

# Introduction of presidential term limits in dominant-party states in Sub-saharan Africa

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権利	Copyrights 2020 by author(s)
journal or publication title	IDE Discussion Paper
volume	783
year	2020-03
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2344/00051692">http://hdl.handle.net/2344/00051692</a>

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## IDE DISCUSSION PAPER No. 783

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Machiko TSUBURA\*

March 2020

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**Keywords:** presidential term limits, dominant-party states

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# **Introduction of Presidential Term Limits in Dominant-party States in Sub-Saharan Africa**

**Machiko TSUBURA\***

## **Abstract**

Since the arrival of the ‘third wave’ of democratisation in sub-Saharan Africa (hereinafter referred to as Africa) in the late 1980s, presidential term limits have been included in a number of constitutions in the region to institutionalise the transfer of power from one president to another. The present paper analyses how dominant-party states in Africa with regular presidential succession have introduced presidential term limits. Through this analysis, the paper explores whether the introduction of presidential term limits was aimed at establishing a party-based rule by guaranteeing a mechanism of leadership rotation within ruling parties, thereby maintaining party coherence. The examination of four dominant-party states in Africa demonstrates that the aims of the introduction of presidential term limits vary among four countries. Moreover, a party-based rule in these countries was established not merely because of the adoption of presidential term limits but by other factors over time.

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## 1. Introduction

The setting of presidential term limits is one of the democratic rules widely institutionalised in Africa since the late 1980s (Bogaards 2014: 38; Cheeseman 2015: 176–182; Reyntjens 2016; Posner and Young 2018). Among the 42 African presidents who completed their terms between 1975 and mid-2018, 20 of them complied with their term limits and retired, and the remaining 22 sought to stay in office beyond their tenures by overruling the term limits (McKie 2019: Appendix A). Among those who tried to overrule the term limits, 10 succeeded in abolishing them, eight extended for one term, and four failed in their attempts and merely retired. For example, the presidential term limit was removed from the Constitution of Uganda in 2005. This enabled the Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni to remain in power beyond the presidential term limit by running and winning in elections consecutively in 2006, 2011 and 2016 (Dulani 2011: 9–11; KcKie 2019: 1508–1509; IFES).

On the other hand, there are African countries where dominant-party systems have been established while presidents have adhered to term limits and changed regularly. These countries are located in the eastern and southern part of the continent; namely, Tanzania, Namibia, Mozambique, Botswana and South Africa (Takeuchi 2016: 43; Tsubura 2019a; Tsubura 2019b).<sup>1</sup> While the countries where presidents have overruled presidential term limits (e.g. Uganda) and the aforementioned five dominant-party states with regular presidential succession are similarly governed by the same ruling parties for a long time, the characteristics of their rule are fundamentally different. The rule of the former is characterised by a concentration of the executive power in the hands of presidents (i.e. personal rule), while the latter is characterised by the control of power by the ruling parties (i.e. party-based rule).

In contrast to the countries where powerful presidents remain in power beyond term limits, presidential term limits in dominant-party states appear to have helped ruling parties maintain their long-term rule. This is done by securing leadership rotation among the powerful ruling elites, motivating them to remain united within ruling parties while waiting for their turn to vie for the presidency from the parties. A notable example of this kind of leadership rotation guaranteed by a presidential term limit is the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party: PRI) in Mexico. In 1929, the PRI incorporated powerful revolutionary warlords with the promise made by its

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<sup>1</sup> A party system is considered dominant when the same party has secured an absolute majority of parliamentary seats in three consecutive elections. See more details on the definitions of dominant-party systems in Tsubura (forthcoming: 3–4).

founder, President Plutarco Elias Calles, to retire from the presidency after one term so that other leaders would be given the opportunity to run for the presidency (Magaloni 2008: 726). Thus, the question arises whether African-dominant parties have also strategically introduced presidential term limits to establish a leadership rotation mechanism within their parties and maintain its dominant rule under the multi-party system.

To address the question, the present paper analyses how presidential term limits were introduced in four dominant-party states in Africa; namely, Tanzania, Namibia, Mozambique and Botswana. In these countries, presidents are changed regularly to examine whether the introduction of presidential term limits is aimed at establishing a party-based rule by the ruling parties through the guarantee of internal leadership rotation and the maintenance of party coherence. South Africa, the other example of a dominant-party state with regular presidential succession, was excluded from this paper because while there are general studies on their constitution-making process after the end of the apartheid in 1994, the available secondary sources on the inclusion of the two five-year terms of the president in their 1996 constitution are too limited to assess the intentions behind it.

Through the analysis of the background of introducing presidential term limits in the four countries, the paper suggests that its aims vary among the said countries. Furthermore, party-based rule was established not merely because of the adoption of presidential term limits but by other factors over time. The present paper also suggests that, as part of a broader constitutional reform, term limits were sometimes critical concessions made by the presidents and ruling parties who faced urgent needs to incorporate opposition forces in the new governing system of their countries.

The present paper is organised into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section reviews the related literature on presidential term limits in emerging democracies and presents the research question of this paper. The third section examines the introduction of presidential term limits in the four dominant-party states in Africa. The fourth section analyses the similarities and differences among the five cases discussed in the previous sections. Lastly, the fifth section presents the conclusion of the paper.

## **2. Effects of Presidential Term Limits on Emerging Democracies**

Presidential term limits are ‘constitutional provisions that restrict the maximum length of time that presidents can serve in office’ (Baturo and Elgie 2019: 1). While many countries

in Latin America have set a single term for presidency, countries in Africa, Middle East and Asia tend to have two terms (McKie 2019: 1501). A number of African countries have introduced presidential term limits since the arrival of the ‘third wave’ of democratisation in the late 1980s. Forty nine out of 55 constitutions in Africa with stipulated presidential term limits ever since their independence have adopted them after 1990 (Dulani 2011: 133).

Presidential term limits are recognised as a democratic rule or law across the world, and its introduction was frequently part of broader constitutional reforms or the formulation of new constitutions in emerging democracies (Baturu and Elgie 2019: 8). However, since the adoption of presidential term limits, some presidents in Africa have attempted to stay in power beyond their tenures by amending the constitutions. Because of this phenomenon, presidential term limits have been increasingly receiving scholarly attention. Some studies explore the conditions under which presidents seek to revoke presidential term limits and their respective outcomes. For example, Posner and Young (2018: 270–273) analyse how African leaders have responded to presidential term limits and demonstrate that the age and popularity of presidents, the level of aid dependence and the impact of whether previous presidents adhered to term limits are factors that explain why presidents may seek to secure third terms in Africa. They contend that African countries have become polarised into two groups: ‘those where term limits have been respected in the past, and where they will in all likelihood continue to be respected in the future’ (Posner and Young 2018: 275) and ‘those where there is no history of abiding by term limits and where the prospects for initiating such a history are poor’ (Posner and Young 2018: 275).

Other scholars highlight the importance of electoral and party politics in the trajectories of presidential term limits. By comparing Kenya, Uganda and Zambia, Cheeseman (2019) argues that ‘the extent of organized opposition parties ... and the ability of the president to enforce unity within the ruling party’ (313) are the two most important factors that determine whether term limits are being challenged or upheld in these countries. McKie (2019) examines the outcomes of the presidents’ attempts to overrule term limits in emerging democracies by highlighting their co-partisan legislators and constitutional court judges, who have the ultimate power to rule on term limit amendments. She argues that the two actors decide on whether to agree or not on the amendments based on recent trends in electoral competition. From the analysis of all the 221 presidents who completed their terms in the countries governed by presidential or semi-presidential systems in Latin America, sub-Saharan and North Africa, the Middle East and Asia from 1975 to mid-2018, she argues that non-competitive elections are likely

to lead to full abolition, less competitive elections allowing for one-term extensions, and competitive elections failed bids (McKie 2019: 1500).

The aforementioned studies focusing on the conditions under which presidents seek to overrule term limits in Africa and other parts of the world are all based on the shared understanding that term limits matter for elections and democracy. There are two competing explanations regarding the effects of presidential term limits on democracy. The first explanation is that term limits increase the likelihood of electoral transfers of power in presidential systems because of significant advantages held by incumbent presidents (e.g. Malz 2007; Cheeseman 2010; Bleck and van de Walle 2019: 70). When presidents do not run again in elections because of term limits or other reasons, ruling parties tend to struggle in selecting their successors, sometimes resulting in serious party splits that benefit opposition parties in the elections. This argument is supported by Maltz (2007) who demonstrates that, out of 88 elections in electoral authoritarian regimes, incumbents have won 93 percent of 67 elections, while their successors have won only 52 percent of 21 elections (134). Cheeseman (2010) added that half of all electoral transfers of power in Africa between 1990 and 2009 occurred in open-seat elections wherein new incumbent presidents did not contest (140). Some other scholars more broadly examine the relationship between respect for presidential term limits and democracy. Reyntjens (2016), for example, explore the relationship between presidential term limits and the quality of democracy in African countries. He posits that the quality of democracy affects whether term limits are respected in the region or not (66).

The other explanation regarding the effects of presidential term limits on democracy is that they have promoted leadership rotation only at the intraparty level without increasing the likelihood for opposition parties to win elections. This phenomenon is exemplified by Tanzania (Dulani 2011: 190, LeBas 2016: 172), South Africa (Cheeseman 2015: 181) and Mozambique (LeBas 2016: 172). LeBas (2016) argues that presidential term limits can coexist with authoritarian rule by dominant parties without any prospects of electoral turnovers, as long as the ruling parties manage internal successions well (172). Indeed, eight out of 20 African presidents who respected term limits between 1975 and mid-2018 were leaders in dominant-party states without electoral turnovers (McKie 2019: Appendix A). Thus, the present paper suggests that the meanings of presidential term limits in dominant-party states with regular presidential succession should be examined separately from that of the countries that have experienced electoral transfers of power, as well as from dominant-party states without regular presidential succession because of term-limit contraventions.

The mechanism of coexistence of presidential term limits and stable dominant-



party rule is partly explicated in Magaloni's analysis of the PRI's dominant rule in Mexico that lasted from 1929 to 2000 (Magaloni 2006; Magaloni 2008). In 1929, President Plutarco Elias Calles, founder of the PRI, made a power-sharing deal with other revolutionary warlords by promising that he would not re-run for the presidency after serving for one term. Since then, presidential succession has taken place in the presidential election every six years in Mexico. The regular presidential succession provided incentives to the elites within the ruling coalition to remain in the PRI to wait for their turn, instead of plotting a removal of the incumbent presidents through illegal means (Magaloni 2008: 726). Furthermore, the rule of non-consecutive re-election for all elective offices, including presidents, was introduced in 1933 which provided ambitious PRI politicians ample opportunities to contest in the elections, establishing a constant rotation of political elites in government offices (Magaloni 2006: 17; Ugalde 2000: 98–99).

The disadvantage of the non-consecutive re-election rule was that the PRI faced challenges in maintaining party unity in selecting new candidates before upcoming elections every six years. Indeed, the PRI frequently experienced major splits, especially in 1940, 1946, 1952 and 1987 when its presidential candidates were opposed by prominent party leaders (Magaloni 2006: 17). According to Magaloni (2006: 8–18), the PRI developed three main mechanisms to maintain party unity: first was creating an image of invincibility by winning elections through a landslide victory, thereby discouraging potential divisions within the ruling party; second was by distributing ample spoils and government jobs to the ruling elites and third was raising the cost of entry for potential challengers by manipulating electoral rules and threatening to commit electoral fraud by force.

Drawing on Magaloni's examination of the PRI's dominant rule, the present paper analyses how and why presidential term limits were introduced in the four dominant-party states with regular presidential succession. This was done to examine whether it was aimed at establishing a party-based rule by guaranteeing leadership rotation and maintaining party coherence to continue to win multi-party elections. The PRI's case suggests that the adoption of a presidential term limit was a concession made by the party leader to incorporate rival forces. The analysis in the next section suggests that the introduction of presidential term limits in some of the four dominant-party states in Africa was a concession made by presidents to accommodate opposition forces outside their parties in the new political systems of their countries.

### **3. Introduction of Presidential Term Limits in Four Dominant-party States in Africa**

The historical background of the introduction of presidential term limits significantly varies among the aforementioned four dominant-party states with regular presidential succession. Presidents are elected directly by citizens in Tanzania, Namibia and Mozambique, while Botswana is governed by a parliamentary system where the president is elected by the National Assembly after each legislative election (Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis 2008). The following analysis of the introduction of presidential term limits in the four countries is arranged in order of the year of their adoption of term limits: Tanzania (1987), Namibia (1989), Mozambique (1990) and Botswana (1997).

#### **3.1. Tanzania: Presidential term limit for leadership rotation after the first president's retirement**

Only six out of 98 constitutions enacted in Africa before 1990 had presidential term limits, and Tanzania's constitution was one of them. Tanzania set the presidential tenure for two five-year terms in 1984, under the leadership of the first President Julius Nyerere during the socialist one-party period (Dulani 2011: 64). The introduction of the term limit can be considered part of Nyerere's retirement plan provided that Nyerere, who had been Tanzania's president since 1962, retired from the presidency one year after the inclusion of the presidential term limit in the constitution. Some scholars contend that Tanzania's constitutional amendment in 1984 signifies a shift from Nyerere's personal rule to an institutionalised presidential system in the country (Mutahaba and Okema 1990: 65–66). However, other scholars disagree on the institutionalisation effect of the constitutional amendments as Nyerere remained influential in the country, being the chairman of the ruling party *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (Party of Revolution: CCM) for five years after his retirement from the presidency. This continued even after he handed over the party chairmanship to his successor, President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, in 1990 (Dulani 2011: 191; Baturu 2014: 57; Kalley, Schoeman and Andor 1999: 631).

The constitutional changes in Tanzania have largely responded to the political evolution of the country since its independence in 1961, particularly in association with the union between Tanzania mainland, known as Tanganyika, and Zanzibar, constituting the islands off the coast of Tanzania. The Constitution of the Republic of Tanzania of 1962 was amended to the 1965 Interim Constitution, which formalised the United Republic of Tanzania through the merger between Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964. The

Constitution was amended again in 1977 following the merger between Tanganyika African National Union and Afro-Shirazi Party, which were the ruling parties in Tanganyika and Zanzibar, respectively to form the CCM in 1977. This Constitution was further amended in 1980 to take into account the political changes in Zanzibar with the establishment of a more representative government structure through the adoption of the 1979 Zanzibar Constitution (Nyanduga 1985).

The fourth constitutional amendment enacted by the National Assembly in 1984 was based on the proposals issued by the CCM National Executive Committee to provide 'democratic safeguards within the context of a one-party democracy and ... to guarantee the socialist goals to which Tanzania is committed' (Nyanduga 1985). One of the intentions for the new amendments was to further integrate Zanzibar into the union. Furthermore, the demand for greater autonomy of Zanzibar was discussed through constitutional negotiations (Campbell, Stein and Samoff 1992: 55).

President Nyerere took the lead in introducing the presidential term limit for two terms by submitting the proposal to the CCM National Executive Committee in 1984, which was later accepted by the party and the parliament. Thus, unlike many other African countries, the introduction of the presidential term limit in Tanzania was not part of its democratisation. In 1984, Nyerere announced that he would not run for the next presidential election in 1985, allegedly in response to a request to him by the Dar es Salaam Elders Advisory Council to serve another five-year term. He argued for the supremacy of the CCM, and not individual leaders, which would create stability and facilitate the smooth succession of leadership. He also sought to institutionalise the method of transferring power by allowing the outgoing president to retain party chairmanship, which the new president would succeed later (Mutahaba and Okema 1990: 72, 75). In proposing the introduction of the presidential tenure, Nyerere emphasised that presidents should not be the ones to decide when to leave their office. It was because presidents who are encouraged to stay in power by their followers with personal interests are likely to end up becoming harmful dictators due to 'corruption of power' (Msekwa 2019).

In selecting Nyerere's successor, he preferred somebody from Zanzibar at the meetings of the CCM Central Committee and the National Executive Committee in August 1984. After deliberations within the party, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, the CCM Vice President from Zanzibar, was selected as Nyerere's successor (Mutahaba and Okema 1990: 73). This implies that the introduction of the presidential term limit was part of Nyerere's strategy to integrate the ruling elites in Zanzibar into the mechanism of leadership rotation within the CCM, while maintaining a power balance between

Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar. Nyerere's selection of his successor from Zanzibar seems to have been aimed at accommodating the Zanzibari ruling elites to facilitate its peaceful integration into Tanzania. Moreover, the power of his successor was constrained by the term limit so that future opportunities to rule the countries were guaranteed for the leaders in Tanzania mainland. Thus, it can be argued that the introduction of the presidential term limit in Tanzania was aimed at establishing a mechanism of leadership rotation within the ruling party.

While Nyerere's three successors did not openly challenge the term limit, there was still one unsuccessful attempt to extend his tenure—such was when the President Mwinyi's two terms in office approached its end in 1991. Mwinyi's close allies proposed constitutional amendments to remove the term limit to enable him to run for a third term in office. Nyerere strongly opposed it through the CCM National Executive Committee and thwarted Mwinyi's proposal. Consequently, Prime Minister John Malecela and CCM Secretary General Horace Kolimba were forced to resign from their positions (Baturu 2014: 188, Msekwa Daily News 24 October 2019). Subsequently, Nyerere selected Benjamin Mkapa as Mwinyi's successor and even campaigned for Mkapa's candidacy within the CCM (Tsubura 2017: 6). With CCM's control over the attempt to extend Mwinyi's tenure, the presidential term limit was no longer challenged either by Mkapa or his successor, Jakaya Kikwete.

In sum, the introduction of a presidential term limit in Tanzania by the strong initiative of President Nyerere was aimed at establishing a leadership rotation mechanism among CCM leaders in Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar after his retirement from office. Since the attempt by the allies of Nyerere's successor to challenge the term limit was thwarted, a party-based rule was established within the CCM.

### **3.2. Namibia: Presidential term limit as a concession to facilitate the independent process**

In Namibia, a presidential term limit for two five-year terms was included in its constitution that was drafted one year before its independence from South Africa in 1990. It was one of the concessions made by the ruling party, South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), to the main opposition party that was against the formation of executive presidency in constitutional negotiations. Such concession was made because of the SWAPO's urgent need to achieve independence (Cliffe and Pankhurst 2013: 82). However, as it turned out, Namibia became a rare case in two-term regimes that allowed an ad-hoc extension of one term for the first president; President Sam Nujoma amended

the constitution and served for a third term (Melber 2006: 98; Melber 2015: 52). Nujoma even contemplated a fourth term but declared his resignation in 2004 and handed over the executive power to his hand-picked successor, Hifikepunye Pohamba, in the following year (Elischer 2013:127–128). Given Nujoma's extension of his presidential tenure, it was unlikely that the introduction of a presidential term limit was originally aimed at establishing a party-based rule by facilitating a leadership rotation within the SWAPO.

As part of the independence process, members of the Constituent Assembly that would draft a constitution for Namibia were selected through a fully open election in November 1989. The SWAPO obtained a majority of 43 (57%) out of the total 72 seats in the election, but it was short of the two-thirds majority necessary for the final vote on the draft constitution as a whole (Cliffe 1994: 1, 183, 199). All the seven parties participating in the Constituent Assembly formally presented their drafts of the constitution, and the main opposition party, Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), requested for a public debate on constitutional principles. Furthermore, the areas of agreement and disagreement were negotiated in the Standing Committee on Rules and Orders in camera, which was attended by representatives of all the parties in December 1989 and January 1990. While it was unanimously agreed that the SWAPO's constitutional proposal would be used as the basic document for deliberations in the committee, significant changes were made to the said document after several discussions (Cliffe 1994: 201–202).

One of the contentious areas discussed in the committee meetings was the role of the executive president. While the DTA representative expressed a concern regarding executive presidency, the SWAPO expected that its founder, Sam Nujoma, would be the first president. They argued that the president should be directly elected by the citizens as 'a father figure ... [and] a symbol of authority of the nation' (Cliffe 1994: 203). The SWAPO succeeded in maintaining their position that the president must be directly elected by citizens in the final constitution. However, the SWAPO still compromised and agreed to significantly modify the president's role from what it originally proposed. Part of the modifications was the introduction of the presidential term limit for two five-year terms to facilitate the process of achieving independence. Achieving independence was urgent for the SWAPO, as it was running out of financial resources to support its party members who had been waiting to be allocated positions in the new government. With this, the SWAPO may have even thought about changing the constitution after achieving independence (Cliffe 1994: 203–213).

Nujoma was elected as the first Namibian president by the Constituent Assembly, and Namibia later achieved independence in 1990 (Melber 2015: 50). Although his

presidency was constitutionally limited for two five-year terms, he served for a third term on the ground that he was elected by the members of the Constituent Assembly under the supervision of the United Nations before independence and not directly by citizens (Melber 2006: 98). The SWAPO was able to amend the constitution after obtaining 53 out of the 72 seats in the first parliamentary election in 1994, which was more than the two-thirds majority required for constitutional amendment (African Election Database). Furthermore, the extension of Nujoma's presidency was not a major dispute in the public sphere. Thus, an exception was made to the rule that only the first president was entitled to serve for a third term without amending the term limit clause in the constitution (Melber 2006: 98, 104; Baturu 2014: 63). In 2001, President Nujoma stated that he would consider serving for a fourth term if people in Namibia wanted him to stay in power beyond the prescribed term limit (Mail and Guardian 2001). However, the SWAPO announced that Nujoma would not run for a fourth term in 2003, and he publicly declared his decision to resign at the end of his third term in the following year (BBC 2003; Elischer 2013: 127).

Although Nujoma's third-term bid led to the first defection of a seminar member of the SWAPO, it did not seriously threaten the SWAPO's dominance in the elections. Ben Ulenga, Namibia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, resigned from his position by openly criticising Nujoma's renewed bid for the presidency. Consequently, Ulenga was suspended from SWAPO's Central Committee and formed a new opposition party, the Congress of Democrats (CoD), with the support of several former ministers and high-ranking civil servants. Since CoD was the first opposition party whose founders were former SWAPO members who had fought for Namibia's independence, the SWAPO actively campaigned against the CoD in the 1999 elections by calling Ulenga a traitor of the liberalisation struggle (Elischer 2013: 120–125). The SWAPO's dominance was not threatened by Ulenga and the CoD; they only gained 10% of votes in the presidential and legislative elections in 1999 and 7% of votes in the elections in 2004 (African Election Database). Nonetheless, the defection may have contributed to the SWAPO's decision to change its leadership, instead of allowing Nujoma to run for a fourth term.

In sum, the introduction of a presidential term limit in Namibia was a concession made by the ruling party, SWAPO, in constitutional negotiations to facilitate the independence process and to immediately seize the reins of power. Given Nujoma's extension of one term and his contemplation of a fourth term, the introduction of a presidential term limit does not seem to have originally been aimed at establishing a party-based rule by guaranteeing internal leadership rotation. Nujoma handed over the executive power to his hand-picked successor, Pohamba, only after he lost support from the SWAPO elite for his fourth term of presidency. In completing his two terms, President

Pohamba respected the term limit and secretly campaigned within the SWAPO for Hage Geingob to be his successor (Tsubura 2019b: 12–13). Since then, a leadership rotation mechanism seems to have been established within the SWAPO.

### **3.3. Mozambique: Presidential term limit as part of a liberation reform to end the conflict**

In Mozambique, the Mozambique Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* [FRELIMO]) has maintained its dominant rule since the first multi-party elections held in 1994. This was the result of a peace agreement signed in 1992 by President Joachim Chissano and Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the Mozambican National Resistance (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* [RENAMO]). The presidential tenure for three five-year terms was introduced in Mozambique through its constitutional amendment in 1990. It was part of the liberalisation reform to end the conflict between the FRELIMO and the RENAMO that lasted for 15 years. Backed by the white minority government in South Africa, the RENAMO was strongly against the FRELIMO's attempt to build a socialist country. Led by President Chissano, a dramatic shift from socialist to liberal ideologies in the 1990 constitution was partly aimed at curtailing the RENAMO's claim for democracy (Hall and Young 1991). Although two Mozambican presidents, Chissano and his successor, Armando Guebuza, sought to re-run for the presidency within the FRELIMO, their attempts were rejected by senior leaders of the party (Tsubura 2019b: 14–15).

After Mozambique's independence from Portugal in 1975, the FRELIMO government adopted Marxism–Leninism as a guiding ideology in 1977 and governed the country by emulating the framework of Soviet-type regimes. However, in 1989, a decision was made at the FRELIMO Congress to replace the socialist ideology by liberal principles. Furthermore, it was decided at the Assembly of the Popular Republic that the Constitution, which was formulated at the independence in 1975, would be revised to reflect the said changes in principles. The new constitution, adopted in 1989 and published in 1990, made no reference to socialism but rather provides for a 'liberal understanding of the state and politics, with a separation of powers and an opening of the way for multiparty democracy' (Morier-Genoud 2009: 155).

The constitutional amendment in 1990 was characterised by President Chissano's strategy to end the civil war while simultaneously containing the RENAMO's influence in the new political system (Morier-Genoud 2009: 155–156). By the late 1980s, the conflict had destroyed the national economy, and the government had lost control over

large part of the countryside. With this, President Chissano and the FRELIMO government sought to accommodate the RENAMO by inviting its leaders to participate in negotiations when the preparation to amend the constitution began in 1986. However, the RENAMO preferred a power-sharing arrangement, which the FRELIMO tried to avoid. Without the RENAMO's participation in the constitutional negotiations, the 1990 constitution had advantages for the FRELIMO's rule. The proposed draft was aimed at democratising the country and stipulated that the president would directly be elected by citizens for a five-year term that could be renewed twice. Because of the dramatic ideological shift in the constitution, the justification of the RENAMO and its Western sympathisers to fight for democracy was undermined (Hall and Young 1990: 107–114; Morier-Genoud 2009: 155–156).

Since the constitutional amendments in 1990, leadership succession within the FRELIMO has been characterised by collective management by the party elites with strong influence from former freedom fighters in the struggle for independence. Even the power of the incumbent and former presidents is constrained by the FRELIMO elite. FRELIMO has been inclusive of potential dissidents through co-optation, and it has no experience of defections by senior party members. Furthermore, the competition with a strong opposition party, the RENAMO, and the fragile political environment during the post-conflict period all seem to have contributed to enforcing solidarity of the FRELIMO leaders (Tsubura 2019b: 13–17).

While Chissano was elected in 1994 and re-elected in 1999, he won by only a margin of less than 5% in 1999. In these elections, he garnered 52% of the votes, while RENAMO's candidate, Dhlakama, only obtained 48%. Chissano and the FRELIMO lost electoral support, particularly from the rural areas and from the centre and north of the country where the economic situation was deteriorating (PanAfrican News Agency 9 May 2011; Morier-Genoud 2009: 158). Against this backdrop, although Chissano was eligible to serve for the third term of presidency under the 1990 constitution, and having sought to re-run for the presidency in 2004, his attempt was allegedly rejected by the FRELIMO leaders. FRELIMO was concerned that Chissano and the party might only lose the forthcoming elections. After the presidential tenure was shortened to only two five-year terms in 2004, Guebuza sought to extend his tenure by repealing the said term limit, but this was yet again rejected by the FRELIMO to provide opportunities to the younger party leaders (Think Africa Press 2012).

In sum, the introduction of the presidential term limit in Mozambique in 1990 was part of the liberalisation reform to end the conflict between the FRELIMO and the RENAMO. Here, the intentions of President Chissano to establish a leadership rotation



mechanism within the FRELIMO were uncertain. However, Mozambique still came to be characterised by a party-based rule with collective management of leadership succession by the party elites, partnered with strong party coherence over time.

### **3.4. Botswana: Presidential term limit for leadership rotation after President Masire's retirement**

Botswana is one of the two African countries where multi-party elections have been held without interruptions since its independence in 1966. The presidential term limit was introduced as part of constitutional reform in 1997, after over thirty years of dominant rule by Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). Initiated by President Ketumile Masire, the presidential term limit was adopted against the background that the BDP had been riven by factional infighting and declining electoral support partly due to corruption scandals involving cabinet members in the 1990s (Good and Taylor 2006: 55).

Masire was sworn in as President following the death of the first Botswanan President Seretse Khama in 1980. The BDP won the following legislative elections of 1984, 1989 and 1994 with Masire being re-elected as the President by the National Assembly each time. Although the presidential term was generally five years long that coincided with the tenure of parliament, neither the presidential term nor the number of re-elections was stipulated in the constitution before the constitutional amendments in 1997. In case the president dies or resigns, the legislature was to elect a new president within seven days (Otlhogile 1998: 215–216).

Under the leadership of President Masire, the BDP was seriously affected by an internal split into two factions in the 1990s. One group was led by the BDP Secretary General Daniel Kwelagobe and Chariman Ponatshego, who largely represented the old elites. The other group was led by Minister of Foreign Affairs Mompoti Merafhe, mainly supported by the newcomers and reformists (Tsubura 2019b: 8). With this, the BDP's support rate continued to decline from 68% in 1984 to 53% in 1994. Conversely, the main opposition party, Botswana National Front (BNF), increased its vote share steadily from 20% in 1989 to 38% in 1994 (African Election Database).

The constitutional amendments in 1997 facilitated the smooth transition of presidential power from Masire to his hand-picked successor by introducing two reforms regarding the presidency. The first reform was setting of the presidential term limit for two five-year terms (Good and Taylor 2006: 53–55). The second reform was addition of the stipulation that the vice president, who was appointed by the president, would automatically succeed the president in case of the president's death or resignation to

ensure a smooth succession (Republic of Botswana 2006; Morton, Ramsay and Mgadla 2008: xix; Maundeni and Seabo 2015: 30). BDP's constitution was also amended so that its presidential candidates would be selected at the party's special congress during election years. Yet, such a congress has never been convened, as Masire and his two successors have resigned from office before the end of their terms, and their appointed vice presidents automatically succeeded the presidency as described below (Maundeni and Seabo 2015: 30; Weekend Post 2018).

Following the 1997 constitutional amendments, President Masire retired from office in 1998, one year before the end of his two five-year terms, and Vice President Festus Mogae, who was appointed by Masire in 1992, automatically succeeded the presidency. Masire arguably decided to retire early from the presidency to avoid two scenarios: first, given the growing challenges posed on the BDP's dominance by the BNF in the 1990s, the BDP might have lost the forthcoming legislative election if its leadership had not been changed; second, if a special congress had been convened within the BDP, one of the two factional leaders might have been chosen as his successor, which might cause a party split by defection of the defeated leader and his followers. As such, the introduction of the presidential term limit and the rule of automatic presidential succession to the vice president in 1997 can be considered as part of Masire's strategy to facilitate his retirement from the presidency while simultaneously mitigating the impacts of factional politics on the BDP. Masire retired on favourable terms and played an active role as a former president, receiving international recognition afterward. Masire's two successors, Mogae and Ian Khama, followed suit and retired from the presidency one year before the end of their two terms in office, in 2008 and 2018, respectively. Following their retirements, the vice presidents they had appointed automatically succeeded the presidency. This custom resulted in alienation of the parliament and the party elites from BDP's succession politics (Good and Taylor 2006).

In sum, the introduction of a presidential term limit in Botswana was aimed at facilitating President Masire's smooth retirement from office and initiating a leadership rotation within the BDP. However, Masire also established a mechanism of automatic presidential succession to vice presidents, which enabled presidential control over leadership succession, partially constraining a party-based rule by the BDP.

#### **4. Analysis**

The present paper has demonstrated that presidential term limits were introduced in four dominant-party states as part of either their constitutional reforms or the formulation of a

new constitution. The presidents who led the introduction of presidential term limits had intentions of achieving certain goals in their historical contexts that were not necessarily related to democratisation. In Tanzania, the presidential term limit was introduced during the one-party socialist period to ensure a leadership rotation within the ruling party, including the Zanzibari ruling elites, in the process of further integrating Zanzibar into Tanzania. In Mozambique, the presidential term limit was introduced as part of the liberation reform to end the conflict and to undermine the opposition's claim for democracy. In Namibia, the presidential term limit was introduced in the independent constitution as a concession made to the main opposition party to achieve the country's independence immediately. However, the first president overruled it by adding another term thereafter. Lastly, in Botswana, a presidential term limit was introduced as the president's plan to retire from office without losing the forthcoming election. The said presidential term limit was adopted together with the president's control over the selection of his successor to mitigate the influence of factional competition on the ruling party.

An examination of the four dominant-party states suggests that presidential term limits were introduced by the presidents in Botswana and Tanzania as their retirement plans to set the rule for their successors. These introductions were aimed at achieving a leadership rotation within their parties to help them remain united. However, provided that both presidents exercised power in selecting their successors in varying degrees rather than delegating the power to select their successors to the parties, the introduction of presidential term limits does not necessarily signify an immediate shift from a personal to a party-based rule in the two countries. Instead, a party-based rule seems to have been institutionalised gradually through the experience of several presidential successions.

The introduction of presidential term limits in Namibia and Mozambique can largely be considered as concessions made in historical constitutional negotiations to facilitate the countries' independence or to end the civil war without plans by incoming or incumbent presidents to resign from the presidency immediately. Therefore, it is uncertain to what extent the introduction of the presidential term limit was originally aimed at establishing a leadership rotation mechanism to unite the party elites. Instead, party coherence underpinned by leadership rotation was gradually established over time in these countries. In line with Cheeseman (2019) and McKie's (2019) emphasis on the importance of electoral trends, the different outcomes of the attempts by Nujoma, Chissano and Guebuza to serve for a third term were partly explained by different levels of electoral competitiveness in Namibia and Mozambique. Strong party cohesion within the ruling party in Mozambique was established because it was critical to beat the strong opposition party in the elections.

## 5. Conclusion

Drawing on the experience of the dominant-party rule in Mexico, the present study examined whether dominant parties in Africa with regular presidential succession have strategically introduced presidential term limits to establish leadership rotation mechanisms within their parties and to maintain their dominant rule under the multi-party system. The present paper has demonstrated that the aims of the introduction of presidential term limits vary among the four dominant-party states. The analysis of the four cases suggests that the introduction of presidential term limits in Tanzania and Botswana seem to have been aimed at strengthening party coherence through leadership rotation. Conversely, the introduction of presidential term limits in Namibia and Mozambique was largely a concession made to incorporate opposition forces in the formation of the new political system. Despite the variation, a party-based rule with relatively strong party coherence has been established in all the four countries over time, not merely due to the adoption of a presidential term limit but by other factors such as the strengths of opposition parties in elections. The present study also finds that, as part of broader constitutional reforms, the introduction of presidential term limits was sometimes concessions made by the presidents and ruling parties to opposition forces facing the need to accommodate them in the new governing system of their countries.

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