

**Spot the Difference:
Namibia's Political Parties Compared**

Edited by Justine Hunter

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Introduction

Justine Hunter

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, legitimation, and the recruitment of political elites. Focusing on some African multiparty systems, Erdmann (2002:268) identifies a number of distinctive features shared by many of the political parties within those systems: barely distinguishable political platforms, few party members, informal organisation, personality cults, missing links to civil society organisations, regional or ethnic support base, 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).

Namibia has not had an alternation of power since Independence. This means that the former liberation movement South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) has not only uninterruptedly ruled Namibia but has also managed to increase its dominance over the years. With its constant gaining and consolidation of political power, SWAPO managed to grasp exclusive control over the parliamentary decision-making process (Melber forthcoming). Legitimately reflecting voters' preferences, the dominant party state is characterized by a distinct power imbalance between the ruling party and opposition parties that are weakened by internal quarrelling, splintering, reestablishment and reshuffling. Over the past 15 years, no numerically meaningful opposition party has managed to establish itself as a relevant political factor. Although observers expected them to attract a meaningful number of frustrated ruling party followers, newly established or revived political parties mainly split the votes among the opposition parties. Accordingly, political commentator Melber states that "opposition parties never managed to obtain enough weight to challenge the factual dominance of SWAPO seriously" (ibid.), and identifies the ruling party's reputation as the liberating force and the absence of serious political alternatives as decisive factors.

Frittering away their energies, the fragmented opposition is increasingly unable to act as counterbalance to the political dominance of the former liberation movement. For the benefit of the ruling party, small parties that rely mainly on ethnic voting split from and challenged the catch-all opposition parties during the 2004 national

elections. Internal quarrelling about inner-party democracy in decision-making and leadership selection, as well as personality clashes detracted from political alternatives as the national elections approached. Usually, political parties are formed when a social group feels some elements in society need to be catered for. Keulder (in Tjaronda 2004) argues that Namibia, with a population of just over 1,8 million inhabitants, does not have enough political diversity to sustain the nine political parties that are currently registered with the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN). Accordingly, Kaapama's (2004) analysis of Namibia's political party manifesto concludes:

“Looking at the party manifestos, one may conclude that perhaps Namibians are even more extravagant than the Americans, in the sense that they are presented with nine parties to choose from, but their policies are not significantly different.”

Taking the similarity of party platforms into consideration, the point is whether the “bits and pieces opposition” (Insight 2005b) would not be better advised to merge or, at least, work together on a tactical basis. However, the Namibian Proportional Representation (PR) system, which deliberately benefits smaller parties, makes mergers less likely. As Namibia does not have a legal threshold system, minor parties with ethnic support bases can gain representation in the National Assembly. According to Hopwood (2004:29), the PR system could be seen as exacerbating ethnic differences with parties mainly seeking to bond with their traditional areas of support.

Ahead of the 2004 national elections, most opposition parties only ventured onto the campaign trail a few weeks before the election date. In contrast, the ruling party had been holding rallies and mobilising its supporters for months.

“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 2004a)

Several weeks before the elections, opposition parties complained that the ruling party used government vehicles for campaign rallies and that they were getting a raw deal from the Namibian Broadcasting Cooperation (NBC). However, a media survey concluded that at least the print media covered all political parties with neutrality and accused political parties of being “lazy” (Keulder in Maletzki 2004b), as they did not sufficiently see to their media profiles. Generally, people voted after seeing their candidates in the media or at rallies and did not seem to read party manifestos (Kakololo & Tjaronda 2004).

Political commentators, therefore, agreed that policy issues were not the deciding factors during the previous election campaign. Instead, co-opting communities, particularly by drawing traditional leaders into patronage systems, had been the easiest method of attracting voters:

“Patronage rather than policy issues are expected to play a key role in the outcome, with the ruling party expected to achieve another landslide victory.” (Maletzki 2004a)

Instead of policy issues, factors such as personality and ethnicity also influenced voting, with some parties drawing on the past during the election campaign. Of course, it may be fair to say that policy issues are not as important in Namibian politics and elections as they are in other countries with stronger opposition parties, where some in fact have a good chance of winning elections and putting their policies into practise (Boer 2004:18).

Both the parliamentary and presidential elections that were held in mid-November 2004 and the regional elections that subsequently took place, confirmed the overwhelming political dominance of the ruling party. SWAPO's heartland in the four north-central regions remained solid, with only few opposition parties campaigning there (Insight 2005b). But even if the ruling party continued to receive almost all the votes from the Oshiwambo-speaking majority, it can also claim to draw enough support from other ethnic groups to be called multi-ethnic. As expected, a further fragmentation of the opposition vote occurred. Referring to the apparently ethnic voting for some smaller opposition parties, the General Secretary of the official opposition Congress of Democrats (CoD) concluded “that people have gone back to their homesteads” (Gertze in Amupadhi 2004b).

Although most political parties had not managed their media profiles during the election campaign, some opposition parties did receive media coverage after the announcement of the 2004 national election results. Five political parties refused to accept the outcome, claiming that the ECN had been unwilling to explain alleged irregularities and refused to agree to a request for an independent audit¹. The ECN was criticised for failing to release the election results more speedily and doubts were raised about the number of close to one million who had been registered as eligible voters. In addition, the ECN failed to offer a plausible explanation for 22 charred ballot papers found in a dry river bed outside Okahandja. In March 2005, the opposition appeared to have scored a major

¹The 2004 national elections had been declared free and fair by the African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) observer teams.

victory when the High Court ruled for a recount of the ballots. After the rushed recount produced a similar outcome, four opposition parties launched a new court application seeking to have the whole election declared null and void. Despite their reservations, the opposition parties decided not to boycott the swearing-in ceremony of the Namibian Parliament and took up their allocated seats.

During post-election focus group discussions conducted by the Polytechnic's Echoes News Services, political parties came under fire for failing to address important issues in their election campaigns and only publishing manifestos shortly before the 2004 national and regional elections (Echoes News Services 2004). After taking up their seats in Parliament, opposition parties cited financial exhaustion for their inactivity (Insight 2005a). However, scholars criticised the opposition leaders for a lack of imagination and maintained that they should come up with innovative alternative policies in order to convince the electorate that they were not just seeking employment as parliamentarians (ibid.).

Taking steps against these shortages, this publication is based on a research project that was initially intended to help shed light on the platforms of Namibia's political parties ahead of the national elections held in mid-November 2004. By means of challenging political party representatives to discuss issues of national interest, the research project aimed at assisting political parties in devising policies and programmes, and to contribute to the improvement of voter education. 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 initial study consisted of three independent, complementary articles. Analysing the ideological histories of Namibia's political parties and comparing their political manifestos and other publications, Boer's (2004) paper served as a pre-study for two complementary articles on political platforms (see Hunter 2004) and economic programmes (see Sherbourne 2004) that were based on comprehensive questionnaires, which constituted the basis of in-depth interviews with political party representatives.

Amongst others, this volume aims at presenting updated versions of the initial articles that were published in the NID's occasional paper series, *Analyses & Views*, during the course of 2004. **Martin Boer's** updated article outlines the ideological histories of all political parties registered with the ECN and then compares and contrasts their most recent election manifestos and other party policy documents. Based on in-depth interviews with political party representatives, **Justine Hunter's** subsequent chapter examines issues that are generally omitted by the written party

manifestos. The article aims 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. Similarly, **Martin Boer's** and **Robin Sherbourne's** updated contribution on the economic platforms mainly focuses on opposition party policies that offer alternatives to those of the ruling party. The aim of the paper is to assess the political parties' positions on key economic policy issues in an effort to inform the electorate, stimulate thinking on economic issues within the political parties and to contribute to the national debate on the future development of the country. Finally, **Graham Hopwood** introduces a new chapter on the state of Namibia's opposition parties. The paper assesses the effectiveness of opposition parties since Independence and their potential for future growth. After considering the opposition parties' histories; organisation and structure; resources and funding; policy formation and communication strategies, the paper will review their electoral potential.

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Taking a Stand: Comparing Namibia's Political Party Platforms

Martin Boer

This review is an update of an earlier study entitled "Spot the difference: Political party platforms compared" (Boer 2004), which contrasts the positions of the nine main political parties in Namibia across a wide range of issues. The update includes the most recent political manifestos and party platforms issued by the parties ahead of the 2004 presidential and National Assembly (NA) elections, but focuses only on those parties that actually stood for the 2004 NA elections. Therefore, the new Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC) has been added, but the Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP) – which was included in the former paper, but which did not register for the 2004 NA elections – has been removed.

This study outlines the ideological histories of the political parties and then compares and contrasts their political manifestos and other party policy documents across a wide range of social, economic and political issues. This analysis makes it clear that the liberation struggle, which successfully resulted in Namibia gaining independence on 21 March 1990 and becoming a sovereign state, shaped the identities and beliefs of the various political parties. In the years following Namibia's independence, differences in policy across the parties have come more strongly to the fore – especially when one looks at the ideas stemming from the left-wing South West Africa National Union (SWANU) and the Christian right – and there are a number of original aims and goals contained in party manifestos that government may want to consider implementing.

1. Introduction

The positions of the political parties on many issues can be found in their party manifestos, almost all of which were updated ahead of the 2004 presidential and National Assembly elections. Although the breadth and depth of the manifestos ranges considerably, and not one party addresses every issue chosen for this study, it is possible to make comparisons across the parties in a qualitative way. This study will make clear that every party contributes their own distinct priorities, solutions to national problems, and ideas as to how the country can best move

forward. But the political party programmes are more alike than they are different, and the parties are shaped by the country's modern history, which has mainly been determined by the liberation struggle. "The main objective [of Namibian parties] is indeed the achievement of a sustainable development in a peaceful political environment", writes Namibian political scientist Tapera O Chirawu (2003:148). "This in my view is what political parties in Namibia aspire to do, using differing and at times competing ideologies" (ibid.).

This study's purpose is to detail the ideological histories of the parties, compare their platforms across a number of issues to examine whether there are substantial differences in priorities and proposed policies, and work out ideological differences between the political parties (as far as such differences exist), and in so doing, help to provide more information about the political parties and stimulate debate.

2. Party platform evolutions

This next section provides an ideological history of the main political parties in Namibia in the order in which they were founded.

2.1 Swanu of Namibia (SWANU)

Chief Hosea Kutako and other members of the Herero Chief's Council founded SWANU on 27 September 1959 as the country's first national liberation movement to "fight for freedom and national independence of the people of Namibia" (SWANU 2004:2). Unlike the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO) – a precursor to the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), which, at that point, consisted mainly of Ovambo members – SWANU was founded as a national political movement. Together with other parties, the movement helped organise the 10 December 1959 uprising against the forced removal of people to the so-called township of Katutura (SWANU 2004:2).

SWANU sought to forge unity among various ethnic groups, "to shift the locus of politics from the ethnic to the national level" (Ngavirue 1997:214). In 1960, SWANU declared itself non-aligned in the cold war, but said it was "violently ... against Western imperialism" (ibid.:241). The party opposed apartheid and published its five basic aims in "SWANU Policy Aspects" (1966; cited in Ngavirue 1997:296):

- To unite the people of Namibia into one nation
- To fight for the self-determination of the people
- To promote the advancement of the people
- To promote pan-Africanism and unity in Africa, and
- To work with allied movements throughout the world to abolish imperialism, tribalism, racialism and all forms of oppression and economic exploitation.

These aims were very similar to SWAPO's. One of the major differences between the two was how they sought to achieve independence: SWANU emphasised self-reliance, while SWAPO actively lobbied the United Nations (UN) (Dobell 1998:32). The party also advocated a socialist policy because it said that striving for political freedom on its own, without adding ideology, often led to corruption (Ngavirue 1997:296).

Over the next 40 years, SWANU remained loyal to its socialist beginnings. In August 1999, it formed a socialist alliance with the WRP¹. The alliance was to run for election under SWANU's name, while the WRP would nominate the first parliamentary candidate.

It is interesting to note that Namibia's first national movement is almost totally insignificant today: it has not once won a seat in Parliament since Independence, and its current leaders are not as well known as those of the past, like Hosea Kutako, who is recognised as a national hero. According to Chirawu (2003:152), SWANU "failed to proffer a coherent and sustainable ideology that could attract enough members from outside the Herero ranks. It has since moved to the very back of the Namibian political arena". In the 2004 National Assembly elections, the party received 0.4% of the vote, winning no seats. In the 2004 Regional Council elections, SWANU won the Otjombinde seat in the Omaheke Region.

2.2 The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)/ SWAPO Party of Namibia

The ruling party, renamed as SWAPO Party of Namibia since Independence, traces its roots back to 2 August 1957 when a group of students and contract labourers formed the Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC), a party focused on the plight of Ovambo contract labourers. The OPC first focused on fighting the contract labour system, but quickly widened its scope to encompass the liberation of

¹The WRP was founded in May 1989 to mobilise the working classes and the dispossessed peasantry. Identifying itself as Trotskyite, it never managed to win any seats in Parliament. It was active until mid-2004, when it decided not to take part in the presidential and National Assembly elections.

Namibia from South Africa. On 19 April 1959 the party was renamed Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO), and established a number of branches in South West Africa (SWA). The OPO cooperated closely with SWANU in 1959, but their relations faltered after a while. The OPO reconstituted itself under the name SWAPO on 19 April 1960, giving itself a more national face. Former President of the Republic of Namibia and current party President, Sam Nujoma (2001:101), reports that the leadership in exile lobbying the UN in New York made this decision: "OPO gave the impression that we were only a regional organization and not, as we really were, a national one".

In 1961, SWAPO published a Programme (reprinted in Ngavirue 1997:298) that outlined the party's three basic aims:

- To "establish a free, democratic government in SWA founded upon the will and participation of all the people of our country"
- To "unify all the people of SWA into a cohesive, representative, national political organisation, irrespective of their race, ethnic origin, religion or creed", and
- To "reconstruct the economic, educational and social foundations which will support and maintain the real African independence which our people desire for themselves".

Furthermore, the party's first programme listed a number of political, economic and social aims. On the political side, SWAPO said parliamentarians should be elected by universal adult suffrage, irrespective of sex, property, religion, colour, nationality, place of residence, or education. Discrimination or prejudice based upon tribe, nationality or colour in form was to constitute a criminal offence. There was to be freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and religion. SWAPO (*ibid.*) also said it believed in one common nationality for all Africans. The party differed from SWANU in that it called on the UN to help liberate the country from South Africa.

On the economic front, SWAPO stressed in 1961 that there would be publicly as well as privately owned industry. All basic industries would be publicly owned, including the railway, mining, electrical and fishing sectors. Where private industry was permitted, SWAPO would give priority to those that were African-owned: "Foreign capital may be allowed in [Namibia] if it will be invested in such industries as are controlled by South West Africans" (*ibid.*:299). On the land ownership issue SWAPO was even firmer, declaring "all existing lands with foreign title deed and ownership shall be placed under the government". Furthermore, the

party would assist and develop multi-tribal cooperatives, especially in agriculture. Turning to social issues, SWAPO pledged to give every South West African suitable employment, introduce a 40-hour working week, and abolish forced and contract labour. All schools would be publicly operated under a SWAPO-led government, and would be free of discrimination in respect of race, sex, religion or colour. The party also maintained it wanted to increase the number of hospitals and health centres across the country and make medical treatment free to everyone (*ibid.*:299–300).

Through the 1960s this platform remained virtually unchanged over various drafts. In the 1970s SWAPO remained primarily a liberation movement. It flirted with Marxism, courted Cuba and the Soviet Union, and moved its headquarters from Zambia to Angola. During other periods it shifted to the West. In 1975, for example, preparations were being made for the controversial Turnhalle Conference, whereby South Africa sought to negotiate a new constitution with parties operating inside Namibia. SWAPO (1975) then drafted its "Discussion Paper on the Constitution", hoping to position itself as moderate and pro-Western. But a year later, in its political programme, SWAPO (1976; reprinted in SWAPO 1981:257–58) stressed socialist values. SWAPO (*ibid.*) aimed to "unite all Namibian people, particularly the working class, the peasantry and progressive intellectuals into a vanguard party capable of safeguarding national independence and of building a classless, non-exploitative society based on the ideals and principles of scientific socialism". The economic side of the programme stressed the establishment of a classless society by abolishing all forms of exploitation and ensuring that the major means of production and exchange of the country were owned by the people (Dobell 1998:58).

Although SWAPO preached socialism, some have argued that it was more a pragmatic posture influenced by global trends. Hidipo Hamutenya, one of the programme's main architects, explained in a 1991 interview that the 1976 constitution was partly intended to make Western members of the UN Security Council, who resisted supporting SWAPO because they feared it was leaning towards Marxism. "It didn't take long between the release of [SWAPO's Political Programme] and the resuscitation of the negotiations" (*ibid.*). The document, which was not widely distributed, was intentionally vague in order to leave maximum room for negotiation (*ibid.*:59). Hamutenya, who was instrumental in attracting foreign investment during his time as Minister of Trade and Industry (1993–2002), is a leading example of someone whose ideological beliefs have changed in this sense over time.

When SWAPO published its first election manifesto in July 1989, in which it called for a just and equitable society, it failed to suggest how it would accomplish this with the limited resources and significant constraints it would inherit (ibid.:93). In 1998, the party's stated economic goal was to "bring change in ownership relations, bring about equitable distribution of national income, create rational linkages of sectors and diversify the economy" (SWAPO 1998:8). The socialist rhetoric had all but been removed, with the party (ibid.:9) stressing, "No wholesale nationalisation of the mines, land and other productive sectors is envisaged in the foreseeable future", and "the independent state of Namibia will stand ready to negotiate new and appropriate agreements with both the existing foreign companies and new investors interested in participating in the development of Namibia's resources for mutual benefit".

During the liberation struggle, SWAPO had identified itself as a socialist party; since then, in its role as ruling party, it has shown virtually no traces of the "scientific socialist" philosophy (Dobell 1998:15). Canadian political scientist Lauren Dobell, who has studied SWAPO's development from 1960 to the present day, determines how the movement changed into a moderate, social-democratic pro-capitalist party almost overnight. Furthermore, she found that, over time, there was "an absence of any consistent beliefs other than the fundamental desire for independence from colonial rule" (ibid.:17). Indeed, in the transition to Independence, SWAPO stressed the need for economic growth and the importance of an "enabling environment" for foreign investment. In short, Dobell (ibid.:59) argues, "SWAPO's real political thinking during this period, despite its own public claims and those of both allies and enemies, never moved beyond its nationalist programme of the 1960s". It is important to note the context of history here, however, namely that SWAPO's thinking was affected by the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the demands of international development aid agencies, and the fact that other liberation parties – like the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa – went through similar programme shifts. That having been said, there are elements within SWAPO, especially members that belong to unions, who believe SWAPO 'sold itself and its values out' at Independence. The ANC has faced similar criticism from its allies and opponents alike.

SWAPO has been the ruling party since Independence in 1990. Its positions on social, economic and political issues will be discussed in more detail throughout the rest of this paper, but it is fair to say that they do not differ dramatically from the party's 1961 vision of a free, unified Namibia with a combination of publicly and privately owned industries. In both the 2004 presidential and National Assembly elections, SWAPO won 75% of the vote. Former Minister of Lands,

Resettlement and Rehabilitation, Hifikepunye Pohamba, became President in March 2005, and the party retained its majority 55 seats in the National Assembly. The succession from Nujoma to Pohamba was recognised as constitutional and democratic by international observers, but a number of opposition parties have launched a lawsuit alleging that there were improprieties in the National Assembly and presidential election process.

2.3 National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO)

The Herero Chief's Council founded NUDO as a traditionalist party on 25 September 1964. The movement aimed to bring the different black communities into one organisation on the one hand, and to lobby the international community via its representatives abroad – like SWANU and SWAPO – to bring about SWA's independence on the other. In its 1964 constitution, NUDO said it wanted to "awaken the political consciousness of the people as a unified nation with one aim and one destiny". The organisation pledged to (Pütz et al. 1990:200)

- fight for independence
- remove all forms of oppression and exploitation
- establish a non-racial government, and
- work for the social, economic and political reconstruction of the country.

Its economic policy was a mixture of traditional and free market, with a strong emphasis on land redistribution and the restoration of traditional land (ibid.). Since Independence, the party has continued to strive for national unity and has been at the helm of seeking reparation from the Federal Republic of Germany and three German corporations for atrocities committed against the Hereros at the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1977, NUDO became one of the main components of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) until it broke away as a political party in late 2003. Chief Kauima Riruako said this split had become necessary because the DTA had died a long time ago (Amupadhi 2004:1). NUDO's constitution remained the same since 1990. Its political platforms prior to 2003 are analysed in the section on the DTA. As an independent party in 2003, NUDO once again focused on unity and on land redistribution. In 2004, the party (NUDO 2004b:1) released a policy paper entitled *Federalism or unitarism: Which of the two is viable for Namibia?*, where it came out in favour of national unity and federalism. In the 2004 presidential elections, Riruako received 4.2% of the vote; NUDO won three seats in the National Assembly elections.

2.4 Republican Party (RP)

The RP was formed in September 1977 when Dirk Mudge, Deputy Chairman of the National Party (NP), led a walkout with 80 others from the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference when the NP insisted certain apartheid laws should be maintained in Namibia. Mudge became Chairman of Cabinet of the interim government in 1980, but resigned a few years later when a bill that would have abolished South African holidays was not passed. The RP (2003:2) maintains it sought to “bring an end to the policy of racial discrimination and to improve racial relations amongst all the peoples of Namibia”. The party joined the DTA when the alliance was formed a month later. Its political programme and economic policies were the same as the DTA’s.

The RP was dissolved in 1991 when the DTA became a single party and alliance members were encouraged to join the new party. In April 2003, former members of the RP decided to reactivate the party because “[n]ot only did the DTA fail to promote racial harmony and national reconciliation, but it has also lost credibility as the official opposition by neglecting to make a meaningful contribution both country wide [sic] and in Parliament” (RP 2003:2). The RP was officially registered for the first time ever on 29 August 2003.

Thus far, the party’s platform differs little from the DTA’s. Henk Mudge, son of the party’s founder, won 1.9% of the presidential vote in the 2004 elections, and the party won one National Assembly seat.

2.5 Democratic Turnhalle Alliance of Namibia (DTA)

The DTA became a unified political party on 2 December 1991, but its roots trace back to 5 November 1977 when it was formed as an alliance (rather than a party) between like-minded, mostly ethnically-based political parties, with the hope of establishing an internal government. The 11 founding parties, including NUDO and the RP, had together walked out of the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference when the NP insisted that certain apartheid legislation should be maintained in a proposed new constitution. The conference had been organised by South Africa in an attempt to sideline SWAPO, who were highly popular. The parties that participated in the conference were so-called internal parties that were backed by South Africa. Although the DTA walked out of the conference, its members have ever since had a hard time shaking off the impression that they collaborated with the apartheid administration and, by doing so, helped to undermine SWAPO’s popularity.

In 1989, the alliance published its manifesto. In this document, the DTA (1989:4) proposed an independent, free and sovereign Namibia. It opposed violence, advocated equality for all, and rejected apartheid in all its forms. The party also emphasised a policy of national reconciliation and harmony. The DTA’s political programme also favoured a mixed economy, with maximum participation by free enterprise, the right to private property, and communal land ownership. Furthermore, it advocated policies “aimed at correcting fundamental inequalities and defects” in the socio-economic structure through development programmes (Pütz et al. 1990:68). In 2000, after the founding of the Congress of Democrats (CoD) and the latter’s success in the 1999 National Assembly elections when it penetrated the DTA’s support base, the DTA formed a coalition with the United Democratic Front of Namibia (UDF) to retain its position as the official opposition party. The DTA became a single party in 1991 and changed its name to DTA of Namibia. The DTA continued to retain members of NUDO and the RP under its umbrella until they both broke away in 2003. Although the DTA served as the official opposition for many years since Independence, it has constantly and dramatically lost voter support. By 2004, its leader Katuutire Kaura garnered 5.0% of the presidential vote, while the party won only four seats in the National Assembly – its lowest since Independence – thereby losing the title of official opposition to the CoD.

2.6 United Democratic Front of Namibia (UDF)

The UDF was formed as an alliance between eight parties on 25 February 1989. It was a centrist liberation movement that sought to challenge SWAPO after the latter was declared the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people by the international community. The leading party of the UDF was the Damara Council, created in 1971 by South Africa as an administrative body of chiefs and public figures that would prepare Damaraland to become an independent so-called homeland. Justus Garoëb, the Damara Chief since 1982, was the party’s founding President and continues to head the party today. In 1996, when a law was passed barring traditional chiefs from also being members of Parliament, Garoëb passed his traditional responsibilities on to Pastor Eliphas Eiseb. The UDF has seen itself as offering an alternative to all the other parties through “advocating a mixed economy, a guaranteed right to own private property, and the representation of traditional chiefs in a council of chiefs, with the protection of cultural and language rights” (Cliffe 1994:152).

The UDF (2000:1) claimed that SWAPO had grown arrogant over time and wanted “all power and credit for itself”; therefore, the UDF was founded by people who had grown disillusioned with SWAPO. The party said in 1989 that it wanted local authorities to have as much autonomy as possible. It sought a national, free and compulsory education system, but made allowances for private schools. The UDF wanted a mixed economy with the right to private property guaranteed, but the state would “have a regulatory role regarding ownership to prevent monopolies and economic sabotage” (Pütz et al. 1990:80). In 1999 the UDF became a unified party rather than an alliance. By the following year it had formed a coalition with the DTA to become the official opposition; since 2004, however, the CoD has assumed that function. One area in which the UDF has tried to make a difference over the years, especially through former parliamentarian Eric Biwa, is by consistently raising the SWAPO detainee issue in Parliament². In 2004, Garoëb won 3.8% of the presidential vote, while the party won three seats in the National Assembly – up from two in the previous Parliament.

2.7 Monitor Action Group (MAG)

MAG was formed in 1991 by members of the Action Christian National (ACN) alliance, who wanted to concentrate on shaping opinions. MAG, which is historically linked to the pro-South African NP, has given up on regaining its role as the ruling party and instead highlights issues it deems important through the National Assembly, a newsletter, and a column by its Chairman, Kosie Pretorius, in the weekly newspaper the Windhoek Observer. Issues of interest to MAG are religion, group rights, land reform, and private land ownership. In their opinion (MAG 2003a:2), “We actually want people to support our ideas rather than our party”. Together with SWANU, MAG’s (2004a:3) beliefs differ the most from the other parties, starting with it not recognising Namibia’s (secular) Constitution. The group also seeks a Namibia that is made up of interdependent, multicultural and self-ruling communities (Chirawu 2003:154), thereby contradicting every other party’s vision of a unified Namibia. In 2004, Pretorius won 1.1% of the presidential vote in his first attempt at running for the highest office; MAG received 0.8% of the National Assembly vote, thereby retaining its one seat. Pretorius (2005) chalks up his success to better organisation and unexpected votes from the North. He has announced his retirement, however, and Jurie Viljoen now represents the party in Parliament.

²The detainee issue is one of the most painful chapters in recent Namibian history. It is alleged that SWAPO detained thousands of suspected spies and collaborators in underground dungeons in Angola in the 1980s and hundreds are still unaccounted for. Despite efforts to raise the issue by some opposition parties and civil society, government has thus far refused to acknowledge the issue.

2.8 The Congress of Democrats (CoD)

The CoD was created on 23 March 1999 when Ben Ulenga and other founding members became disillusioned with the government because it “benefits only an elite, and is out of touch with the rest of the nation” (CoD 1999b:1). Ulenga is a former SWAPO member and Robben Island political prisoner who rose from the unions to become a diplomat. But Ulenga resigned as High Commissioner to the United Kingdom in 1998 after two years of service because he was “deeply disillusioned” with the ruling party (Hopwood 1998:1). Ulenga criticised SWAPO for the way in which the senior leadership were lining their pockets, their tribalistic attitudes, their silence over the detainee issue, their handling of complaints by unemployed former SWAPO fighters, Nujoma’s decision to run for a third term³, and Namibia’s involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo⁴. In 1999, the CoD (1999a:3) stated it aimed to become “Namibia’s bridge to a 21st century of progress and development in all areas of human endeavour, justice and equity”.

The CoD’s political programme states its preference for a smaller government, fewer parastatals, more central power devolved to the Regions, and a larger role for traditional and religious leaders. Although it is the CoD’s aim to create an alternative movement to the ruling party, the 2004 election results suggest that the DTA (rather than SWAPO) suffered most at the polling stations from the CoD’s arrival. In 2004, Ulenga again came in second in the presidential election, winning 7.1% of the vote. The party won five seats in the National Assembly (two less than in the previous elections), thus becoming the official opposition. Outgoing Speaker of the National Assembly, Mosé Tjitendero, has said that the CoD will remain the official opposition even if the DTA and UDF decide to form a coalition again (Amupadhi 2005:1).

2.9 Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC)

Former DTA Councillor for Omaheke, Frans Goagoseb, and other DTA members who share a concern about corruption within Namibia and inside the DTA, founded the NDMC in October 2003. Goagoseb (2005) mentioned that the idea

³The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (RoN 1990) only allows a president to remain in office for two five-year terms. When the Constitution was amended to allow Sam Nujoma to serve a third term, there was criticism from within and outside the party.

⁴In 1999, Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe contributed troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo to assist its President, Laurent Kabila, against a rebellion supported by Rwanda and Uganda. Most of the troops returned home after the Lusaka accords and accompanying ceasefire.

for the party had been around since 1998, and that the group had no relation to Zimbabwe's leading opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change.

The NDMC has focused its attention on corruption and the widespread self-enrichment it argues has created a new form of apartheid: it says certain ethnic groups benefit through government employment and access to land, while other ethnic groups remain poor and landless. The NDMC is especially concerned about the plight of the Damara and San populations. In the 2004 National Assembly elections, the NDMC won 0.5% of the vote. Its largest returns came from the Khomas and Omaheke Regions. Since then, the NDMC has joined a legal challenge by the CoD and the RP to expose irregularities that they allege occurred during the 2004 elections.

3. Election results, 1989–2004

Table 1: Votes received by party in elections, 1989–2004 (%)

Party	1989 CA	1992 RC	1992 LA	1994 PE	1994 NA	1998 LA	1998 RC	1999 PE	1999 NA	2004 PE	2004 NA
ACN	3.5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CoD	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	10.6	9.9	7.1	7.2
DTA	28.6	22.1	33.3	23.1	20.5	23.9	15.7	9.6	9.5	5.0	5.1
MAG	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.7	1.1	0.8
NDMC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.5
NUDO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.2	4.2
RP	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.9	2.0
SWANU	n/a	n/a	1.5	n/a	0.5	0.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.4
SWANU /WRP	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.4	n/a	n/a
SWAPO	57.3	74.7	58.0	74.5	72.7	60.4	80.4	76.9	76.2	75.1	74.8
UDF	5.7	3.2	5.9	n/a	2.7	6.7	3.9	3.0	2.9	3.8	3.7
WRP	n/a	n/a	0.1	n/a	0.2	0.1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

CA = Constituent Assembly

LA = Local authorities

NA = National Assembly

PE = Presidential election

RC = Regional Council

n/a = not applicable due to non-participation

Table 2: Seats in the National Assembly, 1990–2009

Party	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009
ACN	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
CoD	n/a	n/a	7	5
DTA	21	15	7	4
FCN	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
MAG	n/a	1	1	1
NNF	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
NPF	1	1	n/a	n/a
NUDO	n/a	n/a	n/a	3
RP	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
SWAPO	41	53	55	55
UDF	4	2	2	3

FCN = Federal Convention of Namibia

NNF = Namibia National Front

NPF = National Patriotic Front of Namibia

Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia, 17 March 2005

4. Party platforms compared

This section compares political party platforms across the following seven political, economic and social issues: external relations, freedom and democracy, government, economy, welfare and quality of life, fabric of society, and social groups. Most of the information has been culled from party manifestos and constitutions. In some cases, other official party documents such as press releases were used. Most of the parties produced (updated) manifestos in 2004 ahead of the National Assembly and Regional Council elections.

4.1 External relations

4.1.1 Foreign affairs

Since Independence, Namibia has become an active member of the UN, the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and a number of other international organisations. The government has also sent troops to a number of regional conflicts. Seven of the nine parties make reference to foreign affairs in their manifestos. The CoD, DTA, NDMC, NUDO, SWANU and SWAPO all mention the importance of cooperating closely with other African states. The DTA and SWAPO mention their commitment to bringing peace and stability to the southern African region.

The DTA (2004:7) stressed the importance of aligning with peace-loving and democratically elected governments and wished to promote what it calls a Common Market of Southern African States. The CoD, DTA, NDMC, NUDO and SWANU all cite the importance of supporting the SADC. SWANU (2004:12) stressed its support for The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Non-aligned Movement. NUDO (2004c:16) maintained that Namibia's destiny was intrinsically linked with that of the African continent and, therefore, the party undertook to actively support the AU and NEPAD. The NDMC (2004:4) said it would identify what it called its "true friends", and not only those whom they maintained were favoured by SWAPO. In this regard, they (ibid.) cited Canada, the European Union, Scandinavia, South Africa, and the United States.

The only negative references to foreign relations in general came by way of the NDMC and the UDF. According to the latter (UDF 2000:2), "[p]olitical leadership in Namibia relates very closely to the Zimbabwean government[:] hence the fear that the Zimbabwean history may repeat itself in Namibia". Nevertheless, this concern was dropped in their latest document (UDF 2004), perhaps because it is quite a controversial stance in Namibia. In its most recent publication, the NDMC (2004:4) stated that they were against the "Zimbabwean example of 'land grab policy' in the strongest terms".

4.1.2 Decolonisation

Many of today's political parties were founded when Namibia was still colonised by South Africa; therefore, their aims, ideologies and identities are often related to the struggle for independence. SWAPO and SWANU were liberation movements

that operated in exile, lobbied the world community, and tried to bring independence to the people of Namibia. The DTA – which was then an alliance of the now independent DTA, NUDO and RP parties – sought independence for the country through negotiating directly with South Africa from within Namibia.

In its 2004 election manifesto, SWAPO (2004:15) continued to portray itself as a liberation party facing the challenge of eradicating "the legacy of more than 100 years of colonial occupation of our country". In SWAPO's opinion (ibid.), this colonial legacy manifested itself in the unequal distribution of land, which obtains to this day. In a 2004 paper, the UDF (2004:2) argued that colonialism still existed in Namibia because 4,076 rich farmers owned a combined farmland surface area that was far richer than and equivalent in size to what more than one million people currently had to make do with. The party (ibid.:3) argued that, "[t]o stay free, we must bring an end to colonialism in our economy, farming, education and SWAPO government bureaucracy". The CoD, DTA, NDMC, NUDO, SWANU and SWAPO all stress national unity and the building of a Namibian nation.

4.1.3 Peace

Namibia has by and large been a peaceful country since Independence. The only instance of unrest occurred in August 1999, when the government quashed an armed attempt at secession in the Caprivi Region. The CoD, DTA, NDMC, SWAPO and UDF all stress the importance of peace and reconciliation.

The DTA (2004:2) hoped to promote peace and social tranquillity. SWAPO (2004) entitled its manifesto for the 2004 elections *SWAPO's plan of action for peace, unity and sustainable development*, and claimed (ibid.:9) that, as the ruling party, it had worked relentlessly for peace in the country and in the southern African region. SWAPO (ibid.) admitted that peace suffered during the ethnic conflict in the Caprivi, but maintained it now aimed to "build unity without sacrificing diversity". The UDF (2004:3) called for more reconciliation to bring the people closer together. Specifically, the party (ibid.) wanted the president to facilitate what it called a "Presidential Moratorium of National Pardon" to citizens that lost loved ones during the liberation struggle, "in the dungeons of Lubango and elsewhere in Africa". Furthermore, the party (ibid.) wanted the government to pay reparations to the victims' next of kin. Turning to land reform, the RP (2004c:1) stated that peace was being undermined because the issue had not yet been amicably settled. The party (2004b:6) pledged to secure peace, security and stability by means of social, economic and human development.

4.2 Freedom and democracy

4.2.1 Freedom and domestic human rights

Fundamental human rights and freedoms are both safeguarded in the Namibian Constitution. Specifically, the country is committed to upholding the protection of life, liberty and human dignity; it outlaws racial discrimination and apartheid practices, and guarantees equality before the law and the right to a fair trial. The Constitution also guarantees the right to private property, the right to privacy, freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of religious affiliation, and freedom of cultural orientation (RoN 1990:7–16). In addition, Namibia is a signatory to various international human rights treaties. There has, however, been international criticism in the past about the treatment of homosexuals and foreigners, and about the independence of the judiciary.

In its election manifesto, SWAPO (2004:9) emphasised the importance of these freedoms and human rights, saying it was working towards freedom from discrimination on the basis of religion, sex and ethnicity. SWANU's (2004:11) election manifesto promoted national unity and totally opposed favouritism based on tribal, ethnic or racial group identity. The DTA and NUDO are the only parties to explicitly mention human rights. NUDO (2004a:1) stated in its constitution that it sought to defend and protect human rights and all traditional cultures and customs. The DTA (2004:5) maintained that human rights had to be rigorously protected, maintained and promoted. The CoD (2004:6) viewed the provision of water and electricity as basic human rights, stating that their access “cannot be negotiated or compromised at any cost”. The NDMC (2004:2) undertook to safeguard human rights and civil liberties by helping any citizen who believed their rights had been derogated from to seek redress through the appropriate and available legal channels.

4.2.2 Democracy

Namibia is in the process of democratic consolidation. Predictably, therefore, in their manifestos and other campaign literature, all of the parties mention the importance of upholding the democratic system. Even SWANU (2004:2), which is Marxist-Leninist in ideology, described itself as “democratic, socialist and revolutionary”.

SWAPO (2004:11) stated that democracy was about choice; hence, the party was directing its efforts to enhancing the devolution of national powers and resources to regional and local authorities. NUDO (2004c:2) declared democracy to be “under threat” due to a de facto one-party state that could change the Constitution whenever it wished: “It has shown that it is preparedness [sic] to abuse the constitution for political convenience and expediency”. The DTA (2004:5) saw one-party rule as a direct threat to the ideals of democracy because “it will erode the principles contained in the constitution and alienate the country from the international society”. Similarly, the UDF (2004:1–2) stated that the consolidation of democracy was being hampered by the ruling party's dominance: “It is time for multi-party democracy to be put in place and [practised] with vigour and meaning”. The CoD (2004:1) deemed the participation of citizens to be of paramount importance in ensuring that democracy worked. According to MAG (2005:1), not a single post-independence election had been free or fair on the basis of how political parties were financed in Namibia, and in how the electorate was registered. In a press release following the November 2004 elections it stated that “[I]n this respect the playing field is absolutely uneven” (MAG 2004c). The NDMC (2004:1–2) pledged to create a “truly national democracy” where all the people would govern and enjoy equal rights.

4.2.3 Constitutionalism

The Constitution adopted on 9 February 1990 established Namibia as a “sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary State founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all” (RoN 1990:2). All the political parties mention the importance of respecting the Constitution. MAG (2004a:3), however, insists the word secular should be removed from the Constitution.

4.3 Government

4.3.1 Decentralisation

There has been a growing debate about how more power can be devolved to the authorities in Namibia's 13 Regions.

SWAPO (2004:12) maintained it was fully committed to devolving a number of functions and services from central government to regional and local levels of state authority. But some of SWAPO's opponents criticised the party's track record during its time in government as the ruling party. The DTA (2004:3), for example,

although it supported a decentralised unitary state with the accompanying devolution of power, argued that Regional Councils should be equipped with the power and enough funds to control regional government. NUDO (2004c:3) also supported decentralisation, stating that the country was too large and diverse to be governed effectively from the centre. However, the party (ibid.:22) complained that decentralisation was progressing too slowly, and attributed this to a lack of will within government. The UDF (2004:4–5) criticised the current government for being too Windhoek-oriented. In its manifesto (UDF 2000), the party proposed spreading the various ministries across the country. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development would move to Grootfontein and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to Kamanjab, while five other ministries would be transferred to Oshakati to create “a second Government Centre of the Nation” (ibid.).

There are also moves under way to give local governments more political power over their communities. The DTA (1999a:10) believed communities should be directly responsible for the management of local schools, clinics, primary roads, water affairs and many local affairs issues, but omitted referring to these issues in its 2004 platform. SWAPO (2004:12) maintained it was committed to devolving a number of functions and services from central government to the lower levels of state authority in order to maximise community participation. The RP (2003:3) wanted local government to be apolitical and would reintroduce the ward system into local government. SWANU (2004:7) hoped to promote good governance in the Regions in the provision of affordable water, electricity and sewage removal.

A number of tribes and communities in Namibia have been ruled by religious and traditional leaders for hundreds of years. Although Namibia is now a democratic state, many of these traditional and religious authorities still play significant roles. This can be a very difficult area: as Keulder (2000:150) and others have pointed out, some traditional leaders were created during the colonial period and their relevance (and legitimacy) in a postcolonial era could, therefore, be challenged. The government recognises traditional leaders and a council of these authorities advises the President. However, some of the parties want the decision-making roles of these leaders to be greater. The DTA (1999b:8) stated its support for traditional leaders to actively contribute to decision-making and play a stabilising role in governing their communities, probably because the DTA's first president was Herero Chief Clemens Kapuuo and, for many years, the movement was an alliance of ethnically-based parties.

4.3.2 Efficiency

With only a limited amount of resources through which to govern such a vast country with so many pressing needs, government efficiency is a big concern. Government created an Efficiency and Charter Unit in 1998 in the Office of the Prime Minister to maximise the effectiveness of civil services. SWAPO (2004:72) claimed that, under its government, the public service had become more responsive, efficient and effective. But several opposition parties believe that the civil service, especially at the highest levels, is too large to be efficient.

The DTA (2004:3) and SWANU (2004:8) both suggested the government should reduce its current cabinet of 26 ministers to 15. Similarly, CoD (2004:8) envisioned a “small but effective cabinet” to run the nation professionally. The DTA (2004:3) also wanted to reduce the amount of government representatives serving on company boards of directors. Similarly, the NDMC (2004:2) wanted to reduce “unnecessary posts” in the public service, including those for deputy ministers, deputy permanent secretaries and deputy directors, stating their belief that “the current Namibian government is too top-heavy.”

4.3.3 Corruption

Corruption in government and in parastatals has become a high-profile problem and several commissions have been created to investigate specific incidents.

SWAPO (2004:12) launched various initiatives to “root out this scourge from our society”. The CoD (2004:7) stated the most recommendations on how to curb corruption. The party had a code of conduct for its own leaders and vowed to stamp out corruption and nepotism. In the CoD's (2004:8) opinion, any leaders found guilty of corruption should be prevented from ever holding office again; and any companies found guilty of corrupt practices were to be excluded from submitting tenders for government goods or services. Those found guilty should also be held responsible for returning any missing funds. From the NDMC's point of view, its very reason for being was because it was disheartened by the amount of corruption in Namibia today (Goagoseb 2005). The NMDC (2004:1,3–4) gives many examples in its manifesto of how it defined *corruption*, including “corrupt officials”, “police being misused for political gains”, “corruption in the public sector”, “ruling party members who became farm owners by means of favouritism”, and “the allocation of fishing quotas and mineral concessions to Government and party officials”. To combat all this corruption, the NMDC would

investigate every case and strengthen the powers of auditors and the Ombudsman. In addition, the party (ibid.) advocated de-linking the Office of the Ombudsman⁵ from the Ministry of Justice in order to ensure its independence.

The DTA (1999b:5) sought to eliminate all forms of corruption and nepotism in politics, the civil service and the private sector: “Corruption and patronage undermine good governance, distort policy and lead to less effective public services” (2004:3). The DTA (ibid.) committed itself to working with the Auditor General to discipline defaulters and hold public officials responsible for unauthorised expenditure. NUDO (2004c:2) was similarly committed to transparent and corruption-free government, and would work towards that through strengthening institutions of good governance. The party (ibid.:7) would also blacklist businesses caught in corrupt activities with political officials. The eradication of all forms of corruption, suppression, unfair preference and nepotism was what the RP (2004b:6) declared it stood for. The party (ibid.:3) also aimed to establish an Anti-corruption Unit because the problem existed “in almost every state department and parastatal”.

4.3.4 Effectiveness and authority

Many parties cite the use of parastatals⁶ as a particularly ineffective way of managing the economy. Often, these organisations have to be created because they supply key goods and services to the economy that would not otherwise be supplied by the public sector. As of 2003, there were more than 45 parastatals in Namibia. Because many of them operate at a loss, and many have suffered due to mismanagement and corruption, there has been a growing debate about the role of parastatals in Namibia.

The CoD (2004:8) strove for an open, transparent and accountable government, where people were appointed based on their competence and not their ethnic origin or political affiliation. The DTA (2004:3) wanted government to stop interfering with parastatals and to give them more freedom to manage their business in “terms of private enterprise standards” so as not to have to be bailed out by the taxpayers. The party mentions Air Namibia as a particularly egregious example.

⁵The Office of the Ombudsman is an independent government agency charged with protecting human rights, promoting fair and effective public administration, combating corruption, and protecting the environment.

⁶Parastatals are companies or institutions in which the state has a complete or controlling shareholding.

SWANU (2004:5) was particularly critical of the present government: “[I]t is haphazard, neo-liberal in nature, apartheid in character and has not delivered for us all”. SWANU argued that the tenets of the liberation struggle had been undermined by a new laissez-faire economics where the corporation was king, the state its subject, and citizens served only to consume. Another criticism by SWANU (ibid.:7) was the excessive overlap between the executive and legislative branches of government: “[T]he mere fact that closer to two-thirds of the MPs belong ... to the Executive [as well] makes the functions of the parliament a mockery”. NUDO (2004c:2) vowed to not squander scarce resources on failed policies and initiatives. The party (ibid.:23) declared it would subject itself to public scrutiny through taking part in people’s forums, and would encourage the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate corruption, dishonesty and violations of rules of conduct in government. SWAPO (2004:72) stated it would continue with the development of public service charters and capacity-building to improve service delivery and would speed up the implementation of measures aimed at curbing inefficiency, corruption, negligence, abuse of government property, and other malpractices. The NDMC (2004:1) wanted parastatals investigated for alleged corruption.

4.4 Economy

4.4.1 Economic policy

One of the most important issues across Namibia is managing the economy, particularly the specific challenge of creating more employment – especially jobs that provide decent wages. Most of the parties believe in a market-based approach, with limited state intervention. When it comes to the details about their economic policies, they differ in respect of the role of the private sector, state responsibilities, and the role of parastatals in the economy.

The CoD (2004:2) advocated diversifying the economy through supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The party (ibid.) also encouraged international companies to hire Namibians in senior management positions. Similarly, the DTA (2004:3) believed in the virtues of a mixed economy, stating that private enterprise should be encouraged over parastatals. However, in respect of essential commodities such as water, government was to administer such services to ensure nobody went without.

SWAPO (2004:55) stated its top priorities as being economic growth and job creation. It aimed to achieve this through prudent management, the creation of favourable conditions for investment, assisting SMEs, and encouraging entrepreneurs, especially black economic empowerment firms. However, the party (ibid.:61) also stated its intention to use the country's "sovereign power in mobilising resources required to put productive plans [into] action". Although MAG (2004a:1) declared its support for a "free market system", the party supplied no further details on its economic programme. Similarly, the RP (2003:4) did not outline an economic policy. Instead, the party (ibid.) criticises the way the economy was currently being managed: "Natural resources wealth is not being redistributed because of poor management and corruption". NUDO (2004c:9), on the other hand, presented a ten-point plan for economic development that included privatisation, economic empowerment, promoting exports, investing in infrastructure, and developing an industrial base. In the NDMC's (2004:4) opinion, Namibia was to become self-sufficient in basic necessities through promoting agricultural development, land reform, and fishing policies. The only party to depart dramatically from the free market approach was SWANU (2004:2), which described itself as "determinedly anti-capitalist, anti-free market and anti-imperialist". But when going into specifics, its goals were reliant on the free market, as it would "diversify the economy[, and] promote small-scale enterprises [and] manufacturing industries with the aim of securing permanent employment to our citizens" (ibid.:9). On the other hand, SWANU (ibid.:10) was committed to public ownership of the means of production, and to achieve this it would use expropriation – with or without compensation.

4.4.2 Growth

Economic growth is essential for Namibia, especially if it wants to meet the ambitious targets set in Vision 2030⁷. Almost all the political parties view the private sector as the main engine of economic growth.

The DTA (2004:3–4) criticised the government for not meeting its growth targets, and wanted government interference in the economy reduced. The party (ibid.) believed business was to be encouraged through education, training and financial subsidies. The importance of entrepreneurs who could create long-term employment opportunities for the people was highlighted by the CoD (2004:3).

⁷Vision 2030 (GRN 2004) is a government strategy paper, launched in June 2004 by President Sam Nujoma. The document sets forth a vision on how to transform Namibia into a developed economy by 2030.

In the NDMC's (2004:3) opinion, strong growth would be seen in the tourism industry. SWANU (2004:6) complained that the current government lacked the initiative to boost manufacturing and other value-addition programmes, instead relying heavily on foreign investors. In SWAPO's (2004:52) view, the main contributors to growth were agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, SMEs, fisheries, mining, and infrastructure. NUDO (2004c:9) favoured export-led growth, and wanted to promote this through increased competitiveness and providing incentives to businesses.

4.4.3 Tax policies

Although tax is an important issue that affects many voters, it does not receive much attention in party manifestos.

The CoD (2004:5) hoped to reform the tax system by making municipal rates and taxes affordable to all citizens. Although the DTA (2004:4) wanted to "widen" the tax base, it did not elaborate on this proposal. The most specific pledge came from the UDF (2004:4), which wanted to raise income and property taxes on the rich by 10%, raising around N\$300 million over four years, which would help to create new jobs and, in turn, increase the amount of income tax paid. Focusing on the private sector, the DTA (2004:4) aimed to offer additional financial incentives, such as tax relief, to attract foreign investment and to promote private sector initiatives. NUDO (2004c:9) wanted to decrease taxation levels in order to increase competitiveness, and believed in providing tax breaks to the tourism industry in particular so that they could do more to attract tourists.

4.4.4 Focus of public spending

When it comes to government spending, several parties mention the improvement of infrastructure as the most important priority.

SWAPO (2004:51) stated its concern about the "slow pace" of infrastructure development, and aimed to direct all relevant state institutions to embark upon major capital projects in manufacturing, infrastructure, agriculture and the service sector. Yet it wanted to do this in a manner that prevented the debt and budget deficits from increasing (ibid.). The party (ibid.:63–64) pledged to reduce the budget deficit to below 3% over the next five years, down from an average of 5%, and reduce the government debt to below 25% from 30% of GDP. In the party's opinion (ibid.), such fiscal prudence was the reason why – unlike many

other developing countries – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank “don’t tell us what to do” (ibid.).

Putting money into creating infrastructure to assure others that Namibia was a good place in which to invest and to create employment was how NUDO (2004c:9) prioritised public spending. The CoD (2004:3) felt that the development of settlements, villages and rural towns should be prioritised over “grandiose projects” that benefited only a few. Similarly, the DTA (2004:3–4) wanted expenditure on “grandiose schemes” like the new State House to stop. It preferred to have public spending focus on bursaries, pensions and saving. In its turn, the RP (2004a:3) sought to improve the country’s health and emergency services, while the NDMC (2004:2–3) believed the savings derived from trimming the public service should be spent on making education affordable, enhancing the health system, and improving the country’s infrastructure in general.

4.4.5 Attracting more investment

Most of the parties aim to attract more foreign investment as well as make it easier for the domestic private sector to access capital.

SWAPO (2004:64) declared it sought to promote investment in productive sectors. As the ruling party (ibid.), it had attracted foreign investment through awarding Export Processing Zone (EPZ) status to certain manufacturers⁸. The party (ibid.:69) declared that Namibia now ranked third on the African continent in respect of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTED 2004:14), a UN agency that promotes the role of developing countries in the global economy, ranks Namibia as the 18th-largest recipient of FDI in the world, and third in Africa (after Angola and The Gambia).

In the NDMC’s (2004:3) view, a “safe foreign investment regime” was the way to create jobs. To establish such a regime, it (ibid.) undertook to establish incentives, remove disincentives, and promote friendly relations with other countries. NUDO (2004c:8) aimed to offer “a regulatory and fiscal environment that is attractive to foreign investment”, and wanted to develop the population’s skills base. The route offered by SWANU (1999:4 see Bib) would be to demand mining companies only invest in factories with at least 51% Namibian ownership because that would be

⁸EPZ status is an incentive used to encourage foreign investment and a tool for creating more jobs in the economy. For example, foreign manufacturers that open factories in Namibia are exempted from various taxes and duties if they are awarded EPZ status.

“the only means of permanent development”. Moreover, the party (SWANU 2004:6) complained more recently that the government was too heavily reliant on foreign investors. It (ibid.:5) criticised the government’s attitude of “the corporation is king”, and highlighted the Malaysian textile manufacturer Ramatex as a “classic example”⁹.

The DTA (2004:4) declared its intention to create conditions whereby more local and foreign investors would be encouraged to invest in Namibia. But it (ibid.) criticised Ramatex in particular for bringing “poorly qualified and poorly paid” textile workers to the country for positions that Namibians were better able to fill. It added that “Around 50,000 Chinese and Koreans are granted entry into Namibia where they seize the work of our own people” (DTA 2004:4). The party (ibid.:4) also called for “[a] high percentage of the profits generated by all foreign firms including Ramatex should be reinvested in Namibia”. Instead, the party wanted to devise incentives to motivate employers to create employment opportunities for Namibians. These views could be interpreted as xenophobic, but many Namibians would argue that low-skilled positions are too scarce in the country to fill them by importing foreign workers.

4.4.6 Reducing unemployment

Unemployment in Namibia stood at 20% in 2000, the most recent data available. But by relaxing the definition of unemployment to include those who have given up looking for work, the rate rises to 34% of the labour force (ML 2002). Unemployment is even higher among women and the youth. Many parties, therefore, highlight the importance of reducing unemployment and stress the need for both government and the private sector to work together to create more jobs.

The boldest pledge was manifested by the UDF (2004:4), who vowed to spend N\$1.2 billion to create 100,000 new jobs over four years. The funds would come from increased taxes on income, property and alcohol, as well as transfers from parastatals to the government budget. The party argued that the new jobs would also generate more income, which in turn would increase the tax base (ibid.). Economic growth and diversifying the economy were needed in order to boost employment, according to the CoD (2004:2). In the meantime, the party wanted a basic income grant introduced urgently to assist the unemployed and underemployed (ibid.).

⁹The biggest investment in Namibia has come from Ramatex, which has created more than 8,000 jobs in Namibia. In accordance with its EPZ status, the textile company has received a variety of tax benefits and incentives. However, it continues to be criticised in the media for not complying with environmental regulations, and has been taken to court by its workers for unfair labour practices.

SWAPO's (2004:50–63) two main goals were economic growth and job creation. Although the party had pledged in the past to create 50,000 jobs, their most recent manifesto contains no concrete target – perhaps because so few new jobs have been created over the last five years. Job creation was especially emphasised for the historically disadvantaged¹⁰ and on the youth. The party reported having encouraged entrepreneurial initiative, and created support mechanisms that provide access to training, capital and marketing support (ibid.). The top priority for NUDO (2004c:8) was to significantly reduce levels of unemployment. To do so it initially wanted to focus on small business development, and create an industrial base over the long term. The RP (2004d:4) aimed to create agricultural and other projects to boost employment.

In the DTA's (2004:4) view, government, the trade unions and the private sector all needed to work together to create employment opportunities. In 1999, the DTA (1999a:9) had undertaken to create a special Unemployment Compensation Fund to help the unemployed because the party felt everyone had the right to work. In its 2004 manifesto, however, it stopped short of repeating the proposal (DTA 2004). SWANU (2004:9) sought more development efforts and job training schemes in the rural areas so that people living there should not be forced to move to cities and live in what it called “urban ghettos”. The party would also promote youth employment, on-the-job training and self-employment (ibid.). In its turn, the NDMC (2004:3) strove for “full employment” through further investments into water, electricity, telecommunications, education and training to create more jobs.

4.4.7 Poverty reduction efforts

The 1993/94 National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NPC 1996) determined that 38% of households in Namibia lived in relative poverty, where more than 60% of household income was used for food expenses alone. Another 9% lived in extreme poverty, spending more than 80% of their income on food. The 2004 survey, the publication of which is due in late 2005, will give a more current assessment of poverty in Namibia.

Most parties want to do something about reducing poverty levels and believe local authorities, the private sector or some combination of the two can best achieve this.

¹⁰The term *historically disadvantaged* refers to Namibians that suffered under the colonial and apartheid systems.

The DTA (2004:2) viewed unemployment as the main reason for poverty, and felt it undermined peace and social tranquillity in the long run. Similarly, NUDO (2004c:8) wanted to tackle poverty through job creation. The RP (2003:4) complained too little had been done to alleviate poverty at grass-roots level, claiming that “the (newly) rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer”, but offering little by way of solutions. Poverty reduction for the NDMC (2004:2) meant making water and electricity affordable to all, even at reduced rates if necessary. But the party did not explain how such subsidisation would be paid for. The party (ibid.:4) also wanted to provide a monthly allowance of N\$400 to the unemployed by cutting the salaries of and expenditure by senior civil servants.

The ruling party SWAPO (2004:27) reported that it had already implemented an integrated poverty strategy and was dedicated to poverty reduction, in large part through economic growth and job creation. On the other hand, SWANU (2004:1) claimed the gap between the incomes of the rich and the poor had widened since Independence. The party (2004:6) maintained that the reasons for the existence of abject poverty in Namibia were the fact that basic needs for water and electricity, for example, were not being met because of the exorbitant tariffs charged by state-owned enterprises, unemployment, and the inequitable allocation of resources. The CoD (2004:1) also argued that the rich were getting richer on the backs of “the toiling masses of working poor”. To help bridge the income gap, the party wanted more Namibians to obtain shareholdings in international companies that were extracting natural resources.

4.4.8 The privatisation question

Many parastatals have been created since Independence. There has been debate about whether these enterprises, some of them running on purely commercial lines, should be privatised or whether it made more sense for the state to continue operating them. Four of the parties address this issue.

The DTA (2004:10) wanted parastatals to have more freedom to operate, but did not want them competing directly with private enterprise because the latter would always produce better results. Instead, “such parastatals must be privatised and the proceeds used to lower government debt” (ibid.). The most sweeping change was suggested by NUDO (2004c:9), which wanted to speed up the privatisation of all parastatals, including public utilities, and promoted the outsourcing of selected government functions in order to create more efficient

business and government services and provide resources to pay the national debt. The party put forward the notion that shares in parastatals should be owned directly by a broad section of the public (ibid.). The CoD (2004:6) wanted NamWater¹¹ to become part of government again rather than being operated as a commercial entity. In the CoD's opinion, water prices should be strictly monitored and regulated (ibid.). The party also wanted NamPower¹² to provide consumers with electricity directly, bypassing the various intermediaries that currently exist and add to the cost of supply for consumers. Similarly, the NDMC (2004:2) advocated NamWater's duties and responsibilities to be returned to government, so that access to water would remain affordable for all Namibians. In an earlier manifesto, the UDF (2000:3) had declared privatisation should be encouraged. In their latest manifesto (2004:4,6), however, the party wanted both NamWater and NamPower to forgive the enormous debts that were owed to them largely by impoverished communities, and for all the parastatals to pay the government N\$150 million over four years to help with job creation. Nevertheless, the party's demands are almost mutually exclusive: the former asks two of the largest parastatals to dilute their income streams, while the latter expects parastatals to be more profitable and pay larger dividends to government.

4.4.9 Setting a minimum wage

Few political parties addressed the minimum wage issue in their publications. Although the government has no policy concerning a minimum wage, agreements have been made between unions and employers in the farming and security sectors. The Labour Acts of 1992 and 2004 (No. 6 of 1992 and No. 15 of 2004, respectively) both allow for the creation of a Wages Commission to investigate the terms and conditions of employment, including remuneration (Van Rooyen 2005:112–114). The Commission has the power to make recommendations to the Minister of Labour, who in turn has the capacity to issue a Wage Order to enforce fixed wages and other conditions of employment. Although only the farming and security industries have a minimum wage, there have also been calls for domestic workers in particular to negotiate a similar industry-wide agreement.

In their earlier manifestos, NUDO (n.d.:1) and SWANU (1999:2) had both stated that wages should be linked to a quality standard of living, but dropped the issue in their most recent political dictums. Nonetheless, NUDO (2004c:18) did

mention the national campaign to provide domestic workers with minimum wages, and recognised that the work performed by members of this sector contributed to the economy as a whole, and influenced the survival and quality of life of many children. As regards farm labourers, SWAPO (2004:62) referred to their being paid “starvation wages”, and maintained it would continue to address the plight of these workers. The UDF (2004:6) also stated that instituting a minimum wage would be fairer to workers, but did not single out any specific industry in this regard.

4.5 Welfare and quality of life

4.5.1 Environmental protection

Many of the political parties highlight the importance of safeguarding the environment.

The CoD (2004:2) declared that the extraction of Namibia's natural resources should be allowed only after environmental impact assessment studies had been conducted, in order to ensure the balance in Namibia's sensitive environment was sustained and protected. The party (ibid.:5) also wanted decent housing to be built across the country's rural areas in an environmentally friendly manner. While the DTA (2004:6) sought natural resources to be developed to their full potential to help alleviate poverty, this was to be done in a way that would not damage the country's ecology. Similarly, SWAPO (2004:16) was committed to the sustainable use of natural resources. SWANU (2004) did not address the environment in its most recent manifesto, but in a previous issue (SWANU 1999:2) it had called for the outlawing of toxic waste being dumped in Namibia since that would poison underground water and pollute the environment. Environmentally friendly policies and ecologically sustainable development was also supported by the NDMC (2004:3). The party (ibid.) wanted to address refuse recycling, the removal of litter from urban and rural areas, and finding alternative fuels to discourage the burning of wood in urban areas.

4.5.2 Provision of housing

Almost all of the parties address the problem of inadequate housing in Namibia. The most popular solution is that government should provide housing directly to its citizens.

¹¹NamWater is a parastatal responsible for the national delivery of water.

¹²NamPower is a parastatal responsible for the national delivery of electricity.

While the CoD (2004:5) believed that companies and parastatals should be encouraged to build houses or provide housing benefits for their employees, SWAPO (2004:22) pointed out the acute disparities in the availability of housing in rural vs. urban areas, and between various “population groups”. It undertook, therefore, to accelerate the provision of low-cost housing, especially in rural towns, villages and settlements (ibid.). For the UDF (2004:6), the solution was for local authorities to invest in decent, affordable housing for the residents in their communities, whereas the CoD (2004:5) committed itself to providing every Namibian with decent housing: “Despite repeated promises and failed schemes by the current administration, not enough houses have been built in order to address and solve the current housing backlog”. The CoD (ibid.), therefore, wanted to eliminate all squatter camps and singles’ quarters and replace them with affordable housing. In the DTA’s (2004:3) opinion, government should help to subsidise home ownership for first-time buyers. The RP (2004d:4) wanted to ensure that those who currently had homes would not be threatened with losing them. The party (ibid.) also felt that outstanding debts to local authorities should be written off for the unemployed, for pensioners and for widows/widowers, so they could keep their homes. In respect of the aged, the NDMC (2004:4) advocated building old-age homes in every district so that people could continue to live in familiar surroundings.

4.5.3 Access to health services

Health is an extremely important issue in Namibia due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS¹³, malaria and tuberculosis. Health services are also stretched thin due to insufficient funds, people who were too poor to pay, and the vast geographical area they had to cover. Not surprisingly, therefore, all of the political parties stress the need for greater access to health services, especially in rural and urban areas that are populated by the poor. Most of their suggestions require additional funding, but none of the recommendations include possible sources for additional money.

SWAPO (2004:23) stated it sought to improve and maintain health services, emphasising both preventative and curative care. It aimed to focus on children, women, senior citizens, and providing greater access to prenatal and post-natal care. The CoD’s (2004:4) commitment was to improve the quality, affordability and functionality of health care services. In addition, the party wanted to build

clinics in all settlements and villages, ensure health facilities were properly staffed and equipped, pay medical practitioners more, and ensure that low-income households had access to affordable medical schemes (ibid.). Previously, the party (1999b:4) had declared its intention to “open the debate” on the right of women to have open reproductive choices, but the issue was excluded from their 2004 manifesto.

SWANU (2004:9) maintained that because access to health was a right and not a privilege, it should be free, efficient, and available to all. It felt that public hospitals should be as efficient as private ones. To help bring this about, the party would improve management and salaries for doctors and nurses. Despite the fact that the sector received substantial government funding, SWANU (ibid.:6) claimed its objectives were being undermined by inefficiency, corruption and mismanagement. Affordable primary health care that everyone could avail themselves of was what NUDO (2004c:4) advocated. The party wanted to improve access to such services by providing more clinics, health centres and hospitals across the country, as well as by reviving the use of traditional medicines. An expansion of health services to benefit all Namibians was also on the NDMC’s (2004:3) list of priorities. The party proposed doing so by establishing centres in all districts, updating equipment, and employing more nurses and doctors at all health facilities. The RP (2003:4) declared “the situation at state hospitals is critical and the morale of doctors and nurses distressingly low”, but did not suggest how to tackle the problem.

4.5.4 Combating HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is the primary cause of death and hospitalisation in Namibia. By the end of 2001, the country was estimated to have an HIV prevalence rate of 22.5%, making it one of the top five affected countries in the world (MHSS 2002). The government began the roll-out of anti-retroviral drugs in 2004. Despite government and civil society awareness campaigns, a stigma remains around HIV/AIDS.

To counter HIV/AIDS, SWAPO (2004:24) would spearhead a concerted and extensive campaign of prevention and control of all sexually transmitted diseases. SWAPO (1999:10) said it desired to make HIV-infection a notifiable disease – whereby people found to be HIV-positive would be publicly identified as such – but dropped the idea after national and international concerns that such a programme would violate the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

¹³Human immunodeficiency virus / acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

In their 2004 campaign, SWAPO would involve those living with HIV/AIDS, their communities, and civil society at large. As the DTA (2004:5) put it, the pandemic had become a humanitarian crisis of frightening proportions. The party wanted treatment to be a national priority. It suggested that special care centres be set up to relieve the pressure on hospitals (*ibid.*). The CoD (2004:4) put forward a similar approach: the party would declare HIV/AIDS a national emergency and would coordinate the combating of HIV/AIDS directly from the Office of the President. It pledged to distribute anti-retroviral drugs across the country, and would require all senior public officials to take HIV/AIDS tests and make their status public in order to help destigmatise the disease (*ibid.*). SWANU (2004:8) also mentioned HIV/AIDS as a pressing priority, but did not elaborate on strategies to address the situation.

NUDO (2004c:3, 5–6) regarded HIV/AIDS as the most serious challenge facing the country. The party pledged to make the fight against HIV/AIDS a national priority by focusing on both prevention and care, assisting those living with HIV/AIDS, and doing more for children affected by the disease. In addition, NUDO intended to provide all HIV-positive mothers with drugs that helped prevent transmitting HIV to their newborns. An awareness campaign it called the “National Fight for Family Values” constituted the UDF’s (2004:3–4) strategy for promoting morality: “Love and care with God’s Word is the best strategy”. The party had dropped its pledge in an earlier manifesto (UDF 1999b:7) to “quietly promote condom usage without provoking churches”. From the RP’s (2004d:5) point of view, advocating a strategy of abstinence, care and treatment was the way to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. The party would launch public awareness campaigns from the perspective of Christian moral values that explained how to avoid the disease. In addition, the RP wanted to increase counselling, treatment and nutritional programmes to help those living with HIV/AIDS (*all ibid.*). The NDMC (2004:3) stated that the fight against HIV/AIDS was a priority that it would address not only through information campaigns, but also by ensuring that those living with the disease had access to affordable medication. The MAG party (2003b:4) has only addressed the issue by stating in one of its newsletters that “the best way to fight AIDS is moral values”.

4.5.5 Educating the masses

During apartheid, education was divided along racial lines. Since Independence, the government has actively tried to ensure all public schools offer the same high quality of education, but vast differences remain in resources and teaching

capabilities across the Regions and between urban and rural areas. Although basic education (Grades 1–7) is free, many primary schools require school fees, which can serve as barriers to education for poorer families. Most of the political parties agree that primary education should be free, and that higher education should be affordable. Under SWAPO governments, education has received the largest share of the state budget to date.

SWAPO (2004:30) declared it would continue to try not only to improve access to schooling, but also to bridge the disparities that remained between schools in respect of the quality of teaching and the facilities they offered. According to the CoD (2004:4), education should be “genuinely free”, i.e. from pre-primary up until first-degree university/diploma level. It stated that it would streamline education into one ministry, and would encourage Germany, South Africa and the United Kingdom to accept more Namibian students into their universities and colleges.

Improving education, for the DTA (2004:3), entailed encouraging more bursaries to be made available, and pledged to expand teacher-training efforts. It was SWANU’s (2004:8) opinion that inequality in income and a skewed distribution of national resources undermined the notion of education for all. As a remedy, the party proposed introducing pre-primary education, fully funded by the government, to help prepare learners for basic education. The party also advocated formerly disadvantaged groups receiving preferential funding allocations for all levels of schooling (*ibid.*). In NUDO’s (2004c:21) view, the first 12 years of education were to be free and compulsory. The party pledged to provide more classrooms, libraries, laboratories, teachers, resource centres and computers, especially to rural schools. It would also provide a national bursary and loan scheme to make higher education available to more learners. The UDF’s (2004:5) proposal was to build vocational schools and other tertiary-level institutions at Grootfontein, Katima Mulilo, Khorixas and Rundu. The NDMC (2004:2) intended to enforce the law on compulsory school attendance for all children, and would ensure that no child was denied an education simply because s/he was unable to pay school fees. The party also aimed to invest in rural schools to bridge the gap between them and the richer, urban schools (*ibid.*).

4.5.6 Updating the curriculum

When addressing school curricula, most of the parties believe schools should teach skills that will help prepare learners for the working world and that there should be apprenticeships, vocational training, and access to computers.

SWAPO (2004:31) sought to redress inequities by restructuring curricula to meet the challenges of the future. It intended to increase the emphasis on promoting skills training and managerial competence to “ensure that our young people are equipped with marketable skills that will enable them to locate and secure productive employment, or become entrepreneurs”. The party (*ibid.*:32–33) also pledged to promote vocational training and to eradicate illiteracy. The proposal by the CoD (2004:4) involved more technical and on-the-job training for those who did not further their education at tertiary level. They also pledged to build more libraries and laboratories, increase Internet access, and raise teachers’ salaries (*ibid.*). For NUDO (2004c:21), the curriculum was to include more science, technology and commercial subjects. The party also wanted vocational centres established in each of the 13 Regions. The NDMC (2004:2) sought to promote the use of audiovisual and electronic teaching aids. The DTA (2004:6) believed education made a major contribution to employment and economic growth. Therefore, it sought to add more vocational training to the broad curriculum and would ensure computer skills were widely acquired. Vocational and technical training would be the targets for SWANU (2004:8), which aimed to give special attention and resources to these aspects. The present education policy, in the RP’s (2003:4) view, “lacks consistency” because teachers did not enjoy job security or appropriate remuneration. The party also argued the government should again assume responsibility for pre-primary education (*ibid.*).

4.6 Fabric of society

4.6.1 Combating crime

Although official crime statistics are not released regularly the perceptions exist that crime is increasing. A number of high-profile cases of violence have led to demonstrations by concerned citizens demanding that more is done to prevent crime. Thus, a number of parties cite crime as a serious problem. A popular solution suggested is to provide the Namibian Police Force with more funding and to give convicted criminals heavier sentences.

A “zero tolerance” approach in respect of crime was adopted by NUDO (2004c:13–14). The party undertook to strive for a better trained, better equipped, and better resourced police force. The party also resolved to make police stations friendlier to the public, and sought to create a Victims’ Compensation Fund to cover losses related to crime. The CoD (2004:7) also espoused “zero tolerance” on this front, and sought to address the root causes of crime. In addition, the party would recruit and train more police officers, improve their pay and working conditions, and establish neighbourhood watches to combat crime (*ibid.*).

SWAPO (2004:19) committed itself to reducing the crime rate. It aimed to do this through augmenting the police force, involving the community, and instilling professionalism in police ranks. The undertaking by the UDF (2004:3) was to add 1,000 police officers to help patrol streets and villages. It also wanted to classify alcohol abuse and the sale of illegal drugs as serious crimes (*ibid.*). For the DTA (2004:5), a better trained and better paid police force was imperative in combating crime. MAG (2004b:3) believed corporal punishment should be reintroduced for serious offences. A “zero tolerance” approach to crime was adopted by the RP (2004d:2–3), which promised a better trained and better paid police force. The party also advocated heavier sentences, e.g. life imprisonment for rapists of children, and 15 years for other rapists – both without the option of parole. The NDMC (2004:3) claimed the police were currently unable to function properly. To remedy this, the party promised to increase police salaries, institute better training, and supply them with improved infrastructure and equipment. Prisoners would be encouraged to use their time “fruitfully” to help them reintegrate into society upon their release (*all ibid.*).

4.6.2 Rule of law

In its manifesto, SWAPO (2004:19) committed itself to maintaining law and order. Of the opposition parties who wanted certain aspects of the law reformed, the DTA (2004:5) mentioned that all citizens should be able to afford access to the courts. The party pledged to create an arbitration court to relieve pressure from the lower courts, whose staff it believed suffered from a lack of appropriate education and training. The NDMC (2004:3) sought to appoint more judges and magistrates to reduce delays in court proceedings.

4.6.3 The role of religion

Namibia is a secular country that makes no reference to religions in its Constitution, but three political parties – MAG, the RP and the UDF – stress the importance of God and religion in their party constitutions and manifestos.

The UDF (1999b:2) identified itself as “a Party of Believers”, and stated its concern that Namibia had become a “Secular State”, despite an estimated 80–90% of the country reportedly being Christian. In its 1999 constitution (UDF 1999a:2), the party declared that it aimed to cooperate more closely with religious bodies. In its most recent manifesto, the party (2004:3) discussed religion only in the context of HIV/AIDS, mentioning that faith and moral values were necessary to curb the spread of this disease. In the RP’s (2004b:5) opinion, Namibia should be a nation in “submission to Almighty God”, and that the state should promote Christian moral values. As such, the RP rejected the idea that Namibia was a secular state. Although the leadership and most of its membership were openly religious, the party stressed that it was not exclusively for Christians (all *ibid.*). The NDMC (2004:2) advocated a unified nation in which the religious diversity of the people was recognised.

As mentioned earlier, MAG did not recognise Namibia’s Constitution because of the document’s secular nature. Thus, the party’s (MAG 2004a:3) first aim was for the “sovereignty and guidance of the Holy Trinity” to be recognised in society “as the omnipotent source in the destinies of all peoples, nations and countries”. MAG promised to be the only party actively working towards having the word secular removed from the country’s Constitution (*ibid.*). Another party document (MAG 2004b:3) reprints a profile of its Chairman, Kosie Pretorius, entitled *Meet Pretorius – Serving God in Parliament*, in which he states he does not believe in the power of voters, but rather in the will of God: “I am in Parliament not because of the electorate, but because Jesus Christ wants me to be there”.

4.7 Social groups

4.7.1 Boosting labour relations

Many of the political parties stress the importance of workers’ rights and labour unions, but their visions of the role of the government in labour relations differ dramatically. Most of the large trade unions in Namibia, through the National Union of Namibian Workers, are affiliated with the ruling party, SWAPO, a

relationship that dates back to the liberation struggle when SWAPO was formed to help improve the plight of workers.

The UDF (2000:3), objecting to the close ties between unions and government, stated it would discourage trade unions from having political affiliations. In its most recent constitution (UDF 2004), however, the party dropped the issue. For SWAPO (2004:62), labour relations and good communication between social partners in such relations were essential to economic development. Thus, the party wanted to set up alternative dispute mechanisms and continue to address the plight of farm workers. To improve industrial relations and avoid costly labour disputes, NUDO (2004c:10) intended to work with trade unions and business. The party also wanted labour laws to be more “flexible” to ensure more young people were employed (*ibid.*).

Similarly, the DTA (2004:4) pledged to work with trade unions and business in order to improve labour relations and avoid disputes. The RP (2004c:1), being quite critical of current relations between the Namibia Farmworkers’ Union and government over land reform, believed the process could be handled more smoothly. The party wanted the unions to resolve the issue peacefully in consultation with government and farm owners, rather than resorting to violence, protests and threats of forcefully occupying commercial farms.

4.7.2 Reforming land ownership

The issue of land reform is highly charged in Namibia. The bulk of commercial land remains in the hands of a few thousand farmers, most of whom are white. Different ethnic groups lay different kinds of claims on the land that they believe is rightfully theirs. It is a difficult task to determine which groups of people have land rights in a country with a long history of settlement and many different ethnic and tribal groups. The National Land Conference in 1991 reaffirmed that the restoration of ancestral land rights was out of the question. “The newly elected government announced that the principle of ‘willing seller – willing buyer’ would form the basis of land acquisition for redistribution, and that no ancestral land claims would be allowed” (Fuller 2004:83). Because many Namibians are unemployed and landless, national debate and strong disagreement continue in respect of how the land can best be used and allocated.

SWAPO (2004:16) wanted to make commercial land available to the formerly disadvantaged and the landless to redress past imbalances in the distribution of land as a resource, to create employment, and to offer marginalised citizens an

opportunity to take their rightful places in the midst of society. For the CoD (2004:3), the right road to take was to implement a sustainable land and agrarian reform programme over five years – one that was satisfactory to all Namibians. As a first step on that road, the party would target all currently unutilised and underutilised state farms, after which it would target unproductive farms owned by absentee foreign and local landlords. In addition, the party advocated opening up communal land for commercial farming (all *ibid.*). Agreeing with this approach to some extent, the DTA (2004:4) also felt communal land should become “tradable” so as to free up capital currently invested in land. Similarly, NUDO (2004a:2) aimed to fight for land reform and land ownership that benefited those living on communal land. Another proposal put forward by the party (2004c:17) was to accelerate the repossession of all land owned by absentee landlords, as well as any underdeveloped or underutilised land. However, the party did not specify who the new owners should be, but stressed that women needed to have equal rights to land and farming assistance programmes.

The UDF (2004:5–6) wanted to continue the “willing seller – willing buyer” programme, but would complement it with a rule that some of the workers living on farms should be retained when ownership changed so that the workers and their dependants would not be destabilised. The party states that “the land was robbed from Black Africans only 100 years ago”, and should be equitably distributed by 2008. “Give back the Land to the People” is a call to which SWANU (2004:10) also remains committed. The party argues that land should be returned to all those who were historically deprived of their land. However, neither SWANU nor the UDF specifies which groups exactly would qualify, and how rival claims would be settled.

In the RP’s (2004d:4) opinion, the current programme was not working because the government refused to buy properties that become available. Of 756 commercial farms offered to government, the party claimed only 94, or 12%, were in fact purchased. The rejected farms were not unsuitable, the party felt, because they had been used for commercial farming in the past. However, although the RP wanted the current programme to continue, it argued that expropriation should not be a priority because there was so much other land being made available voluntarily (all *ibid.*). In its turn, the NDMC (2004:4) supported the “willing seller – willing buyer” programme. The party favoured granting land only to those previously disadvantaged Namibians who would be able to use the land productively (*ibid.*).

4.7.3 Land redistribution

The parties have different ideas as to how private commercial farms and communal lands can best be redistributed. Most parties want to divide the land more equitably, but they also want to ensure that productivity does not suffer. The recent food shortages in Zimbabwe offer a striking example of the potential pitfalls surrounding equitable land reform¹⁴.

SWAPO (2004:16) wanted the resettlement process to be accompanied by training and capacity-building so as to promote sustainable land use. Similarly, NUDO (2004c:17) would like resettled farmers to be provided with access to training, credit and markets in order to maintain the productivity of farmland. In the RP’s (2004d:5) view, potential farmers should be properly selected and should receive every possible assistance from government to ensure their success.

The CoD (2004:3) promised to speed up land reform through increasing the budget for buying farms. It believed priority should be given to those whose ancestral land had been taken from them, particularly the San, and to current farm workers – rather than to “the wealthy and the political elite who are simply weekend farmers” (*ibid.*). The proposal put forward by the DTA (2004:6) was that land redistribution be combined with sound business sense. Prospective farmers should be assisted and trained, and be armed with sound business plans to ensure they succeed. The suggestion by the UDF (2004:6) was for redistribution to be complemented by training and access to capital. A similarly holistic approach was advocated by SWANU (2004:10–11), which felt that anyone being resettled should be provided with proper and sufficient land; all the necessary equipment, training and credit; and access to health and education facilities. The NDMC (2004:4) stressed that land should be made available to the neediest, and not to senior government and political party officials as a mechanism to secure votes.

4.7.4 Minority rights

With the exception of MAG, most of the parties state clearly in their manifestos that they want to eliminate discrimination. However, parties differed extensively with regard to the groups of people they identified as minorities.

¹⁴After two decades of trying to redistribute land peacefully, Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe launched a controversial land reform programme in 2000 that led to most of the 4,000 farms owned by whites being violently seized. The seizures have led to a flight of foreign capital, a devastated economy, international sanctions, and a 50% reduction in agricultural crops.

Most succinct was the DTA (2004:5), stating it aimed to eliminate racial prejudice, tribalism and all other forms of discrimination. SWAPO (2004:1) stated it was fighting against social, cultural, political and economic oppression, while the UDF (2004:2) envisioned a Namibia where everyone was equally important, “no matter his opinion, wealth, colour, sex or race”. A political dimension to this was added by NUDO (2004c:16), which, if elected to govern, promised not to discriminate on the grounds of sex, ethnicity, creed or political affiliation when appointing High Commissioners and Ambassadors. The NUDO (ibid.:4) platform also included a social welfare component: the party vowed to provide special care for children, senior citizens, the disabled, and crime victims.

The most comprehensive pledge to protect minorities was formerly associated with the CoD (2001:5), which included references to discrimination against homosexuals and foreigners. The party declared it sought “a society free from all forms of discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religious faith or political belief” (ibid.). However, their more recent programme (CoD 2004:2) merely stated that ethnic and tribal favouritism as well as nepotism needed to be halted. The NDMC (2004:2) stated that, as a party, it was non-racial, anti-racist, non-sexist and against any form of tribal exclusivity or ethnic chauvinism. In an attempt to provide constructive criticism, the RP (2003:4) stated it was opposed to the way in which affirmative action had been implemented: “Government creates jobs for their favourites who in most cases are unqualified and inexperienced. We should revert to a system where persons will be appointed on merit only”. The party claimed senior government officials were also guilty of making blatantly racist remarks that went unchecked. In its most recent manifesto (RP 2004b:5), the party declared it believed in competence, and rejected appointments on the grounds of party loyalty and affiliation, ethnic or tribal origin, sex, or skin colour. SWANU (2004:11) promoted a unitary Namibian state, and opposed administrative structures that had a tribal, ethnic or racial basis.

4.7.5 Uplifting the role of women

Namibia is a signatory to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and, therefore, is committed to achieving 30% women’s representation in political and decision-making structures by 2005 (Hopwood 2004:24). By 2004, this mark had only been reached within local authorities: the number of women active in Cabinet, the National Assembly and the National Council remains below the 30% target. The Namibian Women’s Manifesto and other lobby groups have called on government to ensure 50% of all election candidates are women.

Many parties acknowledge the importance of gender issues, and agree that women are equal to men and need to be treated as such. In their view, women need to play larger roles in politics and business, and assume other key roles in society. Five of the parties – the CoD, the DTA, the NDMC, NUDO and SWAPO – say they are committed to strengthening the role of women in their own party structures. However, tangible solutions towards improving the lives of women do not stray far beyond the political sphere. SWAPO already has a strong record of promoting women in leadership roles both before and after Independence.

The CoD (2004:6) stated it supported and promoted gender balance and the complete emancipation and empowerment of women. It urged the country to move faster to a more equal and gender-sensitive society. Beyond promoting policies that advanced women’s interests, the CoD declared it was committed to the gender balance in all of its structures, with women in 40% of senior positions and making up 43% of the party’s National Assembly list. The party also wanted to ensure that women received full pay during maternity leave and that fathers were offered paternity leave (all ibid.)¹⁵. The DTA (2004:5) stated that the role and potential of women was not being adequately appreciated. Therefore, it advocated removing the various barriers that hampered women from contributing to all walks of life (ibid.).

For SWAPO (2004:18), the goal was to remove all obstacles hindering the full participation of women in the process of decision-making within the party, the government and society at large. The party pledged to help women enter the civil service, and believed their representation at management level needed to be improved considerably (ibid.:11,18). If elected, NUDO (2004c:19–20) pledged to have women comprise 30% of the Cabinet, ministries and legislature, with a goal of 50% by 2005. The NDMC’s (2004:4) approach was similar, in that it wanted 50% representation by women at all decision-making levels of government. All that the UDF (2004:3) stated on the issue of women was that they needed to be accorded more equity and respect.

4.7.6 Pensions

Namibia is one of the few countries in Africa to provide financial assistance to its senior citizens. The five parties that mention pensions in their publications, namely the CoD, the DTA, NUDO, the RP and SWAPO, all agree that more needs to be

¹⁵The Labour Act, 2004 (No. 15 of 2004) grants every female employee the right to take 12 weeks’ maternity leave with full remuneration from her employer. In the case of a birth with complications, a woman can receive another month of paid leave. There is no reference to paternity leave.

done to improve senior citizen benefits. It is striking that none of the parties propose how the extra funds will be raised for increased pensions, considering that government coffers are already stretched thin.

The CoD (2004:2) and NDMC (2004:3) wanted to increase the monthly pension from N\$300 to N\$500 a month for all pensioners not entitled to any other pension, and would adjust the amount periodically in line with inflation. In a similar vein, the DTA (2004:3) pledged to give senior citizens a pension one could live on and that is linked to the inflation rate. The NDMC (2004:4) went a step further, proposing that senior citizen centres be established where the elderly could meet and receive care. The pledge from SWAPO (2004:28) was to continue improving pension benefits as the economy grew. In NUDO's (2004c:4) opinion, the pension payout system needed to be simplified so that pensioners could minimise their travel and transport costs. If the RP were elected into power, it (2004a:3) pledged to eliminate all debts incurred by pensioners to the municipality, which are usually for water and electricity, so they could afford to keep their homes.

4.7.7 Preserving languages

Since 1990 the official language of Namibia has been English after the SWAPO-led government replaced the predominant use of Afrikaans over English under the old regime. There are many other languages spoken in Namibia. These include Damara>Nama and other Khoesaaan languages, German, Herero, Kwangali, Lozi, Owambo, and Tswana. Although no political party advocates reverting to Afrikaans or replacing English with one of the other languages, several parties called for indigenous languages to be protected. Although many of the manifestos underscore the importance of preserving and using indigenous languages there are no concrete explanations of how this could come about and what effects it would have on the country and on society.

Just short of a decade ago, the DTA (1999b:6) pledged it would encourage and support the cultivation and maintenance of the various languages and cultures of Namibia as a positive contribution to the richness of the national fabric; this position, however, is not included in its most recent manifesto (DTA 2004). Similarly, the NDMC (2004:2) strove for a society that recognised the linguistic diversity of the people. On this topic, the CoD (2004:7) proposed police officers being taught local languages and cultures in order for them to communicate better with the widest possible range of citizens. In the RP's (2004d:2) opinion, the police lacked competence in taking down statements in English.

5. A wealth of new ideas

Through comparing the party platforms it becomes clear that there are differences between the parties and that all the parties have come up with a number of interesting and often creative ideas by means of which to improve matters in the country. Although the parties do not always explain how these changes could be brought about or funded, the following is a summary of noteworthy ideas that government and civil society in general may want to consider¹⁶.

Table 3: Noteworthy ideas set forth in party platforms

Subject	Party	Idea
Peace	UDF	Pay reparations to citizens who lost loved ones during the struggle
Decentralisation	DTA	Give Regional Councils the power to control regional government
	UDF	Spread ministry headquarters across the country
Efficiency	DTA	· Reduce the size of government
	SWANU	· Cut size of Cabinet to 15 ministers
	NDMC	Reduce "unnecessary posts" in the public service, including deputy ministers, deputy permanent secretaries and deputy directors
Corruption	CoD	Officials found guilty of corruption should return any money or goods they misappropriated
	NDMC	De-link the Office of the Ombudsman from the Ministry of Justice to ensure the former's independence
	NUDO	Blacklist businesses caught in corrupt activities with public officials
Economic policy	CoD	Enforce the requirement that International companies should appoint Namibians to senior management positions
Tax policies	UDF	Raise income and property taxes on the rich by 10% to raise around N\$300 million in revenue

¹⁶The author does not intend to convey his endorsement of or agreement with the ideas listed.

Subject	Party	Idea
Public spending	DTA	Encourage new business ventures through training and financing
	SWAPO	· Maintain very low debt · Do not borrow from the IMF and World Bank
Unemployment	UDF	Spend N\$1.2 billion to create 100,000 new jobs over four years
Poverty reduction	NDMC	Provide a monthly allowance of N\$400 to the unemployed
Privatisation	NDMC	Reincorporate NamWater into the formal state structures
	NUDO	Privatise all parastatals, including public utilities, and outsource selected government functions
Environment	CoD	Enforce the requirement for all developments impacting on the environment to undergo an environmental impact assessment
Housing	CoD	Encourage the private sector and parastatals to provide housing or housing benefits for employees
Health	NUDO	Revive the use of traditional medicine
HIV/AIDS	CoD	Declare HIV/AIDS a national emergency. Demand senior public officials get tested, publicise results
	NUDO	Provide all HIV-positive mothers and their newborn babies with drugs that help prevent HIV-transmission from mother to child
	SWAPO	Make HIV/AIDS a notifiable disease
Education	CoD	Realise the goal of a free basic education
	SWANU	Reintroduce and fully fund pre-primary education
Curriculum	SWAPO	·Emphasise skills training to prepare students for the job market. ·Promote vocational training
Crime	NDMC	Encourage prisoners to use their time “fruitfully” and assist with reintegrating into society life upon release
	NUDO	Establish a Victims’ Compensation Fund

Subject	Party	Idea
Religion	MAG	·Apply the Christian doctrine to government structures ·Remove <i>secular</i> from the Namibian Constitution
Agriculture	DTA NUDO	Grant ownership over communal lands
Resettlement	DTA	Evaluate prospective farmers on an economic basis
Women	CoD	·Enforce the requirement for women to receive full pay during maternity leave ·Offer fathers paternity leave
Pensions	CoD DTA NDMC	·Provide a pension that one is able to able on and that keeps up with the inflation rate ·Distribute it in a safe and easy manner
	NDMC	Establish senior citizen centres where the elderly can meet and receive care

Source: Party manifestos, constitutions and other official documents

6. Conclusion

Most contemporary political parties were formed during the struggle for independence. Some worked outside Namibia towards liberation, lobbying the international community for support, while others negotiated with the South African colonial government directly in Namibia’s capital, Windhoek. How these groups related to the struggle was for a long time the most important lens through which to view Namibia’s party politics. Even today, the role the party and its politicians played during the struggle still resonates with most voters. But 15 years into independence, the parties increasingly focus on day-to-day challenges more than pre-independence history. SWAPO has been in power since 1990 and often fails to differentiate between its existence as a party and as the government when listing its achievements.

Namibia is very much dominated by a single party. The opposition parties are more like “bell-ringers”, raising important issues that they want government and the ruling party to consider. Some of the parties have strong ethnic support bases with specific concerns about cultural rights, decentralisation, land reform, and the immense inequalities in wealth.

Ideology itself does not seem to play a large role in Namibian politics. All the parties generally favour a social democratic system, a mixed economy, and human rights and freedoms for all Namibians. SWANU and SWAPO have both advocated types of socialism in the past, but their views have shifted since Independence, albeit in different ways. It is clear that SWAPO was very pragmatic during the struggle, adjusting itself to national and global events as it dedicated itself above all else to independence for the Namibian people. The cold war required SWAPO to adopt certain postures, so it excelled at finding support on both sides of the East–West divide. SWANU, on the other hand, maintained its socialist leanings; this might be why Namibia's oldest party has failed to win many votes since independence. But as differences in SWANU's 1999 and 2004 manifestos suggest, especially in economics, the party is also moving away from the left. Perhaps the Trotskyite WRP, which did not stand for election in 2004, shows the risk of being too ideological.

The platforms of opposition parties, with the exception of the CoD, DTA and UDF, are slim and short on detail, especially compared with SWAPO's (2004) most recent manifesto, a glossy and well-written 75-page publication. The weakness of opposition manifestos can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the ruling party is so dominant that it holds the lion's share of government and parliamentary positions, as well as of financial and human resources. This has perhaps quelled political discourse because some voters may believe that challenging SWAPO is futile. Secondly, SWAPO has so far been unwilling to bring members of other parties into Cabinet. It may, therefore, be fair to say that having a position on every issue is not as important in Namibian politics and elections because the opposition parties are unlikely ever to be able to implement their policies. Thirdly, rather than creating a common bloc that can take on SWAPO, the number of political parties is increasing. The opposition is arguably growing weaker as a result, because none of the parties enjoys the sort of opposition strength that the DTA used to have with 21 seats in the 1990–1994 Parliament. As at the time of writing in 2005, the CoD has the largest number of opposition seats, namely 5: a mere fraction of SWAPO's 55.

In examining the 2004 party documents it is clear that there has been much improvement and forward thinking since before the 1999 elections, when most parties had last taken the time and effort to explain their positions and viewpoints on issues of national importance. The subject of HIV/AIDS in particular, which continues to affect so many Namibians, receives much broader attention across almost all the party platforms. The manifestos are also more professionally presented, and in some cases more extreme positions have been removed. However, fourthly, one major criticism remains: the opposition parties rarely

explain how new, ambitious initiatives will be achieved and, more importantly, how such initiatives will be funded. Namibia is in a relatively unique situation compared with South Africa, in that the ruling party has been and continues to be expected to win every election. When opposition parties produce political materials, therefore, they very often take the form of criticising the ruling party on issues like government size, corruption, land reform, access to health services, and education. Fifthly, when opposition parties introduce new ideas – like declaring HIV/AIDS a national emergency, providing home ownership for all, and creating drought relief funds – there is rarely a realistic and thorough analysis of where the additional funding would come from. Instead, the parties' underlying messages, above all else, are ones of unity and reconciliation, arguing that SWAPO has become aloof and removed from the people. A sixth reason why manifestos may be slim (and short on details) is that most of the political parties, at least initially, identified themselves along tribal or racial lines; therefore, their positions on certain issues were not as important to voters and party members as were matters like religion, race, ethnicity, and party personalities. Since Independence, all of the parties have pledged unity and an open membership, but many are still widely seen as favouring one particular ethnic or racial group. This could lead to issues and party positions being subservient to other factors, including the power of traditional leaders. When comparing the manifestos of the CoD and the DTA with SWAPO's, they differ very little across the major issues.

There is no evidence that party positions and manifestos have played a large role in post-independence Namibia. This is a country with a painful recent history and many voters have great deference, respect and esteem for SWAPO liberation heroes, especially for former President Sam Nujoma who is regarded as the father of the nation. His chosen successor, Hifikepunye Pohamba, won resoundingly at the polls, but it is not clear that he will command the unwavering support that Nujoma enjoyed. Moreover, the public disagreements amongst SWAPO leaders before the 2004 elections continued after the elections. These events may create a window of opportunity for opposition parties to make their case to the electorate in a more objective environment. If so, party opposition manifestos and platforms may, over time, become important after all.

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Political Platforms on the Record: Party Representatives Challenged

Justine Hunter

1. Introduction

This study is part of a larger research project that has initially been intended to help shed light on the platforms of Namibia's political parties ahead of the national elections that have been held in mid-November 2004. By means of challenging political party representatives to discuss issues of national interest, the research project aimed at contributing to the improvement of voter education. All political parties registered with the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) were approached to join the project.

In particular, this 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. Unfortunately, the ruling SWAPO Party declined face-to-face interviews. Owing to the dominance and political importance of SWAPO, the interviews were substituted by a thorough study of the party's political manifesto (SWAPO 2004) and other official documents (Boer 2004). Subsequently, this study mainly focuses on opposition party policies that offer alternatives to the ruling party's political platforms as reflected in its manifesto and other policy documents. Unfortunately, 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. As the party refrained from registering with the ECN during the course of 2004, the Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP) that has been incorporated in the original study has been excluded from this subsequent chapter. Consequently, the Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC) that registered in early 2004 with the intention of contesting the Local Authority elections in May of that year has been included.

Five policy issues were chosen to provide a basis upon which potential policy differences between the parties could be identified¹, 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 opposition parties, all of which are registered with the ECN²:

- 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
- Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC)

Boer (2005) and Hopwood (2004:41–84) 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 won seats in National Assembly elections that have been held in Namibia 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 National Assembly elections in November 2004 (NUDO and the RP), and
3. Parties that have to date had no electoral success in National Assembly elections (SWANU and the NDMC).

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 presidents or other top party leaders. In the second stage, the persons interviewed were handed questionnaires in preparation for the interviews. 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 2005).

The text that now follows comprises statements based on interviews³ with the following party representatives on the dates indicated:

- Frans Goagoseb, President of the NDMC; 22 February 2005
- 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 2004⁴
- 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.

¹The current study benefited from comments by Christiaan Keulder, who also compiled the underlying questionnaire on political platforms.

²As said, nine political parties contested the national elections in mid-November while the NID conducted interviews with representatives of only seven of them.

³The RP and the NDMC preferred putting the answers down in writing to face-to-face interviews.

⁴After nearly 15 years as MAG's sole representative in the National Assembly, Kosie Pretorius announced in December 2004 that he will hand over the reins to a member of the party's management committee, Jurie Viljoen (Dentlinger 2004).

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 state⁵. Decentralisation has not proven to be an election issue so far, even though the opposition parties NUDO, the UDF and the DTA have the most pronounced positions on decentralisation and want the process to be speeded up (Hopwood 2005:15-16). It is important to mention that the two opposition parties that have been most outspoken on the issue, NUDO and UDF, are widely regarded as ethnic parties (ibid.).

The introductory question, *Could you please tell us what your party's position is on decentralisation?*, is an attempt to determine whether political party representatives favour decentralisation or centralisation. In their interview responses, all opposition parties mentioned the importance of the devolution of powers and resources to sub-national levels of government. In its official manifesto, SWAPO (2005:12-14) also reaffirms its commitment to the principle of decentralisation. Identifying decentralisation as a tool to maximise popular participation of the communities, the party 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. SWAPO (2005:11,14) stressed that decentralisation provided Namibians with more choices regarding effective and efficient public services. For the DTA, the benefits included people being able to deal with the everyday problems in their region. 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 exodus⁶. However, the RP, the

⁵According to Hopwood (2005:2), Namibia's decentralisation project has moved slowly, held back by non-cooperative ministries, a lack of staff and resources across the board, and the complex details of the decentralisation policy itself. He argues that, however, since Independence much groundwork has been completed in anticipation of the delegation and later devolution of central government functions (ibid.).

⁶Interestingly, the CoD did not mention decentralisation in its 2004 manifesto (CoD 2004).

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. Focussing its attention on corruption involving government agencies, the NDMC took the view that devolution of responsibilities, functions and resources to regional and local government would contribute to the fight against poverty.

Only three of the party leaders mentioned the inherent problems associated with decentralisation. The RP warned 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. The NDMC feared that development in the regions could be held back by delayed responses on the part of central government.

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.

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]

<i>Party</i>	<i>What sort of powers and resources should be devolved to the sub-national levels of government?</i>	<i>What are the inherent benefits of decentralisation?</i>	<i>What are the inherent problems of decentralisation? How would you address these problems?</i>
MAG	Everything concerning group rights and local development	Brings government to the people	n/a [No response given]
NDMC	Everything except foreign affairs, defence, and prison and correctional services	Contributes to the fight against corruption, hunger, poverty and diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Possibility that development in the regions will be held back by delayed responses on the part of central government ·Lack of equal access of all regions to resources
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	Maximise participation of communities in planning for development, decision making and the running of government affairs that affect people's lives on a day to day basis (SWAPO 2004:12)	"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" (ibid.:11)	n/a [No response given]

In its party manifesto, the DTA (2004:3) argued that Regional Councils should be equipped with the power and enough funds to control regional government. NUDO (2004:3) complained that decentralisation was processing too slowly. 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. Surprisingly, 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. SWAPO 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 the SWAPO government had sought "to build a civil service that is representative of all the people of Namibia" (SWAPO 2004:11). Apart from the NDMC, the respondents did not demand that public servants be dismissed. 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.

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]	·“Total chaos, especially at the Ministry of Home Affairs” ·Health services and the education system are inefficient	·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]	·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]
NDMC	Reduce the number of government employees	Too large	Yes	n/a [No response given]	·Merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public sector ·Counter corruption

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?
NUDO	Government should be slimmed down by reducing the size of Cabinet	Too large	Yes	Yes	·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	·The public service should not be seen as an instrument for job creation ·Strengthen initiatives in the private sector

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?
SWAPO	"Partnership of all stakeholders ... brings about a common purpose to our effort and resources" (SWAPO 2004:11)	"That is why the SWAPO Party government has sought to build a civil service that is representative of all the people of Namibia." (ibid.)	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]

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. The ruling SWAPO (2004:12) claimed that it addresses the problem by laying "the framework for countering corruption" and by putting in place a law "to counter this destructive trait" (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.

In respect of the opposition 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 distrust⁷. 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 in ideology, SWANU stated that corruption was a symptom of the deep-rooted economic and political weaknesses and shortcomings of capitalism. Arguing that corruption has created a new form of apartheid, the NDMC focuses its attention on corruption and widespread self-enrichment. According to the NDMC the root causes of corruption were selfishness, maladministration in government and tribalism.

In their political manifestos, the CoD, the NDMC and DTA offered additional recommendations to curb corruption. The CoD (2004:8) proposed that any leaders found guilty of corruption should be prevented from holding office again, and that companies found guilty of corrupt practices were to be excluded from submitting tenders for government goods or services. To combat corruption, the NDMC (2004:1,3-4) would strengthen the powers of auditors and the Ombudsman, and advocates to de-link the Office of the Ombudsman from the Ministry of Justice. The DTA (2004:3) would cooperate with the Auditor General in order to discipline defaulters.

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. An important question to ask the respondents, therefore, was whether MPs and civil servants should declare their assets publicly. All opposition parties agreed that MPs and civil servants should publicly declare their assets. Generally speaking, SWAPO stated that "transparency and accountability must continue to be enhanced at all levels" (SWAPO 2004:11).

Political parties in Namibia, like everywhere else are in need of financing during both election and non-election periods (Boer 2004b:2). Apart from the legal requirement that Namibian parties disclose foreign funding, there are no regulations governing the private funding of parties (ibid.). Thus, the interviewees were requested to give their opinion on whether political parties should publicly declare all their sources of funding. The answers revealed that the CoD, the DTA,

⁷Particularly when competition for jobs is extreme, corruption can take the form of ethnic discrimination.

MAG, NUDO, SWANU, the NDMC 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 SWAPO. In SWANU's view, "foreign forces" wanted to "control Namibia" by means of party funding.

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, the NDMC 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". SWAPO does not address this issue in its official documents.

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. All opposition 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. In their responses, the CoD, MAG, NUDO and SWANU emphasised the importance of Namibia's participation in missions abroad. The DTA, the NDMC, and the RP did not explicitly mention UN missions. SWAPO's manifesto

does not comment on its official position regarding the UN, but the SWAPO-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 African Union (AU). The new body focuses on priorities and objectives that are different from its predecessor's. 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.

Mindful of the fact that the struggle for independence was supported by international solidarity, SWAPO (2004:10)-led government adopted "a deliberate policy of active participation in efforts to bring about peace and stability in our region and beyond". Accordingly, Namibia's opposition 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 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.

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, SWAPO does not specifically mention its position regarding NEPAD. In respect of the SWAPO-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.

4.4 The Southern African Development Community

The South African Development Community’s (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 (EU) 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, SWAPO (2004:10) only mentioned the SADC in context with its military involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The ruling party claimed that it “heeded the call of the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo for military support to ward off foreign invasion and aggression” in defence of the AU and SADC principles (ibid.).

As Table 3 below shows, all opposition party 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 Parliament and 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.

Table 3: The Southern African Development Community

<i>Party</i>	<i>Should Namibia continue as a member of SADC?</i>	<i>Should the SADC region become more integrated or should it stay the way it is?</i>	<i>Should SADC move in a similar direction to that taken by the European Union and adopt a regional Parliament ...</i>	<i>...and a single currency?</i>
CoD	Yes	More integrated	Yes	No
DTA	Yes	More integrated	Yes	Yes
MAG	Yes	More integrated	Yes, in the long run	Yes, in the long run
NDMC	Yes	More integrated	Yes, in order to prevent civil wars	Yes
NUDO	Yes	More integrated	Yes	n/a [No response given]
RP	Yes	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	No
SWAPO	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]

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. With its rightist position, MAG 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 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 SWAPO (2004:9,72-73), 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 NDMC, 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; the insufficient law enforcement, and gender imbalances. With reference to human rights abuses committed by paramilitary forces, the CoD stated that individual rights were not protected at all.

Table 4: Individual rights

Party	Are individuals' rights adequately protected	If not, what would your party do to improve the situation?
CoD	·Not protected at all ·Human rights abuses committed by the Special Field Force (SFF)	Political education
DTA	·Not adequately protected ·Human rights abuses committed during the state of emergency in the Caprivi Region in 1999	n/a [No response given]

Party	Are individuals' rights adequately protected	If not, what would your party do to improve the situation?
MAG	·Not adequately protected ·Negative effect of socio-economic inequalities on the protection of rights	n/a [No response given]
NDMC	·Not adequately protected ·Insufficient law enforcement	Law enforcement
NUDO	·Not adequately protected ·Gender imbalances still need to be corrected	Tolerance
RP	·Adequately protected	n/a [No response given]
SWANU	·Adequately protected ·Low levels of understanding and awareness of rights among the people	Political education
SWAPO	“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 2004:9)	“Where anyone is wronged, our institutions are open and accessible to them to redress” (ibid.:73)

In their manifestos, the DTA, CoD, the NDMC and NUDO explicitly mentioned human rights. For instance, the DTA (2004:5) stressed that basic human rights should be protected, maintained and promoted; and the CoD (2004:6) viewed the provision of water and electricity as basic human rights.

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 NDMC called for the protection of group rights. Traditionally, MAG has always insisted on group rights for ethnic, labour and non-economic demographic groups. The NUDO and the NDMC representatives spoke of their parties' insistence on minority and 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”. SWAPO 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 and the NDMC, all the political parties believed that the Constitution fulfilled the needs of the Namibian people. Nevertheless, NUDO 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 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.

Table 5: Constitutionalism

<i>Party</i>	<i>Does the Constitution of Namibia fulfil the needs of the Namibian people?</i>	<i>Is there a need to change any part of the Constitution?</i>	<i>If ever faced with the need to change the Constitution, how would your party go about doing that?</i>
CoD	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
DTA	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
MAG	No	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”]
NDMC	No	Disapproval of the First Amendment Act, 1998, that provides that the first president of Namibia may hold office as President for three terms	n/a [No response given]

<i>Party</i>	<i>Does the Constitution of Namibia fulfil the needs of the Namibian people?</i>	<i>Is there a need to change any part of the Constitution?</i>	<i>If ever faced with the need to change the Constitution, how would your party go about doing that?</i>
NUDO	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
RP	Yes	Any amendments need to be carefully and cautiously considered	Procedures for amendments are provided for in the Constitution
SWANU	Yes	n/a [No response given]	Procedures for amendments are provided for in the Constitution
SWAPO	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]

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 15 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”. Accordingly, 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 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 opposition parties agreed that democracy was the most appropriate form of government. In its official publications, SWAPO (2004:9,72) stated that it “ushered in peace and democracy in our country and remains committed to the strengthening of these political values”, and that it had “nurtured democracy where individual rights are protected”. These findings suggests that the main political players accepted democracy to be “the only game in town” (Linz & Stepan 1997:15). However, considering answers given to related questions (for instance in the categories 5.3 and 5.6) it appears as if some respondents lack adequate understanding of democratic principles.

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 opposition parties can be divided into two groups: (1) the CoD, NUDO, the RP and the NDMC demanded that “the Constitution must be put into practice” by the ruling elite; and (2) the DTA, MAG and SWANU identified 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 democracy 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.

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?
CoD	The Constitution needs to be put into practice	Put democracy into practice in one’s own party ranks	Poverty makes democracy a “hollow word”	Equal access to education, health services and employment
DTA	Lack of education among the citizenry	Education	Lack of a strong and vibrant civil society	By changing the current party-list system
MAG	Lack of education among the citizenry: “Namibia is led by an unsophisticated mass of people”	Raise the minimum voting age to 35 years	n/a [No response given]	Educating voters about their rights and concomitant responsibilities
NDMC	Corruption	Law enforcement	The Constitution needs to be put into practice	Integrity and honesty
NUDO	The Constitution needs to be put into practice	Constitutional jurisdiction	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]
RP	The Constitution needs to be put into practice	Transparency and consultation	The Constitution needs to be put into practice	Transparency and consultation
SWANU	Lack of education among the citizenry	Advocacy work and civic education	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]
SWAPO	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]

In their manifestos, NUDO (2004:2) and the DTA (2004:5) declared the overwhelming majority of the ruling party in parliament as a serious threat to democratic consolidation, and MAG (2005:1) stated that not a single post-independence election had been free and fair on the basis on how parties were financed in Namibia, and in how the electorate was registered.

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. According to the party's 2004 manifesto, the ruling party is committed to "strengthen democracy through the broader participation in public affairs" (SWAPO 2004:74).

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.

Table 7: Participation

Party	Current levels of participation	Major problems	Solution proposed by party
CoD	Unsatisfactory	Lack of education	Education
DTA	Unsatisfactory	Voter apathy	Voter education
MAG	Unsatisfactory	·Hopelessness ·White Namibians believe that they cannot make an impact "because of their numbers"	Political education
NDMC	Unsatisfactory	Corruption	n/a [No response given]
NUDO	Unsatisfactory	Voter apathy	n/a [No response given]
RP	Unsatisfactory	Political apathy, especially among Namibian whites and the Christian community	Motivation
SWANU	Unsatisfactory	Poverty	Civic education
SWAPO	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]

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 democracy. 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. SWAPO addresses neither the function nor the necessity of opposition parties in its official publications.

Table 8: Opposition

Party	Roles and functions of an opposition party
CoD	·To control the executive ·To support policies that are "good for the country" and provide alternatives for government policies that are "not good for the country"
DTA	To criticise and provide alternatives to government policies, where necessary
MAG	To criticise and provide alternatives to government policies, where necessary
NDMC	·To control the executive ·To fight corruption
NUDO	·To inform the public about political platforms ·To establish a "Government of National Unity"
RP	·To consider themselves as an alternative government with an alternative policy ·To contribute to the development of the country and its people
SWANU	To criticise and provide alternatives to government policies, where necessary
SWAPO	n/a [No response given]

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 NDMC saw poverty as the root cause of crime. The NDMC elaborated on the issue by arguing that corruption was the root cause of poverty and, therefore, also responsible for high crime rates. 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. SWAPO (2004:19) intends to increase its efforts to counter crime by strengthening the police force with the recruitment of additional police officers, and by forging professionalism and discipline among the members of the police force. Furthermore, the ruling party will ensure that the courts impose stiffer sentences and stringent conditions before bail is granted (SWAPO 2004:21). Table 9 below records the parties' proposals in respect of crime reduction.

Table 9: Law and order

<i>Party</i>	<i>How crime can be reduced</i>
CoD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Combat corruption ·Put qualified people with decent salaries in the penal system ·Combat poverty and unemployment
DTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Stiffer sentences, especially for murder and rape
MAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Reinstate the death penalty (i.e. amend Article 6 of the Constitution)
NDMC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Increase the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies ·Combat corruption
NUDO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Educating people about moral values ·Has not completely disregarded the death penalty as an option, arguing that there was a lower crime rate before Independence
RP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Education ·Increase the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies

<i>Party</i>	<i>How crime can be reduced</i>
SWANU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Civic education ·Strengthen moral values like solidarity, comradeship and respect
SWAPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Recruitment of additional police officer (SWAPO 2004:19) ·Community policing (ibid.) ·Forge professionalism and discipline among the members of the police force (ibid.) ·Stiffer sentences (ibid.:21) ·Stringent conditions before bail is granted (ibid.) ·Removal of “unpatriotic and dishonest elements” from the police force (ibid.) ·Improvement of working and living conditions of the law enforcement agencies (ibid.) ·Strengthen support mechanisms for victims of crime (ibid.:75)

In their political manifestos, the DTA (2004:5) and NUDO (2004:13-14) added a better trained and better paid police force 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, the NDMC'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 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. As regards abortion, five 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. Generally speaking, the NDMC argued that corruption is the root cause for “social evils”. SWAPO does not address the issues of prostitution and sex work, pornography, abortion, homosexuality and the state of family life in its official publications.

Table 10: Traditional morality

Party	Prostitution and sex work	Pornography	Alcohol abuse	Abortion
CoD	Concentrate on the accompanying complex of problems, especially health	Should be discouraged	Combat the root causes of alcohol abuse: poverty and unemployment	Legalise abortion in cases of rape and on medical, psychological or social grounds ⁸
DTA	Moral decadence	Moral decadence: needs to be banned	Problem not “so severe”	Absolutely opposed
MAG	Disapprove	Disapprove	Disapprove	Disapprove
NDMC	Disapprove	Disapprove	Disapprove	Disapprove
NUDO	“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	Disapprove
RP	Support every action to eliminate ⁹	Support every action to eliminate ¹⁰	Support every action to eliminate ¹¹	Support every action to eliminate ¹²
SWANU	Socio-economic set-up as the root cause	n/a [No response given]	Tolerated “in moderation for relaxation”	Question of religious belief
SWAPO	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	Counter alcohol abuse (SWAPO 2004:25)	n/a [No response given]

⁸The interviewee qualified her statement by saying that legalising abortion made people reject condoms, which aggravated the risk of HIV/AIDS.

⁹Except cases provided by law.

¹⁰Except cases provided by law.

¹¹Except cases provided by law.

¹²Except cases provided by law.

Party	Homosexuality	Family life	Youth
CoD	Sexual preferences are private matters	Threatened because of unemployment and low pensions	Lack of role models and vision
DTA	Distinguishes between two types: (1) a natural phenomenon and (2) a “learned” phenomenon	·No need for interference ·Security and a return to traditional values needed	n/a [No response given]
MAG	Disapprove	Group rights need to apply in respect of the family unit	Stricter implementation of the international conventions on the rights of the child
NDMC	Disapprove	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]
NUDO	Distinguishes between two types: (1) a natural phenomenon and (2) a “learned” phenomenon	Emphasis lies on faithfulness in marriage	Knowledge of own and other cultures needed
RP	Society (especially churches) need to influence behavioural change	Needs protection	Needs protection and opportunity to develop
SWANU	Tolerant	Call for a return to traditional values	Education in social responsibilities and moral values
SWAPO	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	Urgent measures need to be put in place with a view to addressing the “unacceptable high rate of unemployment among the youth” (SWAPO 2004:33)

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 respondents pointed out that there was still much to be done to consolidate unity in diversity. The CoD, the DTA and the NDMC complained about ethnicity and tribalism among the political leadership, specifically that certain groups were favoured for employment in the public sector. Contradicting every other parties' vision of a unified Namibia, MAG stated that the forced integration into a unified culture challenged nationhood and social harmony. In its 2004 election manifesto, SWAPO (2004:9) stated that "racial, ethnic and tribal divisions are fast disappearing, and the people of Namibia are beginning to work together as Namibians." 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.

Table 11: National effort/Social harmony

<i>Party</i>	<i>How to address the main challenges to nationhood and social harmony</i>
CoD	Party slogan: One party, one country, many cultures; i.e. unity in diversity
DTA	Merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public sector
MAG	n/a [No response given]
NDMC	Equal distribution of national resources
NUDO	Tolerance and mutual acceptance
RP	Merit should be the sole criterion for job opportunities in the public sector
SWANU	Lessons from history, especially the recognition of the contribution to the liberation struggle by various parts of the nation
SWAPO	Policy of national reconciliation (SWAPO 2004:72)

6.4 Cultural pluralism

The category cultural 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. Asked about their position on English as the official language, all respondents expressed their approval of the status quo. 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. SWAPO (2004:10) does not address the issue of language in its publications, but promised to "preserve, protect and promote diverse cultures and build a strong and vibrant nation".

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.

Table 12: Cultural pluralism

<i>Party</i>	<i>Proposals on current challenges with regard to the national culture and local cultures</i>
CoD	Preserve local cultures and traditions in order to form a national culture
DTA	·Europeanisation led to local cultures being misrepresented as "uncivilised" and "backwards" ·Call for a return to local cultures for the sake of personal identity
MAG	Group rights should be part of the Constitution
NDMC	Combat corruption
NUDO	Tolerate and accommodate different cultures
RP	·Condemn discrimination ·Respect each other's traditions and cultures
SWANU	Local cultures should be preserved "through the implementation and correct handling of traditional matters"
SWAPO	Preserve, protect and promote diverse cultures and build a strong and vibrant nation (SWAPO 2004:10)

In their political manifestos, the CoD (2004:7) and the RP (2004:2) proposed police officer being taught local languages in order for them to communicate with the widest possible range of citizens, and that police officers should improve their English language skills in order to take down statements.

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 extremely difficult in the light of SWAPO's conservative economic policy (Jauch 2000). The most prominent umbrella organisation, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), maintained its links with SWAPO after Independence. In this context, the issue of political affiliation continues to be a dividing factor among Namibian trade unions. Referring to the plight of farm workers, SWAPO (2004:62) promised to set up dispute resolution mechanisms "to ensure a harmonious relationship between the government, trade unions and the business and industrial sectors in order to avoid unnecessary confrontation".

Generally, an emphasis on labour unions is regarded as a leftist policy position (Budge & Klingemann 2001:22). 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 CoD, MAG, the RP, the NDMC and SWANU identified the NUNW's political affiliation as the main current challenge with regard to labour relations. None of the political parties interviewed had any links with any labour union.

7.2 Farmers

Even 15 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. 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, SWAPO (2004:15) stated that land reform was "one of the biggest challenges faced", and that it has been involved in "addressing the problem of land hunger". The ruling party tied the resettlement programme to the policy of human resource development for the sustainable use of natural resources, and promised to provide resettled communities with the necessary productive and environmental management skills (SWAPO 2004:16-17). Furthermore, the party emphasized that land administration, survey and mapping, valuation, use and planning were indispensable tools in the land reform process (ibid.). The ruling party assured that it will continue to address the plight of farm workers, especially evictions from farms (SWAPO 2004:62). According to SWAPO, land reform is an "integral part of social emancipation of all Namibians" (SWAPO 2004:75).

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 2004:3, DTA 2004:4-6, NUDO 2004:17, SWANU 2004:10-11, RP 2004:4-5), during the face-to-face interviews 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). 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 NDMC stated that everybody knew “which groups are minorities and the poorest”. 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 actions”¹³; the DTA demanded modern education for groups that lived a traditional lifestyle; the CoD sought poverty alleviation; and NUDO proposed what it called a “Government of National Unity”. In its written statements, SWAPO (2004:63) refers to “the great socio-economic disparity between those who were previously advantaged and the previously disadvantaged Namibians”, and it stressed its

commitment to the Black Economic Empowerment Policy to ensure that the previously disadvantaged majority “enjoy a share of the country’s wealth”. Furthermore, the ruling party stated that affirmative action opened “many and new opportunities for those who were marginalized in the past” (SWAPO 2004:73).

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?*¹⁴, 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 the left emphasise the expansion of social services.

In its official publications SWAPO emphasises the importance of uplifting the role of women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. For example, SWAPO (2004:11) stated that it will continue to address the needs of physically challenged Namibians. Acknowledging the unequal social relations between men and women, SWAPO (ibid.:18) is committed to remove “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”. In order to counter the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the ruling party explained that it has embarked on a campaign of prevention and control of all sexually transmitted diseases (ibid.:24). The party identified community participation, involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS, civil society involvement, reduction of stigma and discrimination, human rights-based approaches, and good governance as important principles (SWAPO 2004:25). As the economy grows, the ruling party promised to improve social benefits for senior citizens (ibid.:28).

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 proposed that the amount of a social pension should be determined according to individual needs. With

¹³The RP did not elaborate on what it meant by this.

¹⁴Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

regard to orphans and people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, the CoD, the DTA and NUDO 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.

Table 13: Non-economic demographic groups

<i>Party</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>The elderly</i>	<i>People with disabilities</i>	<i>Orphans</i>	<i>People infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS</i>
CoD	Equal representation on the political level	Increase pensions	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)
DTA	Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and promotion of their complete recognition in all spheres of society	Increase pensions	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)
MAG	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]	n/a [No response given]
NDMC	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]	n/a [No response given]

<i>Party</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>The elderly</i>	<i>People with disabilities</i>	<i>Orphans</i>	<i>People infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS</i>
NUDO	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)
RP	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”	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
SWANU	Supports the emancipation of women	“Resources of experience”	“Community care in the spirit of African traditions”	“Community care in the spirit of African traditions”	“Community care in the spirit of African traditions”
SWAPO	·Full participation of women in the process of decision making (SWAPO 2004:18) ·Increase number of women parliamentarians (ibid.) ·Gender equality at the workplace (ibid.)	Social pension of N\$ 300 per month should improve as the economy grows (ibid.:28)	Access to training, formal and informal employment, and a conducive environment in the workplace (ibid.)	·Establish fund to support orphans (ibid.:19) ·Early childhood development programmes (ibid.)	·Campaign of prevention and control of all sexually transmitted diseases (ibid.:24) ·Counter alcohol abuse and poverty (ibid.)

Party	Women	The elderly	People with disabilities	Orphans	People infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS
SWAPO cont.	·Better access to health care and family planning facilities (SWAPO 2004:27)				·Prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (ibid.) ·Anti-retroviral treatment (ibid.) ·Public sector hospitals should provide full comprehensive HIV/AIDS services (ibid.) ·Community involvement (ibid.:25)

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 (2004:2) and the NDMC (2004:3) proposed to increase the monthly pension for senior citizens from N\$ 300 to N\$ 500 for all pensioners not entitled to any other pension. In a similar vein, the DTA (2004:3) stated its aim to provide senior citizens with a pension linked to the inflation rate¹⁵. With regard to HIV/AIDS, the CoD (2004:4), for instance, 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 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 regularly ends 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 SWAPO (both consultative members of Socialist International) and to the right in the case of the DTA, NUDO, the RP and the NDMC can be identified. In contrast, some of the less significant parties are dramatically distinct from the main parties. Ideologically, the most distinctive party is MAG with its strong rightist position. SWANU remains one "of the few options for voters on the left of the political spectrum" (Hopwood, 2004:55). In any event, these small parties are unlikely to pose any electoral threat to either the ruling SWAPO Party or the main opposition parties.

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 leaders' charismatic personalities. 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.

¹⁵Presumably only when the rate of inflation rises.

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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 anything, 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?

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 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 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 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 groups

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?

Taking Positions: The Economic Policies of Namibia's Political Parties Compared

Martin Boer and Robin Sherbourne

1. Introduction

This paper is based on a study entitled “On the record: Political party representatives challenged. Part 2: Economic programmes” (see Sherbourne 2004), written ahead of the 2004 Presidential and National Assembly elections. The aim of the study was to assess the positions of Namibia’s main political parties on key economic policy issues in an effort to inform the electorate, stimulate thinking on economic issues within the political parties, and contribute to the national debate on the future development of the country. The study was part of a larger project undertaken by Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) in cooperation with the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and funded by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), which resulted in several briefing papers on different subjects.

From the beginning, the ruling SWAPO Party of Namibia (formerly the South West Africa People’s Organisation) decided against participating in the project, arguing that it was designed to help opposition parties. The parties that participated in that study were the Congress of Democrats (CoD), the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance of Namibia (DTA), the Monitor Action Group (MAG), the Republican Party (RP), the South West Africa National Union (SWANU), and the Workers’ Revolutionary Party (WRP). This revised chapter has been expanded to include the economic programmes of the Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC), a new party, and the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO), which was unable to participate in the original study. We initially sought to compare all political parties; however, since the ruling party declined to participate, we have now focused on the opposition parties, their responses to government policy, and the alternatives they propose. Also, because SWAPO is the ruling party, we are much better informed about their priorities and policy goals than we are about those of opposition parties.

The WRP, on the other hand, has been removed from this chapter because they are no longer an active political party after choosing not to participate in the 2004

elections. The United Democratic Front (UDF) is also absent after declining to respond to numerous requests to participate in the original study and in this subsequent chapter. This means that only five of the seven parties represented in Parliament are included in this chapter, along with the NDMC and SWANU, neither of which has ever had a seat in Parliament.

The following party representatives responsible for economic issues were interviewed over the June to August 2004 period:

- CoD – Tsudao Gurirab, Chairman of the Elections Commission and the Finance Commission; 12 August 2004
- DTA – Johan de Waal, Spokesperson on Financial and Trade Matters; 22 July 2004
- MAG – Kosie Pretorius, Chairperson; 23 July 2004
- RP – Henk Mudge, President; 22 July 2004
- SWANU – Rihupisa Kandando, President; 24 June 2004

For this update, two more interviews were conducted during February and March 2005:

- NDMC – Frans Goagoseb, President; 3 March 2005
- NUDO – Arnold Tjihuiiko, Economic Advisor; 24 February 2005

This paper comprises statements based on interviews with the aforementioned party representatives on the dates indicated. References to secondary literature and official party documents are also indicated in the text.

With the exception of SWANU, these opposition party representatives proved difficult to meet and interview. Admittedly they are – or at least should be – people with busy schedules. Yet it is hard not to draw the conclusion that they are not exactly falling over themselves to explain their parties' views to a wider audience, especially an (albeit critical) audience of researchers. It was often difficult to distinguish whether the representatives were explaining their own personal opinions or their party's considered views. Some parties are so small – almost “one-man band” parties – that these views are probably the same. Although the interviewer and the questionnaire attempted to draw the distinction, it ended up not always being entirely clear.

The researchers also reviewed each party's most recent manifestos to determine whether the interview responses were in line with the parties' official positions. By

doing so, we learned much more about party positions and personal opinions. Discrepancies between the responses and manifestos have been highlighted in the text. Because this paper combines the interviews with the most recent party publications, it aims to represent the latest party thinking on economic policy in Namibia.

2. Size of government and fiscal policy

2(a) Do you think government spending, as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), should be lowered, stay the same, or be raised?

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Lowered a lot			X				
Lowered a little		X					X
Stay the same						X	
Increased a little	X			X	X		
Increased a lot							

The Minister of Finance estimates public spending to come down to 34% of GDP in the 2004/05 financial year, from 36% over the past three financial years. These figures are considered high for a developing country (World Bank 2002).

The CoD, NDMC and NUDO all argued for higher levels of public spending. The CoD justified their point of view on the basis of Namibia's developing country status and the need for a more “interventionist state” to develop infrastructure and human resources. NUDO wanted to limit any spending to sectors that would both create employment and boost economic growth. The agricultural, fisheries and mining sectors are all suggested as worthy of more investment by the state. None of the parties presented a clear idea of exactly how much spending should be raised, what it should be used to fund, or how extra tax revenues should be found.

On the other hand, the DTA, MAG and SWANU wanted public spending to be cut. In their view, spending was currently so wasteful that one could actually increase the effectiveness of spending without raising the level of spending.

None of the seven parties addressed this issue explicitly in their party publications, however.

2(b) Do you think company tax should be lowered, stay the same, or be raised?

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Lowered a lot							
Lowered a little		X			X	X	
Stay the same			X	X			X
Increased a little	X						
Increased a lot							

The corporate tax rate in Namibia is presently 35% – high by the standards of both developed and developing countries (World Bank 2002). With the exception of only one financial year, SWAPO has steadily brought down the corporate tax rate since Independence. Furthermore, the government has introduced a plethora of tax incentives for manufacturers and exporters.

The DTA, NUDO and RP were clear in wanting a further reduction in the corporate tax rate, with the DTA arguing in the interview that, in order to remain competitive, Namibia's rate should "always be lower than company tax in South Africa" yet be on par with rates in Botswana. In the interview, SWANU agreed that corporate taxes should be lowered, especially for companies that carried out training and their "social responsibilities to the community". NUDO believed lower corporate tax rates would encourage and increase investment in the Namibian economy.

In contrast, in the interview the CoD argued that "company tax is not a major consideration for companies to invest here [in Namibia]"; for them, therefore, taxes could stay the same or even be raised. This option appeared to be the CoD's main source of the extra tax revenues required to fund the increase in spending mentioned above.

None of the party positions on this topic differed from those in their published documents. Only NUDO mentioned this issue explicitly in their party publication, however. Their published standpoint did not contradict their interview responses.

2(c) Do you think individual income tax should be lowered, stay the same, or be raised?

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Lowered a lot				X			
Lowered a little	X	X			X	X	X
Stay the same			X				
Increased a little							
Increased a lot							

The top marginal tax rate for individuals in Namibia is presently 35%: low by the standards of high-income countries, but comparable with many other middle-income countries.

None of the parties argued for higher income taxes. Six party representatives stated that individual income tax should be lowered, while one – MAG – favoured the status quo. Again, the DTA believed that Namibian income taxes should always be slightly lower than their South African equivalents. NUDO estimated that, by improving tax collection mechanisms and widening the tax base, lower rates would result in an overall increase in revenues. The NDMC was the only party to call for significantly lower taxes. They argued that taxes were worsening the income disparity in the country.

Only the CoD and NUDO mentioned this issue explicitly in their party publications.

2(d) Do you think better-off people should pay a higher marginal rate of tax than the present 35%?

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Yes				X			
No	X	X	X		X	X	X

Namibia's top rate of income tax has traditionally been pegged to the corporate tax rate. At 35%, it is low compared with top rates in high-income countries with substantially lower levels of income inequality.

Only the NDMC believed the top individual marginal tax rate should be increased from 35%, but it did not say by how much. Only SWANU ventured a figure, stating that the top rate should come down to 32%. Beyond the NDMC there appears to be little conviction among the parties that raising the top rate of individual income tax would do much to redistribute income.

None of the parties addressed this issue explicitly in their party publications.

2(e) Under what circumstances should government borrow to finance a budget deficit?

Party	Response
CoD	Only for development projects, infrastructure and skills development
DTA	Only for productive investment
MAG	To finance economic growth
NDMC	None
NUDO	Only for specific projects that will increase employment and boost the economy
RP	To finance economic development
SWANU	For manufacturing investment, but not for salaries

Government has run a budget deficit every year since Independence. For 2004/05 Namibia has forecast a deficit of 2.7%, but the Minister of Finance warned in early 2005 that revenue collection was coming in below forecasts and that unauthorised expenditure in government ministries might push up the deficit and debt levels.

With the exception of the NDMC, all parties were happy, in principle, for government to borrow – provided such borrowings were invested productively. All the parties stated they were against borrowing to pay salaries for public servants. They also all agreed that borrowing should only take place to finance productive investment, although it was not always clear exactly what was meant by “productive investment”. In the interview the DTA stated it believed the time had come to balance the budget for a number of years since government had “depleted [the country’s] reserve funds”. The DTA also believed government should borrow to facilitate strategic investments.

None of the parties addressed this issue explicitly in their party publications.

2(f) On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 represents high taxation/big government and 10 represents low taxation/small government), where would you place the following?

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Yourself	5.0	8.0	10.0	8.0	8.0	10.0	6.0
Your party	5.0	8.0	10.0	n/a*	7.0	9.0	6.0
Your average party supporter	5.0	6.0	10.0	6.5	8.0	10.0	5.0
Average Namibian voter	5.0	5.0	10.0	7.5	8.0	9.0	3.0

*n/a = not applicable

Party representatives were asked the above question to complete the section on the size of government and fiscal policy.

The NDMC respondent stated his party would have to hold an extraordinary congress to determine their official response, but he was able to provide answers in the other categories¹.

All party representatives assessed themselves, their parties and their supporters to favour lower taxation and smaller government except for the CoD, who came in at the middle of the government and taxation continuum. Parties also clearly had very different perceptions of the electorate, with only SWANU assessing the average Namibian voter to be in favour of high taxation and big government. The parties’ responses were broadly consistent with their responses to questions on government spending and taxation: the DTA, MAG and the RP broadly favoured lower taxes and smaller government, while the CoD generally responded in favour of higher taxes and larger government. One exception was the NDMC, which called for more government spending, no government borrowing, and lower private taxes through raising corporate taxes. However, the NDMC did not specify how high the corporate tax rate should be and what effect this would have on the economy. Interestingly, the RP believed that, in terms of opinions held, the average Namibian voter was more closely aligned to the party than its own supporters were.

¹At the time of writing, the extraordinary congress had not yet been convened.

3. Government ownership in the economy

3(a) Do you think some private industries should be taken into public ownership? Which ones? Why?

CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
None	None	None	None	None	None	None

Many newly independent states around the world have taken private industries into public ownership, ostensibly to better direct national development and reduce the role of foreign-owned businesses in the economy. However, none of the parties questioned favoured taking this route, and none addressed this issue explicitly in their party publications. This could be because there are already many state-owned enterprises, some of which are in industries that would be in the private sector in other parts of the world. Most representatives were very clearly of the opinion that nationalisation led to poor management and low productivity. Even when pressed in the case of natural resources, none of the parties appeared to be particularly convinced that nationalisation would be a positive step. For a party like SWANU, which began as a socialist party and was in an alliance with the Trotskyite WRP in 1999, this is a surprisingly capitalist approach to economics.

3(b) Do you think some state-owned companies should be privatised? Which ones? Why?

Party	Response
CoD	None
DTA	Air Namibia and Telecom Namibia
MAG	Meatco
NDMC	None
NUDO	All of them except NamWater
RP	Air Namibia, Roads Contractor Company and Namibia Development Corporation
SWANU	None

Privatisation has become a worldwide trend over the past two decades as countries have sought to reverse the problems caused by nationalisation, such as inefficiency, poor service delivery, lack of choice, and acting as a drain on state finances.

During the interviews most parties stated they were in favour of a mixed economy. In the interview, the CoD described itself as “not rapid privatisers”, believing that companies such as Telecom Namibia had a developmental role to play and should, therefore, remain in state hands. The CoD did not appear to differ in any significant respect with the prevailing pattern of ownership in the economy. The NDMC and SWANU also believed all of the enterprises currently owned by the state should remain in state hands. The DTA, on the other hand, was very clear that any state-owned company competing with private companies should be privatised, but also that monopolies should be carefully regulated to avoid excessive pricing. The DTA and the RP explicitly mentioned Air Namibia in this regard, while NUDO implicitly suggested it should be privatised.

On the other hand, the DTA and NUDO both singled out NamWater as a parastatal that should be converted back into a government department. The DTA believed that there should be one water price across the country and that rich consumers should cross-subsidise poorer ones. NUDO argued that water was too essential and that the ability to pay should not be the sole determinant for access to it. Thus, because NamWater is run according to business principles and is meant to operate on a cost-recovery basis, it could be argued that NUDO’s position is a case where a “private industry” would be taken back into public ownership. NUDO contended that all other parastatals should be privatised and run by professionals rather than card-carrying members of the ruling party. The CoD (2004:6) made a similar argument in its most recent party programme, stating that NamWater should serve as a public good and not as a commercial entity: “Water prices shall be strictly monitored and regulated”, according to the party. In the interview, however, the party did not raise the issue.

One really radical policy of the DTA is their suggestion to privatise communal land. In their most recent party programme, the DTA (2004:4) announced that communal land should become “tradable” so as to free up the capital currently “tied” to the land. Such a policy, if implemented, would have far-reaching consequences for the majority of Namibia’s population, living and farming on land that they currently do not own.

MAG expressed concern about resettlement farms, where clear private ownership did not exist. In the interview, the RP expressed the opinion that “the less state interference, the better [the land’s] productivity and profitability”. The CoD, the DTA, the NDMC and NUDO also mentioned this issue explicitly in their party publications, and consolidated those positions in their interview responses.

3(c) On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 represents total government ownership/no privatisation and 10 represents no government ownership/full privatisation), where would you place the following?

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Yourself	5.0	8.0	10.0	6.0	7.0	10.0	3.0
Your party	5.0	8.0	5.0	*n/a	7.0	10.0	3.0
Your average party supporter	5.0	8.0	2.0	6.0	7.0	10.0	4.0
Average Namibian voter	5.0	5.0	2.0	7.0	7.5	7.0	5.0

*n/a= not applicable

On the question of ownership in the economy, the DTA, the NDMC, NUDO and the RP generally believed in less state ownership than the CoD, MAG or SWANU. The DTA, MAG and RP representatives estimate the electorate to believe more in public ownership than the parties themselves do. In the case of MAG in particular, there are notable differences in the scale values given to the party representative, the average party supporter, and the electorate.

4. Labour, poverty and welfare

4(a) Who has the main task of creating jobs in the economy: the government, private business, or both?

Namibia has seen tremendous employment growth in government and the parastatals since Independence, but only limited employment growth in the rest of the formal economy (Sheefeni et al. 2003).

The CoD, MAG and SWANU stated that both government and private business had the task of creating jobs in the economy. The DTA, the NDMC, NUDO and the RP believed that government's job was to create an enabling environment within which private industry could flourish and create jobs, while the DTA saw a more interventionist role for government in new industries and major infrastructure. It was interesting that none of the parties, including SWANU, believed government to be solely responsible for creating jobs. The CoD, the DTA, the NDMC, NUDO and SWANU all mentioned this

issue explicitly in their party publications and consolidated their respective positions in the interviews.

4(b) Should government introduce a minimum wage to help low-paid workers? How much should it be in N\$ per hour?

CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

Minimum wages have been introduced in many countries as a way of helping low-paid workers, but the measure is controversial since it can impact negatively on employment or end up helping the already better-off. The Namibian government does not have a minimum wage policy, but agreements have been made between unions in the construction, agriculture and security sectors. There are no minimum wages in other industries, although there have been calls for domestic workers in particular to receive such benefits.

The DTA, MAG and NUDO were adamantly opposed to the introduction of a minimum wage since they feared it would lead to a reduction in employment. In this, NUDO (2004:18) contradicted its own election manifesto where it supported the campaign to provide domestic workers with minimum wages.

Although the NDMC and NUDO admitted that a minimum wage was good in theory and practical for richer nations to implement, it was an unrealistic option for developing countries because it meant too many willing workers would be unable to find employment. The other parties were in favour of a minimum wage, with the RP and SWANU wanting different minimum wages for different sectors of the economy. SWANU (2004) mentioned this issue explicitly in its most recent party publication, and did not contradict itself in the interview in this regard.

4(c) Should government provide a financial safety net for the poor? How much should it be?

CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

All parties agreed that government should provide a financial safety net for the poor, but there were a wide variety of ideas on what forms such assistance could take. The DTA was the most specific, stating that the idea of a basic income grant

(BIG) should be investigated further and that pensions should be raised from N\$300 to N\$500 a month. In its latest party programme, the COD (2004:2) stated that a BIG should be introduced urgently to assist the unemployed and the underemployed. However, they did not mention this proposal in the interview.

MAG supported the idea that 10% of the budget should be set aside for cash transfers to the poor – especially for pensions. The RP believed all companies should be forced to introduce pensions for their employees, but that government should continue to pay the state pension. SWANU talked of the need for communalism and the spirit of African solidarity. NUDO wanted pensions to be increased and more grants made available to ensure everyone had access to education and health care. In their interviews as well as their party publications, the CoD, the DTA, the NDMC, NUDO and the RP mentioned social safety nets of various kinds.

4(d) Do you think people should pay the full cost, some of the cost, or none of the cost for health, education and water? If less than the full cost, who should pay the rest?

Party	Response
CoD	Education should be free
DTA	Water should be subsidised
MAG	People should pay some contribution
NDMC	People pay what they can; government should pay the rest
NUDO	People pay what they can; government should pay the rest
RP	Must be affordable, but free to the unemployed
SWANU	People should pay some contribution

The cost of water and education featured highly in most parties' responses. The CoD believed in free universal education up to university level. The DTA believed water should be subsidised by the taxpayer through a government department, and not a commercialised parastatal company as was currently the case. The NDMC, NUDO, and the RP believed basic services had to be affordable to employed people, but should be free to those without an income. MAG and SWANU believed people had to make a contribution to the costs of basic services. This was a change from SWANU's (2004:9) most recent publication, where they stated that access to health was a right not a privilege; it should, therefore, be free,

efficient and accessible to all. The NDMC stated that government and private sector taxation should cover the extra cost of providing these services free to those unable to pay for them. There was a general feeling that many Namibians were able to pay for these services, but no solutions were offered for how the government should go about determining who qualified for assistance and who did not. The CoD, the NDMC and NUDO also mentioned this issue explicitly in their party publications, consolidating their views in their interview responses.

4(e) On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 represents a comprehensive welfare system and 10 represents no welfare system), where would you place the following?

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Yourself	5.0	5.0	10.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.0
Your party	5.0	5.0	5.0	3.5	5.0	5.0	4.0
Your average party supporter	5.0	5.0	5.0	3.5	5.5	5.0	4.0
Average Namibian voter	5.0	3.0	0.0	3.5	5.5	3.0	4.0

Most parties believed in a welfare system and, furthermore, that most Namibian voters wanted such a system. Nonetheless, how it should be funded and administered, for example, and who should be counted as unemployed in a country of widespread casual and underemployment were not issues the parties appeared to be troubled by. The MAG representative sat on the one extreme of the scale, with the average Namibian voter on the other, whereas the CoD and SWANU felt their views were exactly aligned with the electorate's.

5. Trade and economic integration

5(a) Should government encourage free trade with the southern African region and the rest of the world, even if it were to harm a local industry?

CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
No	No	No	No	No	No	No

The past decade has seen trade barriers come down around the world in general and in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) region in particular, as the benefits from freer trade have been recognised.

All parties shared the belief that trade was basically good, but that trade could not take place without some degree of protection to develop industries – especially manufacturing industries that could become internationally competitive. The CoD, the DTA and NUDO specifically mentioned the infant industry protection clause in the SACU agreement. NUDO believed that this time period specified for infant industry protection should be very limited because globalisation was inescapable.

Trade did not get much coverage in party publications: none of the parties explicitly mentioned SACU or the effects of free trade on local industries.

5(b) Should government impose import tariffs or other restrictions to protect local industries? If so, which industries?

Party	Response
CoD	Unclear
DTA	Aggressive protection of new industries
MAG	Strategic industries
NDMC	Fishing, agriculture, mining
NUDO	New industries
RP	Food and manufacturing
SWANU	Manufacturing

Although none of the parties addressed this issue explicitly in their party publications, all agreed that a certain amount of tariff protection was necessary to protect new industries, especially manufacturing. None appeared concerned about the cost this might impose on consumers, however.

In the interview, MAG stated that “strategic industries” required protection, but declined to specify which these were. NUDO argued that border and other import controls remained vital, even in an era of globalisation, because they were needed to deter cross-border crime and to maintain national security.

5(c) Should Namibia try to become self-sufficient in certain things like staple grains, water and electricity, or should it rely on other countries if they can produce these things more cheaply?

Party	Response
CoD	Should not try to become self-sufficient
DTA	Should not try to become self-sufficient
MAG	Unclear
NDMC	Should try to become self-sufficient
NUDO	Should try in grains, water, electricity, medicines, textbooks
RP	Unclear
SWANU	More self-sufficient in food, water and electricity

The CoD and the DTA, the two main opposition parties, were not convinced that self-sufficiency was worth striving for since the costs were likely to outweigh the benefits. They both felt that production should concentrate on where the country had an advantage. SWANU and NUDO thought Namibia should strive towards more self-sufficiency in food, water and electricity. None of the parties addressed this issue explicitly in their party publications, however.

5(d) On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 represents fully regulated trade and 10 represents completely free trade), where would you place the following?

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Yourself	5.0	8.0	10.0	6.0	6.0	8.0	4.0
Your party	5.0	8.0	10.0	n/a*	6.0	7.0	4.0
Your average party supporter	5.0	8.0	10.0	6.0	7.0	7.0	5.0
Average Namibian voter	5.0	8.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	5.0	5.0

*n/a= not applicable

The DTA, MAG, the NDMC, NUDO and the RP assessed themselves to be more in favour of free trade than the CoD and SWANU. In comparison with their view of the average Namibian voter, MAG and the RP saw themselves as more liberal when it came to trade, whereas NUDO and SWANU saw themselves as more protectionist.

6. Conclusions

Collating the results of the questionnaires and interviews, a number of tentative conclusions can be drawn.

The CoD representative consistently rated his own and his party's views to be completely in line with the views of the average voter. The NDMC and SWANU also believed their personal and party views to be near those of the electorate. By contrast, the other party representatives were generally happy to admit that their personal views or those of their party were not entirely in line with the average voter's. The MAG representative, for example, believed himself and the party to be much further to the right than the average voter.

Average scores for views of the party representative, party, average party supporter, and average Namibian voter

Response	CoD	DTA	MAG	NDMC	NUDO	RP	SWANU
Yourself	5.0	7.3	10.0	6.0	6.5	8.3	4.3
Your party	5.0	7.3	7.5	n/a	6.3	7.8	4.3
Your average party supporter	5.0	6.8	6.8	5.5	6.9	8.0	4.5
Average Namibian voter	5.0	5.3	4.3	6.0	7.0	6.0	4.3

When comparing the average scores that the party representatives gave in the four different areas of economics ("size of government and fiscal policy", "ownership", "labour, poverty and welfare, and trade", and "economic Integration"), it was clear that there were differences in how far to the right (smaller and less interventionist, with lower taxes and welfare) and how far to the left (bigger government, higher taxes, and more public spending) the parties believed themselves to be. The DTA, MAG and the RP, in particular, generally placed themselves more to the right of the average voter, while NUDO placed itself a bit to the left.

On the basis of reviewing their publications and conducting interviews with their economic specialists, the parties did not seem to have worked out very detailed or very clear economic policies. They had not put much effort into researching economic policy ideas and fleshing them out into robust and

practical policies. One can only conclude that they do not believe economic policy ideas play much of a role in gaining votes among the electorate.

Opposition parties clearly do not represent a source of original thinking on economic policies, although the DTA and NUDO's idea to revert NamWater to a government department, the DTA's plan to privatise communal farmland, and NUDO's ambition to privatise all parastatals (except NamWater) are possible exceptions.

Although there were a number of inconsistencies between published party documents and interview responses, none were complete contradictions. It is more likely that this shows disagreement on certain issues within most parties.

In addition, opposition parties are not particularly ideological. They appear rather pragmatic and middle-of-the-road, believing neither in the power of capitalist enterprise nor in the power of the state to accelerate economic growth and development. They give the impression that this lack of belief and ideology leaves them with little conviction to fire up the electorate, and little on which to base a consistent and practical economic programme.

Nor do opposition parties appear to have singled out specific areas of disagreement with the economic policies of the ruling SWAPO party and the status quo. Indeed, none of the spokespersons were at pains to differentiate their party's economic policies from those of the ruling party. Surprisingly few numbers were mentioned in the interviews; and when figures such as tax rates were suggested, the choice of one particular rate over another was not justified.

The problem of loss-making parastatals was recognised by all parties. However, besides NUDO, none of the parties appeared to consider privatisation as a solution. This was consistent with the lack of belief in private enterprise and markets.

With the possible exception of MAG, all parties wanted more welfare spending and a more generous welfare state – although none had particularly far-reaching or radical ideas about how it should be financed and which groups of beneficiaries should be targeted. Furthermore, none of the parties appeared to recognise the administrative complexities involved in, for example, providing unemployed people with benefits, given that large numbers of people were underemployed rather than unemployed. The target group would first have to be clearly defined –

i.e. who exactly is unemployed? – and administrative mechanisms would then have to be found to target only these people and exclude all others. Deducing who is poor and who is not is in itself an administrative nightmare.

Opposition parties also appeared unconcerned with the impact of their policy suggestions on different groups. For example, introducing tariff protection could increase prices for Namibian consumers and hit the poorest in society hardest. Forcing companies to introduce pension schemes for employees raises the cost of labour and decreases the incentive to create jobs. The one clear exception to this lack of understanding is on the minimum wage issue: the DTA, MAG, the NDMC, NUDO and even the RP (which seems to favour a minimum wage) recognised the danger for the policy to destroy jobs for the poorest, who have nothing to offer but their labour.

While opposition parties did not manifest any strong ideological commitment to a smaller government and free market economics, they were all aware of the dangers of excessively large, wasteful, corrupt and ineffective government as well as the destabilising effects of over-borrowing and high public debts. Thus, although there was a general belief that government intervention was required by way of subsidies and tariff protection to develop a more diversified economy, especially in the manufacturing industry, this belief was framed in rather general terms – with no specific ideas on what actions should be taken to supplement what the ruling party was already doing. This could be a reason why economic debate in Parliament is currently so limited: there is fundamentally little to distinguish between the ruling party's economic policies and those that would be pursued by the opposition parties.

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Trapped in the Past: The State of the Opposition

Graham Hopwood

1. Introduction

This chapter assesses the effectiveness of opposition parties since Independence and their potential for future growth. The chapter sets out to review the electoral potential of opposition parties after considering their histories; organisation and structures; resources and funding; policy formation; and communication strategies. The paper draws heavily on interviews with six party representatives conducted in June and July 2005. Leading figures from the Congress of Democrats (CoD), the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), Monitor Action Group (MAG), Republican Party (RP), the South West Africa National Union (SWANU) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) were interviewed as spokespersons of parties that gained either National Assembly or Regional Council representation in 2004. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to arrange an interview with a National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO) representative due to scheduling problems. The only other opposition party registered with the Electoral Commission – the Namibia Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC) – currently only has representation on one village council in the east of the country.

The six opposition leaders interviewed for this chapter were: Justus Garoëb – UDF President; Alois Gende – DTA Secretary-General; Reinhard Gertze – CoD Secretary-General; Rihupisa Kandando – SWANU President; Henk Mudge – RP President; and Kosie Pretorius – MAG Chairman.

In this chapter quotations and attributions from these six politicians are all drawn from interviews carried out in June and July 2005. References to secondary literature and official documents are indicated in the text.

2. Historical background

The overriding factor that has shaped the development of political parties since Independence in 1990 has been the liberation struggle. Much of the South West Africa People's Organisation's (SWAPO) appeal to voters is drawn from its

reputation as the movement that delivered independence¹. Opposition parties are acutely conscious of this and, as can be seen from some of the comments from interviews quoted in this chapter, leading opposition figures react with a both fatalism and impatience when asked how they can overcome the *liberation factor*.

SWAPO was launched as a political movement in 1960. Only SWANU has a longer history, having been founded the year before. SWAPO's reputation as the key liberation movement gained momentum with the launch of the armed struggle in 1966. SWANU, which had already fallen behind SWAPO in terms of international recognition, suffered from its decision not to take up arms against the South African occupation of Namibia and never became a mass movement inside Namibia. By the 1970s, SWAPO was the only liberation movement that mattered in terms of an internationally agreed settlement for Namibia. The movement's status was confirmed when in 1973 the United Nations General Assembly recognised SWAPO as the *authentic representative of the Namibian people*. Three years later the General Assembly went further and conferred on SWAPO the title of *sole and authentic representative*.

Most of the other parties that have featured on the political scene since 1989 were part of *transitional government* politics² prior to Independence. Of the nine political parties that took part in the 2004 National Assembly elections six have their roots in attempts to forge an internal settlement to the Namibian question in the 1970s and 1980s. Only the CoD has emerged as a completely new political party attempting to forge *a new beginning* (according to one of the party's slogans) since Independence, while SWANU and SWAPO both emerged from liberation movements with histories stretching back over 45 years.

As a means of introducing the opportunities and constraints facing each opposition party, brief summaries of the party histories are recounted here:

Congress of Democrats (CoD):

The CoD was launched in March 1999, just six months before national and presidential elections. Because of the presence of some leading SWAPO figures – such as former Deputy Minister and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom,

¹Namibia has become a one-party dominant state with SWAPO winning two-thirds majorities in 1994, 1999 and 2004.

²Internal parties took part in two attempts to set up transitional governments between 1978 and 1989 that were aimed at reaching a political settlement without the involvement of SWAPO. The international community rejected both attempts and independence eventually came about through the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 in 1989.

Ben Ulenga, and former SWAPO youth leader Ignatius Shixwameni – the party was seen in some circles as a breakaway from the ruling party and hence received a hostile reaction from many SWAPO figures. Also present on the original steering committee of the party were former SWANU figures such as Norah Schimming-Chase.

Ironically, despite not having obvious links to the *interim governments* of the pre-independence era, the party felt the full force of SWAPO's anti-colonial rhetoric. Although SWAPO feared that the new party would make inroads into its support base, it was in fact another opposition party – the DTA – that lost votes to the CoD in the 1999 election, mainly because the DTA had been in decline as a party since 1989 (see DTA party history below). Even though CoD's support was largely limited to urban areas, Rehoboth, and Caprivi, the party gained just over ten percent of the national vote. At the Local Authority elections in 2004, the party again took about ten percent of the vote – indicating that little ground had been made in its first five years of existence. In the National Assembly elections of 2004 the party only gained five National Assembly seats compared to its previous seven – which was still enough to give the party the mantle of Official Opposition. The CoD also lost support in its previous strongholds of Rehoboth and Caprivi, but performed more consistently in the Karas region. In the Regional Council elections of 2004, the party failed to take a single seat countrywide. The Regional Council election uses the single-member constituency system rather than the Proportional Representation (PR) system used in the National Assembly elections. Opposition parties have only occasionally agreed to cooperate on which party should stand against SWAPO³. As a result, SWAPO has triumphed in many constituencies because the opposition parties have been divided.

DTA of Namibia (DTA):

In 2005, at the time this paper was finalised, the DTA was still debating whether it should change its name – because for many people it remains synonymous with the period of colonial rule. Originally titled the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, the organisation was formed in 1977 as a coalition of ethnic parties. Although it initially had an anti-discriminatory stance – since the parties involved had walked out of the South African-sponsored Turnhalle constitutional conference in protest at racist legislation – the alliance's position was undermined by its leading role in

two South African attempts to impose an internal settlement on Namibia that excluded SWAPO and received little international credibility. The image of the alliance as a South African creation was driven home when it was revealed after Independence that Pretoria had pumped N\$185.5 million into the DTA to improve its chances of winning the 1989 founding election.

The DTA's dependence on South African patronage meant that apart from its connections to tribal leaders it did not develop a grassroots appeal and lacked the capability to build new networks of support after Independence. Once South Africa's financial backing was no more the party's resources also dwindled. The downturn in the DTA's electoral support was dramatic after 1990. At the election in 1989 the party gained 29 percent of the vote. By 2004, after 15 years of steady decline, the party's support level was just over five percent. Without its South African backing, the DTA struggled to organise itself on the ground, while many of the fears rife in 1989 about Swapo being an extremist organisation largely evaporated after Independence.

The alliance was, in theory, consolidated into a single party in 1991, but the constituent parties still retained their identities – making it easy for NUDO and the RP to break away in 2003. The DTA also lost much of its support in the Caprivi after 1998 when the party ousted its president, Mishake Muyongo, for supporting the separatist cause in the region.

Monitor Action Group (MAG):

MAG has defied predictions of its imminent political extinction since it was formed in 1991 out of the former National Party (NP) in Namibia⁴. Although not blatantly discriminatory in its rhetoric, MAG's appeal is largely to the white supporters of the erstwhile NP. MAG has never actually gained the quota of votes to win seats in the National Assembly since 1990, but has been saved by Namibia's system of rewarding smaller parties that come closest to the quota⁵. From 1994 to 2005, MAG's Chairperson, Kosie Pretorius, held the group's lone seat in the National Assembly. In the 2005-2010 Parliament Jurie Viljoen is MAG's representative, although Pretorius continues to play a dominant role in the party.

⁴The National Party of South West Africa was formed in 1924. The party had majorities in South West Africa's white-only legislative assemblies from 1950 to 1989. The NP dissolved in 1991 to make way for MAG.

⁵Under Namibia's electoral system, the total number of valid votes cast in the National Assembly election is divided by the number of seats (72). This gives the quota of votes for one seat in the National Assembly. The number of votes cast for each party is then divided by the quota of votes to arrive at the number of seats for each party. Smaller parties benefit from the system since unallocated seats are distributed to the parties with the largest remainders.

³An agreement between the UDF and DTA in 2004, through which the weaker party in previous elections agreed not to stand in certain constituencies in the Kunene region, helped the DTA to win Epupa and Opuwo and the UDF to win Sesfontein and Kamanjab in the Regional Council election.

National Democratic Movement for Change (NDMC):

The NDMC, which registered as a political party in 2004, is another splinter from the DTA, but without the history or political experience of the RP and NUDO. Led by Frans Goagoseb, a former DTA Regional Councillor, the party has targeted the rural population in eastern Namibia, but so far with little success. Of the nine parties taking part in the 2004 National Assembly elections, the NDMC was the second worst performer (beating SWANU) with 4,380 votes.

National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO):

NUDO was formed in 1964 at the behest of the Herero Chiefs Council⁶, which was not happy with the more radical direction taken by SWANU. The party did work with SWAPO in the short-lived National Convention⁷ in 1971-72, but by the mid-1970s it was drifting towards supporting South Africa's attempts to create an internal settlement in Namibia. In 1977 NUDO became a founding member of the DTA. The party, which has been led by Herero Paramount Chief Kuaima Riruako, remained under the DTA umbrella until 2003 when it decided to fight the 2004 elections under its own name. Riruako has mobilised Hereros around the demand for reparations from the German government for the 1904-07 genocide. He has also promoted the idea of a federal system for Namibia, although NUDO's manifesto for the 2004 elections only argued for the regions to receive greater power. Although the party argues that it has broad appeal, voting patterns tend to indicate that it depends largely on the vote of the Otjiherero-speaking population. NUDO won three seats in the 2005-2010 National Assembly.

Republican Party (RP):

From its inception in 1977 until 2003, the history of the RP was largely synonymous with that of the DTA. The RP was formed when Dirk Mudge led a breakaway from the NP over its insistence on keeping apartheid laws in Namibia⁸. The RP joined the DTA alliance at its inception later in 1977. The party targeted whites who were uncomfortable with the hard-line policies of the NP. The RP broke from the DTA in 2003 amid growing disillusionment over the alliance's steady decline and is now led by Dirk Mudge's son, Henk Mudge.

Although still perceived as a party for whites, the RP has attempted to broaden its base, gaining some success in areas like the Caprivi region. It has also projected a strong Christian message and its rallies sometimes resemble evangelical gatherings. In the 2004 elections it mustered enough votes to ensure one seat in the National Assembly, which was taken up by the younger Mudge.

South West Africa National Union (SWANU):

SWANU was a rival liberation movement to SWAPO in the early 1960s, but found itself eclipsed by the broader-based organisation, which gained international cachet through its decision to launch an armed struggle. Despite its history and the fact that it pre-dates the launch of SWAPO by a year, SWANU has been in decline ever since. The party split in 1982 when Moses Katjuongua led one faction into the Multi-Party Conference, a South African-inspired attempt to create an internal settlement in Namibia⁹. SWANU took part in the 1989 UN-supervised elections under the Namibia National Front (NNF) umbrella¹⁰. Then SWANU President Vekuii Rukoro took up the NNF's lone seat in the Constituent Assembly, but he would later join SWAPO. Since Independence the party has barely gained more than one percent support in national elections and has never won a seat in the National Assembly under its own steam. However, in 2004 SWANU did gain a Regional Council seat for the first time when Jeremiah Ndjoze won the Otjombinde constituency in Omaheke. The party itself ascribes its success in Otjombinde to the popularity of its candidate and his awareness of local issues. SWANU has maintained its socialist stance over the years and offers voters one of few choices on the left of the political spectrum.

United Democratic Front (UDF):

Although founded as a catch-all alliance in 1989, the UDF has in reality never reached far beyond its support base among the Damara people. The party is led by Damara traditional chief Justus Garoëb. As a result it has consistently performed well in the Erongo and Kunene regions but has had little impact elsewhere during elections. The Damara Council (DC)¹¹ was the leading player in

⁶The Herero Chiefs Council played an important role in the early years of Namibia's nationalist movements. SWANU was formed with the backing of the Council in 1959. However, tensions emerged between the more radical members of SWANU and the Council in the early 1960s. In 1964 the Council withdrew its support for SWANU and supported the creation of NUDO.

⁷The National Convention, which included SWAPO, SWANU, NUDO and the Rehoboth Volksparty, demanded that the administration of Namibia be handed over to the United Nations. However, the Convention was short-lived mainly due to tensions between SWAPO and NUDO leader Chief Clemens Kapuuo (Katjavivi 1998: 93).

⁸Dirk Mudge led a walkout of 80 members from an NP congress in September 1977 over the NP's insistence that certain vestiges of apartheid be retained in a proposed constitution for South West Africa. He announced the formation of the Republican Party on October 5 1977. The DTA was founded in November 1977 (Putz et al. 1990: 122).

⁹In 1984 Moses Katjuongua led a SWANU delegation to the Multi-Party Conference, which preceded the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity in 1985. This brought about a split in the party with a faction led by Nora Schimming-Chase and Kuzeeko Kanguuechi refusing to participate in South African-sponsored attempts at reaching an internal political settlement (Putz et al. 1990: 234).

¹⁰Established on February 24 1989, the NNF consisted of five parties with SWANU being the most significant. The NNF President was Vekuii Rukoro, who was also the President of SWANU.

the formation of the alliance with seven other small parties and interest groups also joining. With its original members drawn from such diverse groups as traditional Damara leaders, socialists, former SWAPO detainees¹² and Caprivan politicians – the UDF was never going to have a clear ideological approach. Despite the involvement of Caprivan politicians like Gabriel Siseho, the alliance gained only 556 votes in the region in 1989. The alliance folded in 1993 when the UDF was unified into one party under the leadership of Garoëb. After the 1999 elections the party formed a coalition in the National Assembly with the DTA, but despite talk of cooperating more closely, the working relationship was not renewed after the 2004 elections.

3. The performance of opposition parties since 1989

The high water mark for opposition performance in a Namibian election remains the United Nations (UN) supervised ballot of 1989. Then the opposition, dominated by the DTA, performed relatively well by gaining 42 percent of the vote and preventing SWAPO from achieving a two-thirds majority in the Constituent Assembly, thus ensuring that Namibia's Constitution was a document negotiated by all parties (Hopwood 2004: 48). However, the 1989 election is something of an anomaly in Namibia's electoral history. The exceptional political conditions of the time (the election was held four months before Namibia's Independence) mean it is difficult to compare the process with later elections, when Namibia was for the most part stable and at peace. The election campaign itself was held in an atmosphere of intimidation. South Africa's notorious paramilitary unit, Koevoet, was never confined to base and added to a climate of anti-SWAPO violence (ibid.:34). This reached a pitch two months before the election when SWAPO activist Anton Lubowski¹³ was assassinated. There was a concerted attempt by Pretoria to subvert the result of the election – with millions of South African Rand being pumped into opposition parties, the addition of thousands of South Africans to the voters roll and anti-SWAPO coverage from the then South West African Broadcasting Corporation.

In addition, the revelations that SWAPO had imprisoned and tortured hundreds of its own members in dungeons near Lubango, after accusing them of being spies, affected the vote for SWAPO.

By 1994, a sense of calm had entered Namibia's politics. Fears among sections of the electorate about life under SWAPO had largely dissipated, and the ruling party was able to win a two-thirds majority. The opposition performance was marked by the decline in support for the DTA – down by over 150 000 votes on its 1989 result. Since then the opposition share of the vote has remained remarkably static – at between 24 and 26 percent. The arrival of the CoD in 1999 did little to boost the overall showing of the opposition with the new party largely taking its votes from the DTA, whose support dwindled to nine percent.

The retirement of President Sam Nujoma, announced in early 2004, raised hopes among opposition parties that they would increase their share of the vote as SWAPO's support levels faltered (Amupadhi 2004b:1). However, despite an increased turnout in 2004, the opposition did not improve on their performance of five years earlier and SWAPO retained its comfortable two-thirds majority.

Table 1:
Opposition share of the vote since 1989 (National Assembly elections):

Year	Total vote	Opposition vote	Percentage	Seats (out of 72)
1989	680 787	286 263	42%	31
1994	497 508	127 836	26%	19
1999	541 114	127 862	24%	17
2004	829 269	197 830	24%	17

Source: Electoral Commission of Namibia

¹¹The DC was formed in 1971 as a group of tribal and public figures who were supposed to administer Damaraland if the area was granted a measure of self-rule by the apartheid authorities. The DC later refused to go along with South African plans to create a Damara homeland and although it participated in ethnic elections in 1980 it declined to become part of the Transitional Government of National Unity from 1985 onwards (Pütz et al 1990: 115).

¹²The Patriotic Unity Movement (PUM) was founded by former SWAPO detainees in July 1989. PUM joined the UDF alliance a month later. During the 1980s SWAPO detained over 1000 of its members at Lubango in Angola on suspicion of being South African spies. Most were tortured and several hundred never returned to Namibia.

¹³Anton Lubowski, Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration in the SWAPO Election Directorate, was gunned down outside his home on 12 September 1989. Although his death was linked to the shadowy South African-controlled Civil Cooperation Bureau, his killers have never been brought to justice.

4. Reasons for the poor performance since 1989

“The playing field is uneven to such an extent that the strong get stronger while the weak become weaker. This will continue and nothing will change this except a revolution within the strong party.” – Kosie Pretorius, MAG Chairman

There have been few assessments of why the opposition parties have fared so badly over the last 16 years. It is widely accepted by commentators that Namibia is a one-party dominant state with “moribund opposition parties in the process of continual decline” (KaaPama 2004:106). This process in turn leads to a situation in which “the state of governance is increasingly exposed to the risk of becoming less and less responsive to the true concerns of the public” (ibid.). Within this single dominant party system the role of the opposition is limited to that of “an alarm system” which ultimately helps to keep the ruling party on track (Keulder et al. 2000:161). If the opposition does expose a weakness on the part of government, then the ruling party can shift its position to ensure any such fault line does not become a major electoral issue. KaaPama (2004:107) posits a number of reasons for the poor performances of opposition parties:

- The strength the ruling party gains from its position of occupancy (being in government);
- Lack of depth and quality in opposition leadership;
- The opposition is “sleeping on duty” and misses opportunities to advance its position; and
- The fragmentation within and across parties.

Diescho (1996:6-12) suggests other obstacles for the opposition include:

- Difficulties in mobilising the strength and resources to survive;
- The problem of being seen as anti-SWAPO, when SWAPO was the liberation movement that overturned South African colonial rule;
- A lack of understanding among the electorate about democracy and the role of political parties;
- The party list system for the National Assembly that denies the opposition the chance to compete on the ground against specific party personalities (i.e. within a single member constituency system);
- Perceptions of the notion of *opposition* meaning disloyalty in traditional society;
- The relationship of the DTA and several other parties with the South African colonial regime; and
- The ability of the governing party SWAPO to draw leaders, individuals and communities into its system of patronage.

The final point about patronage cannot be underestimated. It would seem that opposition leaders feel they are facing a brick wall when it comes to SWAPO’s domination of the state and its resources. With virtually no such resources at their disposal, opposition parties are unable to create their own mini-systems of patronage. As Du Toit (1996: 59) has pointed out: under conditions of scarcity, control over state institutions and resources assumes vital importance and makes patronage a very persuasive method of gaining support.

What reasons do opposition parties themselves put forward for their failures? The views of several opposition leaders interviewed for this chapter echo those of commentators like Diescho and KaaPama, although few are willing to admit faults within the parties themselves. Justus Garoëb (UDF) sees the liberation movement status of SWAPO as almost insurmountable, with voters “sticking to the party that brought about independence” no matter what policies or leadership qualities are offered by other parties. According to Garoëb, the ruling party “makes use of the government platform and transport so that they can reach all four corners of the country” while smaller parties struggle to access communities. Rihupisa Kandando of SWANU states that party loyalty is of utmost importance and that “people normally vote on ethnic loyalty”. He also believes that fragmentation is a factor, with parties failing to co-operate on issues of “conviction”. “The system” is heavily weighted against the opposition, states Reinhard Gertze of the CoD, citing bias on the part of the Electoral Commission of Namibia, a partisan state media, and a lack of funds and resources.

Most of the reasons cited by opposition leaders relate to external factors, particularly about the perceived lack of a level playing field, but both Kandando of SWANU and Gende of the DTA mention internal failures – in particular the apparent inability of opposition parties to prepare early enough for elections. Most parties promised to start their campaigns much earlier at the next elections, although such vows have been heard before. The failure to launch longer-term efforts to attract voters is itself an indication of a lack of strategic thinking among opposition parties. Kosie Pretorius of MAG also believes the playing field is not level and cites the resources available to SWAPO as the party of government and the state funding formula that gives the party the lion’s share.

Most of the parties have a strong sense of grievance about the perceived unfairness of the political environment. The RP, CoD, SWANU and the NDMC have backed attempts to challenge the 2004 National Assembly results in court¹⁴. The DTA similarly sees the electoral process as unfair but does not believe court action is the best way to seek redress, according to Gende.

The CoD has lost confidence in the system and sees efforts to restore integrity to the electoral process as its “first fight”, says Gertze. Kandando points to the importance of SWAPO’s patronage system, arguing that it is difficult for known opposition supporters to find a job, whereas support for SWAPO can be a ticket to employment. He also complains of bias in the allocation of airtime on the state media. The peaceful situation in Namibia is conducive for political freedom, says Garoëb, but he adds that he considers party financing as a major stumbling block for the development of the UDF. MAG’s Pretorius also feels that SWAPO’s use of state resources and the current party funding formula make it very difficult for an opposition grouping to make much political headway. To some extent the comments of opposition politicians suggest a certain fatalism about the future. As Pretorius states: “It’s basically a situation of the winner gets everything and the loser nothing.”

5. Internal organisation

“I think the question of membership should not be seen as how many card-carrying members you have. I can tell you that paid up members do not reach 50 – not even 30, I think.” – CoD Secretary General Reinhard Gertze

With the exception of MAG, which according to Pretorius, views itself as a pressure group, most opposition parties do see themselves as eventually forming the government, even if they set lengthy timetables for such an achievement. In order to realise such an aim, even in the long-term, it might be expected that parties would establish certain working structures and practices to enable them to consolidate and expand their support bases. In reality, most parties have no meaningful membership records or systems of recruiting members and only have *ad hoc* and scattered structures beyond their head offices. Even the party

¹⁴After the CoD and RP challenged the results of the 2004 National Assembly elections, the High Court ordered a recount of ballots in March 2005. However, the results were remarkably similar to the first count and CoD and RP, with the backing of SWANU and NDMC, launched a fresh court case challenging the recount. At the time of writing, the case had not been finalised.

headquarters are often closed when state funding runs dry, only to re-open when the next batch of funds comes through. Both the CoD and DTA offices in Windhoek were closed in early 2005 while the parties waited for official funding to come through (Insight 2005a: 20). In the run-up to 2004 elections, Boer (2004:7) found that most parties balked at being asked about their membership figures and finances when he was researching his paper on the role of money in Namibian politics. Party representatives interviewed for this paper in 2005 were more candid about their memberships if a little short on detail.

Table 2: Party membership figures:

Party	No. of votes at 2004 NA election	No. of members (estimate)	Paid/not paid
CoD	59 464	Unclear	30-50 paid up
DTA	42 070	No records	No paid up members
MAG	6 950	300	Most not paid up
RP	16 187	10 000	Most not paid up
SWANU	3 610	4 000	Only 700 paid up
UDF	30 355	35 000-36 000	Not all paid up

Source: Interviews with party representatives

As can be seen from Table 2, most parties hardly have any paid membership to speak of. The lack of records allows an element of hyperbole to enter the parties’ estimations. For example, the UDF claims it has between 35 000 and 36 000 members while it only received just over 30 000 votes in the 2004 National Assembly election. Namibia’s oldest party, SWANU, appears to have the most organised approach to recruiting members. Ironically it was the worst performing party in the 2004 National Assembly elections. SWANU President Kandando says the party has 700 members who have paid the N\$20 annual fee; while another 3 300 supporters are regarded as members. However, at the 2004 National Assembly elections the party only mustered 3 610 votes countrywide.

For the Secretary-General of the CoD to concede that the party’s paid-up membership is less than thirty people would seem to be quite an admission. Yet, it would seem that most opposition parties have very few members who actually pay an annual fee. Instead the parties project what appear to be guesstimate figures as membership numbers, while conceding that they have simply been

handing out membership cards in the run up to elections. It has to be pointed out that SWAPO is also less than forthcoming about its membership figure (ibid.). The last two SWAPO congresses, held in 2002 and 1997, both passed resolutions urging the party to get its house in order and establish a membership database and mechanisms for bringing in membership fees. SWAPO has at least made participation in the party's official decision-making bodies conditional on being a paid up member. Several opposition figures maintain that their parties find it virtually impossible to attract membership fees from most of their supporters as they are too poor to back the party financially. However, it also clear that the parties, on the whole, have failed to establish effective administrative systems through which they can register members and monitor the payment of fees.

The RP representative complains that since leaving the DTA his party did not have the opportunity or the financial resources to set up a nationwide organisational structure as it was too busy fighting by-elections and then national elections. Instead structures emerged on an ad hoc basis and are only to be formalised during 2005. RP leader Mudge admits that to some extent "we put the cart before the horse" by campaigning without a party structure on the ground. In 2005 he says the party will start to create organisational structures from scratch. As part of this informal approach to party organisation, 10 000 RP membership cards were printed and distributed in the run up to the 2004 elections, but not many people paid the N\$10 required as an annual membership fee.

The DTA's representative is the most open about its position – admitting that after 28 years in existence it has no clear record of its membership and no system for collecting membership fees. MAG's aim is not to recruit members, but rather draw together people who share the same views, according to Pretorius. As a result, the party has adopted a scaled-down approach to campaigning, which party leader Pretorius says has yielded results. MAG does not appoint any activists or organisers and holds no meetings before elections. Instead the party sends a pamphlet to every post box holder, states Pretorius. In the 2004 National Assembly election, MAG increased its vote by 48 percent on its 1999 performance, although other smaller parties like the UDF and SWANU also saw their vote almost doubling. The increased support did not result in more seats as SWAPO's own vote went up by 34 percent, possibly because ruling party supporters felt they should turn out in force to support Hifikepunye Pohamba as the new presidential candidate (Insight 2005b: 22).

Most parties say they intend to establish improved regional structures and a proper membership system once they have completed their reviews of their 2004 performances. It will be interesting to see if, by 2007, the parties have made any progress on this issue. Apart from a lack of administrative capacity it would appear that most parties do not see developing their membership base as a priority. Instead of viewing a committed, paid-up membership as a key to developing successful grassroots activities, parties in general tend to view membership drives as time- and effort-consuming projects that produce little in financial resources for the party. Gertze plays down the importance of membership, saying, "We don't want to make everyone a member of the CoD ... It's enough that somebody agrees with you and says that what this person says is true ... Voters are the important thing and not members." Past experience would indicate that despite promises to the contrary, only last minute organisational measures will be taken once the next elections, due in 2009, are approaching.

6. A question of resources

"We are supposed to publish annual accounts, but we don't." –
UDF President Justus Garoëb

In 1997 parties represented in the National Assembly started to receive state funds allocated on the proportion of the total vote parties received in the last election. The total amount allocated each year does fluctuate because the amount made available for party funding is limited to 0.2 percent of government revenue for the previous year. When a parliamentary select committee recommended in 1996 that parties receive state funds to run legislative offices and undertake general political work, it also said that parties should submit annual audited accounts to be published in the Government Gazette. However, no law has ever been introduced to require parties to do this. In 2004 the then Speaker of the National Assembly, Mosé Tjitendero, said that legislation would be introduced in 2005 to compel parties to account for their use of public funds (Amupadhi 2004a:1). By September 2005 no such legislation had been introduced.

Table 3: Allocation of state funding to parties 2000-2006 in million Namibia dollars:

Party	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6
CoD	1.25	1.4	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.0
DTA-UDF coalition	1.57	1.8	2.3	2.4	2.0	
MAG	0.08	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
SWAPO	9.6	10.8	13.8	14.7	12.2	11.7
RP						0.2
DTA						0.9
UDF						0.6
NUDO						0.6

Sources: Boer (2004:10) and Insight (2005a:20)

With no legal requirements for parties to be accountable for their funding, party finance remains a murky area across the board. No party has voluntarily published its accounts for public consumption, even though most parties are keen to call for greater financial transparency on the part of government. However, from comments obtained from party figures during interviews for this chapter, it is clear that most opposition parties are highly dependent on their state funding for survival. Table 4 indicates in approximate terms what proportion of total funding comes from government for 2005/6. However, it should be noted that some parties were uncertain as to whether they would be able to fund their budgeted expenditure from other sources. Even if the parties do succeed in raising money aside from their government subsidies, the combined budgeted total of N\$6.7 does not come close to the N\$11.7 million allocated to SWAPO.

Table 4: Estimates of party funding for 2005/6:

Party	State funding	Proportion of total budget	Estimated total budget
CoD	1.07m	50%	2.0m
DTA	857 000	50%	1.6m
MAG	214 000	50%	N\$ 400 000
RP	214 000	10%	2.0m
UDF	643 000	80-90%	N\$ 750 000

Source: Interviews with party representative

Namibia's electoral law states that foreign donations to political parties must be disclosed to the public (RoN 1992: 52). However, an exact mechanism for how this should take place is not specified by law. In practice, parties do not disclose foreign donations unless they organise a press conference to announce the funding – such as happened in 2003 when SWAPO received N\$240 000 from the Chinese Communist Party (Amupadhi 2003:3). In 2004 it emerged that CoD had received assistance from the Labour Party in the United Kingdom (New Era 2004:1). Although there is little available evidence on foreign funding, it would appear that amounts received from abroad by opposition parties are negligible.

The RP says its state funding accounts for about ten percent of what it needs to run the party. Mudge states that the party wants to expand its funding base by sourcing money both locally and abroad. In particular, he believes that the party could exploit its Christian links by gaining support from like-minded US organisations. Mudge does not envisage membership fees contributing significantly to the party's coffers. The UDF acknowledges that between 80 percent and 90 percent of its funding comes from the state, with Garoëb saying: "I would say it's the only resource we have." He adds that a small amount of funding is raised by activists in the regions "but it's not really worthwhile". The DTA's Gende maintains that its state funding constitutes around half of its expenditure for 2005/6 with the rest coming from donations and other sources. Most parties have experienced difficulties in gaining business support, because companies do not want to be seen as going against SWAPO. Gende of the DTA states: "Coming to the private sector, these are people who are queuing for tenders from government and they don't want to be associated with opposition parties." MAG gains about half of its annual expenditure from government. The rest comes from membership fees and interest from an investment made under the previous dispensation. Even though opposition parties are highly dependent on public funds, none release their audited accounts to the public. Gende is adamant that the DTA will not release its financial statements to the public, saying these are available to the party's executive committee and members can request to see them. Asked if such a secretive policy does not conflict with the party's calls for greater openness from government, Gende says that since government is not transparent about its finances, the party also does not need to be.

The UDF cites strategic reasons for not releasing accounts, with Garoëb saying, "the moment our true financial state is known, our tactics are known." SWANU, which does not receive public funds as it does not have a seat in the National Assembly, says it is accountable primarily to its members who provide its funding. As a result

it does not see the need to release figures to the public. Pretorius explains that MAG will only release its audited accounts if other parties do so. The CoD and the RP both say that they plan to be more transparent in the future. Gertze states that the CoD's finances are not deliberately "closed", adding that there is a lack of administrative and managerial capacity within the party. Apart from the widely held belief that public funds should be clearly accounted for, it will be difficult for opposition parties to gain higher moral ground in the debates about financial transparency and access to information when they are so reluctant to be open about their own financial positions.

The funding formula for the government subsidies to parties remains a bone of contention. Most opposition parties want a system in which a set amount is divided equally among all parties. This can be topped up by an amount linked to the party's share of the vote.

7. The policy-making process

"The moment we get them [= the electorate] to concentrate on the issues is when real democracy will come to this country. But it will take quite a long time before this happens." – UDF President Justus Garoëb.

Most parties seem to agree that once the electorate starts to vote on issues – they will make progress, but as Garoëb (UDF) points out, this could be a long process. Gende (DTA) says it is not easy to address issues in Namibia: "You can write a very good manifesto, but people don't read manifestos – they ask who is the leader, where does he come from, is he respectable, is he a strong leader, is he from my region?"

Most opposition parties adopt a top-down approach to policy making – with central committees and executive committees deciding on manifesto commitments. Pretorius, for example, says MAG policy is formulated in the head office after which it is approved by the management and then by an annual meeting. Few parties seem to bother with grassroots consultations and the idea of focus groups – whereby policy ideas could be tested with representative groups made up of the public as well as party members – seems not to have entered the planning of parties. Focus groups can be expensive and again a lack of resources may rule them out of the parties' thinking. Garoëb says UDF branches can make policy suggestions and occasional public meetings are held. SWANU's Kandando does not see the need for consultation outside the party about manifesto issues

because policy stems from the party's socialist ideology. Swanu decides its policies primarily after internal party consultations. Only the CoD representative states clearly that it will take a bottom-up approach to forming its policies in the future. The CoD is reviewing its policies in the wake of the 2004 elections. Gertze says changes in policy and structure will "start from the ground" and will eventually be put to a congress for adoption.

None of the parties' representatives interviewed mentioned their communications strategy when asked about their future plans. However, most did complain about biased media coverage, particularly in the state media but also in the independent media. This in itself indicates a trend among opposition parties – that they are quick to complain about a lack of fairness but have few pro-active strategies in place to influence the situation. Collaborative research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), the Media Institute of Southern Africa and Media Tenor showed that the ruling party had the lion's share of electronic and print media coverage in the run-up to the 2004 elections. However, the print media's coverage was found to be negative towards all parties, rather than just the opposition (Insight 2005c: 25). Keulder told a media briefing to announce preliminary results for the research that there was a very low volume of election-related material in the media because political parties were "extremely lazy" with a "general lack of energy and imagination" on how to sell themselves. "They don't look after their media profile," Keulder said (Maletsky 2004: 5).

8. Strategies for the future

Several of the parties take heart from the 2004 election results, even though they did not make any ground on SWAPO. The UDF, for example, almost doubled its vote. As a result, Garoëb says he is positive about the party's development and can see only future improvement in support levels. However, on the possibilities for party cooperation Garoëb is more pessimistic. He says his hopes that the UDF-DTA coalition in the National Assembly would expand to include other parties came to nothing, adding, "Everybody's sitting on his small island and they don't want to give way [to a combined party]." Garoëb believes that a united opposition party would be more likely to make a difference in Parliament. The DTA retains an interest in developing alliances with other parties, but complains that other parties are not interested in cooperation. Gende says an alliance with CoD appeared on the cards before 2004's local authority election, but eventually fell through. Similarly the UDF-DTA parliamentary coalition was not renewed in the new

National Assembly. For the Regional Council elections in 2004 the two parties agreed not to compete against each other in some constituencies in north-western Namibia, but this arrangement has also been dropped since then. According to Gende, the DTA is now looking for “trustworthy” partners, but without the CoD and UDF there are not many parties left to work with. The CoD views cooperation among parties as a means of overcoming ethnic division in politics. Gertze believes a grand coalition of political parties is possible – an alliance not dissimilar to the way the DTA was organised in its early stages. He foresees that the CoD could play “open cards” to bring such an alliance together. The RP’s Mudge also believes there could be realignment in opposition politics by 2007, in time to plan for the next election. Pretorius of MAG says his party is prepared to work with other opposition groups, but has no interest in merging with them. He believes that by merging, his party would lose its distinctive brand. “In merging you actually break the trust of those who believe in you by compromising.” It has to be remembered that MAG did not actually gain the quota of votes for a seat in the 2005 National Assembly, but still scraped in through the system of allocating seats to the parties with the largest remainders.

Overall, talk of party mergers or cooperation deals remain vague and there is still an atmosphere of distrust between some parties over failed attempts to work together in the past. Much will depend on whether parties feel they can benefit from mergers or whether they risk losing their own distinctive identities as Pretorius argues would happen if MAG joined a larger party. Ethnic parties, such as NUDO and the UDF, are likely to avoid mergers as they have proved successful in garnering the support of their target communities. A new catch-all party, even if it included some NUDO or UDF leaders, may not have the same pull on the voter as a party that is obviously ethnic in character.

Would a united opposition or at least fewer parties create a greater challenge to SWAPO at the polls? In the 2004 elections the increase in the number of parties pulled in more votes for the opposition. The RP and NUDO, for example, clearly galvanised more support than they would have if they had remained within the DTA fold. But while the fragmentation of parties into smaller groups, often with an ethnic pitch to the voters, may have prevented the opposition vote deteriorating from its 1999 position, it also produces a bits and pieces opposition. So the prospect of a united opposition may prove to be a double-edged sword – it would undoubtedly present a stronger challenge to SWAPO in Parliament and have a higher media profile but it could also lose some voters who might feel their ethnic affiliation is not adequately represented by the new organisation.

When asked about the prospects of party cooperation most party representatives were more concerned about the issues of trust rather than policy differences. This in itself indicates that there is enough common cause between the parties, most of which occupy the centre political ground, to achieve a joint policy platform. Only political outliers like SWANU on the left and MAG on the right are likely to have severe policy differences with a united party. The other challenge facing a united party would be establishing proper, workable structures countrywide. Given that virtually all opposition parties have struggled to build their organisations due to a lack of resources and administrative capacity, could a united party simply fail to connect with voters at a grassroots level for the same reasons? With the potential rewards for forming a united opposition not that compelling and levels of trust between leading opposition politicians not being high, it may well be that there will continue to be far more talk than action concerning mergers and alliances.

Aside from the issues of inter-party cooperation, all opposition parties are currently undertaking review processes following the elections of 2004. The parties talk of reactivating branches countrywide, reformulating policies and making institutional changes. However, with no elections due until 2009, it may prove too tempting for parties to simply collect their state funding, pay their elites comfortable salaries and sit back until stirred into last gasp action when polling days are almost upon them.

9. Conclusions

With six of the eight opposition parties having their roots in the pre-independence dispensation, it is perhaps not surprising that many of them tend to look backwards to better days rather than forwards to improved results. The DTA’s Gende talks of attracting the youth vote, but in almost the same breath he speaks nostalgically about reviving the old support base of the party. The RP, while ostensibly a catch-all party, puts great emphasis on bringing the previously advantaged (whites) back into the political mainstream. Other parties like NUDO and UDF concentrate on maintaining ethnic support bases they developed while part of pre-independence internal politics. SWANU harks back to its long gone glory days, but appears to have little prospect for future growth. MAG – still carrying the torch of NP thinking - is very much a remnant of the past. The CoD – a party that does not carry the heavy political baggage of being linked to the South African occupation – appears to have quickly developed similar characteristics to

the other, older opposition parties – weak administration, lack of formal structures, neglect of its membership, and a lackadaisical approach to party development.

The opposition parties find themselves in a position of stasis and, from the comments of their leaders, most appear to be waiting for a change in the political climate rather than pro-actively strategising for future success. Most of their hopes are pinned on the belief that the allure of the liberation struggle will fade over time thereby creating an opportunity to gain more political support as SWAPO is no longer primarily identified as the party that brought about independence. The tendency to look back also precludes a more positive approach to recruiting young supporters. The last census in 2001 (Hopwood 2004: 3) indicated that nearly 40 percent of the population was under 15 years of age. The 2004 National Assembly election in 2004 demonstrated that many young people are politically engaged – as the turnout topped 80 percent – but their enthusiasm for voting was not benefiting the opposition. Instead many of them were voting for SWAPO, even though their memories of the liberation struggle must be limited.

The parties that developed during the 1970s and 1980s and which were co-opted into the South African-installed interim governments have never developed the organisational capacity to grow. Instead, they apparently remain content to occupy a small political space as long as their leadership figures are able to have seats in Parliament and the accompanying salaries and resources.

Namibia's political system tends to encourage small-time politicians, several of them *ethnic entrepreneurs*, who wish simply to win a wedge of support in their home areas that will justify a presence in Parliament. With no legal threshold for parties to win seats in the National Assembly it is still possible for parties with only half the quota of votes to gain a seat. A threshold – in which, for example, a party would have to gain at least five percent of the national vote to gain a seat – would force parties to move beyond their ethnic niches and historical support bases to actively canvass for votes from a wider spectrum of the electorate.

At present the motivation to advance opposition party causes appears to be lacking. Although the political space may be cramped by SWAPO's dominance and a biased state media, it seems clear that opposition parties are not using the space that is available. In short, the prospects for the growth of the current crop of opposition parties are not good. At the same time the possibilities of new parties emerging to replace those that are weighed down by their own histories are also slim. Most of the recent parties to emerge either as new formations or as

re-activated former parts of the DTA are targeting ethnic votes with the sole aim of gaining a foothold in Parliament. The two significant catch-all parties – the DTA and CoD – regressed in the 2004 National Assembly election. It seems likely that they will enter some kind of cooperation deal, if not a merger, before the next national elections. Unless a new political formation emerges, this will probably be the most significant development within the opposition during the lifetime of this Parliament.

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