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FOREWORD

This report is part of a larger research project that compares the platforms of Namibia's political parties ahead of the 2004 national elections. Funded by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and carried out by researchers of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID), the overall study consists of three independent articles that complement one another. Accordingly, Martin Boer (2004a) compiled the paper *Spot the difference: Political party platforms compared*, which analyses the ideological histories of Namibia's political parties and compares their political manifestos and other publications across a wide range of social, economic and political issues. Boer's paper also serves as a pre-study for this article on political party platforms and for Robin Sherbourne's forthcoming complementary work on the economic programmes of political parties, entitled *On the record: Political party representatives challenged. Part II: Economic policy*. Based on comprehensive questionnaires that constitute the basis of in-depth interviews with political party representatives, both papers examine issues that are generally omitted by the manifestos and other party publications.

The current study benefited from comments by Christiaan Keulder, who also compiled the underlying questionnaire on political platforms. I thank him and Martin Boer (2004b), whose SWAPO Party responses to party platform questionnaires proved indispensable.

1 INTRODUCTION

None of the parties have so far released their political programmes or manifestos, which would leave the voters with little time to glean their election promises. Swapo appears to be the only party that has hit the campaign trail. Opposition parties say a lack of resources is hampering them, but some observers point to deep(-)seated organisational troubles to get work off the ground.

(Amupadhi 2004)

Free and fair elections, which require free competition between different political parties, lay the foundation for democratic rule. Emminghaus (2002: 290—293) identifies four main functions of political parties — irrespective of their regional context: representation, integration, legitimisation, and the recruitment of political elites. Focusing on some African multiparty systems, Erdmann (2002:268) identifies some distinctive features shared by many of the political parties in those systems:

- ¥ Barely distinguishable political platforms
- ¥ Few party members
- ¥ Informal organisation
- ¥ Personality cults
- ¥ Missing links to civil society organisations
- ¥ Regional or ethnic support bases, and
- ¥ Mobilisation on the basis of party loyalty.

Furthermore, opposition parties in particular often lack the financial resources they need for election campaigning (Tetzlaff 2002:247).

In Namibia, the structural power imbalance between the ruling party and the opposition is the main challenge to consolidating a multiparty democracy. Both its historic achievements and its ethnically-determined support base of more than half the Namibian population make the ruling party, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) Party a superior political actor (Emminghaus 2002:302). Since Namibia's independence, the former liberation movement has managed to



constantly increase its dominance, and it currently holds more than two-thirds of the total number of seats in the National Assembly. Thus, Namibian politics are shaped by a democratic system dominated by one party, making the chances of an electoral victory by the opposition very slim. As Sherbourne (2004:17) argues, in a dominant-party system, opposition parties are there at best to act as bell ringers or at worst as part of a system of state patronage that keeps key constituencies and difficult individuals happy. With regard to political party platforms, Boer (2004a:18) concludes that issues are not as important in Namibian politics and elections as they are in other countries with stronger opposition parties, where some of them actually have a good chance of winning and implementing their policies.

According to Keulder's (2000:279) study on voting behaviour in Namibia, party identification is the result of the country's history of race- and ethnically-based colonialism. As he (ibid.) points out, This, and the subsequent development of a liberation struggle, caused a clear socio-political divide in society. Party identification and ethnicity shape voters' perceptions of what makes the best party, and the distribution of party sympathy is relatively fixed. Given the inequality created and sustained by apartheid and colonial rule, it is not surprising that the need for change and improvement was identified as an important voter motivation (ibid.:276). If the strong demands for change and improvement are not met, therefore, instead of switching parties, Namibian voters will abstain from voting. Thus, voter volatility is low; the election outcomes are predictable; and policy issues are sidelined.

As national elections are to be held in mid-November 2004, the aim of this

study is to contribute to the improvement of voter education. The article's purpose is to compare the responses given by party representatives during face-to-face interviews, and to examine whether there are substantial differences in their parties' priorities and proposed policies. Five policy issues were chosen to provide a basis upon which potential policy differences between the parties could be identified, namely:

- ¥ government
- ¥ external relations
- ¥ democracy
- ¥ social fabric, and
- ¥ social groups.

The five topics are further subdivided into 22 categories. These categories serve to distinguish between party positions on those specific issues, as well as parties' general political priorities across issues. While the in-depth interviews examine in detail a number of topics that are addressed in the various parties' written manifestos, the questionnaire includes a number of issues that are generally omitted in such official publications. As can be expected in the latter case, the interviewee's personal opinion generally comes to the fore.

2 METHODOLOGY

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with leaders of the following political parties, all of which are registered with the Electoral Commission of Namibia:

- ¥ Congress of Democrats (CoD)
- ¥ Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA)
- ¥ Monitor Action Group (MAG)
- ¥ National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO)
- ¥ Republican Party (RP)
- ¥ South West Africa National Union (SWANU), and
- ¥ Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP).



Unfortunately, the ruling SWAPO Party declined face-to-face interviews. Owing to the dominance and political importance of the SWAPO Party, the interviews were substituted by a thorough study of the party's political manifestos and other official documents (Boer 2004b). Also, numerous attempts to conduct a face-to-face interview with the party representative of the United Democratic Front (UDF) were unsuccessful due to the latter's constant postponements. The only remaining alternative was to exclude the UDF from the study.²

Boer (2004a) and Hopwood (forthcoming:41–84) describe the parties included in this study, their history, and the evolution of their political platforms. The parties themselves can be arranged into three categories:

1. Those that have been represented in Parliament since independence (the CoD, the DTA and MAG)
2. Those that had dissolved in order to form part of the DTA for the Constituent Assembly elections in 1989; broke away and reactivated themselves in 2003; and won seats in the Local Authority Elections in May 2004 (NUDO and the RP), and
3. Parties that have to date had no electoral success (SWANU and the WRP).

Being almost totally insignificant today, Namibia's first national movement, SWANU, was included on account of its historical importance. The WRP, which formed an alliance with SWANU for the 1999 National Election but is since independent again, was incorporated on the grounds of its far-left political programme that is notably different from those of the ruling party and the major opposition parties.

In the first stage of this research study, party presidents were approached to

identify members well-versed in political platforms who would be available as interviewees. In all cases, the parties selected either their president or another top party leader. In the second stage, the persons interviewed were handed a questionnaire in preparation for the interview. The third stage involved conducting and transcribing the interviews. In the fourth and final stage, the party representatives' responses were summarised and edited. These results were then compared with the written political manifesto of the party concerned (as summarised in Boer 2004a).

The text that now follows comprises statements based on interviews with the following party representatives on the dates indicated:

- ¥ Hewat Beukes, President of the WRP; 13 August 2004
- ¥ Rihupisa Kandando, President of SWANU; 11 June 2004
- ¥ Katuutire Kaura, President of the DTA; 21 July 2004
- ¥ Henk Mudge, President of the RP; 22 July 2004
- ¥ Kosie Pretorius, Chairperson of MAG; 14 June 2004
- ¥ Kuiama Riruako, President of NUDO; 20 July 2004, and
- ¥ Nora Schimming-Chase, Member of Parliament for the CoD; 14 June 2004

References to secondary literature and official party documents are also indicated in the text.

3 SECTION 1 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: GOVERNMENT

3.1 Decentralisation

Decentralisation is the delegation or devolution of responsibilities, functions and resources to regional and local government within the framework of a unitary state. The introductory question, *Could you please tell us what your party's position is on decentralisation?*, is an attempt to determine

²Also excluded from this study is the Federal Convention of Namibia (FCN), which gained one seat in the Constituent Assembly in 1989, but lost it again in 1994. The FCN took part in the Parliamentary Elections in 1999, but did not issue an election manifesto. Also excluded are the Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC) and various Residents' Associations. The NDMC clearly targets the rural population in eastern Namibia and is, therefore, regionally based. Although the Residents' Associations campaigned successfully in a few towns, they reject party politics (Hopwood, forthcoming).

whether political party representatives favour decentralisation or centralisation. In their responses, all parties mentioned the importance of the devolution of powers and resources to sub-national levels of government. For example, in its official manifesto, the SWAPO Party (1999a:6) classifies the implementation of decentralisation within the overall goals of national reconciliation and fostering peace and a common loyalty to a unitary state.

A second question required respondents to identify the sort of powers and resources to be devolved. Among the answers given were health, education, agriculture, and land distribution. In addition, the party representatives were asked to name the inherent benefits of decentralisation. For the DTA,

the benefits included people being able to deal with the everyday problems in their region. The SWAPO Party stressed that decentralisation provided Namibians with more choices regarding public services (ibid.) MAG, NUDO and the RP highlighted the importance of bringing government to the people. More practically orientated, the COD believed that decentralisation benefited socio-economic development and could prevent a rural exodus. However, the RP, the DTA, MAG and the CoD criticised the ruling party's track record, and demanded training and systematic capacity-building programmes for regional councillors and local officials.

Only two of the party leaders mentioned the inherent problems



Table 1: Decentralisation

Party	What sort of powers and resources should be devolved to the sub-national levels of government?	What are the inherent benefits of decentralisation?	What are the inherent problems of decentralisation? How would you address these problems?
CoD	Health and social welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Could prevent a rural exodus ¥ Each region should get equal powers and, thus, facilitate genuine social and economic development 	n/a (No response given)
DTA	n/a (No response given)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ People can deal with everyday problems in the regions ¥ Immediate procedures in the case of natural disasters such as floods 	n/a (No response given)
MAG	Everything concerning group rights and local development	Brings government to the people	n/a (No response given)
NUDO	Agriculture, health, education	Brings government to the people	n/a (No response given)
RP	n/a (No response given)	Brings government to the people	National unity should not be compromised
SWANU	Land distribution, community services, education, health	Unity in diversity is taken into consideration	Can easily be misunderstood as a different form of apartheid
SWAPO Party	Planning for development, decision-making and the running of government affairs that affect their lives on a day-to-day basis (SWAPO Party 1999a:6)	Once the process of decentralisation is complete, the people would be able to decide what services they want, where they want them, and how they should be delivered (SWAPO Party 1999a:6)	n/a (No response given)
WRP	Health and education need to be coordinated at the national level, but should be activated on the regional and local level	Indispensable component of democratic rule	n/a (No response given)



associated with decentralisation. The RP warned, for example, that it should not be allowed to detract from national unity, while SWANU argued that decentralisation could easily be misunderstood as a different form of apartheid.

Contradicting every other party's vision of decentralisation that devolved functions to regional and local government, MAG demanded a federal system based on ethnic origin.

In its party manifesto, NUDO (n.d.:1) asserts that the regions should receive additional governing powers and the potential to earn more revenue. Besides the views expressed by the RP interviewee, the party's manifesto (RP 2003:3) also calls for a ward system of voter representation to be reintroduced into local government.

3.2 Government efficiency

The second set of questions was used to determine the extent to which party leaders were satisfied with the efficiency of the current government. The aim was to examine whether party leaders saw the public service as an instrument with which to combat unemployment or, more specifically, to promote certain groups; or whether they believed it should focus on the delivery of public services. We also considered the respondents' position on the size of government as well as their views on the costs and responsiveness of government services.

The findings suggest that the respondents regarded government primarily as a service deliverer. All the interviewees believed that government was too large. SWANU demanded more private sector initiatives with regard to job creation. The RP stated that economic development needed to be achieved by creating a climate that was conducive to investment and the provision of infrastructure. In

contrast, the SWAPO Party seemed to regard job creation in the public sector and service delivery as equally important. Responding to criticism concerning the size of government, it stated that it was a direct result of the policy of national reconciliation and yet another price to pay for socio-political tranquillity (SWAPO Party 1999b:18). Nevertheless, the respondents did not demand that public servants be dismissed. Instead, some of the respondents emphasised that merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public service. The CoD said it would cut down on salaries and car allowances, and recommended early retirement for civil servants. Both the DTA and NUDO emphasised the importance of decentralisation, saying that the regions could provide job opportunities for civil servants.

(See Table 2 on page 8)

3.3 Government corruption

The various causes of corruption can be viewed from two perspectives. The explanation that involves individual characteristics tends to view corruption as something that arises from greed or the inability to withstand temptation. A broader explanation of corruption requires an analysis of the structural influences of society. The conditions of less-developed countries are such that corruption is likely to have different causes and consequences than in their more developed counterparts. According to the SWAPO Party (1999a:23), the extent of corruption in Namibia is not systemic. The party addresses the problem by putting in place laws and institutions for combating corruption (ibid.). In an effort to fight corruption in Namibia, Parliament passed the Anti-corruption Act, 2003 (No. 8 of 2003). The Act allows for the establishment of an Anti-corruption Commission, and specifies its functions.



Table 2: Government efficiency

Party	How would your party make government more efficient?	What is your party's position on the size of government, and what would you propose to reform the civil service?	Is government too expensive?	Are government services too costly and too cumbersome?	How would your party go about rectifying these problems?
CoD	Government should be slimmed down by reducing the size of Cabinet	Too large	n/a (No response given)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Total chaos, especially at the Ministry of Home Affairs ¥ Health services and the education system are inefficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Cut down on salaries, car allowances and other perks ¥ Early retirement for civil servants
DTA	Government should be slimmed down by reducing the size of Cabinet	Too large	Yes	n/a (No response given)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Decentralisation ¥ The regions provide job opportunities for civil servants
MAG	Government should be slimmed down by making the bicameral Parliament unicameral	Too large	Yes	Yes	n/a (No response given)
NUDO	Government should be slimmed down by reducing the size of Cabinet	Too large	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Decentralisation ¥ The regions provide job opportunities for civil servants
RP	Instead of regarding the expansion of the civil service as a method of job creation, the government should achieve economic development by creating a climate that is conducive to investment and the provision of infrastructure	Too large	n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)	Merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public sector
SWANU	Merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public sector	Too large	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ The public service should not be seen as an instrument for job creation ¥ Strengthen initiatives in the private sector
SWAPO Party	Partnership of all stakeholders brings about a common purpose to our effort and resources (SWAPO Party 1999a:6)	Direct result of the policy of national reconciliation (SWAPO Party 1999b:18)	n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)	Under the SWAPO government, the country's civil service has become representative of the whole population, and is responsive to its needs (SWAPO Party 1999a:22)
WRP	Merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public sector	n/a (No response given)	No	n/a (No response given)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Organisation of the masses ¥ Decentralisation



In respect of the parties' views of corruption, the RP, for example, considered greed as the main motivating factor when it came to leading political personalities becoming corrupt. To combat corruption and self-enrichment, the CoD has put in place a code of conduct for its own leaders and would force political personalities to publicly declare their private interests. In their responses, the RP and the CoD considered the impact of corruption on foreign private investment to be particularly harmful for a developing economy. According to the DTA and NUDO, corruption could intensify inter-ethnic tension and distrust.³ To counteract corrupt practices, MAG highlighted the importance of moral and religious values. The party also pointed to shortcomings in Namibia's legislative and judicial system. Being Marxist-Leninist and Trotskyist in ideology, SWANU and the WRP stated that corruption was a symptom of the deep-rooted economic and political weaknesses and shortcomings of capitalism.

In their political manifestos, the DTA and NUDO offer additional recommendations to curb corruption. The DTA (1999a:5) proposes specific cooperation with the Auditor General, and NUDO (n.d.:1) would prohibit Permanent Secretaries and other members of the public service from sitting on the boards of private companies.

3.4 Transparency

Since the mid-1990s, Members of Parliament (MPs) have been obliged to declare their assets through the Register of Members' Interests, although the only time that they have actually done so was in 2003 (Boer 2004b:4). An important question to ask the respondents, therefore, was whether MPs and civil servants should declare their assets publicly.

All parties agreed that MPs and civil servants should publicly declare their assets. The WRP was the only one to qualify its point of view on this, stating that such declarations should be limited to activities and businesses that involved national resources, such as diamonds and fish.

Apart from the legal requirement that Namibian parties disclose foreign funding, there are no regulations governing the private funding of parties (Hopwood, forthcoming:25). Thus, the interviewees were requested to give their opinion on whether political parties should publicly declare their sources of funding. The answers revealed that the CoD, the DTA, MAG, NUDO, SWANU and the RP were in favour of publicly declaring sources of funding. However, the DTA and the RP stated that potential donors in respect of opposition parties were intimidated and scared off by the SWAPO Party. In SWANU's view, foreign forces wanted to control Namibia by means of party funding, while the WRP again saw such declarations being restricted to only those resources that related to the national interest.

The final question on the topic of transparency was, 'Should political parties submit to the public records of their activities and expenditure?'. The CoD, the DTA, MAG and NUDO mentioned the importance of submitting records of activities and expenditure to the public. SWANU limited such an obligation to political parties that were represented in Parliament and, thus, funded by taxpayers' money. Only the WRP disapproved of the submission of records, stating that it would not like to reveal its political strategies. The SWAPO Party does not address these issues in its official documents.

³Particularly when competition for jobs is extreme, corruption can take the form of ethnic discrimination.

4 SECTION 2 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: EXTERNAL RELATIONS

4.1 The United Nations

A number of international organisations played an active role in Namibia's decolonisation process and its transition to democratic rule. Since independence, Namibia has itself become an active member of various international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Namibian government has also sent troops to a number of conflict regions.

During the face-to-face interviews, the party representatives were questioned about their official position as regards the UN; the role Namibia should play within this international body; and whether Namibia should participate in peace and other missions abroad. Almost all the parties mentioned the importance of the UN in securing worldwide peace and stability. The CoD qualified its positive response by stressing that the UN treated us (the Namibian people) undemocratically in the past. This statement refers to the UN's labelling of the liberation movement, SWAPO, as the sole authentic representative of the Namibian people in 1976. In addition, the CoD mentioned that, since Namibia regularly made its payments to the UN, it should employ more qualified Namibians. The only strictly negative reference to the UN came by way of the WRP, which called the UN a very dangerous imperialist organisation that is just stirring up more problems all over the world. In their responses, the CoD, MAG, NUDO and SWANU emphasised the importance of Namibia's participation in missions abroad. The DTA and the RP did not explicitly mention UN missions. The SWAPO Party's mani-

festos does not comment on its official position regarding the UN, but the SWAPO Party-led government attaches high value to the international body's decisions (GRN 2004:63).

4.2 The African Union

In 2002, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was transformed into the AU. The new body focuses on priorities and objectives that are different from its predecessors. With the aim to strengthen Africa's profile and its role in the international community, the AU plans to establish an African Parliament, an African Court of Justice, and an African Security Council, as well as a task force to intervene in internal conflicts.

Namibia's party representatives were asked to state their official position as regards the AU; the role Namibia should play within the international organisation; and whether Namibia should take part in AU missions. Even though almost all the respondents highlighted the importance of the AU, some political parties criticised its track record. The RP, for example, called for African leaders to be more forthcoming when it came to intervening in the internal affairs of AU member states. In its response, the CoD expressed the view that civil society organisations needed to play an active role in what it called the Heads-of-State Club. MAG contended that AU member states should not give away their sovereignty and national independence at the end of the day. NUDO warned that one had to ensure one's own affairs were in order before introducing one's ideas to others. Again, the only clearly negative reference to the AU came from the WRP, which called it a toothless organisation. Nevertheless, the WRP stated that the AU could serve as a platform for contacts between Africa's progressive forces. Although



the SWAPO Party itself does not mention an official position on the AU, the SWAPO Party-led government has stated that Namibia's major priority is to build strong ties with all African countries, and that the AU embodies the aspirations of the African people (GRN 2004:68).

4.3 New Partnership for Africa's Development

Initiated by the AU, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) aims to increase Africa's international credibility, and to strengthen confidence among foreign and domestic investors. Through good governance and the liberalisation of African economies, the initiative intends to renew existing relationships with industrial nations. NEPAD encourages African countries to achieve and maintain a high standard of good governance in social, economic and political aspects in return for enhanced development assistance and better cooperation in trade (NEPRU & HSF 2004). The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an AU instrument of mutual control with regard to good governance.

In its official documents, the SWAPO Party does not specifically mention its position regarding NEPAD. In respect of the SWAPO Party-led government's official position on NEPAD, it remained unclear until 2002. In fact, the government has questioned the inclusion of the political component in the APRM on several occasions (ibid.). After some adjustments to the original NEPAD plan, Namibia, which can claim to have one of the good governance systems in Africa, accepted the amended plan in principle (ibid.). While a number of civil society organisations in Namibia questioned the authenticity of NEPAD's ownership by Africans and expressed the fear that it was bound to put an end to social

welfare programmes (ibid.), almost all political parties seem to be unconditionally committed to the vision and principles of the new initiative, including the APRM. Again, the WRP ends up on the fringes by stating that NEPAD's priorities are vague, and that the African watchdog has always been blind.

4.4 The Southern African Development Community

SADC's principal aim is to enhance economic and political cooperation and integration in the southern African region. In the long run, SADC plans to move in a direction similar to the one the European Union has taken, and to adopt a regional Parliament and a single market. However, a southern African free trade area would stand on shaky ground for a number of reasons, e.g. —

- ¥ minor investment activities
- ¥ limited trade relations between member states
- ¥ the overwhelming economic dominance of South Africa
- ¥ a lack of manufacturing industries
- ¥ the limited purchasing power of domestic markets, and
- ¥ a lack of market and product diversification.

In its manifesto, the SWAPO Party does not mention its official position on SADC. The SWAPO Party-led government, however, attaches great importance to its relations with SADC member states (GRN 2004:64). Furthermore, the government states that it is committed to cooperation through sustained regional development and economic integration. As Table 3 below shows, all the respondents agree on Namibia's continued membership of SADC.

To further assess the issue, the interviewees were asked whether the SADC region should become more



integrated or stay the way it was. Most of the respondents promoted further integration into SADC. Similarly, the leaders mentioned the importance of a regional Parliament. MAG, however, cautioned that the first responsibility of a Namibian Parliamentarian is the Namibian people. NUDO stressed that member states were reluctant to give up their national sovereignty for the benefit of a supranational organisation. With regard to a single currency, the CoD, the RP and SWANU expressed their scepticism of its success, pointing out that the economic power held by the various SADC member countries was extremely variable. In the WRP's view, proper cooperation between southern African countries would only be possible if one gets rid of the governments of today. According to the WRP, governments should be representatives of the working masses that have a vital interest in changing the existing economic relations.

Overall, the findings on the topic of external relations suggest that, in principle, all parties share an internationalist approach that is not restricted to

the African continent. According to Budge and Klingemann (2001:22), a positive attitude towards internationalism is grouped as a left emphasis. As shown above, the only negative references to the international bodies in question come by way of the WRP, which generally disapproves of their structures as well as their track records. Nevertheless, under specific conditions, the WRP stated it would strongly support the idea of international cooperation. MAG, however, which was generally accepting of international organisations, seemed to have a more cautious and hesitant outlook on integration.

5 SECTION 3 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: DEMOCRACY

5.1 Individual rights

The inalienable fundamental human rights and freedoms that are enshrined in Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia are obliged to be upheld by the executive, legislature and judiciary powers and all organs of the government as well as the Namibian citizenry (RoN 1990). In this regard, Table 4 presents the responses

Table 3: The Southern African Development Community

Party	Should Namibia continue as a member of SADC?	Should the SADC region become more integrated or should it stay the way it is?	Should SADC move in a similar direction to that taken by the European Union and adopt a regional Parliament	and a single currency?
	Yes	More integrated	Yes	No
	Yes	More integrated		
	Yes	More integrated	Yes, in the long run	Yes, in the long run
	Yes	More integrated		n/a (No response given)
	Yes			
	Yes	More integrated	Yes, in the long run	
		First meet specific requirements	First meet specific requirements	First meet specific requirements



of the political party representatives to the following questions: *Are individuals' rights adequately protected?*, and *If not, what would your party do to improve the situation?* The findings reveal that in the opinion of the RP, SWANU and the SWAPO Party, individual rights are adequately protected. However, SWANU qualifies its statement by calling for the population to be educated about their rights. According to the DTA, MAG, NUDO and the WRP, individual rights are not adequately protected. They expressed concern about human rights abuses committed by security forces due to the militarisation of specific areas of the country; the negative effect of socio-economic inequalities on the protection of rights; the inefficiency of labour unions; and gender imbalances. With reference to human rights abuses committed by paramilitary forces, the CoD stated that individual rights were not protected at all.

5.2 Group rights

Given the country's experience with apartheid and colonial rule, it is not surprising that the CoD, the DTA and the RP expressed their disapproval of group rights. Accordingly, the RP stated that group rights were exploited to justify racial discrimination in the past. The CoD pointed out that the liberation struggle was against apartheid. In contrast, MAG, NUDO and the WRP called for the protection of group rights. Traditionally, MAG has always insisted on group rights for ethnic, labour and non-economic demographic groups.

Table 4: Individual rights

Party	Are individuals' rights adequately protected?	If not, what would your party do to improve the situation?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Not protected at all ¥ Human rights abuses committed by the Special Field Force (SFF) 	Political education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Not adequately protected ¥ Human rights abuses committed during the state of emergency in the Caprivi Region in 1999 	n/a (No response given)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Not adequately protected ¥ Negative effect of socio-economic inequalities on the protection of rights 	n/a (No response given)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Not adequately protected ¥ Gender imbalances still need to be corrected 	Tolerance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Adequately protected 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Adequately protected ¥ Low levels of understanding and awareness of rights among the people 	Political education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Democracy is about choices and rights (The SWAPO Party has worked hard to remove obstacles to these choices by guaranteeing freedom of speech, freedom from racism, and freedom from discrimination on the basis of religion, sex and ethnicity (SWAPO Party 1999a:5) 	If anyone is wronged, our institutions are open and accessible to them to redress (the situation) (SWAPO Party 1999a:22)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¥ Not adequately protected ¥ Inefficiency of labour unions 	Labour unions need to participate in fighting for the rights of the individual



The WRP interviewee called for quota regulations for ethnic and sexual minorities to be represented at all organs of mass representation in Parliament. The NUDO representative spoke of the party's insistence on cultural rights for the various ethnic groups. According to the SWANU representative, group rights were already protected in the Constitution: the right to property (Article 16) protected the historically advantaged, while Affirmative Action (Article 23) favoured the historically disadvantaged. The SWAPO Party does not address the question of group rights in its publications.

5.3 Constitutionalism

The Namibian Constitution contains regulations with regard to the concept of *state*; the organisation, functions, duties and objectives of the state; and the legal status of citizens (RoN 1990). With the exception of MAG, all the political parties believed that the Constitution fulfilled the needs of the Namibian people. Nevertheless, aside from MAG, NUDO and the WRP also highlighted the need to change specific parts of the Constitution. If they were ever faced with the need to change the Constitution, the CoD, the DTA and NUDO would only do so on the

Table 5: Constitutionalism

Party	Does the Constitution of Namibia fulfil the needs of the Namibian people?	Is there a need to change any part of the Constitution?	If ever faced with the need to change the Constitution, how would your party go about doing that?
	Yes	There are some things that could have been better written but one does not change those things after 15 years (No further explanation given)	Referendum
	Yes	Somewhere along the line one might find the need for amendments (No further explanation given)	¥ Reach consensus with all political parties (Like the Constituent Assembly in 1989) ¥ National referendum
		Absence of group rights and death penalty (i.e. a call to amend Article 6)	No referendum (Disapproval of the one-person-one-vote approach.)
	Yes	Article 132 (2): The majorities required in Parliament for the repeal and/or amendment of any of the provisions of this Constitution shall be: (a) two-thirds of all the members of the National Assembly; and (b) two-thirds of all the members of the National Council (RoN 1990)	Referendum
	Yes	Any amendments need to be carefully and cautiously considered	Procedures for amendments are provided for in the Constitution
	Yes	n/a (No response given)	Procedures for amendments are provided for in the Constitution
	Commitment to constitutional rule is one of the main features of the SWAPO-led independent Namibia (SWAPO Party 1999b:3)	n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)
	Yes	Article 16 (1): Right to property	Fundamental social transformation



basis of a national referendum. The RP and SWANU stated they would act according to the procedures for amendment provided for in Article 132 of the Constitution (ibid.). The results of the interviews are shown in Table 5.

Almost all political parties mention the importance of respecting the Constitution in their manifestos. Interestingly, in its party manifesto, MAG (2004:3) stresses that the word *secular* should be removed from the Constitution. During the face-to-face interview, the MAG representative emphasised the absence of group rights and the death penalty in the Constitution, and pointed out other Articles that should be changed.

5.4 Democratic rule

After more than a century of colonialism, Namibia has experienced its first 14 years of democratic rule. In the latter short period, Namibia is still in the process of consolidating its democracy (Keulder et al. 2000:238). Reflecting the notions of a number of political theorists, Keulder (2002:4) points out that the exact point at which a new democracy can be considered consolidated is not particularly clear. In addition, political scholars disagree on what preconditions to use for recognising a system as a consolidated democracy (see e.g. Linz & Stepan 1997; Merkel 1994).

Against this background, the Namibian political parties' acceptance

Table 6: Democratic rule

Party	What are the major challenges to the consolidation of democracy at the moment?	How would your party address these challenges?	Just how much of a democracy is Namibia today?	How can the quality of democracy be improved?
				n/a (No response given)
				n/a (No response given)
		n/a (No response given)		



of the concept *democracy* was first assessed by means of the question, *Do you believe democracy as we have it in the Constitution at the moment is the most appropriate form of government for Namibia?* In their responses, all parties agreed that democracy was the most appropriate form of government. This finding suggests that the main political players accepted democracy to be the only game in town (Linz & Stepan 1997:15).

A second question puts the issue of democratic consolidation at the centre of the analysis, namely, *What are the major challenges to the consolidation of democracy at the moment?* With respect to their responses, the political parties can be divided into two groups: (1) the CoD, NUDO, the RP and the WRP demand that the Constitution must be put into practice by the ruling elite; and (2) the DTA, MAG and SWANU identify a lack of education among the citizenry as a stumbling block to the consolidation of democracy.

In a similar vein, the interviewees were asked, *Just how much of a de-*

mocracy is Namibia today? Table 6 provides a number of proposals by the parties regarding what they saw as challenges to the consolidation of democracy, and what they would do to improve the quality of democracy. Particularly interesting were MAG's proposal to raise the minimum voting age to 35 years; NUDO's proposal to establish a constitutional court; and the DTA's proposal to change the current party-list system. In its official publications, the SWAPO Party (1999a:4) states that Namibia's democracy has been applauded far and wide, and that it plans to provide Namibians with more choices by directing its efforts towards decentralisation (ibid.:6).

5.5 Participation

Even if electoral participation is important with regard to the selection of rulers, a living democracy also requires non-electoral participation in the political process on the part of the citizenry. As Keulder et al. (2000:238) states, the future of democracy lies not only in the hands of the ruling elites, but also in the hands of ordinary citizens.

Table 7: Participation

Party	Current levels of participation	Major problems	Solution proposed by party
	Unsatisfactory	Lack of education	Education
	Unsatisfactory	Voter apathy	Voter education
	Unsatisfactory	¥ Hopelessness ¥ White Namibians believe that they cannot make an impact because of their numbers	Political education
	Unsatisfactory	Voter apathy	n/a (No response given)
	Unsatisfactory	Political apathy, especially among Namibian whites and the Christian community	Motivation
	Unsatisfactory	Poverty	Civic education
	n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)	¥ Enhance popular participation to influence public policy decisions (SWAPO Party 1999a:3) ¥ Provide genuine democratic governance that allows for the existence of a plurality of political views and social forces (SWAPO Party 1999b:3)
	Unsatisfactory	Lack of confidence among the masses	Empowering the masses



The questions posed to the interviewees aimed at assessing the degree of satisfaction with political participation in Namibia. If dissatisfaction prevails, the underlying problems need to be identified and addressed. The findings represented in Table 7 show that all respondents were dissatisfied with the current levels of political participation. In their responses, the CoD, the DTA, MAG and SWANU suggested that education was the key to addressing the underlying problems.

5.6 Opposition

Table 8 presents the responses to the following question: *What are the roles and functions of an opposition party?* The respondents named a number of functions that were practically identical to the definitions provided by political scholars such as Nohlen (2003: 348), namely criticism, control, and alternative policies. Thus, the respondents can be said to understand the role and function of the opposition.

Another important question posed to the respondents was how necessary opposition parties were for Namibia's future. The results showed agreement among all the respondents except SWANU, which was that opposition was inherent to democra-

cy. Being Marxist-Leninist in its ideology, SWANU stated there is nothing wrong with a one-party state, adding, however, that the ruling party needed to put democracy into practice among its members. NUDO pleaded for what it termed a Government of National Unity, in which all political parties participated. The SWAPO Party addresses neither the function nor the necessity of opposition parties in its official publications.

6 SECTION 4 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: SOCIAL FABRIC

6.1 Law and order

All of the party representatives cited crime as a serious daily problem that affected women and children in particular. The respondents identified a variety of root causes for this: The DTA, for example, argued that a misinterpretation of freedom had resulted in a high crime rate after independence, but added that the recently declining figures were due to effective police work. The CoD stated that corruption in the penal system, inefficiency and slowness were decisive factors with regard to the escalating crime rate. The CoD, NUDO and the WRP saw poverty as the root cause

Table 8: Opposition

Party	Roles and functions of an opposition party
	¥ To challenge government



of crime. Reflecting its hard-line right policy position, MAG strongly emphasised an effective authority and law and order by demanding the reinstatement of the death penalty. The SWAPO Party (1999a:23) intends to increase its efforts to counter crime against women and children and to strengthen support mechanisms for the victims of crime. Furthermore, the ruling party will make it more difficult for serious offenders to get bail (ibid.). Table 9 below records the parties' proposals in respect of crime reduction.

In its manifesto, the CoD (1999b:3) adds the review of gun legislation to its list of party proposals on crime reduction.

6.2 Traditional morality

Generally, an emphasis on traditional morality is described as a rightist policy position (Budge & Klingemann 2001:21). The party responses contained in Table 10 below indicate that the DTA's, MAG's, NUDO's and the RP's positions on traditional values clearly lean to the right. The results also show that the DTA, MAG and the RP strictly disapproved of prostitution and sex work. SWANU and the WRP identified the socio-economic set-up

as the root cause of the decline of morality. All respondents condemned pornography, while NUDO stated that pornography and alcohol abuse related mainly to a lack of self-control. The CoD called for poverty and unemployment, which it saw as the root causes of alcohol abuse, to be combated. In the context of its campaign on the prevention and control of sexually transmitted diseases, the SWAPO Party (1999a:10) emphasises the countering of alcohol abuse. As regards abortion, four of the responding parties condemned it, while the CoD demanded legalisation that would cater for specific circumstances. Both the DTA and NUDO distinguished between two different kinds of homosexuality: one that was a natural phenomenon, and one that was learned. Regarding the state of family life, the DTA and SWANU claimed that a return to traditional values was needed. Unfortunately, both parties refrained from defining what they meant by *traditional values*. The SWAPO Party does not address the issues of prostitution and sex work, pornography, abortion, homosexuality and the state of family life in its official publications.

(See Table 10 on pages 20/21)

Table 9: Law and order

Party	How crime can be reduced
	‡ Poverty reduction leads to crime reduction



6.3 National effort/social harmony

With independence, Namibia inherited the burden of more than 100 years of racial and ethnic segregation as well as the violent heritage of a war that lasted for more than 20 years. In this context, therefore, the party representatives were asked to identify the main challenges to nationhood and social harmony, and suggest how they would address these challenges (see Table 11 below). Not surprisingly, all the parties pointed out that there was still much to be done to consolidate unity in diversity. The SWAPO Party (1999b:4) identifies unemployment, poverty and socio-economic inequities as the major challenges ahead. The CoD, the DTA and the WRP complained about ethnicity and tribalism among the political leadership, specifically that certain groups were favoured for employment in the public sector. Contradicting every other party's vision of a unified Namibia, MAG stated that the forced integration into a unified culture challenged nationhood and social harmony. To sum up, one might say that almost all the parties rated unity on an equal footing with diversity, while MAG seemed to give preference to diversity.

(See Table 11 on page 20)

6.4 Cultural pluralism

The category *social pluralism* was included in the study in order to determine whether the interviewees had a positive or a negative attitude towards multiculturalism. Given the fact that the Namibian nation is endowed with the cultural variety of at least ten language groups, an important question to pose was the following: *Is Namibia's cultural diversity an asset or a liability?*

A significant proportion of the respondents regarded cultural diversity as an asset. However, MAG and

SWANU qualified their positive position by saying that diversity could only be an asset if handled properly. Only the WRP argued that cultural diversity was a liability because it created difficulty in uniting the working class.

Asked about their position on English as the official language, all respondents except the WRP expressed their approval of the status quo. According to the WRP, the middle class used English as a tool to oppress the uneducated masses. Most parties argued that all languages in the country should either be developed to stand on an equal footing with each other, or at least promoted in the media and the school system. The SWAPO Party does not address the issue of language in its publications.

The party leaders were also questioned about their views on current challenges with regard to the national culture and local cultures. Table 12 suggests that all parties favoured unity in diversity.

(See Table 12 on page 21)

7 SECTION 5 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: SOCIAL GROUPS

7.1 Labour groups

As Namibia has a large rural population and an underdeveloped manufacturing sector, labour groups, i.e. unions, seem to represent only a small minority. Nevertheless, Namibia's overall unionisation rate is high by international standards (LaRRI 2002), and the unions remain key players among Namibia's civil society organisations. After independence, the biggest challenge facing the labour unions was to devise an effective strategy by means of which to influence broader socio-economic policies in favour of its working class base (ibid.). This task proved to be

**Table 10: Traditional morality**

Party	Prostitution and sex work	Pornography	Alcohol abuse
	Concentrate on the accompanying complex of problems, especially health	Should be discouraged	Combat the root causes of alcohol abuse: poverty and unemployment
	Moral decadence	Moral decadence: needs to be banned	Problem not so severe
	Disapprove	Disapprove	Disapprove
	¥ Human desire as the root cause ¥ The society's social responsibility	Problem of a lack of self-control	Problem of a lack of self-control
	Support every action to eliminate	Support every action to eliminate	Support every action to eliminate
	Socio-economic set-up as the root cause	n/a (No response given)	Tolerated in moderation for relaxation
	n/a (No response given)	Campaign of prevention and control of sexually transmitted diseases emphasises the countering of alcohol abuse (SWAPO Party 1999a:10)	n/a (No response given)
	Socio-economic set-up as the root cause	n/a (No response given)	Socio-economic set-up as root cause

Table 11: National effort/Social harmony

Party	How to address the main challenges to nationhood and social harmony
	Party slogan: One party, one country, many cultures; i.e. unity in diversity
	Merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public sector
	n/a (No response given)
	Tolerance and mutual acceptance
	Merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public sector
	Lessons from history, especially the recognition of the contribution to the liberation struggle by various parts of the nation
	(From SWAPO Party 1999a:3, 4 and 1999b:iv, 4) ¥ The policy of national reconciliation led to the rapid disappearance of racial and ethnic hatred and a unified nation that was still evolving ¥ A great deal of work still needs to be done to consolidate unity in diversity ¥ Affirmative Action is needed to redirect resources to the needs of previously neglected communities ¥ The living conditions of the poor majority of the people need to be improved ¥ A firm foundation for the diversification and expansion of economy needs to be laid
	¥ Comprehensive and coherent programme on nation-building ¥ Promotion of the people's interests on a national level



Abortion	Homosexuality	Family life	Youth
Legalise abortion in cases of rape and on medical, psychological or social grounds ⁴	Sexual preferences are private matters	Threatened because of unemployment and low pensions	Lack of role models and vision
Absolutely opposed	¥ Distinguishes between two types: (1) a natural phenomenon and a learned phenomenon ¥ No need for interference	Security and a return to traditional values needed	n/a (No response given)
Disapprove	Disapprove	Group rights need to apply in respect of the family unit	Stricter implementation of the international conventions on the rights of the child
Disapprove	¥ Distinguishes between two types: (1) a natural phenomenon and a learned phenomenon	Emphasis lies on faithfulness in marriage	Knowledge of own and other cultures needed
Support every action to eliminate	Society (especially churches) need to influence behavioural change	Needs protection	Needs protection and opportunity to develop
Question of religious belief	Tolerant	Call for a return to traditional values	Education in social responsibilities and moral values
n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)	Address the problem of unemployment among the youth (SWAPO Party 1999a:4)
Free choice	Tolerant	Threat of domestic violence	n/a (No response given)

Table 12: Cultural pluralism

Party	Proposals on current challenges with regard to the national culture and local cultures
	Preserve local cultures and traditions in order to form a national culture
	¥ Europeanisation led to local cultures being misrepresented as uncivilised and backwards ¥ Call for a return to local cultures for the sake of personal identity
	Group rights should be part of the Constitution
	Tolerate and accommodate different cultures
	¥ Condemn discrimination ¥ Respect each other's traditions and cultures
	¥ Local cultures should be preserved through the implementation and correct handling of traditional matters
	¥ Build unity without sacrificing diversity (SWAPO Party 1999a:5) ¥ Preserve, protect and promote diverse cultures and build a strong and vibrant nation (ibid.)
	¥ Use cultural diversity as resource for nation-building ¥ No support for traditions or cultures that are oppressive

⁴ The interviewee qualified her statement by saying that legalising abortion made people reject condoms, which aggravated the risk of HIV/AIDS.⁵ Except cases provided by law.⁶ Except cases provided by law.⁷ Except cases provided by law.⁸ Except cases provided by law.

extremely difficult in the light of the ruling SWAPO Party's conservative economic policy (Jauch 2000). The most prominent labour union, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), maintained its links with the SWAPO Party after independence — although the SWAPO Party does not address the issue of labour groups in its publications. In this context, the issue of political affiliation continues to be a dividing factor among Namibian trade unions.

Generally, an emphasis on labour unions is regarded as a leftist policy position (Budge & Klingemann 2001:22). With two exceptions, almost all party leaders interviewed stressed the importance of labour unions and collective bargaining. NUDO was the only party to mention the negative effects of strikes and demonstrations on economic activities and growth. The WRP, which generally supported labour unions, stated that collective bargaining should be replaced by an annual wage increase that was linked to the inflation rate.⁹ The CoD, MAG, the RP and SWANU identified the NUNW's political affiliation as the main current challenge with regard to labour relations. With the exception of the WRP, none of the political parties interviewed had any links with any labour union. The WRP maintained that its party policies were taking the NUNW to the stars and back — and they are just trying to hold on to their seats in the aeroplane.

In their party manifestos, the DTA and SWANU provide a more thorough vision of labour relations in Namibia. The DTA (1999a:17) pledges to provide sound guidelines based on principles espoused by the International Labour Organisation. SWANU (1999:4) declares it would terminate casualisation, i.e. the replacement of a permanently employed workforce by casual workers.

⁹ Presumably only when it rises.

7.2 Farmers

Even 14 years after Namibia's independence, land distribution remains an obvious expression of expropriation, oppression and extermination of the African people by German and South African colonists, settlers and members of the occupation forces (Werner 2000:9). Accordingly, the highly charged land question reflects the inherited inequalities and the overall need for redistribution of wealth. As Keulder (2003:14) states,

(i)n many respects, land is more of a political than an economic issue. It is an affirmation of national citizenship of a free country, and of a previously oppressed identity as indigenous (black) African. Against this background, the aim of the questions posed was to determine how much attention was being paid to farmers needs and the issues that affect them, and to examine what the party experts' views were on the country's dual commercial/communal farming system.

In its official publications, the SWAPO Party (1999a:8,21) states that it has been involved in addressing the problem of land hunger by, for instance, strengthening mechanisms to extend loans to communal farmers aspiring to become commercial farmers. Furthermore, their policy initiatives have focused not only on raising the income of livestock farmers, but (also) on improving the well-being of the small(-scale) communal farmers who are largely engaged in crop production (SWAPO Party 1999b:12).

Contrary to the opposition parties' written manifestos that provide detailed suggestions on how, in their opinion, privately-owned commercial farms and communal land could best be distributed (e.g. CoD 1999b:6, DTA 1999a:11, NUDO n.d.:1, SWANU 1999:3), during the face-to-face inter-



views almost all the opposition party leaders focused instead on the government's recent attempts to expropriate commercial farmland. The CoD criticised the ruling party's track record, stating that commercial farmers should not be scapegoats of the economic disaster of the country, and that the criteria for expropriation, e.g. being in the national interest, needed some clarification — especially the term *national interest*. The DTA referred to announcements by the government that it intended speeding up land reform and targeting commercial farms for expropriation. The party disapproved of the government's attempt to solve labour disputes by expropriating farms on which there had been disputes between management and employees. In line with the CoD and the DTA, the RP stated that irresponsible actions by the government had the potential not only to damage relations among Namibians(,) but could also cause irreparable damage to the economy. To the latter party's regret, commercial farmers kept a low profile regarding party politics. In contrast to the RP, MAG contended that farmers should restrict themselves to agricultural issues and bow out of politics. NUDO mentioned that its representatives were personally involved in mediating between landowners and farm workers.

7.3 Underprivileged minorities

The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or socio-economic status (Article 10) (RoN 1990). In contrast to (historically) privileged minorities such as Namibian whites, ethnic minorities like the San and the Himba are generally referred to as *underprivileged* (Daniels 2003). While the San are impoverished and marginalised, the Himba are relatively well-off and have a strong traditional

¹⁰ The RP did not elaborate on what it meant by this.

leadership. Nevertheless, the economic and cultural living conditions of the Himba are threatened by a hydroelectric power plant that the government plans to construct (ibid.). Apart from ethnic minorities, sexual minorities such as homosexuals can also be regarded as underprivileged (ibid.).

Three questions were used to determine which groups the respondents regarded as underprivileged; whether and why these groups and their situation were important; and whether the parties had any specific proposals with regard to these groups. Interestingly, the respondents' answers differed in terms of their identification of underprivileged groups. While the DTA, MAG, NUDO, the RP and SWANU named ethnic minorities such as the San and Himba, the CoD stated that the majority of Namibians lived in extreme poverty. According to the CoD, therefore, people needed to be regarded as underprivileged on an individual level on account of their current living conditions, and not on the grounds of their race or ethnic origin. In its response, the WRP stated that specific ethnic groups as well as certain labour groups needed to be regarded as underprivileged. While the WRP warned about the loss of culture and heritage of underprivileged groups, the DTA compared groups in Namibia with the plight of Native Americans affected by poverty and alcoholism.

Party leaders also differed in respect of specific proposals regarding these groups. The RP, for example, wanted to challenge government to expose actions¹⁰; the DTA demanded modern education for groups that lived a traditional lifestyle; the CoD sought poverty alleviation; NUDO proposed what it called a Government of National Unity; and the WRP emphasised the importance of development programmes. In its written statements,



the SWAPO Party frequently refers to formerly disadvantaged Namibians, but fails to define this term beyond blacks. The SWAPO Party (1999a:23) has implemented Affirmative Action to open many and new opportunities for those who were marginalised in the past.

With the exception of MAG, most of the parties manifestos clearly state their commitment to eliminating discrimination (Boer 2004a:15). The most comprehensive pledge to protect minorities comes from the CoD (2001:5), which includes foreigners and sexual minorities such as homosexuals.

7.4 Non-economic demographic groups

This study also explored the party leaders attitudes towards non-economic demographic groups. Thus, the question, *Does your party have any special policies or specific proposals with regard to the following groups: women, the elderly, people with disabilities, orphans, and people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS?*¹¹, was asked to determine whether the respondents promoted a limitation or, in contrast, an expansion of social services. Generally, parties leaning to the right support the limitation of social services, while those leaning to

Table 13: Non-economic demographic groups

Party		
	Equal representation on the political level	Increase pensions
	Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and promotion of their complete recognition in all spheres of society	Increase pensions
	Against Affirmative Action and gender quota regulations	Amount of pension should be determined by need
	n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)
	Need to be in a position where they can make a contribution as representatives of their community	Programmes should be in place to let them benefit from the natural resources of the country
	Supports the emancipation of women	Resources of experience
	The SWAPO Party has set itself a goal of removing all obstacles hindering the full participation of women in the process of decision-making within the party and government structures as well as in the society at large (SWAPO Party 1999a:8)	Namibia is one of the few countries in Africa that provides monetary assistance to its senior citizens in the form of social pension. Prior to independence, the amount of social pension was determined according to race. Soon after the country became independent, however, the SWAPO government equalised these social benefits. As the economy grows, the SWAPO government will further improve these benefits (SWAPO Party 1999a:11–12)
	n/a (No response given)	Disapproval of retirement homes

¹¹ Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome.



the left emphasise the expansion of social services. As described above, traditional values were assigned to the right (Budge & Klingemann 2001:21–22).

In its official publications the SWAPO Party emphasises the importance of uplifting the role of women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. For example, the SWAPO Party (1999a: 11–12) states that it intends to continue improving pension benefits as the economy grows. The party (ibid.:8) further undertakes to remove all hindrances to full participation by women, and admits that there is still much to be

done to address the needs of the disabled (ibid.:6). Both the SWAPO Party and the CoD, the latter in the interview, professed their commitment to strengthening the role of women within their own party structures.

With regard to women's issues, MAG maintained its rightist stance by disapproving of Affirmative Action and gender quotas. In contrast, the CoD favoured quota regulations for women as well as people with disabilities. The CoD and the DTA also called for old age pensions to be increased, but did not suggest how extra funds would be raised. In its response, MAG

People with disabilities	Orphans	People infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS
Representation on the political level	Joint acceptance of responsibility: government as well as extended family (combination of a social welfare system and African tradition)	Joint acceptance of responsibility: government as well as extended family (combination of a social welfare system and African tradition)
Assistance and integration needed	Joint acceptance of responsibility: government as well as extended family (combination of a social welfare system and African tradition)	Joint acceptance of responsibility: government as well as extended family (combination of a social welfare system and African tradition)
n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)	n/a (No response given)
n/a (No response given)	Joint acceptance of responsibility: government as well as extended family (combination of a social welfare system and African tradition)	Joint acceptance of responsibility: government as well as extended family (combination of a social welfare system and African tradition)
n/a (No response given)	Programmes should be in place to let them benefit from the natural resources of the country	Involvement of the churches and thousands of educators needed
Community care in the spirit of African traditions	Community care in the spirit of African traditions	Community care in the spirit of African traditions
We also need to do a great deal more to address the needs of disabled (SWAPO Party 1999a:6)	n/a (No response given)	The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is undoubtedly a serious concern; and the SWAPO Government is making concerted efforts to reduce the spread of the disease (SWAPO Party 1999b:6)
n/a (No response given)	Joint acceptance of responsibility: government as well as extended family (combination of a social welfare system and African tradition)	Joint acceptance of responsibility: government as well as extended family (combination of a social welfare system and African tradition)

proposed that the amount of a social pension should be determined according to individual needs. With regard to orphans and people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, the CoD, the DTA, NUDO and the WRP seemed to regard the expansion of social services (and government intervention as such) and the maintenance of traditional family values as being of equal importance. Surprisingly, the only negative reference to social services came by way of the socialist party, SWANU, which downplayed government intervention by stressing traditional family values.

In their official publications, the main political parties emphasise the importance of non-economic demographic groups, mentioning the role of women, social pensions for senior citizens, and HIV/AIDS. For instance, the CoD (1999a:6) proposes that the pension scheme be extended to reach 100% percent of the aged. In its manifesto, the DTA (1999b:7) states its aim to provide senior citizens with a pension linked to the inflation rate.¹² With regard to HIV/AIDS, the CoD (1999b:4) undertakes to declare HIV/AIDS a national emergency, and would coordinate the combating of the disease from the Office of the President.

8 CONCLUSION

It is important to differentiate between the parties' general political priorities and their policies on specific issues. Although the main political parties are by and large ideologically similar, specific issues are differently emphasised and prioritised. The opposition parties criticised the ruling party's track record several times, offering a number of interesting alternatives. Unfortunately, most parties were silent on how to implement and fund their proposals.

The in-depth interviews examined in

¹² Again, presumably only when the rate of inflation rises.

detail a number of issues that were also addressed in the various parties' manifestos. In most cases, the publications and the interview responses complemented rather than contradicted each other.

Overall, much variation is shown in the grouping of various parties according to their responses, although it can be stated that MAG and the WRP regularly end up on the fringes. Namibia's main parties remain broadly centrist, and could be seen as more pragmatic and less ideological in nature. Even if the parties follow a generally centrist line, moderate tendencies to the left in the case of the CoD and the SWAPO Party (both consultative members of Socialist International) and to the right in the case of the DTA, NUDO and the RP can be identified.

In contrast, some of the less significant parties are dramatically distinct from the main parties. Ideologically, the most distinctive parties are MAG, with its strong rightist position, and the WRP, with its extreme leftist stance. SWANU also remains one of the few options for voters on the left of the political spectrum (Hopwood, forthcoming:55). In any event, these small parties are unlikely to pose any electoral threat to either the ruling SWAPO Party or the main opposition parties.

The SWAPO Party is a classic example of an African liberation movement that has transformed itself into a nationalistic mass-based party. Even if the ruling party receives almost all the votes of the Owambo-speaking majority, it also draws enough support from other ethnic groups to be called multi-ethnic. On the opposition spectrum, the CoD and the DTA seem to be multi-ethnic catch-all parties that try to maximise their voter support by means of a wide aggregation of interests. With a clear and consistent right position, MAG draws its support from a



reactionary white minority and is, therefore, located at the political and social periphery. Although ethnic voting is assumed rather than proved (Keulder 2000:268), it can be stated that ethnic groups in Namibia tend to be associated with particular political parties. NUDO and SWANU rely mainly on one ethnic group that, on the other hand, distributes its support among several parties. Despite its claim to represent all groups in Namibia, the RP's primary aim is to get the previously advantaged back into mainstream politics (Sherbourne 2004:16). Certainly, one needs to distinguish between the parties' perception and portrayal of themselves in their official publications on the one hand, and the observer's perception of them on the other. For instance, all parties pledge unity and an open membership, but some still widely favour one particular ethnic or racial group (Boer 2004a:18). Finally, with its well-defined position to the left, the WRP could be described as an ideologically class-based movement.

In many cases, an element of confusion was introduced by the difficulty of distinguishing between official party policy and an interviewee's personal bias. This applied especially to issues that had not been dealt with before in the parties' written documents, and to smaller parties whose popularity hinged on their leader's charismatic personality. With regard to the major parties, opinions might also differ amongst their respective members on a number of topics. Although the respondents had been identified and, thus, were authorised to represent the political party as its expert on political issues, one should anticipate that the interviewee's personal bias or opinions may have clouded some of the answers given. Consequently, differences between the responses by political party representatives do not

necessarily imply differences between the platforms of the parties themselves. Theoretically, some party representatives could also find a political home in another party. It would appear that a number of Namibian politicians joined political parties not, as one would expect, primarily on the grounds of agreement with its platform, but for other reasons, such as Namibia's recent liberation history and ethnicity, as well as personal ambition.



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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: Government

Decentralisation

Could you please tell us what your party's position is on decentralisation? Do you support the idea that powers be devolved to sub-national levels of government? If so, what sort of powers should be devolved? What sort of resources should be devolved? What, in your view(,) are the inherent benefits of decentralisation? What, in your view(,) are the inherent problems of decentralisation? How would you address these problems?

Government efficiency

According to your party, just how efficient is government and administration in Namibia today? How would your party make government more efficient? What is your party's position on the size of government, and what, if any(thing), would you propose to reform the civil service? Is government too expensive? Are government services too costly and too cumbersome? How would your party go about rectify(ing) these problems?

Government corruption

What are the challenges in this country with regard to corruption? What is the extent of the problem? What are the root causes of the problem? How would your party address these problems?

Transparency

According to your party, should Members of Parliament and civil servants declare their assets publicly? If so, how should this be done? Should political parties declare their sources of funding publicly? If so, how should this be done? Should political parties submit(,) to the public, records of their activities and expenditure?

Section 2: External relations

The United Nations

What is your party's official position on the UN? What sort of role, if any, should Namibia play within the UN? Should Namibia partake in UN peace and other missions abroad?

The African Union

What is your party's official position on the AU? What sort of a role should Namibia play within the AU? Should Namibia partake in AU missions? If yes, what sort of missions?

New Partnership for Africa's Development

What is your party's official position on NEPAD? What does Namibia stand to gain from NEPAD? What does Namibia stand to lose (lose) from NEPAD? Should Namibia unconditionally commit itself to the Peer Review Mechanism? If not, what alternative arrangements would you propose (if any)?

The Southern African Development Community

Should Namibia continue as a member of SADC? If not, please provide reasons. Should the SADC region become even more integrated or should it stay the way it is? If more integrated, what are your party's proposals? Should SADC move in a similar direction as the European Union and adopt a regional Parliament (and a single currency? What does Namibia stand to gain from such measures? What does Namibia stand to lose (lose) from such measures?



Section 3: Democracy

Individual rights

What is your party's official position on individual rights? In your view, are individuals' rights adequately protected? If not, what would your party do to improve the situation?

Group rights

According to your party, is there a need to protect group rights? If not, why not? If so, whose rights should this (these) be? What sort of rights would be protected? How would your party go about protecting these rights?

Constitutionalism

In your view, does the Constitution of (the Republic of) Namibia fulfil the needs of the Namibian people? If not, what are its failures? How can these problems be rectified? Is there (a) need to change any part of the Constitution? If so(,) which part? If ever faced with the need to change the Constitution, how would your party go about doing that?

Democratic rule

Do you believe democracy(,) as we have it in the Constitution at the moment(,) is the most appropriate form of government for Namibia? If not, what should be changed? What are the major challenges to the consolidation of democracy at the moment? How would your party address these? What are your views on the current quality of democracy in the country(, i.e.) just how much of a democracy is Namibia today? How can the quality of democracy be improved?

Participation

Are you satisfied with the current levels of political participation in the country? If not, what do you consider to be the major problems? How would your party address these problems?

Opposition

What are the roles and functions of an opposition party? How necessary are opposition parties for the future of democracy in this country?

Section 4: Social fabric

Law and order

In your view, just how much of a problem is crime in Namibia? What does your party propose to do about the issue? In your view, is there a need for stiffer sentences to solve crime(-)related problems? Should the death penalty be brought back?

Traditional morality

What is your party's official position on: prostitution and sex work; pornography; alcohol abuse; abortion; homosexuality; the state of family life; and the youth? Does your party have any special policies or strategies with regard to these?

National effort/social harmony

Just how united is the Namibian nation today? What are the main challenges with regard to nationhood and social harmony? How do you propose to address these challenges?

Cultural pluralism

Is Namibia's cultural diversity an asset or a liability? What are the current challenges with regard to the national culture and local cultures? What is your party's official position on English as the official language? And on the status of local and traditional languages? Does your party have an official policy or special proposal with regard to preserving local cultures, religions, and heritage? If so, what does that entail?



Section 5: Social groups

Labour group

What is your party's official position with regard to labour unions and collective bargaining? What are the current challenges with regard to labour relations? How would your party deal with these challenges? Does your party have links with any labour groups? If so, could you please describe these?

Farmers

What is your party's official position with regard to farmers and farming groups? What is your party's view on the dual farming system in the country? How would you go about implementing these ideas?

Underprivileged minorities

Which groups, if any(,) would you regard as underprivileged? And on what basis? Why are these groups and their situation important? Do you have any special policies or specific proposals with regard to these groups?

Non-economic demographic groups

Does your party have any special policies or specific proposals with regard to the status of the following groups: women; the elderly; people with disabilities; orphans; and people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS?/ If yes, could you please describe these?

