

Conceptualizing Populist Politics in Contemporary Namibia: For the People, or for the Leader?

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ABSTRACTS

While most proponents of liberalism and the governing elite may have the propensity to deplore populism, its contribution to democratic politics compels the ruling elite to table issues they opt to ignore on the national agenda. In the face of public outcry over the Namibian government's lackluster approach towards addressing urban land, the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement in 2015 threatened to occupy vacant land across urban centers. Anticipating the inevitable instability and lawlessness this may cause, the Namibian government acquiesced and entered into an agreement with the AR to service 200,000 plots in the country's major economic hubs, including the capital city, Windhoek. It is the threat to use violence and other illiberal democratic means that make populist politics unappealing for modern democracies. With a general sense of nihilism and widespread disillusionment that permeates across the Namibian society, populists will continue propagating narratives that stir anti-state emotions and labelling the government an 'enemy of the people'. On the other end, it is the rhetoric being spewed by the apex political elite to legitimize their management of society often marred by pervasive public discontent and disillusionment that tend to undermine the democratic project and, more specifically, the material conditions of the Namibian populace. Hence, should there be a political distinction between 'progressive populism' and 'destructive populism'?

Während die meisten Verfechter:innen des Liberalismus und die Regierungselite dazu neigen, den Populismus zu beklagen, zwingt sein Beitrag zur demokratischen Politik die herrschende Elite dazu, Themen auf die nationale Agenda zu setzen, die sie ansonsten lieber ignorieren würde. Angesichts der öffentlichen Empörung über die träge Vorgehensweise der namibischen Regierung in Bezug auf die städtische Landverteilungsfrage drohte die Bewegung „Affirmative Repositioning“ (AR) im Jahr 2015 damit, leerstehende Grundstücke in den Stadtzentren zu besetzen. In Erwartung der Instabilität und Gesetzlosigkeit, die dies potentiell auslösen könnte,

gab die namibische Regierung nach und schloss mit der AR eine Vereinbarung über die Bewirtschaftung von 200.000 Grundstücken in den wichtigsten Wirtschaftszentren des Landes, darunter auch in der Hauptstadt Windhoek. Es ist die Drohung mit Gewalt und anderen illiberalen demokratischen Mitteln, die populistische Politik für moderne Demokratien unattraktiv macht. Angesichts des allgemeinen Nihilismus und der weit verbreiteten Desillusionierung in der namibischen Gesellschaft werden Populist:innen zukünftig weiterhin Narrative verbreiten, die anti-staatliche Emotionen schüren und die Regierung als „Feind des Volkes“ bezeichnen. Auf der anderen Seite ist es die Rhetorik, die von der politischen Elite zur Legitimierung ihrer Führungsform der Gesellschaft verbreitet wird und die oft von öffentlicher Unzufriedenheit und Desillusionierung begleitet wird, die dazu neigt, das demokratische Projekt und vor allem auch die materiellen Grundlagen der namibischen Bevölkerung zu untergraben. Hieraus ergibt sich die Frage: Sollte es eine politische Unterscheidung zwischen „progressivem Populismus“ (*progressive populism*) und „destruktivem Populismus“ (*destructive populism*) geben?

1. Introduction

While most proponents of liberalism and the governing elite may have the propensity to deplore populism, its contribution to democratic politics compels the ruling elite to table issues they prefer to ignore on the national agenda. In the face of public outcry over the Namibian government's lacklustre approach towards addressing urban land, the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement in 2015 threatened to occupy vacant land across urban centres. Anticipating the inevitable instability and lawlessness this may cause, the Namibian government acquiesced and entered into an agreement with the AR movement to service 200,000 plots in the country's major economic hubs, including the capital city, Windhoek. State president Hage Geingob has dedicated his presidency to annual slogans that aim to instil a message of hope to a public that is grappling with socioeconomic quagmires. It is the threat to use violence and other illiberal democratic means that make populist politics unappealing for modern democracies. With a general sense of nihilism and widespread disillusionment that permeates the Namibian society, populists will continue propagating narratives that stir anti-state emotions and labelling the government an “enemy of the people”. Notwithstanding the contentious nature of the country's populist politics, Namibia lacks a national identity that is able to promote unity and social cohesion. This deeply troubling phenomenon requires a strong and concerted response from civil society organizations (CSOs) to stave off populist rhetoric that is by and large divisive, bellicose, and misguided.

2. A Conceptual Paralysis?

As with most concepts in the social sciences, the term *populism* has not escaped the definitional promiscuity along terms such as *politics*, *policy*, *liberty*, *equality*, or *terrorism*. It remains marred in the arena of conceptual contestations among scholars and

researchers. While there is no agreed comprehensive definition on the concept *populism*, scholars such as Müller characterizes populism as a “permanent shadow of representative democracy.”¹ Its central claim is to represent “the people” that are being “exploited” by the ruling elite. One may argue that populism can be viewed as a democratizing force as it seeks to empower groups that do not feel represented by the governing elite.² All things considered, Tormey asserts that

*what is clear in the various attempts at defining populism is the centrality of the idea of “the people”. For populists “the people” is the subject of politics, as opposed to any particular social class, ethnic grouping or nation. What motivates populists is some sense that the needs and interests of the people are at odds with the needs and interests of those who govern, whom commentators usually term “the elites”. On the other hand, the elites are harming the people and it is this sense of injury that prompts populists to frame politics in confrontational or antagonistic terms.*³

Augmenting the argument above is the fact that any given society will have its fair share of disenfranchisement emanating from its citizens, and opportunistic leaders could exploit this discontent to rally support for their political parties or movements without necessarily addressing the socioeconomic conditions of the people they claim to represent. As Tormey further observes, “there are lots of parties that call themselves Marxist, liberal or socialist but as yet very few parties call themselves ‘populist’. Popular yes, but *populist*, no.”⁴ Another reason for the conceptual chaos with populism is that “as soon as scholars are confident that they have encircled it with their definitional snares, it resurfaces in a different form in another corner of the impenetrable jungle of politics.”⁵ The main definitional controversy is between populism as a discourse or strategy and populism as a (thin) ideology.⁶ Finding consensus on the concept *populism* is further exacerbated by the argument that it is not a fully fledged ideology like communism, liberalism, or conservatism. It is for this reason that Tormey postulates that

*there’s nowhere to go if we want to find out more about what a “populist society” would look like and why we should join a populist movement or party. There are no philosophers or great thinkers who espoused populism, or who made it into a consistent body of thought in the manner of Karl Marx (communism), John Stuart Mill (liberalism) or Edmund Burke (conservatism). There is very little to promote, to mobilize behind, or get excited about.*⁷

1 J. W. Müller, *What is Populism?*, Philadelphia 2017, p. 101.

2 C. Mudde and C. R. Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2017, p. 18.

3 S. Tormey, *Populism: A Beginner’s Guide*, London 2019, p. 10.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

5 *Ibid.*

6 D. Stockemer, Introduction, in: D. Stockemer (ed.), *Populism Around the World: A Comparative Perspective*. Cham 2019, pp. 1–7, at p. 2.

7 Tormey, *Populism: A Beginner’s Guide*, p. 11.

As Müller proffers, there is no theory on populism, and we therefore do not have some coherent criteria for concluding when political actors decide to engage in populist activity.⁸ If this is the case and the depth of befuddlement around the concept, can we really label political actors such as Donald Trump, Geert Wilders, Nigel Farage, Julius Malema, or Job Shipululo Amupanda as “populists”? Is democracy not about fighting for the downtrodden and under-represented? Politics is fundamentally about the material conditions of people and populist politics and actors are attempting to fill the void left by the unfulfilled promises of democracy. Where there is discontent and disillusionment about economic exclusion, or ethnic and racial tensions, there is room for populist politics and actors. Despite the conceptual ambiguity engulfing the concept, the literature sums up *populism* and *populists* as engaging in a type of politics that is bellicose, obnoxious, anti-establishment, and performative in style and goes against the mature nature of politics associated with mainstream democratic approaches.⁹ But it is this performative style of politics that has compelled the political establishment to consider various public policy issues that they would otherwise prefer to ignore. Perhaps the discussion should gravitate towards *progressive populism* vs. *destructive populism* as not all populist politics is negative. In fact, in some cases, it promotes and strengthens the salient tenets of democracy such as giving a voice to the voiceless and meaningful participation in the political process of a given society. Have Namibians given up on democracy? Or is it a phase in a society experimenting with democracy after 100 years of colonialism and apartheid?

3. From Democratic Promise to Growing Political Disenchantment

Namibia’s independence on 21 March 1990 from white minority–ruled South Africa created a sense of unbridled optimism for the majority of black Namibians who were denied economic and political opportunities in a society governed by deeply entrenched racial segregation and discriminatory, inhumane public policy practices. Slightly more than three decades after independence, there is mounting evidence, as discussed in subsequent sections, that the country may have arrived at some crossroads in its development trajectory. Local agency finds it increasingly difficult to respond meaningfully to the multiple challenges. The governing party, the South-West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO Party of Namibia), seemingly no longer has the same energy, drive, and mission that had long sustained it. The mantra of “Solidarity, Peace and Justice” proffered by the governing party has lost steam and impetus. The 2019 presidential and National Assembly elections confirmed the trend, when SWAPO Party’s share of votes declined by 15 percentage points, while that of the incumbent president declined by 30 percentage points. For the first time since 1994, the governing party did not obtain a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly. Christiaan Keulder advances the following reasons

8 Müller, *What is Populism?*, p. 2.

9 Tormey, *Populism: A Beginner’s Guide*, p. 9.

for the decline in trust in the SWAPO Party and the government: “With three consecutive years of economic recession, subsequent major job losses and a crippling drought over the past four years, many Namibians are struggling to adapt with the impact of the economic contraction on their personal living conditions.”¹⁰ Growing public perception that corruption is on the rise and that the economy is heading in the wrong direction means that public views of the government’s performance are at their lowest points since 1990. The promises made at the dawn of independence seem to be a distant dream for the majority of the governing party’s members, supporters, and sympathizers. At the time, the inaugural speech of Namibia’s first president, Sam Nujoma (1990–2005), resonated with a majority of the populace when he declared during the country’s first independence inaugural celebrations on 21 March 1990:

*To the Namibian people, I would like to state, on this solemn occasion, that our nation blazed the trail to freedom. It has arisen to its feet. As from today, we are masters of this vast land of our ancestors. The destiny of this country is now fully in our own hands. We should, therefore, look forward to the future with confidence and hope. Taking the destiny of this country in our own hands means, among other things, making the great effort to forge national identity and unity. Our collective security and prosperity depends on our unity of purpose and action, Unity is a precondition for peace and development. Without peace, it is not possible for the best and talented citizens of our country to realize their potential.*¹¹

Dark memories still haunt those that experienced the brutality of the apartheid regime. However, a majority of young people born years after the country’s political independence, the inaugural speech is immaterial to their current lived experiences. It is in this disposition that Henning Melber argues that “the ongoing exclusion of the impoverished and marginalized from the benefits of the country’s wealth and resources is no longer only the result of the structural legacy of apartheid, as is so conveniently claimed by the new postcolonial elite”.¹² In 2022, as part of its country overview, the World Bank provided a damning report on the country’s poverty levels. According to the report, more than 1.6 million Namibians, out of a population of 2.5 million, are said to be living in poverty.¹³ The Bretton Woods institution further lamented that

Namibia ranks as one of the world’s most unequal countries. Its Gini coefficient of 59.1 in 2015 was second only to South Africa. Geographical disparities in both economic op-

10 C. Keulder, Culture, Performance and Origins of Political Trust in Namibia, Windhoek: Institute for Public Policy Research (= Democracy Report), 2020, p. 3.

11 S. Nujoma, The Inaugural Speech of His Excellency Dr. Sam Nujoma on 21 March 1990. https://samnujoma-foundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Inaugural-speech-of-dr-sam-nujoma_21_march-1991.pdf.

12 H. Melber, “One Namibia, one nation?” Social cohesion under a liberation movement as government in decline, in: Stichproben. Vienna Journal of African Studies 21 (2021) 41, pp. 129–158, at p. 136.

13 World Bank, The World Bank in Namibia, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/namibia/overview#:~:text=Namibia%20is%20a%20geographically%20large,Botswana%2C%20Zambia%2C%20and%20Angola.>

portunities and access to services are large and widening. High levels of inequality result in starkly different poverty rates across different groups, including by age and gender.

Relatively high poverty, lagging human capital, and poor access to basic services are inter-related problems. Namibia's poverty rapidly declined from 1993/94 to 2015/16, but it remains high for the country's level of development. Despite recent progress, Namibia ranked 117th among 157 countries on the Human Capital Index. The duality of the labor market, combined with slow job creation and low primary-sector productivity, results in very high unemployment.¹⁴ Despite this precarious socioeconomic situation presented by the international body, the Office of the President appeared to be evasive and nonchalant towards these egregious statistics afflicting the Namibian populace. The press secretary and presidential advisor to President Geingob, Dr. Alfredo Hengari, countered the report by lamenting that

the fact that it's a world bank does not make it absolute, because for you to live above the poverty line you must spend N\$84.43 (US\$5.50) per person per day. Looking at our rural households, they are living a normal, healthy life, but they don't live on US\$5.50 per person per day.¹⁵

But a member of the CSO the Basic Income Grant (BIG) Coalition highlighted that Namibia's democratic project remains incomplete as pervasive socioeconomic disparities violates the socioeconomic rights of the most vulnerable in society.¹⁶ In the Namibian context, it is unremitting levels of unemployment, widening inequality, and structural poverty that breeds widespread disillusionment and discontent with democracy, the political and economic elite, and anyone that is perceived to be taking a larger share of the "national cake". It is these socioeconomic disparities that have led to public discontent and the emergence of political and social formations that purport to represent and fight for "the people". On the political front, Namibia has witnessed the establishment of the AR as a social/political outfit established by the erstwhile SWAPO secretary of information and publicity, Job Shipululo Amupanda, in 2014, whose main contention with the government was the plight of young Namibians who were excluded from the urban housing market and the inability to access affordable land in urban areas. In the same year, another political entity called the Namibia Economic Freedom Fighters (NEFF) was officially registered as a political party with close links to the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in South Africa, led by Julius Sello Malema. What do these political formations have in common? Are they an integral component to the democratic project, or an obstacle?

14 Ibid.

15 S. Tendane and S. Peterson, "Presidency disputes World Bank's 1,6 million poverty figure", in: The Namibian [Windhoek], 21 January 2021, <https://www.namibian.com.na/6217280/archive-read/Presidency-disputes-World-Banks-16-million-poverty-figure>.

16 Ibid.

4. The Ambivalence of Namibian Populism

It appears that populism has an ambivalent relationship with democracy. The emergence of the AR, NEFF, and other political formations with left-leaning ideological orientations is a direct reaction to the failed neo-liberal economic policies that have been pursued by the Namibian state for the past 33 years. The proliferation of these political formations is indicative of a politics that is broken and no longer serving the interests and aspirations for a majority of people. As Marvin Zonis et al. assert, “Whether for good or ill, when public anger grows, political opportunity grows with it”.¹⁷ Is the emergence of the AR and NEFF mere political opportunism, or are they addressing real public policy issues?

4.1 The Affirmative Repositioning: An Illiberal Outfit or *Progressive Populism*?

When the AR movement appeared on the Namibian political scene, it shook the prevailing political and social discourse to an extent that officials in the public and private sector did not want to be associated with the movement or their leaders. Their approach and tactics in the conduct of their politics was viewed by certain quarters of Namibian society as cantankerous and bellicose at times. The events leading up to the movement’s deadline and ultimatum that the government should respond favourably to the more than 50,000 people that applied for urban land under their direction by the 31 July 2015, or they resort to illegally occupying land, had enflamed public opinion, criticized by the Namibian intelligentsia and senior government officials, including the Office of the President. Hengari in particular postulated that

*AR for its part should be cautioned that it is a dangerous supposition to issue ultimatums in a republic. Republics are in terms of their Platonian definition and traditions inherently democratic and should not respond to blackmail. Bluntly, it is un-republican conduct to threaten us into action. For this reason, AR should ruminate within forms of republican reasoning around delivery on its core grievance.*¹⁸

It is this kind of political posturing that would make the AR movement and its leadership to be characterized as being “populist”, no matter the sincerity of their cause and intentions. To be able to understand the movement’s unconventional approach in the conduct of politics, it is important to note that they derive their ideological leanings from leftist intellectuals, past and present. In their founding documents and various public statements, the movement asserts that

the AR movement is a radical movement in Namibia aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the youth. In the quest to restore the dignity of the landless people, the AR movement serves as a Marxist-Fanonian Leftist movement with Namibian

17 M. Zonis et al., *Risk Rules: How Local Politics Threaten the Global Economy*, Evanston 2011, p. 57.

18 A. Hengari, *Reposition Affirmative Repositioning Into Republican Reasoning*, in: *The Namibian*, 21 April 2015, <https://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=136072&page=archive-read>.

characteristics seeking to establish an order quarantining and liquidating the capitalist anarchy characterizing the post-independence land question. Its informative standpoint is to inspire and inform the post-independence generation to concretize paths towards economic freedom. Its tactical approach is to redirect state development planning from Neo-liberal macro-economic policy to humanistic development policy.¹⁹

This thinking is also espoused in their public utterances on various social media platforms, or when they conduct press releases. After their symbolic occupation (they “occupied” the land under 30 minutes and left) of “ERF 2014” in the upmarket suburb of Kleine Kuppe in the capital city, Windhoek, the movement published the rationale behind this public spectacle:

Land is everything; a master means of production. There is nothing you can do without land. It gets worse with urban land; a paradise for capitalists. Central to urban land is housing a major crisis treated with kid gloves. Like orphans, we are at the mercy of market forces. It would appear that leaders surrendered to capitalism at will or through coercion. It is, therefore, unsurprising that house prices in Cape Town are said to be 30% cheaper than those in Windhoek. Leaders are not troubled by our ranking as the world’s number two in regard to expensive house prices. Consistency in land supply, basic economics dictate, will mean prices will stabilize. This, capitalists do not want. If ministers and MPs [members of parliament] are property moguls and landlords, how can they change the law to make land available if it means they lose rent income? The crisis is deep. We are troubled not only by corruption, nepotism and elitism but more so by the fact that no one seems to be brave enough to stop the land shenanigans in the whole country. The youth are the hardest hit by the land crisis and shenanigans. We are left to rent, subjected to unregulated housing prices and cannot find land. To NHE [National Housing Enterprise], young professionals’ salaries are too high for housing. To the banks, their salaries are too low for home loans. Youth are only good when listening to exile stories and not when they demand their share as citizens. “Affirmative Repositioning” is a rejection of the view that the land question is concluded. It is about restoring black people’s dignity as it relates to land. Ours is to give a clear message that youth will no longer eat bones in their country while even the elite’s dogs eat better. We seek to establish an order quarantining and liquidating this capitalist anarchy. “Affirmative Repositioning” is about standing up for the 60% of our population and shielding them from capitalist greed and economic rape. It is not about election or political parties but about land. Sell-outs and propagandists were saying we want to disturb elections. After elections they say we want to destabilize the incoming government. We are not shaken by lies and propaganda. We are not in the bush; we are in a free country. This is a sunrise on the land question, not the sunset.²⁰

19 AR Movement on Land Issues, in: The Namibia Economist, 17 September 2017, <https://economist.com.na/28890/speak-your-mind/ar-movement-on-land-issues/>.

20 Affirmative Repositioning – The Rationale, in: The Namibian, 12 December 2014, <https://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?page=archive-read&id=131571>.

The sentiment expressed in the admittedly rather long quotation embodies the view that populists and populist's movements consider themselves to be the sole and authentic representatives that are fighting for "the people" and that the political elite are in cahoots with the captains of industry in condemning them to the doldrums of absolute squalor and excluded from the mainstream of the economy. This is a classical Marxist interpretation of the role of the state as it is perceived as an "instrument of the bourgeoisie" with the sole intent of exploiting the proletariat.

Notwithstanding such criticism, it is worth noting that the AR movement's modus operandi runs deeper than just economic critique. The movement and its leadership represent an idea. It is an idea that speaks to the depth of discontent and disenfranchisement afflicting the young and restless in Namibia. It is an idea that resonates with disillusioned youth who think and believe that their various socioeconomic malaise is caused or exacerbated by a governing class that is divorced from their lived experiences. The movement represents an idea for young people who believe that Namibia's politics is broken and only caters for the select few. In other words, the AR movement and other movements, or leaders that emerge as a consequence of economic grievances, are usually an expression of a deep crisis in a given society.

It is this anger and frustration with the political system that has made political formations like the AR to deviate from the mainstream practice of democratic norms and create alternative political spaces and tactics that are deemed "illiberal" or "unconventional" to the norms and values of democracy. However, scholars such as Hengari argue that movements such as the AR should be accommodated in the discourse of national policy-making as

republican reasoning imposes responsibility on the part of elected officials who ought to respond to governance failures with urgency. To denounce the AR trio as unelected and illegitimate is anti-republican. The space of civil society, which AR occupies is republican and leadership here is constituted by both elected and unelected women and men, of whom Amupanda and his men and women are important in distilling issues. For as long as their actions do not display an utter lack of Mandelanness or calibrate illogic, we should not de-legitimise the AR leadership and the issue for which it agitates.²¹

However, their various encounters with law enforcement officials and their fiery rhetoric towards the governing elite had divided public opinion to a point where some believed that the founding president, Sam Nujoma (now 94), was endorsing and sponsoring the movement's activities. This assertion was soon dispelled when the former head of state dismissed the movement's actions:

It is clear that these provocative actions were meant to destabilise the newly appointed government as their timing coincided with the inauguration of the new government, under the leadership of H.E. Dr Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia.

As we are all aware, the enemies of progress will always try to cause anarchy, division and disunity among our people in order to reverse the gains of our hard-won freedom and independence. I urge our youth to stand solidly behind our president, H.E. Dr Hage Geingob, and give him all the support and loyalty in order to address the socio-economic gaps that exist in our society, as he clearly outlined the priority areas of his administration.²²

Despite these criticisms at the time, the movement's popularity remained high as they had a presence nationally and could galvanize their constituents at a moment's notice. Populists sound passionate about the causes that they champion, but do they always say what they mean and mean what they say?

The style of politics practiced by the AR movement feeds into the academic narrative that any behavior that goes against the "conventional", "mainstream", or "formal politics" is undemocratic and should be discouraged or defeated wherever it occurs in a given society. Perhaps more pointedly, Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser assert that populism alludes to amateurish and unprofessional political behavior that aims to maximize media attention and popular support. By disrespecting the dress code and language manners, populist actors are able to present themselves not only as different and novel, but also as courageous leaders who stand with "the people" in opposition.²³

The prevailing precarious socio-economic climate suggests that contemporary democracy is in the intensive care unit and needs to be resuscitated as the core norms of democracy is losing its ability to engage and enthuse. It is important, however, not to understate the strengths of movements like the AR to the core tenets of democracy or the conceptualization thereof as

(1) a system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged; (2) a form of rule in which the people rule themselves directly and continuously, without the need for professional politicians or public officials; (3) a system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities; (4) a system of rule that secure the rights and interests of minorities by placing check upon the power of the majority; and (5) a system of government that serves the interests of the people regardless of their participation in political life.²⁴

If populism is a permanent shadow of representative politics as proffered by Müller,²⁵ should scholarly work on the subject matter not focus or redirect their efforts towards *progressive populism*? The salient principle of democracy is that people have the liberty to decide on who ought to represent them more so in a society that does not cater to their various socioeconomic needs and aspirations. And if there is something like "populism", it needs to be defined within the context it occurs. Western conceptualization of the term might not suit the political dynamics and intricacies of the African continent as the

22 Nujoma condemns Affirmative Repositioning's Land Threats, in: New Era [Windhoek], 27 March 2015, <https://neweralive.na/posts/nujoma-condemns-affirmative-repositionings-land-threats>.

23 Mudde and Kaltwasser, Populism, p. 4.

24 A. Heywood, Politics, 5th ed. London 2019, p. 90.

25 Müller, What is Populism?, p. 101.

“universalization of Western liberal democracy”²⁶ could be at odds with African values and norms since

*African cultural democracies are founded on the African philosophy of communalism and morality. Western-style democracy however is founded on liberalism, self-interest-seeking free-market principles whose implementation has hurt the welfare of the poor in Africa.*²⁷

It is this imposition of Western values that is partially responsible for a fraught political climate and growing discord between the governing elite and the general populace. The advent of European colonialism disrupted the African governance architecture that was in place and replaced it with a dictatorial system that uprooted the communal way of life for most African societies. As we have seen earlier in the conceptualization of the term, populism is a concept under continuous construction and we should be cautious in pursuing a blanket approach towards defining it in various contexts as it is not a one size fits all. For this reason, Simon Tormey argues that for “as long as there is a disagreement about how we should organize ourselves, there will be disagreement about how we frame and define the key concepts we use to describe the world as it is and as it *ought* to be.”²⁸ Is the AR movement a threat to the core values of democracy or an impetus towards its consolidation? Providing reasons for his resignation as the governing party’s youth league’s secretary for information, publicity, and mobilization at the time, a few days after the symbolic land occupation, Amupanda asserted that

*I am very biased, of course, to the youth, that I represent. Expectedly, those opposed to these principles, those who think our role must be tea boys clapping hands and singing songs found my character alien for they are used to obedient zombies who ask no question and get rewarded for their mediocrity and for maintaining silence.*²⁹

It is prudent to acknowledge that no matter the characterization of certain acts as illiberal and political posturing, populism has a therapeutic effect as people feel their voices are being heard, which is a cornerstone of liberal democracy. For instance, as the “Activist-in-Chief”, Amupanda has pursued a myriad of issues that ordinary Namibians feel the government is complacent about, such as exposing matters of corruption and social justice. Through the process of internet-based activism, Amupanda exposed the acts of possible malfeasance in 2021 involving the then minister of defence, Peter Vilho. Amupanda had accused Vilho of being involved in underhand procurement deals at the ministry and having a unit trust account with HSBC bank in Hong Kong with a

26 Heywood, *Politics*, p. 109.

27 D. Adejumo-Ayibiowu, Western style ‘democracy’ in Africa is just a way of pushing the neoliberal agenda, in: Open Democracy Net, 6 November 2019, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/western-style-democracy-in-africa-is-just-a-way-of-pushing-the-neoliberal-agenda/>.

28 Tormey, *Populism: A Beginner’s Guide*, p. 10.

29 Amupanda resigns as SPYL information secretary, in: The Namibian, 12 November 2014, <https://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?page=archive-read&id=130412>.

market value of N\$3.4 million in September 2020.³⁰ The incessant media barrage led to Vilho's eventual resignation in April 2021 as the stain of corruption and access to funds in offshore accounts would not dissipate.

Another public issue that Amupanda championed on behalf of "the people" was the contentious issues of the Veterinary Cordon Fence (VCF), also known as the "Red Line", where he filed a lawsuit on 26 May 2021 with the High Court, suing the government and demanding the removal of the VCF.³¹ The VCF divides the country between live-stock producers of northern and southern Namibia, acting as a "stock disease control mechanism that protects Namibia's beef exporting industry from stock diseases such as foot and mouth and lung sickness."³² However, Amupanda argued that the

*red line is a colonial structure; hence, it is unconstitutional on the basis that it is not sanctioned and made provisions for as a law in Namibia – and it is also not rationally connected to any purposes. The fence still classifies persons, including their animals, as inferior, hence subjecting them to be screened for diseases, confiscated, burned and searched without warrants by officials of first and second respondents.*³³

Moreover, even if the boisterous type of politics that the AR movement pursues is at odds with conventional norms of democracy, Mudde and Kaltwasser argue that from this angle acts of populism can be viewed as a democratizing force "since it defends the principle of popular sovereignty with the aim of empowering groups that do not feel represented by the political establishment".³⁴ However, challenging the constitutionality of the VCF through institutions of the state is not an "illiberal" conduct or an affront to democracy, but the promotion thereof. This is a classic case of *progressive populism* that pundits of democracy should embrace and perhaps popularize in the mainstream discourse as an alternative from of politics towards registering popular discontent and disenchantment. However, threatening to occupy land illegally goes against the rule of law and can upend the democratic gains made since independence and cause instability. But one may ask, what is the alternative to movements such as the AR if the political space renders itself impenetrable to conventional politics? Is violating the law justified if it is accompanied by state institutions capitulating to the proposed demands? The AR movement has been accused of engaging in such public policy matters for their own political mileage and not for the interests and inspiration of "the people". If this narrative is an accurate depiction of the intentions of the movement and its leaders, do beneficiaries (the general public) of populist politics define and perceive the actions of the AR and its leaders as being

30 Vilho challenges Amupanda to report him to ACC, in: The Namibian, 8 March 2021, <https://www.namibian.com.na/209406/archive-read/Vilho-challenges-Amupanda-to-report-him-to-ACC>.

31 O. Sismasiku, Amupanda sues over 'discriminatory' red line, in: New Era, 27 May 2021, <https://neweralive.na/posts/amupanda-sues-over-discriminatory-red-line>.

32 LAC, The infamous "Red Line": Why does Namibia have a veterinary cordon fence? Windhoek: Legal Assistance Centre, http://www.lac.org.na/news/probono/ProBono_64-RED_LINE.

33 Simasiku, Amupanda sues over 'discriminatory' red line.

34 Mudde and Kaltwasser, Populism, p. 18.

“populist”? Or do they view the AR as “the authentic voice of democracy”, as Christopher Lasch maintains?³⁵

4.2. The State’s Response to the AR: Compromise and Consensus or a Political Gimmick?

While discussions in the preceding sections highlighted the salient theoretical tenets around populism and the boisterous and performative type of politics undertaken by the AR movement, it is crucial that one delves into the intricacies and processes that led to a negotiated settlement with the government to obviate the imminent national land occupation by force. One week before they threatened to occupy land on the 31 July 2015, the new president, Hage Geingob, invited the movement to the State House to find an amicable solution and to prevent the country from descending into chaos and lawlessness. The meeting was attended by the president; vice president; prime minister; and other cabinet ministers responsible for urban and rural development, land reform, justice, safety and security, presidential affairs and the chief of the Namibian Police Force. From the AR movement, the key founders, Job Amupanda, Dimbulukeni Nauyoma, and George Kambala, were leading their negotiation team, accompanied by three legal practitioners who worked in the private sector. In preparation for the meeting, the movement provided the state officials with a 32-page document titled “AR Housing Charter 31”, which included a litany of policy proposals to address the land and housing crisis in the country. Among the suggested policy proposals were that the government enforces the Rents Ordinance Act 13 of 1977 and that a Property and Rental Control Board be established to regulate rental prices and the price of land generally. The charter stated:

Our view is that it can't be correct that for example Municipalities take land from communal farmers at close to nothing and then as soon as it is transferred to the municipalities or to third parties it then become suddenly worth more than 10 times the value. The compensation for communal land rights should be subjected to being regulated by the aforementioned board. In the same vain the sale and renting of property should also be subjected to being regulated by the board.

We also propose that the said board should not only be the primary functionary in the determination of property and rental prices, but that the said board shall also be the primary custodian of all immovable property valuations carried out pursuant to private agreements as well as statutory prescribed valuations of immovable property in Namibia, within the agricultural (commercial), communal or urban land sectors.³⁶

A pivotal provision in the charter to which the government acceded to was that the government commits to the servicing of 200,000 nationwide with the AR movement being an integral party to the establishment of various committees mandated to execute

35 Müller, What is Populism?, p. 2.

36 Affirmative Repositioning, AR Housing Charter 31, Windhoek: Affirmative Repositioning, July 2015, <https://www.namibian.com.na/public/uploads/documents/55bb181cd9821/AR%20HOUSING%20CHARTER%2031a.pdf>.

this national project under the auspices of a program called the Massive Urban Land Servicing Program (MULSP) and institutionalized by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development. However, as a new president with his own development agenda, Geingob announced his signature development blueprint dubbed the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP), which envisaged to service 26,000 plots and construct 20,000 houses in the first term of his presidency.³⁷ Even though the plan made reference to the MULSP, it did not specifically mention the 200,000 plots that were to be serviced as part of the accord reached between the government and the AR movement. Was this perhaps a classic case of politics as the art of deception and manipulation in order to avert a national land occupation.

Fast-forward to 2023, the AR movement has taken the government and the president to court over their failure to honour the agreement as only 15,000 plots have been serviced by 2020. During an appeal hearing at the Supreme Court (Namibia's highest court) on 17 of September 2021, the lawyers representing the state argued that the agreement reached between the government and the movement was not enforceable and that they were mere political statements.³⁸ Put differently, the argument advanced by the state implies that the agreement reached on the 24 July 2015 amounted to nothing more than pageantry and the amalgamation of clout by the Geingob administration. On the other end of the spectrum, Namibian scholars, such as Phaniel Kaapama, argue that the top leadership of the AR movement could have capitalized on the land issue for political and malevolent reasons.³⁹

Prior to the arrival of the AR movement, both Amupanda and Elijah Ngurare as well as a number of SWAPO Party Youth League (SPYL) activists supported the candidacy of Jerry Ekandjo in an electoral contest against Geingob for the SWAPO Party vice presidency, which was to pave the way for the winner to be nominated as the party candidate for the November 2014 presidential elections. Hence referring particularly to the timing of some of the actions mounted by the AR, some have adopted the view that Amupanda and his movement are driven more by their unwillingness to accept the electoral outcome and are therefore being accused of engaging in an orchestrated campaign for undermining the Geingob presidency. For instance, the symbolic occupation of Windhoek's affluent Kleine Kuppe suburb, what became known as ERF 2014, took place on 21 November 2014, which was barely seven days ahead of the presidential elections in which Geingob as the presidential candidate of the SWAPO Party was preparing to square up with candidates from opposition parties. Another example is that on 27 March 2015, barely a week after the inauguration of Geingob as the country's third president,

37 Republic of Namibia, Harambee Prosperity Plan 2016/17–2019/20. Namibian Government's Action Plan towards Prosperity for All, Windhoek: The Office of the President, 2016, p. 41.

38 M. Amakali, Namibia: AR, Govt Plots Battle On Hold, in: *New Era*, 27 January 2022, <https://neweralive.na/posts/ar-govt-plots-battle-on-hold>.

39 P. Kaapama, Youth Political Retreatism, Activism and Militancy in Postcolonial Namibia, in: P. Bruhns (ed.), *Youth Matters: 10 Years of the Youth Leadership Development Programme (YLPD) in Namibia*, Windhoek 2016, pp. 25–39, at p. 38.

the AR leadership publicly announced that if the land applications would not have been met by local authorities by 31 July 2015, then the movement would engage in forceful land invasions, seizure, and occupation. This therefore raises questions regarding the long-term resilience and sustainability of its cause beyond the Geingob tenure.⁴⁰

An equally significant aspect that complements the narrative above was that the AR trio were not keen on having a candidate that did not originate from their ethnic group. President Geingob is from a minority ethnic group called the Damara and the first head of state since independence to ascend to the corridors of power without belonging to the executive ethnic group, the Aawambo. A relentless barrage of public utterances on various social media platforms peddled this narrative that the AR trio, Amupanda in particular, is “anti-Geingob” because he is Damara. Bigotry, discrimination, and prejudice of any form should not be condoned in any modern democracy, more so in Western democracies where there has been an increase in cases of anti-migrant, anti-refugee, and anti-African/black sentiments being spewed by right-wing populist parties and leaders. Notwithstanding the proclivity for the state to involve the AR movement in key policy matters of national concern, evidence suggests there is no genuine appetite to resolve the matters being advocated by the movement. It is more a matter of wanting to be seen doing something while doing nothing. With the exception of voting, may one deduce that direct political participation in the form of policy-making by non-state actors is minimal, or in crisis? If this process is broken, how can it be mended to be more inclusive? Another point to consider is the leadership style of politicians that explains their commitment in accommodating alternative voices from the other end of the political spectrum. Does their style of governance equate to democratic politics and impactful policy change?

5. The Mendacious Reign of Geingob

Since ascending to the helm of state power on 21 March of 2015, President Geingob has been perceived by pundits and the general public as a leader that will transform society for the better as he was a member of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Namibian constitution in 1989, a liberation struggle stalwart, and a two-term prime minister (1990–2002), tasked with setting up the necessary bureaucratic infrastructure for a new and independent Namibian civil service. Having secured an overwhelming 87 per cent of the presidential vote on 28 November 2014, Geingob was the most popular president of SWAPO since independence.⁴¹ Even though he hails from a generation of the “first struggle”, his political and career journey is different from that of his predecessors, namely presidents Sam Nujoma and Hifikepunye Pohamba. This could be attributed

40 Kaapama, *Youth Political Retreatism, Activism and Militancy in Postcolonial Namibia*, p. 38.

41 N. Shejavali Shejavali, *One Year of Geingob. An Analysis of the Namibian President's Hits and Misses During his First Year in Office*, Windhoek: Institute for Public Policy Research (= Democracy Report), p. 2.

to his various educational accolades, including a PhD from the University of Leeds in 2004.⁴² It is for these reasons that André du Pisani postulates that while they may be of the same generation,

*Geingob draws on different sources of power. His techno-nationalist vision – a recent proto ideology – sets him apart from his predecessors. He is a corporate politician, a potential unifier, on condition that his personal likes and dislikes and loyalty to him are intact. He is a contested individual – a concessional democrat with techno-nationalist and autocratic impulses.*⁴³

This characterization of Geingob gives credence to the adage that ambition is one thing, reality is quite another. With less than two years before he concludes his second and final term as president, Geingob made a litany of promises to the Namibian electorate anchored on his signature development plan, HPP I (2016–2020) and II (2021–2025), with a strong emphasis on “prosperity for all” and “eradicating” poverty by 2025.⁴⁴ Consider the opening remarks in the first iteration of HPP:

*On 21 March 2015, I was inaugurated as the third democratically elected President of our Republic and assumed the mantle to deliver Prosperity for all our people. Former President, Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, cemented our democracy and stabilized the country by building on the firm foundation established by our Founding Father, Comrade Sam Nujoma. Spurred on by these giants of our revolution and building on their legacy, I have declared all-out war against poverty and embarked upon the path towards prosperity. Many heroes and heroines of our liberation struggle selflessly sacrificed their lives for the independence of our motherland. They never got to experience the peace, unity and prosperity they fought and died for and their blood indeed waters our freedom. It is for that reason that their inspiring legacies must never be betrayed. I am acutely aware of the burning desire of the Namibian people to inhabit a Namibian House where there is no poverty. Namibians want a house where everyone feels a sense of belonging, where everyone is presented with a fair opportunity to prosper in an inclusive manner and by so doing, ensure that no one feels left out.*⁴⁵

To his credit, Geingob was quick to qualify what he meant by “prosperity”:

This Plan is called the HARAMBEE PROSPERITY PLAN. Talk of Prosperity may sound overly ambitious to some. However, when we speak of prosperity, we do not intend to create opulence and excess. We want to ensure that every Namibian has access to the

42 H. Melber, D. Kromrey, and M. Welz, Changing of the guard? An anatomy of power within SWAPO of Namibia, in: African Affairs 116 (2016) 463, pp. 284–310, at p. 294.

43 A. Du Pisani, “7 Years and a Bit Under President Hage Geingob’s Watch: An Interim Assessment”, in: The Namibian, 4 March 2022, <https://www.namibian.com.na/6218514/archive-read/7-Years-and-a-Bit-Under-President-Hage-Geingob&amp;39s-Watch-An-Interim-Assessment>.

44 N. Shejavali and M. Weylandt, 3 Years of Geingob, Windhoek: Institute for Public Policy Research (= Democracy Report), 2018, p. 6.

45 Republic of Namibia, Harambee Prosperity Plan 2016/17–2019/20, p. 4.

*basic necessities for survival. We aim to meet those most basic needs and by so doing, enable every Namibian to realize their full potential and prosper according to their inherent abilities. We strive towards building a Namibia where there are no structural poverty traps. A prosperous Namibia should be inhabited by people with decent shelter, access to basic amenities such as safe potable water, access to quality schooling and adequate health services.*⁴⁶

Being at the apex of state power, Geingob’s public utterances have been replete with annual slogans and phrases that are meant to inspire hope and confidence and the metaphorical “Namibian house” in which “no one should feel left out”. Throughout his presidency, Geingob announced a theme at the beginning of each year, accompanied by a speech of hope, shared prosperity, and a sense of national unity.

Table 1. President Geingob’s Annual Themes

Year	Annual Theme
2015	Year of Planning
2016	Year of Implementation
2017	Year of Rededication
2018	Year of Reckoning
2019	Year of Accountability
2020	Year of Introspection
2021	Year of Resilience
2022	Year of Reimaging
2023	Year of Revival

Source: Author’s compilation.

The above annual declarations and his HPP plans have been critiqued by local scholars and other civil society actors as there has been an apparent disconnect between what he promises vis-à-vis what he delivers. Most notable were the remarks of du Pisani in which he postulates that

*in key respects, the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) served as a justification for government interventions across five dimensions, but has by-and-large entered the space of death. Notwithstanding public undertakings of “implementation” and “accountability”, the HPP was an exercise in myth-making along with the older myth of liberation.*⁴⁷

However, Geingob’s administration did make significant progress in some aspects of catering for the most vulnerable in society, the elderly, orphans and vulnerable children,

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Du Pisani, 7 Years and a Bit Under President Hage Geingob’s Watch: An Interim Assessment.

and people living with disabilities. When he came into office, the pension scheme increased from N\$600 to the current N\$ 1,400. In the 2023/24 financial year, “grants to people with disabilities, which have increased in value from the initial 250 Namibian Dollars to the current 1,400 Namibian Dollars per month”.⁴⁸ This social safety nets provide a significant cushion to the vulnerable segments of the Namibian populace to stave off the economic and social hardships that are prevalent in most developing countries, more specifically structural poverty. Moreover, when the first plan was launched and during its lifetime, the economy was already in a depression, and there was little evidence that it would bounce back in the short term. This undermined some of the social progression targets in the plan, such as job creation, a progressive wealth tax, and the provision of shelter.

Also, in late 2019, the biggest public scandal broke – #Fishrot – casting a dark shadow over the accountability and transparency governance that were claimed to be contained in the plan. The HPP II has been partly redesigned to strengthen governance in order to respond more effectively to the new and ongoing socioeconomic challenges that came in the wake of Covid-19. It is important to remember that HPP II, like its antecedent, is not wholly divorced from the envisaged targets in the National Development Plans (NDPs) and the UN Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite these constraints, pandemic or no pandemic, the Namibian populace ran out of patience with an administration that has over-promised and under-delivered. In his 2023 State of the Nation Address (SONA), Geingob failed to acknowledge the actual reality facing the country when he concluded that

*through thick and thin, we have stood firm as a people and as a country. Thus, I can confidently say that the state of our nation remains strong. Let us therefore take a collective decision as Namibians to hold hands and ensure that we all partake in the writing of a new chapter in this nation’s history, a chapter defined by strength, a chapter defined by character, a chapter that speaks to the revival of Namibia.*⁴⁹

With less than two years remaining in his second and final term, it appears that the Geingob presidency has not moved above and beyond the ideological narrative. It is confined to grand posturing, self-glorification, and conjuring up images of a prosperous Namibia that does not exist, but only in the minds of the president and his coterie of leadership. It is for these reasons that Melber argues that Geingob’s “populist narratives backfired. Promises were no substitute for realities. Geingob’s Harambee Prosperity Plan, announced during his first year as president, remained wishful thinking”.⁵⁰ More importantly, there are promises in the first iteration of HPP that have not materialized,

48 H. Geingob, State of the Nation Address by His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia. Windhoek: Office of the President, 2023, p. 20.

49 Ibid., p. 36.

50 H. Melber, Namibia is showing wear and tear after 30 years under SWAPO rule, in: The Conversation [Melbourne], 17 March 2020, <https://theconversation.com/namibia-is-showing-wear-and-tear-after-30-years-under-swapo-rule-133703>.

especially the issues on housing and urban land delivery. The 2023 SONA made no reference to the unfulfilled promises of the 2022 SONA in which Geingob lamented that 1,252 plots were serviced countrywide and 1,282 housing units delivered through state funding, local authorities, and private developers. Instead, the 2023 SONA stated that a “total of 21 townships were proclaimed and 528 housing units have been constructed from April 2022, to date”.⁵¹ The above statistics are a spit in the ocean, so to say, if one is to juxtapose the original intentions of both HHPs as they planned to service 24,000 plots and 20,000 houses within both periods. Postulating on what Geingob promises vis-à-vis what he delivers, Melber pertinently notes

*almost a million people (40% of the 2.3 million inhabitants) have been estimated to live in shacks. Geingob declared this a national humanitarian crisis and promised to deal with it. No visible improvements have happened since. Over half of the population has no access to proper sanitation and an outbreak of hepatitis E in 2018 continues to take its toll.*⁵²

President Geingob has made a litany of promises, but the focus of this article is on the issue of urban land and housing delivery as it is arguably of great importance considering that the country has a housing backlog of more than 300,000 units and more than 900,000 people living under corrugated iron sheets and other forms of undignified housing. Most local and foreign economists are of the opinion that the country is in dire need of both domestic and foreign investment to support sustainable growth and development and that remaining policy uncertainty needs to be addressed, more specifically the New Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill, which seeks to address historical racial and economic imbalances. The discovery of oil by major multinational corporations has received mixed feelings from various quarters of Namibian society. Some are of the opinion that only a select few, or those with proximity to the corridors of state power, will benefit and that it will be business as usual for the 1.6 million battling with poverty and a sense of hopelessness and disillusionment, while proponents of the political establishment see it as a panacea that will be an answer to most of Namibia’s socioeconomic challenges. Only time will tell.

6. Conclusion: Political Uncertainty or Democratic Consolidation?

Even though populism is an ideology under construction, it exposes democracy’s imperfections while undermining its values. On reflection, there are no optimal scenarios. Every scenario has some dysfunctional elements and faces formidable obstacles to reform. The importance of norms in public management implies that development will be heavily impacted by social structure, culture, and other variables not under the direct

51 Geingob, State of the Nation Address, p. 22.

52 Melber, Namibia is showing wear and tear after 30 years under SWAPO rule.

control of public policy.⁵³ How can a country grappling with colossal and unacceptable levels of socioeconomic quandaries be supportive of democracy? There is a consensus, across the political divide that the public policy concerns highlighted by the AR movement are valid and should be addressed with the urgency they deserve. However, at what point should they pursue conventional forms of conflict and dispute resolution in the face of a political establishment or elite that is lackadaisical in tackling matters of public concern? The agreement between the AR and the government on servicing 200,000 plots is currently dead and buried, and it is quite evident that the accord was entered into to avert an imminent nationwide land occupation and not on the basis of delivering urban housing and land to the masses. The discombobulated nature of Geingob's policy stance on a myriad of issues has not made things any better. The policy inconsistencies and contradictions speak to the imperfections of democracy and how movements such as the AR may or will undermine the salient values of democracy.

If Amupanda is considered a populist, can populists govern? In the 2020 regional and local authority elections, the AR movement garnered two seats on the biggest municipal council and the capital city. Together with other political parties, they formed a coalition called Progressive Forces and relegated the ruling party SWAPO to the periphery of decision-making after a prolonged period of dominating the council since 1992. The City Council comprises 15 councillors, with SWAPO previously occupying 12 of the 15 seats and subsequently dominated the policy direction of council activities. Now, SWAPO occupies 5 seats, but still is unable to form a majority council. During a historic moment, the city councillors nominated and elected Amupanda as mayor in December 2020. He served for a year and remerged in the council's powerful Management Committee (MC) (comprising 5 members), currently dominated by 3 of SWAPO's councillors. The Progressive Forces reign has been marked by internal bickering and squabbles as the council has been labelled dysfunctional by local policy expert, Graham Hopwood:

*The constant chopping and changing at the council cannot be good for governance or service delivery. The pleas for Councilors to rise above political infighting and dedicate themselves to serving Windhoek's residents have fallen on deaf ears. It seems to be a case of political egos triumphing over the spirit of public service.*⁵⁴

With the upcoming 2024 parliamentary and presidential elections, AR leader Job Amupanda has announced his candidature to run for the highest office in the land and vowed to address the pertinent issues engulfing the Namibian society. Many have been pondering the prospects of his success, while others view it as a tall order as the movement is seen to have reached their political ceiling in terms of relevance and a following among the disillusioned segment of Namibian society. This is compounded by the fact that three of the top leadership that left the movement are accusing Amupanda of greed and

53 F. Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*, Ithaca 2004, p. 38.

54 G. Hopwood, *IPC Loses Grip On City: Urgent High Court Application Dismissed*, in: *The Namibian Sun* [Windhoek], 25 August 2022, <https://www.namibiansun.com/government/ipc-loses-grip-on-city2022-08-25>.

dictatorship. What is the movement's potential for the future? Will President Geingob deliver on his mantra of "prosperity for all"? Over the coming two years, the future of the country and the governing party will hinge strongly on the ability of the government to service urban land, solve unemployment, and reduce inequality and poverty in a much more meaningful way while reversing growing disillusionment and erosion of political trust in the governing party.