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Only 3 months after the Conference, on Tuesday, Sept 4th 2001,  
the Acting Chairman of IMD, Dr. Klaas Groenveld, died.

Before becoming director of the Telders Foundation, the think tank  
of the Dutch Liberal Party VVD, Klaas was attached to the Faculty of  
Economics of the University of Groningen and was active in the local  
politics of this city as member of the City Council on behalf of the VVD.

Before becoming Acting Chairman of IMD he was Chairman of the  
Foundation for New South Africa. In this position he played an  
initiating and lead role in providing much appreciated assistance to  
the political parties in South Africa in the post-apartheid era when the  
country transformed itself into a multiparty democracy.

Jos van Gennip, board member on behalf of the  
Christian-Democrats (CDA), described Klaas with the following words:

*“Our institute is a co-operative body, with parties from a broad  
political spectrum - except from the far right - taking part in the decision-  
making process. We do not always see eye to eye, which is only natural  
given our ideological differences. It was largely thanks to Groenveld that we  
were able to give tangible proof of our commitment to the cause of improving  
the situation in the Third World. We will miss him dearly.”*



Political parties are the heart and soul of democracies. Since the Cold War ended, democracy has become the form of government widely considered best able to resolve internal conflicts of interest peacefully, respect the human rights of citizens and provide the conditions for social and economic development and the reduction of poverty. This recognition is reflected in the priorities of the international partners in development with governance having become a major priority on the co-operation agendas while the support for the transition and consolidation of democracy is increasingly considered to be a core objective in itself.

Two organisations supporting the development of democracy world-wide are the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), based in Stockholm, Sweden, and the new Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD). The two Institutes have pulled together their expertise and networks to organise the Conference *Network Democracy: Enhancing the role of political parties* on 24-25 April in the Ridderzaal at the Dutch Parliament in The Hague.

The participants of the conference, representatives from young democracies from the different continents, discussed the role of political parties in the democratisation process, opportunities for supporting political parties in new democracies and the need for closer international co-ordination. This report presents the proceedings and the papers of this conference.

An important part of the conference was dedicated to the official launch of the IMD. The Institute is a foundation collectively established and owned by the Netherlands political parties PvdA, VVD, CDA, D66, GroenLinks, ChristenUnie en SGP. The main objective is to support the process of democratisation in young democracies by strengthening political parties and/or groupings. The Institute plans to become an international partner in the growing democracy networks. The conference offered a useful opportunity to introduce the IMD, to assess the possibilities for

co-operation with other institutes and organisations, and that it resulted in making a large number of useful contacts.

Another important part of the conference was the presentation of International IDEA's new *Handbook on Funding of Parties and Election Campaigns*. The Handbook examines options for improving the functioning and funding of political parties, including methods of disclosure, systems of transparency, alternative methods for income generation and the role of external funding. In this conference paper you will find an overview of the Handbook by Michael Pinto-Dushinski, who is the lead writer of this IDEA publication.

Addressing the delegates at the opening session of the conference the Dutch minister for Development Co-operation, Ms. Herfkens, highlighted that despite the vast differences between developing countries in general, it are the ones with good governance that obtain the best results in overcoming their development problems. The most important ingredient of such a well-functioning system of government, she pointed out, is a democracy "with a number of political parties at its core."

On behalf of IMD I would like to express our thanks to International IDEA for the fruitful and pleasant co-operation and valuable input to the conference. ■



Prof Jos van Kemenade  
Chairman of IMD



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
'NETWORK DEMOCRACY:  
ENHANCING THE ROLE OF PARTIES'  
RIDDERZAAL, THE HAGUE

24-25 APRIL 2001





The role of political parties in the process of democratisation, opportunities for supporting young, emerging democracies, and the need for closer international co-ordination and democracy networking were the subject of an international conference held in The Hague on 24 and 25 April 2001. The two-day meeting was attended by national and international representatives of political parties, governments and non-governmental organisations, by foreign-affairs specialists and academic experts from all parts of the world. It was organised by the newly founded 'Nederlands Instituut voor Meerpartijendemocratie' (Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy) and the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Following is a report in chronological order. For the conference agenda, the full text of speeches and for papers presented at the two-day meeting, the reader is referred to the annex, in which available texts have been collected together with other documents pertaining to the issues discussed.

TUESDAY,  
APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup>,  
2001

With the IMD's Acting Chairman, Dr. Klaas Groenveld, in the chair, the conference is called to order. Groenveld welcomes the more than one hundred participants and the various institutes and organisations which they represent, at the heart of Dutch democracy, The Hague's historic 'Ridderzaal' (Knights' Hall). It is here, he points out, that Holland's Queen opens the new session of parliament every year, reading her 'speech from the Throne' and outlining government policy for the year to come.

Summing up the aims of the conference<sup>1)</sup>, he says that "the role of political parties in the process of democratisation" will be the main topic, because a viable multiparty system is "both the end and the means" of democracy. This will involve answering questions with

regard to how political parties, recipients and donors alike, "assist in acquiring good governance in a sustainable democracy or, in other words, how they can contribute to building a network democracy." But also how the existing donor foundations, institutes and organisations can form such a network democracy of their own in order "to learn from each other's experiences, to survey existing problems and find optimal solutions" in the most effective way.<sup>2)</sup>

Groenveld, director of the 'Telders Stichting,' the think tank of the Dutch Liberal Party VVD, one of the Dutch political parties participating in the IMD<sup>3)</sup>, explains that the new institute was established to continue and, at the same time, to widen the activities

of its predecessor, the Foundation for the New South Africa (NZA). He lists the criteria under which the IMD will provide its support, which, he stresses, will be demand driven, and says that it will co-operate closely with other donor organisations "in walking the narrow path between unwanted interference and much needed assistance" in budding Third-World democracies. Among these fellow donor institutes, he singles out the International IDEA<sup>4)</sup>, co-organiser of the conference, which is to present its 'Handbook on the Funding of Political Parties' at the conference. He then gives the floor to Ms. Eveline Herfkens, the Dutch Minister for Development Co-operation.<sup>5)</sup>

Before delivering her keynote address to the conference, Herfkens points out to her audience that it is not the Dutch Queen herself who prepares the annual Speech from the Throne, which Groenveld mentioned in his opening words. "I'm afraid I must correct you there, Mr. Groenveld. It is us, the government, who write that speech. We are a democracy, after all," she says. Herfkens then launches into her speech, declaring that despite the vast differences between developing countries in general, it is the ones with good governance that obtain the best results in overcoming their devel-



SG of the International IDEA Sävje-Söderbergh addresses the conference.  
In the panel: Klaas Groenveld, Eveline Herfkens and Hilde Johnson

<sup>1)</sup> FOR THE FULL TEXT OF MR. GROENVELD'S SPEECH, SEE ANNEX 1 • <sup>2)</sup> FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE CONFERENCE AND OBJECTIVES, SEE ANNEX 2: THE CONFERENCE AGENDA • <sup>3)</sup> FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE IMD, SEE ANNEX 3 • <sup>4)</sup> FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INTERNATIONAL IDEA, SEE ANNEX 4 • <sup>5)</sup> FOR THE FULL TEXT OF MS. HERFKENS' SPEECH, SEE ANNEX 5.

opment problems. And although there is no universal definition of what 'good governance' is, it should be clear that its main ingredient is a democratic system with a number of political parties at its core. Even where only one political party is in power -instead of a coalition of them, as is the case in the Netherlands- they form a credible alternative to the establishment. They force the governing party to "keep on its toes," vie with it in elections, and compete in "the marketplace of ideas", thus strengthening a "system of peaceful transition of power from one group to the other." Funding political parties from other sources than limited, local contributions involves dangers, she admits. In that respect there is no difference between the developed and the developing countries, she says, referring to a flurry of recent contribution scandals in well-established democracies in the West. In Third World countries, there are the added dangers of undermining the legitimacy of the political parties receiving foreign support, of Western donors forcing their views of what democracy is or should be on recipients, of further fuelling existing political conflicts, and of undermining national sovereignty. But these are risks we should be prepared to take, Herfkens insists, for it is an illusion to think that political parties in the Third World "can do their job under their own financial steam."

The IMD and the International IDEA are aware of the "minefield" they are venturing into, Herfkens says, but with International IDEA's new handbook and IMD's principle of demand-driven support as their guidelines, she is confident that they will tip-toe through it safely. She announces that she has awarded the new organisation a start-up subsidy of seven million Dutch guilders (about U.S. \$ 2.8 million) for the coming two years.

The next speaker is Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, the Secretary-General of the International IDEA, who pushes

off by expressing his thanks to Herfkens, the Dutch government and the IMD for "hosting, financing and co-sponsoring" the conference, which he expects will be "thought-provoking."<sup>6)</sup>

Säve-Söderbergh says that political parties are "the heart and soul of democracy" and suggests that if we measure democratisation by the number of competitive elections worldwide, the final decade of the twentieth century has shown an increase in democracy. In Africa, for example, there were 29 such elections for presidencies and parliaments in the course of the 1980s against 160 in the 1990s, while Central and Eastern Europe, together with the region of the present CIS (the former Soviet Union), even show an increase from 1 (one) in the 1980s to 113 in the 1990s. Voter turnout, meanwhile, remained stable worldwide, despite a gradual decrease in established democracies, "which should cause some concern if it continues."

Of far greater concern to Säve-Söderbergh, however, is the situation in which political parties find themselves. He lists four, inter-related challenges which they are facing:

- 1 Their membership is declining;
- 2 The electorate is increasingly averse to ideology, the traditional cornerstone of the party-political system;
- 3 The trust in and the respect of political parties are declining;
- 4 Political parties are meeting ever-greater problems in funding their activities.

This final challenge is the theme of the International IDEA *Handbook of Funding of Parties and Election Campaigns*, which is to be presented in greater detail later in the conference. For the moment, Säve-Söderbergh points out that it is not just the political parties in the developing world, which are confronted with this problem. "When it comes to political money, Western nations are in no position to preach

<sup>6)</sup> FOR THE FULL TEXT OF MR. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH'S ADDRESS, SEE ANNEX 6.

virtue to the rest of the world.” The International IDEA’s approach is not to be prescriptive; it offers choices for people and organisations in different countries to make for themselves.

The role of political parties is also central to several other International IDEA’s projects and programmes, Säve-Sönderbergh says. He mentions its handbook on electoral-systems design and its code of conduct on political-party campaigning.

He says his organisation hopes to use the opportunity of this conference to consult with the other participants on the International IDEA’s next three-year work plan and mentions “two complementary ideas”:

1 How to build and organise a Democratic Party and how to achieve democracy within parties;

2 How to regulate relations between ruling parties and opposition parties in order for them to function in a peaceful and respectful way.

Expecting many other ideas to be put forward in the next two days, Säve-Sönderbergh concludes by saying that he has great expectations of the outcome and the follow-up of the conference.

In a reaction, Norway’s former Minister for International Co-operation and Human Rights, Ms. Hilde Johnson, calls on conference participants to keep in mind that the fundamental human rights are the basis of democracy and that she, for one, feels that women’s rights are part and parcel of these rights. Pointing out that she happens to be the only woman on the panel, she reminds the audience that

human rights are still being violated in many countries.<sup>7)</sup> She also calls for respect for other cultures, saying that many traditional systems have, by nature, been democracies and that these systems should not be dismissed out of hand; they just do not function fully on the macro level. “We should be patient and not rush to hold elections before the transition from such original democratic systems to a more modern form of democracy has been completed,” she says. The Western world should refrain from disturbing existing democratic traditions by forcing developing nations to adopt its own democratic ideas and systems. Too often, Johnson warns, such an approach leads to the emergence not of real political parties but “of a weak imitation of them,” which can be no basis for a sustainable democracy.

While it is true that a democratic wave has swept the world in the past decade, Johnson cannot help but notice that quite a considerable number of countries have turned into “imitation democracies” with weak political parties, a weak opposition and media that may be free but fail to do a proper job. What is needed in such countries, she says, is a revitalisation of democracy. “Without checks, there can be no balance. Everyone needs a watchdog.”

There are many pitfalls on the road to a viable democracy: The problem of ethnicity is one, that of corruption and nepotism another, and these, Johnson says, are not specifically African problems. “Mind you, we have financial scandals in Western Europe, too.” The IMD will have to avoid these pitfalls. It will have to develop sharp criteria for its proposed financing. “Beware of the imitations; avoid ethnicity and check the motives of whoever is asking for funding.”

Finally, Johnson warns: “We have to be careful not to become missionaries.” For the IMD, the aim should be “not to preach democracy or to clone it” but to ensure participation. She concludes by saying that she is convinced that the IMD has chosen the

<sup>7)</sup> FOR THE FULL TEXT OF MS. HILDE JOHNSON’S ADDRESS, SEE ANNEX 7.

right way with its broad base at home and its demand-driven orientation abroad.

After a break for tea, Dr. Michael Bratton of the Department of Political Science and African Studies of the Michigan State University reconvenes the conference for its afternoon plenary session, which is to discuss the role of political parties in the process of democratisation.

Bratton introduces the speakers, the co-referents and the panellists, and gives an overview of the afternoon proceedings. As the earlier session took longer than planned and the tea break was used for extensive informal discussions between the participants, he renders a reduced version of the paper he is presenting in order to prevent the conference from running out of time.<sup>8)</sup>

Political parties and democracy, he says, exist in “a complex chicken-and-egg relationship. They are locked in a mutual embrace; the one cannot be without the other, and the evolution of the one affects the adaptation of the other.” But this, he points out, is a specific view of democracy, the so-called European model. This also appears to be the view of the IMD, as is evident from its name, which “in fact stands for a programme.” It remains to be seen, however, whether there is a direct link between having a democracy and having more parties. Isn’t a well-functioning one-party model thinkable? And what about the relationship between parties, governments and other institutions and organisations active in the field of politics, such as non-governmental organisations, one-issue groups and popular movements?

In an international enterprise in collaboration with the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) in Ghana, Bratton and his department have developed the “Afrobarometer” as a research instrument to measure the social, political and economic atmosphere in Africa. It conducts surveys in more

than a dozen African countries and tracks trends in public attitudes over time. Bratton’s paper highlights a number of key findings on political parties from the African point of view. These include “some good news and some bad news” for the conference in general and for the IMD in particular.

“To begin with the good news,” Bratton says, “democracy - in theory at least - is the only game in town” at present in Africa, and party competition is seen as either “essential” or “important” for a society in order to be called democratic by a three-out-of-four majority of respondents in the most recent Afrobarometer surveys. Other findings reinforce the fact that, in the minds of most Africans, multi-party competition is an indispensable ingredient of democracy.

At the same time, however, other governmental features are also regarded as essential to democracy, sometimes far more so than political parties. Fully 90 per cent of Afrobarometer respondents, for example, feel that a society cannot call itself democratic unless it delivers “basic necessities like shelter, food and water for everyone.” Worse, although to be expected on a continent where partisanship tends to revolve around non-ideological patron-clientelism, is the fact that most Africans do not identify with political parties. But the worst news is that trust in political parties is extremely low. Political parties have failed to win public confidence and in the popular imagination, according to the Afrobarometer findings, their popularity barely exceeds that of the institution that is nearly universally regarded in Africa as the most unprofessional and corrupt: the police.

Ending on a positive note, Bratton says that multi-party democracy has at least taken root in Africa. He points to the fact that some 74 per cent of Afrobarometer respondents across eleven countries reject authoritarian alternatives and says that “we might take heart from the situation in Uganda,” which he feels is

<sup>8)</sup> FOR THE COMPLETE TEXT OF DR. BRATTON’S PAPER ON THE AFRICAN VIEW OF POLITICAL PARTIES, SEE ANNEX 8.

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“a test case for Africa.” Despite the fact that their present government is promoting a merit-based, no-party, “movement” system, a majority of Ugandans tend to agree that political parties help to ensure that the authorities do not abuse their power. In addition, they feel that “through political parties, young leaders will arise to replace the older” ones, which may be of great importance “on a continent where the principal barrier to change is political leaders who overstay their welcome and refuse to surrender power.”<sup>9)</sup>

One such leader is Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, as is made abundantly clear by the next speaker, Prof. Brian Raftopoulos of the Institute of Development Studies of the University of Zimbabwe.<sup>10)</sup>

Mugabe’s policies of paying out huge sums of money to war veterans from the anti-colonial liberation struggle in return for political support, his committing the Zimbabwean armed forces to the conflict in the neighbouring Congo and his disastrous way of handling the important issue of land reform, combined with his plugging in the country “firmly into the circuits of international capital” have brought the economy near to collapse. Desperately hanging on to power, Mugabe is presiding over a regime that is increasingly “racked by mismanagement, corruption and a seriously eroded legitimacy.”

Despite the efforts of Mugabe and his followers in the ruling Zanu-PF party to portray opponents as “stooges

of neo-colonialism,” as “mabwidi” (totemless foreigners) and “betrayers of the nationalist cause,” a broad-based opposition party has emerged in the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which captured 57 parliamentary seats against the 62 seats won by Zanu-PF in last year’s general elections.

Describing the history of trade unionism in Zimbabwe and its involvement in the country’s politics, Rastopoulos credits the labour movement with the creation of this opposition party. Evolving from a patronised wing of the ruling Zanu-PF into a socio-political player in its own right, the labour movement “has provided the catalyst and the organisational framework for the growth of a powerful political opposition.” The MDC has brought together “a plethora of seemingly contradictory interest groups into a conjectural alliance” on the basis of widespread disillusion with the government’s mismanagement and is now challenging for state power.

Stressing the imperatives of democratisation and the rule of law, the MDC demands a more pluralistic approach to national politics but, at the same time, it owes its electoral success primarily to its commitment to the policy of a broad-based alliance. Pursuing their aims, moreover, through “a largely uncritical” adoption of neo-liberalism, the labour movement in Zimbabwe and its political creation, the MDC, will find the road ahead far from easy, Raftopoulos concludes.

The next speaker, Mr. Edmundo Jarquin, the Director of the State, Governance and Civil Society Division of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), presents a paper<sup>11)</sup> on the relations between the political climate and the economic development of the countries in Latin America.

Jarquin’s position as to political pluralism is clear. “You cannot have a democracy without an institutionalised system of political parties,” he says, and he

<sup>9)</sup> MICHAEL BRATTON HAS DELIVERED ANOTHER PAPER FOR THE CONFERENCE, WHICH CAN BE FOUND IN ANNEX 9 • <sup>10)</sup> FOR A FULL TEXT OF PROF. RAFTOPOULOS PAPER, SEE ANNEX 10 • <sup>11)</sup> SEE ANNEX 11.

goes on to define such a system. Political parties are not just vehicles for the promotion of candidates to public office at election time; they must be little democracies themselves, with a stable set of rules and procedures, with a relatively stable membership and leadership structure and, most important, with an agreed set of ideas to confront the principle problems of the societies in which they operate.

From this point of view, the situation in Latin America is highly diverse. On the one extreme, we find countries like Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay (where multiparty democracy is more or less institutionalised). On the other, we see Venezuela (where the original system of political parties has completely collapsed) and countries like Ecuador, Peru and Colombia (where the party system has been seriously undermined). Even so, basically free and fair elections are regularly held in all Latin-American countries, while the human-rights situation has shown a marked improvement over the past two decades. The problem is, however, that there is a varying degree of corruption, nepotism, clientelism, influence peddling and strongman politics all over the region. This is what Jarquin and his colleagues at the IADB have come to call the democratic deficit in Latin America.

In order to overcome this deficit, reform from within is needed - within the state and within the existing political parties themselves - but "it would be naïve" to expect Latin America to do so without outside help. In the past, the IADB concentrated on helping countries in the region to overcome their macro-economic and social deficits, neglecting the democratic one, which the bank now recognises as the main cause for the other deficits. According to Jarquin, "it is no coincidence" that Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay, the three countries in the region with the strongest democratic traditions, are performing better than the Latin American average in social and economic terms. "This is the new frontier in our concept of development aid: democracy is a fundamental pre-requisite in the struggle to overcome economic problems and to eradicate poverty. It is not just a construct of the mind, it can also be used as a tool of development

policy." For this reason, the IADB has increased its co-operation with institutes and organisations promoting multiparty democracy, such as the International IDEA and the newly established IMD. Mr. Jarquin assures his audience that the bank will continue to do so.

Bratton now introduces the two panellists and the two co-referents who will lead the discussion in the late afternoon session. The panellists are Mr. Rainer Erkens, the Regional Director for Africa of the German liberal Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (FNS), and his fellow countryman, Mr. Holger Dix, Head of the Sub Department North and West Africa of the Christian-democrat Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). The co-referents are Mr. Martin Lee, the Chairman of the Hong-Kong Democratic Party, and Mr. Álvaro Pinto Scholtbach, a board member of the IMD and International Secretary of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA).

After allowing the audience to ask questions, Bratton provides the panellists and co-referents with a summary of remarks made from the floor. He says they roughly come under three headings:

- 1 Multiparty democracy is often prevented from emerging by a "one-party mentality," especially in Africa; how "are we to level the playing field?"
- 2 "Aren't we neglecting the aspect of (class) struggle in our discussion?"



Opening of the plenary session by chair Dr. Michael Bratton.  
In the panel: Rainer Erkens, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, Brian Raftopoulos, Edmundo Jarquin, Martin Lee and Holger Dix.



- 3 “What about ideology in this era in which ideology is supposed to have come to an end?”

Lee addresses the third point, saying that the conference speakers have so far been concentrating on the practical aspects of democracy. But “we can also look upon democracy as an ideal,” he argues: “It is like a star that guides our way. Sometimes the sky is darkened and we lose sight of it. That, in fact, is the situation in China, where it is very simple: there is only one party, which is enshrined in the constitution. In this respect, Hong Kong is unique. We are part of China since the end of British colonial rule in 1997 and the sky is clouded, allowing us to catch only occasional glimpses of our guiding star.”

“In accordance with the one-state-

two-systems principle, Beijing told us in 1998 to form into several political parties, but these are all funded and ordered around by Beijing. My party has won every election held in Hong Kong, but the electoral system is unfair. Beijing is rigging the system and the elections, all in an effort to frustrate the opposition.” “No, Beijing decidedly doesn’t like us. We can travel all over the world but we can only return to Hong Kong. To go to, or even through China, we need a visa and that is hardly ever granted. Technically, we have a free press. There are 64 newspapers but they are all financially dependent on Beijing and only two dare criticise Beijing. Funding for political parties is difficult. Business is totally dependent on Beijing.

Businessmen do what Beijing wants, otherwise they have no business, and so, business is not willing to support the opposition. And as to funding from abroad, Hong Kong was required to legislate against any affiliation between its parties and political parties abroad.”

“So what can the IMD do? I’d say: come to Hong Kong; talk to the parties and talk to the government and see what they have got to say. You will find that Beijing doesn’t like you either. But, on the whole, I remain optimistic. Look at what happened in Taiwan. The recent elections there were the first example of a freely elected change of government. Yet, not so long ago, Taiwan did not differ much from China. There’s a star there. So, look at the sky and hopefully, before long, you will see a little star, which is Hong Kong, and soon a big one, too: China.”

Pinto Scholtbach takes up the matter of levelling the playing field for multiparty democracy in Africa, stressing that this is precisely why the IMD has been created. He explains that although the institute is building on the experiences of its predecessor, the NZA<sup>12)</sup>, the need was felt for a more comprehensive approach, widening the field to more countries, and more parties, than the two where the earlier foundation was active. Listing the aims of the IMD, he once again stresses that, “while we hope to find the balance between a naïve idealism and an outdated paternalistic approach, we intend to remain modest and humble. We will look and search for knowledge. We will try and network with people who really know what is going on, with those who are politically active in Africa. We will keep an open mind and, no, we will not be missionaries.”

“Mr. Jarquin spoke of the democratic deficit,” he continues. “We need good governance in order to have democracy but we also need democracy in order

<sup>12)</sup> FOR THE NZA’S APPROACH TO DEMOCRATISATION, SEE VOLKER HAUCK: BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: REVIEWING THE STRATEGY OF THE NETHERLANDS IN ANNEX 12 .

to have good governance. The IMD intends to support projects that will enhance both. Mr. Lee wants us to come to Hong Kong. Perhaps we will be able to do that. It is the kind of thing that fits in with our idea of creating a network of solidarity, a network of support for democratic political parties. And not only in the developing world. Let us not forget that also in the Western world there is the threat of a democratic deficit. We are suffering from a decrease in party membership and a loss of interest in party politics in general as well.”

Raftopoulos points out that the element of struggle, class struggle or otherwise, was certainly not neglected. It was, after all, what his paper on the Zimbabwean labour movement was largely about. He also remarks that “there has been an ideological crisis over the past two decades.” According to him, this is one of the reasons why political parties increasingly fail to attract workers and young people. They lack a creditable ideology. They have to struggle for their legitimacy. “One of the challenges facing them now is to define new ideas worth fighting for, to develop fresh ideas as a counterbalance for neo-liberalism.”

Where ideology is concerned, panellist Erkens takes a realist view.<sup>13)</sup> According to him, there has never been, and there still is, no lack of ideology in Africa. On the contrary, in a way, there has been, and still is, too much of it. The problem is that ideologies are only paid lip service. Before the collapse of communism, for example, the continent boasted a rich variety of Marxists, African and other kinds of socialist parties, while in the course of the 1990s these have all turned into democratic proponents of free trade and the free market. In reality, “it is of little relevance if political parties in Africa call themselves ‘socialist’, ‘liberal’, ‘national’ or ‘revolutionary’. Names serve to persuade

the international community that there is an ideological difference between the parties beyond the mere lust for power, because that is what foreign donors demand,” Erkens points out. “The inflationary use of the word ‘democratic’ in party names is a clear sign that this is considered an indispensable keyword in the battle for international recognition as a trustworthy destination for foreign attention and investment.”

The reality of African party politics, Erkens says, is that it is profoundly non-ideological. “It is focused on bread-and-butter issues, in particular on the delivery of basic social services, the maintenance of security and the creation of jobs, and opportunities to gain some kind of income.” In this respect, there is hardly any difference between ruling parties and opposition parties. Many, if not most, democracies in Africa are what Erkens calls “phoney democracies” and even in the best cases, democracy is primarily seen as a “device for the legitimisation of power.” African democracy is mainly “electoral.” This “democratic minimalism” in Africa is a far cry from the ideals and the practice of democracy in the West.

In view of this stark reality, Erkens’s FNS is concentrating its efforts on the creation of a viable civil society in Africa. It focuses on the political education of members and representatives of African parties. This is mostly done on the level of youth organisations, women’s groups, local councillors and provincial legislators, thus avoiding the powerful and often corrupt party bosses and their clientele and providing the parties with a cadre to stimulate democracy from within. The FNS works to communicate democratic values and the essentials of democracy. As the FNS is a liberal organisation, it only works with groups and individuals “who are open to liberal ideals,” which in general comes down to working with one party per country. It co-operates with other donor institutes and also provides support for other players in civil society, such

<sup>13)</sup> MR. ERKENS’ OBSERVATIONS ON THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN AFRICA ARE GIVEN IN FULL IN ANNEX 13.



as think tanks, interest groups, media, and NGO's.

Dix then expands on the issues raised by his FNS colleague. He says that the majority of the population in the African countries where his foundation, the KAS, is active, "doesn't really trust politicians," because their role and what their parties stand for remains largely unclear - apart, of course, from the corruptive "bread-and-butter" practices mentioned in Erken's speech.

Most parties have no programme explicitly stating their overall aims and views. Their leaders, who have often studied in the West, have forgotten how to relate to the population at large; "they no longer speak the language of the people."

There is no internal democracy in most political parties in Africa; "it

is hard to explain to a president that he has to accept the point of view of a mere party member." Political parties do not communicate with the population; "they don't face up to their responsibilities, they fail to organise party discussions, they fail to inform and educate their public." And despite the fact that there may be a one-party-mentality on the continent, in some African countries there is certainly no lack of political parties. "In Benin, we counted 120 of them. Obviously, you cannot work with all of these."

"These are only some of the problems the IMD will be facing," Dix says. "There are many others, and there are many areas where much work remains to be done." The KAS, which sees informing the population and integrating it into a viable civil society as its main task, has, for example, been organising seminars locally to explain the need for political platforms. But, judging from his experience of seven years in Africa, "one of the main points is that you need a lot of

patience. There are no quick results. We at the KAS know that in order to build up trust, we need to stay for years. Only too often, the attitude with some NGO's is to land two weeks ahead of elections, monitor these, announce a verdict as to whether they were democratic or not, and then quickly depart again."

In a final round of questions and remarks from the floor, it is suggested that the electoral system of proportional representation might be adopted in African countries to counter their supposed one-party mentality. An embassy official of one African country protests, however, that "at the moment, there are enough parties as it is. We had 84 of them contesting our most recent elections. The problem is rather that there are too many parties."

Nick Sigler, the International Secretary of the British Labour Party, takes issue with the stated intention of the IMD that it will not take the missionary approach. While it is true, he says, that "we of the Labour Party, working within the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), are not acting as missionaries in the sense that we set out to create new labour parties wherever we go, we do feel bound to put forward the ideas that we believe in. We believe in multiparty democracy. It is an ideal we propagate. In that respect, I think we are and ought to be missionaries."

He also discerns a tendency in African countries to divide along ethnical lines and warns that proportional representation would "threaten to ossify the existing system of ethnic parties." The first-past-the-post system, as practised in the United Kingdom, is to be preferred, he claims. It might, moreover, be a remedy against the proliferation of phoney parties set up only to collect subsidies from abroad.

The German panel members react to his latter argument saying that the first-past-the-post system was adopted in many British colonies in Africa and solved none of the problems mentioned. They prefer proportional representation mitigated by a "vote-threshold of four or five per cent" to keep out the loony -and the corrupt- fringe.

Pinto Scholtbach points out that the IMD will be “a missionary in the sense that it stands for the ideals of multiparty democracy but not in the sense that we will force our model on the parties we work with. We realise that we will have to work with many political parties and that we will have to make a choice which among them to support. But all that fit our criteria will qualify in principle. And once chosen, they will receive support - financial, moral or otherwise - towards a democratic model that they believe will fit the local context best.” ■

The morning session on the second day of the conference is devoted to the Handbook on Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns, the work of a team of 25 scholars, constitutional advisers and electoral administrators from twenty different countries, which forms the first part of the *International IDEA Political Finance Project*.

In the chair is Mr. Reg Austin of the United Kingdom, the International IDEA's Director of Programmes. He introduces the speakers. They are: Dr. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky of the United Kingdom, who formulated the terms of reference for the handbook and authored the core practical guide, and three contributing writers, Prof. Karl Heinz Nassmacher of Germany, Dr. Ruud Koole of the Netherlands and Dr. Daniel Zovatto of Spain.

Before describing the problems involved in the financing of political parties and giving an overview of the handbook<sup>14)</sup>, Pinto-Duschinsky hails the IMD as “a new group in the promotion of democracy.” Turning to his theme, he points out that financial scandals about election campaigns, political parties and politicians themselves are rarely out of the news. The media are having a field day lately with a variety of scandals and instances of corruption, both in economically advanced countries and in the developing world. These scandals are a worldwide issue; they form one of the most serious problems facing democracy today. In all the media reporting, however, the question of political financing, which is at the root of virtually all of these scandals, tends to get snowed under. This is because it

is a very sensitive subject. Major democracy building organisations prefer to obfuscate the problem, “lest they should embarrass the politicians, parties and governments receiving their support. The media play along, concentrating on the spicy elements of the story rather than analysing the core of the problem.”

Many countries have reacted with a flurry of legislation against corrupt electoral practises, setting contribution limits, demanding disclosure of funding, banning certain kinds of donations, instituting public subsidies and so on. Such legislation has several drawbacks, however. To begin with, they have proved to be a constitutional minefield, forcing courts and legal experts to chose between the often-contradictory principles of fairness and freedom of expression. But more serious, there are so many laws, rules and regulations that they are difficult to administer and only half-heartedly being enforced. To prove his point, Pinto-Duschinsky tells about a major U.S. fund-raiser for presidential candidate Al Gore, who he “met in Washington last year and who didn't know that there was a federal law limiting campaign donations.”

Less regulation and better enforcement are an obvious solution but transparency and close, independent monitoring is an important aspect as well. In this respect, the media have an important role to fulfil. “It is when political financing is accompanied by silence and indifference that abuses are best able to flourish,” he says.

All of these aspects are set out in the handbook, which is primarily intended as a practical guide for policy makers. It is not prescriptive and does not advocate a specific model but rather describes the various systems of political funding around the world and the options open to practitioners and reformers in the field. In concluding, Pinto-Duschinsky stresses that his research is far from complete. Further studies, for example as to “where the money actually goes,” are “part and parcel of democratic capacity building,” he says.

<sup>14)</sup> FOR THIS OVERVIEW, SEE ANNEX 14.



Participants to the conference in the Ridderzaal

Nassmacher has conducted a study<sup>15)</sup> into the ways in which political parties are being funded in ten affluent societies, with per capita GDP falling into a range between PPP-\$ 16,000 (Spain) and PPP-\$ 24,000 (Canada). He regards Spain, the most recent addition to this community of established democracies, as the most interesting example for emerging democracies. In all ten countries a mix of private and public funding prevails, and Nassmacher points out that public funding has become a permanent feature. This is a logical reaction to the gradual increase in the costs of political party activity (mainly as a result of the ever higher amounts set aside for media expenses in campaigning) and the decrease of party membership

and hence of contributions in these countries. In a “trial-and-error” effort to prevent parties from falling prey to corruption or from being taken over by private interest groups, the authorities have stepped in with various systems to regulate public funding.

Private funding, meanwhile, remains just as permanent. Nassmacher distinguishes three sources:

- 1 small amounts given by individuals to their preferred candidates, parties or political action groups;
- 2 larger amounts of so-called “interested money” given by corporations, interest groups or institutional donors wanting to buy general access to politicians or to influence policies;
- 3 donations made in exchange for political favours, which, although a clear instance of graft, “are quite frequent with any party in power.”

The borderlines between these three sources are vague. Efforts to reduce the importance of the second source or to stamp out the third are often unsuccessful. Parties have found various ways to avoid regulations and to approach big donors for clandestine donations.

Just increasing the amount of state funding brings with it the risk of fostering the status quo, of petrifying the existing party system. A better remedy, according to Nassmacher, is forcing political parties to accept effective disclosure of and reporting on their sources of income in exchange for public subsidies. Also needed is stricter enforcement, which demands a strong authority with sufficient legal powers to investigate and, if necessary, to begin legal proceedings. “Anything less is a formula for failure.”

He, too, stresses the need for further study, if it were only to answer the question of how much money is actually being spent on elections and political party activity in the ten countries investigated in his paper. As to the outcome, he is rather pessimistic. “After ten years of unremitting academic activity, I have not

<sup>15)</sup> SEE ANNEX 15.

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been able to come up with an answer, and, to be quite honest, I don't think others will be either."

Koole, whose recent election as Chairman of the Dutch Labour Party was singled out by Herfkens at the start of the conference as "a sign that internal party democracy is alive and kicking" in the Netherlands, agrees with Nassmacher that public funding of political parties "is here to stay."

In the established democracies, he says, "it is a spreading phenomenon that cannot be stopped." Combined with strict regulation and supervision, it can be a useful tool in the fight against corruption, although, according to him, it is in essence a reaction to the individualisation of society in the West and its concomitant decrease in party membership. "All over Europe,

people are leaving political parties behind with the result that these parties can no longer count on their followers where funding is concerned, as they used to before. Public funding seemed the only fair solution to the problem."

He notes that, statistically at least, the new democracies in Eastern Europe appear to be going against the trend with an overall increase in party membership. But that, he adds, "is understandable if we realise that these parties started from zero not so long ago. To go from zero to any kind of membership figure will naturally show up as an improvement in statistics." Moreover, there are signs of growing disillusionment with political parties there as well, and popular following may in fact be on the wane.

Koole goes on to list the various systems for the public financing of political parties. He mentions the flat-rate system, with possible variations as to whether money is being provided to every party, or only to parties

represented in parliament, or only to parties with a membership above a certain figure, and so on. Another way of financing is the proportional system, with the amount of money given to parties depending on their membership, or on the number of seats they hold in parliament, or on their popular support in elections. In some countries, the two systems are combined with a flat rate being provided to all parties and bonuses added according to their size. Money may be given to party organisations, or directly to candidates standing for office in elections, or to party think tanks. The variations are virtually endless, as are the differences from country to country in legislation on accounting, limiting donations and supervising the system.

Allowing the state to become a major source of income for political parties may carry the risk of turning them into semi-state institutions, Koole warns. "But on the other hand, "if we don't provide them with public funds, I don't see how we can prevent them from being left at the mercy of private interests. This is a dilemma that we in Western Europe have not (yet) been able to solve." Since public funding appears to have become a permanent feature, however, he agrees with Nassmacher that "whatever system is chosen, transparency is an absolute necessity" and he concludes by saying that "this demands a strong supervising authority with sufficient legal powers."

Zovatto has made a comparative study of political party funding in Latin America. He has found a number of striking similarities with the situation in the north of the continent and in Western Europe. In Latin America, the costs of party activity and electoral campaigning have been rising as well, while party membership and interest in party politics in general, especially among younger people, has been declining. As a result, public subsidy to help parties pay their way has been introduced by law in the past few decades. Legislation has also been devised to regulate private contributions and to supervise the financial transactions of political parties, while the ways in which they are provided with public subsidies are just as varied as in Western Europe.

In some respects, the situation appears to be more critical than in Western Europe, however. The upward trend in political costs has been astronomical. Although the increasing reliance on marketing, foreign consultants and opinion polls are an important factor, this is primarily due to the huge amounts of money set aside for campaigning in general and for televised propaganda in particular. In the Argentinean elections of 1999, for example, the two major presidential candidates assigned close to U.S. \$ 30 million in the last month of their campaign alone for political announcements in the media, of which the major share went to televised advertisements. With such enormous amounts at stake, political parties tend to be less inquiring about the origin of the money they raise or even deliberately ignore all kinds of irregularities.

There has been a proliferation of scandals in which illegal fund-raising, influence peddling and other forms of corruption have come to light. Large corporations and other powerful economic groups - still the major source of income for most parties - are buying their way into the heart of politics. In addition, money coming from organised crime and illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, is suspected of playing an important role in the funding of political campaigns in a number of Latin American countries.

Although civil society has begun to play a more active role in the funding of politics, there still is a lack of true commitment on the part of political actors (candidates and parties alike) to adhere to existing regulations and to duly report on their sources of income and on the way the money is spent. According to Zovatto the situation has got to the point where, if not corrected in time, it could eventually impair the very legitimacy of democracy as a system in the region. Fortunately, there is a trend to remedy the situation by means of a series of reforms, such as ensuring free access to the media for political parties, stricter rules and limits for private contributions, detailed accounting and disclosure rules, and a strengthening of supervision mechanisms. This trend, however, can only be successful if it is accompanied by a change in the way politics are engaged in. What is needed, according to

Zovatto, is “a reconciliation of political action with ethics in order to merge ethics with politics.”

“Either we do something quickly in the right direction or democracy will no longer be known as ‘the government of the people, by the people and for the people,’ but rather as ‘the government of the money, by the money and for the money’,” he concludes.

In the discussion following the presentations of the contributors to the International IDEA handbook, a member of the audience who comes from the Philippines points out that there were over one hundred different parties contesting the recent elections in her country. This, she says, is clear evidence that having a multi-party system is not necessarily the same as having a fair and smoothly running democracy, since the elections were marred by widespread rigging, illegal funding and vote buying. In her country, too, there are rules, laws and regulations against such practices but these were almost openly flaunted, with one of the major presidential candidates, for example, receiving money from gambling racketeers. “How can democracies arm themselves against this kind of thing? Does your handbook give any rules for that,” she wants to know.

A Frenchman in the audience wonders whether the problem of illegal funding “is not being exaggerated.” He feels that the media are misrepresenting the situation, concentrating on corruption while hardly paying any attention to the measures taken against it. He claims that the electoral system in his country, which combines proportional representation with the first-past-the-post system, is “running fairly enough.” Ms. Patricia Keefer of the U.S., who is to address the conference later in the day, remarks that relying on public funding for political parties is no guarantee against corruption. She, for one, is not so certain that “we are contributing to democracy by trying to stamp out private contributions.” Moreover, she says, “fund raising is fun for political parties, and it is indicative, too, of what kind of party you are. Money is so much more than the root of all evil; it is more than just a cause of corruption.”

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In reply to the remarks and questions from the floor, Zovatto agrees that neither the multiparty system nor the public funding of political parties will guarantee a fair amount of democracy. Public funding has a long tradition in his part of the world and while it has certainly been an improvement, it has far from solved all the problems. But that may be because none of the eighteen countries where it has been introduced are relying solely on public financing; they all have a combined system of party financing, and public funding has simply ended up as a complement to private contributions.

He stresses that the International IDEA handbook gives no hard and fast rules. It is not prescriptive, but it does present interesting options and new ideas. One of them is the concept of electoral investment,

where public and private contributions are channelled to a neutral fund for distribution among parties and candidates. Such a fund may also decide to spend less money on campaigning and more on other things, such as education to enhance internal party democracy, party think tanks and the like.

Further reforms are needed. "Otherwise politicians and their parties will just go on demanding more and more money," he says. The most urgent reform is probably the creation of an effective control and checking system. The media have an important role to play in this respect, but with so much money going to television at the moment, the media "have become part of the problem as well," he adds.

Koole remarks that the most important aspect of political financing is that the system should be transparent and agrees that effective control is an absolute necessity.

Addressing the point made by Keefer, he says "we certainly wouldn't want to take the fun out of fund raising." Collecting contributions from private sources, both at the large, corporate end and at the small, grass-roots end, "has its good sides, if it were only for the fact that it familiarises political parties with all levels of the society in which they are active." Koole prefers to have political parties acting as mediators between the electorate and the elected. "They must be more than mere electoral organisations propelling candidates into office." One way of encouraging them to go in this direction is to set strict limits on the size of private and public contributions, thus "forcing political parties to go to the grass roots in order to collect money." The result will be that "they remain in close contact with their voters and that they continue to develop new ideas. Just handing out flat rates tends to ossify the existing party system," he feels.

Nassmacher says that he "would like to know more about experiences in France," although recent reports in the French press about financial scandals involving former government officials and even the President of the Republic himself did not give him the impression that there has been such a great improvement there lately. "But," he adds, "it may very well be that I'm putting too much trust in what I learn from the media."

"It all goes to show that political financing remains a risky business, whichever method of funding we choose, especially in view of the enormous growth of the amount of money spent on politics. Still, I feel we are improving democracy by insisting on public funding; it levels the playing field and has caused a decline in the reliance on corporate financing."

Trying to stem the increase of political expenditure by means of legislation serves no purpose, he adds. "There is no way to control the spending on politics, I have learned from my studies," Nassmacher explains. "Good laws will simply cause the money to be diverted, and bad laws will only give the public the impression for a while that something is being done while in fact nothing is really changing."

Chairman Austin thanks the panel and the audience for their contributions and concludes by saying that the International IDEA “invites further criticism of its new handbook, so we can continue this fruitful discussion in the future.”

After a short break for coffee, the conference reconvenes in plenary session to discuss foreign support of political parties. In the chair is Senator of the Dutch Christian-Democratic Party (CDA) Jos van Gennip, a Board Member of the IMD, who is also one of the contributing writers to the International IDEA handbook. He submits a working paper<sup>16)</sup> on trends in the external funding of political parties, and, setting a brisk pace as the conference is once again in danger of running short of time, he introduces the subject to the audience.

He points out that the history of foreign support of political parties goes back over more than four decades and that it was used by the super powers during the Cold War as a tool to extend their influence. That foreign funding can easily lead to intervention and a change in a society’s inner power structures was amply demonstrated in that period. But it can have beneficial effects as well, Jos Van Gennip says, and he points to the role of foreign support in the change from dictatorship to democracy in Portugal and Spain in the 1970s and, more recently, in Chile. Nevertheless, the difference between unwanted foreign intervention and support in enhancing democracy is vague and “we need to tread carefully here. Foreign funding of parties remains the Achilles’ heel of development aid,” he says. But this should be no reason not to engage in it. “Developments in the 1990s have shown good results in some cases, even though we found ourselves in a jungle rather than on a level playing field.” Nations have a legal obligation to act against human rights violations; a similar obligation, even if only moral exists for promoting democracy.

There are many pitfalls, he admits. “We must stay clear of nepotism, clientelism, corruption and one-party systems, be they open or covert. We are well aware of the dangers; they will be described in the International IDEA handbook. In the last few decades, however, we have developed methods and techniques, which enable us to avoid at least some of the pitfalls. And what is just as important: we have learned that a tailor-made approach is possible.”

This approach, Van Gennip explains, consists of using the different instruments for aid to political parties in various ways, depending on the situation in the recipient country. The circumstances differ widely and it should be clear that aid given to a country where after years of one-party rule power has been transferred to the opposition in a peaceful way should take a different form from aid given to a country that has been ravaged by civil war. The challenge is to determine which instrument or which form of mixed assistance is the best in a given situation.

In order to make this approach possible, targeted recipient nations must be carefully studied so as to find political parties, movements or other segments of civil society that qualify as partners. A thorough knowledge of the local situation is an absolute requirement. IMD activities should be part of an overall strategy and, in some instances, need to be placed against the background of a programme to assist creating a civil society or of a more general development policy. This is one of the reasons why the IMD intends to co-operate with other donor institutes in the field, such as the British WFD and the German foundations for assistance to political parties in the developing world.

In concluding, Van Gennip stresses that further studies are needed in this relatively new field. “The discussion has to be continued and to be intensified,” he says.

<sup>16)</sup> SEE ANNEX 16.

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Van Gennip introduces the next speaker, Dr. Kasuka Mutukwa of South Africa, who, with Mr. Peter Hengstenberg of Germany acting as co-referent, will discuss the political background of the subject.

Mutukwa, who is the Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Forum of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), begins by pointing out that “to us, Africans, this is not an academic issue but a thoroughly practical matter.” He says that in the course of the conference much attention has been paid to the risks involved in providing financial aid to political parties on the African continent. He admits that such risks exist but adds that “this issue should also be weighed in its historic context.”

By putting so much emphasis on the element of risk, the impression

is given that the concepts of democracy and human rights are alien to Africa. Nothing is farther from the truth. “The human rights crusade is not imported into Africa” and “the achievements of democracy cannot be said to be foreign goods either. African people have fought for hundreds of years to attain their freedom. Democracy and human rights were at the basis of our struggle. We don’t need to be told about these things. What we need is help, practical help.” Several speakers at the conference brought up the issue of ethnicity and said that it seemed to be a particularly African problem. But that is not true either. “We don’t need to go into history to put them right on that point. Recent events in former Yugoslavia would seem to suggest that ethnicity is not just an African, but rather a global problem.”

Political parties are not a foreign imposition on Africa and neither is their financing from public sources, as may be clear from the recommendations adopted by

the plenary assembly of the SADC Parliamentary Forum last month in Namibia. Eight of the twelve states in the region already have public funding in operation. The problem is that public resources are scarce and that part of the funding is being misused. “There are political leaders,” Mutukwa says, “who found a party and only then look what they are expected or supposed to stand for. Again, this is not particularly an African problem. I only have to point to Ross Perot in the United States to make you see my point.”

The IMD and similar foundations in the West should concentrate on providing practical help and badly needed resources. There is no need for them “to teach democracy - an issue on which Europe, by the way, has some homework of its own to do, as Senator Van Gennip pointed out in his introduction, when he mentioned the democratic deficit in the European Union.” The political framework for the reception of aid from abroad exists in Southern Africa. The SADC, which was established to help strengthening regional integration, is part of it. Its Parliamentary Forum enables the representatives of the political parties in the region, who so far were only involved in ratification - “at the parliamentary tail end of the process, so to speak” - to play an active role in creating an environment in which regional development, democratisation and the enhancement of human rights can take place.

Hengstenberg, the Director of the Department for Latin America and the Caribbean of the socialist Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), congratulates the IMD for its entering a field where his foundation has been active for over ten years. With sixty German representatives working in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the FES has considerable experience with “democratic confidence building” in these regions. He says that although the aims and the set-up of his foundation are somewhat different from those of the IMD, the FES is looking forward to working closely together with the new Dutch institute, as it has been doing with other organisations active in the field.

His personal experience, Hengstenberg says, is limited to Latin America and the Iberian peninsula, but there, as everywhere else, every country “is a specific case, and as democracy is a never ending story, an ever evolving process, it is hard to draw general conclusions.” Judging on what has been discussed, however, his impression is that although Africa is historically familiar with democracy on the local level, it has not yet succeeded in fully realising democracy at the national level. “This,” he says, “may be an issue that we ought to work on.”

Political parties are in a crisis, Hengstenberg says, all over the world and not just in Africa. At the same time, however, he has observed that young people are eager to participate in the political process and that they want to see concrete results for their participation. This is difficult to achieve in the existing party system with the result that they prefer to take an active part in the institutions of civil society, in popular movements and one-issue groups. These are important, but they cannot replace political parties in a well-functioning democracy. “This is another area where we may work for a change.”

Hengstenberg ends his contribution with a series of recommendations, which the IMD “may find useful”:

- 1 Make sure that there is complete agreement on the side of your partners about the form of co-operation selected; this will prevent accusations of unwanted interference;
- 2 Try to formulate the terms of reference for your programmes as clearly as possible;
- 3 Monitoring of projects is an absolute necessity;
- 4 Correct your programme as soon as you find that things are not working as you expected;
- 5 Co-operation cannot be free of charge; there should always be a quid pro quo, the least being active participation on the side of your partners;
- 6 Do not concentrate on elections and election campaigns alone; continue working with your partners during the periods in between elections;
- 7 Try to involve as many young party leaders - and young people in general - as possible;
- 8 Emphasise the importance of women taking part in your programmes;

9 Do not try to include people, institutes and organisations in your programmes that are not ready to be included;

10 Do not expect quick results.

Remarking that “the IMD should not try to re-invent the wheel,” Van Gennip thanks Hengstenberg for his “tips” and introduces the next speaker, Ms. Patricia Keefer, the Southern Africa Director of the U.S. National Democratic Institute. Her co-referent is Ms. Amélia Matos Sumbana, the FRELIMO Secretary for External Relations of Mozambique. They are to discuss the technical aspects of foreign aid to political parties. In view of the fact that the morning session has already lasted longer than scheduled, Van Gennip asks them to keep their remarks to a minimum.

“I demand equal time for women,” is Keefer’s reaction, “but I’m certain not to get it, as usual. Allow me to remind you then, just for the record, that money is the mother’s milk of politics.” Her emphasis is on the word ‘mother’.

She goes on to describe the multiparty system as a market place - “in line with the political climate of the moment,” as she puts it - and says that, as in all market places, there is fierce competition with money as the deciding factor. Competition is costly in politics. For the enormous amounts involved at the end of the 1990s, she refers her audience to an international comparative study on the funding of political parties first published by her institute in 1998.

Dividing the world roughly into developed North and developing South, she says that there are a number of marked differences between the two. In the North, matters tend to be strictly regulated, while the South takes more of a laissez-faire attitude. Foreign funding of political activity is generally accepted in the South, as long as it is duly disclosed, while in the North it is unusual. The United States, for example, forbade it after the Watergate affair. More important than the question of whether there should be political funding from abroad or not, Keefer feels, is the question of how to handle the money, where to channel it to >

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and how to make the best use of it. Donors should ask themselves whether their money is doing any good. Political parties on the receiving end have often resented or even ignored requirements made by donors in exchange for their financial support. Where this attitude led to sanctions, recipients sometimes simply turned to other donors. This was possible because there was competition in a “donor market” as well.

With respect to the role of the media in politics in general and campaigning in particular, Keefer points out that while in the North problems centre on the increasing costs of obtaining access to the media, in the South it is mostly the access itself which is the problem. She adds that, judging from discussions at the conference, it would appear that the high cost of access

to television is now also changing the field in Latin America.

Matos Sumbana limits herself to describing the situation in her country, which, impoverished by the civil war of the early 1990s, had embarked on a programme of reconstruction when it was struck by the heaviest floods in four decades early last year. More than a million people were displaced and the economy was devastated. If the IMD is willing to help, she says, it is more than welcome. It will have its work cut out for it. But even though any kind of help is welcome, it should take the form of “a process where we are not just recipients but where we are allowed to have our say in what we need to improve the situation.”

After a one-hour break for lunch, the participants divide into groups for the workshops, which are held

in different parts of the Ridderzaal building. There are three of these working sessions.

Mr. Cyril Ndebele, a former speaker of the Zimbabwean parliament, chairs the first. Its subject is the “who” of the support and funding of political parties or, in other words: what are the criteria for a political party to qualify for such support?

Ndebele tells the workshop participants that he overheard someone say in an informal discussion the day before: “We would support anything to put them out of power.” To which particular “them” he was referring remained unclear, but Ndebele feels that “this is a dangerous attitude. If we want democracy, we will have to accept that not every party shares our own particular ideas. We will have to work *with* parties, not against parties or against any one party in particular.” After this opening remark, Ndebele gives the floor to Mr. Trefor Williams, the Chairman of the Westminster Foundation (WFD), for his introduction of the subject.

Williams explains that the WFD was founded after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Receiving a grant from the government but working independently, it promotes the development of political parties worldwide, depending on the need. Much of its work is centred on Anglo-Africa. The available funds are split between the British political parties and the foundation. The parties are free to choose their overseas partners, provided that these are democratic organisations.

“We don’t insist on high levels of democracy,” Williams says. “We look at principles rather than at what is achieved. In many countries there are local democratic systems that have served well for ages. We have to look very closely how our modern democratic models can interface with these traditional ones.”

The WFD aims at helping organisations to become effective as political parties, to become accountable to their members and to adhere to their published principles. In doing this, it meets with several problems. The emphasis in a recipient country may be on political personalities rather than on political principles; there may be a lack of resources; often, there is a lack of

accountability; sometimes political party development has failed to keep pace with the aspirations of the people; and sometimes “we have to work in a context where neighbours have done terrible things to one another.”

Williams stresses that “it is of great importance, therefore, to be open and transparent about our political alliances. We focus on what people want and, having identified the specific problems, we work in partnership to make progress in solving these problems.” He has little use for the terms ‘pro-active and re-active’. “How to be pro-active in a situation where demand massively overruns supply,” he asks. But he adds: “you might say that the WFD is ‘re-active’ in the sense that we want solutions to emerge from within, from the people who are actually facing the problems.”

The nature of the WFD’s work is determined by the specific needs of its various partners but, in general, there are three areas that are given priority:

- 1 Infrastructure support. “Belly needs have to be fed before we can start talking about slightly more elevated matters”;
- 2 Basic training in campaigning and political field-work;
- 3 Work on mechanisms in the communities in which the recipient parties are active. The aim is to create checks and balances, to create trust, to create a democratic environment for these parties to work in.

Williams goes on to say: “Of course, there are more urgent priorities. Yes, there is poverty and often people in the countryside are just plain hungry, but this doesn’t mean that the development of political parties is irrelevant. Political parties should be the vehicles to alleviate these more urgent problems. I think it should be seen as a failure of a political party if it is not concerned with the needs and the problems of ordinary men and women. This should be the first of our criteria for the selection of partners. Another should be whether a party is prepared to work together with other parties. We have very positive experiences with inter-party work. It is a useful tool in the process of democratisation, because, in the end, democracy is

based not on structures but on values and principles.”

In the open discussion following Williams’ introduction, questions and remarks from the participants in the working session vary from very practical to more theoretical matters. One member of the audience, for instance, comes up with the advice for donor organisations “to keep their overhead expenditure, such as hotel and restaurant bills, as low as possible” and to check carefully whether “material aid safely passed customs in recipient countries and ended up in the right hands.” Another participant discerns “a certain shyness” on the part of donor organisations to support political parties; he wonders why. “In a context where states are dependent on financial aid, political parties should be allowed to receive the same kind of support, as long as they handle it in a transparent and accountable fashion,” he said.

Some worry that supplying aid to some parties and not to others in any one given country would “clash with the overall aim of levelling the playing field.” Others warn that “supplying material aid to certain persons in a political party and not to others might lead to power struggles that risk breaking up the party from within.” One participant feels that donor organisations “should not focus on the national level straight away but start providing aid at the local level to acquaint themselves with the situation in a country.” Another warns that “some liberation movements fresh from the bush” set up political parties in order “to get their hands on resources only to return to the bush later and start fighting again.” And another feels that “more attention should be paid to the behaviour of the police in recipient countries.” He believes that “the attitude of the police in countries with a multiparty system is generally better than in one-party states.” Some suggest additional selection criteria, such as only offering aid to parties represented in parliament, or to parties, which prove themselves capable of winning a certain percentage of the vote. Others feel that the attitude of governments in recipient countries should also be taken into account. “They ought to respect opposition parties and allow them a free operating range.”

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In a reaction, Williams comments that organisations like the WFD and the IMD should “make their criteria common-sensical and functional” and that “whatever the criteria, all parties should in principle be considered as candidates for support.” He adds: “There are countries where it would be irresponsible to provide support to all parties.” In such cases, he says, “it would be better to work on an inter-party basis.”

Summing up, Ndebele says that an apology for supporting political parties is unneeded, because “support of political parties is a crucial tool in the support of democratisation.” He concludes that in establishing criteria “it is important to look at the programmes of political parties and to find out whether these answer to grass-root problems.” Equally important, he

says, “is the level of inclusiveness,” adding that “if you want to create a level playing field, you have to include all parties for consideration. When you support all parties, you support neighbours in learning to solve their problems in the way of politics and not in the way of violence.” The question of “who to support must not be based on personalities. Funding organisations must not give in to the African cult of personality. Parties are more important than persons, in this respect.”

“And finally, bear in mind that if you don’t support the parties that you don’t agree with, how can you expect them to be influenced at all?” Ndebele says.

The second workshop, with Mr. Colin Wells Eglin of South Africa in the chair and Dr. Axel Queval of France providing the introduction, has the goals (the why) of the support and funding of political parties as its subject.

Eglin, a Democratic Alliance MP, who was involved in writing the South African constitution and who is the chairman of his party’s foreign affairs committee, explains that the first major problem in dealing with African politics is the fact that the continent is divided in an English-speaking and a French-speaking block. “The ties with former colonialist rule are still very much in evidence,” he says. “The two blocks meet only in Europe, via the London-Paris axis - a situation which forms an obstacle to communication and co-operation in Africa.”

As a contributor to the process of constituting the new South Africa, Eglin puts his liberal ideals to the fore: democracy must include universal suffrage, a declaration of human rights and as many checks and balances as possible. Permanent accountability is a major asset in a democratic system. “This is why strong political parties are needed,” he says. “From parliament, they must be able to function as a check on the government, and they must find their strength and public importance in a healthy relation with their grass roots.” Funding for the political parties in South Africa is provided by parliament on an equitable and proportional basis. Besides this source of income, Eglin stresses the importance of fund raising within society. “Donating money to a favoured party is an expression of the link between roots and leadership. If you take grass-root support out of the equation, political parties will become mechanical and cut loose from society. The tendency to make parties professional organisations has a similar effect. The need for professionals is understandable but a healthy party needs its fair share of volunteers. A strong democracy cannot do without civil participation.”

Queval, a foreign affairs specialist and Head of the Co-operation Department of France’s socialist Fondation Jean Jaurès (FJJ), has experience with democratisation in a great number of countries. A major problem in the process, he says, is how to deal with former ruling parties. Such Marxist, authoritarian and/or military tyrannies tend to cast their ugly shadow over the democratisation process for years after their removal from power. Even after their

disbandment, they continue to influence the political mentality of the democratic forces in their country. When the democrats take over, they are inclined to adopt a weak political structure. However sincere their intentions, they are 'schooled' in the tyrannical system. "Our first aim," Queval points out, "should therefore be to help create a strong political system. Authoritarian rule must be replaced by a full-fledged democracy, with clear rules, institutions and the proper attitude to the culture of democracy."

It is difficult, however, to define what makes a democratic system. The oldest democracies - the United States, Britain and France - differ considerably from one another, because they "have grown" over a longer period of time from different local traditions. The FJJ tries to spread the principles of democracy and to avoid exporting specific local elements to developing countries. "Democratic values are not to be imposed upon them," Queval stresses. "The West is no moral authority; we only have to look at its political history over the last century to realise that democracy in the West is far from perfect."

Support for countries in the process of democratisation should be tailor-made. "Take note," Queval says, "that developing countries have their own traditions and cultures, which must be taken into account. Every specific situation calls for its own, specific approach. Don't ever accept the 'cosmetic' reforms, which often result from round-table compromises. Don't limit your support for democratic forces to funding parties from abroad. Providing nothing but money inevitably causes corruption, and, just as important, it is an obstacle for the development of strong, independent structures relying on grass roots."

"The focus of our support should be on the development of a truly democratic environment. There is no universal theory or model to achieve this. It is of the utmost importance that the West deals with developing countries without prejudice in helping to find effective solutions for local problems," Queval concludes.

Remarks from the workshop participants tend to confirm Queval's point of view, with one participant

accusing the West of forgetting that "Africa has a strong democratic tradition on the local level" and "being prejudiced in neglecting that historical fact."

Another points to the situation in Uruguay, where "political parties in the first half of the century served as educators of the people, a situation that lasted until the coup d'état of 1973. When democracy was restored, this specific role of parties in society had been forgotten. People nowadays don't know what they vote for or even why they vote at all."



"Politicians should be firmly rooted in society," another agrees and he calls for practical assistance to allow them to play their part. "In some poor countries, members of parliament haven't even got the money or the means to visit faraway constituencies."

Dr. Yaw Saffu, one of the contributing writers to the International IDEA's new handbook, presides over the third working session, which deals with the instruments (the how) of the funding of political parties. He opens the meeting saying that democracy is on the rise worldwide, although in many countries it remains at risk. There is no shortage of academics turning out papers trying to explain how democracy is spreading, he says. One of them distinguishes between the spread of democracy

- 1 by 'contagion', of which the situation in Latin America is a good example;
- 2 by outside control, as in the case of Japan during its occupation by the United States after World War II;



3 by conditionally, in answer to demands from donors, such as the International Monetary Fund or the European Union. In all three cases, there must be a certain measure of 4) consent on the part of the targeted countries; “if they are not willing to democratise, nothing much is going to happen,” Saffu says. “This is just a broad description,” he adds. “What we need is a more closely argued position on how to co-operate internationally in spreading democracy.” He gives the floor to Mr. Michel Groothuizen, the International Secretary of the Democratic coalition party D66 member of the IMD board, to outline the position that the new Dutch institute takes in this respect.

After explaining that the IMD has to be “accountable and transparent” because it is spending tax payers’ money, Groothuizen, an international lawyer who was among the founding members of the NZA in 1993, lists six different methods of assistance:

- 1 providing a lump sum;
- 2 giving financial aid proportionally - “either in accordance with the recipient parties’ popular following or with the number of seats they hold in parliament”;
- 3 structural funding - “for the hiring of regular staff, for instance, or the renting of buildings, a form of assistance that the IMD is not planning to take up”;
- 4 activity financing - “with electoral campaigning as the most sensitive activity as against, for example, assistance with polling, which is much less sensitive. With the NZA, we provided some electoral assistance in South Africa, although we

concentrated primarily on capacity building there”;

- 5 demand driven assistance - “all our assistance is of this kind; our partners decide where assistance is needed. The IMD is reluctant, however, to provide hardware, such as printing presses et cetera. We prefer to avoid it but that is not always possible”;
- 6 Non-financial support - “inviting people for conferences abroad, for example, the least sensitive form of support.”

The IMD will only deal with parties that respect human rights, are non-violent and accept the goal of establishing a democratic society. If one of these fundamental requirements is not met, there can be no IMD assistance. “That, at least is the theory. In practice, it occasionally turns out to be difficult to decide,” Groothuizen admits.

Another question to be answered is whether only parties represented in parliament are to be supported, or other parties as well, such as parties not represented in parliament but only on lower levels, or popular movements and liberation movements. This is to be discussed further among IMD members.

Which activities are to be supported? “Should we support parties to provide food in schools, for example? Personally, I think not; the IMD should limit its assistance to party-political matters. But we aim to be complementary. There are other organisations for other forms of support in recipient countries. We hope we can work together with them in a concerted development effort.”

Accountability is another important aspect. “We find it difficult enough to arrange our own financial matters but in some developing countries there is no tradition of accounting at all. Stopping support because of faulty accounting or even a total lack of it, is a difficult issue, but it needs to be addressed.”

How much money will be available? “The IMD will have several million dollars as project moneys. You can do a lot with a reasonably small amount of money. All the more reason for us to work together with other organisations, such as the WFD in the UK,

the German foundations and the party internationals, as the Socialist International (SI) and the Liberal International (LI).”

“The IMD is a new player in the field. Because we can build on the work of the NZA, we have some experience in South Africa and more recently in Mozambique, but in the rest of the world we are complete newcomers. We need to work with other, like-minded organisations. This is one of the reasons why we are organising this conference; it is being held not just for you, but for ourselves as well. We need to get better acquainted with the field we will be working in,” Groothuizen explains.

If the IMD is to work with other donors, “there must be compatibility,” he stresses. “We aim for synergy. We will work side by side with others; we will share our experiences and our contacts. We hope to build up a co-operation network, but only on an ad-hoc basis and not structurally. It must be a real network.” Groothuizen’s introduction is followed by a flurry of questions and remarks, some of which are conflicting. A member of the British Labour party in the audience feels that the IMD “is making a mistake if it is limiting itself to financing conferences, seminars and study groups.” What is needed, he says, “is direct help to political parties. They don’t need more seminars; they need computers, telephones, assistance in the field, help in organising themselves.” Another participant, however, says that “assistance with conferences is very important, but also from a practical point of view; in some poorer countries representatives of political parties simply lack the funds to attend conferences abroad.”

Someone else points out that the aim of foreign support should be “to change the existing political balance, at least in quite a number of countries.” The IMD and other donor organisations “should have the aim to create a level political playing field. To say that you don’t want to change the political structure is a lie. Let’s not perpetuate it.”

Others have their doubts about the wisdom of providing financial aid on a proportional basis. Donor organisations should rather support the smaller

political parties and the new ones. The larger parties are often strong enough as it is. “How can you have a level playing field if you give most of your assistance to parties in power or on the verge of getting there?” they ask. Still other participants, however, warn that foreign aid should not lead to upsetting election results. “You want to level the playing field? Fine, but keep in mind that democracy means respecting the outcome of elections,” one says.

Pressed for time - the working session has lasted much longer than scheduled - Groothuizen limits himself to a general reply, but only after he has taken up the remark by the Labour Party member in his audience. “We will definitely not stick to organising seminars,” he says, “but we are not so far apart as you make it appear. There may be instances where you draw the line and we don’t. It’s all right to have different views; we also differ in our approach, with the IMD representing all major political parties in The Netherlands and you just representing the Labour Party. But that does not mean we cannot complement each other’s work. The different approaches can be adapted to fit in a larger framework. Let’s discuss this.”

He further agrees that “high thresholds” may make it difficult for smaller parties to become recipients of IMD assistance. The institute is considering the problem. Finally, he says that he hopes he has “made clear that the IMD has no fixed plans yet. We are hoping to develop our plans in further discussions with possible recipients and other donor organisations.”

Much later than programmed, the conference reconvenes for its final plenary session with Dr. Patrick Molutsi, the International IDEA’s Acting Director of Programmes and Dr. Klaas Groenveld as co-chairmen. Ndebele, Eglin and Saffu report on the outcome of the working sessions, after which the floor is open for remarks and questions.

Someone in the audience is concerned that not enough attention has been paid to the importance of peace for democratisation and development, especially in Africa, where emerging democracies are seriously threatened by international conflicts and civil wars. >

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Donor organisations should at least make sure that funds are not “misrouted and end up being used to fuel these conflicts.” He also warns that foreign funding carries the risk of importing inflation into recipient countries.

Another participant remarks that the global trend towards neo-liberalism “has made life for people in the Third World much harder.” His advice is that foreign assistance might also be used in order to help local political parties reach the poor. “This would also be a major contribution to democratisation in developing countries,” he says.

Other questions are of a more practical nature, such as whether there is a list of conference participants available “so that we can continue these discussions in direct, personal contact at a later date,” (there will

be, Molutsi promises) and when the new International IDEA handbook is to appear (later this year, Molutsi replies).

One member of the audience warns that many political parties “are democratic only on paper.” He wonders how the IMD is to distinguish between “truly democratic parties and phoney ones.” Groenveld agrees that it may be difficult to establish whether prospective recipient parties really meet the IMD’s requirements to qualify for assistance. One solution might be to set up an advisory board in the country concerned, which may be consulted by the IMD if there is any doubt in this respect, he suggests.

In a final address on behalf of both the International IDEA and the IMD, Molutsi gives a summing-up of the conference and expresses his view about what the way ahead should be.

He says that the conference has had two days of rich

and fruitful discussions about democracy as a process, and adds that “we want to underscore that it is a highly complex and non-linear kind of process. We need time and resources for further investigation, as this is a process that is going back and forth.” In supporting it, “we have reached a stage where for further study it may be useful to begin to speak of different generations of democratisation.”

Discussions at the conference have made clear, he says, that political parties are sensitive organisations and that targeting them for assistance may involve risks, but that these may be no reason “to shy away from the goals which the donor organisations represented here these past two days have set themselves.”

“We have found that the principles and ideals of democracy are not foreign to any culture, and that political parties are both the objects and the agents of this worldwide ideal. For this reason, we don’t have to justify our support for them. In supporting political parties, in strengthening political parties, we support peace, we strengthen peace. It is the weak political parties which are contributing to conflict and the killing of people all over the world.”

“We came here to look for the mechanisms of assistance and to discuss what the role of the IMD should be,” he says. “You, the participants in this conference, have given guidance; you have given the IMD a clear message: the way ahead is going to be complex, sensitive and demanding but you are welcome, IMD; we are willing to co-operate with you.”

“We consider this conference and its working sessions as an important network activity. This is the direction of the future. We are not competing. We are working together, consulting with each other and each contributing in his own way to a shared aim.”

“The support for democratisation has three major aspects: funding political parties, enhancing their internal democracy and securing peaceful relations between ruling parties and opposition parties. These are the critical issues of democracy building; they are the issues that we should focus on. It is important that political parties work together on the local, regional, national and the international level. We, each with

our own modest contribution, can help them on this way ahead,” Molutsi concludes.

Groenveld, finally, expresses optimism about the future of the IMD’s activities. His optimism, he says, is due to the results of this conference.

“The discussions have been fruitful; they have helped the IMD, a new organisation in this field. We have not solved all the problems. This conference is only the beginning of a dialogue that will continue. The IMD hopes to become part of an international network. Otherwise, we cannot hope to be successful,” Groenveld says and, after thanking the Dutch government for its support and the conference participants for their contributions, he declares the meeting closed. ■

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am proud to welcome you all to this conference in this beautiful Hall of Knights in The Hague. I welcome you all on behalf of the organisers of the conference, the International IDEA and the IMD (the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy).

I would like to address a special welcome to Ms. Herfkens, the Dutch Minister for Development Co-operation and to our speakers and guests from abroad.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this conference is about the role of political parties in the process of democratisation, in a process of transition from a non-democratic institutional setting to democratic institutions within a multiparty democracy.

The conference should first and foremost underline the necessity of much more attention to the role of political parties in a system of good governance and to the way in which this role can be sustained and strengthened.

Nowadays a great number of organisations and foundations are involved in the strengthening of political parties. Several models of support are in operation. An important objective of the conference is to investigate how we can promote the co-operation between these institutions. How can we build a so-called Network Democracy? The conference should take stock of the ongoing programmes and plans and make an inquiry into the possibilities of international co-ordination and the gradual formation of networks.

The recognition of political parties as indispensable for a system of good governance, as a normal part of

civil society and multiparty democracy as a precondition for an integral development or transition process is at the very basis of the set-up of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD).

Today this Institute is launched. The way IMD will operate is also based on the experiences of its predecessor institute, the Foundation for the New South Africa (NZA), which has assisted multiparty democracy since 1994, first in South Africa until the end of 2000 and since then in Mozambique. As you know, NZA as well as IMD are joint ventures of Dutch political parties. In the NZA model political parties in South Africa and Mozambique have drawing rights. For each party a maximum amount of money is available that should be used to finance projects for capacity building. So the NZA model is demand driven. In principle the parties can decide on their own how they want to spend the money for capacity building.

During the conference we will discuss the experiences of the NZA. We will confront the general validity of these experiences with the reflections of other donors, representatives of political movements in the South, scholars and representatives of the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). We will also try to reach a broader consensus of the need for a better recognition of the political parties and the way in which their functioning can be assisted.

Today International IDEA presents a draft of a handbook on the funding of political parties. Tomorrow we will discuss some of the findings and conclusions that are presented in the handbook.

Ladies and Gentlemen, foreign assistance to political parties presents us with a paradox. On the one hand, assistance, even when demanded, can easily evolve into intervention. On the other hand, outside help is often needed just to correct distortions from the past. The Conference should try to define the narrow path between unwanted intervention and needed effective assistance to a many times fragile and vulnerable system.

There is another paradox involved in assisting political parties: the need for a profiled and distinctive presentation of the different political parties against each other on the one hand and the need for a process of nation building and fostering consensus on the other. The Conference should survey this and other complications and the formula's which can enable effective assistance and co-operation. In the process of fostering multiparty democracy a tailor-made approach is desirable, varying from assistance to human right organisations via, amongst others, strengthening the capacity of political academies and inter-parliamentary contacts to proportional subventions of projects on the basis of the relative strength of the different parties. The Conference should discuss the validity of this concept.



Chairman of IMD, Dr. Klaas Groenvelde opens the conference

Ladies and Gentlemen, it has become clear that completely different systems of funding have been developed in the different donor countries. There is also a discussion about the capacity of the receiving end, generally about the amount needed to foster a healthy system of multiparty democracy without aid dependency or addiction. The Conference should offer an opportunity for an exchange of views about the workability of these different forms, their advantages and limitations and start a discussion about the quantitative needs for assistance in this field.

IMD has set up an extensive orientation about its possible engagement in a number of countries. In a first round, seven to ten countries have been selected for further studying and surveying. Although the list of the countries as such does not mean we should be making any decisions at this moment, the presence of so many experts and representatives of organisations offers a unique opportunity for gathering further information and appreciation. The Conference should, therefore, give input for the further process of decision making about the concrete engagements of IMD in the near future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these are some of the major issues we will discuss during this conference. I hope and expect that we will have fruitful discussions and that we will reach workable conclusions. My expectations are based on the quality of the speakers and the participants in the discussions.

Finally I would like to thank the Dutch government and especially Ms. Herfkens for the material and immaterial support we get to start the operations of IMD and to organise this conference together with the International IDEA. I would also like to express my thanks to the International IDEA for working together with us in organising this conference.

We are very proud that we have the opportunity to have our plenary session today in this beautiful Hall of Knights. Each year we celebrate the opening of Parliament (the Staten Generaal) in this Hall. On that occasion the Queen gives us her description of the State of the Nation and the policy intentions of the government.

Thank you for your attention and I give the floor to the Minister for Development Co-operation. ■

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- 13.15 - 13.30 **Opening Plenary session**  
Welcome, Conference Outline and Objectives  
Dr. Klaas Groenveld, Acting Chairperson, IMD
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- 13.30 - 13.55 Launching of the IMD  
Ms. Eveline Herfkens, Netherlands Minister for Development Co-operation
- 
- 13.55 - 14.15 The Role of Political Parties in Democratisation  
Mr. Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, Secretary-General, International IDEA
- 
- 14.15 - 14.30 Reaction by Ms. Hilde Johnson, former Minister for International  
Co-operation and Human Rights of Norway
- 
- 14.30 - 15.00 **Tea**
- 
- 15.00 - 17.15 **Plenary session: *The role of political parties in the process of democratisation***  
*Chair:* Dr. Michael Bratton, Department of Political Science, Michigan  
State University

*Speakers:*

- Prof. Brian Raftopoulos, Institute of Development Studies, University of  
Zimbabwe  
Mr. Edmundo Jarquin, Chief State, Governance and Civil Society Division,  
Inter-American Development Bank

*Co-referents:*

- Mr. Martin Lee, Chairman of the Hongkong Democratic Party  
Mr. Álvaro Pinto Scholtbach, member of the Board, IMD

*Panellists:*

- Mr. Rainer Erkens, Regional Director Africa, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung  
Mr. Holger Dix, Head Subdepartment North & West Africa, Konrad  
Adenauer Stiftung

After the introduction by the speakers the co-referents will give a first  
reaction on this issue and the speeches. Their reaction will be followed by  
a discussion with panellists and participants.

**Concluding remarks**

- 18.00 **Reception** hosted by the City Council of The Hague at the Danstheater

## WEDNESDAY 25 APRIL 2001

9.00 - 10.30 **Plenary session: *Presentation of International IDEA's Handbook on the Funding of Political Parties.***

*Chair:* Mr. Reg Austin, Director of Programmes, International IDEA

*Speakers:*

Dr. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, contributing writer to International IDEA's forthcoming *Handbook on the Funding of Parties and Election Campaigns*

Prof. Karl Heinz Nassmacher, contributing writer to the Handbook

Dr. Ruud Koole, contributing writer to the Handbook

Dr. Daniel Zovatto, contributing writer to the Handbook

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### **Discussion**

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10.30 - 10.45 **Coffee**

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10.45 - 12.40 **Plenary session: *Foreign support of Political Parties***

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10.45 - 10.55 *Chair and Introduction:*

Senator Jos van Gennip, member of the Board, IMD and contributing writer to the Handbook

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10.55 - 11.40 ***The political context***

*Speaker:*

Mr. Kasuka Mutukwa, Secretary-General of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum

*Co-referent:*

Mr. Peter Hengstenberg, Director of the Department of Latin America and the Caribbean, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

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11.40 - 12.25 ***The technical context***

*Speaker:*

Ms. Patricia Keefer, Southern Africa Director, National Democratic Institute

*Co-referent:*

Ms. Amélia Matos Sumbana, Secretary for External Relations, FRELIMO

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12.25 - 12.40 ***Concluding remarks***

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12.40 - 14.00 **Lunch**

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14.00 - 15.30

**Working sessions:**

**1. Support and funding of political parties: criteria (who)**

*Chair:* Mr. Cyril Ndebele, former speaker of the Zimbabwean parliament

*Introduction:*

Mr. Trefor Williams, Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation

**2. Support and funding of political parties: goals (why)**

*Chair:* Mr. Colin Eglin, MP of South Africa, Chairperson of the Commission of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Alliance

*Introduction:*

Mr. Axel Queval, Head of the Co-operation Department, Foundation Jean Jaurès

**3. Support and funding of political parties: international co-operation**

*Chair:* Dr. Yaw Saffu, contributing writer to International IDEA's forthcoming *Handbook on the Funding of Parties and Election Campaigns*

*Introduction:*

Mr. Michel Groothuizen, member of the Board, IMD

15.30 - 16.15

**Round up and Way Forward**

*Chairs:*

Dr. Klaas Groenveld, Acting Chairperson, IMD

Dr. Patrick Molutsi, Acting Director of Programmes, International IDEA



N.B. The working language of the conference is English, but simultaneous interpretations to French and Spanish will be available.



*“The promotion of democracy continues to form an essential part of the Dutch foreign policy. As in previous years, the Netherlands will take part in election monitoring in various different countries during 2000. Free and fair elections are important, but the Netherlands also focuses on other forms of participation and involvement of the general public. Policy related to the strengthening of representative governments - parliamentary processes - forms part of this.”*

### *Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Budget 2000*

#### **I**ntrouction

Ten years after the revolution of 1989, international involvement is still necessary to promote democratisation. Thanks to the end of the ideological dichotomy, immeasurable progress has been achieved in the past 10 years in the dissemination of democracy, not only in Europe but also elsewhere. Throughout the world a trend was set in motion towards (the restoration of) democratic regimes. Elections were held in Eastern Europe,

Asia, Africa and Latin America and democratic governments were installed in accordance with the will of the people. Support from abroad was of great -sometimes vital - importance to the transition to a democratic system.

Other countries, however, are still ravaged by violent domestic conflicts or conflicts in neighbouring countries. Support from abroad to help settle these conflicts is indispensable. Diplomatic measures, and if necessary other measures, need to be deployed to prevent humanitarian emergency situations and conflicts from escalating. However, political measures should be taken in good time so as to prevent such situations from occurring.

Support from abroad is indispensable to prevent conflicts, and to make a policy aimed at conflict prevention policy more than just empty words. Support is

essential if political conflicts are to be solved peacefully. Strengthening democratic forces is crucial in this respect, not only *before* the outbreak of violent conflicts, but also *during* and *after* the transition to a democracy in post-conflict situations.

People have become aware that the *formal* transition to democracy is merely the beginning of a transition to a *sustainable* democracy. Holding elections is no guarantee of a democratic *culture*. Democracy is a long-term process. It is not only a question of improving institutional and procedural structures but also of anchoring democratic codes of conduct.

International democratisation policy consequently requires patience. It is more than financial support for elections, election monitoring or voters' education. It requires continuous support for democratic forces. Democracy is both the goal and the means. Building up of the democratic civil society and political society go hand in hand.

In many young democracies, the division of tasks between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and political parties is diffuse. Political parties develop basic community activities and NGOs develop wholly or partially into political parties. But political parties fulfil a different role in democratisation to that of other social actors such as trade unions, churches and community-based organisations. In a parliamentary democracy, political parties are the intermediaries between society and the state. Political parties can articulate the social demands of all citizens when formulating party policy. Political parties can also

exercise control over the government and its policy. Political parties form a political society counterforce that can compel good administration and good policy. The sustainability of democratic decision-making depends on its quality. The latter partly depends on the quality of political parties.

Ensuring good governance should form a central element in the foreign policy of the Dutch government. It should also be part of a broad-based foreign policy focusing on democratisation as an essential element of conflict prevention. Through the use of development co-operation instruments, it is endeavoured to make a contribution towards the quality of government policies via all kinds of activities in the field of good governance. The legitimacy of the administrators, the existence of dialogue with society, participation of citizens in the decision-making process are crucial in this respect. Political parties are indispensable in this context.

The Netherlands has a good international reputation. This is based on its non-threatening character of not being a major power, and also on its strong economy, its policy of international involvement beyond economic considerations and a strong and reliable partnership.

Dutch political parties enjoy the reputation of feeding this policy through *consensus politics*. Co-operation/ the forming of coalitions as an instrument of democratic politics for the peaceful resolution of conflicts is of primary importance in the Netherlands. Furthermore, through their tradition of transparency and mutual co-operation, Dutch political parties have an important instrument at their disposal to play a constructive role abroad.

Political parties abroad often ask their political friends in the Netherlands to support them. There is a need for direct support for building up parties, for political education, substantive development and campaign organisation. It is usually a question of the same tasks

that Dutch parties have been undertaking for several years now with considerable success in Central and Eastern Europe and in South Africa and since 1998 in Mozambique.

The new foundation that supports political parties or groups in other young democracies has found a niche in the support programmes. Apart from the successful but very limited programmes described above, the Dutch Government has no structural provisions that make it possible to support political parties.

Unlike in neighbouring Western European countries, neither co-financing organisations nor other (private) organisations have that mandate in the Netherlands. France, England and Germany have all created possibilities in different ways for this type of support.

Through their individual foundations that support democratic developments in Eastern Europe and through their joint Foundation for the New South Africa (NZA), Dutch political parties have been able



IMD Board members Mr. Groothuizen and Mr. Haitsma



NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY



to accumulate expertise that should be made use of elsewhere. Since its foundation, the NZA has been thinking about ways to support other young democracies for the purpose of anchoring their democratisation processes.

In joint co-operation with the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), NZA devoted a conference to this theme in 1996. In 1998 an internal follow-up debate was organised (between representatives of the Dutch political parties). The proposal formulated below for setting up a general foundation is partly based on the outcome of these meetings.

### **The new foundation**

In line with the policy plans of the Dutch Government and in a response to the international need

for support for political parties or groups, the Dutch political parties PvdA, VVD, CDA, D66, GL, Christen-Unie and SGP have decided to set up a new foundation. This foundation will collectively set the general objectives decides on the countries and the partners abroad. The foundation will operate flexibly when it comes to implementing projects.

### **General objectives**

In accordance with its articles of association, the purpose of the foundation is: to support the process of democratisation in young democracies by strengthening political parties or groups as the pillars of democracy in order to help create a well-functioning, sustainable, pluralistic system of party politics.

The Dutch political parties participating in this foundation will also endeavour to transfer and exchange knowledge and experience of how to function in a

democratic, pluralistic political system. As a joint venture between a number of (democratic) Dutch political parties, the foundation offers a unique possibility of co-operating with political parties or groups in young democracies aimed at strengthening the capacity of the political parties or groups concerned. The activities of the foundation complement non-party-oriented activities supported by other organisations, including the activities that are supported by the Dutch Government out of its budget for Development Co-operation.

The objectives of the policy of the Dutch government, as laid down in government documents concerning democracy, human rights, good governance and the establishment of an organised civil society, also form the basis of the foundation's activities.

When implementing its activities, the foundation will cooperate internationally as much as possible with other organisations working in the field of support for democratisation processes, such as the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the Carter Centre, the German Stiftungen, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the Westminster Foundation.

The Dutch political parties will also individually strive to co-ordinate activities via the different international organisations of sister parties.

### **Selection of countries**

The foundation can support political parties or groups in countries that are supported through the Dutch policy for development co-operation, including those countries that do not come under the structural bilateral policy.

In addition, the following criteria apply to the choice of countries:

- 1 Countries that after the first formal (series of) elections are faced with the process of building up and enhancing their multi-party system.
- 2 Countries in a transition process from an authoritarian regime to a democratically elected government.
- 3 Countries that do not as yet have a democratic system, but where the conditions exist for the development of free institutions which could prepare the transition to a multiparty democracy in the foreseeable future.

Individual decisions will be taken per country with regard to inclusion in the programme or eventual removal from the programme. As a preparation for this decision, a study will be carried out into the possibilities of implementing activities in the country concerned. The number of countries where a study is carried out regarding expansion of activities or where activities are being started will be geared to the administrative and implementing capacities of the foundation.

### **Criteria for the selection of political parties or groups that will be supported**

The foundation supports activities of political parties and political groups that, in the opinion of the foundation, fit within the relationship despite the lack of a formal party structure.

Political groups are only considered for support if they are organisations that are basically comparable with political parties and that function in a multi-party democracy.

The foundation will apply the following criteria for co-operation with political parties or groups abroad:

- The political objectives of the party or group should be based on the fundamental principles of democracy and non-discrimination on the grounds of for instance gender, ethnicity or religion;

- Strengthening of the fundamental values that form the basis of democracy and the rule of law. This excludes the ideology of racial or ethnic exclusivity, as well as the incitement of racial or ethnic hatred;
- To contain political differences of opinion through peaceful competition and dialogue. This excludes the justification or the use of violence as a way to conduct politics;
- Accepting free and fair elections as the only legitimate means of gaining political power;
- Democratic tolerance. This requires mutual tolerance of and respect for the political beliefs and standpoints of other political groups;
- The party operates in accordance with the code of conduct drawn up by international organisations.

Depending on the situation in a specific country, political parties or groups will be supported if they meet a number of conditions specifically laid down for the country in question. These conditions will be objectively assessable conditions, such as (non-exhaustive):

- Having a seat/seats in the national parliament;
- Having participated in free and fair elections;
- Compliance with internationally accepted and legally established requirements concerning participation in elections.

When implementing supportive activities, the foundation must be careful not to increase the dominance of already powerful government parties over smaller parties even further. Local parties or groups will be given extra attention if required.

### **Activities**

The foundation's approach is demand-driven.

In order to realise its objective, the foundation particularly concentrates on financing projects aimed at institutional development and capacity building of political parties or groups. Capacity building is defined here as strengthening the political parties from the leadership to the voters, strengthening the infrastructure of the party and promotion of a democratic >

culture among the leadership and senior officials. Activities are only worthwhile if democratisation is promoted by strengthening structures, in other words: the party organisation, party conduct and political culture.

The following activities are supported on a project basis:

- Support for building up the party organisation (leadership training for senior officials; management training; communication training especially to improve communication between party delegates and their supporters);
- Political education, aimed at a better understanding of the principles, institutions and processes that nurture and maintain a multiparty democracy;
- Strengthening the role of political parties as idealistic organisations based on policy programmes;
- Joint projects focused on building up greater interaction between political parties;
- Promoting greater accountability;
- Projects designed to increase the capacities of political parties with respect to acquisition of members and funds, especially the collection of membership fees;
- Projects that increase the ability of political parties to formulate policies.

The Dutch parties and their affiliated institutions will play an important role, collectively and individually, in the implementation of activities.

### Structure and mode of operation

An executive committee will be formed that includes representatives of the political parties participating in the foundation.

The task of the foundation executive committee is:

- To formulate general policy;
- To take (joint) decisions on the choice of countries;
- To take (joint) decisions on the projects to be carried out;
- To ensure that activities are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the subsidy provider(s).

The executive committee will be supported by a secretariat. This secretariat will be responsible for supporting the executive committee, the Supervisory Board, the advisory committee and the party co-ordinators, for (supervising) the implementation of committee decisions, carrying out the financial administration including budgetary control and contacts with the subsidy provider(s). The executive committee in accordance with the statutory decision-making procedure will take decisions relating to entering into commitments and implementation of activities.

The Supervisory Board will comprise representatives of the Dutch political parties participating in the foundation. The executive committee will appoint an advisory committee. Academics and representatives of international organisations will be invited to sit on the advisory committee.



IMD Board member Mr. Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach

The tasks of the Supervisory Board and the advisory committee will be laid down in the articles of association and other documents pertaining to the foundation.

Based on the demand-driven character of the foundation, it is the receiving political parties or groups that will take the initiative for projects and formulate them. Ownership of the receiving party also forms the basic starting-point in the relationship between the foundation and the receiving political parties or groups.

The Dutch political parties will appoint project co-ordinators. On behalf of the foundation these project co-ordinators, together with the secretariat and if necessary with representatives of the foundation in specific countries, will maintain contact with the partners with whom the foundation carries out activities, they will make active contributions to the activities and report back to the executive committee.

Implementation of the projects will take place jointly and will be co-ordinated by one or more of the above-mentioned party co-ordinators. Any representatives of the foundation in specific countries and the secretariat will collectively represent the foundation and consequently the Dutch political parties participating in the foundation.

In accordance with the agreement with the subsidy provider(s), policy documents, decision lists of meetings and substantive and financial reports will be submitted to the subsidy provider(s) for their information or approval.

Furthermore, the structure and mode of operation of the foundation will be laid down in the articles of association, the byelaws, a description of the administrative organisation and internal control and other descriptions.

## **The budget**

The foundation will distribute the resources put at its disposal among the countries where the foundation carries out activities. For each country a separate budget will be drawn up. Within the possibilities given by the subsidy provider(s), the foundation can commit itself to a long-term co-operation relationship with the political parties or groups in these countries.

## **Mode of operation first year**

The first year will start with the official presentation of the foundation during a conference on support for democratisation processes and the role of political organisations, in joint co-operation with international organisations such as NDI, the Carter Centre, the German Stiftungen, IDEA and the Westminster Foundation.

In the first year of its existence, the foundation will apply itself to the initial selection of countries and identification of parties or groups with which a long-term relationship will in principle be entered into. In addition, the foundation will develop its organisation structure, in other words it will set up a secretariat and make it possible for political party co-ordinators to be appointed.

## **Finance**

The first year of the foundation will mainly be focused on presentation, building up of the organisation structure and the identification of countries and counterparts in these countries as a result of which the initial budget for project expenditure will be smaller than in subsequent years.

In the first year, the budget will largely be spent on structural, recurring overhead costs in connection with the secretariat for the executive committee and co-ordinators in the individual Dutch political parties. Financing of the latter can be based on distribution of seats in the Lower Chamber of the States General. The total of overhead costs should >

structurally not exceed 20 percent of the total budget of the foundation.

Every endeavour will be made to ensure that good opportunities are fully utilised, but also to prevent pressure to spend. This means that a budget will be drawn up for the first year, with a provisional budget for the two following years.

We propose to start with a budget of NLG 2,000,000 for the first year. For the next three years we envisage an annual budget of between NLG 10,000,000 and NLG 20,000,000. After the first year, the budget will depend on the findings of the identification missions and the decisions of the executive committee on the countries and political parties or groups that will be supported. ■

#### **Information**

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Created in 1995 by 14 countries, International IDEA promotes and advances sustainable democracy and improves and consolidates electoral processes worldwide. It provides a forum for discussions and action among individuals and organisations involved in democracy promotion. Global in ownership and scope, independent of national interests, and flexible and quick in its responses, International IDEA is the only international organisation with this unique mandate. The Institute has 19 member states today and five international organisations as associate members. The objectives are:

- To promote and advance sustainable democracy world-wide;
- To broaden the understanding and promote the implementation and dissemination of the norms, rules and guidelines that apply to multi-party pluralism and democratic processes;
- To strengthen and support national capacity to develop the full range of democratic instruments;
- To provide a meeting-place for exchanges between all those involved in electoral processes in the context of democratic institution-building;
- To increase knowledge and enhance learning about democratic electoral processes;
- To promote transparency and accountability, professionalism and efficiency in the electoral process in the context of democratic development.

*International IDEA* has the following advantageous characteristics which assist it in undertaking such tasks:

- It is global in ownership and scope;
- It is devoted to advancing democracy as its main task;
- It brings together in its governing body, on an equal footing, governments and professional international organisations involved in the process of furthering democracy, and
- It regards democracy as an evolving process and is able to take on long-term projects.

There is no other organisation today with this unique mandate and set of characteristics. Decisions about what work *International IDEA* undertakes is guided, in part, by the uniqueness of its members, which in turn reflects the diverse partners that are found in national democracies. The governments and organisations that founded *International IDEA* believed that the time had come for the creation of a dynamic Institute that could creatively and practically assist in sustaining and developing a democratic process in a large number of countries. ■



*Speech by Ms. Eveline Herfkens  
Netherlands Minister for Development Co-operation*

Next month in Brussels, there will be a conference on the Least Developed Countries. Many of you will know that the forty-eight countries grouped under this heading share similar problems in relation to economic growth and development. However, if you take a closer look at individual countries, you begin to see vast differences. Countries in conflict or countries with bad governance are certainly digging their own graves. But countries with better governance, who are improving, are getting decent results.

5

Good governance is the key to poverty reduction. World Bank figures show that in the 1990s the strategy of shifting aid to countries with reasonably good governance made that aid twice as effective. And when I took office, it was in the interests of effectiveness that I decided to target aid at twenty-one countries that have earned our confidence through good governance.

There is no universal definition of good governance. There is no yardstick for all times and for all places that countries have to measure up to. There are, however, a number of crucial elements: a transparent and responsible government, independent institutions like a supreme audit authority, a free press and scope for civil society. The main ingredient is a democratic system: fair and open elections, a well-functioning parliament and committed political parties.

### **The importance of political parties**

That last ingredient - political parties - is on your agenda for the next two days. I'm pleased that you are giving so much attention to this issue. Political parties are the hinge that joins government and society. The better oiled it is, the smoother the interaction. Current thinking on development often underestimates the importance of political parties. Civil society is always at the top of our agenda. But it can never take over the role of parliaments and political parties.

That role has to do with accountability, legislation, monitoring, participation and transparency. More girls attending school? That's a fine promise for a government to make. But it is parliament that has to monitor and test the implementation of that promise. What really matters is not how governments justify themselves to foreign donors, but how they justify themselves to their own people. Political parties play a key role in that process.

Sometimes certain groups become so dissatisfied that single-issue parties have a chance to take root. In the past century, the Netherlands had a couple of them - one representing the farming lobby, the other for the over-fifty-fives. But they weren't there to stay.

Experience suggests then, that the crucial role of political parties is to address the entire range of issues, and not just focus on one of them. This enables parties to negotiate agreements and compromises, necessitated often as much by the scarcity of resources, as differences in ideological thinking. That role is fundamental and cannot be taken over by other organisations.

The existence of a credible alternative to the establishment, in the form of an opposition party, or opposition parties, with a clear profile, a substantive program, good candidates with vision and a strong

institutional structure, has two consequences, leading to better policy and governance and more effective allocation of limited resources.

- 1 The party in power is forced to improve its performance. The need to stay ahead of the competition keeps it on its toes. It has to do its job well and serve the public.
- 2 Opposition parties can compete with the government on the basis of issues. Once they are in power, the electorate can judge them on how well they live up to their promises. This “marketplace of ideas” strengthens a system of peaceful transition of power from one group to another.

Still, in development policy, political parties have received a rough deal compared to civil society. Support for political parties is seen as a minefield. The Advisory Council on International Affairs has recently advised great caution. There are certainly risks, which I will come back to shortly. But to my mind, the Council takes prudence one step too far. Political

parties are so important that I am fully prepared to take the risks.

It is an illusion that parties can do their job under their own financial steam, with income from contributions. External financing really is a minefield, almost by definition. The experience of the Western world has made the dangers very clear. In the past decade, contributions to political parties by special interest groups have been the subject of scandals in many countries including Canada, Belgium, Germany, Britain and the United States.

Around the world, the question is how political parties can - and should - get the money to cover the steadily rising costs of their campaigns and their work. Around the world, the fear is that powerful interest groups will take control of parties and politicians by buying influence.

The situation is no different in developing countries, where voluntary contributions are often much smaller.



Ms. Eveline Herfkens, Netherlands Minister for Development Co-operation launches the IMD



We can't just ignore the problem. Openness and transparency are our most powerful weapons. The International IDEA's new handbook goes into this issue at length.

This conference also marks the beginning of a new organisation in this area, the Institute for Multi-party Democracy (IMD), a joint effort of just about every Dutch political party. I applaud this initiative and I have awarded it a start-up subsidy of seven million guilders for the next two years. The IMD will put these funds to work in a small number of developing countries, mainly in Africa.

The IMD does not focus on campaigns and elections. Democracy is more than that. It is also what parties do between elections: the difficult process of co-operation

between the government and the opposition, maintaining the party's connection to its members, recruiting new members, drafting and debating party programmes. It takes persistence and it takes professionalism. The IMD has taken on the task of trying to build on these capacities.

It is an inspiring prospect, but at the same time a daunting one. Many factors make support for political parties incredibly complicated. Let us take a closer look at four of them.

### **1. The risk that external financing undermines ownership**

Support for political parties can improve their performance, but it can also undermine their legitimacy. Parties stand for independent choices, independent interests, independent structures. For them, ownership is of cardinal importance. You could say the same

about democracy in general. Its foundations are strongest when citizens pay tax and when those taxpayers keep an eye on government through their representatives and insist on accountability. Independent financing automatically strengthens ownership.

The IMD and the International IDEA are aware of that. There is no watertight solution. What is clear is that recipients should take the lead. Our goal is to provide funds for initiatives that come from the political parties themselves, not to lure them into seeing things our way with fat wads of cash. This demand-driven approach is a guiding principle for the IMD.

### **2. The risk that external financing pushes Western ideologies**

Supporting political parties could mean pushing Western notions of democracy. The contention is that multiparty systems are the outcome of a specifically Western historical process. Can political parties in other parts of the world find the firm public support base they need to take a clear, independent stance and develop a characteristic profile?

Fortunately, we do not have to worry too much about that. Michael Bratton and others have investigated how deeply democratic ideals have taken root in Africa. Popular support for democracy is as wide as an ocean - though it may only be an inch deep.

The contemporary enemies of democracy are not ideological. There is widespread agreement that all the ills of democracy can be cured by more democracy. Democracy consists of a limited number of universal values and principles such as free and fair elections, respect for human rights, a free press and the existence of political parties.

Those are the basics, world-wide. There is no blueprint for putting them into practice. That's another thing I like very much about the approach the International IDEA takes. It champions the basics while remaining open to the many forms democracy can take. It looks as though the IMD plans to adopt a

similar strategy. The Dutch political parties are not out to spread the polder gospel in faraway lands.

While we are on the subject, let's not forget that even in a country like the Netherlands the role of political parties is hardly set in stone. Our own parties grapple with their identity and their future. Just look at the joy of the Labour Party's membership at the election of a different party chair than the one endorsed by their leaders. This outcome was welcomed as a piece of evidence that the democratic spirit within the party was still alive and kicking.

### **3. The risk that external financing fuels conflict and clientelism**

In unstable situations, support for political parties can add fuel to the fire and encourage bad governance. By stirring up ethnic rivalries or by propping up shady networks of nepotism and clientelism. The spirit of democracy is often weak within political parties. They are not only the hinge that joins government and society. They can also open the door to the corridors of power, giving their leaders access to power, wealth, and jobs that they can distribute among their followers. The answer is not to turn our backs. The answer is a political and an economic offensive.

The problem calling for a political solution is not how population groups want to organise themselves, but how different groups interact. Almost all lasting multicultural systems are based on power-sharing and compromise. When the winner takes all the loser is left out in the cold and it becomes all too easy to think of the opposition as the enemy. Proportional representation, on the other hand, forces parties to talk to each other, find compromises and thereby shape a more inclusive system. The Netherlands has an especially rich history of pillarisation and emancipation which the IMD can draw on when it talks to parties in other countries.

The economic solution is a powerful private sector - both profit and non-profit - with the power to reduce the public's dependence on the state. But democrati-

sation cannot wait until social and economic development has reached some predetermined level. As Amartya Sen has famously said, "Countries are not fit for democracy, but become fit through democracy." We must recognise that democracy is a precondition for sustainable development, even in the poorest parts of the world.

### **4. External financing is incompatible with national sovereignty**

When the Dutch government provides support for political parties in developing countries, some tricky questions about sovereignty and neutrality arise. Which parties should you support and which ones will have to look elsewhere?

Libertarian thinkers look for libertarian partners, while socialists focus on left-wing sympathisers. But the ideologies of their partners may not be entirely the same. What is more, many parties do not fit into standard political categories.

I am hopeful that the unique working methods the IMD has chosen will overcome these hurdles. Instead of party-to-party support, there promises to be co-operation across the political spectrum, on both sides, as long as parties meet certain basic standards.

Most of all, the IMD provides support that is demand-driven. I would like to stress that once again. That means that the donors, in this case of the IMD and the Netherlands, do not determine which activities deserve support. The recipients - that is, the political parties - come forward with projects and plan them on their own initiative. In order to get support, they need to request it from the IMD.

The institute does not ask the government for permission, unless special circumstances warrant it or permission is required by law, as it is in Mozambique where there is an official registration procedure. The IMD does, however, keep governments informed about the support it provides. >

## Conclusion

There are many dangers and pitfalls ahead. But there is no reason to shy away from this endeavour. And there is too much meaningful work to do, in places like Tanzania, the IMD's pilot country. Tanzania is in the middle of a transition to a multiparty system. It's not easy. The country's new strategy for poverty reduction, the PRSP, is a very good example of such a poverty strategy. And it has been discussed in depth with NGOs, but not in the Tanzanian parliament. Parliamentary debate is scripted in advance behind closed doors by the largest party, the CCM. Other parties play an insignificant role. When the country had a one-party system, parliament was a kind of committee formed by the CCM. Differences of opinion were never made public.

That is different from where Tanzania is moving to now. But thus far the multiparty system has in large part preserved this tradition. The only murmurs of dissent come from the opposition's handful of representatives in parliament. That means that even today, parliament's main role is to rubber stamp the decisions the CCM has already made. Civil society is also not very democratic and is largely composed of former government officials and other friends of the CCM.

Many developing countries share Tanzania's problems. A rift separates the true will of the people from what political parties, or members of parliament, say and do in the name of the people. Many parties emerge from existing power structures, ethnic or otherwise, which have no real record of serving the public.

The IMD can help build confidence by making political parties more democratic, transparent and open to public scrutiny. I wish you every success in the world.

Thank you. ■

*Speech by Bengt Säve-Söderbergh  
Secretary-General of International IDEA*

**D**ear Ministers, Ambassadors, Colleagues and Friends,

Let me first seize this opportunity, on behalf of the International IDEA, to sincerely thank Minister Herfkens, the Government of the Netherlands and the IMD (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy) for hosting, financing and co-sponsoring what I hope and believe will be a very important and thought-provoking conference. I would also like to welcome the newly founded IMD and wish this organisation great success. There are considerable challenges facing you with this mandate and I am convinced that your work can make a great difference in many countries.

This conference focuses on what should be the heart and soul of democracy, namely political parties. The great professor of political science and scholar, Robert Dahl, who has written some of the most influential books on democracy in modern times, says in his latest book, "On democracy": "Probably no political institutions shape the political landscape of a democratic country more than its electoral system and its political parties." Despite their importance, political parties have been more or less neglected in the otherwise flourishing discussions about democratisation. In my introductory remarks I will explain why I believe that this subject and this conference is of such great importance.

A vibrant democracy needs active participation by its citizens. Democracy also needs representative and efficient institutions and organisations. Do we see this in today's world? My answer is both yes and no. One way to measure participation is to look at elections.

**A decade of elections**

During the last decade of the twentieth century we witnessed some remarkable developments. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the symbolic collapse of the idea of one-party rule, we saw enormous efforts made towards the idea of democracy. The 1990s was a decade of elections. Measured in terms of the numbers of competitive elections for parliaments and for presidencies our own compendium of statistics shows that in the 1980s there were 291 such elections; in the 1990s this figure had more than doubled to 603. The differences between these two decades become even more striking when you look at specific regions. In Africa in the 1980s a total of 29 competitive elections for presidencies and parliament were registered; in the 1990s this figure was 160. In Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, the rest of the former Soviet Union, only one competitive election took place in the 1980s as compared to 113 a decade later.



Mr. Bengt Säve-Söderbergh Secretary-General of International IDEA



This is about the number of elections. But what about citizens' participation in individual elections? Looking again at global statistics compiled by IDEA on voter turnout since 1945 we see some different trends, but we do not see a major overall decline. Of course some countries in certain regions and in specific situations have experienced extremely low voter turnout. In established democracies the pattern is more of a slow and gradual decrease, which should cause some concern if it continues. Globally, however, there is no dramatic change in the voter turnout statistics. But there is no reason, on the other hand, to be complacent. Democracy has to be gained and regained every day: it doesn't exist in a vacuum.

### **Civil society/ voluntary organisations**

What about civil society and political participation through voluntary organisations? On this I have no comparative statistics, but recent research and other observations tend to confirm that there is no general global downturn, rather the opposite. Of course, there are marked differences between countries and regions and participation is certainly changing in character. We also know that there is a lot to be done to further stimulate and promote an active and democratic civil society. Furthermore, we are still hoping that participation will be more gender-balanced than before. There has been a large increase over the last decades in the number of one-issue organisations, especially those which operate beyond national boundaries. This change has also, been facilitated by the development of information technology, particularly in richer countries. We all know that a vibrant and responsible civil society is a prerequisite for democracy to flourish.

### **Challenges for political parties**

But what about political parties? Here I believe there is reason to be more cautious and concerned. In both established and emerging democracies the role of political parties gives rise to many serious questions. Let me first say that I cannot imagine a representative democratic system functioning without political parties. There are no cases in recent history in which a democracy has successfully operated without pluralism in political parties. In theory, political parties should set the tone in a democratic society, but are they doing that today? Has this role been partly overtaken by other actors and, if so, why is this? Let me mention four challenges that political parties are currently facing:

- 1 Whereas general political participation may not be declining, there has been a fairly dramatic fall in the membership of parties in established democracies over the last decade. We have to ask ourselves whether this trend will continue and why this change as well, what the reasons are for this change.
- 2 This trend is probably linked to the second challenge. Political parties are traditionally based on ideologies and specific interests. Today we see, particularly among younger people, less belief in these ideologies and consequently less interest in partisan identification. Individuals, identity and individualism are becoming more important. Many citizens are now less inclined to subscribe to a whole party program, preferring instead to chose from the menus presented. In this sense the citizen acts more as a consumer than as a participant in the agenda-setting of political parties. There is also the emerging trend of ethnicity and religious allegiances replacing traditional ideology.
- 3 Trust and respect is key to the success of any political party. I think it is true to say that political parties now enjoy less trust and respect than they used to. In countries where democracy is in its infancy it has often been very difficult for political parties to find their proper role: in relation to members and potential members, in relation to other political parties and in relation to the other

institutions of democracy. The lack of trust in political parties was recently reported by the Afrobarometer study, which will be presented at this conference. It is also partly linked to the fourth challenge.

- 4 Political parties are experiencing increasing problems in securing funding for both the financing of election campaigns and the day-to-day running of the party. In our media-led world, it takes more money than ever before to make your presence felt. This is the theme of the IDEA Handbook to be presented in more detail later in this conference. The rising cost of campaigning has, amongst other things, become a source of malpractice around the world. In the introduction to the Handbook one of the propositions reads: “When it comes to political money, Western nations are in no position to preach virtue to the rest of the world”. In other words, we all share the fundamental problem of how to make political parties viable in an environment which has changed quite dramatically. The IDEA’s approach is not to be prescriptive; what we want to offer is options and choices for people and organisations in different countries to make themselves. The Handbook promises to be rich and will certainly raise a lot of practical suggestions, based on practical experience and scholarly research. More about that tomorrow.

### **IDEA and political parties**

For the IDEA the publication of the Handbook is not an isolated event. The role of political parties was identified earlier as one of the areas in which the IDEA would seek to make additional value, by complementing at the international level what so many others are doing nationally and in co-operation between parties over the borders. We hope to be able to translate this handbook into several languages and make it available for training and for legislators.

The role of political parties is being partly addressed in a number of other projects and programmes of our work. One of our first undertakings was to produce a

handbook on electoral systems design, which has been widely used and translated into several languages. The renowned Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart, who is famous in this field, partly by advocating the old Dutch tradition of consensualism, is one of the contributors. We have also published a code of conduct on political party campaigning. Conferences have been and are being organised to highlight the links between money and politics. In our capacity building field activities we work with partners and use these comparative studies to support democratisation.

### **Next steps?**

We want to use this conference to consult with you on what could be most useful in addressing the challenges of political parties beyond financing. In our next three-year work plan we are also looking at what more could be done in the normative field to assist in building well functioning political parties. Let me mention two complementary ideas, which have been suggested by quite a few people and stakeholders:

- 1 One is about how to build and organise a democratic party: how to achieve democracy within parties, how to be a modern party, where still so many function with guidelines and approaches which have become antiquated. Particularly in new and emerging democracies the party is sometimes more seen as an expression of a certain individual rather than the other way around. What are the possibilities to form and build parties which have the trust of their voters and members?
- 2 A second suggestion is one which touches on the very heart and the culture of democracy. When multiparty democracy has been adopted as a principle the issue in many countries is to make the relations between ruling and opposition parties function in a peaceful and respectful way: each recognising and respecting the role of the other. What are the rights and the obligations of a ruling party and what are the rights and the responsibilities of an opposition party? Fundamentally this >

issue is about the culture of trust and respect and it has to be dealt with in this context. But I still believe that the good practices should be exposed - and maybe some bad ones as well. But just as political parties learn about campaigning and how to address the adversary in a more or less respectful manner, there is a need for us to learn more about the limits and about the culture that shapes a functioning multiparty democracy. If proper relations between contestants are not established the whole idea of democracy will be at stake.

These are some ideas. There are probably many others that you will put forward at this rather unique international conference devoted specifically to the role of political parties. I look forward with great expectation to the outcome and the follow-up of this important event. Once more I would like to sincerely thank our Dutch partners for making this conference happen.

Thank you



*Speech by Ms. Hilde F. Johnson  
MR and former Minister*

**E**xcellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you most sincerely for inviting me to speak to you and to my Dutch friends on such an important occasion.

**The Fundamentals:**

What is the basis of our topic of discussion?

Firstly, fundamental human rights, the right to participate, to influence political decision-making. The right to speak one's opinion, to organise and to meet. In a surprising number of countries in the world, these rights are extensively violated. Democracy may be the political system that ensures respect of these rights and freedoms, especially at the macro level.

**The variety of democracies**

It is important, however, to approach other cultures and countries modestly and humbly. Many traditional systems have been very democratic, especially at the micro level. Consensus-oriented decision making under a tree is more democratic than our multiparty democracies. Elected Village Councils using extensive consultative mechanisms are also very democratic. The problem is that these mechanisms do not apply to the macro level.

Still, we have to avoid a simplistic view. Democratic processes are often more important than 'quick-fix' elections to ensure participation and influence. The tendency of some countries to advocate multiparty elections as soon as possible - often too soon in a transitional phase - may have devastating consequences. Proper democratic institutions and processes often have to be in place to ensure a successful election and a stable and sustainable democratic system afterwards - not least in post-conflict situations. As Evelyne

Herfkens said, most countries are in a transitional phase towards more democracy. What happens before and between elections is often more important than the elections themselves.

We should apply the same modesty when dealing with multiparty systems. Here we should operate with caution as well and avoid small "copies" of our own parties - without the proper basis and foundation - or "one-man" parties without ideological or political principles - parties which are not much more than a 'fan-club' around one leader.

Democracy is not built in one day. It needs time!

**The challenges**

Which challenges are we facing, especially in developing countries? My background is mainly Africa, so what I say is based on my experience there. Throughout the beginning of the 1990s a wonderful democratic wave went through Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin-America. There have been free and fair elections, most countries have established multiparty democracies. There is a free press, political freedom is respected to a large extent and there is organisational freedom. This is a major breakthrough for democratic values.

There are a number of problems, however:

- Electoral participation is reduced. The number of voters usually declines in the elections after the first multiparty elections. They can be down to 15% - 20% in local elections;
- Parties are weak, lacking organisational skills and capacity;
- Opposition is weak. In countries that had one-party systems before, newly formed parties have capacity and competence problems;
- Usually, the media are also weak with a tendency to attack rather than do proper research and publish verified stories and well-founded criticism. To be taken seriously, the media need to be more credible.

Every executive needs opposition, needs checks and balances, needs to be accountable to someone. If we, as politicians in donor countries, did not have NGOs on our backs, the media following every step we take, if we did not have a competent and tough opposition, I can assure you we would have been doing a lousy job. We need to be challenged, we need to be accountable to others.

Without accountability, we tend to get bad governance. Lack of strong opposition, competent and challenging media, and a strong party organisation that is capable of challenge has only *one* consequence: bad governance and bad government. Old tendencies of authoritarian rule may reappear. We have seen it in several countries. It is dangerous for development.

What does good governance actually mean? Using the family as an analogy, we can come up with a rather humorous definition:

- Taking care of your wallet, of the family economy, by balancing what comes in and goes out, i.e. good macro-economics;
- Taking care of your family as a whole and making sure everyone is allowed to influence decisions, i.e. democracy;
- Not beating your wife, i.e. human rights.

As a minister I focused on good governance and on democracy building - on accountability. I launched a new initiative, with measures and instruments in all these areas, related to parties and their organisation, to politicians and MPs, to the media. I worked on a model similar to the IMD-model to strengthen the parties and include the opposition using the Norwegian party-organisations whilst making preparations. Capacity building for parties and members of parliament was to be emphasised. Here, election systems are also relevant. In addition, we planned courses for the media and journalists - extensive programmes, building on experiences we had already gained from some of our projects for journalists. I also wanted to strengthen the civil society in our partner countries. We did much, but wanted to do more and build their capacities in a more systematic way.



Hilde Johnson' speech was received with enthusiasm. Amongst others John Cheyo chairman of the UDP in Tanzania

Unfortunately, our government was out of office before I was able to implement all elements of the initiative. I am very pleased, however, to see what you have achieved here in the Netherlands.

Your IMD is very much the right model, I think, to meet the democratic challenge many of our parties are facing in our partner countries.

### **Pitfalls and problems**

Now, I want to turn to some of the pitfalls and problems in relation to multiparty democracies in many countries.

One of them I have mentioned already, the “party owners”, the one-manshows. I say men deliberately because that is generally what they are. In these cases there is not much of a principle-based political platform attacking the government, apart from what we usually see.

- The second pitfall or problem is ethnicity, especially in Africa, where often parties are based more on ethnic groups than on ideologies and where ideologies are often scapegoats for ethnic interests. This is difficult to avoid in an African context, but all the more important.
- The third problem is party and campaign finance, a crucial issue. Political parties in new democracies usually have to do without financing. The strain on their MPs and MP-candidates is usually much worse than on us. Their electorate want to see schools, health centres, jobs and financial support to meet their needs. Often there are long queues of people outside their house, sometimes every day. In addition, they have the responsibility for a number of relatives.

If you are not a rich businessman or -woman, you have to find creative solutions to these problems. As not doing anything is not an option, you have to do something. Some of these more creative solutions might be creating your own NGO to get external support, making alliances with international NGO's

or getting support from private businesses. This very often leads to corrupt practices. Fellow MPs have told me of quite a number of these practices, practices that may look quite similar to what one might call nepotism or clientelism. They are extremely frustrated. This cannot continue! Because you get corrupt Cabinet ministers, when MPs are corrupted. What then happens to good governance?

*We have* to address this issue. Development institutions and practitioners, Ministers for Development Co-operation and their counterparts, parliaments and parties, both in the South and in the North have to address it. Party finance and campaign finance have to be placed high on our political agenda, however controversial they may be.

In my view the IMD will help to avoid all three of these problem areas and pitfalls.

Firstly, the “party owners” will have a difficult time as the capacity of party members and activities increase and they become competent actors in the party. This is important. Programmes such as the IMD programme will be an important tool in this regard.

Secondly, the more competent party members become, the more they debate principles and practices; the more capacity is in place, the more of a party the party becomes, and the less it remains an ethnic movement and instrument. Here, IMD may also play an important role.

Thirdly, when it comes to party finance and campaign finance, we need IMD and other democratic institutes to contribute not only in the debate, but also in developing instruments that can contribute to solving these problems. Finally, a fourth pitfall has to be addressed and that is the missionary role. Being an active church member and missionary child born in Tanzania, I would like to warn strongly against any “missionary role” when assisting parties in developing countries. A number of institutes and institutions have made this >

mistake, attempting to create copies of their own parties in developing countries. And we talk about ownership? No, ladies and gentlemen, ownership implies developing your own party platform, based on the principles you cherish, making your own party structure, thus ensuring participation and democracy.

I think IMD has chosen the right approach through an all-party co-operation, assisting parties of any political colour. Provided a few fundamentals are in place, the missionary role will be avoided.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Party development is fundamental to good governance. It is fundamental to ensuring that good governments remain to be exactly *that*: good governments. It is fundamental to democracy and to the respect of fundamental human rights.

On this note I congratulate the Dutch government, the Dutch parties and you all with the establishment of the IMD and wish you a fruitful conference. ■

by Michael Bratton

professor of political science and African studies, Michigan State University

Political parties and their role in democracy can be examined from at least three vantage points:

- The *macro*-level of the political party system. This includes the number of political parties, the extent of inter-party competition or coalition, and the interactions of parties in electoral and legislative arenas. A key question here concerns the relationship, if any, between the number of parties and the nature of coalitions on the one hand and the extent of democracy on the other.
- The *meso*-level of political parties as *institutions* in their own right. This includes the internal structure and governance processes of individual parties, including matters of organization, financing, and leadership accountability. To what extent, if any, is internal democracy within political parties a prerequisite for building a regime of democracy in the political system as a whole?
- The *micro*-level of political parties as *objects of mass support*. It is important to know whether citizens identify with political parties, join as members, and participate in electoral events. Moreover, do ordinary people think that political parties are trustworthy and effective? Mass support for the available set of political parties and for the principle of party competition would seem to be requirements for consolidating democracy.

I hope that the discussions on this panel will converge on the role of political parties from all three angles. Only through triangulation can we expose the strengths

and weaknesses of parties as agents of democratization.

This brief paper takes a *micro* perspective because little is known about the attitudes and behaviors of citizens *vis a vis* political parties, especially in new democracies, and particularly in an under-researched area like sub-Saharan Africa. I would like to present a few key findings on this subject from a large-scale, cross-national survey research project known as the Afrobarometer. The purpose of the Afrobarometer is to track public opinion about democracy, markets and civil society. So far, my African colleagues and I have conducted over 19,000 interviews with nationally representative samples of citizens in 11 new democracies Africa.<sup>1)</sup> The following is what Africans in these countries say about political parties.

### Political Parties Are Important to Democracy

People associate democracy with many diverse meanings. We asked the African survey respondents how important it is for society to have “at least two political parties competing with each other... in order to be called democratic?” (See Table 1 pp.72-1). On average, three out of four respondents (75 percent) regarded party competition as either “essential” or “important” to their conception of democracy.<sup>2)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> BOTSWANA, GHANA, LESOTHO, MALI, MALAWI, NAMIBIA, NIGERIA, SOUTH AFRICA, UGANDA, ZAMBIA AND ZIMBABWE. A TWELFTH COUNTRY, TANZANIA, WILL BE ADDED IN MAY 2001. <sup>2)</sup> THIS QUESTION WAS ASKED IN 9 COUNTRIES, EXCLUDING GHANA AND UGANDA.



In January 2000, Nigerians felt most strongly about the centrality of party competition to democracy (89 percent), perhaps because their country had recently undergone a landmark electoral transition. By contrast, citizens in Lesotho in June 2000 tended to downplay the importance of party competition to democracy (49 percent) in the wake of a disputed general election and violent clashes between supporters of rival parties. Botswana and Zimbabwe (both 82 percent) also score above average in associating parties with democracy, though for different reasons. Botswanans make the connection on the basis of forty years of experience with a functioning two-party system; Zimbabweans see genuine party competition and real democracy as desirable objectives, both of which have yet to be attained in their country.

Other findings reinforce the fact that, in the minds of most Africans interviewed, democracy requires multi-party competition. When asked to rate “different forms of government” on a scale of zero to ten, respondents in every country gave high marks to “our current system of government with regular elections and at least two political parties” (average = 6.7). The previous form of government - whether one-party, military, or colonial - rarely scored half as highly. Furthermore, when we asked directly whether people would like to adopt or return to a one-party regime, some 74 percent across 11 countries rejected this authoritarian alternative. Nigerians, Zambians, Ghanaians and Botswanans were the most adamant in opposing the abolition of multiparty competition.

Our respondents also told us, however, that they regard other governmental features as essential or

important to democracy, sometimes more so than political parties. For example, fully 90 percent think that a society cannot call itself democratic unless it delivers “basic necessities like shelter, food and water for everyone.” This sentiment was especially widespread in South Africa (94 percent), where democracy is more closely associated with the elimination of apartheid deprivations than with the requirement that the political system possess more than one party. Indeed, as in Lesotho, both South Africa and Namibia fall below the cross-national norm in associating parties with democracy. The popular conception of democracy in these places appears to be much more economic and substantive than political and procedural. In the other African countries surveyed, we found more of a balance between substantive and procedural interpretations, though economic delivery was slightly more important everywhere.

#### **Democratization Enables Political Party Activity**

Democratization is valued in Africa for the breath of fresh air that it blows through political life. The process of transiting to democracy includes political openings that restore civil and political liberties that were long denied under *ancien regimes*.

Several liberties are especially pertinent to the activities of political parties: the freedoms of speech, association, and electoral choice. Without an environment in which these rights are protected, parties are hindered from organizing, campaigning and attaining political office. According to the Afrobarometer, clear majorities of citizens affirm that regime transition has been accompanied by improvements in the following: “anyone can freely say what he or she thinks” (78 percent); “people can join any organization they wish” (81 percent); and “each person can choose who to vote for without feeling pressured” (81 percent). Taken together, these results suggest that Africans think that the political environment is genuinely more hospitable to the activities of political parties than it was before any democratic transition.



Dr. Michael Bratton, Michigan State University, Department of Political Science

But pockets of recalcitrance remain. Zimbabweans are genuinely divided on whether political life has improved under Mugabe, with just over half seeing a better climate for free expression (54 percent) and open voting (53 percent) compared to the previous Smith regime. Botswanans are least likely to perceive recent gains in the ability to associate freely (60 percent), mainly because these rights have long been protected in their country. The main point, however, is that democratization facilitates party activity, with many more people in the countries surveyed reporting that political opportunities have recently expanded. The African country in our sample that has come furthest in these respects is Malawi, closely followed by Mali and Ghana. More than 89 percent of Malawians perceive gains in free speech, 93 percent in freedom to form political associations, and 94 percent to freely choose who to vote for in an election. This surely reflects the depths to which the old Banda regime had sunk in obliterating these rights.

Thus, in terms of actual performance, democracy in Africa seems to have been effective at delivering basic political goods. But it has been far less competent at

addressing the economic concerns that Africans say are central to their conceptions of a well-ordered society. Positive evaluations virtually vanish when we ask whether the new political regime has done better than the old in ensuring that “people have an adequate standard living”. Whereas about four out of five respondents think that political life has improved under democracy, fewer than half (47 percent) think that economic life has done so. Out of ten African countries<sup>3)</sup>, only Mali, Nigeria and Namibia possess a majority of citizens who see economic gains from democratization.

Thus, regime changes that are advantageous to political parties are not necessarily regarded as conducive to improving popular living standards. The big question, of course is whether satisfaction with the delivery of political goods can offset dissatisfaction with the delivery of economic goods over the long run.

### **Most Africans Do Not Identify with Political Parties**

Transitions to democracy, which occurred in numerous African countries during the 1990s, have been accompanied by an efflorescence of political parties. Whether these are ex-single parties, historic parties or new parties<sup>4)</sup>, all suffer from key weaknesses: they tend to be non-ideological patronage networks centered on a personalistic leader with little in the way of permanent or broad-based organizational machinery. It remains an open question as to whether this type of party is capable of inducing attachment and loyalty among members of the mass electorate.

The Afrobarometer asks a standard question about party identification: “do you feel close to any particular political party?” As might be expected on a continent

<sup>3)</sup> THIS QUESTION WAS NOT ASKED IN UGANDA. <sup>4)</sup> THIS CLASSIFICATION OF PARTIES IS DRAWN FROM NICOLAS VAN DE WALLE, “PRESIDENTIALISM AND CLIENTELISM IN AFRICA’S EMERGING PARTY SYSTEMS”, PAPER PRESENTED TO A WORKSHOP ON CITIZEN-POLITICIAN LINKAGES IN DEMOCRATIC POLITICS, DUKE UNIVERSITY, MARCH 30-APRIL 1, 2001, P.2-3.



where partisanship revolves around patron-clientelism, fewer than half of respondents (47 percent) across ten countries expressed a close attachment to a party organization.<sup>5)</sup>

But there is tremendous variation on either side of this norm and a host of different reasons for individuals choosing to belong (or not belong to) a party. Identification is highest in Malawi, where 81 percent said that they felt close to either the UDF, the MCP or AFORD. Mobilization of support for these political parties in Malawi has been aided by the small size of the country, the strong regional character of each party, and the intense competition sparked by the fact that, until recently, no party commanded an absolute majority in parliament. At the other end of the scale is Uganda where, in June

2000, only 30 percent said that they felt close to a political party, most often DP or UPC, old entities discredited by their association with failed regimes in the past. Moreover, many Ugandans seem to have accepted the argument made by President Museveni that party competition can be divisive, even violent, and should therefore be replaced with a merit-based, no-party, “movement” system.<sup>6)</sup>

The low levels of party identification in Zambia (36 percent) and Nigeria (37 percent) also warrant comment. In Zambia, respondents reminded us that, under the old regime, they had been forced to carry cards for the only legal political party and that daily

access to public services was dependent on demonstrating loyalty to UNIP. Thus, under democracy, they now welcome the opportunity to choose to belong to no party at all. In Nigeria, low levels of party identification are traceable to a different source, namely the constitutional restrictions that limited competition to only three approved entities (PDP, APP and AD) in the founding legislative and presidential elections of 1999. So circumscribed were the requirements for forming these organizations that they became alliances of electoral convenience that now lack cohesive constituencies.

When people do identify publicly with a political party, they usually choose the party in power. This could be taken as evidence that clientelistic impulses are alive and well even under multiparty democracy. Expressions of loyalty to the powers-that-be is a rational response in a winner-take-all context where political patrons are the main source of largesse and losers in elections are left to languish in the wilderness.

In this context, researchers must worry about the reliability of survey research results if respondents try to protect themselves by giving “politically correct” responses. In the Afrobarometer we are learning how to ferret out this possible source of disinformation using statistical cross-checks. We have asked respondents, for example, whether “in this country, you must be very careful what you say or do with regard to politics.” So far, we have found that respondents who agree with this statement are no more likely to say that they feel close to the ruling party (e.g. BDP in Botswana, UDF in Malawi). And in Mali we asked at the end: “who do you think sent us to do this interview?” Those who mentioned a governmental entity were very slightly more likely to say they felt close to ADEMA, but the difference was not statistically

<sup>5)</sup> THIS QUESTION WAS NOT ASKED IN NAMIBIA • <sup>6)</sup> SEE MICHAEL BRATTON AND GINA LAMBRIGHT, “UGANDA’S REFERENDUM 2000: THE SILENT BOYCOTT”, AFRICAN AFFAIRS, FORTHCOMING JULY 2001.

significant. We thus argue provisionally that self-censorship by respondents is not confounding our results.

### **Africans Participate in Elections through Political Parties, But May Not Vigorously Defend Multiparty Elections**

Because competitive elections are a novel feature of the African political scene, they have attracted interest and involvement from citizens. And citizens come into contact with political parties when they participate in certain types of electoral event. Within the past five years, for example, two out of four Africans surveyed (39 percent) report attending an election rally and one out of six (17 percent) claim to have worked on behalf of a candidate for political office.<sup>7)</sup> Even discounting events organized for independent candidates, these are moderately high levels of electoral participation through political parties.

Claimed rates of voting are even higher, with an average of 71 percent of respondents across 11 countries saying they had cast a ballot in the last national elections. In this instance we know that that survey respondents overstate their participation in the socially approved activity of voting. Based on four country cases for which both official and survey data on voter turnout have been compared, I provisionally estimate over-reporting to be of the order of about 8 percentage points.<sup>8)</sup> Of course, it is difficult to attribute voter participation, whatever its correct level, directly to mobilization by political parties since so many other factors impinge upon voters' decisions to go to the polls. But I note for the record that, in the 11-country survey

data, respondents who identify with a political party are significantly more likely to vote (82 percent) than those who deny identification with any party (60 percent).

To test the depth of popular commitment to electoral rights the Afrobarometer asks: "What would you do if the government suspended the National Assembly and canceled the next elections?". Such emergency measures typically also include a ban on political parties and the activities of partisan movements. Hence this item can also serve as a rough proxy measure of commitment to the principle of multiparty competition. On average, more citizens say they would take action (53 percent) than would do nothing (34 percent), though 6 percent would support the government. Among anticipated actions, people would "join a protest or boycott", "contact an elected representative" and "support the opposition".

From a comparative perspective, Zambians are much more politically engaged than Malians. The former, perhaps reflecting Zambia's history of urban mass resistance, would be much more likely to "do something" (74 percent); the latter are equally divided between "doing nothing" and taking some sort of protest action (42 percent each). Moreover, in countries with large Islamic populations - like Mali, Nigeria and Ghana - citizens say they are more likely to defend their religious beliefs (for example by protesting if "the government told you which religion to follow") than to defend multiparty elections.

<sup>7)</sup> REPORTED ATTENDANCE AT ELECTION RALLIES IS HIGHEST IN MALAWI (71 PERCENT) AND CLAIMED PROMOTION OF CANDIDATES IS HIGHEST IN UGANDA (43 PERCENT). REPORTED ATTENDANCE AT ELECTION RALLIES IS LOWEST IN LESOTHO (19 PERCENT) AND CLAIMED PROMOTION OF CANDIDATES IS LOWEST IN SOUTH AFRICA (7 PERCENT). SIZE OF COUNTRY APPARENTLY MATTERS LITTLE HERE SINCE BOTH MALAWI AND LESOTHO HAVE SMALL LAND AREAS, THOUGH LESOTHO HAS INACCESSIBLE MOUNTAIN REGIONS. THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM HELPS EXPLAIN THE OTHER CONTRASTING CASES: UNDER UGANDA'S NO-PARTY SYSTEM, ALL CANDIDATES WERE INDEPENDENTS; IN SOUTH AFRICA, PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION WITH A PARTY LIST SYSTEM MEANT THAT CAMPAIGNING IN LOCALITIES WAS FOR PARTIES RATHER THAN CANDIDATES. <sup>8)</sup> BASED ON NAMIBIA, ZAMBIA, GHANA AND MALI, WHICH HAD HELD SECOND ELECTIONS BY THE END OF 1997. THE AVERAGE ACTUAL TURNOUT FIGURE FOR THESE CASES WAS 60 PERCENT, COMPARED WITH AN AVERAGE SURVEY FIGURE OF 68 PERCENT. FURTHER WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE BY UPDATING OFFICIAL ELECTION STATISTICS FROM 1998 ONWARDS. SEE MICHAEL BRATTON, "SECOND ELECTIONS IN AFRICA", JOURNAL OF DEMOCRACY, 9, 3 (JULY 1998), PP. 51-66.



### Trust in Political Parties is Low

The most troubling popular image of political parties, however, is that they cannot be trusted. When the Afrobarometer asked about a variety of public institutions in four countries<sup>9)</sup>, fewer than half of all respondents (average = 46 percent) said they trusted parties either “somewhat” or “a lot”. The other half (48 percent) said they actively *distrusted* parties either “somewhat” or “a lot”. The level of trust for parties was lower than for seven other social and political institutions: traditional chiefs (67 percent), Christian churches (66 percent<sup>10)</sup>), local government councils (63 percent), the electoral commission (62 percent), the national assembly (60 percent), the army (55 percent) and the courts of law (52 percent).

Indeed, in the popular imagination, political parties resemble the institution that is nearly universally regarded in Africa as the most unprofessional and corrupt: the police (42 percent).

Perhaps this result is an artifact of the inclusion of Uganda in a small sample of countries. Because Uganda has a no-party constitution and President Museveni has condemned multiparty competition as divisive, levels of trust in parties there are idiosyncratically low (31 percent). Importantly, however, the status of parties does not improve when Uganda is dropped from the sample. Even though the raw trust score for political parties rises slightly (to 51 percent, a bare majority),

parties still rank eighth out of nine in a standard list of public institutions. Thus, even in African countries where political parties are allowed by the constitution and promoted by leaders, they have not won public confidence.

Why might this be so? The obvious hypothesis is that party leaders and officials are popularly perceived as being involved in bribery or other self-serving acts. The data are confirmatory. Across the same four countries, Africans who think that corruption is “common” among elected leaders (most of whom were elected on party tickets) are significantly more likely to distrust parties. Among this group, confidence in parties drops to the same low level as the general public’s assessment of the honesty of the police (42 percent)! I also found evidence that perceptions of corruption among elected leaders are higher among younger people, suggesting that distrustfulness in parties could increase in the future.

**The Perceived Roles of Political Parties; Even Ugandans see some Advantages**

### Let us conclude with observations about the roles of political parties in democracy, the theme of this conference. What do Africans think that parties do?

Because the Afrobarometer is an omnibus instrument that covers many topics, it does not include a module probing such specialized attitudes in all countries. Our surveys have focused on this topic only in Uganda in June 2000, where the issue of multiparty competition is at the heart of debates about the country’s constitutional and political future. Our Afrobarometer questions from Uganda on the roles of parties were partly replicated by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in Kenya in a December 2000 survey.<sup>11)</sup>

<sup>9)</sup> GHANA, MALI, NIGERIA AND UGANDA. INSTITUTIONAL TRUST QUESTIONS WERE ASKED IN OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES, BUT NOT ABOUT POLITICAL PARTIES • <sup>10)</sup> WHEN MALI IS EXCLUDED -- WHOSE SOCIETY IS OVERWHELMINGLY MUSLIM - TRUST IN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES RISES TO 77 PERCENT • <sup>11)</sup> INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE, A NATIONAL SURVEY OF KENYA VOTERS: A PRESENTATION OF KEY DATA (WASHINGTON D.C., IRI, DECEMBER 14, 2000)

We draw upon results from both countries in this last section (See Table 2 p.74).

Kenyan and Ugandan tend to have similar, negative views about the capacity of political parties to represent citizens. In both countries, only a minority of respondents agree that “political parties represent well the views of people like myself” (Kenyan 43 percent, Ugandan 38 percent). One of the reasons for dissatisfaction with representation is that strong majorities agree that “in order to get elected, political parties make promises they can never fulfill (Kenyan 80 percent, Ugandan 65 percent).

Kenyan and Ugandan have very different views on the desirability of multiparty competition and the contributions of parties to political pluralism. Whereas most Kenyan thinks that “it is necessary to have at least two political parties to ensure that different points of view are represented (71 percent), only half as many Ugandan feel the same way (35 percent). Along similar lines, 69 percent of Kenyan consider that “we need more than one political party to provide people with real choices of leader,” but only 39 percent of Ugandan do so, also a wide spread of opinion.

Political parties tend to form along ethnic and regional lines in both countries, a prospect that Kenyan accept with apparent equanimity, but which Ugandan seem to fear. This interpretation is supported by their contrasting reactions to the following statement: “political party competition undermines national unity by causing conflict and confusion”. While only a minority in Kenya agrees (46 percent), a clear majority does so in Uganda (62 percent). In my opinion, the Kenyan profile is more representative of sub-Saharan Africa, where recognition is emerging that the develop-

ment of political parties along sectional lines is an inevitable consequence of democratization. While democratization may sharpen conflict, democratic institutions at least provide mechanisms and channels to manage it.

With a reformist regime that is nonetheless hostile to party-based pluralism, Uganda forms an important test case for Africa. If Ugandan see any advantages to political parties, then other Africans are surely likely to feel the same way. The Afrobarometer survey reveals that, in two key respects and by slender majorities<sup>12)</sup>, that more Ugandan support than resist the reintroduction of political parties in their country.

First, those Ugandan with an opinion on the subject tend to agree that “political parties help to ensure that people in government don’t abuse their power” (51 percent). If this finding can be generalized to other places, it seems to suggest that popular distrust of political parties is directed mainly at *ruling* parties and that Africans continue to harbor hopes that new opposition groups might be able to combat corruption if elected to power.

Second, those Ugandan who have thought about the problem of political succession clearly agree that “through political parties, young leaders will arise to replace the older leaders who have run this country” (59 percent). In so doing, they identify the key role that political parties play in democratization in Africa. On a continent where the principal barrier to change is political leaders who overstay their welcome and refuse to surrender power, political parties can be a powerful force for organizing a refreshment or alternation of office-holders. For the moment, this is what political parties in Africa have done (and will do) best.

<sup>12)</sup> AND ONLY AFTER “DON’T KNOW” RESPONSES ARE REMOVED.

**Table 1: Popular Attitudes to Political Parties: Selected African Countries, 1999-2001**

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In order for a society to be called democratic, how important is it to have two political parties competing with each other? *[percentage saying “essential” or “important”]*

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How would you rate our current system of government with regular elections and at least two political parties? *[on a scale of zero to ten]*

---

Do you think the country would be better off if we were governed by only one political party? *[percentage REJECTING this alternative]*

---

Under our present system of government, are the following things better or worse than they used to be?

- (a) anyone can freely say what he or she thinks
  - (b) people can join any organization they wish
  - (c) each person can choose who to vote for without feeling pressured
- [percentage saying “somewhat better” or “much better”]*
- 

Do you feel close to any political party? *[percentage “yes”]*

---

Have you done any of these things during the last five year?

- (a) Attended an election rally
  - (b) Worked for a political candidate or party
- [percentage who say at least “once”]*
- 

What would you do if the government suspended the National Assembly and canceled the next elections? *[percentage who would do something to oppose]*

---

How much do you trust political parties? *[percentage who say “somewhat” or “a lot”]*

---

	BOT	GHA	LES	MWI	MAL	NAM	NIG	SAF	UGA	ZAM	ZIM	AVE
	82	-	49	74	68	62	89	70	-	81	82	75
	-	6.7	5.9	6.1	6.7	-	7.5	6.1	-	6.0	-	6.7
	78	79	51	77	74	63	88	57	53	80	74	72
	57	85	56	89	88	80	90	76	-	76	54	78
	60	86	63	89	93	85	85	83	-	84	63	81
	60	86	56	94	90	86	86	83	-	82	53	81
	74	67	57	81	57	-	37	44	30	36	45	47
	49	50	19	71	22	54	20	32	65	43	47	39
	10	20	12	10	15	16	13	7	43	11	20	17
	62	67	28	55	43	54	51	53	-	74	50	53
	-	63	-	-	42	-	51	-	31	-	-	-

**Table 2: Popular Views on the Roles of Political Parties in Democracy: Uganda and Kenya, 2000**

	UGANDA	KENYA
Political parties represent well the views of people like myself	38	43
In order to get elected political party leaders make promises they can never fulfill	65	80
It is necessary to have at least two political parties to ensure that different points of view are represented	35	71
We need more than one political party to provide people with real choices of leaders	39	69
Political party competition undermines national unity by causing conflict and confusion	62	46
Political parties help to ensure that people in government don't abuse their power	51	-
Through political parties, young leaders will arise to replace the older leaders who have run this country	59	-

*[percentages who agree "somewhat" or "strongly"]*



by Michael Bratton (Michigan State University) and  
Robert Mattes (Institute for Democracy in South Africa)

## **I**ntrouction

Africa is a latecomer to democratization. In terms of timing, African countries have followed rather than led the reform movements that installed elected governments, multiparty systems, and more open societies around the world. As foreign aid dependencies, African countries have also experienced weighty external pressures to liberalize. One should not automatically conclude, however, that the impetus for reform originated from outside Africa rather than from within.

This paper measures whether a mass popular constituency exists for democracy within selected

African countries.<sup>1)</sup> If political liberalization is a Northern idea that is being foisted on an unwilling South, then certain empirical facts should follow. One would expect that Africans would: (a) be unaware of the concept of democracy; (b) have distinct cultural understandings of its content; (c) be unsupportive of regimes based on competitive principles, and; (d) prefer alternative political regimes. People would also have a

propensity to (e) be unsatisfied with the performance of democratic regimes in practice.

Alternatively, if we find popular awareness of, support for, and satisfaction with recent political reforms in African countries, we can conclude that democratization has some sort of indigenous base. It is important to know this because democracy can contribute to the alleviation of Africa's problems only if it is embraced by African people themselves.

To measure public attitudes we employ an original set of data from a large-scale, cross-national survey research project known as the Afrobarometer. The present paper reports results from a first round of surveys implemented between July 1999 and February 2000 in Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe.<sup>2)</sup> Face-to-face interviews were conducted by trained interviewers in local languages with a total of 10,398 respondents using a questionnaire instrument that contained a core of common items.

A caveat is in order about generalization. Because country samples were each drawn randomly, they represent national voting-age populations.<sup>3)</sup> But the six countries selected, which are all English-speaking territories that have recently undergone political transitions to electoral democracy, are not fully representative of the entire sub-Saharan subcontinent. We do

<sup>1)</sup> WE SITUATE THE AFRICAN SURVEY RESULTS IN THE GRAND TRADITION OF COMPARATIVE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON MASS POLITICAL ATTITUDES. FOR A RECENT STATE-OF-THE-ART REVIEW SEE PIPPA NORRIS (ED.), *CRITICAL CITIZENS: GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE* (NEW YORK, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1999) • <sup>2)</sup> THE SAMPLE SIZES FOR EACH COUNTRY ARE SHOWN IN TABLE 1. THE MARGIN OF SAMPLING ERROR IS PLUS OR MINUS 3 PERCENT (2 PERCENT IN NIGERIA). FIELDWORK WAS CONDUCTED BY NATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE AFROBAROMETER PROJECT. THE AUTHORS ARE GRATEFUL FOR RESEARCH FUNDING FROM THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION AND THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• <sup>3)</sup> SAMPLES WERE DRAWN ACCORDING TO A COMMON, MULTI-STAGE, STRATIFIED, AREA CLUSTER DESIGN. RANDOM SELECTION WAS USED AT EACH STAGE, WITH PROBABILITY PROPORTIONAL TO POPULATION SIZE. SAMPLING FRAMES WERE CONSTRUCTED IN THE FIRST STAGES FROM THE MOST UP-TO-DATE CENSUS FIGURES OR PROJECTIONS, AND THEREAFTER FROM CENSUS MAPS, RANDOM WALK PATTERNS, AND SELF-GENERATED LISTS OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS. IN EACH CASE THE SAMPLES WERE SUFFICIENTLY REPRESENTATIVE OF NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS ON KEY SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS (GENDER, AGE, REGION, URBAN-RURAL, ETC.) THAT STATISTICAL WEIGHTING OF THE DATA WAS NOT NECESSARY.

not allege that the findings in this paper can be extended to francophone Africa, to the continent's remaining authoritarian regimes, or to states that are imploding through civil war. If we occasionally refer to "Africans" we have a more limited populace in mind.

To anticipate findings, this paper reports that Africans (so defined) overwhelmingly support democracy and reject alternate, authoritarian regimes. They are much less happy with the way that democracy actually works, however, though a majority is satisfied in five out of the six countries studied. The fact that survey respondents report support for democracy, even when dissatisfied with its capacity to deliver, suggests that popular commitments are intrinsic as well as merely instrumental.

## **Attitudes To Democracy**

### *Awareness of Democracy*

Because democracy means different things to different people<sup>4)</sup>, we began by asking "What, if anything, do you understand by the word 'democracy'?" Although the question was posed in the local language of the respondents' choice, the word "democracy" was always presented in English. To all survey respondents who suggested a meaning, we attributed an awareness of democracy. All those who replied that they didn't know what democracy meant - or had never heard the word - were held to be unaware.

By this criterion, the concept of democracy is recognizable to most Africans interviewed. Across six countries, more than seven out of ten respondents (74 percent) were able to volunteer a definition of the term.<sup>5)</sup> For the moment, we do not enquire into the content of these definitions, simply noting that clear majorities

can attach a meaning to democracy in each of the six countries (See Table 1 pp.78-7). By no stretch of the imagination can democracy be described as a strange and incomprehensible construct.

Interesting cross-national variations nonetheless exist. The level of public awareness of democracy ranges from a low of 65 percent in Namibia to a high of 88 percent in Malawi. We speculate that the diffusion of political ideas occurs more easily in geographically small countries with high population densities than in large, under-populated countries. Neither Malawi nor Namibia is highly urbanized, however, a factor that probably helps to increase awareness of democracy in Ghana (72 percent aware, 36 percent urban) and Nigeria (77 percent aware, 43 percent urban). Also, education undoubtedly enables awareness, an issue we explore later.

## **The Meaning of Democracy**

Beyond recognizing democracy, what do people think it means? Because we used an open-ended question, respondents were free to offer answers in their own words. This procedure was adopted so that we did not overlook any distinctive meanings that Africans might attach to democracy. We were particularly concerned to resist an imported, Western framework and to leave room for indigenous conceptions. As it happens, though, our interviewees seem to have arrived at understandings of democracy that are more universal than culturally specific.

4) FOR RECENT EXAMPLES OF EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS SEE ARTHUR H. MILLER, VICKI L. HESLI AND WILLIAM M. REISINGER, "CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY AMONG MASS AND ELITE IN POST-SOVIET SOCIETIES," 27, 1997, PP. 157-190. AND ROBIN LUCKHAM, "POPULAR VERSUS LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN NICARAGUA AND TANZANIA?," DEMOCRATIZATION, 5, 3, AUTUMN 1998, PP. 92-126 • 5) EXCEPT WHERE NOTED, ALL CROSS-NATIONAL AVERAGES ARE CALCULATED AS THE RAW MEAN OF THE TOTAL POPULATION INTERVIEWED. THIS HAS THE EFFECT OF REPRESENTING COUNTRIES IN PROPORTION TO THEIR SAMPLE SIZES • 6) THAT IS, EXCLUDING "DON'T KNOW", "CAN'T EXPLAIN", AND "NEVER HEARD OF THE WORD 'DEMOCRACY'", PLUS ALL REFUSALS AND MISSING RESPONSES.



**Table 1: Popular Attitudes to Democracy, Selected African Countries, 1999-2000**  
(percentages of national sample, including “don’t knows”)

**Knowledge of democracy.**

What, if anything, do you understand by the word “democracy”?  
(percentage of respondents able to supply a meaning)

**Support for democracy.**

Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.  
(percentage choosing this option versus non-democratic option or no regime preference)

**Rejection of non-democratic alternatives.**

Military rule.  
One party state.  
(percentage disapproving these alternatives)

**Extent of democracy.**

How democratic is the way (your country) is governed today?  
(percentage saying “completely democratic”)

**Satisfaction with democracy.**

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in (your country)?  
(percentage saying “fairly” or “very” satisfied)

**Table 2: The Relationship between Support for Democracy and Satisfaction with Democracy**  
(percentages of national samples, without “don’t knows”)<sup>1</sup>

	Support Democracy		Support Any Alternative Regime <sup>2</sup>		Pearsonr
	Satisfied with Democracy	Unsatisfied with Democracy	Satisfied with Democracy	Unsatisfied with Democracy	
Malawi	53	22	13	13	.337***
Namibia	54	18	17	11	.181***
Ghana	53	26	10	11	.170***
Botswana	70	17	7	6	.136***
Nigeria	72	11	14	6	.133***
Zimbabwe	15	59	8	17	-.142***
All	58	21	12	10	.149***

\*\*\* p = <.001

<b>Botswana</b> (n = 1200)	<b>Ghana</b> (n = 2004)	<b>Malawi</b> (n = 1208)	<b>Namibia</b> (n = 1183)	<b>Nigeria</b> (n = 3603)	<b>Zimbabwe</b> (n = 1200)
69	72	88	65	77	70
82	76	66	57	81	71
85 78	89 80	82 77	59 63	90 88	79 74
46	-	34	30	17	9
75	54	57	63	84	18

- 1 Figures may not agree with Table 1 because “don’t knows” are removed in Table 2.  
Row percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.
- 2 Includes those who support non-democratic alternatives and those for whom the type of regime “does not matter”.

First, with few exceptions, the survey respondents attached a *positive* value to democracy. Among those people aware of the concept<sup>6)</sup>, more than nine out of ten (92 percent) volunteered a laudatory connotation: democracy was a public “good” that in some way would make conditions “better” (See Chart 1). Fewer than one out of a hundred saw democracy as in some way “bad.” This small minority thought that democratic reforms brought elite corruption, conflict among social interests, or “confusion” in political life. The remainder (8 percent) saw democracy in neutral terms, usually as a “change of government” or as “civilian politics or government” without implying that a new regime would be better or worse than that which had gone before.

Second, respondents regard democracy in *procedural* as well as *substantive* terms. This finding runs counter to much of the literature, which paints democratization in Africa as a quest for equalizing social and economic outcomes. In Ake’s words, “the democracy movement in Africa gets its impetus from the social and economic aspirations of people in Africa.”<sup>7)</sup> This portrayal is usually accompanied by a critique of procedures like constitutional reform and multiparty elections as mere formalities. Our findings show otherwise. More than six out of

ten survey respondents (69 percent) refer to political procedures like the protection of human rights, participation in decision-making, and voting in elections. Fewer than one in five (17 percent) refer to substantive outcomes like peace and unity, social and economic development, and equality and justice.<sup>8)</sup> Thus, when left unprompted, the majority of Africans interviewed see democratization as a limited political process rather than as an expansive socioeconomic transformation.

Moreover, the rank order of substantive interpretations is revealing: more respondents associate democracy with *political* goods (such as peace, order, unity, equality, justice, or national independence, which together account for 11 percent of responses) than with *economic* goods (social and economic development, which accounts for just 5 percent). The “peace or unity” responses are particularly interesting since none of the countries in the sample, with the possible exception of Namibia, employed democratic elections to implement a peace agreement.<sup>9)</sup> One would expect an even closer identification of democracy with peace in countries emerging from civil wars.

But the popular meaning of democracy cannot be so easily laid to rest. An alternate question about the components of democracy gave rise to dissonant results. Noting that “people associate democracy with many diverse meanings,” we asked respondents to say whether a list of political and economic features were “essential...for a society to be called ‘democratic’.” The list included (procedural) political features like “majority rule,” “freedom to criticize the government,” and “regular elections;” but it also added (substantive)

7) CLAUDE AKE, *DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA* (WASHINGTON, D.C., THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, 1996), p. 139 • 8) THE PROPORTIONS IN THE “PROCEDURAL” AND “SUBSTANTIVE” CATEGORIES DEPEND ON HOW ONE CLASSIFIES THE RESPONSE THAT DEFINES DEMOCRACY AS “GOVERNMENT BY, FOR, OR OF THE PEOPLE”. IF THEY VOICED THIS INTERPRETATION, MOST RESPONDENTS CAST IT AS “GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE”, WHICH TOGETHER WITH “GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE,” IS PROBABLY BEST INTERPRETED IN TERMS OF POLITICAL PROCEDURE. THE FIGURES REPORTED HERE SO CLASSIFY IT. BUT EVEN IF ONE EXCLUDES THIS RESPONSE FROM ANALYSIS, OR RECLASSIFIES IT AS “SUBSTANTIVE,” A MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS STILL OPT FOR PROCEDURAL INTERPRETATIONS (76 PERCENT AND 56 PERCENT RESPECTIVELY) • 9) NAMIBIANS ACTUALLY CHOSE THE “PEACE OR UNITY” OPTION LESS FREQUENTLY (5 PERCENT) THAN ALL RESPONDENTS (6 PERCENT).

socioeconomic features like “jobs for everyone,” “equality in education,” and “a small income gap between rich and poor.” In two countries (Botswana and Zimbabwe), respondents rated political and economic attributes as equally essential to democracy. In three other countries (Malawi, Namibia and Nigeria), however, respondents rated economic components as significantly more essential than political ones. This finding suggests that African conceptions of democracy also include important substantive components of economic delivery.<sup>10)</sup>

Third, popular African conceptions of democracy are unexpectedly *liberal*. When open-ended responses are analyzed, people cite civil liberties and personal freedoms more frequently than any other meanings of democracy (34 percent). These represent a conception of democracy based on individual rights that stands in marked contrast to the one-in-a-thousand respondents (0.1 percent) who make reference to group rights. Thus Africans do not seem to conceive of democracy and associated rights in a different way than people in other parts of the world.<sup>11)</sup> And, to the extent that they claim such rights as a means of resisting repression at the hands of an authoritarian ruler, Africans are beginning to think more like citizens of a constitutional state than clients of a personal patron.

Nevertheless, people use very general terms when they speak of political freedoms, for example referring to “freedom as a birthright,” “the right to everything,” and “control over one’s own life.” These vague associations - expressed by more than half (56 percent) of those citing civil liberties - suggests that the popular conception of human rights remains highly undiffer-

entiated. When people do mention specific rights, they overwhelmingly define democracy in terms of freedom of expression - including the freedoms of speech, press and dress - which accounts for 35 percent of the references to civil liberties. All other specific freedoms - of movement, association, property, and religion - together account for only 9 percent. In Ghana, several respondents referred to a democratic system as a deliberative one in which “you say some and let me say some,” which is a direct translation of a well-known Akan saying.

Are there cross-national variations in the way citizens understand democracy? Botswana stands out as the most liberal country with more than half of its citizens (55 percent) identifying democracy with civil and political rights. Nigerians are distinctive insofar as they see democracy as “government by the people” at levels (38 percent) almost twice as high as in any other country. That they also associate democracy with voting rights (14 percent) is surely attributable to the recency of the historic transition elections there. Malawi, for its part, is the only country in this sample in which more than one in ten persons (11 percent) offer a substantive definition of democracy. Interestingly, like other Africans, they see democracy’s substance not so much in terms of the delivery of socio-economic development but in terms of guarantees of political order and social harmony. Given that Malawi is deeply divided by regional rivalries, such sentiments may reflect wishful thinking.

Finally, the meanings imputed to democracy help us interpret the contrasting levels of democratic awareness noted earlier for Namibia and Malawi. In 1989, a

<sup>10)</sup> AT FIRST WE WONDERED WHETHER RESPONDENTS WERE LED BY THE CLOSED-ENDED LIST, BEING PROMPTED TO CHOOSE SUBSTANTIVE ATTRIBUTES THAT THEY DID NOT FREELY ASSOCIATE WITH DEMOCRACY WHEN ASKED IN A COMPLETELY UNDIRECTED WAY. BUT FACTOR ANALYSIS SHOWS THAT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RESPONSES CLUSTER ALONG SEPARATE DIMENSIONS AND THAT PEOPLE WHO EMPHASIZE DEMOCRACY’S POLITICAL PROCEDURES ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE WHO EMPHASIZE ITS ECONOMIC SUBSTANCE • <sup>11)</sup> FOR A RECENT EXPOSITION ON “THE PRIMACY OF THE COLLECTIVE” SEE PATRICK CHABAL AND JEAN-PASCAL DALOZ, *AFRICA WORKS: DISORDER AS POLITICAL INSTRUMENT* (BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA, INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1999), P.130. >

dominant political party came to power in Namibia in a transition from colonialism that marked the achievement of state sovereignty. As such, Namibians are significantly more likely than other Africans to associate democracy with national independence. By contrast, Malawi's 1994 transition signaled a largely indigenous process of the collapse an authoritarian single-party monopoly and the introduction of open multiparty competition. Thus Malawians (as well as Nigerians and Ghanaians) equate recent events with the installation of democracy rather than with decolonization.

### Support for Democracy

To assess support for democracy, the Afrobarometer poses a standard question that has been employed in Barometer surveys in Western

Europe, Latin America and the former Soviet bloc. It asks: "Which one of these statements do you most agree with?: A. Democracy is preferable to any other form of government; B. In certain situations, a non-democratic government can be preferable; or C. For someone like me, it doesn't matter what form of government we have." Those persons who find democracy to be the best form of government (Option A) were deemed to support democracy.

By this accepted measure, three-quarters of all people interviewed in six African countries (75 percent) identified themselves as supporters of democracy. This average figure is high by global standards, for example when compared with mean scores recorded in 1995 for six Eastern and Central European countries (65 percent) and four Latin American countries (63 percent).<sup>12)</sup>

The appearance of a pervasive public commitment to democracy in Africa can be explained in good part by the exceptional levels of support in just two countries: Botswana and Nigeria. If these two countries are excluded, and South Africa is brought into the sample, then the level of support for democracy is almost identical to that in new democracies elsewhere.<sup>13)</sup>

Botswana has the highest levels of support for democracy so far found in any African country (82 percent) (See Table 1, pp.78-7). This appreciative public mood probably reflects a rational assessment that a stable political regime based on regular elections has served the country well over the past forty years. By contrast, the high level of public support for democracy in Nigeria (81 percent) is hardly based upon an extended experience with competitive elections and good governance. More likely, it reflects a popular euphoria with the restoration of civilian rule after a particularly corrupt and repressive interlude of military dictatorship. While a jubilant mood prevailed at the time of the survey (January 2000), just half a year after the inauguration of an elected government (May 1999), there was no guarantee that high levels of support for democracy could be sustained indefinitely. Note also that support for democracy in Nigeria varies by

<sup>12)</sup> NEW DEMOCRACIES BAROMETER IV (1995), CITED IN WILLIAM MISHLER AND RICHARD ROSE, "FIVE YEARS AFTER THE FALL: TRAJECTORIES IN SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE," STUDIES IN PUBLIC POLICY, No. 298 (GLASGOW, SCOTLAND: UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE, CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF PUBLIC POLICY, 1998), P.13; LATINOBAROMETRO (1995), CITED IN JUAN LINZ AND ALFRED STEPAN, PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND CONSOLIDATION: SOUTHERN EUROPE, SOUTH AMERICA, AND POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE (BALTIMORE, MARYLAND: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1996), P.222 • <sup>13)</sup> SEE MICHAEL BRATTON AND ROBERT MATTES, "SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA: INTRINSIC OR INSTRUMENTAL?," BRITISH JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, FORTHCOMING 2001. THE UNSTANDARDIZED AVERAGE SCORE FOR GHANA, MALAWI, NAMIBIA, ZIMBABWE (1999) AND SOUTH AFRICA (1997) IS 65 PERCENT.

geopolitical region, reflecting a power shift in 1999 from the north to the south. While support for democracy is high throughout the country, it is markedly higher in the south (86 percent, higher even than Botswana) than in the north (75 percent, which matches the continental standard).

Other country features stand out. For example, Malawians display much more nostalgia for authoritarian rule than other Africans in the sample: fully one out of five respondents in Malawi (22 percent) agree that “in certain situations, a non-democratic government can be preferable.” These longings for the past also vary significantly by region; they are most prevalent in Malawi’s Central Region (30 percent), the homeland and political base of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the country’s former strongman. Also notable are the Namibians who admit that they “don’t know” whether they support democracy (20 percent), a figure four times higher than for other African countries in the sample. This finding suggests popular doubts about whether the *de facto* one-party regime that is emerging there is really a democracy at all.

It is also worth noting that public support for democracy follows a common profile in Ghana and Zimbabwe. Both cases resemble the standard for popular commitment to democracy in the six-country sample as a whole. Yet, at the time of the surveys, Ghana and Zimbabwe were embarked on very different trajectories: Ghana was in the process of completing an extended transition from military to democratic rule on the basis of increasingly open elections and Zimbabwe was descending into political crisis at the hands

of a dictator bent on retaining power by openly flouting the law. Under such divergent circumstances, it is perhaps surprising that the mass electorates in these countries would express such similar levels of commitment to democracy. This finding (together with the finding about high levels of public support for democracy in the contrasting cases of Botswana and Nigeria) suggests that African citizens make separate judgments about democracy as a preferred political system and the momentary status of governments of the day.

### Opposition to Non-Democratic Alternatives

To further explore support for democracy, we probed popular appraisals of alternative political regimes.<sup>14</sup> Democracy was presented as a concrete regime form, described as “our present system of government with regular elections and many parties” and was contrasted to the “previous regime”, whether colonial, one-party or military. Using such regime comparisons, Ghanaians rated democracy (6.7 on a scale of 1-10) well above “the former system of military rule” (just 3.6 on the same scale). Malawians, however, seemed much less certain about the desirability of recent political changes, granting the new regime of multiparty elections only a slightly higher rating than the old one-party system (6.1 versus 5.4 on a scale of 1-10).

We also asked about alternative political futures. Respondents were informed that “some people say that we would be better off if the country was governed differently,” and were asked: “What do you think about the following alternatives to our current

<sup>12</sup> NEW DEMOCRACIES BAROMETER IV (1995), CITED IN WILLIAM MISHLER AND RICHARD ROSE, “FIVE YEARS AFTER THE FALL: TRAJECTORIES IN SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE,” STUDIES IN PUBLIC POLICY, No. 298 (GLASGOW, SCOTLAND: UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE, CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF PUBLIC POLICY, 1998), P.13; LATINOBAROMETRO (1995), CITED IN JUAN LINZ AND ALFRED STEPAN, PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND CONSOLIDATION: SOUTHERN EUROPE, SOUTH AMERICA, AND POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE (BALTIMORE, MARYLAND: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1996), P.222 • <sup>13</sup> SEE MICHAEL BRATTON AND ROBERT MATTES, “SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA: INTRINSIC OR INSTRUMENTAL?,” BRITISH JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, FORTHCOMING 2001. THE UNSTANDARDIZED AVERAGE SCORE FOR GHANA, MALAWI, NAMIBIA, ZIMBABWE (1999) AND SOUTH AFRICA (1997) IS 65 PERCENT • <sup>14</sup> THIS APPROACH HEEDS THE ADVICE OF RICHARD ROSE, WILLIAM MISHLER AND CHRISTIAN HAERPFER TO MEASURE “REAL” RATHER THAN “IDEAL” CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY. SEE DEMOCRACY AND ITS ALTERNATIVES: UNDERSTANDING POST-COMMUNIST SOCIETIES (BALTIMORE, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1998), ESP. CH. 2.



system of government?” A list of statements was then presented about military rule (“the army should come in to govern the country”), one-man rule (“we should abolish parliament and political parties so that the president can decide everything”), one-party rule (“candidates from only one political party should be allowed to stand for elections and hold office”), rule by traditional leaders (“all decisions should be made by a council of elders, traditional leaders, or chiefs”).

Clear patterns emerge when regime preferences are probed this way. Generally, we can reconfirm that Africans who live in new democracies wish to retain their current political regimes. And they roundly reject non-democratic alternatives (see Table 1 pp.76-7).

Military government is the least popular form of rule, being rejected by an average 81 percent of respondents in the six countries surveyed. This average is pulled up by Nigeria, where fully 90 percent said “never again” to a form of government that they now associate with the abuses of General Sani Abacha. The prospect that “the army should come in to govern the country” was eschewed with almost equal vehemence in Ghana (89 percent) and Botswana (85 percent). By contrast, only a modest majority of Namibians (59 percent) were opposed to the prospect that, one day, soldiers might take political power. This suggests that,

while neither Botswana nor Namibia has ever experienced a coup, citizens of Botswana would be much less likely than their Namibian counterparts to tolerate one if it ever occurred.

Africans also disavow rule by big men and single parties. From a general perspective, they seem to see one-man rule and one-party rule as inseparable regime forms; very similar majorities (76 and 77 percent respectively) shun these options.<sup>15)</sup> But cross-country comparisons reveal interesting differences. In Botswana, Ghana and Zimbabwe, slightly more respondents oppose one-man rule than oppose one-party rule. This may indicate that, in these countries, all of which have relatively well developed political institutions by African standards, citizens are becoming more attached to political institutions than to individual leaders.<sup>16)</sup> Malawi, Namibia and Nigeria display a different pattern, with slightly more respondents opposing one-party rule than opposing one-man rule. Indeed, only a slim majority of Namibians (56 percent) opposes a strongman option. Other things equal, these seem to be places in Africa where personalistic politics are most deeply entrenched and pose the biggest threat to the health of new democracies.

In searching for political regimes appropriate to Africa, we asked about the contemporary relevance of traditional authority. Would citizens countenance a return to decision-making by chiefs or a council of elders? Survey respondents everywhere were less resistant to this option than to military or one-party rule. But opposition to traditional rule was strongest where chiefs actually retained practical powers, formal or informal, over decision-making (e.g. Botswana and Ghana). Ironically, therefore, those who had experienced the involvement of traditional leaders in modern governance, were most likely to express reser-

<sup>15)</sup> BIVARIATE PEARSONS'S R CORRELATION COEFFICIENT = .536\*\*\*. <sup>16)</sup> IN GHANA AND ZIMBABWE, HOWEVER, OPPOSITION TO BIG MAN RULE ALSO SURELY REFLECTS POPULAR DISAFFECTION WITH SITTING LEADERS WHO HAVE OUTSTAYED THEIR WELCOME. SINCE SOME OF THESE DIFFERENCES FALL WITHIN THE SURVEYS' MARGIN OF SAMPLING ERROR, THEY SHOULD NOT BE OVER-INTERPRETED.

ventions. And, overall, twice as many respondents repudiated a traditional regime as supported it.

### The Extent of Democracy

Do citizens think that democratic principles are applied to the governance of their own countries? To this end, the Afrobarometer surveys asked about the way each country was governed. Was it: A. completely democratic? B. democratic, but with minor problems? C. democratic but with major problems? or D. not a democracy? (See Table 1).

Nowhere did a simple majority of respondents think that the current regime in their country was completely democratic. Even in Botswana only a plurality (46 percent) perceived democratization to have reached a zenith. But the overwhelming majority of respondents there thought that democracy was either “complete” or incomplete only in “minor” respects (82 percent). In Ghana, where the question was asked in a more compact form, 69 percent thought that the country was a democracy, whereas 12 percent thought that it was not.

These cases, which show some evidence of gradual regime consolidation, stand in marked contrast to Namibia and Nigeria. In Namibia, the largest group of respondents (41 percent) thought that the country was “democratic, but with minor problems.” In Nigeria, an even larger group (46 percent) was even less optimistic, finding the country “democratic, but with major problems.” This last assessment strikes us as intuitively reasonable, especially given the tremendous challenges of recovery and development that an elected Nigerian government must confront with untested democratic institutions. While Nigerians say they support democracy at almost the same levels as Botswana, perceptions of the extent of democracy are exactly inverse. To wit, the same proportion of Nigerians see “major problems” with their democracy as Botswana who see their democracy as “complete.” Which brings us to Zimbabwe, the exception among the countries studied here. A majority of citizens here

(55 percent) either think that their country is “not a democracy” or say they “don’t know” or “don’t understand.” The proportion of Zimbabweans saying “not a democracy” (38 percent) is three times larger than the proportion of Malawians who think the same way (12 percent) and thirty times larger than in Nigeria (1 percent). And the proportion of Zimbabweans who “don’t know” (17 percent) far exceeds the equivalent proportion in Namibia, a country already noted for having the lowest levels of popular awareness of democracy in the sample. We suspect that, far from being oblivious to the meaning of democracy, many Zimbabweans simply have a hard time thinking of their own country in these terms during a period of enforced one-party dominance.

### Satisfaction with Democracy

At best, then, most of “the people” regard democracy in Africa as a work in progress. Because actual regimes are imperfect simulacra of citizen preferences, regime performance may not induce popular satisfaction. Much depends on whether ordinary folk judge the accomplishments of the new regime against recollections of a previous regime’s record or against a yardstick of future expectations. If the former, democracy may appear as the least worst alternative; if the latter, democracy is destined to always fall short.

Thus, at this juncture, we draw a sharp distinction between *support* for democracy and *satisfaction* with democracy. The former refers to a judgment in the abstract about one’s preferred form of government. The latter refers to an assessment of the concrete performance of the way elected regimes operate in practice. We also note that, because satisfaction with democracy is a much more corporeal standard, it almost always trails support for democracy wherever it has been measured around the world.

The Afrobarometer surveys track satisfaction with democracy by asking the standard question: “Generally, how satisfied are you with the way that democracy works in (your country)?” The results across six >

African countries are shown in Table 1 pp.76-7. In the paragraphs below, we refer to an aggregate measure of satisfaction with democracy, which is calculated by adding together those who are “very satisfied” and those who are “fairly satisfied.”

These results reveal the widest variation in attitudes reported so far. At one extreme is Nigeria, where 84 percent of adults interviewed said that they were satisfied with democracy; at the other extreme stands Zimbabwe, where only 18 percent said that they were so satisfied. This stark antithesis can be interpreted as a contrast between populations either celebrating a long-awaited transition to democracy or bemoaning the intransigence of an entrenched autocracy. As such, expressions of satisfaction with

democracy are subject to the exigencies of regime life cycles and must be regarded as much more volatile than other, more stable attitudes like support for democracy. One could easily foresee, for example, the gradual decline of satisfaction in Nigeria if the Obasanjo administration fails to live up to popular expectations. Similarly, one might have expected a leap in expressed satisfaction with democracy in Zimbabwe if, against the odds, Robert Mugabe had been defeated in the elections of June 2000.

Other countries are arrayed between these extremes. In terms of the proportion of people professing themselves “very satisfied” with democracy, Botswana (32 percent, the highest in the sample) actually exceeds Nigeria (26 percent). And Ghana scores lower on satisfaction than its relatively high score on support for democracy would lead one to expect. Popular satisfaction with democracy averages 64 percent when calculated as a mean for all respondents across six countries. This cross-national average is inflated by the presence of Nigeria with its high satisfaction scores and large sample size.

Satisfaction with democracy drops to 59 percent if sample sizes are standardized by calculating satisfaction as an average of aggregate country scores (i.e. controlling for the large size of the Nigeria sample). And satisfaction declines further still to 51 percent if we set aside the two countries (Nigeria and Namibia) where, countering global patterns, citizens report more satisfaction than support.

Overall, satisfaction with democracy lags behind support for democracy in the African cases. This gap is wider in Africa than in Eastern and Central Europe and in South America.<sup>17)</sup> We interpret this to mean not only that African citizens have inflated expectations of democracy but also that African governments often lack the capacity to readily fulfill elusive popular dreams.

### Understanding democratic attitudes

We end by exploring the origins of democratic sentiments. Our explanation is restricted to standard demographic factors and to relationships among attitudes already described in this paper. The analysis

<sup>17)</sup> WITH DATA FROM NEW DEMOCRACIES BAROMETER IV (1998), WE ESTIMATE AN AVERAGE SUPPORT-SATISFACTION GAP FOR EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE (6 COUNTRIES) OF ABOUT 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS. WITH DATA FROM THE LATINOBAROMETRO 1995, WE ESTIMATE AN AVERAGE GAP FOR SOUTH AMERICA (4 COUNTRIES) OF ABOUT 13 PERCENTAGE POINTS. DEPENDING ON HOW IT IS MEASURED, THE AVERAGE GAP FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN 1999-2000 IS BETWEEN 11 AND 21 PERCENTAGE POINTS.

excludes other factors, notably economic ones, recognizing full well that a more complete explanation requires a more complex model.<sup>18)</sup>

We simply ask:

- Are mass attitudes to democracy influenced by demographic factors, especially *education*?
- Is support for reform affected by the *meanings* that people attribute to democracy?
- What is the *quality* of democratic commitments? Are they instrumental or intrinsic?

### The Impact of Education

A common prediction in social science is that demographic attributes - like gender, age and income - shape mass beliefs. We find that, with the exception of education, such factors have relatively little influence on attitudes to political reform in six countries in Africa.

Take gender. Men and women display very similar levels of support for, and satisfaction with, democracy. Men and women differ only in their awareness of democracy: 21 percent of males in the six countries had never heard of democracy compared to 31 percent of females. This difference survived a statistical control for the respondents' level of education, thereby suggesting a genuine *gender* gap in awareness of the political world.

Given our earlier speculation about the diffusion of democratic awareness in urbanized countries, one might expect meaningful urban-rural distinctions in attitudes to democracy. But there were few, with urban and rural dwellers in the six countries supporting democracy in roughly equal proportions. In five coun-

tries (especially Botswana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe) urbanites are more likely to express dissatisfaction with a democratic regime. But this general finding is offset by results from Malawi, where urbanites are more satisfied with democracy than their country cousins.

Of all demographic factors, education has the greatest observed effects on attitudes to democracy. Not surprisingly, the higher the educational attainment of African citizens, the more likely they are to be aware of this type of political regime. Nine out of ten persons with university education said they know something about democracy, whereas just six out of ten persons with no formal schooling made the same claim. Education also has strong effects on the numbers of people who equate democracy with "government by the people." We are inclined to think that this interpretation of democracy is a learned response, possibly reflecting exposure in school to Lincoln's standard dictum.

Unlike in the West, however, education does not build support for democracy in Africa. University post-graduates are no more likely than people who have never been to school to say that democracy is "always preferable." Indeed, the very highly educated in Africa seem to have qualms about democracy precisely because it endows non-literate citizens with political rights that they fear may be exercised unreflectively or irresponsibly.<sup>19)</sup> Moreover, educated Africans are critical of democracy in practice. Only 10 percent of university post-graduates are "very satisfied" with democracy, compared to 32 percent of those without formal schooling, a group that may be easier to mislead or please. If educated people are satisfied at all, they are likely to damn with faint praise by saying they are only "fairly" satisfied.

<sup>18)</sup> SEE BRATTON AND MATTES, "SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA" (FORTHCOMING 2001). ALSO MICHAEL BRATTON AND ROBERT MATTES, "DEMOCRATIC AND MARKET REFORMS IN AFRICA: WHAT 'THE PEOPLE' SAY", IN E. GYIMAH-BOADI (ED.), REFORM IN AFRICA: THE QUALITY OF PROGRESS (BOULDER AND LONDON, LYNNE REINNER PUBLICATIONS, FORTHCOMING 2001) • <sup>19)</sup> AMONG ZAMBIANS, FOR EXAMPLE, EDUCATED PERSONS ARE LESS LIKELY TO AGREE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF THE UNIVERSAL FRANCHISE. THEY ARE ALSO LESS LIKELY TO VOTE. SEE MICHAEL BRATTON, "POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN A NEW DEMOCRACY: INSTITUTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FROM ZAMBIA," COMPARATIVE POLITICAL STUDIES, 32, 5, AUGUST 1999, P. 564. >

### The Eye of the Beholder

To state the obvious, support for reform begins with awareness of the purposes of reform. Individuals who cannot define democracy are much less attached to it as a preferred form of regime.

Compared to politically conscious citizens, they are twice as likely to say that “it makes no difference to me what form of government we have.”<sup>20)</sup>

More interestingly, support for democracy is related to the content of popular understandings. Citizens are more likely to support democracy if they conceive it in procedural terms rather than substantive ones. For instance, 81 percent of those who see democracy as “government by the people” go on to name it as the best form of regime, compared to the 73 percent

who define democracy as “social and economic development,” a small but statistically significant difference. Moreover, support for democracy is lowest among those who associate democracy with “social and economic hardship” (56 percent). Thus, support for democracy seems to be centered among minimalists, for whom democracy’s scope is limited to the reform of the rules of the political game. Support for democracy is more tentative among maximalists, who hope that democracy will herald sweeping socio-economic change.

The same applies, but with greater force, to satisfaction with the way that democracy actually works. The most satisfied citizens are those who define democracy in terms of electoral choice, a limited procedural

notion (73 percent). The least satisfied are those who expect democracy to deliver economic equality or social justice (60 percent), social or economic development (58 percent), and security from crime (57 percent), all substantive desires. We conclude that, if citizens have modest expectations, namely that democracy will enable them to choose leaders and participate in decision-making (and not much more!), then they are relatively likely to be satisfied with democracy. If, however, they believe that democracy will automatically provide jobs, redistribute income, and ensure social peace, then they are candidates for rapid disillusionment. In short, the perceived performance of democracy is partly in the eye of the beholder.

### From Satisfaction to Support

Does satisfaction with democracy (in practice) drive support for democracy (in the abstract)? One might expect that popular assessments of an elected regime’s performance would deeply influence whether citizens opt for democracy as their preferred form of government.

To a degree, the African data support this proposition, though less strongly than expected. To be sure, support is positively related to satisfaction in five out of the six countries surveyed (see Table 2 pp.76-7). Overall, 58 percent of all respondents are both supportive of, and satisfied with, democracy. Although this relationship is statistically significant in all five country cases, it is strong only in Malawi. And in Zimbabwe, the relationship runs counter to the predicted direction, with high levels of democratic support coinciding with low levels of democratic satisfaction.

We interpret these data as follows. On one hand, popular support for democracy in at least five African countries has a strong instrumental component. Citizens extend support to the regime in democracy in

<sup>20)</sup> 8.9 PERCENT VERSUS 19.5 PERCENT.

good part because they are satisfied with its performance at delivering desired goods and services. On the other hand, support and satisfaction are imperfectly linked, with 21 percent of all survey respondents (and 59 percent in Zimbabwe) saying that they support democracy *even though* they are dissatisfied with its performance. Thus support for democracy has an intrinsic component in all six countries, according to which citizens value democracy not so much as a means of delivering development, but as an end in itself.

These results cast new light on the quality of the democracy emerging in African countries. Take Zimbabwe, which harbors the most dissatisfied democrats. Zimbabweans apparently cling intensely to democracy precisely because their current government has broken most of the rules of the political game. Thus, ironically, intrinsic support is best revealed in regimes in crisis, when citizens have abandoned all pretense of instrumental support for an underperforming incumbent government. In short, the quality of support for democracy is easiest to observe when the chips are down and the regime is under great threat.

There is also evidence of intrinsic support for democracy in Ghana. Three-fourths of Ghanaians endorse democracy even though only one-half of them are satisfied with the way it actually works. In other words, they tend to support democracy despite popular perceptions of the sub-par performance of a quasi-democratic regime led by a soldier-turned-civilian. In other words, the quality of “democracy” experienced under Jerry Rawlings falls short of the ideal regime they would prefer. Such intrinsic attachments suggest that the democracy is relatively well-established in Ghana, a country that once led Africa to political independence.

Table 2 pp.76-7 should not be read as raising reservations about Botswana, which our surveys portray as the paragon of African democracies. Even though this country has the highest levels of expressed support for

democracy in the sample, most of this support appears on the surface to be instrumental. At this time, we do not know if high levels of (instrumental) satisfaction in Botswana mask high (underlying) levels of (intrinsic) support. Nor can we resolve this issue until and unless the regime undergoes a period of crisis. Should economic or political performance ever take a serious turn for the worse, and should public attachments to democracy falter in response, then democracy in this country would have been revealed to be less secure than commonly thought. More likely, as in Zimbabwe, citizen attachments to democracy in Botswana will then be seen to be deep-seated.

Finally, Nigeria and Namibia represent a different orientation. As noted earlier, these are the only two countries in Africa - and possibly the world - where, at the turn of the millenium, more citizens reported satisfaction with democracy than support for it. In these countries, even people who do not support democracy in principle stand ready and willing to consume the products of a regime that calls itself democratic. Citizens here seem to be instrumentalists *par excellence*. Many of them apparently care less about the form of government than about the capacity of rulers - any rulers - to deliver the goods. Under these circumstances, we are tempted to conclude that the consolidation of democracy is a distant prospect in both these countries. This is so because the conditional attachments of citizens to democracy in some parts of Africa are mercurial, unreliable, and possibly evanescent.

## Conclusion

At this time, several leading sub-Saharan African countries display a significant quantity of popular support for democracy. Of greater general concern is the limited depth of these attachments and thus the quality of democracy that is emerging.

There can be little doubt that democracy, broadly defined, has attained wide legitimacy. More than seven out of ten respondents to six national Afrobarometer surveys named it as their preferred form of >

government in late 1999 and early 2000. Because, for the moment, military and one-party rule are discredited in these countries, support for democracy is not seriously compromised by large pockets of authoritarian nostalgia. These findings also suggest that, while outsiders from elsewhere in the world may have influenced political reform in Africa, democratic sentiments have their own indigenous roots.

Although popular support for democracy is almost a mile wide, it may be only an inch deep. While many Africans interpret democracy in universal terms, and value it intrinsically as well as instrumentally, they also rely on extremely vague understandings of democratic principles. Education helps to offset some of these shortcomings, for example by closing gaps in political knowledge, but it does not always deepen commitments to democratic values. And, compared to citizens in other regions of the non-Western world, Africans express considerable dissatisfaction with the performance capacity of elected governments. In every African country that we surveyed, majorities of the adult population regard their new democracies as seriously incomplete. Thus, when it comes to building democracy, African citizens acknowledge that much work remains to be done. ■

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## Introduction

For nearly two decades, Zanu PF, one of the two parties that led the liberation movement in Zimbabwe between 1963-1979, dominated post-colonial politics in Zimbabwe. However, in the general elections of June 2000, the first substantive opposition party to emerge in the last 20 years, the labour led Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), captured 57 parliamentary seats, against 62 seats won by Zanu PF, in context of pre-election violence orchestrated by the ruling party. At one level the significance of this performance of the MDC was not only that it made such electoral gains against the background of state sponsored violence, but that it did so only nine months after the birth of the new party. At a broader level, the significance of the emergence of the MDC is that it represented the success of broad alliance politics, bringing together trade unionists, intellectuals, the urban middle class, rural producers, commercial farmers, and sections of the industrialist class. The alliance, based on a widespread disillusion with the government's economic mismanagement, the demand for constitutional reform, and criticism of a non-transparent land reform process, has brought together a plethora of seemingly contradictory interest groups, into a conjunctural alliance, which faces many tensions over future policies.

Pursuing an exhausted economic accumulation model that failed to deal with the unequal economic legacies of the colonial period, government economic policies, particularly during the Structural Adjustment years

of the 1990s exacerbated, income inequalities, unemployment, tensions over land reform, increasing prices of basic goods, and de-industrialisation. Thus a liberation movement party that boasted its socialist credentials in the early 1980s, plugged Zimbabwe firmly into the circuits of international capital by the late 1990s, and in so doing exacerbated the severe structural constraints that characterised the settler colonial economy. The promise of integration into the global economy had resulted in severe economic crisis, under a regime racked by mismanagement, corruption and a seriously eroded legitimacy.<sup>1)</sup>

Confronted with this organic crisis, the ruling party sought to revive its political fortunes through three measures. Firstly, large payouts were made to war veterans from the liberation struggle in response to protests from the latter in 1997, against their continued economic and political marginalisation by Zanu PF. Secondly, President Mugabe committed the Zimbabwean armed forces to the crisis in the Congo in a manner that has betrayed the business interests of Mugabe and his close allies in the army and party. Thirdly, Mugabe has re-mobilised the peasantry over the popular demand for land reform, largely though not solely, through the coercive deployment of a combination of war veterans and unemployed youth.

<sup>1)</sup> PATRICK BOND, *UNEVEN ZIMBABWE: A STUDY OF FINANCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT*, TRENTON, NJ, AFRICA WORLD PRESS, INC. 1998.



This mobilisation has taken place through a heightened racialised discourse, reminiscent of the liberation war rhetoric, that has also sought to project a radical, Pan Africanist, anti-imperialist image. Whether in SADC, the OAU, or in Harlem, Mugabe has proclaimed the need for a broad, black, Africanist alliance, an essentialised and combative subject, to confront the racist West that has demonised him as an anti-democratic tyrant. Thus he has attempted to generalise the struggle for land on a continental level, in a manner that displaces the inadequacies of Zanu PF's state policies over the last twenty years, onto the broader terrain of global politics. Central to this logic is the proposition that the struggle over land is the sole signifier of authentic, liberated nationhood. Those who seek to question the modalities

of Mugabe's version of land redistribution, are defined as outside of the nation, and mere impostors for imperialist designs. The central target for this invective has been the MDC, who have continuously been characterised as outside of 'genuine' nationalist aspirations. In the words of the ruling party's newspaper:

*Their ties with ex-Rhodesians and Western powers who have been working against the realisation of our people's aspirations and goals such as land reform is clear testimony that they are enemies of our revolution. To be more precise, they are puppets of these imperialists who want to re-colonise Zimbabwe.<sup>2)</sup>*

The violence that has been unleashed by the ruling party has been carried out in the name of an anti-colonial land reclamation: a radical rhetoric for repressive politics. Moreover, this strategy has been contrasted to the pluralistic, liberal democratic language of the MDC, and its general embrace of economic neo-liberalism. The opposition emphasis on liberal rights based issues and governance, has been confronted with a populist redistribution message, cloaking an authoritarian politics, on the part of Zanu PF.

The central purpose of this paper will be to trace the ambiguities of the politics the opposition in Zimbabwe, fought over issues of individual rights, democratisation and redistribution, at a moment when the constraints of globalisation have both undermined the social basis of the country's leading liberation movement party, and yet provide the continuing basis for the redistributive message of the liberation struggle. Central to the focus of this paper will be the role of the labour movement, looking both at the strengths and limitations of the labour led opposition.

### **Zimbabwe in the 1980s: Labour in the Shadow of the State**

Most of the 1980s were characterised by a Zimbabwean state which, though it had substantial legitimacy based on the legacy of the liberation struggle and a broad developmental social programme, still needed to establish its authority both in the state, and in those areas of the country where its support base was weak. In particular the new state needed to stamp its authority on the Matabeleland region, where the rival liberation party, ZAPU, was dominant, and on the urban classes, given the fact that the liberation war was conducted largely in the rural areas. In Matabeleland the ruling party dealt with the opposition through violence and repression in the mid-1980s, and a Unity Accord in 1987 which incorporated sections of the leadership in the region into the ruling party, but left

<sup>2)</sup> THE PEOPLE'S VOICE, EDITORIAL, MDC AGENT OF IMPERIALISTS, 19-25 SEPTEMBER 1999.

the legacy of this conflict unresolved.<sup>3)</sup> In terms of the urban based classes, and in particular labour in the formal sector, the state set up a central labour structure, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), that was, in the early 1980s, effectively a wing of the ruling party.

During the colonial period labour organisations played a central role in the anti-colonial struggles, in particular between the 1940's and early 1960's, when nationalist parties were banned by the colonial regime. However there were strong tensions between labour organisers and nationalist politicians over the relationship between labour issues and nationalist politics. Central to these tensions was the autonomy of the labour movement and its strategies with regard to the objectives of the nationalist parties. The outcome of these struggles was the substantive subordination of the labour movement to nationalist parties, sometimes through coercive mobilisation strategies. The shift of the anti-colonial struggle to a rural liberation war in the early 1970's, further marginalized urban labour organisations, both in the leadership and discourse of the liberation agenda.<sup>4)</sup> This marginalisation is confirmed in one of the official histories of Zanu PF published in 1984, in which it is only in 1979, the year of the Lancaster House peace talks, that the mobilisation of 'workers, intellectuals and other patriotic forces,' was targeted with 'greater vigour.'<sup>5)</sup>

Thus, at independence in 1980, the labour movement was weak and divided and played no significant role in the discussions over the transition to majority rule at the Lancaster House discussions in 1979. This was in contrast to the situation in South Africa where in the



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1980s, the basic contours of the post-apartheid labour relations system, in the form of the Laboria Minute, were constructed prior to the broader political discussions on the constitutional aspects of the transition to majority rule. As Webster and Adler comment, this development 'set up a practice of tripartism, giving labour an institutional voice, enabling it to shape the broader transition agenda.'<sup>6)</sup> As labour prepared to face the new Zimbabwean state, there was no united labour federation. Instead there were six labour centres, with negligible labour constituencies, and with little legitimacy in the eyes of the new ruling party.<sup>7)</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of independence, against a background of repressive labour relations and an accumulation of pent-up frustrations in the labour force, a series of strikes broke out countrywide between 1980-82. Estimates of the number of strikes

<sup>3)</sup> JOCELYN ALEXANDER, JOANN MCGREGOR, TERENCE RANGER, VIOLENCE AND MEMORY: ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN THE 'DARK FORESTS' OF MATABELELAND, OXFORD, JAMES CURREY, 2000 • <sup>4)</sup> BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS AND IAN PHIMISTER (Eds), KEEP ON KNOCKING: A HISTORY OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN ZIMBABWE, 1900-1997, HARARE, BAOBAB BOOKS, 1997. SEE ALSO, BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS AND TSUNEO YOSHIKUNI (Eds), SITES OF STRUGGLE: ESSAYS IN ZIMBABWE'S URBAN HISTORY, HARARE, WEAVER PRESS, 1999 • <sup>5)</sup> ROBERT MUGABE, ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION CENTRAL COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE PARTY, HARARE, 1984 • <sup>6)</sup> EDWARD WEBSTER AND GLEN ADLER, 'TOWARDS A CLASS COMPROMISE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S 'DOUBLE TRANSITION': BARGAINED LIBERALISATION AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY.' POLITICS AND SOCIETY, VOL 27, ISSUE NO 3, SEPTEMBER 1999, PP347-385, P361 • <sup>7)</sup> BRIAN WOOD, 'TRADE UNION ORGANISATION AND THE WORKING CLASS,' IN COLIN STONEMAN (Ed), ZIMBABWE'S PROSPECTS: ISSUES OF RACE, CLASS, STATE AND CAPITAL IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, LONDON, MACMILLAN, 1988. >

vary, but Sachikonye puts the number at 171 between 1980-82.<sup>8)</sup> This proliferation of strike activity confirms Valenzuela's proposition that the harsher the union repression and the more closed the public space, the more explosive will be union protests and strikes once controls are lifted, and the more difficult it will be for national union leaders to moderate protests in order to negotiate a role for unions.<sup>9)</sup> In Zimbabwe, where national union leadership was very weak at this stage, this was a particular problem. The immediate impact of these strikes was to indicate the lack of a strong regulatory framework for labour relations, through which the new state could begin to construct the category of labour within the discourse of the post-colonial dispensation. This construction was based on the con-

tradictory combination of Marxism Leninism, authoritarianism,<sup>10)</sup> and liberal nationalism, in which the role of labour was strictly defined by the state which was the sole bearer of the legitimate aspirations of the liberation movement. Moreover this placing of labour was constructed within a political policy of Reconciliation that sought to gradually overcome the economic obstacles of the past, without disrupting the accumulation model of the settler bourgeoisie. Radical reconstruction was to be achieved through a gradualist strategy of 'Growth with Equity', which in turn translated into a politics that placed greater emphasis

on intra black conflicts than on confronting white privilege.<sup>11)</sup>

The policy response of the state towards labour included several interventions. Between 1980-81 the state introduced a series of legislative measures to provide for minimum legislation, restrain dismissals and retrenchments in the private sector, and provide for workers committees at shop floor level. In addition, in 1981 the state played a central role in the establishment of the central labour federation the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), which was to be dominated by the state until the mid 1980s. In 1985, a new labour relations act was passed, superseding the colonial Industrial relations Act. While the new act broadened the scope of labour relations management, and advance the right of workers to join unions and workers committees, it severely restricted the right to strike, and, as in the colonial period, concentrated powers in the Minister of Labour. Moreover, because of their organisational weakness during this period, the labour movement played no substantive role in the drafting of the legislation. Complementing these interventions, the state also displayed its capacity for coercion by using colonial legislation, in the form of the Industrial Conciliation Act and the Law and Order Maintenance Act, to arrest striking workers between 1980-82. The coercive strains in State ideology extended to the language of labour mobilisation, which warned labour that the state would take action against workers, 'who exhibit unpatriotic tendencies like insubordination, laziness, drunkenness and coming to work late.'<sup>12)</sup> This rhetoric strongly resembled the experiences of the other post-colonial states, that in Cooper's words sought 'to persuade workers of the virtues of order and productivity, in the name of a bigger cause, fighting imperialism and developing the

<sup>8)</sup> LLOYD SACHIKONYE, 'THE STATE, CAPITAL AND TRADE UNIONS', IN IBBO MANDAZA, ZIMBABWE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TRANSITION, DAKAR, CODESRIA, 1986 • <sup>9)</sup> SAMUEL J VALENZUELA, "LABOUR MOVEMENTS IN TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY", COMPARATIVE POLITICS, VOL 21, NO4, JULY 1989, PP445-471 • <sup>10)</sup> CHRISTINE SYLVESTER, "ZIMBABWE'S 1985 ELECTIONS: A SEARCH FOR NATIONAL MYTHOLOGY," JOURNAL OF MODERN AFRICAN STUDIES, VOL 24, NO 1, 1986, PP229-255 • <sup>11)</sup> CHRISTINE SYLVESTER, "CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN ZIMBABWE'S DEVELOPMENT HISTORY," AFRICAN STUDIES REVIEW, VOL 28, NO 1, MARCH 1985, PP19-44 • <sup>12)</sup> HERALD, 13TH MAY 1988.

economy.<sup>13)</sup> Thus by the mid-1980s a fragile relationship had emerged between the state and the labour movement. Sachikonye summarises it as follows:

*In sum, the first five years of independence witnessed dominant state intervention in labour relations, with a visible bias to the immediate interests of the bourgeoisie. The spirited, if fragmented, struggles of workers at the workplace were undermined by the tacit pact between the state, bourgeoisie, and the labour movement leadership to create stability through the repression of strikes.....However, the cooptation of the ZCTU rested on a shaky basis. There did not exist popular support in the unions for the co-opted leadership.*<sup>14)</sup>

In political terms, the weakness of the labour leadership translated itself into a dependence on the state for political patronage. When in 1987, the Government of Zimbabwe amended the Lancaster House constitution to remove the racially franchised parliamentary seats that had been reserved for whites, the ZCTU leadership made an urgent appeal to be included in the new parliament, as an interest group within Zanu PF. The President of the ZCTU in 1987, Geoffrey Mutandare argued:

*We feel that the ZCTU should be represented on the decision-making bodies such as the House of Assembly, the senate and the Zanu PF central committee. This will give the labour movement a real opportunity to put across the view, as sentiments and attitudes of the working people of Zimbabwe on all matters of national interest and to partner the party and government in policy-making and formulation of national planning.*<sup>15)</sup>

In response the speaker of the House of Assembly, a prominent Zanu PF official, responded disdainfully:

*If we grant the ZCTU special representation, next will be the youth, then the Women's League. The Churches will also want to be represented in Parliament, even the teacher's association.*<sup>16)</sup>

Given the problems of legitimacy faced by the state imposed leadership of the ZCTU during this period, and the corrupt practices which accompanied this lack of accountability to the broad membership, a renewed leadership struggle emerged in the labour centre in 1987/88. In the latter year, a substantively new leadership emerged in the ZCTU which initiated a restructuring programme in the labour centre, resulting in a growth in labour affiliates, and a stabilisation of membership in the period that followed. Significantly a new Secretary General, Morgan Tsvangirai, was appointed, a man whose impact on Zimbabwean politics was to become decisive in the 1990s. Through these revitalised structures, the ZCTU concentrated its campaigns on a number of areas including: wider tripartite consultations on the Labour Relations Act, and pressure to distance the state from the collective bargaining process; a demand for more clarity and commitment on the government's stated socialist programme; a critical posture towards the state's move towards economic liberalisation in the late 1980s. In 1989 the ZCTU developed a strong anti-capitalist critique of the government's Investment Code, which signalled the state's move towards the implementation of a structural adjustment programme. The labour movement warned that the 'moral from history' was that 'the wealth and resources of a people

<sup>13)</sup> FREDERICK COOPER, *DECOLONISATION AND AFRICAN SOCIETY: THE LABOUR QUESTION IN FRENCH AND BRITISH AFRICA*. CAMBRIDGE, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1996, p438 • <sup>14)</sup> LLOYD SACHIKONYE, "THE STATE, WORKERS AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS," IN SAM AGERE (Ed) , *ZIMBABWE POST INDEPENDENCE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: MANAGEMENT POLICY ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS*, DAKAR, CODESRIA, 1998, p176 • <sup>15)</sup> SUNDAY MAIL, 25TH OCTOBER 1987 • <sup>16)</sup> HERALD, 28TH OCTOBER, 1987.



are acquired by positive seizure in the same manner as our political independence was won.<sup>17)</sup>

In addition to its lobbying strategy on the economic front, the ZCTU broadened its campaign into the broader issue of political democratisation. This campaign took the form of struggles against Zanu PF's attempt to impose a one-party state in 1990, corruption in the ruling party, and the continuation of the colonial strategy of maintaining a State of Emergency in the country. In these campaigns the ZCTU began to develop alliances with other civic groups, such as the student movement, who also sought to challenge the dominant political role of the ruling party. With the growing crisis in the economy, industrial unrest once again made its way on to the agenda at the end of the first decade of inde-

pendence, with strikes breaking out amongst nurses, teachers, commercial bank workers and air transport workers. Thus by 1990, the labour movement had moved from being a pliant wing of the ruling party to a more autonomous critical force, which had begun to make broader societal alliances, in an attempt to link the issues around economic policy to problems of governance. The economic backdrop to these developments was an economy that faced growing unemployment, stagnant fixed capital investment rates, an inability to break out of stagnant effective demand, and an industrial sector with 'insufficient economies of scale and outdated production processes which left

most manufacturers incapable of competing in international markets.'<sup>18)</sup> In such conditions worker incomes were eroded such that real minimum wages in 1990 were well below their peak levels in 1982.

### **ESAP and the Critique of the State.**

In 1990 the ZCTU led a critique of the launch of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in Zimbabwe, both in terms of its conception and the lack of civic involvement in its formulation. At its 1990 Congress the ZCTU launched a frontal assault on the government's new economic turn:

*The Government strategy of staking the people's hopes on World Bank structural adjustment policies, on foreign investment, on privatisation and on trade liberalisation ignore the evidence of the devastating effects of these policies on working people across the globe and dooms a vast section of the society to permanent joblessness, hopelessness and economic insecurity. It further mortgages the economy to foreigners and leaves the nation economically powerless and without economic control over its future.<sup>19)</sup>*

Additionally in the early 1990s, the ZCTU fought to consolidate its position in the collective bargaining process in the face of eroding economic conditions. In 1992, the state introduced the Labour Relations Amendment Act that set out to deregulate labour relations in line with ESAP. The legislation set out to place constraints on union power at the shop floor, while at the same time ensuring that the Ministry of Labour retained wide-ranging powers over collective bargaining and the industrial relations process. In response to these developments the ZCTU organised an anti-ESAP demonstration that was banned and broken up by the police. Six unionists were arrested

<sup>17)</sup> ZCTU, ZCTU ON THE INVESTMENT CODE; ITS IMPLICATIONS TO NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND TO THE POSITION AND CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE, HARARE, 1989. <sup>18)</sup> PATRICK BOND, "ZIMBABWE: FROM DIRIGISME TO STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND BACK", UNPUB. Mimeo, 2000.

<sup>19)</sup> ZCTU, "STRATEGY DOCUMENT FOR THE 1990 CONGRESS", CITED IN PARIS YEROS, LABOUR STRUGGLES FOR ALTERNATIVE ECONOMICS: TRADE UNION NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM UNDER ESAP, FORTHCOMING 2001, SARIPS, HARARE.

and charged under the Law and Order Maintenance Act. A subsequent High Court decision acquitted the six, and affirmed their constitutional right to assemble and demonstrate. This event, while confirming the importance of the role of the labour movement in the fight for democratisation, raised the concerns of the ruling party about the political ambitions of the ZCTU. The main state controlled daily duly warned that, after the anti-ESAP demonstration the political interests of the labour movement appeared to be 'in conflict with the Government and the ruling party.'<sup>20)</sup> Moreover Mugabe added his admonitions in 1993, when refusing to attend the labour organised May Day celebrations for the second year running, he stated:

*The moment you turn yourself into a political party I will tell you I am Zanu PF. I cannot go to May Day celebrations to be a subject of ridicule by school children like students at the University of Zimbabwe.*<sup>21)</sup>

The spectre of the Chiluba route to political power in Zambia loomed large in the Zimbabwean political debate.

Notwithstanding the central role that the ZCTU was taking as an oppositional voice, it was unable to halt the declining standard of living of its membership. The indicators of this decline included:

- Real wages declined from an index of 122 in 1982 to 67 in 1994, increasing again to 88 in 1997;
- The share of wages in the gross national income fell from 54% in 1987 to 39% in 1997, while that of profits increased from 47% to 63% during the same period;

- The Poverty Assessment Study carried out by the Government in 1995 found that 61% of Zimbabwean households lived in poverty;
- Employment growth declined from an average of 2.4% between 1985-90, to 1.55 in the period 1991-97.<sup>22)</sup>

The inability of the ZCTU to protect its members from the erosion of their standard of living, in the early 1990s, was due to a number of factors. Firstly, although the labour movement had begun to emerge from the shadow of the state in the early 1990s, the state still felt able to marginalize it in the policy process, while also noting its potential as an oppositional political force. Secondly, within the trade union movement itself there were several organisational problems that hindered its progress. These included the fact that many workers showed scant knowledge of the functions of their unions, were not aware of the institutional achievements of their unions through the collective bargaining process, and were dominated by males.<sup>23)</sup> Alternatively, the government showed more interest in courting the emerging black business groups, known as the indigenisation associations, who found new spaces to press their class project in the neo-liberal environment of ESAP.<sup>24)</sup> This agenda found greater resonance amongst the ruling elite, whose own accumulation activities had grown actively behind the rhetoric of socialism in the 1980s.

Given this growing rift between the state and the labour movement in this period, and the continued marginalisation of the ZCTU from the policy process, the latter attempted a different approach in 1995/1996. As the state prepared to develop the second

<sup>20)</sup> HERALD, 23RD JUNE 1992 • <sup>21)</sup> THE WORKER, NO.4, JUNE 1993 • <sup>22)</sup> GODFREY KANYENZE, "THE IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBALISATION ON THE ZIMBABWEAN ECONOMY". PAPER PREPARED FOR THE ZIMBABWE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, 2000 • <sup>23)</sup> STELLA MAKANYA AND TRUST NGIRANDI, "WORKERS PARTICIPATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: A REPORT ON RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE 1991/92 EDUCATION SEMINARS", ZCTU, 1993; SEE ALSO STELLA MAKANYA AND TRUST NGIRANDI, "WORKERS PARTICIPATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: A SECOND REPORT ON RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE 1991/92 EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS," ZCTU, 1993 • <sup>24)</sup> BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS AND DANIEL COMPAGNON, "INDIGENISATION, THE STATE BOURGEOISIE AND NEO-AUTHORITARIAN POLITICS," FORTHCOMING 2001.



phase of the structural adjustment programme, the labour movement produced a document entitled “Beyond ESAP” in 1996, that represented an attempt to engage the state and the international financial institutions, in a more constructive debate on structural adjustment. The central thrust of this document was to engage in what Webster and Adler have called ‘bargained liberalisation’ which was an attempt to engage the state and capital in institutional structures, which would be used to set the form and pace of adjustment.<sup>25)</sup> The strategic reasoning of the intervention was to remain relevant to continuing economic policy debates. The result of this new approach was, as Yeros has observed, to shift the debate from a political level to more strictly technical/economic issues requiring state interventions, within a social

democratic framework.<sup>26)</sup> This rapprochement between labour and the state took place against the background of the 1995 general elections and the 1996 Presidential elections, in which Mugabe was apprehensive about the political role of the ZCTU. As a result Mugabe agreed to meet with labour leaders in March 1995, and he attended the May Day celebrations for the first time since 1991. In response the labour movement agreed to remain non-partisan in both elections.

However, this thaw in state-labour relations was to prove short-lived. In the following two years 1996-

1997, three significant events were to take place that decisively changed the terrain of Zimbabwean politics. In 1996 the public sector carried out the biggest civil service strike in post independence history, led by the teachers and nurses, over wages. The strike provided an opportunity for the ZCTU to cement its relations with public sector workers. Previously the ZCTU had assisted public sector workers through policy, legal and organisational work directed towards the creation of a unified labour law, given that public sector workers did not fall under the Labour Relations Act of 1985. In addition the ZCTU lobbied for a collective bargaining system and a fairer dispute resolution mechanism in the public sector. This active role of the ZCTU culminated in affiliation of the Public Services Association (PSA) to the ZCTU in August 1996. During the strike the ZCTU provided an important stabilising role for the PSA leadership and brokered meetings between the state and striking workers. For the state, this major public sector protest betrayed the cracks emerging in the state’s legitimacy. During the 1980s, one of the major boasts of the new government was its rapid Africanisation of the public sector. Indeed the civil service represented the fastest growing sector in formal employment, growing from 12% of formal employment in 1979 to 19% in 1989.<sup>27)</sup> Through this expanded sector the new government extended the reach of the state into remote areas of the country. Thus the strike represented a rebellion from a central arm of the state. At least one Zanu PF MP, Irene Zindi, was under no illusions about the significance of the strike action: ‘..this industrial action is an eye opener to tell us if we really know where our bread is buttered.’<sup>28)</sup>

<sup>25)</sup> WEBSTER AND ADLER OP CIT, P351 • <sup>26)</sup> YEROS, OP CIT, P43. ONE GROUP OF COMMENTATORS HAVE OBSERVED THAT BEYOND ESAP ‘CODIFIED MANY OF THE MUGABE REGIMES WORST CONCEPTUAL ERRORS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.’ SEE PATRICK BOND, DARLEN MILLER AND GREG RUITERS, “THE PRODUCTION, REPRODUCTION AND POLITICS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN WORKING CLASS: ECONOMIC CRISIS AND REGIONAL CLASS STRUGGLE: ECONOMIC CRISIS AND REGIONAL CLASS STRUGGLE,” FORTHCOMING SOCIALIST REGISTER 2001: THE GLOBAL WORKING CLASS AT THE MILLENNIUM, LONDON, MERLIN PRESS • <sup>27)</sup> GODFREY KANYENZE AND ARNOLD SIBANDA, “THE LABOUR SECTOR”, BACKGROUND PAPER FOR THE ZIMBABWE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, 1997.P16 • <sup>28)</sup> HERALD, 22ND AUGUST 1996.

The response of the government to the strike was to arrest strike leaders and to fire large numbers of public sector workers, with Mugabe declaring: 'We don't take kindly to illegal strikes. Already the public service is far too large and it may be an opportunity for us to reduce it.'<sup>29)</sup> Reacting to the coercion of the state, the ZCTU called for a general strike in support of public sector workers. However, the strike call was made with insufficient preparation and communication, both within the labour movement, and with the general public, resulting in divided reactions from the labour force and a failure of the strike.<sup>30)</sup>

No sooner had the ruling party begun to recover from the debacle of the public sector strike, than a new threat to its legitimacy emerged, once again from one of the central support structures of Zanu PF, namely the Zimbabwe War Veterans Liberation Association. From mid 1997 members of this association lobbied the ruling party more intensively for greater financial compensation and political recognition. It should be noted that, while the lobbying of the war vets reached a critical point in 1997, such efforts had been going on since the 1980s. Contrary to his negative and coercive response to the labour actions, Mugabe, frightened by the legitimacy and mobilising power of the war veterans in Zanu PF, quickly resolved to give in to their demands, granting each war veteran a sum of Z\$50000, compensation. This decision, carried out without any fiscal planning, had an enormously damaging effect on the Zimbabwean economy, contributing to the worst devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar in the post-independence period. Besides the economic impact of this development, the significance of Mugabe's decision was his strategic decision to court the alliance of the war veterans, at a moment of increasing labour opposition. In doing so Mugabe sought to keep the war veterans from a future alliance

with the labour movement. In order to prevent a rift from growing between the war veterans and the labour movement, the General Secretary of the ZCTU, Morgan Tsvangirai, met with the leader of the war veterans, Chenjerai Hunzvi, in 1997, and both agreed that the government should not levy workers to pay for the war veterans compensation, but instead other options should be explored.<sup>31)</sup> Further meetings between the two became impossible as Mugabe cemented his alliance with the veterans thereafter.

In the event the government went on to impose a levy on the taxpayer, resulting in an immediate demand from the ZCTU that the levy should be dropped, in the absence of which a general strike would be called. The state duly dropped the levy, but the ZCTU went ahead with its call for a general strike on the 9th December 1997 in protest against other levies still in existence, and the more general lack of transparency in the state's budgetary decisions. The result was the most successful general strike in Zimbabwe's history, which received massive support, not only from workers, but from large sections of the middle class, and, significantly, employers. The Zimbabwean Police Commissioner observed in despair:

*...I note with surprise that for the first time since independence in this country we have all institutions- banks, stores, the industry and farms- being closed and urged to go out and demonstrate.*<sup>32)</sup>

*The Minister of Home Affairs called the ZCTU 'an unholy alliance between the ZCTU, employers and white commercial farmers, who have been angered by the government's designation of farms',<sup>33)</sup> in 1997. Indeed the general strike marked a confluence of views amongst a cross section of Zimbabwean society, that the growing economic crisis in Zimbabwe, could*

<sup>29)</sup> HERALD, 26TH AUGUST 1996 • <sup>30)</sup> "BEHIND THE STRIKE: THE 1996 PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKES", ZCTU 1996 • <sup>31)</sup> INTERVIEW WITH MORGAN TSVANGIRAI, AUGUST 1998 • <sup>32)</sup> FINANCIAL, GAZETTE, 11TH DECEMBER 1997 • <sup>33)</sup> IBID.

only be dealt with by addressing the issue of governance. Within the ranks of capital, which had benefited most from the neo-liberal policies of the government, there was a growing concern about the unpredictability of the state, even if this did not translate itself into outright opposition. Amongst the commercial farmers, who had benefited from nearly two decades of supportive policies by the Zimbabwean government, particularly during the economic liberalisation period of the 1990s, there was a definite concern over the government decision to designate 1471 farms in 1997.<sup>34)</sup> Overall, therefore, the historic compromise developed between the post-colonial state and capital, had begun to unravel, underpinned by the broader loss of legitimacy amongst the urban classes. The state, which had

pinned its hopes of economic recovery on the structural adjustment programme and the support of capital, had overseen the severe limitations of this accumulation model. The decision to compensate the war veterans, the re-mobilisation of the land issue on a non-market basis, and the later decision to enter the war in the DRC in 1998, marked a desperate attempt by the state to retain important, traditional bases of ruling party support, in the face of a crumbling economic edifice.<sup>35)</sup>

*In this hostile environment, the state's attempt to cobble together a consultative framework for economic*

*consultation in 1997, in the form of the National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF), proved largely fruitless, with the ZCTU walking out on a structure it regarded as just another talk shop. This atmosphere was to pervade state-labour relations in 1998, with the ZCTU calling three successful stay-aways in that year, one in March and two in November. The atmosphere was further charged by the food riots that rocked the capital city in January 1998. In the midst of this crisis, in December 1997, an attempt was made to assassinate the General Secretary of the ZCTU, Morgan Tsvangirai. Moreover, Mugabe launched a tirade against the lack of liberation credentials of the union leadership, a theme that has been a constant refrain throughout the post-colonial period. Referring to the President and the General Secretary of the ZCTU Mugabe warned: 'The freedom that you have, came from the people, from Zanu PF and those who chose to fight while you stayed behind enjoying everyday comforts.'*<sup>36)</sup> *Joining the attack the leader of the war veterans invoked the experience of Eastern Europe to denounce the unions:*

*These whites are using stooges and puppets with the objective of taking over the government. It has happened in Eastern Europe where trade unions and human rights groups were used by foreign forces to destroy their own economies.*<sup>37)</sup>

The year 1998 thus opened with the labour movement presenting a strong front. Both the 1997 general strike and the mass stay-aways of 1998, had shown greater preparedness and consultation within ZCTU. Moreover, the central element in the success of the strike was that the leadership had articulated key concerns of many Zimbabweans, raising urgent economic issues, such as taxation levels and escalating prices,

<sup>34)</sup> SAM MOYO, LAND REFORM UNDER STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN ZIMBABWE: LAND USE CHANGE IN THE MASHONALAND PROVINCES, UPPSALA, NORDISKA AFRIKAINSTITUTET, 2000. SEE ALSO SAM MOYO, THE LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS IN ZIMBABWE (1997/98), HARARE, UNDP, 1998 • <sup>35)</sup> PATRICK BOND, FROM DIRIGISM TO STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND BACK, OP CIT • <sup>36)</sup> SUNDAY MAIL, 22ND FEBRUARY 1998 • <sup>37)</sup> HERALD, 5TH MARCH 1998.

and demanding 'clear practical responses from government.'<sup>38)</sup> The ZCTU leadership thus turned the concerns of the strikes into broad common sense issues, gaining important hegemonic ground in the struggle against the state. However, the labour actions also showed the need for the ZCTU to extend its reach into the rural areas, smaller towns and mining centres. In these areas there was a lack of information on ZCTU activities, and an insufficient focus on priority issues affecting rural workers, with the latter seeing the national labour movement as 'distant, urban-focused entities, which confine their events (eg. Meetings, rallies, demonstrations) to larger towns and cities, and their priority issues (eg taxation, rallies, demonstrations) to themes that are of marginal or secondary interest to rural people.'<sup>39)</sup> Clearly therefore, more work needed to be done on extending the geographical and social basis of the labour movement.

**Mobilising for State Power: “The Politics of the stomach cannot be separated from the politics of the state.”<sup>40)</sup>**

Notwithstanding the impressive strides that the ZCTU had made in leading opposition to the state, and the fact that its membership had grown to approximately 200,000, this had not been translated into greater influence over economic policy issues. Workers continued to face declining incomes and a macro-economic environment that promised only further decline. In early 1998, the labour leadership thus set its sights on broadening its alliances, and seeking a political solution to the growing economic crisis. At a Special General Council meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January, this new trajectory in labour strategy had already become clear. As the minutes of the meeting read:

*People from all walks of life, (not necessarily workers), are crying out for salvation from the labour movement. Labour should therefore seriously consider and understand the concern of the men in the street. There is need to seriously consider going beyond the worker and integrate the ordinary people. It was said to be vital for ZCTU to go out there and be involved in all levels of change, at the same time working towards being strongly organised. Workers issues have become community issues. As much as linkages and networking with other civic groups is important, we should be able to control and direct social movement to maintain direction. We should be able to put things on course in case of deviation so as to maintain legitimacy.<sup>41)</sup>*

One of the resolutions that emerged out of this meeting was that:

*When workers cannot earn a living wage and decent working conditions through industrial action at the workplace, they will go beyond the shop-floor and bring their issues in the national stage, thus politicising the issues. When in addition the Trade Unions have been marginalized and can not successfully address these issues through National Reforms in a government that has abandoned the desire to engage in national politics, the only recourse is action at national level.<sup>42)</sup>*

In line with this strategy of political unionism, the ZCTU was a central player in the launching of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in early 1998, along with other civic groups such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, human rights Ngos, lawyers organisations, and interested individuals.<sup>43)</sup> The

<sup>38)</sup> STAYING AWAY TO MOVE AHEAD: A REPORT ON THE NATIONAL STAY-AWAY MARCH 3-4 1998, ZCTU, HARARE, 1998, P22. <sup>39)</sup> IBID, PP26-27. <sup>40)</sup> NICHOLAS MUDZENGERERE, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, ZCTU, QUOTED IN THE SOCIALIST WORKER, MAY 1998. <sup>41)</sup> ZCTU, MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE ADELAIDE ACRES ON 30TH JANUARY 1998 AT 10.00. <sup>42)</sup> IBID. <sup>43)</sup> THIS SECTION OF THE PAPER DRAWS HEAVILY FROM BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS AND GERALD MAZARIRE, “CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE CONSTITUTION- MAKING PROCESS IN ZIMBABWE: THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY-1997-2000.” PAPER PREPARED FOR THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGIONAL INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES, SARIPS, SEPTEMBER, 2000.



major objective of the NCA was to lobby the general public for a broad, popular, process of constitutional reform. Throughout 1998, the NCA carried out a series of public activities to bring the issue of constitutional reform on the centre of the of the Zimbabwean political agenda. By early 1999, the growing response to the NCA campaign, combined with pressures from within Zanu PF itself, combined to force the ruling party into establishing a constitutional commission in April of that year. However, serious divisions over Presidential control over both the membership and process of the government's commission led to a rejection of the process by the NCA. What followed was an intense and bitter debate over both the process and content of constitutional reform that dominated the

Zimbabwean political landscape from mid-1999 until early 2000. In February 2000 the government held a referendum in order to seek national acceptance of a draft constitution that the NCA had campaigned against. The result of the referendum was defeat for the government, as the draft was rejected by the Zimbabwean public.

For the labour movement, its leading role in the NCA, with Morgan Tsvangirai as its chairperson, propelled it even further into the leadership of opposition politics. Moreover, it had succeeded in creating, in line with its strategic objectives, a formidable political alliance which included: trade unions; women's groups; churches; human rights organisations; intellec-

tuals; cultural groups; students organisations; youth organisations; residents associations; NGOs; and political parties. Together the alliance of groupings in the NCA numbered some 96 organisations. Through the activities of the NCA, the governance question entered the common sense of everyday politics, and channelled the discussion of economic issues towards the crisis of the state, and the politics of the Mugabe regime.

In early 1999, the ZCTU stepped up its political campaign and facilitated a National Working People's Convention in February 1999. The purpose of the Convention was to 'critically analyse issues through discussion based on the society's views and experiences, and identify together how best to improve the current situation for the betterment of every Zimbabwean regardless of political affiliation, race, tribe, colour or creed.'<sup>44)</sup> The convention brought together a broad grouping of people from urban, peri-urban and rural areas, representing trade unions, women's organisations, professional associations, development organisations, churches, human rights groups, the informal sector, communal farmers, industry, the unemployed and student organisations.<sup>45)</sup> In its proceedings the convention identified 9 major issues that had to be addressed at national level. These included: the inability of the economy to address the basic needs of Zimbabweans; the severe decline in incomes, employment, health, food security; the unfair burden borne by working women and the persistence of gender discrimination; the decline of public services; the lack of progress in resolving land hunger; the weak growth in industry and marginalisation of the vast majority of the nation's entrepreneurs; the absence of a national constitution framed by and for the people; the persistence of regionalism, racism, and other divisions undermining national integration; and widespread corruption and lack of public accountability

<sup>44)</sup> ZCTU, REPORT OF THE NATIONAL WORKING PEOPLE'S CONVENTION, 1999, P4 • <sup>45)</sup> IBID, P4.

in political and economic institutions.<sup>46)</sup> Among the major recommendations that emerged from the convention was the need for a basic needs strategy on food security, shelter, clean water, health, education and the equitable distribution of resources. More strategically, the convention resolved on the need to build a consensus on the establishment of a 'vigorous and democratic political movement for change.'<sup>47)</sup>

Following its inaugural meeting in February, the convention met again in May 1999, to deliberate on its national consultations, resulting in the ZCTU receiving a mandate to facilitate the formation of a political party. In August 1999, the ZCTU held a special congress, and voted unanimously to facilitate this process, leading to the launch of the Movement for Democratic Change on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1999. At the launch of the MDC, carried out symbolically at Rufaro Stadium, the site of the Independence celebrations in 1980, the President of the ZCTU, Gibson Sibanda, protested:

*For how long shall we wait for the biblical Moses to deliver us? When Zimbabweans are poorer today than they were in 1980, is that not a crime against humanity? When 12.5 million landless peasants and workers cry for food and water and their rulers refuse to listen, is that not a crime against humanity? We can no longer wait. Throughout history, from deep within our culture, there are times when people take back the power they have entrusted to their leaders, demonstrating firmly that power comes only from the people, and entrust that power to new leaders. Today we are here to fulfil a promise because in 1980 we removed the Union Jack here, so we are here to remove the Zanu PF government.<sup>48)</sup>*

At the first congress of the MDC held in the working class area of Chitungwiza, the leadership of the new party was elected, representing a combination of trade unionists and leaders from the NCA, strategically combining the leaders of economic and governance campaigns. In the first executive of the MDC, labour leaders dominated the senior positions, occupying the posts of President (Morgan Tsvangirai), Vice President (Gibson Sibanda), Chairman (Isaac Matongo), Deputy Secretary General (Gift Chimankire), as well several places amongst the committee membership.

Faced with a mounting political challenge, particularly after the referendum defeat in February 2000, the Zanu PF government mounted a violent response in the run-up to the forthcoming general elections in June of that year. In March 2000, the ruling party orchestrated a nation-wide occupation of commercial farms, led by a combination of war veterans and unemployed youth, blaming white farmers for supporting the NCA and the MDC in the referendum. There is little doubt about the popular demand for land reform in Zimbabwe, and indeed land occupations, particularly in the Mashonaland area, have been going on since the 1980s, and intensified in the late 1990s.<sup>49)</sup> However, the difference with the occupations that ensued in March was the central role of the state in the logistics and violence that accompanied it. As we have already noted the occupations were at one level a major response to the exhaustion of the structural adjustment accumulation model. In political terms, the occupations became a frontal assault on opposition politics, effectively violating the personnel and structures of the MDC in its growing rural campaign, and cordoning off large areas of the rural constituency from opposition politics. From late 1999 until the February referendum the MDC had begun to make

<sup>46)</sup> DECLARATION OF THE NATIONAL WORKING PEOPLE'S CONVENTION, FEBRUARY, 1999 • <sup>47)</sup> IBID • <sup>48)</sup> THE STANDARD, 12-28 SEPTEMBER, 1999 •

<sup>49)</sup> PARIS YEROS, PEASANT STRUGGLES FOR LAND AND SECURITY IN ZIMBABWE: A GLOBAL MORAL ECONOMY AT THE CLOSE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, FORTHCOMING, SAPES, 2001. >

inroads into rural communities through trade union structures, white commercial farmers, public sector workers and the structures of the NCA. Through this diverse route into rural politics, the traditional support base of Zanu PF had begun to be penetrated with an alternative political message. The structures of mobilisation indicated the broad alliance that constituted the MDC.

Sensing the danger to its support base the ruling party's interventions left little doubt about their intentions. In the campaign for the general election in June 2000 and after, 30 people, mostly MDC members were killed, with approximately 18,000 people being affected by human rights violations, including assaults, property damage, displacement from home areas,

detention, abduction, death threats, and interference with the right to campaign and vote freely.<sup>50)</sup> Most of this violence (91%), was carried by Zanu PF supporters, and the majority of the victims were farm workers and civilians (52%), and MDC supporters (37%).<sup>51)</sup> The use of violence to retain the support of rural voters is also partly rooted in the erosion of local government structures established in the rural areas since the 1980s, in the form of Village Development Councils (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Councils (WADCOs). As a recent study has indicated the initial

optimism about these structures, 'was gradually replaced with cynicism and frustration due to the lack of support given for VIDCOs and WADCOs, and the tendency of many councillors to represent party or personal interests, rather than community interests.'<sup>52)</sup>

Accompanying the physical violence, the ruling party launched a torrent of abuse on the opposition, designed to depict them as a privileged urban minority, controlled by whites and foreigners, and 'tainted' with money from 'right wing conservative racists associated with Rhodesia.'<sup>53)</sup> Another element of this ideological strategy was to emphasize the longevity of Zanu PF's revolutionary credentials, a feature that has characterised all the ruling party's election campaigns.<sup>54)</sup> As the strident language of the Zanu PF Manifesto proclaimed:

*Our party is the only one with a proven history of revolutionary achievements whenever the political and economic situation in our country has called for real transformation. Ever since its formation, Zanu PF has distinguished itself as an unwavering, principled, revolutionary party with a tradition of promoting political participation, social and economic advances and total human freedoms that are constitutionally protected and guaranteed under conditions of unity, peace and development.*<sup>55)</sup>

However, it was the land question that provided the central organising theme for the Zanu PF election campaign, in which Mugabe repeatedly emphasised *the land*, as the sole authentic signifier of national belonging, as defined by the selective political criteria of the ruling party. In this process of selective nationhood, the MDC was characterised as a 'sellout' organisation who

<sup>50)</sup> SHARI EPEL, 'AMNESTY CLEARLY TAILORED FOR ZANU PF AND ITS SUPPORTERS,' DAILY NEWS, 17TH OCTOBER 2000 • <sup>51)</sup> IBID; SEE ALSO ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM, A REPORT ON POST ELECTION VIOLENCE, AUGUST 2000 • <sup>52)</sup> AFRICA COMMUNITY PUBLISHING AND DEVELOPMENT TRUST, "LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION." BACKGROUND PAPER PREPARED FOR THE ZIMBABWE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, 2000 •

<sup>53)</sup> ZANUPF, ELECTION 2000: THE PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO, ZANU PF ELECTION DIRECTORATE, 2000, P7 • <sup>54)</sup> SEE SYLVESTER, 1985 AND 1986 OP CIT; ALSO CHRISTINE SYLVESTER, "UNITIES AND DISUNITIES IN ZIMBABWE'S 1990 ELECTION", JOURNAL OF MODERN AFRICAN STUDIES, VOL 28, No.3, 1990, PP375-400 • <sup>55)</sup> ZANU PF, ELECTION MANIFESTO, OP CIT P8.

wished to 'ensure that land and all other economic resources remain in the hands of the white community.'<sup>56)</sup> This message resonated with a central image of nationalist politics from the 1950s through the period of the liberation struggle in the 1970s, namely the emotive chant of 'mwana wevhu' or 'son of the soil'. There were, of course, outsiders to this project, who for most part consisted of white settlers, and those who were considered betrayers of the nationalist cause.<sup>57)</sup> In the Zimbabwe of 2000, the outsiders consisted not only of whites but included urban workers, the supporters of the MDC, whom Mugabe branded 'mabwidi' or totemless foreigners.<sup>58)</sup> On more than one occasion urbanites were threatened for their support for MDC. In the words of one war veteran leader:

*If President Robert Mugabe loses the elections, you people in the cities who voted 'No' during the referendum are in for a very tough time because we will go back to war and this time we will teach you and your white masters a very big lesson.<sup>59)</sup>*

Also designated as 'sellouts' in this process were the black middle class and civil servants, and particularly teachers who were regarded, and targeted, as 'political commissars' of the MDC.<sup>60)</sup>

The MDC, on the other hand fought the general election with the slogan 'Chinja Maitiro', meaning

'change your ways',<sup>61)</sup> but attempted to combine this vision with a rather contrived and unproblematised history of the labour movement that set labour at the centre of the anti-colonial struggle, and posed the labour movement as the true inheritor of the nationalist legacy. The MDC Manifesto thus reads:

*The political struggle in Zimbabwe, historically led by the working people, has always been for the dignity and sovereignty of the people. In the first Chimurenga, workers fought against exploitation in the mines, farms and industry, and peasants against the expropriation of their land. The nationalist movement that led the second Chimurenga was born from and built on the struggles of the working people. The current nationalist elite has hijacked this struggle for its own ends, betraying the people's hopes and aspirations.<sup>62)</sup>*

In this discourse, the thread of the MDC's history is traced through a continuity of earlier anti-colonial struggles, whose legacy was betrayed by the nationalist elite in the post-colonial period. This portrayal represents a variation of the seamless web of resistance once offered by nationalist historians, and still recounted by nationalist leaders.<sup>63)</sup>

In policy terms, the MDC presented itself as a social democratic party, committed to 'human-centred, equitable development policies, pursued in an environment

<sup>56)</sup> EDITORIAL, 'MDC WHITE PARTY WITH BLACK FACE', ZIMBABWE NEWS, OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ZANU PF, VOL 31 NO.3, MARCH 2000, P2. THE FANONIAN REFERENCE WAS CLEAR • <sup>57)</sup> MASIPULA SITHOLE, "ON 'STOOGES' AND 'ZWIMBWASUNGATA'", FINANCIAL GAZETTE, 19-25, 2000. 'ZWIMBWASUNGATA' TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH MEANS 'CHAINED DOGS' • <sup>58)</sup> DAILY NEWS, 4TH MAY, 2000 • <sup>59)</sup> FINANCIAL GAZETTE, 4-10 MAY, 2000 • <sup>60)</sup> FINANCIAL GAZETTE, 25-31 MAY 2000. THE DOWNGRADING OF URBAN STRUGGLES IN THE MEMORIALISATION OF THE LIBERATION WAR BY THE NATIONALIST LEADERSHIP, HAS BEEN A RECURRENT FEATURE OF THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD. SEE BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS AND TSUNEO YOSHIKUNI (EDS), SITES OF STRUGGLE OP CIT, 1999 • <sup>61)</sup> THE SLOGAN WAS COINED BY A TRADE UNIONIST BY THE NAME OF EARNEST MUDAVANHU, FROM BIKITA. MUDAVANHU ALSO SUGGESTED THE OPEN PALM AS THE PARTY SYMBOL. BOTH THE SLOGAN AND THE SYMBOL HAD ALREADY BEEN IN USE IN TRADE UNION MOBILISATION PREVIOUSLY. DAILY NEWS, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2000, AND AN INTERVIEW WITH MORGAN TSVANGIRAI IN JUNE 2000. I AM INFORMED BY, JOCELYN ALEXANDER AND JO-ANN MCGREGOR, THAT THE OPEN PALM SYMBOL ALSO RESONATED WITH A ZAPU PRACTICE FROM THE 1960'S • <sup>62)</sup> MDC, MANIFESTO SUMMARY, 2000, P1. CHIMURENGA IS THE TERM USED TO DESCRIBE THE ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE OF 1896/97 • <sup>63)</sup> FOR A MORE CRITICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY SEE BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS AND IAN PHIMISTER (EDS) KEEP ON KNOCKING OP CIT, 1997; IAN PHIMISTER AND BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS, "KANA SORO RATSWA NGARITSWA': AFRICAN NATIONALISTS AND BLACK WORKERS- THE 1948 GENERAL STRIKE IN COLONIAL ZIMBABWE," THE JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY, VOL 13, NO.3 PP289-324; AND BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS, "PROBLEMATISING NATIONALISM IN ZIMBABWE: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW", ZAMBESIA, THE JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE, VOL 26, NO.2, 1999, PP115-134.



of political pluralism, participatory democracy and accountable and transparent governance.<sup>64)</sup> Significantly, however, policy statements that emerged from the MDC economic spokesman Eddie Cross,<sup>65)</sup> former Vice President of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industry, took on a much stronger neo-liberal complexion, indicating the policy conflicts within the MDC. In a statement put out in March 2000, Cross delivered his version of a neo-liberal economic programme with a social conscience, and promised to deliver the constituency to back such a tough programme:

*Work is well advanced on the Stabilisation and Recovery plan. This is being discussed with multi-lateral institutions so that when the political transition takes place, no time is lost in putting things*

*right. The plan calls for a comprehensive revision of the national budget in the light of new priorities, scaling back on all non-essential Government expenditure and restructuring Government itself. The preliminary phase of the programme also envisages the fast track privatisation of all Government controlled business entities and the contracting out of many Government*

*functions to the private sector. It also envisages strong support by donors of the social programme in education and health as well as help with restructuring Government and parastatal debt. By making its economic and political strategies known before the transition, the MDC is hoping to persuade the IMF and the World Bank to come to the table immediately after the change over. One thing the international community can be sure[sic], only a Government with broad based popular support can deal with the fundamental restructuring of Government that is required.<sup>66)</sup>*

While such an uncritical approach to neo-liberalism has been tempered by policy tensions in the MDC, the party has not moved substantively from this position. Such policy tensions emerged over the land question when the radical young MP for the working class area of Highfield, Munyaradzi Gwisai,<sup>67)</sup> expressed support for land appropriation without compensation, a statement which caused him to be disciplined by his own constituency in the weeks that followed his comment. Gwisai also expressed concern about the threat to the labour leadership from the 'bourgeois and petty bourgeois dominance' and the 'white bosses and white professionals'.<sup>68)</sup> Notwithstanding such tensions, and the enormous organisational problems that faced the MDC as a nascent opposition party, the latter performed extremely well in the June general elections. In the face of massive pre-election violence, and an array of electoral problems,<sup>69)</sup> the MDC won 57 seats against Zanu PFs 62.

<sup>64)</sup> MDC MANIFESTO OP CIT, P2 • <sup>65)</sup> EDDIE CROSS WAS APPOINTED ECONOMIC SPOKESMAN FOR THE MDC IN FEBRUARY 2000 • <sup>66)</sup> EDDIE CROSS, "MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE: ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND GROWTH IN ZIMBABWE," GCROSS@ID.CO.ZW CROSS HAS RECENTLY BEEN TOLD BY THE MDC LEADERSHIP TO LIMIT HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS, AND TO ALLOW THE MDC PARLIAMENTARY SPOKESMAN FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, TAPIWA MASHAKADA, TO ANNOUNCE MDC ECONOMIC POLICIES. FOR A CRITIQUE OF CROSS AND THE NEO-LIBERAL DRIFT IN THE MDC SEE PATRICK BOND, "RADICAL RHETORIC AND THE WORKING CLASS DURING ZIMBABWE'S DYING DAYS", FORTHCOMING IN BRIAN RAFTOPOULOS AND LLOYD SACHIKONYE (EDS), THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN ZIMBABWE: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS, 2001 • <sup>67)</sup> GWISAI IS A LEADING MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ORGANISATION, A TROTSKYIST GROUPING, IN ZIMBABWE • <sup>68)</sup> DAILY NEWS, 25TH AUGUST, 2000 • <sup>69)</sup> FOR THE MOST RECENT EXAMINATION OF ELECTORAL PROBLEMS IN ZIMBABWE SEE JOHN MAKUMBE AND DANIEL COMPAGNON, BEHIND THE SMOKESCREEN: THE POLITICS OF ZIMBABWE'S 1995 GENERAL ELECTIONS, HARARE, UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE PUBLICATIONS, 2000. ONE REPORT ON THE 2000 ELECTIONS OBSERVED THAT, A "LARGE SECTOR SECTOR OF THE COUNTRY REMAINED INACCESSIBLE TO THE CIVIC SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES AS RESULT OF THE VIOLENCE AND OCCUPATION OF THE FARMS BY WAR VETERANS." SEE ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPERVISORY NETWORK, REPORT ON THE 2000 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ZIMBABWE, HARARE, 2000.

## The Labour Movement and the MDC: The Hard Road Ahead

One year after its formation, the MDC has begun to consolidate its political position as a parliamentary opposition. However, it still faces enormous challenges at organisational, political, and strategic levels. Organisationally it has to consolidate its structures and maintain the levels of consultation that were a central part of its mobilisation capacity. An internal organisational audit of the organisation had begun to indicate the problems that lay ahead. An assessment of MDC structures in Mbare, Waterfalls Highfield and Harare<sup>70)</sup> branches, indicated that branch level structures remain weak, lacking resources and effective lines of communication, in particular with MPs. The report warned that if the MPs 'do not become more visible further campaigning will be difficult.'<sup>71)</sup> At a political level the MDC has to maintain a broad alliance and negotiate its future relationship with the labour movement. In terms of its alliances the relationship with the commercial farmers has already shown signs of strain. In August 2000, the President of the MDC attacked the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) after it agreed to withdraw its litigation against the ruling party in an attempt to broker an accord with Mugabe. Tsvangirai accused the commercial farmers of wanting to 'sup with the devil with the hope that they can buy time', warning the farmers that it was 'their evasiveness that is going to expose the membership of the CFU.'<sup>72)</sup> The commercial farmers, in response, pleaded that as they stood alone against the Government they had to negotiate as best they could, criticising the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industry for having 'grovelled and fawned to Government' throughout the crisis over the land.<sup>73)</sup> Such problems are unlikely to disappear as future policy issues over farm workers, and land reform demand more concrete attention. As Mamdani has

observed while the 'it would be a mistake to underestimate the long-term power of justice-related issue to influence politics in former colonies.'<sup>74)</sup>

Another serious strategic problem that confronts the MDC is its future relationship with the ZCTU. Before the June election, trade unionists accounted for 16 of the nominated MPs. Other categories of MPs included individuals involved in: agriculture (6); environment (1); business executives (8); technical fields (9); ordained church minister (1); medical professions (3); ex civil servants (8); academics (9); professionals such as accountants, import and export specialists and engineers (16); lawyers (5); educators (19); transport industry (9); self-employed (7); NGOs (2); the remainder involved in construction, information technology, hotels and other business enterprises.<sup>75)</sup> After the elections 12 trade unionists entered parliament, with the Vice President of the party, a trade unionist, leading the party in parliament. With unionists representing only 21% of MDC parliamentarians, there has been some concern over the future influence of labour issues on MDC policies. As the ZCTU paper observed, describing the diversity of the MDC:

*Of course there are workers and trade unionists in the MDC, but one also finds hordes of political and human rights activists, lawyers, business people, academics, professionals, peasants and so on within the party's ranks. And within the ZCTU there are MDC supporters, Zanu PF fanatics, Zimbabwe Union of Democrats, United Parties, non-political and non-partisan workers. There are even curiously competing NCA interests within the MDC.'*<sup>76)</sup>

<sup>70)</sup> THESE REPRESENT BOTH WORKING AND MIDDLE CLASS AREAS • <sup>71)</sup> MDC DISTRICT WORKSHOP: KEY NOTES, AUGUST 2000 • <sup>72)</sup> DAILY NEWS, 14TH AUGUST, 2000 • <sup>73)</sup> THE FARMER, 'EDITORIAL', 22-29 AUGUST 2000, P1 • <sup>74)</sup> MAHMOOD MAMDANI, 'ZIMBABWE: LAND AND VOTES,' THE NATION, 7TH OCTOBER 2000, VOL 271, ISSUE 2 • <sup>75)</sup> MDC PRESS RELEASE 3RD JUNE 2000 • <sup>76)</sup> THE WORKER, 'EDITORIAL', AUGUST, 2000.



Other unionists warned the MDC parliamentarians not to forget that their ‘core leadership comes from the labour movement and we expect them not to forget where they came from.’<sup>77)</sup> The future autonomy of the ZCTU remains a matter of great concern, with unionists arguing for a strong autonomous trade union movement that will be able to make critical responses to the MDC. Such issues are likely to be settled at the forthcoming ZCTU congress towards the end of 2000, at which the ruling party will attempt to make an impact. For the immediate future, therefore, the MDC has much to resolve within its ranks.

With regard to Zanu PF, the MDC must face the prospect of a violent presidential campaign that is likely to place much more pressure on its membership and resources. The probability of such violence and the

obstacles it is likely to present, as well as the rapidly declining economic environment and growing impatience of the MDC mass membership, has forced the MDC leadership to consider the strategy of a sustained mass action in order to hasten the defeat of Mugabe. In August 2000, the ZCTU called for a stay-away in protest against the violence against its members on the farms. Originally intended to last three days the stay-away was reduced to one day because of divisions between the MDC and Zanu PF factions in the labour movement.<sup>78)</sup> This action only raised further questions about the possibility of a sustained protest through the

co-ordinated actions of the MDC, ZCTU and civic allies in the NCA.<sup>79)</sup> Somewhat in frustration over what future action to take against the Mugabe regime, Morgan Tsvangirai issued a threat to the president on the first anniversary of the formation of the MDC:

*Mugabe should go peacefully. If he does not want, we will remove him violently. This country cannot afford Mugabe to rule a day longer than is necessary.*<sup>80)</sup>

The food riots that spread through Harare’s working class suburbs in October once again raised the possibility of a co-ordinated mass action. However, the violent state reaction to the riots, from the police and army, sent a clear message to the MDC about the response it could expect, if it pursued such a course of action.

### Conclusion

Zimbabwe is caught on severely contested terrain in which a beleaguered state, presiding over an economy in severe crisis, nevertheless retains a critical mass of rural support through a combination of a populist articulation of the land question, and the use of force to break an alternative political presence in the rural areas. Moreover, Robert Mugabe has consolidated his support in the Southern African region by articulating the land question in Zimbabwe as part of a broader regional, and indeed, continental struggle against a colonial legacy. As the broad social alliance that brought Zanu PF to power in 1980 has unravelled, Mugabe has distilled his survival message into an essentialist Africanist position, symbolised by a life and death struggle for land. On the other hand the MDC has demanded a more pluralistic approach to national politics, stressing the imperatives of democratisation and the rule of law. However, this politics has been pursued through a

<sup>77)</sup> THE WORKER, JULY 2000 • <sup>78)</sup> THE MIRROR, 4-10 AUGUST 2000 • <sup>79)</sup> FOR A DISCUSSION OF THE ‘SUHARTO SCENARIO’ IN ZIMBABWE, SEE PETER ALEXANDER, “‘IF THINGS DON’T WORK, WE TRY OTHER MEANS’: ZIMBABWEAN WORKERS, THE MDC AND THE 2000 ELECTION,” FORTHCOMING REVIEW OF AFRICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY • <sup>80)</sup> DAILY NEWS, 2ND OCTOBER 2000. WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF IRONY ZANU PF’S INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY SECRETARY RESPONDED: “WE SHOULD NOT BE BLAMED WHEN WE HIT BACK. THE AREA OF VIOLENCE IS AN AREA WHERE ZANU PF HAS A VERY STRONG, LONG AND SUCCESSFUL HISTORY.” HERALD, 2ND OCTOBER 2000.

largely uncritical neo-liberalism, in which redistributive questions are not centrally addressed, leaving Mugabe to present his interventions as an anti-imperialist position, however grotesque his political intolerance. Thus where Zanu PF has attempted to subsume the politics of national accountability beneath a pseudo-radical rhetoric moulded by a despotic elite, the MDC has lacked a critical view of globalisation in its embrace of liberalism.

Surveying the last twenty years of labour history it is clear that the labour movement in Zimbabwe has made remarkable progress. Moving from a patronised wing of the ruling party the labour movement has provided the catalyst and the organisational framework for the growth of a powerful political opposition now challenging for state power. Unions, elsewhere in Africa have proved to have the greatest capacity to provide national structures capable of nurturing an enduring oppositional voice, and capable of combining struggles over production with broader issues of democratisation.<sup>81)</sup> Finding an emancipatory economic project beyond structural adjustment programmes has, however, proved more intractable. The labour movement in Zimbabwe, and its political creation the MDC, will find it no less difficult. ■

<sup>81)</sup> FRANCO BARCHIESI, "LABOUR, NEO-LIBERALISM AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW," *LABOUR CAPITAL AND SOCIETY*, VOL 30, NO.2, NOVEMBER 1997, PP170-225; ALSO SUZANNE DANSEREAU, "LABOUR'S SEARCH FOR AN EMANCIPATORY PROJECT IN ZIMBABWE," *SOCIALIST STUDIES BULLETIN* No.59, JAN-MAR 2000. >