



# **OCCASIONAL PAPER**

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## **Democratisation in Southern Africa: Barriers and Potentialities**

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Professor Kenneth Good has since 1990 been a researcher and lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Botswana.

During his years in Botswana Kenneth Good has become known as a critical analyst of the otherwise praised democratic development. He has in particular advocated the interest of the marginalised indigenous people in Botswana. He defended the plight of the San people in a highly profiled case when the government expelled them from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Kenneth Good has also intensively criticised the state of democracy in Botswana for being elitist. He has in particular been outspoken about the way President Mogae has chosen his Vice-President and probable successor.

This latter case culminated in his expulsion from Botswana in May 2005 when Kenneth Good - by presidential order – was declared a ‘national security risk’ and subsequently deported.

This Occasional Paper is a revised version of Professor Kenneth Good’s lecture on “*Presidential Power and Democracy in Southern Africa*”, which he gave at the Centre of African Studies on 25 October 2005.

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Southern Africa is the most advanced region in Africa in economic terms, and the most developed democratically, in its recent past, the present, and its potentialities too.<sup>1</sup> It is on these intertwined economic and political factors, and on both their positive and negative aspects, that this paper concentrates. Southern Africa is a definable region,<sup>2</sup> where there are nonetheless huge differentials of power and potentialities between, for instance, South Africa, Angola and Zimbabwe, on the one hand, and Malawi, Lesotho and Swaziland, on the other. Consideration of the barriers to democratisation, furthermore, embraces of course the big problems of Africa, and the author stands with African luminaries like Soyinka, Achebe and Ngugi who believe that the key problem for Africa is the failure of its leaders. Soyinka's Old Toad Kings are power-hungry, incompetent and unscrupulous, and their approximations, even in a few cases replicas, are found today in southern Africa.

## **Presidentialism and Predominance**

This baleful combination is the outstanding feature of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, though they exist together, in part and tendency, in one or two other places as well. Presidentialism basically entails the centralisation of power in one office and person, and the predominance of a single party, under reasonably democratic conditions – different parties compete, but one always wins through the ballot-box – involves, not only the dominance of the executive over the legislature, but also a command of the voters' support, through the presentation of reasonably

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<sup>1</sup> A shorter version of this paper is in Round Table (London), January 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Gretchen Bauer and Scott D. Taylor, Politics in Southern Africa, Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005, Introduction.

attractive policies in repeated elections, and the absence of credible alternatives.<sup>3</sup>

Botswana became a liberal or electoral democracy from the outset, though the consolidation of this democracy is still awaited.<sup>4</sup> Presidentialism developed under first Seretse Khama and then Ketumile Masire, and the triumph of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) in all nine general elections over 40 years accompanied it. Characteristically of presidentialism, Seretse Khama readily altered the country's constitution (with the willing approval of parliament in which his BDP predominated) in favour of the indirect election of the president. His biographers report that he had found the democratic rough-and-tumble of a constituency-based election process tiring. He also sought to centralise power in the office of the president, one of the first steps on the road to autocracy, they recognised. Altering the constitution has never been a serious problem for a predominant Botswana president.<sup>5</sup> When Sir Ketumile wished to stand down in the 1990s, following a series of corruption scandals and intense factionalism in the BDP, the constitution was again changed to allow for the automatic succession of his Vice President, i.e., over the heads of the party in parliament as well as the people. Meantime, all three BDP Presidents to-date, Khama, Masire and his successor Festus Mogae, had manipulated constitutional provisions allowing for the appointment of four specially (un)elected

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<sup>3</sup> The idea of one party predominance within a democracy stems from Pempel, and it is considered among other places in Good, The Liberal Model and Africa: Elites against Democracy, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Consolidation in the accepted sense of two turnovers of government through the ballot-box – Botswana is yet to achieve its first. Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> He is head of state, head of government and leader of the ruling party, and his office has direct control over the bureaucracy, military, police, broadcasting and information, and the anti-corruption agency.



members of parliament; only BDP-aligned figures were appointed, sometimes even BDP MPs democratically rejected by their constituencies. Sometimes these appointed MPs acquire (or re-acquire) immediate ministerial positions too.<sup>6</sup>

The intensification of presidentialism in South Africa is a conspicuous characteristic of Thabo Mbeki's African National Congress (ANC) government, especially after 1999. While Mbeki has centralised increasing powers in the Office of the President, this was earlier no inevitability. Through the 1980s, a world-historic participatory democratic process developed, involving at its height perhaps some three million people in newly created, internally-based organizations like the United Democratic Front (UDF), Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) and COSATU, only to be terminated (with the significant exception of COSATU) soon after 1990, with the release of the established nationalist elites from jail and the return of others from exile.

The transition from apartheid to a conventional form of electoral, representative democracy was achieved in largely exclusive negotiations between a formerly apartheid-supporting political elite and the elites of the vanguard ANC. Those who marginalised and dissolved the UDF-MDM were those whom Zakes Mda terms "the aristocrats of the revolution". Men who could be plausibly seen to have given their lives to the struggle like Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Joe Slovo, elitist figures who, as Bantu Holomisa noted – in the wake of an ANC-fund-raising scandal involving President Mandela – the people venerated too

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<sup>6</sup> Appointed MPs enjoy the full voting rights of their elected parliamentary confreres. Namibia and Mauritius also have provision for specially appointed parliamentarians, but they administer the appointments differently, and deny the appointees voting privileges.

highly and uncritically.<sup>7</sup> Today, the effects of the ANC's predominance are such that voters have in reality no choice – opposition parties have no chance of winning power, and voters must support the ANC or 'spoil their ballots.'<sup>8</sup>

The most egregious examples of presidentialism today, regionally and perhaps elsewhere, are in Angola and Zimbabwe. In the oil-rich country, a "shadow" or parallel state has been created by and for "the president's men",<sup>9</sup> which enjoys complete non-accountability and impunity. Oil and military expenditures were exploited to the extent that, in 2001 alone, one-third of the state budget, or some \$1.4 billion, was unaccountable.<sup>10</sup> Messiant stresses that power in Angola lies with the person "occupying all the central institutions of the state". What she terms "tenure of actual power", rather than institutions per se, has been "increasingly centralised" on and in the President. He and his "nomenklatura" have brought about a "privatisation of the state", and established a patronage and security system "endowed with complete impunity". People have been bound to the President by patronage and privilege available at his discretion.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The complexities of the transition are considered in Good, The Liberal Model. Biographies of Nelson Mandela sometimes reveal his preference for the company of the rich and famous, and the discomfort he experienced when meeting younger and more boisterous UDF members in the late 1980s.

<sup>8</sup> It's said that at the last general election 'spoiled ballots' totalled enough votes to have elected three MPs. It was not necessarily a negative or 'apathetic' choice. A few observers had recommended this limited option, which might accurately be seen as 'positive abstention' under the prevailing political circumstances.

<sup>9</sup> Another name for this ruling, highly exploitative elite is the "oilgarchy". Their coin was arms purchasing and currency devaluation as well as oil.

<sup>10</sup> Global Witness, "All the Presidents' Men", March 2002, pp. 3 and 59-60. All dollars are American.

<sup>11</sup> She describes the membership of the nomenklatura, and indicates the kind of patronage and preferment which dos Santos wields. While most official salaries are no higher than \$200 to \$300 a month, and Luanda is one of the most expensive cities in the world, the

The Eduardo Do Santos Foundation (FESA) is perhaps the highest manifestation of “this system of clientelist domination and...the reinforcement of presidential power.” As the institutions of the state abandoned “all pretense of performing public services”, the President, through FESA, has arrogated a part of these “to his own person”. A self-styled “Engineer Jose Eduardo dos Santos” appears through FESA as “the number one leader of civil society”, while being also through official office the head of government and ruling party, commander in chief of the military and controller of the police. He “receives oil dollars which do not appear in any official accounts and determines how they are spent, and is the prime beneficiary of the competition between foreign companies and...governments for Angolan resources and markets.” As with Global Witness, she notes that the “utter misery of the people” is combined with the impunity of the powerful.<sup>12</sup>

In ways no less unscrupulous and crude, Zimbabwe in 2005 displays the “emergence of a predatory authoritarian state which is highly personalised and [actually] owned by [President Robert Mugabe]”.<sup>13</sup> It has become “ever more authoritarian” and destructive.<sup>14</sup> Anna Tibaijuka reported on the origins and consequences of “Operation Murambatsvina”

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nomenklatura receive “a Christmas bonus of between \$25,000 and \$30,000”. Also available, or unavailable, are “simple gifts in cash of tens, hundreds or thousands of dollars given to individuals.” Overall privileges are “favours granted by the Prince”. Christine Messiant, *The Eduardo Dos Santos Foundation: Or, How Angola’s Regime is Taking Over Civil Society*, *African Affairs*, 2001, 100, p.294.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.289-291, 294-297 and 301-302.

<sup>13</sup> Tendai Biti, in Commentary, *Africa Analysis*, 477, 9 September 2005, p.15. He quotes George Ayittey: “The nationalists who won freedom for their respective countries were hailed as heroes, swept into office with huge Parliamentary majorities and deified...Criticising them became sacrilegious”, and promised freedoms and development were “transmogrified into a melodramatic nightmare.”

<sup>14</sup> Augusta Conchiglia, “Zimbabwe’s Political Evictions”, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 2005, pp. 4 and 7.

(or 'Restore Order' or 'Drive Out Rubbish') to the UN Secretary General. It was a nationwide demolition and eviction campaign carried out by the police and army with speed and ferocity, "a massive military-style operation". She reports that some 700,000 urban people lost their homes, their livelihoods, or both, and indirectly "a further 2.4 million people have been affected in varying degrees."

A militant nationalism, based on the use of force, had been a mark of Mugabe's rule, through the agency of his party ZANU (PF), the military and the police, and a relatively strong bureaucracy, from the very beginning. As early as 1981-82, Mugabe himself had planned, launched and directly controlled Operation Gukurahundi in Matabeleland, a protracted military campaign against supposed dissident elements, which saw the deaths of some 20,000 people. His instrument was the Fifth Brigade, which was trained for unquestioning loyalty, operated outside the normal military hierarchy, and answered directly to Mugabe. Under then-Colonel Perence Shiri, the Brigade created terror – murders, torture and property burnings – in a sustained and systematic way.<sup>15</sup>

Zimbabwe too was "led by a Founding President, a towering and influential political personality, viewed with respect...in all of Africa for his historical role in the...liberation struggle", as Tibaijuka puts it. A "combination of this reverence and the inherited colonial administrative structures contributed", she says, "to a heavily centralised government." When the seizures of commercial farms began in 2000, war veterans were mobilised as key "political shock troops" of ZANU-PF and its leader.

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<sup>15</sup> No official acknowledgement of what happened in Matabeleland has been made. Good, "Dealing With Despotism: The People and the Presidents", chapter in Henning Melber (ed.), Zimbabwe's Presidential Elections 2002, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 2002, pp. 8-10.

In elections through this time, “intimidation and violence” was in “systematic use”.<sup>16</sup>

Namibia established a progressive constitution in 1990, but experienced through the decade thereafter a “constant gain in and consolidation of political power and control by the former liberation movement” SWAPO. No “numerically meaningful opposition party could firmly establish itself”, as SWAPO gained 74 per cent of the votes in national elections in 1994, increased that to 76 per cent in 1999, and maintained that predominance in November 2004. A critical bridge to autocracy was crossed in 1998, when parliament amended the constitution, with the necessary two-thirds majority, to allow President Sam Nujoma a third term in office. In the same year, Namibia entered the war in the Congo “as a result of the personally ordered intervention” of the President – he is constitutionally empowered to decide alone for the protection of national security.<sup>17</sup>

Critical voices on these big issues and on others became seen as unpatriotic; “loyalty to Namibia [was] equated with loyalty to SWAPO’s policy and in particular to the party’s President.” Dissenting views were marginalised.<sup>18</sup> The capacity for predominance, here as elsewhere in the region, had its origins in the liberation struggle, which fostered presidentialism in equal measure. As Saunders encapsulates it: “The centrality of the armed struggle in the years of exile meant that SWAPO

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<sup>16</sup> Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, “Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to Assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina”, 18 July 2005, pp.7,15 and 17-19.

<sup>17</sup> Henning Melber, “Limits to Liberation”, chapter in Melber (ed.), Re-Examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Culture Since Independence, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 2003, pp.16-19.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.19.

became dominated by a military culture, strongly hierarchical, authoritarian and closed.”<sup>19</sup>

Angola and Zimbabwe are obviously very different from, say, Botswana, and South Africa, despite President Mbeki and the ANC, retains a strong civil society, as a structural feature of its advanced capitalist economy. But there is a core similarity between all the countries described above. Presidentialism and predominance is common, and they facilitate and express very wide social control focussed on a single person. People may vote – not since 1992 in Angola and under heavy duress in Zimbabwe – but they are denied meaningful choice;<sup>20</sup> and free speech faces severe limitations in many places.

## **Elite Corruption**

While Messiant and Global Witness show that kleptocracy is as immense as it is systemic in Angola, elite corruption is also present elsewhere in the region. Corruption is generally understood as the misuse of public office for private gain, and the duopoly of presidentialism-predominance offers enhanced opportunities for the personalised enrichment of a ruling elite. If corruption is theft from the public realm, it follows directly that it is ethically wrong and anti-democratic, even if it appears as inevitable or tolerable within domestic political culture. Botswana’s authoritarian liberalism is a case in point. Combining wealth and political power was

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher Saunders, “Liberation and Democracy: a Critical Reading of Sam Nujoma’s ‘Autobiography’”, chapter in Melber, *ibid.*, p.94.

<sup>20</sup> President Mandela utilised his immense stature to achieve reconciliation in South Africa, but did nothing to promote a democratic party system, and instead lampooned the weak opposition as ‘Mickey Mouse parties’, unworthy of the voters’ support.

characteristic of the country's economic and political development from the nineteenth century, as rising Tswana elites participated directly in cattle production. The Setswana word for a chief was the same as that for a wealthy man, and it was deemed natural or pre-ordained that the BDP should be formed and led by so-called cattle-barons who became the leaders of the new nation state – unlike a Kaunda, Nyerere or a Nkrumah elsewhere, these men were st[e]ak[e]holders in every sense. Not school teachers or Verandah Boys, but liberalism's responsible men, directly engaged in furthering their own and their nation's development.

With rapid growth, this continued well enough for a quarter century, but the process went badly wrong with a series of highly visible corruption scandals in the early 1990s. The near bankruptcy of the National Development Bank, a flagship state institution, highlighted the role of President Masire and leading ministers in this debacle. They had awarded themselves generous loan funds and neglected to repay their borrowings. While Sir Ketumile attempted to explain that successful venture capitalism involved unavoidable risk-taking, further public scandal followed in critical institutions like the Botswana Housing Corporation and Local Government.<sup>21</sup> The ideology of the growth economy in Botswana, that returns in profits, wages and services would go to those who made the biggest contribution to that growth, suffered serious setback, as did the ruling party which had devised it. Vice President Mogae fought to establish an anti-corruption agency, Sir Ketumile eventually stepped down, Mogae succeeded, directly and smoothly, to the presidency, and General Ian Khama, the other supposed new broom, began his rise to power. But the BDP remained

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<sup>21</sup> Detail is found in Good, "Corruption and Mismanagement in Botswana: a Best-Case Example?". The Journal of Modern African Studies, 32,3, 1994.

faction riven, a level of crony-capitalism continued,<sup>22</sup> and the BDP's share of the popular vote declined through 1999 and 2004 as that of even a weak and divided opposition rose.<sup>23</sup>

Affirmative action or black economic empowerment (BEE) were emphasised by President Mbeki in particular, but when they were associated with the award of government contracts, and specifically with access to an arms procurement programme worth some ten billion dollars, these otherwise justifiable initiatives became the source for the private enrichment of the political elite and their associates. As the gap between rich and poor blacks visibly widened in the statistics and on public display, talk of "fat black cats" and their greediness became rife. Bishop Desmond Tutu had observed, not long after 1994, that the gravy train had stopped only long enough for the new guys to get on. Tony Yengeni, former MK commander and prominent ANC parliamentarian, was sentenced to four years jail for fraud, Defence Minister Joe Modisi left office tainted with allegations of profiting from earlier arms deals, and Mbeki finally sacked Deputy President Jacob Zuma in 2005 when evidence of his wrong doing in the same field was overwhelming.<sup>24</sup> At

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<sup>22</sup> Chiefly through 'bail-outs' and similar assistance to citizen-owned companies, government tenders and in land acquisitions in and around Gaborone.

<sup>23</sup> While the "ruling BDP dominates the poll by winning more seats...its share of the popular vote is declining and that of the opposition is rising" over the last quarter-century. Over the period 1989 through 2004, less than fifty per cent of eligible voters turned out to vote, and the country was ruled by a minority government. Mpho Molomo and Wilford Molefe, "Voters and Electoral Performance of Political Parties in Botswana", chapter in Zibani Maundeni (ed.), 40 Years of Democracy in Botswana, 1965-2005, Gaborone, Mmegi Publishing House, 2005, pp. 103,108 and 117. The nadir of voter turnout had been in 1974, when only 26 per cent of eligible voters participated.

<sup>24</sup> The case is on-going. But when Judge Hilary Squires sentenced Zuma's close aid and financial advisor, Schabir Shaik, to 15 years jail for corruption, he said: "His corporate empire's progress and prosperity was plainly linked to the possibility that Jacob Zuma would finally ascend to the highest political office". Shaik's role in the government's multi-billion dollar arms procurement programme, "was a typical example of a privileged treatment to a selected political figure in a situation redolent with lack of transparency and subversion of administrative fairness and integrity." BBC News online, UK edition, 8 June 2005.



much the same time a top ANC official publicly revealed that he for one 'hadn't struggled in order to be poor'.

While opportunities for elite corruption are lesser in Namibia, Melber is clear about the problem. "Self-enrichment by higher ranking officials and politicians utilising their access to the state is tolerated", regardless of public morale, and he notes that the Namibianisation of the fisheries sector showed how "national wealth is privatised for the benefit of a privileged few".<sup>25</sup> Namibia is no Angola either, but ex-President Nujoma remained head of SWAPO, supported in 2005 by an Office of the Founding President, and a Sam Nujoma Foundation too.

If the main functions of the rapid land seizures that Mugabe initiated in early 2000 were to hold on to presidential power and punish white farmers, the consequences of the redistribution included the self-enrichment of the ruling elite. Anna Tibaijuka's carefully phrased report notes that "the major beneficiaries turned out to be senior ruling party officials, ministers and their families", though not all of them bothered to use their acquisitions productively.<sup>26</sup>

## **Neglect of the People and their Problems**

Mere neglect is too soft a word to use against the ruling elites in both Zimbabwe and Angola. The former country once possessed the second most advanced capitalist economy in Africa. With a diversified economy, it was the region's breadbasket, and its importance here was directly brought home to Mugabe by Presidents' Julius Nyerere and Samora

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<sup>25</sup> Melber, op.cit., p19.

<sup>26</sup> Tibaijuka, op.cit., p.18 and Good, "Dealing With Despotism", op.cit.

Machel, in 1980 -- in their famous admonitions, 'you have inherited a jewel of Africa, don't tarnish it'. He purposefully did the opposite. In a present day summation: "land grabs have crippled commercial agriculture and irrigation systems. Hyperinflation and lack of foreign exchange makes it hard to buy seeds and fertiliser, while fuel shortages stymie transport....the government has [even so far] refused to endorse the UN's emergency programme to help those affected."<sup>27</sup> Renewed farm invasions followed instead, forcing the Governor of the Reserve Bank, Gideon Gono, to declare the obvious in October: "if you invade a coffee, tea, wheat or fruit farm...you undermine the productive capacity of the economy." On IMF data, GDP fell four per cent in 2004 and another seven per cent to-date in 2005. The once surplus-producing country was importing at least 37,000 tons of maize a week just for survival. <sup>28</sup> Neglect was combined with suppression. In November over four million people were in need of food aid, while about 300 people had been killed in political violence, and thousands more kidnapped, assaulted and tortured, since 2000. Responsibility for such enormities was in fact continental, and an alliance of 26 church and civic groups noted how African states remained "conspicuously silent" about the on-going abuse of human rights in Zimbabwe.<sup>29</sup>

At the start of the 21st century, Angola is awash with oil revenues, yet the people are in the deepest misery. The system of clientelist control

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<sup>27</sup> The Economist, 8 October 2005.

<sup>28</sup> BBC News online, 12 October 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Report by Angus Shaw, Mail and Guardian on line, 18 November 2005. Silence sometimes extended into complicity with the Mugabe regime and support for his position. When South Africa signed an agreement on increased cooperation on defence and security matters with Zimbabwe, also on 18 November, Ronnie Kasrils, Pretoria's intelligence minister, said: "We have very strong ties with our neighbour and we are indebted to our neighbour for achieving freedom and liberty." BBC News on line, UK edition, 18 November 2005.

established by President dos Santos, both operates at the people's expense and accords impunity on the ruler while doing so. Global Witness reports on the "progressive impoverishment" of the country, as a ruling MPLA elite, and a (once) competing elite led by Jonas Savimbi, fought for control of Angola's huge oil and also diamond resources over decades.<sup>30</sup> Armed conflict was "deliberately exploited" to enrich the rulers through increasing oil revenues, foreign investment, and profits from big arms-procurement programmes.

The condition of the people in the oil-rich country is manifest. The population living in absolute and relative poverty was 82.5 per cent (of an estimated total of 12.4 million, around 2000). The population without access to drinking water was 62 per cent; those without health care totalled 76 per cent; some 3.2 million people were known to require food-aid which, as noted, was not forthcoming from the Angolan government. Unemployment was some 80 per cent, and 70 per cent of Angolans lived on less than a dollar a day.<sup>31</sup> What care the common people received was provided by churches, international agencies, and voluntary groups.<sup>32</sup> The "logic of theft and predation", combined with the depth of the misery, was extreme and aggravated. The opulence of the nomenclatura was ever more visible. Politicians' wives flew to New York on the government miniscule health budget for cosmetic surgery, while most of Luanda's people lived in ramshackle shacks in fetid slums that stretch for kilometers to the horizon, as Leonard described it. The economy grew by 14 per cent in 2005, and the IMF anticipated a 25 per

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<sup>30</sup> When Savimbi's UNITA entered national elections against dos Santos in 1992, the popular perception of the choice offered them was; "UNITA kills, the MPLA steals".

<sup>31</sup> Global Witness, op.cit., p.4, and Terry Leonard, "A Rich Country Full of Poor People", Mail and Guardian on line, 18 February 2005, p.2

<sup>32</sup> Messiant, op.cit., p.302.

cent rate next year. But roads and bridges remained destroyed in the countryside, and agriculture continued to flounder. Most farmers, even in the once productive central highlands, lived on subsistence and UN food aid. "There is no incentive", said Richard Corsino, of the UN World Food Programme. "Even if the farmers grow a surplus there is no way to get it to a market."<sup>33</sup> And there was, "growing among the population, especially in Luanda" -- home to almost half of the country's people -- as Messiant reported, "a deep resentment of their condition and of the people held responsible for it".<sup>34</sup>

Botswana was not Angola, and people had an opportunity to vote. But it too was a rich country with many poor people. It is an Upper Middle Income country where, thanks to a heavy reliance on diamonds, inequalities are rife.<sup>35</sup> On most recent UNDP data, the richest ten per cent got 56.6 per cent of national income, 1989-2000, and the poorest ten per cent only 0.7 per cent. The ratio between the two was 77.6. The Gini coefficient, a comparative measure of income inequality, was 63.0, and only Lesotho (63.2) and Namibia (70.7) were worse in Africa and the world.<sup>36</sup>

Poverty and its affects were also bad. 23 per cent of the people lived on less than a dollar a day, and some 50 per cent got below two dollars.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Leonard, op.cit.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>35</sup> Botswana is the world's most "Nonfuel Mineral Dependent" country, and Angola is the world's most Oil-Dependent state. Michael Ross, "The Natural Resource Curse: How Wealth Can Make You Poor", chapter in Ian Bannon and Paul Collier (eds.), Natural Resources and Violent Conflict, Washington, DC, The World Bank, 2003, p.21.

<sup>36</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 2005, Table 15. No data was available on Angola.

<sup>37</sup> HDR 2005, Table 3.

The numbers of people experiencing chronic food insufficiency had been rising, from 18 per cent in 1990/92, to 24 per cent, 1999/01.<sup>38</sup> The country's Human Development Index was falling, from a high of 0.681 in 1990, to 0.598 in 2000 and 0.565 in 2003.<sup>39</sup> This was occurring even at a time when the country was enjoying high and sustained economic growth.<sup>40</sup>

Diamonds dominated the economy on across the board data for exports, GDP (45 per cent), and government revenue, 2003/04. Manufacturing simultaneously was only 4.1 per cent of GDP, while agriculture was 2.3 per cent.<sup>41</sup> Agriculture had been in decline since 1980, due in good part to low government investment.<sup>42</sup> The World Bank reported that 97 per cent of those existing on less than two dollars daily lived in rural areas. Inequalities in cattle ownership were not dissimilar to those in income. Agriculture was in a sense being hollowed out, economically and socially. Cullis and Watson noted that in 1991 some 42 per cent of rural households were not actually engaged in agriculture. Towards the end of that decade of high growth, many poorer households were effectively excluded from agricultural production and obliged to rely on "itinerant casual labouring for their subsistence".<sup>43</sup> In Ghanzi and Kgalagadi

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<sup>38</sup> HDR 2004, p.162.

<sup>39</sup> HDR 2005, Table 2.

<sup>40</sup> Botswana was unique in the world in combining high growth with falling human development through the 1990s. Jenny Clover, "Botswana: Future Prospects and the Need for Broad-Based Development", Situation Report, Institute for Strategic Studies, Pretoria, 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report Botswana, July 2005, p.5.

<sup>42</sup> Clover, op.cit., p.7.

<sup>43</sup> A. Cullis and C. Watson, "Winners and Losers: Privatising the Commons in Botswana", Briefing Paper. International Institute for Environment and Development and RECONCILE, 2003, pp.12 and 17.

districts particularly, poverty was endemic and structural, and many survived only on frugal state destitute handouts.<sup>44</sup>

Not unlike Angola, there appears to be a causal connection between the national wealth of Botswana (based today on diamonds but historically and culturally in cattle too), inequalities in distribution, and the comparatively deep poverty of the many.<sup>45</sup> The UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) is higher in poorer developing countries than in richer but deeply inequitable Botswana.<sup>46</sup> Wilkinson argues with a wealth of historical, comparative data, that big inequalities are bad for a person's health and welfare.<sup>47</sup> Botswana's rulers have the material and state capacity to reduce poverty and inequalities, but they are yet to try seriously to do this. Festus Mogae was not the first BDP leader to observe that it would be wrong to give money to the poor by taking wealth from those who were already enjoying it. But either re-distribution, or new broad-based, diversified and equitable, developmental strategies is precisely what is required, as the World Bank earlier observed.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Clover, op.cit., pp. 1 and 8, and Good, "The State and Extreme Poverty in Botswana: the San and Destitutes", The Journal of Modern African Studies, 37,2, 1999, pp.192-194.

<sup>45</sup> The connections and ramifications are considered in Good, "Resource Dependency and its Consequences: The Costs of Botswana's Shining Gems", Journal of Contemporary African Studies, 23, 1, January 2005, and "The Social Consequences of Diamonds Dependency in Botswana", Public Lecture, Nordic Africa Institute, 24 November 2005.

<sup>46</sup> Botswana's HDI ranking was 131 (out of 177 countries) in 2005, when Viet Nam (GDP per capita \$2490) was 108, Cape Verde (GDP per capita \$5214) was 105, Jamaica (GDP per capita \$4100) was 98, and Fiji (GDP per capita \$5880) was 92. HDR 2005, Table 1.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Wilkinson, The Impact of Inequality: How to Make Sick Societies Healthier, New York, New Press, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> "The pattern of growth must ...benefit the poor, either directly through increased employment and incomes or indirectly through improved social services." The World Bank, Taking Action to Reduce Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, Washington, DC, 1997, p.8.

While President Mbeki's ANC government won 70 per cent of seats in national parliamentary elections in April, and majorities in all nine provinces, socio-economic problems, and consequent popular discontent, existed. While less than Botswana's figures, poverty was "pervasive" around 2000, affecting about 45 per cent of the population.<sup>49</sup> On UNDP data for 1990-2002, seven per cent of people received less than a dollar a day, and 24 per cent got below two dollars. The Gini coefficient "continued to rise throughout the ANC's first two terms of office", and stood at 57.8 on 2005 data.<sup>50</sup> Worsening inequalities were reflected in the fact that the size of "the African component in the richest income decile rose from 9 per cent in 1991 to 22 per cent in 1996."<sup>51</sup> For COSATU and others, this showed that BEE programmes had benefited the black bourgeoisie, not workers and rural people. The government was further accused by the unions of failing either to create jobs or save those threatened by market forces – over 130,000 jobs were lost in the non-farming economy in the January-March quarter of 2005, on official figures.<sup>52</sup>

Later in the year, COSATU identified other policy failings of the government: Mbeki's very personalised policy of "quite diplomacy" towards Robert Mugabe, where failure was writ large in the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy and the consequent appearance of a visibly failed state on South Africa's doorstep; HIV-AIDS, where again, highly idiosyncratic policies and beliefs persistently upheld by Mbeki, had led to

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Ballard, Adam Habib, Imraan Valodia and Elke Zuern, "Globalization, Marginalization and Contemporary Social Movements in South Africa", African Affairs, 104/417, 2005, p.620.

<sup>50</sup> Ballard, et.al., op.cit. p.621, and HDR 2005, Table 15. The country's HDI ranking in 2005 was 120, eleven points better than Botswana.

<sup>51</sup> Ballard, et.al., op.cit., p.621.

<sup>52</sup> Africa Confidential, 46, 18, 9 September 2005.

an adult HIV prevalence rate in excess of 20 per cent, and about 600 AIDS-related deaths a day. The unions accused President Mbeki and his health minister of a “failure of leadership” and a “betrayal of our people and our struggle”, in presiding over a situation where six million people were infected with AIDS, on the government’s own findings.<sup>53</sup>

In the middle of the year, popular discontent had broken out, sometimes in violent demonstrations, in townships across the country, expressing anger at the government’s failure to deliver services to poor people in key areas like health and sanitation – papers carried stories of school girls forced to walk great distances daily to try to find an available, usable toilet. The ANC acknowledged in September that there was “a real danger of steadily but surely eroding public confidence in the [party]”. When a lengthy and expensive drive to encourage voter registration ended in early September, fewer than 300,000 out of an estimated five million to seven million unregistered voters had come forward.<sup>54</sup> South Africa is not in crisis as is Angola and ever more Zimbabwe, but Mbeki’s presidentialist, predominant party regime is responsible for serious policy failures, which relate directly to the autocratic elements in the system. And there is popular awareness of the scope and cause of these problems.

## **Intolerance of Criticism**

With the suppression prevailing in Angola and Zimbabwe, and the intolerance in Namibia already alluded to, South Africa and Botswana are focused on here. While South Africa was the cockpit for a great

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<sup>53</sup> BBC News online, 26 September 2005.

<sup>54</sup> BBC News online, 12 September, and African Analysis, 447, 9 September 2005.



participatory democratic impulse in the 1980s, and it retains an organized civil society, President Mbeki appears to have a loathing of criticism. When it is expressed by black academics and intellectuals, he tends to portray them as disloyal, and when a white critic has the temerity to speak out, Mbeki labels him or her as racist. The result in both cases, according to Mamphela Ramphele, speaking when she was Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, was silence, and silence was a 'threat to South Africa's infant democracy'. Other informed observers have noted that, what the Mbeki elite hates most, is the white intellectual or activist who tries to speak in the name of the poor black majority, on the big issues concerning them like jobs, the non-delivery of public services and corruption. Vocal critics like Holomisa earlier and Dale McKinley more recently have been hounded from party membership publicly. The governing elite is often supported here by black professionals and business leaders. Christine Qunta is an articulate legal figure with a regular newspaper platform, who apparently believes that any white who raises the issue of corruption is necessarily, if perhaps subliminally, racist. These restrictions on free speech can be and are resisted. But resistance, on the vivid example of Zackie Achmat and the Treatment Action Campaign, requires cause, organization, and considerable determination.

Democracy is constrained in Botswana, not only at key institutional and structural levels, but in the expression of opinion too. While opposition parties may compete, they must do so on an unfair playing-field where the BDP commands the necessary resources of money, mobility and access to the media. Deference remains important in the society, upheld as the desired norm by the ruling elite in their admonitions that even questioning authority constitutes abuse. A bold local critic, such as the

lawyer Duma Boko, may obtain a platform for his views; but retaining it is another matter. Criticism can endanger one's career in journalism, teaching, academia and law, to be replaced by self-censorship, and a prevailing "battered-wife syndrome", where journalists and others scramble to find excuses for authority's mistakes.<sup>55</sup> Incorporation into the established system also ensures uniformity and closure. A number of independent thinkers gained prominence in Gaborone through the 1990s, speaking out critically on women's rights and on economic problems, but the people concerned were fairly quickly accorded high places in the bureaucracy and judiciary. Representation gained, and the modernizing image of the BDP was improved, but critical thought, and those who might have benefited from it, suffered.

Free speech exists in late 2005 if one has nothing too serious to say. Vice-President Ian Khama frankly declared in May that: "I believe one has to have democracy but with discipline."<sup>56</sup> The discipline he perhaps had in mind was exerted over me on 31 May 2005, when I was snatched from the portals of the High Court in Lobatse by security personnel, and put on a plane out of the country seven hours later. See Appendix 1 for a résumé of the expulsion.

## **Potentialities for Democratisation**

While President Mogae continues to proclaim, as on 29 September 2005, that Botswana is the 'longest established multi-party democracy in Africa', the accolade for a functioning, consolidated liberal democratic system actually lies with Mauritius. Its population is smaller than both

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<sup>55</sup> Term used by Otsa Mokone when he was editor of The Botswana Guardian.

<sup>56</sup> Christina Lamb, "In Sickness and in Wealth", The Sunday Times Magazine, 3 July 2005.

Namibia and Botswana, but its economy is sound and diversified. GDP was \$6.3 billion in 2004, manufacturing represented 20.8 per cent, and agriculture was some 14 per cent of GDP. The value of “EPZ products” (goods manufactured in the special export promotion zones) was almost \$1.2 billion. Real growth was just over 4 per cent then, and GDP per capita was the region’s highest at \$12,800 (PPP).<sup>57</sup> Expenditure on defence and security represented just 0.2 per cent of GDP in 2004.<sup>58</sup>

These economic gains were accompanied by social and political strengths. Life expectancy, in a region devastated by HIV-AIDS, was 72 years in 2005. The unemployment rate was 10.8 per cent in 2004, poverty affected only 10 per cent of people, and the Gini coefficient was negligible (a mere 37.0 on 1987 data).<sup>59</sup> The country’s leadership had played a positive role in these achievements. Successive governments had invested heavily in education and social welfare. Cawthra recognised a “political consensus around the social dimensions of democracy”. The political elites, he says, have shown “a willingness to sacrifice personal gain for the good of the country”, and with per capita GDP high and relatively evenly distributed, economic growth and democracy were mutually reinforcing.<sup>60</sup> The country’s liberal, representative democracy is functional and truly established. Eight national elections had been held by July 2005, resulting in four transfers of government. Turnout at the latest was as high as 81.5 per cent, the campaign was fought “largely on economic issues”, and the defeat of the

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<sup>57</sup> EIU, Country Report, August 2005, and CIA World Factbook Mauritius, August 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Gavin Cawthra, “Mauritius”, Africa Insight, 35,1, April 2005, p.18, and CIA, op.cit., p.10..

<sup>59</sup> CIA, op.cit. The country’s HDI rank for 2005 was 65.

<sup>60</sup> Cawthra, op.cit., p.15.

sitting prime minister, Paul Berenger, was followed by his immediate resignation.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, no presidentialism, no predominance, a liberal parliamentary system based closely on ethnic realities, where voter participation is high, and voters change governments regularly. The economy is diversified and dynamic, and development has not been accompanied by poverty and inequalities. Leadership appears attentive to the needs of the people,<sup>62</sup> and it is answerable to the voters at elections. – in July, ten ministers in the outgoing government lost their seats as well as their office.<sup>63</sup> Liberalism functioning unusually well, in a small and relatively wealthy country.

Change away from predominance is possible in Botswana by 2009. 48 per cent of voters supported a then divided opposition in 2004, and the electoral trends over more than a decade disfavour the BDP. People appear to want change, given the ruling party's long neglect of their needs as reflected in the levels of poverty and inequalities, and the failures in agriculture, manufacturing, and diversification. The arrogance sometimes displayed by this presidentialist regime constitutes a further aggravation and weakness. San people were notoriously characterised by Vice-President Mogae, in the mid-1990s, as "stone age creatures", who were "doomed to die out like the dodo" if they did not fall in with the

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<sup>61</sup> An estimated 66 per cent of Mauritians are of Indian origin, of whom 52 per cent are Hindu and 17 per cent Muslim. Berenger was the first European (or Franco-Mauritian) prime minister. EIU, op.cit., p.13.

<sup>62</sup> An Independent Commission Against Corruption was established in 2002, and a minister resigned the next year, following his arrest over the fraudulent sale of state-owned land. But corruption remains a problem, says the EIU. Country Profile 2004, p.6.

<sup>63</sup> EIU, August 2005, op.cit., p.14.

government's development plans.<sup>64</sup> External criticism is readily labelled by the President as "ignorant and malicious comment", or alternatively, as the "regurgitation of ignorance and innuendo".<sup>65</sup> The London-based advocacy group, Survival International, a registered charity, was demonised as a "terrorist organization", after it criticised the government's removal of San from their homes in the Central Kalahari Game Park.<sup>66</sup> Robert Masitara was the person endorsed by the BDP to run against a combined opposition candidate in a key Gaborone by-election in October 2005. He was known to have a charge of rape pending against him in court, and he displayed "flamboyant and ostentatious conduct" throughout his campaign.<sup>67</sup> And by 2008 or earlier, General Ian Khama will succeed to the presidency, despite his seeming authoritarianism and inexperience, in a process entirely over the heads of the voters. This in itself could be a galvanizing issue, since polling data indicates that "63 per cent of those interviewed support the idea of a popularly elected president." Similarly, support for the election of presidential successors – rather than the existing automatic transfer – is "widespread", in both urban and rural areas, and "across the supporters of all parties."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> San people are a sizable ethnic minority in Botswana, and their subordination is a defining failure of Botswana's democracy, the more jealously guarded for that reason.

<sup>65</sup> State of the Nation address, 8 November 2004, and Press Circular no.10 of 2005.

<sup>66</sup> Good, Bushmen and Diamonds: (Un)Civil Society in Botswana, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 2003, Discussion Paper 23. By contrast, Nicky Oppenheimer, chairman of De Beers, sees Survival International as "a reputable NGO". The Guardian, 2 July 2005.

<sup>67</sup> The group, Women and Law in Southern Africa, labelled this endorsement as "belittling the seriousness" of the charge of rape, and an "abuse of the integrity of public office", and further criticism was expressed by Emang Basadi. Mmegi, 11 and 12 October 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Afro Barometer, Botswana Briefing, "Public Opinion on Presidential Selection in Botswana", 30 August 2005, pp.1,3 and 6.

But the neglect of the people, elitist arrogance, and the urge for change, will not be addressed and actualised without opposition unity. The leading opposition parties, the Botswana National Front and the Botswana Congress Party, must display a unity of programme, purpose and leadership to establish themselves as a credible alternative to BDP predominance. Turnout of eligible voters at national elections in Botswana is more like 50 per cent than the 80 per cent of Mauritius. Participation will only increase if people can see that a change of government is at last a realisable possibility. This process received a boost in the by-election in Gaborone on 15 October, when a combined opposition candidate (the leader of the BNF), supported actively by the BCP, was fielded for the first time against the BDP. The election was doubly historic, Mmegi informed its readers the previous day, when “ever more people are beginning to voice disquiet over the future of Botswana’s democracy.” The ruling party “shows worrying signs of intolerance for dissent”, and it “increasingly comes across as impatient with the democratic process.” There was concern too about the “independence of the judiciary” when key posts were seen to be reserved for individuals known to be close associates of those in power.” The unity candidate, Otsweletse Moupo, won convincingly.<sup>69</sup>

Despite Mugabe’s tyrannous regime, it is in their structural and organizational strengths that the potentialities of Zimbabwe and South Africa are outstanding. Though infrastructure has been seriously damaged in the former since 2000, the socio-economic strengths remain latent in both. The jewels of economic diversification and integration have been more than tarnished by Mugabe, but the fundamentals may still remain. It was the relatively advanced capitalism that produced a

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<sup>69</sup> Two weeks later, on 28 October, Mmegi announced the resignation of its editor, Mesh Moeti, effective three days later.

diversified and strong civil society, with specifically a trade union movement at its head, which together created a new political party, the Movement for Democratic Change. It was this profound development that seriously challenged the despot for the very first time in 2000. The urban-based trade unions have been purposefully weakened by the denuding of the towns in actions like Operation Murambatsvina, but long-term reconstruction would draw them back. On a depth and scale much greater than Mauritius, there is a mutually supportive inter-relationship between advanced capitalism, the formation of civic groups and trade unions, and the formation of a political party representative of those popular interests. They showed their potential capacities in 1999 and 2000-01, and might do so again.

Similarly but much more so in Africa's most advanced economy. The participatory democratic experience of the 1980s is only two decades away. A wide range of popular organizations grew up in efforts to democratise the daily lives of many people, in what Ballard and his colleagues recognize as "one of the quintessential social movements of the twentieth century".<sup>70</sup> Highly relevant norms for the achievement and maintenance of democracy were adopted by the UDF – "principles of our organizational democracy" – to combat elitism and strengthen the people. Organization and democracy might be made to work together. Leaders should be criticised, they must be accountable, they would report back regularly to the rank and file, collective leadership was preferable to that of the single great man, and no one was immune from criticism.

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<sup>70</sup> Ballard, op.cit., p. 622. See also The Liberal Model and Africa, second last chapter.

The democratic potentialities did not die in the transition to 1994. A “host of significant social movements” arose through the latter 1990s. The Homeless People’s Alliance was the possible “forerunner”, to be followed by the Treatment Action Campaign in 1998, the Concerned Citizens’ Forum in 1999, and the Anti-Eviction Campaign, the Anti-Privatisation Forum, and the Landless People’s Movement in 2000, among others reconstituting a “vibrant and contentious civil society.” Some made claim to very large memberships – the Landless People’s, for instance, up to 100,000. Their origins, in the “high and growing levels of poverty and inequality” in South Africa, were also similar.<sup>71</sup> The concern of many of them, to oppose the “trend to authoritarianism” in the political environment, was equally important and rising. Utilising a repertoire of tactics, over a range of fundamental socio-political issues, these movements demonstrated that “power does not reside exclusively with political or economic elites,” nor is it shaped exclusively by the state. And consequentially, that it was possible even for marginalized people “to exert influence over policy and practice”, through activist, critical tactics like “shaming [leaders] and delegitimization”, as well as threatening to vote for another party.<sup>72</sup> Such aims and activities stand in sharp contrast to those of an over-compliant civil society in Botswana, where almost everything is indeed shaped by the state.

If elites are to be controlled, it is though popular organizations upholding similar values and practices. It is unlikely that other means exist to combat the overweening presumptions of the Aristocrats. No Mbeki can seriously undermine the complex and advanced structures of South Africa’s economy and society. The country has one of the highest levels

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<sup>71</sup> Ballard, op.cit., pp. 623-624.

<sup>72</sup> Ballard, op.cit., pp. 629-630.



of unionisation (members as a percentage of the work-force) in the world, and COSATU remains large, self-financing and active. The power of presidentialism and predominance obviously bulks large today, and the consequences of elitism are vivid. But the decade of the eighties showed that democratisation is a process, where the participatory future is built in the democratic practice of the day. Achieving a more participatory democracy is certain to be slow and incremental, but structural capacities and organizational resources are present in South Africa, and gains might still be made in areas like poverty, landlessness and HIV-AIDS through the agency of the unions and activist civics. Needs are critical,<sup>73</sup> and in addressing them through civic action democratisation is furthered. And criticising elitism, as the TAC, for instance, does so trenchantly, is of great value in itself.

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<sup>73</sup> The country has over 800,000 people in need of AIDS treatment, but only about 100,000 of them are getting it. The Economist, 8 October 2005.

## Appendix 1: The Expulsion from Botswana

Free speech exists in late 2005 if one has nothing too serious to say. Vice-President Ian Khama frankly declared in May that: “I believe one has to have democracy but with discipline.”<sup>74</sup> The discipline he perhaps had in mind was exerted over me on 31 May, when I was snatched from the portals of the High Court in Lobatse by security personnel, and put on a plane out of the country seven hours later. I had been declared to be a Prohibited Immigrant in February, and President Mogae had claimed that I was a threat to national security. I was resident in Botswana for fifteen years, and had been teaching and carrying out research, as Professor of Political Studies at the University of Botswana. My job functions included the responsibility of providing “service to the community”, and I had written on issues such as corruption, poverty and presidential power. I was a member of no organization other than the University. During the fourteen weeks when I appealed against the order in the courts, people frequently approached me in the street saying “we support you, prof”, “hang in there”, and “you’re saying just what we’re thinking.”

Mogae’s drastic action, in the assessment of South Africa’s leading financial daily, turned a difference in opinion “into an international cause celebre.” The President had apparently acted in a fit of pique against an elderly foreign academic who “dared to mention that the emperor was stark naked.” Festus Mogae was clearly “from the same mould as Africa’s other ‘Big Men’ – happy to pay lip service to democracy when the going is good, but autocratic to the core.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Christina Lamb, “In Sickness and in Wealth”, The Sunday Times Magazine, 3 July 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Editorial, Business Day, 2 June 2005. An experienced South African journalist observed at this time that African democracies are democratic until they are criticised.

## Appendix 1: The Expulsion from Botswana

Not long after my expulsion, two foreign journalists working for Botswana newspapers had their work and residence permits cancelled and they were forced to leave the country.<sup>76</sup> Students have written latterly about a stultifying atmosphere prevailing at UB and of “silence among those most able to speak [out].”<sup>77</sup> The need for criticism is present across the region, and it exists in reverse proportion to its acceptability to the ruling elites of the various countries. Here lies perhaps the basic failure of Soyinka’s *Toad Kings*. If the people were actively engaged – not merely consulted – both the socio-economic and the political weaknesses might begin to be corrected.

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<sup>76</sup> One, Rodrick Mukumbira, a Zimbabwean, was news editor of the *Ngami Times*, where he had worked for two years. *Bocongo News*, 10 August 2005.

<sup>77</sup> Personal communication, 29 September 2005, author’s name withheld.

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