

Sit-tight leadership and elections in the SADC. Are elections a credible measure of democracy?

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Abstract

This analysis explores standard features for democracy juxtaposing with what has been presented by some sit-tight leaders in the Southern African Democratic Community (SADC). It also investigates why elections have failed to pass a credibility test of measuring democracy outside of other features. The analysis guided by the Democratic Theory by Jean Jacques Rousseau argues that in ideal democracy, elections are supposed to help facilitate rotation in leadership in a manner that fosters peace, unity and development. The study argues that there are two countries where the leaders have manipulated the systems so



much that democracy ceases to influence political systems. The analysis also argues that most of the challenges experienced in the region harks back to the systems and structure of the region, which is characterised by fissures, poverty, greed, autocracy and an archaic mentality. Countries in the region need to be frank with each other and get hard on deviants and transgressors.

Key words: sit-tight leadership, democracy, elections, autocracy, greed, conflict

Introduction

It has become a culture in Africa in general and in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region in particular, that while the world over, democracy is measured among others by elections, and they have ceased to be a credible feature. Some states in the SADC region are known for timely and consistent elections that are, however, illegitimate and often characterised by violence and the abuse of human rights. The same states might also present various other features for a democracy and yet still fail to pass the test. It is often in the same problematic states that the leadership decides to sit in office without any intention of leaving. It is, therefore, the scope of this analysis to explore standard features for democracy and juxtapose them with what has been presented by some sit-tight leaders. The analysis also investigates why elections have failed to be a credible measure of democracy outside of other features.

Theoretical framework

In order to understand the essence of elections in finding new leadership, the study focuses on the SADC region. The Democratic Theory by Jean Jacques Rousseau is used to guide the arguments. This theory argues that elections are supposed to guide the fair and free selection of new leadership in a credible manner to allow rotation of power. However, with regards to the study area, there are some leaders who seem to ignore the essence of the practice and manipulate the processes. The study stretches its focus back from the independence of the region in the 1960s.

Background

During post-Africa's independence in the 1960s, it was anticipated that the new leaders would cherish the new freedoms and nurture democracy constructively but most importantly, through elections and possible rotation of power. Most of the early nationalist leaders unfortunately did not have that dream in mind. Most either died or were ousted from power grudgingly.

Of all the nationalist leaders, there is Mugabe and dos Santos in the SADC region who are still in office and claiming popularity. The two leaders have, over the years, consolidated power in a manner that has seen almost all sectors of both the economy and politics manned by their cronies (Lust-Okar, 2009). They have also managed to create a military and security system of their 'liking' wholly made up of 'yes-men'.

Mugabe and dos Santos have, over the years, allowed their subordinates to commit various crimes and pardoned them in a strategic manner that allows them a leash for control and periodic reminders of their crimes. This strategy has managed to keep their supporters in close check. Over the period, the two leaders have directly or indirectly indulged in corrupt practices, thus making them as dirty as their subordinates. Therefore, under such circumstances, it has been difficult for the leaders to think of retiring, lest the new regimes question their past practices.

The two leaders have coined their forms of democracy, which they say empower them to remain in office. Their safety and continued occupation of the offices are guaranteed by the use of the youth constituencies and the state security institutions, which harass, detain and in some cases, kill real and perceived opponents (Lindberg, 2006b). Interestingly, to present some sort of democracy to the world, the two leaders ensure timely conduct of elections. As a result, Zimbabwe has had 10 presidential and legislative elections while Angola has conducted four elections during the tenure of the sitting leaders.

The question has always been "Are the elections properly designed and conducted?" The study, therefore, seeks to understand why despite all the elections, democracy remains a dream and the leaders fail to interpret the voices of the voters.

Democracy

Democracy is a concept many claim to know and practice and yet, it is misunderstood and misused. There are many sit-tight and dictatorial leaders who claim to be practicing forms of democracy specific to their political, social and cultural practices. They claim championship to democracy. These leaders believe that democracy is all about elections. They never value other factors as defined by various governance scholars and practitioners (Lindberg, 2006 and Matlosa, 2005). They, according to Schmidt (2002), believe that holding elections, no matter their quality and acceptability, is what people desire and expect in a real democracy.

Democracy is a set of philosophies and values around self-determination made up of procedures and practices. These are exercised over time during which personal freedoms are institutionalised, becoming part and parcel of a people (Collier and Levitsky, 1997). Once institutionalisation is complete, the people concerned take the responsibility to safeguard the freedoms. While democracy may not be uniform the world over, it is defined by basic fundamental principles of majority rule and individual rights among others

(Matlosa, 2005). In short, democracy means the government is elected to serve people and not the other way round.

It has been observed that some of these leaders under study have personalised their subjects such that they have almost all the control over them. Therefore, while there are elements of democracy in their countries, they manipulate each of them in their favour so that the voters do not question their existence but rather, the degree to which they are practiced.

Features of democracy

Citizen participation and empowerment in a democracy means that the people are allowed to play a meaningful role in all the governance processes from well before an election is prepared. Participation, as explained in Dodo (2013), takes into account the education of the people so that they are knowledgeable about their rights and obligations.

In Zimbabwe, there are reports that in some areas, citizens were forced to participate in election processes as a way of punishing them for aligning with the opposition political parties. Some reports (Dodo, 2013) also suggest that there were some individuals who were forced to feign illiteracy so that they could be assisted to vote by either an election official or a member of the police force. Apparently, state security and election officials are biased to such an extent that when they assist, they ensure that a candidate votes for a particular political party even if it is against his/her choice.

Various scholars – Barkan (1993), Crawford (1999), and Ndegwa (2003) – posit that *de jure* free and fair elections have a long-lasting, encouraging influence on the process of democratisation. It is under a free and safe environment that people are able to participate in elections. It is also in the people's participation that elections are declared credible, free and fair, allowing the winner to confidently take office. While Lindberg (2006) contends that elections have a contributing part in the consolidation of democracy, that hypothesis has failed to prove true in the Zimbabwean situation. This has been largely because conducting frequent elections has not changed the inducements on offer to political players and that election campaigns are never allowed to create opportunities for new political contestants. In Zimbabwe and Angola, repeated elections are never a forum for the people to get educated about their rights and obligations because there is never space for civic and voter education.

Under authoritarianism, according to Lust-Okar (2009), the elected demand allegiance and service from the voters without any reciprocal duty to get their consensus for its actions. Demand for allegiance from the voters who seem to like it is a clear sign of a political environment where accountability is a luxury. In essence, leaders are expected to be accountable to the voters and this expectation must be unconditional if democracy is to be real. The challenge with some states like Zimbabwe and Angola is a serious lack of

political literacy; where the generality of the people might have attained secondary education and yet are ignorant of their political rights and obligations. This form of literacy pushes people to feign excitement and a liking for something bad and immoral.

In most democracies, governments recognise the importance of the voters and all the other stakeholders. These governments are often guided by concepts of good governance and transparency, which imply providing a service in a manner that satisfies all. It is under the same principles that governments realise the value of effective communication with the people on the ground, who are updated of whatever happens concerning their well-being.

The Inkhanhla case in South Africa, the misappropriation of donor funds in Mozambique and the disappearance of US \$15 billion in Zimbabwe are classic examples of a lack of transparency in governance. Such cases of criminality and dishonesty on the part of the leadership erode the people's confidence and trust.

When states are run, there are laws that guide to ensure that everyone's essential social, political, and economic rights are protected. The laws also protect people from the threats of lawlessness. Democratic regimes implement authority through the law and are also subject to the law's restrictions. The principle of rule of law means that no single person, whether state president or private citizen, is above the law. Adherence to the rule of law ensures that every citizen has equal access to justice and other services that build confidence in the citizens, especially during election times.

A constitution outlines the basic drives and ambitions of a society. It also serves as the supreme law in a given country. Constitutionalism acknowledges that democratic and responsible government must be tied with plainly outlined parameters on the authority of government. In democracies, constitutionalism is simply about the strict adherence and practice of the constitution. This adherence has no exception.

With constitutionalism, it means that the constitution has to be respected and maintained without any unilateral provisions for amendments. It also implies that the constitution has to be reasonable in as far as its outline is concerned: being clear, interpretable and outlining clear and manageable terms of office. This is in view of the fact that there are some leaders who just amend the constitution to meet their desires. Kaunda, Nyerere, Banda, Mugabe and Santos have amended the constitutions to extend their terms of office while Kabila's attempts have hit a hard wall.

Constitutionalism is the practice of strict and appropriate adherence to the dictates of a constitution without tempering or manipulating it to please the interests of a particular individual. This principle entails electing leaders who respect the mandate from the voters; the constitutional terms define and observe reasonable time limits as determined by various factors like age, ill health and other incapacities. Democracies do not elect leaders who cling on to power beyond reasonable periods or constitutionally stipulated times

(Collier and Levitsky, 1997). Unfortunately, this is what Angola under Eduardo dos Santos, DRC under Joseph Kabila, Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe, Zambia during Kenneth Kaunda, Tanzania during Julius Nyerere, and Malawi under Kamuzu Banda precisely experienced (Hoffman and Robinson, 2009).

In some states like Zimbabwe, DRC and to some extent Lesotho, the essence of a constitution has been pushed away, leaving the leadership to manipulate unilateral amendments for personal gratification (Cawthra, 2010). The Zimbabwe 2013 new constitution has already been amended, defeating the voices of the people who crafted it, while in DRC and Lesotho, the leaders have also attempted to amend their constitutions so that they can remain in office beyond their terms.

Another of the most important features of democracy is the existence of the separation of powers. In a constitutional democracy, government's power is shared so that the parliament generates the laws, the executive authority implements them, and the judiciary functions quasi-independently (Gutsa *et al*, 2010). It is expected that each of the three arms of government perform its role independent of the others. Unfortunately, in some states that claim to be democracies, the executive has a lot of influence, so much so that it even makes decisions. The amendment to the 2013 Zimbabwe constitution with regards the appointment of the judiciary, is a result of interference by the president. It is the independence of each of the arms that ensures a smooth drive of the governance systems. Pluralism in a democracy entails the existence of a diversity of active institutions that play various roles, from watchdog to complementing government efforts. Some of these institutions include political parties, civic organisations and pressure groups. The existence and operations of these in a normal democracy should not be under some strict and bureaucratic licensing procedures. Rather, any regulation would be to ensure that the masses get a fair deal from their operations (Dodo, 2012a).

Closely akin to the principle of pluralism is the availability of a free and independent media, which plays a third estate role: monitoring and reviewing the activities and service delivery by the state (Baloro, 1992). Where the media is heavily controlled like in the case of Zimbabwe where there are less than seven national newspapers, two television stations and less than 10 radio stations, it is difficult to identify and expose socio-political ills and inform and educate the people on relevant issues around democracy and elections (Gutsa *et al*, 2010). The media ensures a transparent election process through periodic and consistent reportage of the processes. It also instills confidence in the players who feel that their concerns and contributions are also taken on board.

In democracies, the people, through their voted representatives, decide security matters. The principle of citizen control and power over the military is central to democracy. The security must never represent or sympathise with any specific political perspective or ethnic or social group. Ideally, there should be cordial relations between the civilians and

the security. However, what exists in less democratic states is an overly strong military sector with a lot of influence in the three arms of government including politicians (Albuquerque and Wiklund, 2015). The military has overstretched its power and influence in almost every civilian sector. In South Africa, Zambia and Botswana, retired military officers are deployed in civilian areas as part of their resettlement. However, in DRC and Zimbabwe, the military is deployed in civilian sectors as part of a 'deliberate militarisation' programme meant to secure political tenure.

The protection of peoples' freedoms by all the relevant institutions is a fundamental requirement. In a democracy, every citizen must be allowed to express his/her opinion for as long as it is within the confines of the constitution. However, it is necessary that whatever constitution is referred to, it is legitimate and reasonable in that it is not the main tool for the suppression of the freedoms. It has to be realised that it is only under conditions where one is free to engage in anything progressive that he/she also realises responsibilities. In a democracy, wherever there are rights, there are also reciprocating responsibilities. It is then these responsibilities that make a complete citizen who also plays a part in the development and creation of peace.

Elections and their challenges

Democracy and elections are complementary systems – one legitimising the other (AU, 2007). The world over, legitimate governments are elected and it is that election process that is of interest to this analysis. Elections must be timely, as has been recorded in all the states except in the DRC, periodic, competitive as what all states but Zimbabwe have practiced, and allowing contesting candidates to enjoy freedoms of movement, speech and assembly, among others, like it has been noted in most states except Zimbabwe, DRC, Lesotho and Angola (Hoffman and Robinson, 2009).

Despite the differences in election systems, the fundamentals remain the same throughout the world and adoption of each method is dependent on various factors: culture, historical precedence, availability of resources and constitutional expectations, among others (Dodo, 2016). An election is a process and not an event as is the case with some of the states in the SADC, which give prominence to elections a few months before and immediately vanish soon after the publication of the results. Ignorance of this 'process' aspect has often robbed people of their rights and obligations in as far as elections are concerned. There is usually a need for the voters to be informed about the processes from the pre-election phase, during which delimitation and voter registration and voter education exercises are conducted, to the election phase, up till the post-election phase, when election activities subside, election results are properly secured and violence and hostilities are appropriately addressed (Cheeseman, 2010).

There has been a systematic failure by political parties in power to observe electoral codes of conduct (Dodo, 2016). These are wide and differ with institutions and constitutions and basically define the parameters around which election processes are conducted. They help instil a sense of security and confidence in the participants, which is an ideal for democratic elections. In some of the least democratic states, codes are non-existent, vague or partially adhered to, while in others, they are tampered with on the eve of elections.

Globalisation and modernity have transformed the way in which traditional governance has always existed. In the same vein, modernity has also ushered in technology as a response to the needs of the contemporary political and economic dispensation. In a democracy, there is also a need to adapt to the prevailing world systems, especially if that technology improves features of democracy. The use of technology in the electoral process is a case in point. Zimbabwe has also adopted the use of a biometric system in the elections, hoping to ease the process and bring credibility. However, the biometric approach is also susceptible to manipulation, as has been experienced during the August 2017 Kenyan elections. Besides, Zimbabwe has a complex election management system that has been previously hired to 'run' elections in Malawi in May 2014 and Equatorial Guinea in 2016. The Zimbabwean election management contingent in Equatorial Guinea was deployed from October 2015 to January 2017 to allow the necessary 'cover-up'.

Often, overstaying in power tends to build a mentality of personal ownership of the resources. Some leaders even go to the extent of establishing their homes and investments using state resources. This was seen when Mugabe built his house in Borrowdale-Brooke, commonly referred to as 'blue-roof', where some of the building material and interior furnishings were state sponsored. Similarly, Jacob Zuma of South Africa also financed the upgrades at his home using state funds. Some leaders tend to abuse resources at their disposal to build empires and strengthen their grip on power at the expense of the masses. Some of the resources that are abused include finances, the media, the military and police and some intellectuals, who claim popularity for the leaders without the masses expressing it openly.

Parties in power often abuse government resources and machinery to advance the electoral prospects of their candidates (Baloro, 1992). The ZANU PF party in Zimbabwe, African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) for Frederick Chiluba in Zambia, Dos Santos in Angola and Kabila in DRC have been accused of misappropriating state resources for propping up their political parties. The separation of institutional and political resources, according to Posner and Young (2007), is not yet an embraced norm in some African states such that they mistake party structures for government structures. This is also particularly so in Zimbabwe, where the ZANU PF head or the Women's wing is assigned the responsibility to distribute agricultural equipment to members of her political party, bought by government under some bilateral

agreement. The same party uses the Ministry of Youth Development and Ministry of Women Affairs to prop up its programmes, especially mass mobilisation initiatives.

There is a need for an agreed definition of what majority is in any system (AU, 2007). There is also a need to put in place systems that cater for both the majority and minority population, as defined in the constitution, as a way of avoiding a situation where 51% of the voting population oppresses 49% in the name of the majority. What is often ignored is that the voting population does not represent the entire population in a given territory (Bogaards, 2013). The minority voters' interests also need to be catered for in order to prevent resentment and potential grievances and conflicts.

While in other countries, the opposition parties learn from their previous mistakes (Rakner and Walle, 2009), in Zimbabwe, there is never room for the correction of the mistakes, let alone for any coalition attempts. The infrastructure in Zimbabwean politics is such that the security services are technically allowed to infiltrate any opposition movements and possibly destroy from within. Some of these technicalities are positioned within either the laws or structurally such that it is difficult to undo them (Ndegwa, 2003).

Election-related violence in SADC

Most elections in Africa are characterised by bloody violence. Most of the violence affects innocent voters and is often instigated by political leaders in pursuit of power. The forms of violence often recorded include physical, emotional and psychological. Khadiagala in EISA (2010), while analysing elections in Africa, reported that basically, there are two types of electoral violence that have been established in Africa. He described the two as where state has deep-rooted power asymmetries and when violence arises because electoral management bodies (EMBs) mismanage elections by rigging, theft, and other practices of indiscretion and manipulation. In that respect, Khadiagala disclosed that there might not be any fundamental changes without radical transformation. He then proposed a focus on essential institutional restructurings throughout all spectrums. While he stated that most African conflicts fall into the first type, Zimbabwe has shown traits of both forms of conflicts (EISA, 2010).

Matlosa (2010) states that though the issues that contribute to electoral violence are particular to each country, in Lesotho and Zimbabwe, the violence stems from structural social influences. South Africa's form of violence is psychological, often driven by poverty, while in the DRC and Mozambique; it is largely at the instigation of some power-hungry leaders. Some of the influences, according to Matlosa (2010), include political gurus over the state and its resources and the acquiescence of state establishments to manipulation. It is often this intense violence that frightens innocent and defenceless citizens. In some cases, they are then forced to tow lines that are not amenable to their desires. No wonder

that in states that are characterised by violence during election periods, the voters never question the outcomes, even if they are visibly fraudulent. This is what defines the ‘docility’ and ‘naivety’ of Zimbabweans and Angolans who have endured the continuance of fraudulent elections without tangible reaction.

SADC’s stance on democracy

The policy framework of SADC considers democracy and general citizen participation as the backbone of economic development and human security. The regional body characterises good governance and democratic systems as consisting of accountability, legitimacy, transparency, constitutionalism, participation by citizens and the rule of law (Dodo, 2012b).

The region houses six of the 10 best-run countries in Africa, according to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance of 2015 (Albuquerque and Wiklund, 2015). However, it also houses two of the worst administered countries in Africa: Zimbabwe and the DRC. Generally, from its inception, the regional body espouses a situation where every member state practices what is enshrined in the laws, conventions and treaties for the good of the entire region. It is evident that over the period, the environment in the region has improved with the coming of new blood in the likes of Mbeki of South Africa, Khama of Botswana, Mwanawasa, Banda and Lungu of Zambia, Kikwete and Magufuli of Tanzania, Chissano of Mozambique and Banda and Mutharika of Malawi. The adoption of new perspectives and the interaction with the outside world have also helped to improve the region. This is especially so following the establishment and adoption of some of the following laws and protocols (Dodo, 2012b):

- African Union (AU) Constitutive Act;
- African Charter on Human and People’s Rights
- AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa
- SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation
- SADC Declaration on Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections
- SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC)

The body has, however, faced various challenges from both the leaders who sit in the executive body and the institution itself, whose policies and implementation mechanisms are flawed. Some scholars have noted that the interconnected problems of instituting good governance with a persistent system of democracy in some member states: Zimbabwe, Swaziland, DRC, Angola, and Mozambique, are entrenched in practice, history

and law (Lust-Okar, 2009 and Dodo, 2012b). Practice has influenced some of the regional body's challenges through precedence where other leaders have been allowed to get away with it (Matlosa, 2005). Cases in point include Mugabe post-2002 and 2008 elections and Andry Rajoelina of Madagascar after his 2009 coup (McGowan, 2003). Historically, traditional leaders only left the throne either following a military conquest or death. They also believed that the show of strength and militancy was a symbol of power, bravery and good leadership. Therefore, their cruelty on their subjects and unwillingness to leave the throne has been passed on to the contemporary leadership. On the other hand, laws that guide both SADC as a body and individual states are weak and prone to abuse. In fact, abuses have been allowed along 'brotherhood' lines (Dodo, 2012b).

Operationally, the agenda of the body to ensure standard democracy in all the member states where rule of law, constitutionalism, peace and good governance are practiced has been derailed by glitches in some member states (Matlosa, 2005). While over the years, member states have been improving on their approaches to democracy; some have elected to remain stuck to the old, archaic and retrogressive practices. Swaziland is locked in a crisis where lawmaking power is still in the king, Mswati III, who has the power to veto all laws ratified by parliament. Swaziland has also remained a single-party constitution within the SADC region (Cawthra, 2010).

In Zimbabwe, the constitution is so flexible that it can be tampered with, especially by the executive (Dodo, 2016). This anomaly has seen the President clinging to power in a manner that appears to be 'constitutional and appropriate' and yet it is the constitution and the operating environment that are flawed. The system is such that violence is allowed to flourish in a manner that forces opposition parties to boycott the elections. Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole employed such a strategy in 1996 when United Parties and Zimbabwe African National Union Ndonga, withdrew, leaving Mugabe to contest alone. In 2008, Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) also withdrew from the second round of the election, leaving Mugabe in a lone race.

It is interesting to note that despite all the efforts by the region and other players towards democratisation, Zimbabwe is one of the 23 countries in Africa that refused peer review under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (Dodo, 2012b). APRM is an initiative within New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) meant to foster good governance practices.

The DRC is ranked second worst run state in the SADC after Zimbabwe. Its challenges stem from the dictatorial tendencies of Joseph Mobutu sese Seko, who had run the country for decades. Following a coup, Laurent Desire Kabila governed by decree up until his elimination in 2001, after which his son took over (Mbata *et al*, 2008). In 2006, the DRC conducted its second polls before an attempted constitutional amendment that sought to prolong the president's tenure from five to seven years, remove tenure limits and permit

the President to chair the judicial High Council. There has also been wide criticism of the Commission Electorale Nationale Independante (CENI) over its partial conduct of the elections in favour of Kabila (Phezo, 2010).

Angola, endowed with vast natural and human resources, remains trapped in extreme poverty. Despite the fact that the country experienced a protracted civil war that ended after the death of Jonas Savimbi, a rebel leader in 1992, 25 years down the line, no change is visible on the ground. Santos who, over the years has built an empire, tamed the people of Angola through his sit-tight leadership. He has secured all vital posts in the economy and security structure. This has seen the waning of any hopes for democracy in oil-rich Angola.

The situation in Mozambique is unique in that the civilian-driven violence is also complemented by some element of insurgency at the instigation of Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), an opposition party cum insurgent group. The challenges in Mozambique, according to various scholars, are a result of a skewed constitution, especially the electoral act that allows the ruling party to manipulate the entire process (EISA, 2005 and Cheeseman, 2010). While the elected leaders may be interested in setting the systems right, they also take advantage of the skewed laws to tilt the landscape in their favour.

Capitalising on the already existing problems, the leader of RENAMO, Alfonso Dhlakama, has repeatedly piled his unrealistic demands on an ailing democracy. Dhlakama's acts are in various circles described as criminal and insurgent, and that he deserves no regard. However, because of populism and the need to save lives by the leadership, he has always received some attention.

Leadership arrogance

Despite common assumptions that some of the SADC leaders are arrogant (Cawthra, 2010), studies simply show that there are a variety of structural and policy discrepancies supported by the culture and history of liberation legacy, which drive leaders to become arrogant. Generally, there has been a culture of nationalism procuring independence through either protracted talks or small-scale wars. It was, therefore, these nationalist leaders who supported each other, even when it was not necessary. Over time, the group of nationalist leaders began to dwindle as some either died or were defeated in democratic elections. For those who have survived, they now seem to play the big brother role. Should they decide to retire, they often anoint a puppet leader to sustain their corrupt tendencies. These include Mugabe and Santos. It was also during the era of nationalist leadership that a culture of impunity was developed and it still haunts the region up till this day (Phezo, 2010). Some of the leaders like Kabila and Mswati take advantage of the *toothlessness* of

the body, hence developing arrogance. Some of the cases where SADC failed to demonstrate good governance include:

- Acceptance of Zaire in SADC, which had just staged a coup in 1996;
- Watching the killing and displacement of people during the land invasion era from 2000 in Zimbabwe;
- Failure to collectively intervene in the 2001 Lesotho crisis;
- Failure to address electoral fraud in Zimbabwe in 2002;
- Failure to intervene militarily in the DRC crisis in 2012;
- Failure to enforce the SADC Tribunal's ruling against Mugabe's confiscation of white Zimbabweans' farms on human rights grounds in 2007;
- Failure to uphold an electoral victory by MDC in Zimbabwe in 2008;
- Failure to enforce a Global Political Agreement (GPA) in Harare in 2008;
- Failure to reverse a coup in Madagascar in 2009 (McGowan, 2003);
- Rubberstamping the contested 2013 election results in Zimbabwe;
- Prioritising sovereignty over cooperation;
- Interventions in various crises have been more of individual efforts than the body; and
- Some leaders like Mugabe simply choose to ignore advice from others as defiance to interfering in domestic matters. He sees his arrogance and sit-tight leadership style from a sovereignty standpoint.

Frequency of elections in SADC

Since the attainment of independence, almost all the countries in the SADC region have held elections at various times (Cawthra, 2010). Elections are a phenomenon that is gradually being accepted and embraced as they foster democracy, an ingredient for development and peace (Matlosa, 2005). To understand the level of democratisation and the irony in electioneering, statistics of elections that have been conducted in the region have been compiled for analysis.

Elections in Africa

Country	1 st election		2 nd election		3 rd election		4 th election		5 th election		6 th election		7 th election		8 th election		9 th election		10 th election	
	Year	Type	Year	Type	Year	Type	Year	Type	Year	Type	Year	Type	Year	Type	Year	Type	Year	Type	Year	Type
Botswana	1965	FPT	1969	FPT	1974	FPT	1979	FPT	1984	FPT	1989	FPT	1994	FPT	1999	FPT	2004	FPT	2009	FPT
Zambia	1964	Bloc	1968	Bloc	1973	FPT	1991	FPT	1996	FPT	2001	FPT	2006	FPT	2011		2016			
Mozambique	1994	bloc	1999	FPT	2004	Bloc	2009	Bloc	2014	bloc										
DRC	1960	bloc	1965	cou	1997	cou	2001	bloc	2006	FPT	2011	FPT								
Lesotho	1970	FPT	1986	FPT	1993	FPT	1998	FPT	2002	PR	2007	PR	2012							
S/Africa	1994	PR	1999	PR	2004	PR	2009	PR	2014	PR										
Tanzania	1962	FPT	1965	FPT	1970	FPT	1975	FPT	1980	FPT	1985	FPT	1990	FPT	1995	FPT	2000	FPT	2005	FPT
Namibia	1989	PR	1994	Bloc	1999	Bloc	2004	bloc	2009	Bloc	2015	Bloc								
Zimbabwe	1980	Bloc	1985	Bloc	1990	FPT	1995	FPT	1996	FPT	2000	FPT	2002	FPT	2005	FPT	2008	FPT	2013	FPT
Malawi	1966	bloc	1978	Bloc	1983	Bloc	1989	Bloc	1994	FPT	1999	FPT	2004	FPT	2009	FPT	2014	FPT		
Angola	1975	FPT	1979	FPT	1992	PR	2008	PR	2012	PR										
Madagascar	1962	FPT	1992	FPT	1996	FPT	2001	FPT	2002	FPT	2006	FPT	2012	FPT						
Swaziland	1972	Bloc	1978	Bloc	1992	bloc	2013	FPT												

Dr O. Dodo (2016)

What is evident from the analysis is that there is no direct correspondence between the period of independence and the frequency of elections, nor is there any relationship between the number of elections and the number of leaders occupying the office. Table 2 below interprets Table 1 above.

Table 2: Election Frequency Interpretation

RANK	COUNTRY	INDEPENDENCE YR	ELECTION FREQ.	# LEADERS
1	Tanzania	1962	12	5
2	Botswana	1965	11	4

3	Zimbabwe	1980	10	1
4	Malawi	1966	9	4
5	Zambia	1964	9	6
6	Lesotho	1970	7	3
7	Madagascar	1960	7	6
8	Namibia	1989	6	3
9	South Africa	1994	5	3
10	Mozambique	1975	5	4
11	Angola	1975	5	2
12	DRC	1960	5	3
13	Swaziland	1968	4	2

Zimbabwe is the only country that has had one leader since attaining its independence in 1980 despite having conducted 10 plebiscites. This is in direct contrast with countries (South Africa and Namibia) that attained independence well after Zimbabwe but have constitutionally changed leadership three times each.

Conclusion

It is a widely held view that elections are central in the democratisation of Africa. However, it is unfortunate that such a hypothesis has failed to prove its mettle in some states like Zimbabwe and Angola where elections remain a window dressing. It is unfortunate to note that some institutional forces designed to protect the interests of certain leaders deliberately thwart what most scholars research and document.

Most of the features for an ideal democracy like timely elections are evident in states such as Zimbabwe and Angola and yet the quality and implementation of such leaves a lot to be desired. Democracy has to be understood as a complex system whose effective and efficient existence is dependent on various factors: people, political will, the desire to engage, parameters and a defined destination. Therefore, in the case of Zimbabwe, it takes its people to initiate the process of democratisation. Incumbent leaders take advantage of the absence of the process to extend their stay in office. Actually, they like it when the people are either ignorant or are hesitant to initiate the process. In Zimbabwe, any attempt at initiating the democratisation process is faced with militant resistance and outright condemnation, so much so that there will not be any willing follower or sympathiser. Mugabe has been in office for 37 years, always igniting the memories of the liberation war. However, he fails to realise that the people want prosperity, jobs, a sound economy, a bright future and no more liberation rhetoric.

As much as Bogaards (2013) queries the evidence for Africa's democratisation through elections, this analysis also doubts the validity of the hypothesis. Scholars like Lindberg

(2009) and Bogaards (2013) note how some scholars tend to make general assertions based on a subset of cases. This study observes that the theory of democratisation through elections in Africa appears to be a victim of a similar problem of over-generalisation. SADC, unlike other regional bodies like ECOMOG, has proven to be toothless and mainly bogged down by a 'brotherhood syndrome' where some leaders tend to protect the sins of others in anticipation of reciprocal protection. Some also prioritise respect on the basis of age rather than the dictates of democracy and constitutionalism. It is some of these problems that led to the protection of such leaders as Mugabe when he rigged the elections in 2002 and 2008, and Mswati when he instigated a coup in 1998 and 2001. Others were Santos in his manipulation of the constitution and Rajoelina when he staged a coup in 2009.

The existence of various continental and regional institutions for good governance and the regulation of elections and leadership are immaterial in the midst of an archaic ideology in the leadership of Mugabe and Santos. The regional body needs to have brave and blunt leaders like Mandela, Mwanawasa, Mugafuli and Khama to remind their peers of the wrongs that they do almost daily if it has to adopt democratic practices.

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