

# Review of Electoral Systems and Democratisation in Southern Africa

by

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## Introduction

That democratic governance is one of the current key development challenges facing the world in general and Southern Africa in particular is indisputable (Huntington, 1991; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Ake, 1996; Hyslop, 1999; Ake, 2000; UNDP, 2002). Although the entire world has witnessed impressive progress towards democratic governance following the collapse of the ideological bipolarity of the Cold War era, enormous challenges still exist. It is thus gratifying to recognise that even within United Nations circles the issue of democratic governance is currently being made a focal policy issue, the idea being that member states will be encouraged to reform their political systems. It is therefore fitting that the UNDP Human Development Report of 2002 focuses on democratic governance and human development under an appropriate theme "Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World". The UNDP poignantly observes that:

around the world, more people are recognising that governance matters for development – that institutions, rules and political processes play a big role in whether economies grow, whether children go to school, whether human development moves forward or back. So, promoting human development is not just a social, economic and technological challenge; *it is also an institutional and political challenge.* (UNDP, 2002: 51; my emphasis)

The world-wide transformation towards democratisation and commitment to democratic rule by governments and other critical policy actors has not left Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular untouched. Hyslop reminds us that

in the 1990s Africa appeared to be poised between two possibilities for its future. On the one hand there was the apparent success of South Africa's democratic transition; on the other hand the path of disaster typified by events in Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire and the surrounding region. The early 1990s had brought a wave of democratisation to the continent; by mid-decade, however, it remained unclear whether there was a decisive change or merely a superficial shift. (1999: 1)

This phenomenal development, which the renowned American political scientist, Samuel Huntington (1991), prefers to term the Third Wave, has expressed itself through recent commitments by African governments to embrace democratic rule through various continental and regional initiatives. At the continental level, the newly established African Union (AU), which was formally launched in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002, has openly committed member states to democratic governance, which will be monitored from time to time through peer review. Inextricably linked to this is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) – a continental socio-economic and political revival plan pioneered by Presidents Thabo Mbeki (South Africa), Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria), Abdulaye Wade (Senegal) and Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria) – which was unanimously adopted by the OAU Summit in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2001 and further embraced wholesale by the AU Summit in South Africa in 2002. The NEPAD initiative unequivocally states that the key pre-requisites for sustainable development in Africa are:

- Peace, security, democracy and political governance initiatives; and
- Economic and corporate governance initiatives.

This perspective is also shared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which has initiated various country studies to monitor progress towards democratic governance in the continent with the ultimate aim of producing the first ever continental report on governance in Africa (a report that will, incidentally, come in handy for the AU peer review process).

At the regional level, Southern African states have made impressive strides towards democratic governance since the 1990s. Somolekae aptly captures this transformation as follows:

In Southern Africa, the end of one party rule in countries like Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia, as well as the end of minority rule in South Africa and Namibia have all marked the ushering in of [a] new era of hope and renewal. Although the current situation in the DRC and Angola constitutes a notable setback in the region, there is still reason to believe that the democratisation wave which has been sweeping the region since the 1990s has not lost momentum. (2002: 187)

Somolekae's understandable optimism is vindicated, and indeed validated, by the commitment of the Southern African states themselves to democratic governance mainly through the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Treaty signed in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1992. The SADC Treaty states that the major objectives of the regional integration scheme will include the following:

- Evolution of common political values, systems and institutions;
- Promotion of peace and security; and
- Strengthening and consolidation of long-standing historical, social and cultural affinities and links among the peoples of the region.

It is against this continental and regional backdrop that we are better positioned to appreciate the strides made thus far by SADC member states towards democratic governance and identify key challenges that still bedevil their political systems. Like various other parts of the world, the Southern Africa region is undergoing a profound political transformation. The era of authoritarianism of either a civilian or military variety which marked the region's political landscape during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s has been eclipsed by an era of multi-party political liberalisation. However, whether political liberalisation is synonymous with democratic consolidation still remains a moot point. It is also arguable that, indeed, sustainable democracy already exists in Southern Africa and has begun to be consolidated. Most importantly, this political liberalisation underway in the region is fundamentally steeped in and steered towards the Western-type liberal democracy in a majority of the states and has indeed become part of the political conditionality of aid by Western donors upon whom these states so overwhelmingly depend for economic survival. This raises an important question as to the form and content of democratic changes in the SADC region. Who drives the democratisation process in Southern Africa? Is liberal democracy an appropriate democratic model for the region, which is in accord with the dominant political culture in most SADC member states? If not, then does the region need to steer its political system towards a social democratic model as suggested by the renowned Nigerian social scientist, the late Claude Ake (1996; Ake, 2000)? Who determines the form and substance of the democratic process? Who sets the rules for the current political change in the region? What are the roles and responsibilities of internal forces and external actors in the process of democratisation? Do electoral systems add any value to the democratisation process? Anyway, does the region need to hold regular elections for democracy to be nurtured and consolidated? These are complex questions each of which would require a separate article for a comprehensive discussion. However, for the

purpose of the present discussion, we focus mainly on the last two questions only in order to establish the impact of elections and electoral systems on democratisation.

This paper aims to discover possible linkages and interfaces between electoral systems and the democratisation process. The discussion takes the following form: the next section provides an overview of elections and governance; section three presents an outline and some analysis of various electoral systems globally and throughout the SADC region; this is followed in section four by a comparative analysis of the more dominant electoral systems in the region, namely the constituency electoral system or what is commonly known as the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system and proportional representation (PR) system; and the conclusion wraps up the discussion by summing up the key assumptions and observations made in the paper. In the concluding section, a thought-provoking (and perhaps also controversial) proposal is made for SADC states to deliberately transform their electoral systems towards some form of the mixed member proportionality (MMP) system. The most compelling rationale for this proposal is that the adoption of a common electoral model for the region would deepen regional integration in the political arena, which is also a crucial determinant for economic integration (see SAPES/UNDP/SADC, 2000). Furthermore, a more harmonised electoral system on a regional scale would also be helpful for the regional states to monitor and peer review each other in terms of progress (or lack thereof) towards democratisation in line with the SADC Treaty signed in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1992.

## **Overview of Elections and Governance**

It is widely accepted that elections are a crucial, albeit not the only, ingredient of democratic transformation. The value of an election to a democracy is either enhanced or reduced depending on the nature of an electoral model/system being used. Whereas an election is basically a *process* of choosing leaders, an electoral system is a *method* or instrument of expressing that choice and translating votes into parliamentary seats.

As the region made strides in its transition from war and violent conflict towards peace and reconciliation in the 1990s, yet another transformation was underway: the transformation from mono-party, one-person and military rule towards political pluralism and multi-party democratic governance. Among various other key ingredients of this transformation are the holding of regular elections and electoral systems that undergird the electoral process itself. All regional states have embraced the practice of regular multi-party elections bar two, namely (a) the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and (b) Swaziland. Although Botswana and Mauritius have managed to institutionalise regular multi-party elections since their political independence, a majority of the SADC member states embraced multi-party elections since the 1990s. Zambia showed the way in its epochal multi-party election of 1991, which saw the demise of *de jure* one-party rule. In countries like Namibia (1989), Mozambique (1994) and South Africa (1994) elections played a more profound role as they acted as conflict resolution instruments while ensuring peace, reconciliation, democracy and stability. In Lesotho (1993), the election acted as a midwife for the birth of civilian rule marked by a fragile democracy following a military interregnum of about eight (8) years. The only major setback was the aborted election in Angola (1992) which failed to resolve the protracted violent conflict. However, following the death of the UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, early in 2002, prospects for peace, reconciliation and stability in Angola are much brighter, and elections could possibly be held in 2004. Table 1 below provides a snapshot of the electoral process in the SADC region in the recent past.

**Table 1:SADC Elections Calendar**

Country	Last Parl. Election	Next Parl. Election	Nature of Legislature	Size of Legislature	Ruling Party
Angola	1992	Not Known	Unicameral	220	MPLA
Botswana	1999	2004	Bicameral	47	BDP
DR Congo	1993	Not Known	Dissolved	210	Trans. Gvt
Lesotho	2002	2007	Bicameral	120	LCD
Malawi	1999	2004	Unicameral	177	UDF
Mauritius	2000	2005	Unicameral	70	MMS & MSM
Mozambique	1999	2004	Unicameral	250	Frelimo
Namibia	1999	2004	Bicameral	104	SWAPO
Seychelles	1998	2003	Unicameral	35	SPPF
South Africa	1999	2004	Bicameral	400	ANC
Swaziland	1998	2003	Bicameral	65	Exec. Monarch
Tanzania	2000	2005	Unicameral	231	CCM
Zambia	2001	2006	Unicameral	159	MMD
Zimbabwe	2000	2005	Unicameral	150	ZANU-PF

**Source: SAPES Trust Databank**

**Key:**

- MPLA Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola
- BDP Botswana Democratic Party
- LCD Lesotho Congress for Democracy
- UDF United Democratic Front
- MMM Mauritian Militant Movement
- MSM Militant Socialist Movement
- FRELIMO Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
- SWAPO South West Africa People's Organisation
- SPPP Seychelles Peoples' Progressive Party
- ANC African National Congress
- CCM Chama Cha Mapinduzi
- MMD Movement for Multi-Party Democracy
- ZANU-PF Zimbabwe African National Union Popular Front.

Elections refer to a process by which people (variously referred to as voters, the electorate or the governed) periodically choose their national and/or local leaders to manage public affairs on their behalf. Elections therefore serve the following functions:

- they provide a routine mechanism for recruiting and selecting individuals to occupy seats in representative institutions;
- they provide periodic opportunities to review the government's record, assess its mandate, and replace it with an alternative;
- they accord the elected government domestic and international legitimacy as well as moral title to rule;
- they also act as agents of political socialisation and political integration, providing a unifying focus for the country (Jackson and Jackson, 1999: 366).

Elections take place on the basis of certain accepted procedures, rules and modalities that are peculiar to individual countries in Southern Africa. It is a combination of the legal and the institutional framework for elections. The legal and institutional set-up is commonly referred to as the *administrative system* of elections. The management and administration of elections is commonly the responsibility of the election management bodies as depicted in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in the SADC Region**

Country	Nature of EMB	Nature of Appointment	Tenure
Angola	-	-	-
Botswana	Independent Electoral Commission	Nominated by an all-party Conference	No term limit
D.R. Congo	-	-	-
Lesotho	Independent Electoral Commission	Established by the Constitution and appointed by the King	3 years
Malawi	Independent Electoral Commission	Established by the Electoral Commission Act and appointed by the President	Term ends 30 days after election results
Mauritius	Electoral Supervisory Commission	Established by the Constitution	5 years
Mozambique	National Electoral Commission	Established by the electoral law	Term ends 120 days after elections
Namibia	National Electoral Commission	Established by the Constitution and appointed by the President	5 years
Seychelles	One Commissioner	Established by the Constitution and appointed by the President	7 years
South Africa	Independent Electoral Commission	Established by the Constitution and appointed by the President	7 years
Swaziland	Electoral Committee	Appointed by the King	-
Tanzania	National Election Commission	Established by the Constitution and appointed by the President	5 years
Zambia	Independent Electoral Commission	Established by the Constitution and appointed by the President	7 years
Zimbabwe	Electoral Supervisory Commission	Established by the Electoral Act and appointed by the President	....

**Source:** Electoral Institute of Southern Africa

The administrative framework is combined with the procedures, rules and regulations that govern the manner in which voters exercise their choice and legislators occupy their seats in parliament. A combination of these procedures, rules and regulations is commonly referred to as the *electoral system*. Although this paper does touch on the administrative machinery for elections where appropriate, it focuses primarily on the electoral system. The choice of an electoral system is crucial for the credibility of the electoral process, the acceptability of the election outcome and, of course, the legitimacy of rule itself. To be sure, the credibility of the process, the acceptability of the outcome and internal and international legitimacy of the rulers are all important ingredients for political stability in any given country. Whereas elections simply accord the electorate a right to choose their representatives in the legislature, the electoral system sets specific systemic rules, which determine “who votes and how votes are counted” (Jackson and Jackson, 1999: 371). An electoral system thus determines the manner and pattern in which votes are matched with the allocation of seats in parliament. An electoral system is therefore “a method of converting votes cast by electors into seats in a legislature. Electoral systems thus are practical instruments through which notions such as consent and representation are translated into reality” (Asmal and de Ville, 1994: 2).

### **The Essence of Electoral Systems for Democracy in Southern Africa**

An electoral system refers to a method that a given country adopts for choosing national leaders. It encompasses procedures, rules and regulations for the electorate to exercise their right to vote, and determines how elected Members of Parliament (MPs) occupy

their allocated seats in the legislature. Procedures, rules and regulations governing elections are commonly defined by both national constitutions and specific electoral laws. The administrative obligations and management of elections are the responsibility of specific public institutions (see table 2) assigned this task either as government departments (as in Zimbabwe) or as independent electoral commissions (as in South Africa). There are many electoral systems throughout the world and there is little consensus as to which is best for democratic governance and political stability. Each country adopts an electoral system that best suits its own political traditions, culture, history and party systems. As Jackson and Jackson aptly observe, "each political system offers certain benefits and disadvantages in terms of the representation of different groups in society" (1997: 371).

**Table 3: Types of Electoral Systems and Representation**

Electoral System	Constituency Representation	Party Representation
Single-Member Plurality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintains traditional link between representative and constituents</li> <li>● Representatives often elected on a minority of total votes (wasted vote thesis)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distortion of votes/seats ratio</li> <li>● Minor parties disadvantaged unless support is regionally concentrated</li> <li>● Discourages multiplication of parties; tendency to two-party system; one party; dominant party system</li> </ul>
Single-Member Majoritarian (a) Alternative Vote (AV) (b) Second Ballot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Both maintain traditional link between representative and constituents</li> <li>● In both cases representatives usually elected by a majority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distortion of votes/seats ratio</li> <li>● "Wasted vote" thesis does not apply; small parties survive even if unsuccessful</li> <li>● Tendency toward multi-party system</li> </ul>
Proportional Representation (PR) (a) Party List (b) Single Transferable Vote (STV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Individual representatives usually owe election more to party than to voters</li> <li>● Representatives forced to compete for "first preference" votes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Approximate congruence between vote shares and seat allocations</li> <li>● Minor parties usually gain "fair" representation; easy entry for new parties</li> <li>● Tendency toward multi-party systems</li> </ul>
Mixed Plurality/PR = Mixed Member Proportionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintains traditional link between representative and constituents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Approximate congruence between vote shares and seat allocation</li> <li>● Minor parties usually gain "fair" representation</li> </ul>

**Source:** Jackson and Jackson, 1997.

Globally, four main types of electoral systems exist: single-member plurality (SMP), single-member majoritarian (SMM), proportional representation (PR) and mixed members proportionality (MMP) with multiple variations within and permutations amongst them. The essence of each of these systems is summed up in table 3 above, which highlights their distinctiveness in terms of constituency representation and party representation.

The political history of Southern Africa and the concomitant political culture have had a significant impact on the nature of electoral systems that individual states have adopted since the independence period. The majority of Southern African states were under British colonial rule and upon independence they adopted the Westminster constitution and the political arrangements that go with it. It should be noted in this regard that very few Southern African states have thus far taken a deliberate effort to adopt an electoral system of their own choice involving popular internal consultations. Those that have include South Africa, Namibia and, recently, Lesotho. The rest of the SADC member states operate electoral systems that are part of the legacy of the inherited political and constitutional arrangements left behind by the departing colonialists in the 1960s.

Consequently, the British single-member plurality or the first-past-the-post electoral system has become a dominant political feature of elections in the SADC region given that Britain was indeed the dominant colonial power in the region. Table 4 clearly illustrates the different electoral models used in the SADC region.

**Table 4: Electoral System, Size of Legislature and Nature of Representation**

Country	Electoral System	Size of Legislative	No. Ruling Party Seats	% Ruling Party Seats	Appointed Seats
Angola	FPTP	220	129	53.7	0
Botswana	FPTP	47	33	54.2	7
DR Congo	FPTP	210	-	-	-
Lesotho	MMP	120	79	66.0	0
Malawi	FPTP	192	93	47.3	0
Mauritius	Mixed	66	54	51.7	4
Mozambique	PR	250	133	53.0	0
Namibia	PR	104	55	76.1	6
Seychelles	Mixed	34	30	61.7	0
South Africa	PR	400	266	66.4	0
Swaziland	FPTP	85	-	-	30
Tanzania	FPTP	274	244	89.1	42
Zambia	FPTP	158	69	46.0	8
Zimbabwe	FPTP	150	63	53.0	30

Source: SAPES Trust Data Bank

It is worth noting that the electoral systems that Southern African states have adopted are not a product of public debate and broadly based internal political consensus. The stark reality is that electoral systems in the region were “generally hardly ever debated and carefully chosen on the basis of consensus among political players and the population at large” (Molutsi, 1999: 9-10). Independent Southern African states have simply inherited these systems from the colonial rulers together with other constitutional frameworks (Matlosa, 1999). It is not surprising, therefore, that out of fourteen (14) SADC states, eight (8) operate the FPTP system, given that Britain was a dominant colonial power in the region. Only three (3) member states of the SADC, namely Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa, have adopted proportional representation (PR), while three (3) others – Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles – operate some combination of the first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR). The distinctions between the FPTP and proportional representation as dominant electoral systems in Southern Africa are worth considering. It is to these that the next section now turns.

### **The First-Past-the-Post and Proportional Representation Electoral Systems: A Comparative Perspective**

#### **1. The First-Past-the-Post System**

The First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) or single-member plurality system is the simplest of the electoral systems in the world. It is also the most commonly used electoral model, and draws on the traditions of liberal democracy in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada. Of the 52 states in Africa, 18 – mostly former British colonies – use the First-Past-the-Post electoral system. In the Southern African region this system is used by Botswana, the DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Tanzania, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The principal tenets of this system are many and varied. First, a country is divided into relatively equal constituencies from which only one representative is chosen to occupy a parliamentary seat on behalf of that constituency. It is as a result of this tenet that the

FPTP is reputed for ensuring the accountability of the MP to his/her constituency. This is one of its major strengths vis-à-vis other electoral systems. Second, candidates contesting an election in constituencies stand in their own right as individuals and not as political parties even if their candidature is endorsed by parties. This feature of the FPTP is often misunderstood by politicians and this leads to serious problems, especially during the primary elections, emanating from conflict between constituencies and party leadership on choice of candidates. This usually results in intra-party squabbles, faction-fighting and at times even a rupture of parties into fragmented splinter groups (witness this problem in Lesotho (1998) and Zimbabwe (2000)). Disgruntled party faithfuls have had to stand as independent candidates while in some instances parties have made a ruling that they will not place candidates because the disagreements had not been resolved even by the courts of law. Third, this electoral system allows for independent candidates to contest elections in their own right. Fourth, the winner of an election contest in any constituency may secure a simple plurality of votes and not necessarily the majority of votes and this leads to winners by minority votes both at the constituency level as well as the national level. Neither the candidates themselves, nor the parties that endorse these candidates, need an absolute majority of votes to form a government. This situation leads to the all-pervasive problem of 'wasted votes' whereby a considerable proportion of votes does not form part of the calculation for the election outcome. There is no more vivid demonstration in recent times of a minority government brought about by the FPTP system than the 2001 parliamentary election in Zambia. Table 5 depicts a situation in which the ruling Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) won election on a paltry 44% of the votes cast. Surely if a government wins an election on less than 50% of total valid votes, this simply becomes a pyrrhic victory and constitutes disenfranchisement and wasted votes.

**Table 5: Zambia Parliamentary Election results 2001**

Party	Seats	%
Agenda for Zambia (AZ)	0	0
Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD)	13	9
Heritage Party (HP)	4	3
Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD)	62	43.66
National Christian Coalition (NCC)	0	0
National Leadership for Development (NLD)	0	0
Patriotic Front (PF)	1	1
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	0	0
United Party for National Development (UPND)	47	33
United National Independence Party (UNIP)	12	8
Zambia Alliance for Progress (ZAP)	0	0
Zambia Republican Party (ZRP)	2	1
Independents	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** Electoral Institute of Southern Africa

For instance, Lesotho's 1998 election and Botswana's 1999 election outcomes ignored the choice of almost 40 per cent and 46 per cent of voters, respectively, due to this system. Furthermore, this situation has undermined the legitimacy of governments in the region and has led to major conflicts, as the Lesotho case clearly demonstrates. The 1965 pre-independence election in Lesotho delivered a marginal victory for the Basutoland National Party (BNP), which won the election race on a minority vote of about 42 per cent of the total valid votes. It was no wonder that the BNP government suffered a severe legitimacy crisis afterwards. Hence the party was defeated by the opposition Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) in the subsequent election of 1970 in which the BCP won 50% of the total valid votes. However, the ruling party annulled the election,



declared a state of emergency and institutionalised authoritarian rule between 1970 and 1986, when it was dislodged from power by the military.

Fifth, given the very nature of this system it tends to unduly advantage dominant parties, and this leads to a one-party/dominant party system or a two-party system (duopoly). In the case of the dominant party scenario, witness for instance how the BDP has managed to stamp its political hegemony through this system in Botswana, yet the country has not been subjected to major political conflicts. Table 6 below illustrates the election results in Botswana between 1965 and 1999. Three important observations are worth noting from this data. The first is that, from the first election to the present, the BDP has entrenched its political hegemony over the Botswana polity through some form of a de facto one-party system. The second is that representation of parties in the Botswana national assembly is certainly not broadly inclusive and this also undermines oppositional politics. The third is that the unfettered political hegemony of the ruling BDP and the marginalisation of opposition parties tends to trigger a feeling of bitterness on the part of opposition politicians and a lack of confidence in the system. In the case of Lesotho, this has also resulted in overtly violent conflicts.

**Table 6: Botswana Parliamentary Election Results: 1965 – 1999**

Party	1965	1969	1974	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999
BDP	28	24	27	29	29	31	27	33
BPP	3	3	2	1	1	0	0	0
BIP	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
BNF	-	3	2	2	4	3	13	6
BPU	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>

Source: Molomo, 2000

The outcome of elections between 1965 and 1999 in Botswana vividly demonstrates the hegemony of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) in the context of a dominant party system anchored upon the FPTP electoral system and liberal democracy, as table 5 above clearly demonstrates.

Despite the fact that the FPTP electoral system in Botswana has not really led to openly violent political conflicts, it has ensured and entrenched the dominant party system in a way that excludes and marginalises other key actors in the political system. In this manner the foundations of Botswana's world-acclaimed liberal democracy still remain shaky. This explains in part Molomo's recent critique of Botswana's electoral model: "there are growing concerns in Botswana that while the FPTP electoral system has consolidated electoral competition in the country, it has in many respects denied the electorate the chance to shape their political future ... Democracy is ... about ensuring that electoral outcomes reflect the will of the people. The FPTP electoral system has fared poorly in this regard" (Molomo, 2000: 109). It is on the basis of the deficiencies of the FPTP that observers, including Molomo himself, have raised trenchant arguments for Botswana to reform its electoral system. According to Molomo, "what is desirable is the formulation of an electoral model that provides for an effective link between MPs and their Constituencies and also one that allocates seats in proportion to the popular vote" (2000: 118). His suggestion for an ideal alternative electoral model is the adoption of the mixed member proportionality (MMP) electoral system akin to the one that Lesotho has just adopted. For Botswana, this could mean that the current 40 constituencies are retained and contested on the basis of the FPTP to retain the accountability element.

Then the proportionality element could be addressed by the introduction of, say, 20 more seats “allocated on the basis of the party poll of the popular vote. This system would address both issues of linking MPs to particular constituencies and constituting a representative Parliament” (Molomo, 2000: 118).

**Table 7: Election Results in Lesotho: 1965 – 2002**

Year	Main Parties	No. of Votes	% of Votes	No. of Seats
1965	BNP	108 162	41.6	31
	BCP	103 050	39.7	25
	MFP	42 837	16.5	4
1970 (election annulled)	BCP	152 907	49.8	36
	BNP	120 686	42.2	23
	MFP	7 650	7.3	1
1993	BCP	398 355	74.7	65
	BNP	120 686	22.6	0
	MFP	7 650	1.4	0
1998	LCD	355 049	60.7	79
	BNP	143 073	24.5	1
	BCP	61 793	10.5	0
	MFP	7 460	1.3	0
2002	LCD	304 316	54.8	77
	BNP	124 234	22.4	21
	BAC	16 095	2.9	3
	BCP	14 584	2.7	3
	LPC	32 046	5.8	5
	NIP	30 346	5.5	5
	LWP	7 788	1.4	1
	MFP	6 890	1.2	1
	PFD	6 330	1.1	1
	NPP	3 985	0.7	1

**Source:** Matlosa and Akokpari, 2002

As with Botswana, the FPTP system has ensured a de facto one-party system in Lesotho (see table 7). However, unlike in Botswana where one-party hegemony has been sustained and reproduced under conditions of political stability, in Lesotho the reverse has been the case until the electoral reform of 2002. Despite the fact that they share common electoral systems, the difference between Lesotho and Botswana as regards political stability surely has to do with other factors – principally: (a) resource endowment; (b) political culture; and (c) institutionalisation of governance. All three factors have stood Botswana in good stead and nurtured its liberal democracy which today is globally acclaimed. In the case of Lesotho, lack of resources, political intolerance and the personalisation of governance have given rise to violent conflicts.

Table 7 above demonstrates how the FPTP system can also lead to a one-party parliament (particularly in the case of the 1993 elections), disenfranchising a considerable number of voters with adverse effects for democratisation and political stability. Although the conflicts that engulfed Lesotho after the 1993 and 1998 elections emanated from a multiplicity of factors, the electoral system had a role to play in this instability. Hence the government and the interim political authority have agreed on the reform of the electoral model towards the mixed member proportionality (MMP) system. This author contributed directly to the debate around Lesotho's electoral reform and was one of the proponents for the adoption of the MMP.

Although the FPTP system is conventionally regarded as critical for ensuring the political stability of the political system because it does not lend itself to coalition governments, in other countries it has helped accentuate already existing conflicts, as in Lesotho in 1993 and 1998 and in Tanzania in 2000. It is interesting, though, to note that the same system has not triggered major political conflicts in Botswana, for instance. The most interesting outcome of this system so far in the region is the ushering in of a possible two-party (duopoly) system scenario in the recent general election in Zimbabwe (see table 8).

**Table 8: Zimbabwe Parliamentary Election Results, 2000**

Party/Representation	Seats	%
ZANU-PF	62	51.7
<b>MDC</b>	57	47.5
Zanu-Ndonga	1	0.8
Non-constituency Parliament Members	12	
Provincial Governors	8	
Chiefs	10	
<b>Total</b>	150	100%

**Source:** Electoral Institute of Southern Africa

Of the total 120 elected parliamentary seats, the ruling ZANU-PF won a simple majority of 62 seats (about 49% of the total valid votes) while the main opposition, the MDC, secured 57 seats (about 46% of the total valid votes). ZANU-Ndonga came third with only one seat and less than 1% of the total valid votes. Only time will tell whether Zimbabwe will evolve into a two-party (duopoly) system as this outcome seems to suggest. The challenge for ZANU-PF is to play politics of accommodation that allows room for divergent opinion – including that which is highly critical of its own policies – within the framework of a multiparty system. On the part of the MDC, the major challenge is to prove that, beyond the election, it is a viable, vibrant and sustainable opposition party able to engage the dominant party constructively within the framework of politics of consensus. Both parties will play a crucial role in either making or breaking the seemingly emergent two-party (duopoly) system in Zimbabwe from which the region could learn significant lessons.

Sixth, the FPTP is also known for its marginalisation of smaller parties as it entrenches the hegemony of either one or two dominant parties. This feature has implications for the inclusivity and representativity of the legislature in its law-making and decision-making functions. It is generally accepted that the more inclusive and more representative the governance system, the more legitimate a government is in the eyes of the electorate. It is, in part, due to this system that opposition parties are generally weak, ineffective and fragmented in the countries using the FPTP, and this reinforces either the one-party system or dominant party situations. Equally important here is the critique that the FPTP does not increase gender equality and women's participation in the political process (Molokomme, 2000). Table 10 vividly demonstrates this stark reality.

## 2. Proportional Representation (PR) System

The proportional representation (PR) system is more complex than the FPTP. It draws its inspiration from the traditions of social democracies, and a number of countries have adopted this system, among them Denmark and Sweden. Although the system has multiple variants, the most commonly used is the party list. In Southern Africa, only Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa use the party list variant of PR.

The PR has a number of tenets and features with implications for election outcomes, democratisation and political stability. First, the whole country is considered as one single constituency for the election; hence there is no need for the delimitation of election boundaries. Rather than being a constituency-based system, it is instead an opinion-based electoral system. Put simply, voters' choice is not bound by geographically confined electoral zones, but is driven, rather, by their opinions/inclinations regarding the ideologies and manifestos of contesting parties. Second, candidates do not contest elections as individuals, but as party candidates appearing on a prepared list. This explains why in the Southern African context the PR system does not provide room for independent candidates to contest elections – as, for instance, the FPTP system would. Voters also do not elect individuals but political parties. The party list of candidates is “usually equivalent to the number of seats to be filled” (Asmal and de Ville, 1994: 6). As Jackson and Jackson observe “essentially . . . in all party list systems the election is primarily to ensure that the legislature reflects the relative popularity of the parties: individual candidates are a secondary concern” (1999: 373). This links to the third feature, namely that, after election, members of parliament are accountable to the party rather than to voters. Hence, the PR is usually criticised for its inability to ensure the accountability of the MP to the electorate, while subjecting him/her to the dictates of the party leadership. The winner is determined by a calculation of total proportion of votes of each party relative to the overall valid votes cast. Using a threshold for qualification of parties to enter parliament (e.g. 0.5% in South Africa) qualifying parties are allotted parliamentary seats in equal proportion to their electoral strengths.

Fourthly, unlike the FPTP, the PR is reputed for encouraging more inclusive and fairly representative mechanisms of governance. The PR lends itself easily to coalition governments. Whereas coalition governments could be a recipe for political instability, if well managed, coalition governments, or what are also referred to as governments of national unity, could prove useful in building politics of consensus and compromise – as the Mozambican and South African experiences clearly show. The inclusivity of the Mozambican electoral system can be demonstrated by the nature of the election outcomes in 1999, as table 9 illustrates.

**Table 9: Mozambique's Election Results, 1999**

<b>Presidential Election</b>			
<b>Party</b>	<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Total Votes won</b>	<b>% of total votes won</b>
FRELIMO	Chissano	2 338 333	52.3
RENAMO	Dhlakama	2 133 655	47.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>4 471 988</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Parliamentary Election</b>			
<b>Party/Coalition</b>	<b>Total Votes Won</b>	<b>% of Total Votes</b>	<b>Parliamentary Seats</b>
<b>FRELIMO</b>	2 005 703	48.53	133
<b>RENAMO</b>	1 603 811	38.81	117
<b>OTHER</b>	532 789	12.66	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 132 303</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>250</b>

Source: SAPES Trust Data Bank

In this way, the PR system has been found to be extremely useful as a conflict-resolution mechanism, especially for countries emerging from violent conflicts such as Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa (Matlosa 2001).

Witness, for instance, the enormous contribution of the inclusive and broadly representative PR system to the South African political transition. It ushered in, first, a government of national unity following the 1994 election; and it subsequently nurtured and consolidated peace, reconciliation and political stability through the second

successful 1999 election. Although, of course, various other factors are at play in South Africa's stable democracy, no doubt the PR has a share in the remarkable progress that South Africa has made thus far in managing the most protracted armed conflict in Africa and in deepening its democratic governance. Table 10 below clearly illustrates the inclusivity and representivity of the PR system in South Africa by depicting the outcome of the 1999 election.

**Table 10: South Africa's Election Results, 1999**

Party	Total Votes Won	% of Total Valid Votes	Parliamentary Seats
African Christian Democratic Party	228 975	1.4	6
African National Congress	10 601 330	66.4	266
Afrikaner EenheidsBeweging	46 292	0.3	1
Azanian People's Organisation	27 257	0.2	1
Democratic Party	1 527 337	9.6	38
Federal Alliance	86 704	0.5	2
Inkatha Freedom Party	1 371 477	8.6	34
Minority Front	48 277	0.3	1
New National Party	1 098 215	6.9	28
Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania	113 125	0.7	3
The Government by the People Green Party	9 193	0.06	0
The Socialist Party of Azania	9 062	0.06	0
United Christian Democratic Party	125 280	0.8	3
United Democratic Movement	546 790	3.4	14
Vryheidsfront/Freedom Front	127 217	0.8	3
Abolition of Income Tax and Usury Party	10 611	0.07	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 975 052</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>400</b>

Source: <http://home.Global.co.za>.

As a conflict-resolution mechanism, this system could also serve countries like Angola and the DRC well by entrenching peace and security – at least as part of the political settlement of the war. This suggests that before the PR system can contribute positively to the constructive management of a conflict, a solid peace agreement to which all belligerent parties adhere must be in place (Matlosa, 2001). Furthermore, the system is considered conducive to enhancing gender equality in politics and increasing the participation of women (Molokomme, 2000). In a recent study, Molokomme discovered that although PR by itself is not a sufficient guarantee for increased women's participation in the legislature and cabinet, it is surely a catalyst in this process. Table 11 depicts women's participation in parliament in the SADC region, and from this table it can be seen that those countries using the PR electoral system are doing much better than those using the FPTP.

**Table 11: Women in Parliament in the SADC Region**

Country	Election	Seats	Women	% Women	Electoral System
Angola	1992	224	34	15	FPTP
Botswana	1999	47	8	18	FPTP
DRC	1970	210	-	-	FPTP
Lesotho	1998	112	10	9	FPTP
Malawi	1999	193	16	8	FPTP
Mauritius	1995	65	5	8	Mixed
Mozambique	1999	250	71	28	PR
Namibia	1999	99	19	19	PR
Seychelles	1998	33	8	24	Mixed
South Africa	1999	400	119	30	PR
Swaziland	1998	95	7	7	FPTP
Tanzania	1995	275	45	16	FPTP
Zambia	1996	150	16	10	FPTP
Zimbabwe	2000	150	13	9	FPTP

Source: Molokomme, 2000

The SADC states signed the declaration on Gender and Development during the 1997 summit in Blantyre, Malawi. The summit committed member states to equal gender representation in all key organs responsible for decision-making by the state by the year 2005. In this regard, member states committed themselves to achieving at least 30% representation of women in decision-making structures in the short term. It is within this context that table 11 must be understood. It is clear from the table that the top four countries in terms of the representation of women in parliament are South Africa, Mozambique, Seychelles and Namibia. Three of these operate the PR system, while one operates a mixed system. The bottom four countries in terms of the representation of women in parliament are Swaziland, Malawi, Mauritius and Lesotho. It is instructive that three of these operate the FPTP system, while one operates a mixed system. A plausible argument can hence be made that the PR is surely a better system for the enhancement of gender equality in the legislature. The MMP is the next best system for this purpose, whilst the FPTP is the system that appears least to support increased women's participation in the legislature.

### **Towards Electoral System Reform**

This paper has established the interface between electoral systems and democratisation in Southern Africa. It argues strongly that for an electoral system to add value to democracy, it must enhance the accountability of the MPs to their constituency while at the same time ensuring the broader representation of key political forces in the legislature. In this way a political system becomes more inclusive and participatory, and accords the rulers legitimacy to govern. This further ensures that the region's political systems are not destabilised. SADC states must make deliberate efforts to address election-related conflicts and war by, among other things, reforming their electoral systems.

A majority of SADC states has embraced the principle of regular multi-party elections. The dominant electoral systems used in the region are the FPTP and PR. These electoral systems differ fundamentally in terms of their essence and features as well as their impact on election outcomes and the political stability needed for democratic governance. We have argued that elections and electoral systems are a crucial, but not the only, prerequisite for political stability and democratic governance in Southern Africa. Generally, the PR is more conducive to stability and broad representation in the process of governance than the FPTP. However, despite its multivariate defects and deficiencies, the FPTP also appears to enhance the accountability of MPs to the electorate.

A reform process aimed at the adoption of a combination of the FPTP and PR systems could stand the SADC region in good stead in terms of nurturing and consolidating democratic governance. The Lesotho electoral reform process could help the region with lessons of experience in introducing the MMP as a preferred electoral model. This model is used mainly in Germany and New Zealand. Lesotho used this electoral model during the 2002 elections for the first time. Its main tenets are as follows:

- constituency-based seats are retained – constituency vote;
- party-based seats are introduced – party vote;
- the total of constituency-based and party-based seats make up the legislature;
- a specific formula is developed to regulate entry into parliament and the calculation of seats (eg in New Zealand two conditions apply, namely that (a) a party must cross the threshold of at least 5% of party votes and (b) it must win at least 1 constituency seat). In Lesotho, the entry threshold is determined by each party's quota of total valid votes cast.

- voting may take place on the basis of either two ballot papers or a single ballot paper. The latter is used in New Zealand and could prove convenient and cost-effective for the SADC region. Lesotho uses a rather cumbersome system of a double ballot which has a great potential to bureaucratise the voting process and is also costly financially.

Although we are making a strong recommendation that SADC states deliberately steer their electoral systems towards the MMP, it should be noted that this system is rather complex. This is so because it actually combines two systems into one. In fact the most difficult aspect of this system has to do with the formula for entry of MPs into the legislature and the allocation of seats. Consider for example table 12 below which illustrates the allocation of seats on the basis of the MMP to opposition parties. Since the ruling LCD had captured 77 out of 78 contested seats, it did not qualify for compensatory seats within the MMP framework.

**Table 12: Allocation of Seats on the Basis of the New MMP System**

Party Name	Total party votes (valid votes)	Constituencies won by party	Party's allocation of compensatory seats	Total number of seats	%Party votes (valid votes)	%Seats won (constituency+ seats compensatory seats)
Basotho National Party	124234	0	21	21	22.4%	17.8%
Basutoland African Congress	16095	0	3	3	2.9%	2.5%
Basutholand Congress Party	14584	0	3	3	2.6%	2.5%
Christian Democracy Party	1919	0	0	0	0.3%	0.0%
Khoeetsa ea Sechaba/Popular Front For Democracy	6330	0	1	1	1.1%	0.8%
Kopanang Basotho Party	1155	0	0	0	0.2%	0.0%
Lesotho Congress For Democracy	304316	77	0	77	54.9%	65.3%
Lesotho Peoples' Congress	32046	1	4	5	5.8%	4.2%
Lesotho Workers Party	7788	0	1	1	1.4%	0.8%
Marematlou Freedom Party	6890	0	1	1	1.2%	0.8%
National Independent Party	30346	0	5	5	5.5%	4.2%
National Progressive Party	3985	0	1	1	0.7%	0.8%
New Lesotho's Freedom Party	1671	0	0	0	0.3%	0.0%
Sefate Democratic Union	1584	0	0	0	0.3%	0.0%
Social Democracy Party	542	0	0	0	0.1%	0.0%
United Party	901	0	0	0	0.2%	0.0%
Independents	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>554386</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Independent Electoral Commission, Lesotho.

The allocation of seats on the basis of the MMP follows these steps:

**Step One:** Total valid votes cast (554 386) divided by total number of legislative seats (118)  
= Quota of votes (4 699)

**Step Two:** Party votes divided by Quota of votes = Party Quota

**Step Three:** Subtract the summation of party Quotas from the total number of legislative seats.

**Step Four:** Any remaining vacant seats will be allocated in the order of the parties with highest decimal fraction arising from the calculation done in step three above.

**Step Five:** Subtract constituency seats won by each party from the total number of seats won by the party to get the party's compensatory seats.

**Step Six:** Summation of the compensatory seats to ensure that the total tallies with the stipulated number of PR seats.

The MMP system has a great potential to deepen democratic governance and ensure political stability in Lesotho. Given its inherent representativeness and inclusivity – virtues which are bound to encourage politics of accommodation and consensus – this system has suddenly become so popular that it is termed *Ntsoepelele* in the local vernacular, which means getting a smaller share of the bread. Although at times used rather derogatorily, the *Ntsoepelele* concept aptly describes the MMP given that the ruling LCD indeed has the largest share of the cake (77 out of 78 contested seats) and the other opposition parties have managed to get smaller shares of the national cake.

Managing the electoral reform process should not be confined to the political elite alone. The process must involve all sectors and sections of society from the planning stages, through design stages up to the implementation and review stages. This is an area where the Lesotho reform process has been weakest and this required a vigorous voter education programme prior to the 2002 election. The reform process must also not lead to an adoption of a particular MMP merely because it is implemented in New Zealand and Lesotho; the reform process must be in accord with the particular political culture of each one of the SADC states. In other words, the electoral reform process must be homegrown and driven by a national vision rather than externally derived and driven by aid donors.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that Southern African states have made tremendous strides towards democratic governance. The 2002 UNDP Human Development Report conceives of democratic governance as encompassing the following basic tenets:

- Respect for people's human rights and fundamental freedoms, thus allowing them to live with dignity;
- Allowing people to have a say in decisions that affect their lives;
- Allowing people to hold decision-makers accountable;
- Inclusive and fair rules, institutions and practices govern social interactions;
- Institutionalising gender equality in public and private spheres of life and decision-making;
- People are free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, gender or any other attribute;
- The needs of future generations are reflected in current policies;
- Economic and social policies are responsive to people's needs and aspirations; and
- Economic and social policies aim at eradicating poverty and expanding the choices that all people have in their lives (UNDP, 2002:51).



Judging by the above basic tenets, it is clear that democratic governance in the SADC region still needs to be nurtured and consolidated through deliberate reforms of both the political and electoral systems. As regards the reform of the political system, it is desirable that SADC member states consider adopting social democracy rather than liberal democracy. Western-style liberal democracy is certainly not enough for consolidation of real democratisation in Africa as a whole and Southern Africa in particular. Africa needs to adopt social democracy, which Claude Ake defines as

- A democracy in which people have real decision-making power over and above formal consent of electoral choice;
- A democracy that puts emphasis on concrete political, social and economic rights as opposed to liberal democracy, which emphasises abstract political rights only;
- A democracy that puts as much emphasis on collective rights as it does on individual rights; and
- A democracy of incorporation, inclusivity and popular participation having due regard for racial, ethnic and gender equality (1996: 132).

This systemic reform has to dovetail neatly with policy reforms around electoral systems which most of the SADC states inherited from the departing colonial administration in the 1960s as part and parcel of Western liberal democracy, as it were. This process of electoral reform is in accord with the SADC treaty of 1992 which among other things commits member states to evolve common political values, systems and institutions in order to achieve stability, peace and security. Furthermore, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) identifies democracy, political governance, peace and security as crucial prerequisites for sustainable development. Pursuant to the 1992 SADC treaty and the 2001 NEPAD, Southern African states should reform their electoral systems with a view to deepening democratic governance. In order to evolve common political values, systems and institutions, SADC states are therefore urged to consider adopting the MMP electoral system. Although individual states should initiate the reform process, institutions such as the United Nations (UN), through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Union (AU), through the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the SADC should assist this process to its logical conclusion.

It is worth noting that in fact UNECA has already begun a continental project aimed at assessing progress towards democratic governance in Africa. UNECA intends to produce the first African governance report by the end of 2002. This UNECA project investigates three main components of governance, namely: (a) political representation; (b) institutional capacity; and (c) economic governance. Electoral system reform is bound to be an important issue in this report.

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