

FRIEND OR FOE?

**DOMINANT PARTY SYSTEMS
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA:**

Insights from the developing world

**EDITED BY NICOLA DE JAGER &
PIERRE DU TOIT** FOREWORD BY KAY LAWSON

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Dominant party systems
in southern Africa

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Nicola de Jager and Pierre du Toit

Within southern Africa, there has been a steady increase in the number of dominant party systems—systems where one party dominates over a prolonged period in an ostensibly democratic system with regular elections and multiple parties participating in elections. In Africa the dominant party system has largely replaced the one party system that predominated after Africa's initial wave of liberation in the 1950s and 1960s. Bogaards's (2004) study on *Counting parties and identifying dominant party systems in Africa* points out that there is 'an urgent need for systematic research into the nature, sources, conditions and consequences of dominant party systems'.

This call caught our attention not only because of our concern for conscientious scholarship, but also because we are citizens of South Africa, which is a clear example of a dominant party system, and because we border on Zimbabwe, another obvious, yet worrying example of a dominant party system in which opponents to the incumbent party have suffered brutal, even grisly violations of their human rights. As ordinary citizens we wonder, as do many other South Africans, if that is the way we can expect to go. This question was also asked in Giliomee and Simkins's book *The awkward embrace* in 1999. Now, almost 15 years later, it needs to be followed up.

This book seeks to begin the work of filling the gap that Bogaards identified, by focusing on how and why such dominant parties have developed in four nations in southern Africa (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe) and exploring the effect they have had on the quality of democracy in that part of the world. In addition to in-depth studies of each of these nations, we offer comparable coverage of four non-African nations: India, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan. By thus extending our coverage we are able to explore whether there are significant differences in dominant parties within and outside southern Africa, as well as to discover characteristics common to all.

The book is divided into three parts: the first presents the theoretical approach to the dominant party system, providing the basis for comparison of the case studies. An initial classification of dominant party systems is presented in the first chapter and is revisited in the final chapter.

Part Two provides four instances of successful transition from party dominance to multi-party democracy in the developing world, namely Mexico, India, South Korea and Taiwan.

It starts with Kenneth F. Greene's chapter, where he explains and tests his resource-based theory using Mexico as one of his case studies. His methodology is primarily quantitative and his goal is to understand why dominant parties rise and decline. His resource-based approach is useful, throughout the book, in helping us understand the impact of the dominant party system on the quality of democracy in the more qualitative studies that follow in succeeding chapters.

Part Three turns to southern African examples of dominant party systems, where party dominance is a key feature of the political landscape. Zimbabwe stands out as a worst-case example, having decayed into an oppressive, authoritarian regime. Part Three ends with a comparative analysis of the case studies, identifying the nature and sources of dominance and drawing conclusions for southern Africa.

Selection of cases

In taking up the challenge to fill the research gap identified by Bogaards, we decided to focus on southern Africa as a region within the continent. Apart from our personal concerns, presented above, our choice is based on the following considerations. For a start, our research design is primarily (but not exclusively) based on studies that use qualitative data analyses. This limits the number of cases we are able to compare within one book and we therefore restrict ourselves to countries from one region in the continent. We also prefer to limit our set of cases to states that are in spatial proximity to one another, rather than a set of cases from countries dispersed all over the continent, selected on the basis of some analytical criterion. Proximity allows us to consider the role of path dependence, to examine the extent to which certain policy choices in one country have affected the range of policy options that emerged later in adjacent countries. And by selecting cases which are from the same region, we can identify some shared characteristics, which from the outset helps in dealing with the problem of 'many variables, small N'.

Southern Africa provides an adequate group of countries from which to select a set of cases in which there is a range of variation in party systems. We roughly demarcate southern Africa as being south of the Zambezi River, and include both Angola and Mozambique. The first has a number of tributaries that feed into the Zambezi, and the latter is neatly intersected by the river. Our potential set of cases is thus Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and excludes Zambia and Malawi, two otherwise interesting cases. From this list we select South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. The specific reasons for this selection are set out below.

Firstly, our research questions shape the selection. As stated above, Zimbabwe appears to be a dominant party system of a most malevolent kind: for more than a decade the ruling party has inflicted gross human rights abuses on some of its citizens, yet it still holds regular elections, opposition parties survive and power is contested. Our first question, therefore, is whether this is the likely trajectory that other such party systems in the region may follow. We exclude the Kingdom of Swaziland from this comparative frame, a monarchy in which democracy is non-existent, and the Kingdom of Lesotho, a constitutional monarchy characterised since 1993 by a highly fluid and unstable multi-party system. Angola held its

first democratic elections in 2008 (since the 1992 elections that dissolved into civil war), won by the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), but is still short of qualifying as a dominant party system. (We consider a winning streak of four consecutive elections as the benchmark for a dominant party system.) Mozambique held its first multi-party elections in 1994, which were won by the ruling Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) party which also won every subsequent election. Mozambique thus meets the criterion of consecutive successes to qualify as a dominant party system. Nevertheless, we exclude Angola and Mozambique from our set of cases on the basis of the criterion of 'bounded variability' which we discuss below. The three remaining countries to add to Zimbabwe then are Botswana, Namibia and South Africa.

These three countries are relevant to the question for reasons more than just their geographic location of being south of the Zambezi. Botswana and South Africa (along with Mauritius) consistently rank (in the Freedom House ratings) as among Africa's most exemplary democracies. And this is notwithstanding their dominant party systems. Botswana is exceptional as an African state which has upheld the democratic Constitution with which it gained independence the longest. Namibia and South Africa are highly regarded as success stories in the Third Wave of democratisation. Namibia is recognised as one of the United Nations' most successful third party interventions in mediating the transition from *de facto* rule by South Africa to democracy. There was no such mediation in the South African transition, but the country is hailed for the way its leaders managed to negotiate for both peace and democracy against very strong centripetal forces. For any one of these countries to follow the Zimbabwean example would be a telling blow for the Third Wave of democratisation, not only in southern Africa, but for the continent as a whole.

The choice to eliminate Angola and Mozambique from the set of cases can be further justified on the basis of the criterion of 'bounded variability' (Rose, 1991), also described as the 'comparable cases' yardstick (Lijphart, 1971). This entails the cases selected being '... similar in a large number of important characteristics (variables) which one wants to treat as constants, but dissimilar as far as those variables are concerned which one wants to relate to each other', with the advantage that 'while the total number of variables cannot be reduced, by using the comparable cases in which the variables are constant, one can reduce the number of operative variables and study their relationships under controlled conditions without the problem of running out of cases' (Lijphart, 1971: 685).

Angola and Mozambique share some crucial characteristics which differ from those shared by Zimbabwe, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. They form part of Lusophone Africa, colonised by Portugal, whereas the other four are part of Anglophone Africa, with Britain as its coloniser. The two sets of states were therefore the products of wholly different colonial experiences. The Portuguese and British colonial regimes were constructed on different legal systems, bureaucratic principles and citizenship criteria. The Portuguese imposed direct rule, whereas the British preferred indirect rule, allowing for a domestic clone of the British administrative state to develop. Thus we see a set of two different path-dependent trajectories of political conflict and, eventually, democratisation.

The different colonial regimes, among other factors, shaped the pattern of resistance, revolt and the eventual taking of power from the colonial masters in each set of cases.

The Portuguese held onto their colonies to the very end. The end came in the form of the collapse of the authoritarian Caetano regime in the metropolitan capital of Portugal itself, which left an enormous power vacuum not only within Portugal but even more so in the colonies where armed revolts were escalating. The end result was armed take-overs in Angola and Mozambique, where the victors stepped into a vacuum of, not only power, but also administration. One-party rule, inspired by Marxist thought, shaped the first post-colonial regimes in both countries. Mozambique was democratised in 1990, whereas Angola did so only after the end of a prolonged civil war between domestic adversaries (with the help of their respective Cold War sponsors).

Indirect rule brought different outcomes to the British colonies. British control was secured over South Africa only after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902. The methods used to secure victory (conventional war as well as scorched-earth tactics and ethnic cleansing) cast the die for domestic white Afrikaner nationalism. Within the indirect rule of the Constitution of 1910, this led to Afrikaner ascendancy in 1948 and the subsequent policies of apartheid, which aimed to contain the rival black African nationalists. North of the Limpopo River the British presence was even more tenuous, resting on the 1890 occupation by Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa Company. Indirect rule in the then Southern Rhodesia eventually opened the gap for a de facto *coup d'état* by the white settlers, who unilaterally declared the country independent. In South Africa and Rhodesia armed revolt against indigenous white minority rule took hold and in both cases a negotiated peace accord led to democratisation.

In Botswana, indirect rule produced a similar outcome, but, never having had a white minority of any critical mass, no armed resistance ensued. The transfer of power from the British to the indigenous African leadership within the framework of a Westminster-type Constitution was a largely amicable affair and assured legal, administrative and constitutional continuity.

Namibia appears at first sight to stand out from the other three. The 1884 Berlin Conference awarded the region to Germany. The most profound impact of this coloniser was the genocidal wars against the Nama and Herero ethnic communities, matched nowhere else in the sub-continent, which led to a demographic and eventual electoral shift in power to the north, which lasts to this day. South Africa became the de facto sovereign power after World War I. It imposed direct rule at first, and later, British-style indirect rule on the territory. This white minority rule elicited an armed insurrection which was concluded at the negotiating table, with the strong presence of the UN as third party mediator, who administered the inauguration of a democratic regime in 1990.

In all four countries the democratic regimes were built upon the foundations of the British model of an administrative state, with elements of Westminster constitutionalism, and a legal system with Roman-Dutch law and English common law as well as aspects of indigenous African customary law. Legal and administrative continuity was secured in the negotiated agreements, and democratically elected rulers took power within operating court systems and state bureaucracies, unlike the situations faced by the revolutionary MPLA and FRELIMO in Angola and Mozambique respectively. These formative experiences provided two qualitatively different templates that shaped the

subsequent political and civic cultures in the two sets of states as well as the incipient factional cleavages within their societies. By taking Angola and Mozambique out of the set of selected cases we are able to control for many of these formative factors and can compare the set of southern African states with the most similar colonial experiences.

As the title of the book indicates, we draw insights from other countries to illuminate our analyses of these dominant party systems. We again selected cases on the basis of bounded variability. If our cases to be examined are most similar in their trajectory into dominant party systems, then our cases for comparable insights are most different in the evolution of their dominant party systems, yet most similar in their trajectory out of dominant party systems and into multi-party systems. On this basis we selected Taiwan, South Korea, India and Mexico, each with a widely divergent cultural base and historical sequences of events that culminated in dominant party rule. These differences and similarities will be further described in the respective case studies. But the point to be made here is that should we find patterns of convergence in their respective moves to the similar outcome of a multi-party system despite their widely different contexts, we will have found factors that override such contextual differences. The significance of such findings, and their claims to possible explanatory power, will then also be enhanced.

Understanding and identifying the dominant party system

Broadly, dominant party systems refer to procedurally democratic regimes dominated by one party for prolonged periods. Five criteria can be used to identify party dominance: the political system; the threshold for dominance; the nature of the dominance; the inclusion of opposition features; and time span (De Jager, 2009). Theorists of party dominance acknowledge some or all of the above criteria, but there is much variance within each (Arian & Barnes, 1974; Blondel, 1968; Bogaards, 2004; Coleman, 1960; Giliomee & Simkins, 1999; Pempel, 1990; Van de Walle & Butler, 1999; Ware, 1996).

The political system

The dominant party system occurs within a regime that is democratic inasmuch as it is instituted and maintained through regular elections in which multiple parties participate and the dominant party enjoys popular support. It is thus distinguished from a one-party system, which is undemocratic and has only one party that has the legal right to participate in politics. What distinguishes the dominant party system from other multi-party democracies is the preponderance of power invested in one party. Thus, since this system permits more than one party to compete, and regular elections are held, it is democratic in the procedural sense, but whether civil and political liberties are fully protected is questionable. The issue needing further investigation is therefore the *quality* of the democracy in these party systems.

There is a plethora of terms used to describe the variations of democratic systems in which dominant party systems may occur: for example, 'pseudodemocracies' (Diamond, 1996); 'dominant-power politics' found within the 'Gray Zone' (Carothers, 2002);

‘competitive authoritarian’ (Levitsky & Way, 2002); ‘electoral authoritarian’ (Schedler, 2005) and ‘dominant party authoritarian regimes’ (Greene, 2007). In agreement with Carothers (2002:13) who argues that ‘dominant-power systems vary in their degree of freedom and their political direction’, we argue that the dominant party system is not necessarily authoritarian, but instead straddles authoritarian and non-authoritarian regimes and sits between the ‘not free’, ‘partly free’ and ‘free’ classifications of Freedom House. For example, Zimbabwe under the dominance of the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) was certainly authoritarian and very different from Botswana under the dominance of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which is essentially non-authoritarian. We therefore use the liberal–illiberal divide to acknowledge the different manifestations of the dominant party system.

Classifications across the illiberal–liberal democracy divide can be helpful. Zakaria (1997:23–24) recognises a liberal democracy in which free and fair elections are accompanied by the rule of law, a separation of powers and the protection of civil and political liberties. This institutional context is underpinned by a democratic political culture. In an illiberal democracy, regular elections with multiple parties competing may occur, but the rule of law, the separation of powers and civil and political liberties are transgressed. An undemocratic political culture (intolerance and low trust) is also pervasive in such a context. Party dominance therefore occurs within both liberal and illiberal democracies.

The threshold for dominance

The threshold given for identifying dominance varies according to different authors. Pempel (1990:3) and Ware (1996) assert that dominance can be sufficiently acquired with less than half of the seats in Parliament, through attaining a plurality of the seats and not necessarily a majority. Blondel (1968) also recognises dominance when there is a plurality of support, as indicated in the vote. Thus a party can be considered to be dominant with less than half of the votes. In contrast, Sartori (1976:193) holds that dominance requires an absolute majority, in which the make-up of the opposition largely loses its relevance. Bogaards (2004) further argues that most dominant party system definitions were developed for parliamentary governments. However, as most of Africa leans towards presidentialism there needs to be a means of recognising dominance in these governments too. Thus, according to Bogaards, in a presidential form of government the party must control Parliament and the presidency through at least a plurality of the seats or vote.

Often the party dominant in the system wins the elections by a majority and the outcome of the elections is, to a large extent, a given. Some initial observations, which we will revisit in the concluding chapters, provide instructive examples. In South Africa the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), has won the last four national elections with over 60 per cent of the vote, which means that it holds the majority of the seats in the legislature. However, looking at the strength of parties in legislatures is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for dominance. Although dominance in number is a significant indicator of dominance, it is the power and influence it translates into that

is more important. For example, in Botswana the BDP has maintained its dominance despite receiving only between 51 and 54 per cent of the vote in the last three elections. A more extreme case is Zimbabwe, where ZANU–PF won approximately 47 per cent of the seats in the House of Assembly during the 2008 elections, less than the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), but still dominates Zimbabwe’s political landscape. Therefore, what is more important in terms of establishing dominance is to ascertain whether a certain party dominates the political polity and policy-making. This leads to the third criterion — the nature of the dominance.

The nature of the dominance

Duverger (1954:308) emphasises that a party is dominant when its ‘doctrines, ideas, methods and style coincide with those of the epoch [...] Domination is a question of influence rather than specific strength’. Public opinion underpins this dominance as ‘even the enemies of the dominant party and citizens who refuse to give it their vote acknowledge its superior status and influence’; they *believe* it to be dominant. This type of dominance goes deeper than mere numbers — at its core is a *symbolic* attachment to a particular party (Reddy, 2006:57). The dominant party system occurs within a democratic setting and thus enjoys the support of the majority, but this support continues despite non-delivery, mismanagement, corruption and other factors which would normally cost the political party its ruling seat. This symbolic attachment, which serves to maintain the party’s dominance, is often due to a particular historic event. A common feature of most dominant party systems is a highly symbolic history and the ushering in of a new political order. To illustrate briefly: in Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was the post-revolutionary party; the ANC and the Indian National Congress (INC) are associated with post-authoritarian regimes; the Kuomintang (KMT) ruled in Taiwan after a counter-revolution and during continued struggles against the communist regime of Beijing; and Malaysia’s United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) ruled after colonial rule, foreign occupation and a war of insurgency. In particular, the ANC’s liberation credentials, and its association with the struggle against apartheid, results in an affinity to the party that goes beyond a mere instrumentalist relationship between it and its constituency. Seepe (2007) refers to this as a ‘collective psyche’, in which those who lived under apartheid associate the ANC party with a ‘sense of freedom’ and the notion of human dignity. Such parties have a far larger share of popular legitimacy at their disposal than any of their political contenders.

The inclusion of opposition features

Arian and Barnes (1974:613) call the dominant party system ‘a competitive system in which electoral results are held constant’. They argue that the system is dependent on the performance of the dominant party: ‘so long as the dominant party performs intelligently, the opposition can do little that is effective. Even bad decisions will not be disastrous unless the opposition is in a position to take advantage of them, and it

seldom is' (1974:600). In other words, other parties *may* compete but they are unlikely to win. As opposed to a one-party system, the electorate have a choice beyond one party, yet they mostly exercise that choice in favour of the dominant party. Nevertheless, the dominant party system places on the ruling party a number of constraints that are absent in a one-party system. Since they still have to win elections and ensure the long-term maintenance of their dominance, they must meet a measure of the expectations of their electorate or else they will lose their support. In addition, the opposition parties will attempt to keep the ruling party accountable as it is in their interests to highlight its shortcomings. Concomitantly, the ruling party is liberated from many of the constraints associated with a multi-party system. If they win elections by a significant margin, this gives them substantial room to move. In addition, the presence of opposition parties gives the political system legitimacy and legitimises the rule of the dominant party.

Time span

There are also divergent views regarding the duration of the dominance. Ware (1996) stipulates that the dominant party should win 'usually'. Pempel (1990:4) argues for dominance to occur over a 'substantial period'. Greene (see Chapter 2) employs a five-election or twenty-year threshold as a criterion for classification. And Sartori (1976) argues that for a system to be called dominant, the party must dominate over at least three consecutive elections. We take a position midway along the scale: dominance should be over a prolonged period of time of at least four consecutive national elections.

To summarise: in the discussions that follow, a dominant party system occurs in liberal and illiberal democracies; the dominant party's dominance is sufficient for it to dominate the polity and public policy; its dominance tends to emanate from a history expressed in symbolic terms; opposition parties compete in elections, but are unlikely to win, whether the elections are competitive or semi-competitive; and the ruling party dominates over four or more consecutive national elections (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Summary of criteria for identifying party dominance

Criteria	Party dominance
Political system	Both liberal and illiberal democracies
Threshold for dominance	Sufficient to dominate the polity and public policy
Nature of dominance	Emanates from an heroic history expressed in symbolic terms
Opposition features	Opposition competes in elections, but is unlikely to win
Time span	Four or more consecutive national elections

Source: Compiled by the authors

Classifying dominant party systems

Ruling parties of dominant party systems may exercise their power in either an authoritarian manner, such as the PRI in Mexico and ZANU–PF in Zimbabwe, or a non-authoritarian manner, such as the BDP in Botswana, culminating in liberal or illiberal democracies. Sartori (1976:26) similarly identifies two types of dominant party systems: the predominant party system and the hegemonic party system. In the first case, there is limited political competition and one party outdistances its opponents, but a significant chance of an alternation in power nevertheless still exists. The second case refers to a non-competitive system, in which alternation cannot occur. Peripheral parties do exist but mechanisms that permanently exclude them from power are in place. In such a system open contestation and dissent are not allowed. It is characterised by fraudulent elections, internal repression and a gagged press. Nacif (2006:92–93) referred to Mexico's dominant party system as a single-hegemonic party system and recognised it to have been an authoritarian regime¹ since these hegemonic parties 'sustain their monopoly of power through barriers of entry to new competitors'. He nevertheless distinguishes the single-hegemonic party system from other authoritarian regimes in three aspects. First, this system is different from personal dictatorships due to the institutionalisation of succession of power. Second, dominant party systems tend to have a genuine base of social support. Third, they are able to co-opt emerging political movements and co-exist with some form of opposition. The PRI in Mexico maintained its legitimacy domestically and internationally through semi-competitive elections and a base of social support underpinned its rule. However, opposition parties faced serious official constraints, even harassment, and the ruling party heavily exploited the powers of office to maintain political support. Nacif thus distinguishes single-hegemonic party systems in authoritarian regimes, such as Mexico, from dominant party systems such as in South Africa.

Greene (see Chapter 2) uses the categories 'dominant party authoritarian regimes' (DPAR) and 'dominant party democratic regimes' (DPDR) to distinguish between the different types of dominance. Figure 1.1 illustrates how manifestations of party dominance straddle non-authoritarian and authoritarian political systems. The hegemonic party system occurs within an illiberal democratic political system and the dominant party system within a liberal democratic political system. Although we can place party systems on a continuum ranging from authoritarian to democratic, none is likely to be placed at the absolute polar points of either end. The differences between the two types of party dominance are illustrated in Table 1.2. The attainment of a liberal democracy, as characterised in the second column, is an ideal, not a description of an easily found reality. Rather, the characteristics of the different types of dominant party systems serve as tools to identify and distinguish between the party systems. Thus a dominant party democratic

¹ Nacif uses Barbara Geddes's typology of authoritarian regimes, in which she distinguishes between three types of authoritarianism: personal dictatorships, military regimes and single-party regimes.

regime will have many, though not all, of the characteristics identified. Indeed, it is the very point of this book to investigate the influence of the dominant party system on the characteristics of a good quality democracy.

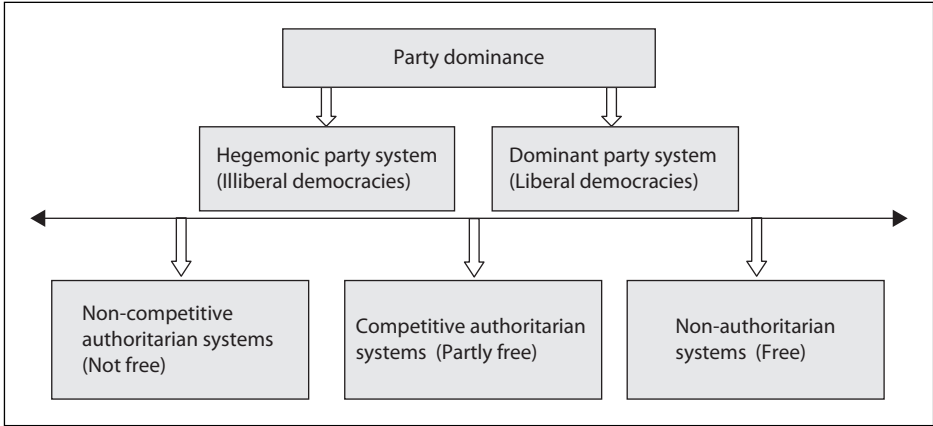


Figure 1.1: Typology of party dominance in political systems

Source: Compiled by the authors

The quality of democracy

Diamond and Morlino (2004) present an extensive conceptual description of the various dimensions of democracy. Democracy, for a start, is defined minimally in terms of four criteria: the extensive if not universal right to vote; elections (being free, fair and regular); the presence of ‘more than one serious political party’; and the existence of and access to alternative sources of information (Diamond & Morlino, 2004:21). Our interest is, among others, in uncovering what is meant by a ‘serious’ political party.

Diamond and Morlino identify two dimensions of quality. The first is that of the quality of democratic governance, which can be described in terms of three distinct aspects. These are: firstly, there are aspects of governance that are found within the procedures of democratic regimes; secondly, governance can also be found within the substance of democratic action; and thirdly, within the results that democratic regimes produce.

The second dimension of quality comprises of the structural features of democracy, which entails freedom, equality, the rule of law, vertical accountability, responsiveness, participation, competition and horizontal accountability. These two dimensions can be combined to form a matrix within which aspects of quality can be described. As can be seen from Table 1.3 most of the structural features of democracy can also relate to the procedural aspect of governance. These include the rule of law, participation, competition, vertical accountability and horizontal accountability. Civil and political freedom as

Table 1.2: Categorisation of dominant party systems

	Hegemonic/Dominant party authoritarian regimes	Dominant/Dominant party democratic regimes
Political system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illiberal democracy • Freedom House categories: 'not free' and 'partly free' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal democracy • Freedom House categories: 'free'
Political authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralised • Monopoly of power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly centralised government • Limited scope of control
Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular but not free (violence and intimidation) and fair (limitations on opposition) • Able to dominate with or without an electoral majority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and largely free and fair • Electoral majority important in terms of maintaining dominance
Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional centralisation • Ruling party controls legislature, executive and judiciary; no de facto separation of powers • Controls or gags so-called independent statutory bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralisation of power is evident • Judiciary is independent • Independent statutory bodies
Rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disregarded, circumvented and deliberately violated by the ruling party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elites and the general citizenry recognise and abide by the rule of law
Civil and political society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispositional centralisation • Limited and constrained civil and political society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a system of checks and balances on the ruling party • Right to organisation and contestation recognised and protected • Space for civil society organisations to play a multiplicity of roles • Political parties can freely contest elections
Media freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media mostly state-owned • State-regulated • Censorship imposed by the ruling party without restraint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and private ownership of media • State and self-regulation • Censorship is constitutionally limited

Source: Compiled by the authors

well as equality are considered by Diamond and Morlino to be a structural aspects of democracy that relate to the substance of democratic governance, and responsiveness bears on the results of democratic governance. Responsiveness, according to the authors, is also a structural feature that serves as a bridge to the procedural dimension of governance in the sense that it allows for the measurement of the extent to which public policies generated by the democratic regime, within the given set of rules and procedures meet the expectations, demands and preferences of citizens (see Table 1.3).

A number of short observations can be made about each of these dimensions. The rule of law, according to Diamond and Morlino, serves as the bedrock on which all the other dimensions of quality are constructed. It is also the crucial dimension that distinguishes liberal from illiberal democracies. Important conditions conducive to the emergence and maintenance of the rule of law include the presence of liberal values (such as trust and tolerance) among the citizenry and elites; bureaucratic cultures of merit, competence and impartiality; extensive institutionalisation and economic capacity; and finally, political will among leaders not only to establish rules applicable to all, but also to comply with them.

Diamond and Morlino consider extensive public participation, not only in elections but also in other forums, to be another dimension of quality. According to them, more is always better; they do not consider the possibility that too much participation may undermine quality. (A recent study of politics in the American state of California argues that persistent and widespread use of participatory initiatives has done precisely that [*Economist*, April 23–29 2011, special report].) High levels of participation should be conducted in such a way as not to undermine equality, and a liberal political culture is again considered as a vital condition for facilitating such an outcome.

Table 1.3: Quality of democracy

		Democratic governance		
		Procedure	Substance	Results
Structural features of democracy	Rule of law	X		
	Participation	X		
	Competition	X		
	Vertical accountability	X		
	Horizontal accountability	X		
	Civil & political freedom		X	
	Political equality		X	
	Responsiveness			X

Source: Compiled by the authors, derived from Diamond and Morlino (2004)

The degree of competition, as measured in the access to competitive arenas also contributes to quality. Not only do free, fair and regular elections count, but so do the rules of the electoral system. Party-list proportional representation (PR) is favourably considered by Diamond and Morlino in this regard, but even such systems can inhibit competition if very high thresholds of representation apply. Rules on access to public and private funding are of large potential significance for the contest between dominant parties and the other smaller parties. So, too, are limits to campaign spending, the gerrymandering of electoral districts, and the role of the media in election campaigns.

Vertical accountability refers to the extent to which elected officials answer for their actions to voters and receive either punishment or endorsement — the latter usually in the form of re-election. Again, Diamond and Morlino do not place an upper limit on quality of this form of accountability, and do not foresee that extensive use of the classic forms of direct democracy — the referendum, recall and initiative — may adversely impact on the quality of democracy.

Horizontal accountability, especially, but not only, in the form of the system of checks and balances within the state is recognised as another dimension. Here Diamond and Morlino do caution that excessive use of these mechanisms may undermine the entire institutional network within which it is embedded.

Freedom is conceptualised in terms of civil and political rights as well as economic rights, with the more or less standard set of first generation ‘negative’ rights. The decisive conditions for the maintenance of these freedoms are found in the rule of law in the widest sense, as well as an autonomous judiciary which is constitutionally protected and has adequate authority. A strongly held liberal political culture, at the level of citizenry as well as leadership, is another condition favourable to the exercise and maintenance of these rights.

Political equality is another substantive right relevant to the quality of democracy. This is not easy to achieve under conditions of persistent and extensive inequalities of wealth and status. One way of dealing with this tension is to declare certain public goods, such as health and education, as social rights with an obligation on the state to act ‘positively’ in order to realise them. Such rights are not only applicable at the individual level, but can also be extended to vulnerable minorities.

Responsiveness, the last dimension of quality, refers to the extent to which voters’ preferences are actually implemented in the form of public policy. Here Diamond and Morlino again identify limits, but only as they apply to the actual ability of leaders to respond. Firstly, leaders may influence and even manipulate the preferences of their voters in a deliberate or inadvertent way through their very incumbency. Secondly, leaders may have limited resources at their disposal within the political regime in which the democratic system is embedded. Thirdly, globalisation constrains popular sovereignty in a variety of ways. They note that responsiveness is always limited in the sense that democracy is about preferring some objectives over others, and choosing between many desirable objectives, so that not all preferences can be realised all of the time.

Assessing the impact of dominant parties on the quality of democracy

Dominant parties tend to come into power on the wave of a significant historic event, whether it be a revolution, state-creation or liberation, and initially maintain this dominance by the continued referral to this event. With the passing of generations, in order to ensure their dominance, these parties must induce and maintain political loyalty using other mechanisms. Arian and Barnes (1974) note that ‘the dominant party system is one in which politics is king, in which dominance results from strategic political decisions made by the party elite’. In T. J. Pempel’s (1990:32) seminal study of party dominance, he concluded that ‘one-party dominance is an art far more than it is an inevitability’. What accounts for the persistence of dominant party systems within regimes with democratic practices and institutions? More specifically, if it is an art, what are the ‘brush techniques’ that dominant parties use to consolidate their dominance? How do these techniques or strategies impact the quality of democracy? ‘Democracy’s resilience is in the stability of its institutionalised uncertainty, an uncertainty that even the most dominant of political parties has to confront’ (Friedman & Wong, 2008:1). The issue is how do these parties confront this uncertainty? Why do dominant party systems endure? Or do they give way to other kinds of authoritarian systems or to multi-party systems, and why? In 2000, Mexico’s PRI — the world’s longest running dominant party — was defeated in democratic elections by the National Action Party (PAN), illustrating that even the expert in the artform of party dominance could be defeated. This is in sharp contrast to Zimbabwe under ZANU-PF, whose dominance led to an oppressive, authoritarian state. How can these different trajectories be accounted for?

To understand prolonged dominance, Kenneth F. Greene (2007) puts forward a resource-based theory (which is further elaborated on in Chapter 2), similar to Levitsky and Way’s (2010:57) ‘uneven playing field’, where ‘democratic competition is undermined less by electoral fraud or repression than by unequal access to state institutions, resources, and the media’. Even though Levitsky and Way (2010) focus on what they refer to as competitive authoritarian regimes, an uneven playing field is recognisable in dominant party systems, where the problem of unequal access to resources inhibits the development of opposition and fair competition, necessary requisites of a liberal democracy. The assumption that the electoral market is fair and no party has a systematic advantage is simply untrue in a dominant party system (Greene, 2007:3). Levitsky and Way (2010:58–60) highlight three ways in which the playing field may be uneven: disparities in resources; uneven access to the media; and uneven access to the law.

Using Greene’s resource-based theory as a starting point, this book recognises two broad categories of resources, namely economic and political resources. To maintain and consolidate their dominance, incumbents will attempt to create monopolies of power and

control over these resources.² Economic resources³ include public and private finances, state resources, and the ability to determine economic policies. Political resources include law-making, rule-making (through delegated functions), media access, leadership, the power of appointment, ideologies and social networks.

The role of resources can be illustrated further by drawing on the analytical framework used by Levite and Tarrow (1983) in accounting for the rise and decline of party dominance in Italy (1946–1981) and Israel (1948–1981). They identified a so-called cycle of dominance tied to processes of delegitimation and re-legitimation of excluded parties by the dominant parties — Mapai in Israel and the Christian Democrats (DC) in Italy.

In Israel and Italy, resources, as described above, came into play in changing contexts and historical conditions, and were put to use through a variety of strategies, countered with yet other strategies. In both instances the dominant party achieved its initial ascendancy through unique historical events (the founding of the state of Israel, and the re-inauguration of democracy in Italy after World War II, respectively). The dominant parties succeeded in achieving electoral dominance by capturing and monopolising the symbolism associated with these events. Heroic, charismatic leadership (in the case of Israel), and the tactically astute use of an ideology appealing to a distinct social base, helped them to capture the allegiance of a major historical bloc of voters which spanned decades. From this position of dominance the excluded political parties could effectively be depicted as irrelevant and illegitimate in the contest for power.

The re-legitimation of the excluded parties occurred with, first of all, a change in social context. In Italy and Israel the historical bloc of voters supporting the dominant party were whittled away by generational change and ageing and, in Israel, by large-scale immigration. New cohorts of voters entered the electoral arena, with different and receding memories of the historical founding roots of the party; they were less attuned to the dominant ideology, and in the case of Israel, didn't have the charismatic leadership of David Ben-Gurion. Along with attendant processes, such as the secularisation of Italian society, the sub-cultural unity of the original historical bloc of voters weakened and interest-based formations took hold within the electorate. Deft tactical use of these conditions amid new crises of mobilisation and changes in the international system accounts for the rise of Herut (and later Likud) to power within a multi-party system, and for the partial legitimation of the Communist Party in Italy.

In spite of their hyper-incumbency advantages (Greene, 2007:34), dominant party systems have been recognised by some as models of democratic stability (Arian & Barnes, 1974 and Pempel, 1990). Pempel points out that a dominant party can facilitate stability through the entrenchment of democratic institutions, marginalising political

2 Studies conducted by De Jager (2009), Greene (2007) and Magaloni (2006) illustrate how dominant parties consolidate their dominance through the creation of monopolies of power.

3 Magaloni's (2006:37) findings from her study of Mexico indicated that: 'the more fiscal resources, subsidies, and economic regulations are under the government's control, the more leeway the autocrat will have to buy off electoral support and deter voter exit.'

extremes and fusing ethnic differences, thus creating a forum for compromise. The argument follows that if the dominant party combines its rule with political competition and the protection of civil liberties, it can serve as a good foundation for a durable liberal democracy. This entails a restraint on the extent of their control of political and economic resources. We therefore postulate that the growth and decline of resources and the extent of control over these resources influences the trajectory of the dominant party system: either in the direction of a liberal democracy or an illiberal democracy, even to the point of oppressive authoritarianism. Similarly, Greene (2007:6) in his resource-based theory notes the political economy of dominance, in which the ruling party's resource advantages rise and fall in accordance with its level of control of the economy.

If we argue that a good-quality democracy includes the rule of law, separation of powers, and the protection of civil and political liberties, then how do the strategies — the so-called 'brush techniques' — that dominant parties use to centralise control over political and economic resources, affect these features of a good-quality democracy? For example, how does the use of state resources for the benefit of the incumbent impact on opposition parties? This uneven access to resources may impair the opposition's ability to organise and compete for public office. Thus the apparent weakness of opposition is perhaps less a result of their own inherent ineptitude than it is due to limitations arising from the context of a dominant party system.

Conclusion

In this book, our interest lies in the interplay between:

- the availability of resources to dominant and excluded parties
- the changing conditions that weaken the importance of some resources and make available new resources
- the strategic insight and tactical astuteness, agility and deftness in making use of available resources by dominant and excluded parties, and
- whether and how the ruling dominant parties foster a liberal democracy or not.

Thus to assess the impact of the dominant party system on the *quality* of democracy, the influence of an 'uneven playing field' — in terms of access to resources — on the rule of law, separation of powers, and political and civil liberties needs to be examined.

Using the set of conditions we have chosen we will try to establish which combination of resources, changing context and strategic interaction is likely to produce a period of sustained single party dominance, and which an authoritarian outcome.

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Friend or Foe? Dominant Party Systems in Southern Africa: Insights from the Developing World

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Within southern Africa, there is an observable increase in dominant party systems, in which one political party dominates over a prolonged period of time, within a democratic system with regular elections. This party system has replaced the one-party system that dominated Africa's political landscape after the first wave of liberations in the 1950s and 1960s. This book seeks to understand this trend and its implications for southern Africa's democracies by comparing such systems in southern Africa with others in the developing world (such as India, South Korea and Taiwan). In particular, the case of Zimbabwe stands out as a concerning example of the direction a dominant party can take: regression into authoritarianism. India, South Korea and Taiwan present alternative routes for the dominant party system. The salient question posed by this book is: Which route are Botswana, Namibia and South Africa taking? It answers by drawing conclusions to determine whether these countries are moving towards liberal democracy, authoritarianism or a road in between.

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