rule in 1999.

In addition, voter apathy occurred despite the commendable mobilisation and voter education efforts of the INEC, National Orientation Agency (NOA), political parties and civil society organisations.

The second issue that requires scholarly analysis is violence during the elections. Although the incidence of violence was low, government must take appropriate punitive actions against all those who were implicated in the pockets

of violence recorded during the elections. While violence did not occur on the large scale that was feared before the elections, those who were involved in the few incidents should be brought to justice. This would help to deter future merchants of violence. It would also help to restore citizens' confidence in the state's capacity to enforce its own laws. Available evidence suggests that the culture of impunity is an entrenched feature of electoral competition in Nigeria.

The Bolarinwa Babalakin Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the activities of the former Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) in 1986, for example, lamented that 'the abuse of the nolle prosequi and pardons' by the government encouraged lawlessness during the 1979 and 1983 election periods (FGN 1986, p.10). Similarly, the Sheikh Lemu panel instituted by the Federal Government to investigate the post-election violence that erupted in Nigeria after the 2011 presidential election, documents that

[T]here was not a single arrest of any person in connection with those killings in Kaduna State South Senatorial District. This raised very great concerns on why or how this happened or what guarantees there are to prevent such terrible killings in the future.

(FGN 2012, p. 217)

The importance of these examples is that the lack of a strong will on the part of the state to directly confront the conundrum of political violence is a major explanation for the continuation of violence in the political and social life of the country. Among other instruments, Nigeria is not lacking in elaborate laws designed to check political and electoral violence, as evidenced by several provisions in the 1999 Constitution, as amended. These include the 2010 Electoral Act, as amended, and the Code of Conduct for political parties. What has been tragically absent is the strict enforcement of these provisions with a view to sanctioning perpetrators of violence for their dastardly acts (Ojo 2015). This enforcement deficit represents a huge challenge to the new administration in Nigeria.

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- Use sparingly. Use capitals in people's titles (e.g. President Zuma) but not as a generic (e.g. the president called on the security forces to intervene).
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### Abbreviations

The first time a term is used, write it in full, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. On subsequent use, refer to the abbreviation only:

- The African National Congress (ANC) issued a statement that ... .  
An ANC spokesperson declined to comment further.
- Avoid starting a sentence with an abbreviation if possible. Often the insertion of 'The' avoids this problem.

### Gender pronouns

Avoid using male pronouns (he, his, him) as a generic. Most sentences can be reworded to use a neutral plural pronoun (they, their, them) or to exclude gender pronouns. If gender pronouns are used, write 'he or she' (not 'he/she') and 'his or her' (not 'his/her'). Examples of acceptable use are:

- Each participant provided **his or her** opinion on the draft policy.
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- According to Merton (2010), governments should ensure ...
- However, the results are often hotly contested (Merton 2010, p. 3).
- According to Merton **and** Brink (2012), governments should ensure ... **[no ampersand '&' in the main text, only in brackets]**
- Some studies have examined the role of young voters in ... (Goodall 2013; Merton & Brink 2012) **[Alphabetical order of names, not date order.** Also note the use of '&' in brackets.]

- A third of young adults are jobless (Merton, Mogale & Brink 2013, p. 56) [**first citation only: list all authors' names**; do not use et al. On later citations, use et al. – e.g. Merton et al. 2013]
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- Merton (2010) states that 'Governments should ensure ...' (p. 4).
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### Reference style

#### Books

Butler, A 2004, *Contemporary South Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.  
 Southall, R & Petlane, T 1995, *Democratisation and demilitarisation in Lesotho: the general election of 1993 and its aftermath*, Africa Institute, Pretoria.  
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Giliomee, H & Simkins C (eds) 1999, *The awkward embrace: one party – dominance and democracy*, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

*Chapters in edited collections*

Richards, KC 1997, 'Views on globalization', in HL Vivaldi (ed), *Australia in a global world*, Century, North Ryde NSW.

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*Newspaper articles*

*Australian* 2014, 'Greek PM calls risky election' 10 December, p. 9. **[The in-text citation here would be: *Australian* 10 December 2014]**

Hilts, PJ 1999, 'In forecasting their emotions, most people flunk out', *The New York Times* 16 February. Available at <<http://www.nytimes.com>>. [19 February 2000]. **[In-text citation would be: Hilts 1999]**

