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IMPLICATIONS OF THE NAMIBIAN ELECTIONS

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The smooth transition to independence during 1989/1990, which followed a long and protracted anti-colonial liberation struggle, turned Namibia into an internationally applauded showpiece of African democracy. Based on a constitutionally enshrined multiparty democracy, the country set standards for controlled change within a normative framework in respect of what is generally labeled by those who hold the power of definition as ‘good governance’. The liberation movement South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO of Namibia) seized legitimate political power as the result of United Nations supervised general, free and fair elections. In an appraisal of the first party, president Sam Nujoma, to whom parliament in the course of his retirement from office as a head of state conferred the official title ‘Founding Father of the Republic of Namibia’, the SWAPO website states: ‘He successfully united all Namibians into a peaceful, tolerant and democratic society governed by the rule of law’.¹

This sounds indeed like an impressive track record. The latest National Assembly and presidential elections, held 20 years into democracy during 27 and 28 November 2009, seem to be a good reference point and litmus test to verify this ambitious claim. SWAPO has operated as a de facto single-party government ever since it obtained a two-thirds majority in the 1994 elections. It has since then consolidated its political hegemony into a three-quarterly majority of votes during elections in 1999 and 2004. Democracy in Namibia seems to be a rather unilateral affair and underscores the slogan of the struggle days that ‘SWAPO is the nation and the nation is SWAPO’.

This review of Namibia’s latest elections twenty years into Independence provides an analysis in the overall context of the country’s recent political developments, which saw a marked increase in political contestation during the election campaign. While the election results suggest at first sight little changes, it is suggested that behind the surface simmers a deeply entrenched risk: political rule under the former liberation movement in power is increasingly reduced to a narrow minded concept of hegemonic control over political processes and decision making by those currently in power at almost any cost. The victim of such trend would in the first place be democracy.

The state of Namibian democracy

Notwithstanding a rights-based constitutional framework adopted at independence, national sovereignty did not automatically predetermine a vibrant, plural democracy with strong civil society components. Instead, the legacy of a century of settler colonialism had created rather restrictive mental dispositions. A survey among Namibians aged 18 to 32 concluded more than a decade after independence that ‘Namibia does not have sufficient young Democrats to make the consolidation of democracy a foregone conclusion’ (Keulder and Spilker 2002, 28). As if this were not discomfort enough, a follow-up study added the not so flattering diagnosis that ‘Namibians are high in partisanship and low in cognitive skills’ (Keulder 2002, 24). This touches on aspects of what could be termed an authoritarian character, resulting from the oppressive systems of both the settler colonial structures and the hierarchy of the anti-colonial movement, particularly in exile. Both were by any standards not a fertile breeding ground for a human and civic-rights-inspired culture and environment, fostering democratic mindsets (see Melber 2009a).

In a compendium of public opinion findings based on a total of three surveys in Namibia between 1999 and 2006, the Afrobarometer network concluded that among the 18 countries surveyed ‘Namibians appear to be the most deferential to their elected leaders’ (Logan, Fujiwara and Parish 2006, 16). In terms of the attitudes among citizens the Afrobarometer national survey of 2005 classified Namibia as ‘a democracy without democrats’ (Keulder and Wiese 2005, 26). A summary of Afrobarometer indicators from five surveys between 1999

and 2008 among a representative sample of around 1,200 persons concluded: 'There is no obvious trend in support for democracy. It has fluctuated roughly around 60% across all five surveys'. Furthermore: 'Commitment to elections as the best means for selecting leaders declined by nearly 30% between 2002 and 2008' (Afrobarometer 2009c, 1).

It would be misleading, however, to assume that Namibians would accept the status quo. On the contrary, in the past two years Namibians have become more active politically and much of the print media and journalists operate rather independently of the dominant party – much to the latter's displeasure.

With the formation of the new Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) in late 2007 by a fraction of former high-ranking political office-bearers from the first (exile) generation of SWAPO, the campaign for votes did not go smoothly. And, during 2008 the political climate, the campaign had changed markedly for the worse (see Melber 2008).

A survey undertaken by the Afrobarometer project at the end of 2008 warned: 'The unprecedented fixation on the coming election, which seemingly has been underway for years, has already challenged the peace and stability of the country in ways unseen since independence. Emotions are running high, judging by the unprecedented confrontations around recent by-elections and political party rallies' (Afrobarometer 2009a, 1). A local observer predicted that 'if RDP's promise bears fruit, Namibia's democracy will be paraded and be shown up to have either matured or regressed to the level of other sorry states in Africa' (Amupadhi 2008, 6).

The election process

With the elections in late 1994, SWAPO expanded its absolute majority obtained in November 1989 to two-thirds majority of seats in the National Assembly. In 1999 and 2004 this political hegemony was consolidated into a three-quarter majority of votes with 55 out of the 72 political mandates obtained, notwithstanding the challenges of the Congress of Democrats (CoD). The CoD was formed just ahead of the 1999 elections as the first political alternative based on dissenting former SWAPO activists. While it emerged as the official opposition by securing (in both elections) most votes among the parties contesting the SWAPO quasi-monopoly of political power, it never managed to make inroads into the SWAPO electorate.

In 2008 the CoD imploded over internal differences, power struggles and fights over resources. The RDP emerged as the only relevant substitute for the CoD. It was founded by two former members of cabinet, who were both political heavyweights from the first struggle generation in exile, before losing a SWAPO internal power struggle over the succession of Sam Nujoma as head of state (Melber 2006). Given the new party's affinity also to parts of SWAPO's regional stronghold in the northern region of Namibia, the RDP was considered to be a serious challenge to SWAPO's dominance. This perception encouraged an aggressive response from SWAPO. The RDP was denounced as being composed of traitors, who were labelled as agents of imperialism and remote controlled pawns acting in the interest of regime change. The responses from both higher party levels as well as from local grassroots activists were heavy handed and contributed to a climate of repression hitherto unknown. A witch-hunt was initiated for 'hibernators', suspected of undermining the SWAPO structures from the inside as moles for the RDP.

On various occasions the right to campaign freely was denied to RDP activists, who were accused of provoking SWAPO supporters in their local strongholds. Properly registered political rallies were banned on the basis that they were organised in SWAPO territory. This led to several clashes between members of both parties and acts of physical violence. Police forces intervened on several occasions and dispersed the crowd using teargas. For the first

time since independence, an election campaign in Namibia turned visibly ugly. Leading political office-bearers in the two main rival parties ignored orderly conduct and used aggressive language bordering on hate speech. The degree of intolerance did not bode well for the state of Namibian democracy (Melber 2009b).

Votes were cast on two consecutive days 27 and 28 November. The reform of the electoral law also provided for a vote count at the polling stations in the presence of observers. However, the results were then transmitted to the headquarters of the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) in Windhoek for final verification. This resulted in a considerable delay, so that the official result was made known only on 4 December, after days of speculation. Given the relatively small number of votes counted (just exceeding 800,000), this added to the irritation among those intimidated.

In spite of such concerns, the Minister for Diplomatic Affairs in the Office of the President of Mozambique (as head of the 120-member SADC Electoral Observer Mission), was the first to present an account of the elections as ‘transparent, credible, peaceful, free and fair’ (SADC Electoral Observer Mission 2009, 15). Observer missions from the parliamentary forum of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) also declared the elections as free and fair, as early as 1 December. A spokesperson of the 40-member SADC observer team recommended the return to one polling day in line with the other SADC countries and to allocate equal airtime to all parties during the election campaign in the state-owned broadcasting company NBC. He noted ‘vigorous coverage of the electoral process in a balanced manner’ by the local (predominantly private-owned) print media but criticised the state broadcaster NBC for its bias in favour of SWAPO (Weidlich 2009a).

In presenting the preliminary report of the 24-member observer mission from the AU, retired Tanzanian Justice Lewis Makame combined its approval of the elections with a reference to ‘minor problems’, which included a ‘painstakingly slow’ counting process. It found fears of vote rigging expressed among the opposition parties not supported by evidence but felt at the same time ‘not in [a] position to say that there was no rigging’ (Shejavali 2009a). A day later the 17-member observer mission of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) presented a more nuanced assessment with some noteworthy criticisms. It questioned the policy of the state-owned radio and television company NBC, which it accused of undue support for SWAPO and recommended that the State media in Namibia be separated from direct government control and be recreated as an ‘independent media institution with the responsibility of appointment and dismissal of heads of State media’. The PAP mission leader, Ambrose Dery from Ghana, also expressed his concern over the printing of 1.6 million ballot papers (for a registered electorate of less than one million), as a potential recipe for vote rigging. Although the mission had concluded that the elections took place within the constitutional and legislative framework, it felt that Namibia could do much better (Shejavali 2009b).

For the first time in Namibian elections local civil society institutions had formed their own election observation teams. The Namibian Institute for Democracy (NID) declared in a statement that it had noted several minor flaws but did not observe any grave irregularities and therefore trusted that the results were by and large credible. It announced a more detailed report for January, and noted ‘problematic issues relating to the often inept performance of some ECN officials, problems with the voters roll and the system of counting and verification of ballots, exacerbated by the large number of tendered ballots’.² The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), having created an election watch website³ also refrained from any fundamental criticism and seemed largely satisfied that the results reflected the will of the voters.

Most opposition parties were less reconciliatory. Eight of them announced in a joint statement on 4 December that they would bring a list of irregularities to the Namibian justice system to seek clarification in court as to whether and to what extent, the election results are acceptable (Weidlich 2009b). In 2004 and 2005 the objections to the election results by some of the opposition parties led to a legal battle ending in a recount of the votes.. As reported in more detail below, the verdict on the legal intervention taken at the end of 2009 is still pending.

The election results

SWAPO's dominance of the electoral process in late 2009, underscores its continued control over the Namibian electorate. To the dislike of some, SWAPO's political rule in Namibia – not least the failure of dissenting parties to effectively oppose it – has all the features of a dominant party system (Du Pisani and Lindeke 2009, Melber 2007). Yet this is hardly reason enough to blame the winner.

For the first time a considerable number of young voters were able to express their preferences. During the pre-election build-up these 'born free', because of their sizeable numbers, were considered to be of some influence as a much speculated unknown variable. According to an Afrobarometer survey of late 2008 SWAPO underperformed in terms of party attachment among younger voters (18–34 years). Core support remained primarily with 'older, rural, and respondents with less education, especially from the north-central areas', while 'urban, female, and younger voters represent a growing challenge for the ruling party in terms of party closeness or identification' (Afrobarometer 2009a, 8).⁴

This certainly did not reassure SWAPO and the changing electorate might have positively influenced its campaign strategy. For the first time the cultivation of the liberation gospel was complemented by an emphasis on purported achievements under a SWAPO government. And in the end, the 'born free' seemingly did not play any decisive role in changing the voting pattern.

Not so surprisingly, the official end results announced by the ECN⁵ confirmed the hegemonic status of SWAPO despite the RDP's claims and earlier expectations that it would be a serious contender. The table below is compiled on the basis of the official figures released. It shows that little has changed in terms of the fundamental political power relations for the forthcoming five-year legislative period.

Table 1. National Assembly Election Results 2009

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Mandates</i>
SWAPO Party of Namibia (SWAPO Party)	602,580	74.29	54
Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP)	90,556	11.16	8
DTA of Namibia (DTA)	25,393	3.13	2
National Unity Democratic Organization (NUDO)	24,422	3.01	2
United Democratic Front of Namibia (UDF)	19,489	2.40	2
All People's Party (APP)	10,795	1.33	1
Republican Party of Namibia (RP)	6,541	0.81	1
Congress of Democrats (COD)	5,375	0.66	1
South West Africa National Union (SWANU)	4,989	0.62	1
Monitor Action Group (MAG)	4,718	0.58	0
Democratic Party of Namibia (DPN)	1,942	0.24	0
Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (DMC)	1,770	0.22	0

National Democratic Party (NDP)	1,187	0.15	0
Communist Party (CP)	810	0.10	0
Rejected ballots	10,576	1.30	
<i>Total</i>	811,143	100.00	72

The loss of one seat for SWAPO is anything but a defeat. The party would, however, be well advised to take note of the pockets of dissenting votes cast in some of the urban centers as well as the central and southern parts of the country. In parts of the Caprivi and Kavango there is strong opposition from RDP and APP respectively. The Damara chief Justus Garoeb, who represented the interests of Damara-speaking communities in Parliament since Independence, remains with his UDF the unchallenged, most popular force albeit locally confined to those electoral districts with a significant number of Damara voters. Among the Herero communities Chief Riruako draws considerable support for the similarly ethnically oriented NUDO. Herero support is also provided to the DTA as represented by Katuutire Kaura and, most likely, the Herero leadership in SWANU.

At some polling stations in Windhoek the RDP emerged as the winner. SWAPO also lost a majority to the RDP among the Baster community in Rehoboth. SWAPO's majority in the southern and eastern regions has been reduced. Since the first elections for independence it has relied more than ever on the stronghold in the so-called four O-regions of the former Ovamboland (Oshana, Omusati, Oshikoto and Ohangwena), where for historical reasons it is firmly anchored. Despite the RDP challenge (with some leaders coming from parts of this region) SWAPO remains by far the biggest and in most areas the only party. Given that this is the electorate which holds more than half of the votes, even SWAPO – like most of the smaller parties – bears ethnic traces.

Ethnicity (re-)emerged more visibly and forcefully in the second last national elections in November 2004 after the opposition to SWAPO campaigned in several more smaller parties, in which locally rooted leaders were seeking political representation among their communities. They managed to secure seats in Parliament without adding any votes to the opposition, but merely re-directing the dissenting minority into more particularistic entities. While SWAPO maintained almost by the same percentage its overwhelming dominance this time around, it lost in actual numbers votes among the electorate outside of its regional-ethnic strongholds. Hence its largely unchallenged support among the members of the Oshivambo-speaking majority as by far the biggest groups in Namibia becomes an even more determining factor for its hegemonic role.

Despite the fact that it has emerged as the new official opposition, the RDP has little reason to celebrate. Its leadership certainly had much bigger hopes and publicly proclaimed markedly higher aspirations during the election campaign. While the RDP boasted of a database with close to 400,000 supporters, which suggested that they would make inroads into the “traditional” SWAPO electorate in its Northern strongholds (where also some of the most influential RDP leaders have their roots), they garnered less than 100,000 votes. Four out of their eight MPs taking seats in the National Assembly as from 21 March 2010 represent SWAPO. However, given the changing electorate, they will have to show that they can make a difference and are more than old wine in new bottles. This will not be an easy task, because as noted previously, SWAPO is used to being in control.

The predictable has been the CoD. It was toppled from the pedestal of ‘official opposition’. The two most prominent founding members managed to survive on one mandate

each. Party leader Ben Ulenga will be the only one left to wave the torn CoD flag in the newly elected National Assembly. His former political ally Ignatius Shixwameni, who parted after losing an internal power struggle, will return as an elected MP for the newly established APP. While the CoD garnered the few votes left throughout the country, the APP is another of the locally-ethnically rooted organizations. It managed to obtain the necessary number of votes for parliamentary representation almost exclusively in the electoral districts in and around the Kavango capital of Rundu. The same pattern of ethnic local support applies to some extent also to the RP, DTA and MAG, which draw most votes among the white electorate. Their declining influence can be seen as a further political marginalisation of the white minority, which is hardly represented any longer in the National Assembly.

The replacement of MAG as the conservative Afrikaans-speaking advocacy group by SWANU as the oldest anti-colonial organisation in existence represents a remarkable (and symbolic) shift in terms of emancipation from a colonial-settler past not so long ago. For the first time, SWANU is represented in the National Assembly. It is possible that this resulted from visible campaigning efforts, which left a mark in the public sphere. If so, then Namibian democracy seems to exist at least to some encouraging degree. The party's president, elected into the National Assembly on the last seat available (and some 200 votes ahead of MAG), has declared that the parliamentary forum will be used for the promotion of the party's socialist policy programme.

It is also possible that this will encourage (given the lack of support of the CP) greater equality for the majority of the population – including women. The latter have clearly been the biggest losers in Namibian society during these elections. Despite women representing 52% of the electorate and a commitment by political parties and in particular the SWAPO leadership to enhance gender equality in politics their number among the parliamentary representatives decreased from 18 to 16 – with a mere 22% of the seats a far cry from reasonably equal representation. The results of the presidential election, conducted in a parallel vote on separate ballot papers, showed – as in all previous elections – that the votes for SWAPO's candidate actually exceeded those for the party. Hifikepunye Pohamba received almost 9,000 votes more than the party list. Already exceptionally high approval rates during the latest Afrobarometer survey placed him among the highest ranked democratic presidents (Afrobarometer 2009b, 8). This is a remarkable vote of confidence after a number of internal disputes during his first term in office, when party factions challenged his policy of reconciliation towards some party members who had been accused of being 'unreliable'. Here are the top runners⁶ as extrapolated from the official figures:

Table 2. Presidential election results 2009

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Hifikepunye Pohamba (SWAPO)	611,241	75.25
Hidipo Hamutenya (RDP)	88,640	10.91
Katuutire Kaura (DTA)	24,186	2.98
Kuaima Riruako (NUDO)	23,735	2.92
Justus Garoeb (UDF)	19,258	2.37

The re-elected president Pohamba could now use this vote of confidence to pursue his moderate politics. During his first term in office, he did not do this and too often showed leniency towards the SWAPO hardliners, who pushed for a more exclusivist and dogmatic

approach to political rule. At times Pohamba seemed to be caught between party loyalty and his own values as a man who prefers peace and harmony to polarisation. Inspired by conservative Christian values, he hardly demonstrated antagonistic tendencies. For him the slogan 'Unity in diversity' seemed to have meaning, though at times he also bowed to pressure and articulated the SWAPO party line.

Only when his candidacy for a second term started to be questioned, by those who preferred a more autocratic leadership style and there was a rigorous purging of those thought not to be toeing the hard-core line, did he stand up to defend his claim to be the party's elected president and therefore the obvious and only candidate for nomination. He thereby visibly challenged efforts to erode his legitimacy. Originally perceived as an interim president for one term only, he now has another five years to maybe convince those doubting his capabilities that he indeed is the president able to achieve political harmony in the country.

The retired president Nujoma never retired from politics and continued to influence matters after the elections. During 2009 he mimicked Mugabe's polemical style. This contradicts his claim (quoted at the start of this article), that he seeks to civilise Namibia. Thus far, the relationship between him and his successor, Pohamba, has certainly been damaged, since Pohamba did not live up to Nujoma's expectations.

Namibia's democratic future: an outlook

After a lengthy and cumbersome process of verification the official results for both the National Assembly and presidential elections were finally released by the ECN on 4 December and published in Government Notice no. 4397 of 18 December 2009. A total of nine opposition parties sought legal intervention disputing the correctness of the election results for the National Assembly and took the ECN to court over suspected procedural and other irregularities. On 24 December the High Court granted the applicants access to selective election material (but not the ballot papers) until 4 January 2010 to substantiate their claims. On that last day the parties submitted an application for the nullification of the National Assembly election results on the basis of their compiled evidence. The court hearings are expected to begin in early February 2010 (Weidlich 2010). A ruling is likely during March 2010. Despite the pending outcome, it is only reasonable to assume that no correction of the results – or new elections – would bring an end to the absolute majority of SWAPO. An interesting question that remains is, to what extent Namibian democracy can be fostered and consolidated and how far the independence of the judiciary can strengthen the country's legitimacy and reputation as a pluralist society. If the objections by the political opposition are properly dealt with in the courts, this can only support the credibility of Namibia's democracy.

While SWAPO and its president can with confidence claim to have defended their hegemonic role and mastered the RDP challenge, the next five years may prove decisive. If the dogmatic approach prevails in which SWAPO alone remains at the political helm, the country's already damaged reputation will deteriorate further and internal divisions will deepen. The peaceful conduct of the elections and citizens' civil response to the election results should not detract from the worrying signs of increased violence ahead of the elections. For the first time since Independence these clashes among party followers (in particular of SWAPO and the RDP) indicated that the hitherto peaceful atmosphere of political contestation could get out of hands. Those politically responsible among all the social forces will face an enormous challenge to maintain peace and stability. The decisive factor in this will remain SWAPO.

Ahead of the first independent general elections in November 1994, the then prime minister Hage Geingob argued that a two-thirds majority for his party, which had held an absolute majority since the UN-supervised elections, would not be good for Namibian democracy. Since then, this high-ranking political office-bearer has had a rocky career, including temporary withdrawals from Namibian politics. When after 12 years in office demoted in 2002 from the rank of prime minister he preferred to accept employment as a migrant worker at an African advocacy institution funded by the World Bank in Washington DC rather than continue as a lower-ranking minister. Since then he has returned and made a remarkable comeback into Namibian politics. As Minister of Trade and Industry he has also been elected the SWAPO vice-president at the party congress in November 2007. This makes him the designated successor to Hifikepunye Pohamba as the party's president and head of state if the next SWAPO Congress in 2012 does not make any turns.

His track record includes long service as a highly paid United Nations official, employed between the mid-1970s and 1989 as the director of the United Nations Institute for Namibia based in Lusaka. Upon returning from exile he was in charge of the election campaign for SWAPO and played an influential role in the Constitutional Assembly in the final step towards independence. While prime minister Geingob obtained a doctorate from the University of Leeds for a thesis on Namibia's constitutional process.

Addressing a well-attended political rally in the harbour town of Lüderitzbucht in mid-November, Geingob described opposition parties as 'fake' and accused their leaders of suffering from a 'Savimbi syndrome', to which he added: 'the moment Savimbi died, there was peace in Angola' (Cloete 2009, Sasman 2009). Despite public criticism over this outburst, he stated in similar fashion, during the weekend before the elections at a rally in the mining town of Tsumeb, that 'international observers and "cry babies" should not describe the final victory of his party during the forthcoming elections as undemocratic and intolerant towards opposition parties' (Special Correspondent 2009).

Such change in tone implies a departure from democratic principles. It should come as no surprise that the rank and file of SWAPO, in their eagerness, copy such fanatical rhetoric. A triumphant (if not sycophantic) article published both in the state-owned daily newspaper and on the SWAPO website confirms this as the columnist confidently ended with the claim that, 'Namibia, SWAPO Party and Sam Nujoma are one' (Froese 2009). If this sets the tone for the 'peaceful, tolerant and democratic society governed by the rule of law' which the Founding Father of the Republic of Namibia is credited for by his party, then it does not seem to bode well for all those who do not share the same ideals.

As if to make the point, the results of the elections in some of the country's diplomatic missions (which produced a strong support for the RDP) prompted a hysterical tribunal. Surprisingly, these early votes cast were already released a few days ahead of the elections in Namibia. Even though they were numerically insignificant, they were reason for a publicly initiated witch-hunt. In a press conference on 24 November – prior to the elections inside the country – the leaders of the SWAPO Youth League and the SWAPO-affiliated National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) stated among others:

Namibia under SWAPO Party Government can proudly teach America, Europe, Asia, SADC and Africa the meaning of National reconciliation, democracy, peace, stability and how to hold peaceful and democratic elections. [...] Poor and disappointing performance must be compensated by a recall and subsequent release from duties. We mean it, because the high commissioners are not diplomatic tourists in those countries but were supposed to represent the President of Namibia with uniform loyalty and not divided allegiance. [...] The SWAPO Party must urgently set up a

Deployment Policy on the basis of which cadres will be deployed in the Government, its agencies and its SOEs and hold accountable on their performance and recalled for non-performance. If laws prevent this from happening, we cannot be held back by laws we can change, as simple as that. [...] We shall defend the gains of the liberation struggle through the ballot box. Those saboteurs and political cry babies who are masquerading as democrats are political failures on the string of neo-imperialists. (Ngurare and Kaaronda 2009)

In the spirit of victory, the following statement was published on the SWAPO home page's blog: 'we are all democrats and therefore we must know that democracy means hardship to our people. Please no mercy to hibernators let them learn a lesson ... to feel the pinch of the Namibian majority, enough is enough comrades'.⁶ And a like-minded patriot posted a comment in a similar vein: 'We in Swapo party want to let those hibernators know that defecting Swapo is defecting the nation. Swapo is the Nation and the Nations of Namibia are Swapo'.⁷

This self-righteousness finds its roots in the days during the mid-1970s, when SWAPO in its efforts to bring independence to the people of Namibia was recognised in a resolution adopted by the majority of members of the United Nations General Assembly as 'the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people'. Yet self-determination should mean something different from that equation, which was then a political statement in support of the struggle for independence. A struggle, which for many acting on behalf of, or in solidarity with the colonised majority was assumed to be one for democracy too.

One needs to remember, however, that reality lies in the eye of the beholder. Strikingly, and in contrast to all the critical observations presented above, the latest Afrobarometer survey undertaken at the end of 2008 offers the insight that Namibians 'are among the most satisfied populations in African democracies in terms of how democracy works in the country' (Afrobarometer 2009a, 9).

Notes

1. www.swapoparty.org/founding_president.html.
2. Preliminary Statement by the NID on the 2009 National and Presidential elections. Accessible at www.nid.org.na/.
3. www.electionwatch.org.na/.
4. For a variety of empirical details from the survey, which was undertaken between 23 October and 3 December 2008 among 1,200 Namibians interviewed, see Afrobarometer (2009d).
5. www.ecn.na/Pages/home.aspx.
7. Posted by C. de Kanamutenya, 2 December 2009, www.swapoparty.org/.
8. Posted by Kapitaholo Otati, 11 December 2009, www.swapoparty.org/.

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