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Progress towards Consolidated Democracy in Namibia

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This paper reviews Namibia's progress towards consolidating its democratic dispensation over the 13 years since independence. The paper concludes that Namibia has all the formal requirements of democracy, but that consolidation is hampered and threatened by persistent poverty and the lack of a democratic value system.

1. Introduction

The 13 years since Namibia's independence in 1989 represent one of the longest periods of uninterrupted democratic rule on the African continent. In southern Africa, only Botswana and Mauritius can claim to be 'older' democracies than Namibia.[1] This means that the most immediate dangers associated with the transition period have been negotiated successfully, and that the democratic dispensation has had some time to settle and develop. Thus when analysing the state of democracy in Namibia, the focus should be on the prospects for consolidation rather than the mere physical attributes of the democratic regime itself. Not that these attributes are not important in themselves – they are – but what needs to be explained right now is how these attributes contribute to the deepening of a democracy.

This type of analysis ascribes to the view that consolidation is a lengthy process, and one with no uni-linear timeline measuring progress and no guaranteed outcome. In this view democracy itself represents an ideal state that is ultimately worth striving for, but one that might never be achieved completely. In the 1970s, influential theorist Robert Dahl (1971) introduced the concept of *polyarchy* to distinguish between the ideal – democracy – and the 'polluted reality'. States that have made the most progress toward democracy (typically those found in the industrialised countries) are considered *polyarchies* because they measure high on both the contestation and inclusiveness dimensions of democracy and not because they are the ideal type. But more importantly perhaps, they are also considered *consolidated* because despite their imperfections, democracy has become the 'only game in town' (Linz and Stepan 1997) and the chances of a reversal of the democratic regime are genuinely remote. Ultimately, this is perhaps the most important difference between the polities of the industrialised and developing worlds.[2] The democratic dispensations of the developing world are much younger and as yet unconsolidated,

[1] Although Zimbabwe is still a *de jure* multiparty state with regular elections, it can no longer be considered a *democracy*.

[2] Technically many of the young democracies in the developing world meet the narrow requirements for polyarchy put forward by Dahl (1971). These are: freedom to form and join organisations; freedom of expression; the right to vote; all citizens eligible for election to public office; the right of political leaders to compete freely for public support; freedom of the media and access to alternative sources of information; and regular, free and fair elections.

and there is much more opportunity for these regimes to be reversed into some form of non-democratic dispensation.

This paper focuses on the prospects for consolidated democracy in Namibia. It starts from the assumption that Namibia meets the minimal formal requirements (as set out by Dahl 1971) to be classified as a polyarchy.[3] Thus it does not reflect on whether or not Namibia today can be regarded as having a democratic dispensation, but rather whether or not Namibia's democratic dispensation will remain in the future. First the paper gives a short overview of four current approaches to consolidation: the electoral approach, the values approach, the support for democracy approach; and the economic development approach. Indicators by which to gauge Namibia's progress to consolidation are extracted from all four approaches and discussed in more detail. Data from a number of national and international data sources (including survey and opinion data) are used to quantify the indicators. Where possible, reference is made to trends and developments elsewhere to provide an appropriate comparative context against which to measure Namibia's progress. The paper concludes with some important political issues that might shape future political trajectories.

2. Four Approaches to Consolidation

Scholars disagree about the requirements for consolidation. Some (see Przeworski *et.al.* 2000) propose at least one alteration in office as a key indicator.[4] In this view contestation is emphasised and "democracy is a system in which parties lose elections" (Przeworski cited in Przeworski *et al.* 2000: 16). Thus a precondition for any country to be classified as democratic is a strong viable opposition party (or parties) that poses a real electoral threat to the incumbent(s). This kind of contestation has three features:

1) 'ex-ante uncertainty' – the positive probability of an electoral victory by the opposition;
2) 'ex-post irreversibility' – the assurance that those who win elections will be allowed to assume office; and
3) 'repeatability' – elections must be repeated and those that win current elections cannot use office to prevent others from winning a next time (Przeworski *et al.* 2000: 16-17).

The main problem with this view is simply that it tends to be (by the authors' own admission) minimalistic: it overemphasises the importance of elections and ignores all other non-electoral aspects of democracy. The dangers of this approach are clear: Botswana, which has all the formal requirements of polyarchy but has not had an alteration in power, would not be considered democratic, whereas Kenya, which has few if any of the formal requirements but recently had an alteration in power would be considered democratic[5]. In addition, this view would also not regard South Africa (democratic since 1994) and Namibia as democracies. On the other hand, one should not commit the "anti-electoral fallacy" (Bratton 1999) by disregarding the importance of elections altogether. Without regular free and fair elections there cannot be democracy – but democracy should not be reduced to elections only.

A second approach (see Inglehart and Welzel 2002; Inglehart 1997; Diamond 1994; Almond and Verba 1963; and Lipset 1959) focuses on the cultural and value aspects of democracy, and

[3] To avoid confusion, I will use the concept democracy throughout the report when polyarchy is implied.
[4] Huntington (1991) concurs with this type of reasoning, but proposes a double alteration.
[5] This type of misclassification is typical of what has been called the 'fallacy of electoralism' (Terry Karl cited by Diamond 1999: 9).

argues that for democracy to be consolidated it requires a "distinctive set of political values and orientations from its citizens: moderation, tolerance, civility, efficacy, knowledge and participation" (Diamond 1994: 1). For Almond and Verba (1963) democracy correlated with a civic culture and for Ingelhart (1997) and Inglehart and Welzer (2002) democracy is strongly correlated with the presence of self-expression values. These self-expression values exist in so far as citizens emphasise "liberty and participation, public self-expression, tolerance of diversity, interpersonal trust and life satisfaction" (Inglehart and Welzer 2002: 7).

A third approach (see Rose *et al.* 1998 and Linz and Stepan 1997) associates the consolidation of democracy with mass support for democracy and mass rejection of non-democratic alternatives. Rose *et al.* (1998: 5) argue that democracy becomes consolidated when and if "there is no political demand for transforming the system of government and politicians would commit electoral suicide if they campaigned for office advocating a change to an undemocratic regime". New democracies develop as a result of what citizens demand and what elites supply. Linz and Stepan (1997: 15-17) identify three aspects to democratic consolidation: 1) a behavioural aspect – when no significant political group aspires to bring an end to the democratic regime or instigate violence to overthrow the democratic government or to secede from the existing state; 2) an attitudinal aspect – when even during the time of a severe crisis, the overwhelming majority of citizens believe that democracy is still the best form of government; and 3) a constitutional aspect – when all actors (state or non-state) accept and become habitual to the fact that conflict will be resolved according to established rules and norms and that the violation of these rules and norms is ineffective and costly. Ultimately, to bring about consolidation mass support for democracy has to reflect a moral or normative commitment to democracy by both elites and citizens.

Inglehart and Welzer (2002) pointed out that mass support for democracy is only meaningful for consolidation if accompanied by deep-rooted values of self-expression, i.e. liberty and participation, public self-expression, tolerance of diversity, interpersonal trust, and life satisfaction. Without these values mass support for democracy amounts to little more than lip service (since democracy has become so fashionable it is also fashionable to support democracy) and contributes little to effective democracy. It is still instrumental rather than normative. Thus, increased mass support for democracy is not sufficient for consolidation; consolidation requires more deep-rooted supportive values and a normative commitment to democracy.

A fourth approach (Lipset 1959 and Przeworski *et al.* 2000) emphasises economic development as the key predictor of whether democracy will endure or not. Lipset (1959: 56) argued, "The more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances it will sustain democracy." Using per capita income as indicator of the level of development, Przeworski *et al.* correctly predicted 77% of the world's democracies.[6] A key finding of their analysis is that higher levels of development do not bring democracy, but democracies are more likely to endure in the more wealthy nations. They found the probability of poorer democracies (income levels below $ 1,000) reverting back to some form of dictatorship to be much higher (0.121) than for wealthier democracies (0.018 for income levels between $ 4,001 and $ 5,000; 0.009 for income levels between $ 5,001 and $ 6,000; and 0.008 for income levels between $ 6,001 and $ 7,000). No country with an income level exceeding $ 7,000 has ever reverted back to a non-democratic form of government. Since the probability of a reversal of the democratic regime is so remote at the $ 4,001+ income level, one can perhaps suggest that democracy is fully consolidated above this threshold (Przeworski *et al.* 2000: 92-93). Based on these findings they predict that democracies with income levels below $ 1,000 would have an

[6] One has to keep in mind, however, that they define democracies as those countries that have had an alteration in power. This means that a country such as Botswana is classified as a dictatorship and not a democracy.

average lifespan of about eight (8) years and those with an income level of between $ 1,001 and $ 2,000 a lifespan of about 18 years (Przeworski *et al.* 2000: 98). They also found that poor democracies are more likely to survive if they continue to grow and those that grow faster endure longer. In addition, democracies become more vulnerable if the poorest 40% becomes relatively poorer. (Przeworski *et al.* 2000: 109,117, 121).

Although each of the four approaches summarised here offers a unique angle on the assessment of consolidation, none on their own offers a complete solution. This paper will discuss the following elements with regard to consolidation: 1) elections and representation; 2) quality of governance; 3) political culture and support for democracy; and 4) economic growth and development.

3. Elections, Representation and Participation

Elections

Namibia has not had an alteration in power since independence, yet every one of the six elections held to appoint representatives to both national and sub-national levels of government has been declared (locally and internationally) free and fair. The fact that a single party, SWAPO, dominates at all three levels is thus an accurate reflection of voters' preferences and not the product of electoral manipulation or fraud. In fact, a number of legislative reforms have been introduced since 1992 to enhance the autonomy of the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) and to improve the quality of electoral process. Perhaps the most significant of these reforms was to move the Directorate of Elections from its previous location within the Office of the Prime Minister to its current status as part of a far more autonomous Electoral Commission residing under Parliament.[7]

The dominant trend thus far is that SWAPO has managed to increase its dominance at all levels, both in terms of votes and seats. It currently holds more than two-thirds of the total number of seats in the National Assembly and could therefore produce unilateral changes to the Namibian Constitution. SWAPO's electoral dominance is the result of a number of factors including its performance – first as liberator and then as governing party; its own superior capacity to mobilise and maintain a loyal support base; an incapacitated and ineffective opposition; and the legacies of the colonial period.

As a result, Namibia's party system has remained un-fragmented since the introduction of multi-party democracy. Table 1 shows that at both regional and national level, the effective number of parties[8] has for the most part not exceeded two (2). This suggests that the prospects for an alteration in power, at this point in time, are quite remote.

[7] Various steps were and currently are being taken to improve the registration of voters, as well as the voting and counting process. For an overview of these and some of the problems experienced in the past with the registration of voters, see Keulder and Van Zyl 2002.

[8] The effective number of parties is a measure of the number of equal-sized parties (based on votes or seats) that exist in any specific polity. For example, a score of one would indicate that one party is completely dominant and that the party system is completely un-fragmented, and a score of three would indicate that there are at least three parties or groups of parties that are more or less equal in size, which would be regarded as reasonably fragmented.

Table 1: Effective number of parties by election year (1992-1998)

Election year	Effective number of parties - votes	Effective number of parties - seats
1992	1.8692	1.5023
1994	2.0254	1.7100
1998	1.8246	1.3715
1999	2.1331	1.6600
Average	**1.9631**	**1.5610**

Note: This table does not include the results of local authority elections.

Does this mean that Namibia, as a result of it single, dominant party system is not a democracy as those favouring the alteration rule would maintain? The answer is no and there are at least three reasons for this.

Firstly, to suggest that democracy requires free and fair elections is to accept unequivocally the outcomes of such elections, even if it shows overwhelming support for a single party. To call for free and fair elections on one hand, and then to prescribe the outcome as another precondition for democracy (at least two equal-sized parties as the alteration rule prescribes) is simply a contradiction in terms. There is nothing in the theory that suggests that democracies should be defined in terms of the outcomes of their elections, rather the opposite is true: democracies are defined by the nature and quality of their elections.

Secondly, although unusual, single, dominant party democracies have occurred even amongst the most advanced industrialised states.[9] Italy under the Christian Democrats (DC) has not had an alteration in power for over four decades following the democratic reforms after WWII, and in Sweden and Japan, the Social Democrats and the Liberal Democratic Party respectively survived as ruling parties for several decades without any interruption in their terms in office. Namibia, and for that matter, Botswana and perhaps even South Africa, are thus not unique. There is therefore nothing, not even in theory, to suggest that single-party domination (or an un-fragmented party system) is incompatible with formal and procedural democracy.

Finally, single-party domination has certain advantages for consolidation. The key advantage being that it provides often much-needed stability for new governments after the turmoil of a transition. Ruling parties can constitute governments on their own (there is no need to incorporate small parties as alliance partners) and can set about the business of governing and implementing its policy blue print without any fear of getting derailed by opposing forces (Arain and Barnes 1974). Furthermore, and this is the case in Namibia, the high levels of mass support for the dominant party translate into high levels of trust and legitimacy for the new government.[10] Namibia's single, dominant party system has thus allowed the new government the opportunity to find its feet under democracy, thus removing much of the immediate political pressure that could have added to the vulnerability of the new regime. There were therefore fewer incentives to reverse the democratic regime shortly after independence.

Despite the weakness of the opposition in Namibia, one has to keep in mind that single-party domination does not last forever. Opposition parties might be reduced to 'bell-ringers' (Gilliomee and Simkins 1999) and their actions limited to "carping and sniping" (Arian and Barnes 1974: 599) during the period of domination, but their role is nevertheless useful in keeping the ruling party close to the action. At this point in time, there is little to suggest that any of the opposition parties will expand their support base during the next round of elections starting 2003/4. It is quite

[9] See Pempel 1990
[10] Keulder 2002(a)

possible that at least one small party (MAG) will not survive another election, and that another (likely to be the UDF) will come close to losing all their current seats (three). Unless the larger opposition parties can work out some deal (perhaps to share lists), their combined seat share might also be reduced as a result of a decline in voter turnout.

Dominant parties carry within them the seeds of their own destruction (Arain and Barnes 1974: 595). They rule themselves out of power. This is yet to happen with SWAPO, although the next election holds some interesting challenges for them too. In the first instance, SWAPO voters might have to vote for a new presidential candidate (should the incumbent retire from office), and thus far, less than two years before that election, no candidate has been proposed. Secondly, SWAPO might have to contest the next round of elections without a substantial number of its most senior leadership. Aside from the possible presidential successor, it would certainly enter the elections without the services of the current deputy-President, Rev. Witbooi, and the previous Prime Minister, Mr. Hage Geingob. It might also have to do without a number of current ministers and even deputy-ministers who are close to retirement. Given its entrenched support, especially in the largely rural areas of north-central Namibia, these leadership changes (however significant) are unlikely to diminish the party's overall support within its traditional strongholds. Like opposition parties, the ruling party might be affected by declining voter turnout outside these areas, but it would not threaten the overall stability of the single-dominant party system.

Representation

Namibia uses two types of electoral systems to convert votes into seats: a simple plurality system for regional council elections and a closed-list PR with highest remainder for local authority elections and national assembly elections. Recently, the merits of these systems have come under scrutiny as a result of new legislation introduced to retain the PR format for local authority elections. [11] Among the issues raised in favour of the PR variety was that it promotes the number of women elected to representative councils by means of gender quotas. Seeing that there is little chance of the proposed Bill being rejected, one has to regard this as a positive step toward expanding democracy to include a section of the population that was previous under-represented. It is thus a positive step towards overall consolidation.

The idea of gender quotas is not new to Namibia, with the Government setting a minimum threshold for party lists already during the last local authority elections. Currently, Namibia measures extremely favourably with the rest of the world in so far as: 1) women make up more than 40% of all local councillors with many being mayors, deputy majors and council chairpersons; and 2) women make up 26% (19 out of 72) of all voting members of the National Assembly.[12] At the regional level, where no quotas have been implemented or are being contemplated at this point in time, the picture is much less positive. Only 4% of regional council representatives and only 9% (2 out of 26) of the National Council are women. Only two of the 13 regions have women as governors. The new legislation should increase the proportion women representatives at local level to nearly 50%, but it will not affect proportions at the regional and national level. These levels have not been targeted by the 50/50 campaign and the reasons for that are not entirely clear.

The PR system has also provided for small parties to gain seats in proportion to their support, especially at the national level.[13] Where these parties represent ethnic/racial minorities (as is the case with MAG and to some extent the UDF), it has meant that these minorities have gained

[11] For an overview of these electoral systems and their political consequences, see Keulder 2002(b).
[12] The proportion of women in the National Assembly is even more remarkable if one takes into account that no quotas were applied at this level.
[13] For a more detailed discussion as to why PR benefits small parties, see Keulder 2002 (b).

representation and that they participate in the legislative process (even if their contributions are more symbolic and without real influence). But since all parties are not minority-based parties and given the fact that some of the larger parties often make no deliberate effort to include minority candidates on their lists, some groups such as the San and the Ovahimba remain largely outside the realm of formal politics.

The one dimension of representation that raises some cause for concern is the weak vertical links between representatives and their constituencies. This is often contributed to the PR system that operates without clearly demarcated geographical constituencies. Survey research has found this argument unsubstantiated as voters have equally little contact with representatives at regional and national levels (Keulder 1998, 1999, 2001). Without regular contact with representatives, vertical accountability is reduced and so is public input into the policy process. These are conditions that could work against consolidation for they reduce opportunities for participation and space for self-expression. To improve the situation does not require a change in the type(s) of electoral system, as it is not a product of any of the systems currently in use. Parties should be encouraged to reach out to constituencies more. There is nothing that prevents the parties from assigning members to their own informal constituencies, then to encourage and enable members to service these constituencies. In practice, however, parties lack the financial and human resources to implement such a system and as a result, out-reach programmes are mostly limited to election time.

Participation

Consolidation theorists such as Inglehart (1997) and Diamond (1999) argue that mass participation in the political process is crucial for the consolidation of democracy as it is one of the key components of a supportive political culture. In the case of Inglehart (1997) and Inglehart and Welzel (2002) participation is one of the self-expression values that drive effective democracy. It is useful to distinguish between two broad types of participation: electoral participation and non-electoral participation.

When electoral participation is considered, the dominant trend in Namibia is a downward one. With each of the two elections held since independence at each of the three levels of government, overall turnout declined sharply. Turnout figures are contained in Table 2.

Table 2: Voter turnout by election year and type of election

Election year	Type of election	Turnout as % of registered voters
1989	National	98.05
1992	Regional	81.07
1992	Local	82.33
1994	National	76.05
1998	Regional	40.01
1998	Local	33.70
1999	National	58.08

Source: Keulder 1999, 2001

In 1989 some 98% of registered voters cast a vote, whereas in 1999 this figure was down to 58%.[14] For the two sub-national level elections, the decline in turnout was even more dramatic: down 50% for regional council elections and down 55% for local authority elections. Although apathy is common in all polities, survey data raises concerns about quite large sections of society that have either become cynical or have failed to vote because they lack the administrative requirements or physical capacity to vote. These include various factors such as birth certificates,

[14] One should really consider the unusually high turnout for the founding elections of 1989 as atypical and not a predictor for subsequent elections.

ID documents and registration cards, whilst some have argued that the distance to polling stations is too far, or that they are too old or sick to walk etc.[15] Much more could be done to re-incorporate these two categories of non-voters into the election process, although the cynics might present additional problems.

Even more concerns could be raised about the level of non-electoral participation among Namibians. In 1999, between one quarter and one half of Namibians indicated that they were not willing to participate in political activities that include: solving community problems, attend election rallies, work for candidates or parties or write letters to newspapers (Keulder 2002(a)).[16] Civic participation is equally low with one fifth or less of Namibians regularly attending meetings by groups such as church groups, co-operatives or self-help organisations, schools/housing/rates groups, commercial organisations, community groups and trade unions. A second survey confirms these low participation levels among young Namibians as well (Van Zyl and Keulder 2001). Hence, one can expect these low levels of non-electoral participation to continue for at least a generation and possibly beyond.

4. Support for Democracy

In 1999, almost 58% of Namibians responded that democracy was preferable to any other kind of government. In 2002, almost 64% felt the same way. In both 1999 and 2002, Namibians have rejected various non-democratic forms of government:

- One party rule – 63% and 72%
- Traditional leaders as government – 54% and 57%
- Military rule – 59% and 64%
- Presidential (one-man) rule – 57% and 68%

From this alone it appears that Namibia had more supporters of democracy in 2002 than in 1999. Slightly more Namibians feel positive about the extent of democracy in Namibia: more Namibians believed that the country is either a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems in 2002 than in 1999 (76% versus 71%). Overall satisfaction with democracy has also increased significantly: in 1999, 64% were fairly or very satisfied with the way democracy works in Namibia, whereas 78% felt the same way in 2002.

Although the Afrobarometer Survey does not include the battery of questions used in the World Values Survey to measure self-expression, it contains certain questions that would allow some picture of how Namibians relate to authority and group interaction. Firstly, only about 54% felt that individuals themselves, and not government, are responsible for their own success in life. Secondly, 72% of Namibians felt that individual well-being should be pursued rather than putting community well-being ahead of that of the individual. Thirdly, 76% of respondents felt that since communities are unlikely to agree on everything, they should learn to accept differences of opinion with the community, rather than talk until all agrees. Finally, some 71% felt that as citizens they should be more active in questioning the actions of their leaders rather than show more respect for those in authority. Thus, whilst these are not measures comparable to those which Inglehart and Welzel (2002) argue are the driving forces behind effective democracy, they do show that

[15] For a detailed analysis as to why Namibians don't vote, see Keulder 1998, 1999, 2001.
[16] Although Namibia's participation scores are low, it is still among the highest in the SADC region (see Mattes *et al.* 2000).

Namibians value the individual over the group, and that they endorse a more self-assertive attitude toward political leadership. These factors, when taken together with the increase for democracy, are positive but should not be interpreted as a supportive political culture. They are by no means indicators that democracy has been consolidated, they simply suggest that as far as mass attitudes toward democracy are concerned, things are moving in the right direction. Democracy cannot survive if it has no support.

5. Quality of Democracy

A country's quality of democracy can be gauged by two factors: 1) the extent to which its government respects citizens' political rights and civil liberties;[17] and 2) the extent to which elites abide by their own rules and abstain from corrupt practices. Two widely respected organisations, *Freedom House* and *Transparency International*, annually report on the state of freedoms and corruption worldwide. According to the latest Freedom House ratings (2001-2002), Namibia is regarded as *free* (together with only eight other African nations) with a score of two on the political rights index and three on the civil liberties index.[18] With regard to press freedom Namibia has been classified as *partly free* with a score of 34 (below 30 is regarded as free) (Freedom House 2001). Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index*[19] in 2001 ranked Namibia as the second most corruption-free state in Africa after Botswana. It scores 5.4 compared to Botswana's 6 and ranks 30th overall.

Freedom and Human Rights

The scores presented above indicate that Namibia is regarded 'free'. However, this does not mean that freedoms are not impinged upon and that human rights abuses do not take place. Since 1999, human rights abuses have increased from previous years, as a result of the attempted succession in Caprivi and the Government's decision to allow the Angolan Government to use Namibian territory in its military campaign against Unita rebel forces. The scope and extent of human rights abuses stemming from these two events are well documented (see National Society for Human Rights 2001 and US Department of State 2002), so there is no need to repeat them here. Suffice it to say that both the types of abuses, and the frequency with which they occurred, are largely a reflection of the increased militarization of specific areas of the country. It is thus very likely that human rights abuses in these areas will decline with the re-introduction of peace and the subsequent reduction in militarization.

The key issue for quality democracy is whether or not those who had their rights violated have legal recourse to redress their position. There are several instances over the past years in which rights violations have led to successful legal recourse and in a prominent case Government was forced to introduce legislation to supply legal aid to the alleged secessionists. Civil society agencies, most notably the NSHR and the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), continue to play a crucial role in both the monitoring and enforcement of human rights.

A more worrying aspect of human rights is the limited extent to which they have become entrenched in the Namibian society, both at mass and elite level. Recent focus group analysis on

[17] Freedom House defines political rights as the freedom of citizens to form new political parties whose leaders can openly contest elections whilst civil liberties are defined as respect for and protection of religious, ethnic, economic, linguistic, gender, family, personal freedoms as well as press freedom and freedom of belief and association (see www.freedomhouse.org).
[18] On both indexes 1 means most free and 7 least free.
[19] This index ranges from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean).

youth perceptions on human rights (Keulder 2002(c)) revealed that tolerance levels are relatively low, and so are the levels of understanding and awareness of rights. It also showed that it is particularly minorities who see little benefits from rights and freedoms. It concluded that "much more education on human rights is needed. Not only should awareness be raised about such rights, there is also a need to explain the very notion of rights. In addition, there is a need to explain how these rights relate to duties, liberties and obligations and where rights originate […]. Such education activities need to be ongoing: civic education is vital for building social capital and for inculcating a human rights culture" (Keulder 2002(c)).

Corruption

Namibia's scores on the *Corruption Perceptions Index* are supported by survey data on individual experiences with corruption. Although changes to the instrument make a direct comparison of the 1999 and the 2002 Afrobarometer Survey impossible, real experiences remain low (on most accounts less than 10% of all Namibians have ever had to pay a bribe to obtain something from someone in a position of power). Despite this, popular perception on the level of corruption is much higher than actual experiences. The 2002 Afrobarometer Survey expanded its battery of questions measuring perceptions on corruption. Table 3 below shows a breakdown of these perceptions.

Table 3: Perceptions on corruption 2002

Agency	Most or all officials corrupt (%)
Officials in the presidency	18.0
Elected Leaders	26.8
Government Officials	39.4
Police	36.0
Border officials	24.6
Judges and Magistrates	14.6
Local businessmen	18.5
Foreign businessmen	32.3
Teachers and school administrators	23.2
Religious leaders	17.6

Even though perceptions might not be an accurate reflection of reality, they do shape actions and represent the reality for those that hold them. The table above illustrates some interesting patterns: firstly, government officials and the police are seen as most corrupt, followed by foreign businessmen. Those seen as least corrupt are: those working in the Office of the President, members of the judiciary and church officials. Whereas one could explain the 'cleanliness' of the presidential office as a product of popular belief about the personal integrity of the President himself, and that of church leaders as the product of religious beliefs, the perception of judicial officials cannot be explained as the by-product of some other factor. This is positive and holds much value for consolidation.

Secondly, elected leaders are also seen to be fairly corrupt. This is cause for concern as it might point to much larger cynicism about electoral politics in general, which does not bode well for the consolidation process.

Thirdly, the difference in perceptions of local and foreign businesses is very significant. Cases of corruption reported in the media do not reflect large-scale corruption involving foreign businesses. It is possible that these perceptions have some xenophobic or nationalist underpinnings: a feeling that if it is local, it is good; if it is foreign it must be bad.

Finally, the fact that Government is identified as the locale of most corruption might be an accurate one. In recent years the press provided detailed coverage of corruption in the housing sector that involved a number of senior government officials and managers of the National Housing Enterprise (NHE). Currently, a much-publicised probe into social pensions is underway which also involves senior government officials.

Although these perceptions can and should be turned around, it would involve a much more transparent approach to corruption by the Government and its anti-corruption agencies. Past attempts to do so have failed, as is shown by the perceptions presented here. These 'public relations' exercises must be backed up with real, substantive reforms and in this regard the new Anti-corruption Bill passed in 2002 is most welcome. Also, public watchdog agencies must be strengthened and their autonomy protected.

6. Economic Growth and Development

If one applies the model of Przeworski *et al.* (2000), Namibia's democracy with a per-capita income of around $ 1,900 ($ 1,940 in 1998 and $ 1,871 in 2000) should endure for about 18 years. The end of this period is only five years away, and unforeseen circumstances aside, there are no indicators to suggest that Namibia will not be a democracy in five years time.

The Namibian economy scores well on a number of international indexes. On the Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal *Index of Economic Freedom (2000)* [20] Namibia ties for Africa's top spot and 60th place overall with four other African countries: Botswana, Mali, Ivory Coast and South Africa. These economies are considered 'mostly free'. The Fraser Institute and Cato Institute's *Economic Freedom in the World – 2001 Annual Report* scores Namibia (with Botswana) 6.9 (out of 10) with only one African country, South Africa, ranked as more free (7 out of 10). This report also shows that the Namibian economy has become more free – up from 80th place in 1990 to 50th place overall today. With regard to economic competitiveness, the World Economic Forum's *African Competitiveness Report* ranked Namibia 4th overall in Africa behind Tunisia, Mauritius and Botswana.

The Namibian economy continues to grow, but growth rates have declined since 1994. Currently the economy grows at approximately 3% (real GDP) per annum, which is below the target of 5% set by Government. In addition, GDP per capita growth rates have also declined from about 4% in 1994 to less than 1% in 1999 (UNDP 2000: 158).

Przeworski *et al.* (2000) argued that economic growth would postpone the death of poor democracies, provided that the poor do not become much poorer. The prospects for democratic consolidation do not look too bleak as the growth predictor is concerned, but the level provides cause for concern.

Although considered a lower/middle-income country, Namibia has one of the most highly skewed income distributions in the world. In 1996 it had a *Gini coefficient* of 0.70 (UNDP 2000: 20).[21] Due to the racist nature of the country's colonial past, income inequalities overlapped almost completely with racial group. This is by and large still the case, although since independence historically disadvantaged Namibians have joined the middle and upper classes, mainly in urban

[20] This index ranks 161 countries on 10 indicators of economic freedom, including trade policy, government intervention in the economy, monetary policy, wages and prices, property rights etc.
[21] A measure of inequality where 0 means perfect equality and 1 perfect inequality.

areas and due to transformations in the civil service and affirmative action in the private sector. Since there are currently no statistics that measure inequality by race, it is not possible to reflect on the scope or pace of these transformations.

If one looks at the measures of human development by region, as well as regional consumption patterns, there is a clear gap in levels of well-being between rural and urban areas (see Table 4). Several regional disparities also exist across Namibia's regions with regard to life expectancy, literacy, and income.

Table 4: Human Development Indicators by region, urban/rural, and gender

Region	Life Expectancy	Adult Literacy	School Enrolment	Income N$	Adjusted Income	HDI 2000	HDI 1999	HDI 1998
Caprivi	32.6	75.4	95.3	1,598	3,773	0.517	0.541	0.538
Erongo	47.2	88.5	89.7	5,423	4,339	0.713	0.754	0.810
Hardap	41.6	80.7	85.8	5,945	4,446	0.667	0.706	0.822
Karas	42.0	88.6	89.5	6,655	4,505	0.700	0.734	0.787
Khomas	46.1	94.0	83.7	11,359	4,777	0.769	0.821	0.853
Kunene	45.5	64.3	94.9	2,203	3,939	0.588	0.616	0.608
Ohangwena	43.0	76.0	93.7	1,070	3,569	0.544	0.582	0.546
Kavango	40.3	73.1	96.7	1,763	3,762	0.554	0.584	0.569
Omaheke	44.1	64.0	79.0	3,944	4,236	0.605	0.644	0.706
Omusati	42.6	82.5	99.3	1,452	3,725	0.585	0.624	0.614
Oshana	43.5	85.4	99.5	1,922	3,869	0.618	0.659	0.648
Oshikoto	40.3	81.9	94.1	1,680	4,322	0.654	0.686	0.604
Otjozondjupa	41.1	72.0	79.4	3,659	4,198	0.601	0.636	0.735
Namibia	43.0	81.0	94.5	3,608	4,190	0.648	0.683	0.770
Urban	46.4	91.7	96.2	7,651	4,575	0.749	0.787	0.808
Rural	41.7	73.7	93.7	1,875	3,856	0.574	0.608	0.601
Female	45.6	79.6	95.3	2,188	3,935	0.622	0.660	0.653
Male	40.6	82.6	93.5	4,454	4,299	0.653	0.685	0.767

Source: UNDP

The encouraging aspect of these disparities is that they do not reflect partisanship in any way which would suggest selective development or systemic neglect by the ruling party. Furthermore, there is no pattern in these disparities to suggest that development is driven by ethnic considerations (see Table 5).

Table 5: Human Development Indicators by language group

Language Group	Life Expect	Adult Literacy	School Enrolment	Income N$	Adjusted Income	HDI 2000	HDI 1999	HDI 1998
Afrikaans	67.2	96.1	87.4	13,995	4,884	0.885	0.887	0.865
Caprivi	56.6	79.9	89.0	1,692	3,803	0.613	0.640	0.579
English	66.9	98.6	89.9	1,708	5,108	0.895	0.926	0.873
German	75.0	99.4	92.2	30,459	5,283	0.960	1.000	0.930
Nama/	58.6	71.1	74.7	2,404	3,983	0.611	0.642	0.618
Oshivambo	61.3	82.8	88.9	1,707	3,807	0.641	0.673	0.613
Otjiherero	64.1	72.3	75.7	3,077	4,162	0.667	0.702	0.711
Rukavango	55.9	72.8	83.0	1,652	3,791	0.585	0.613	0.550
San	48.1	16.0	18.3	1,315	3,674	0.326	0.359	0.279
Tswana	61.7	81.0	85.7	5,326	4,390	0.721	0.751	0.782

Source: UNDP

In addition, survey measures of 'lived poverty'[22] shows that many Namibians live in conditions that can only be described as dire.

Table 6: Lived poverty 1999 and 2002 *(Having to do without____: "always/many times")*

Item/Commodity	1999 (%)	2002 (%)
Food	10.8	15.8
Water	19.0	18.5
Health care	14.3	19.3
Electricity	46.3	55.2
Fuel for cooking	-	10.5
Income	24.7	13.8

Note: The 1999 instrument did not include 'fuel for cooking' as an item.

Table 5 shows some minor increases in the levels of lived poverty from 1999 to 2002. But the overall trend remains clear: a significant number (more than one in 10) of Namibians live under conditions of absolute poverty where they have to make do with the essentials for physical survival.

The fact that there are no ethnic patterns to human development, and the fact that the ruling party does not have to buy votes from its main support base (which would introduce an ethnic pattern to public expenditure) could explain why poverty has not yet destabilised the country politically. But this has not prevented some political agents playing the ethnic card when looking to mobilise communities in these impoverished areas. This was certainly the case when Messrs. Muyongo and Mamili explained the reasons behind the 1999 abortive succession attempt in Caprivi.

Another reason why poverty is yet to have a destabilising effect on Namibia's democracy is that Namibians are generally patient (much more so than other southern Africans) and hopeful that matters will improve in years to come (see Mattes *et al.* 2000: 44). Furthermore, individual and group-based relative deprivation (comparing oneself or one's ethnic group's status with that of other individuals and ethnic groups in the country) was among the lowest in southern Africa. Namibians also scored highest in the region on the Economic Evaluations Index constructed from a battery of questions in the Afrobarometer (Mattes *et al.* 2000: 42).

These performance factors, together with the political gains as a result of the successful transition to democracy, currently delay the potential political impact of poverty. But, unless something tangible is done, especially with regard to 'lived poverty', political stability could well be threatened in the long run. Thus, whilst all might appear to be well at this point in time, it might not stay that way forever.

7. Key Emerging Issues

Presidential Succession

In 1999, the Constitution was amended to allow the current incumbent President another (third) term in office, which is to last until 2004. However, early last year (2002), the issue of a further term in office resurfaced, despite early statements that another constitutional amendment is not being contemplated. The issue of a possible fourth term for the incumbent is closely linked with the ruling party's seeming inability to find an acceptable and credible presidential successor to replace

[22] The Afrobarometer Survey measures 'lived poverty' as the frequency with which citizens have to do without essentials such as food, water, health care, electricity, fuel for cooking and cash income.

such a highly popular and dominant personality.[23] Depending on whether or not a fourth term becomes a real issue in the near future, the outcome of the succession issue is likely to be one of two possibilities.

The first is another amendment of the Constitution to allow for a fourth (or even longer) term. This time round the nature of the amendment would be more substantial than the previous one as it will require much more extensive changes to the constitutional clauses regulating the presidency. This will no doubt promote a further strengthening of the Executive and the politics of patronage. Both these will reduce the quality of democracy in Namibia although it might not necessarily reduce the quality of governance in the country.

The second possible outcome of the succession issue is one that does not involve a further constitutional amendment, but has the incumbent remain as head of the ruling party whilst hand-picking a successor to head the State. This formal splitting of the highest offices could cause some serious tensions between State and Party when and if the two offices pursue different objectives. Indirectly it could also cause some crucial tensions between the Executive and the Legislature, as the two bodies would technically be accountable to different agencies. Although this would not cause a constitutional problem, it could cause some crises of governance.

To avoid such tensions, the incumbent President might decide to appoint a successor which would allow him indirect control over the State and the Executive from his position as Head of Party. The new Head of State would thus have no real autonomy from Party leadership and is likely to pursue the goals and objectives of his predecessor. To subordinate the Head of State to the Head of Party is likely to reduce the quality of democracy, as the locus of power would be outside the constitutional framework of accountability, and it would have a seriously negative effect on the balance of power within the formal polity. The ultimate executive power would be located outside state structures and would be used through personal and informal channels.

The Land Issue

Since independence, 'land' has always featured as an issue in political debates. This is hardly surprising if one considers the issues encapsulated in the land debate: colonialism, disempowerment and dispossession of indigenous Africans, racial discrimination and oppression, and on the more positive side, land is associated with liberation, empowerment and national identity. In many respects, land is more of a political than an economic issue. It is an affirmation of national citizenship of a free country, and of a previously oppressed identity as indigenous (black) African.

In 1991 the Government of Namibia committed itself to land reform by means of a 'willing-buyer-willing-seller' principle in line with a Constitution that protects property rights as part of a comprehensive, entrenched Bill of Rights. Since then, land has also become a constitutional issue for some.

Having committed itself to land reform, whilst at the same time relying greatly on the market to supply farms for the reform, the Government has often found itself criticised for the slow pace of

[23] One has to keep in mind that the ruling party (SWAPO) has had President Nuyoma as leader since its formation in the 1950s. The party itself thus does not have a culture of leadership succession through open contestation and in the tradition of liberation movements remains sceptical of openly ambitious personalities. This was confirmed at this year's party congress that led to the official demotion of two potential contenders resulting in the resignation of the then Prime Minister Hage Geingob. Furthermore, the Congress decided to let the succession issue stand over to a extraordinary congress planned for 2003.

the reform, as well as trying to address fears of a Zimbabwe-style land grab. But where are we 13 years after Independence and some 12 years after that first Land Reform Conference in 1991?

Recently the IPPR published a paper tracking the trends regarding land transactions since independence (see Fuller and Eiseb 2002). Their paper highlights the following:

- White males dominate the land market in terms of number and value of transactions.
- After 1995, when it became mandatory to report farm sales, a large number of privately owned farms were transformed into closed corporations. Some 44% of the transactions since 1995 constituted 'farms-as-donations' to closed corporations. This amounts to 23% of all hectares transferred.
- On average only about 0.5% of all farmland in the country is annually transferred to black Namibians, and mostly to black males. Thus far, only 6% of total farmland has been transferred to black Namibians (male, female or couples) since 1990.
- Government has only twice come close to meeting its expenditure target of N$ 20 million. In all other years since Independence it has fallen short by almost half that amount.
- White males out-buy Government on the open market. In 2000, if 'donations' are included, they spent N$ 97 million whereas Government spent only N$ 15 million.

How much of an issue is land for ordinary Namibians? In 1999 only 1.8% of Namibians listed land as one of the three most important problems that Government has to address. In 2002 only 1.1% Idid the same. For them jobs, education and HIV/AIDS were far more important.

Does this mean that land is a non-starter as a political and economic issue? Maybe as an economic issue, but not as a political issue. How popular an issue it becomes in the near future depends on whether or not elites start linking it with other more serious political issues, whether or not it is seen by sinking politicians as a political lifeline and whether or not SWAPO is put under pressure at the polls.

8. Conclusions

This paper started with the assumption that Namibia has all the requirements of a formal democracy or polyarchy. It presented evidence that Namibia has many of the requirements to enable it to consolidate its democratic dispensation despite the single, dominant party system. These include free and fair elections, an open and relatively free economy, a functioning judicial system and widespread mass support for democracy. Threats to consolidation largely come from two sources: the degree of poverty and the lack of deep-rooted democratic values. Two more immediate issues could test elites commitment to democracy: finding a successor for the incumbent president and the issue of land reform.

How can prospects for consolidation be further enhanced? The answer is two-fold: poverty reduction and the promotion of a democratic value system. The latter requires civic education, since democrats are made not born. At the same time, democratic institutions such as Parliament and the Electoral Commission should be strengthened, and the gap between citizens and their representatives should be reduced. Civil society should be made more effective for them to continue their positive contributions (such as those regarding human rights).

Ultimately, consolidation requires time and there is no indication of just how much time is needed. With the right kind of interventions, it could take one or even two generations to start producing the 'solid' democrats that democratic consolidation require.

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