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The Emerging Predominant Party Systems in Angola (2008 – 2017)

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The end of the armed conflict in 2002, following the death in combat of the leader of the UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), Jonas Savimbi, allowed the process of transition to democracy begun in 1991 to be resumed (signing of the peace accords of Bicesse) and interrupted with the rekindling of the 1992 post-electoral war. Thus, in 2008, the second legislative elections were held, which were won by the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), with a qualified majority of 81.64% of the votes cast corresponding to 191 parliamentary mandates of the 220; in 2012, the third elections took place and the MPLA once again won with a qualified majority of 71.8% of the votes cast, corresponding to 175 parliamentary seats out of 220; in August 2017, the Wednesdays were held, again won by the MPLA with a qualified majority of 61.1% of the votes cast, corresponding to 150 parliamentary terms out of 220. These results allow us to visualize the emergence of a predominant party system in Angola (2008 -2017), with a decreasing trend.

The dominance of the arena of political competition by the MPLA is the result of a combination of multiple factors, with emphasis on the incomplete separation between the party and the state; the imbalance in the arena of political competition, especially the unequal access to extra-budgetary resources, national public media and the disproportionality of provincial constituencies. Finally, the consistency of the dominant voting trend in the MPLA, regardless of ethnic, economic, political and sociodemographic considerations, allows admitting the possibility of consolidating the predominant party system in Angola, in future elections. Electoral polls closer to the electoral period allow for fine-tuning the forecasting mechanism.¹

Keywords: Predominant party, Liberation Movements, Institutions, Voting Intention

O fim do conflito armado em 2002, na sequência da morte em combate do líder da UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola), Jonas Savimbi, permitiu que o processo de transição para a democracia iniciado em 1991 fosse retomado (assinatura dos acordos de paz de Bicesse) e interrompido com o reacender da guerra pós-eleitoral de 1992. Assim, em 2008, realizaram-se as segundas eleições legislativas, que foram ganhas pelo MPLA (Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola), com uma maioria qualificada de 81,64% dos votos expressos correspondentes a 191 mandatos parlamentares dos 220; em 2012, realizaram-se as terceiras eleições e o MPLA voltou a ganhar com uma maioria qualificada de 71,8% dos votos expressos, correspondendo a 175 dos 220 mandatos parlamentares; em Agosto de 2017, realizaram-se as quartas-feiras, novamente ganhas pelo MPLA com uma maioria qualificada de 61,1% dos votos expressos, correspondendo a 150 mandatos parlamentares dos 220. Estes resultados permitem-nos visualizar a emergência de um sistema partidário predominante em Angola (2008-2017), com uma tendência decrescente. O domínio da arena da competição política pelo MPLA é o resultado de uma combinação de múltiplos factores, com ênfase na separação incompleta entre o partido e o Estado; o desequilíbrio na arena da competição política, especialmente o acesso desigual aos recursos extra-orçamentais, aos meios de comunicação social públicos nacionais e a desproporcionalidade dos círculos eleitorais provinciais. Finalmente, a consistência da tendência de voto dominante no MPLA, independentemente de considerações étnicas, económicas, políticas e sociodemográficas, permite admitir a possibilidade de consolidação do sistema partidário predominante em Angola, em futuras eleições. Sondagens eleitorais mais próximas do período eleitoral permitem um aperfeiçoamento do mecanismo de previsão.

Palavras-chave: Partido predominante, Movimentos de libertação, Instituições, Intenção de voto

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1. Introduction

The Angolan party system began with the experience of an authoritarian socialist-style single party regime, proclaimed by the MPLA on the night of November 11, 1975, in Luanda². The civil war started before the proclamation of independence³ between the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) and the MPLA and, later, the MPLA government and UNITA would end in 2002, with the death in combat of UNITA leader Jonas Malheiro Savimbi⁴.

In the 1977 Congress, MPLA adopted officially the name MPLA-PT (MPLA Worker Party) and the Marxism Leninism become the State Ideology. In the mid-1990s, following the wave of democratizations that also reached Africa, the MPLA decided to take the lead in the transition process to democracy with a double purpose: to determine the rules of the game in the process of political liberalization and negotiate with UNITA the peace (Araújo, 2017).

Officially, the multiparty era started in 1991 with the signature of the peace agreement at Bicesse (Portugal) between the Government of MPLA and the rebel movement of UNITA. The first multiparty elections took place in 1992, and the MPLA was announced the winner. But the process was interrupted by the post-electoral war from 1992 to 2002, between the MPLA Government and UNITA armed movement. Unfortunately, the transition to democracy that started in 1992, with the first legislative and presidential elections did not produce a democratic regime.

It can be said that both purposes were achieved by the MPLA, but democracy remains a challenge under construction, as there is "*a coexistence between elements of a democratic regime and those of an authoritarian regime, in which the government party often assumes itself as 'the guarantor and bulwark of democracy and democratic transformations'*" (...) "*This hybrid democratic regime is what characterizes the process of democratic transition in Angola*" (Araújo, 2017, pp. 249-250); (Belchior, Sanches, & José, 2016); (Schubert J. , 2010).

² He did it to consecrate the "chronological precedence" he had made in 1960, dating its foundation to a certain December 10, 1956". (...) And to justify the statement, in the official narrative, of exclusivity in the struggle for independence, which is also claimed as the only anti-colonial liberation movement (Mabeko-Tali 2018).

³ The national liberation movements of Angola disputed among themselves the hegemony of the "political legitimacy" of representation of the Angolan people and, consequently, of directing the state power, once independence was achieved. As the struggle for independence passed through the military conflict, legitimacy also became "the prerogative of the first who unleashed the armed struggle". This dispute, in the phase of the armed struggle for independence, would evolve around the concepts of "anteriority" and "interiority". That is, who was the first to exist? Who was the first to exist inside Angola and start the armed struggle? (greater seniority has become synonymous with greater political legitimacy to direct the destiny of the future state) Thus, the struggle between the FNLA and the MPLA will be essentially over the hegemony of "political legitimacy", very present in their strategies of political propaganda, historical events and attempts to eliminate the "other". UNITA, being the last to arrive, will be excluded from this dispute, claiming only its participation in the armed struggle for national liberation, in a first phase, and of having fought for democracy, in a second phase - civil war (Mabeko-Tali 2018); (Mbah 2010); (Muekalia 2010).

⁴ The proclamation was made in the context of armed competition with Angolan organizations (FNLA and UNITA) and with regional political-military (the South African, in the South, and Zairean, in the North) and international organizations, in a conflict scenario that reflected the characteristic cleavages of the Cold War (Mabeko-Tali 2018).

The Angolan “hybrid democratic regime” is classified as “not free” by the Global Freedom Scores 2020 (FreedomHouse, 2021) or as “authoritarian” by The Economist Democracy Index 2020 (TheEconomistIntelligenceUnit, 2021). The hybrid nature of the Angolan regime refers to the “pseudo-democracy” of (Diamond, 1997)⁵ or to the “competitive authoritarianism” of (Levitsky & Way, 2010)⁶, because the “hybridism” or the “stagnation” of the transition process to democracy may be not a matter of procedural failure or unintended consequence of the transition process, but the result of the rational choice of the ruling elite, for reasons of political survival⁷ ⁸.

The emerging Angolan predominant party system, characterized by the declining dominance of the MPLA, according to the electoral results of 2008, 2012 and 2017, will not only be a consequence of the free choice of voters. The three consecutive electoral victories of the MPLA with a qualified majority of 2/3, which appear as a minimum condition to qualify the Angolan party system as predominant (Sartori, 2012) or dominant (Bogaards & Boucek, 2010) and (Erdmann & Basedau, 2008) are our starting point.

Understanding the nature of the domain and the possibilities of its maintenance, in the foreseeable future, leads to a brief analysis of the trajectory of the Angolan party system, that is, the historical process of interaction of national liberation movements with each other and with the parties that emerged in the multiparty period; the institutional constraints (formal and informal) that make electoral competition possible (Schedler, 2013); (Schubert J. , 2010); and, finally, the conditions that may or may not change the rule of the ruling party, based on the understanding of the variables that explain the voting intention of Angolans.

⁵ “Pseudodemocracy allows legal opposition parties, multiparty elections, and often a greater degree of pluralism and openness in civil society than the typical authoritarian regime. Pseudodemocracies, however, lack a crucial ingredient of even electoral democracy: a sufficiently fair arena of electoral competition to make it possible for the ruling party to be turned out of power. In a pseudodemocracy (...) the ruling party hegemonically controls the levels of power (electoral administration, the registration of parties, the police and justice system, the mass media, not to mention credit, contract and jobs) so that opposition parties have no chance of winning power at the national level. Ruling party control of the state prevents any opposition party or coalition from mobilizing sufficient electoral support to win control of government; if the opposition does mobilize such support, the ruling party uses outright fraud to retain control” (Diamond, 1997, pp. 3-4).

⁶ “Competitive authoritarian regimes are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents’ abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents. Such regimes are competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to contest seriously for power, but they are not democratic because the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents. Competition is thus real but unfair” (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 5).

⁷ For Soler-Crespo, when the liberation movements reach state power, they establish a strategy of hybrid governance which is vital to maintain power. They do celebrate elections, respect institutions and democratic norms on one side, which gives them a public and international appearance and status as consolidated democracies, whilst at the same time they have authoritarian practices aimed at their maintenance in power (Soler-Crespo, 2019, p. 5).

⁸ Interview with Professor Paulo Inglês (07.05.2021 in presence) and Fernando Macedo (26.05.2021 by WhatsApp)

2. Literature Review

Three decades after transitions to multi-party democracy in Africa, the expected emergence of fragmented multi-party-political systems (van de Walle, 2003) gave way to a reality characterized by the generalization of the predominant party systems. (Sartori, 2012) or dominant (Bogaards & Boucek, 2010), Regardless of the electoral system or the system of government (Doorenspleet & Nijzink, 2013). Although in some countries there have been changes in governance, as in the cases of Zambia, Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Cape Verde and Ghana, in the vast majority, the parties that governed in an authoritarian manner remain in power, giving way to the party system that raised concerns among academics, especially its relationship with democratization (Walle & Butler, 1999); (Doorenspleet, 2003); (Bogaards, 2004).

The reality of political systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially the Southern region or SADC, reveals a stable or institutionalized combination of prevailing party systems either in free democracies (South Africa, Botswana and Namibia) or in partially free democracies (Mozambique and Tanzania), or in non-democracies (Angola and Zimbabwe)(Erdmann & Basedau, 2008); (Doorenspleet & Nijzink, 2013); (Bogaards & Elisher, 2016).

The predominant party systems in Southern Africa have the particularity of being taken over by the national liberation movements (ANC-South Africa, SWAPO - Namibia, FRELIMO - Mozambique, MPLA - Angola, CHAMA CHA MAPINDUZI - Tanzania and ZANU-PF - Zimbabwe) that became governments as a result of conducting anti-colonial resistance (including military action and sabotage) against white minority authoritarian regimes (Soler-Crespo, 2019); (Southall, 2013).

The stability of the dominance of the arena of electoral and political competition of the ANC and SWAPO is predominantly attributed to the politics of identity, racial for the ANC (Friedman, 2014); (Southall, 2014) and ethnic for SWAPO (Melber, 2014); (Melber, Kromrey, & Welz, 2016); the neo-patrimonialist political economy of the “big man rule” (excessive concentration of power in the hands of the President) that allows the use of State resources in a discretionary manner to meet the needs of rural communities, where the largest support base of the BDP lives. (Makgala & Giollabhuí, 2014); incomplete separation between party and state from the previous authoritarian one-party regime, as a result of the multi-party, top-down transition process that gave the ruling party the monopoly of determining its steps, designing the rules of the game; appropriating them; benefit from them, in favor of CHAMA CHA MAPINDUZI (Makulilo, 2016); (Makulilo, 2014); (Katundu, 2018); for FRELIMO, several factors are considered, such as the form of transition to democracy, that is, the critical situation that created the possibility for changing institutional trajectories, the financing of political parties, the relations between political parties (cooperation or coalition) and the relations between political parties and the electorate (clienteles or pragmatic) (Sanches, 2018).

3. The Angolan Political Parties

There is a double reality in the Angolan party system: on the one hand, the presence of former national liberation movements, transformed into political parties, with distinct electoral performance (FNLA – disappearing, MPLA – decreasing dominance and UNITA – recovering); on the other hand, the political parties of the era of multi-party opening, which went from nine with parliamentary representation in 1992 to one (PRS - Social Renewal Party, in a decreasing trajectory) and a coalition (CASA - CE, in an increasing trajectory) in 2017.

3.1. The Emergency Context of Angola's national liberation movements: FNLA, MPLA and UNITA

In historical terms, the FNLA is heir to the evolution of the nationalist movement of the former kingdom of Congo (which capital is the city of Mbanza Kongo, mainly Catholic and Baptist elites, with a path of socialization in Kinshasa), which in 1953 joined the UPNA (Union of the Peoples of Northern Angola); in 1957 it evolved into the UPA (Union of the Angola People) and in 1962 into the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola. The MPLA is heir to the nationalist currents of the Luanda corridor, coast of Angola and the Angolan diaspora in Portugal and France (*“Portuguese-Mbundu creolity”*, mainly Catholic and Methodist elites), which in 1960, in Tunis - Tunisia, would lead to the creation of the MPLA. UNITA is heir to the dissident movement of the FNLA in 1963-65 (Ovimbundu and Bakongo cadres of Cabinda and Uíge), and from the Angolan diaspora in Zambia, USA and Switzerland (mostly elites from the central highlands, Catholics and American Congregationists), who in 1966 would form UNITA. These elites represented alternative modernities, whose trajectories probably never crossed before independence of Angola. *“(…) FNLA, MPLA and UNITA were three different trajectories of modernity, bringing, so to speak, of (three) Angola to the same country”* (Fortuna, 2012, pp. 145-146); (Mabeko-Tali, 2018); (Paredes, 2010); (Schubert B. , 1999).

3.2. The MPLA and its peers in SADC

The MPLA, the dominant party, shares with its SADC counterparts some values such as: in addition to 'comradeship', the emergence as a group of nationalists who 'adopted' the ideological 'option' for socialism (Marxism-Leninist or Maoist, with ideological support and military from the Soviet Union, China and Cuba during the Cold War); a hierarchical organizational structure, as soon as they took up the option of armed struggle (for the former guerrillas, the watchword for combat is 'the struggle continues'); authoritarian and paternalistic political culture; retrospective and selective populist discourse, as a means of legitimizing the permanence in power, appealing to the need for permanent combat against 'foreign domination', 'enemy forces', 'false patriots' or 'enemies of peace' and presenting itself as the only and exclusive true alternative that can offer a better future for all; appropriation of

national history and society, becomes the only and best interpreter; leader's personality cult, 'big men rule', whose critique is seen as critique of the movement, that is, of the nation (Melber, 2015); (Melber, 2018); (Melber, 2019); (Southall, 2014); (Soler-Crespo, 2019); (Schubert J. , 2015).

4. The Playing Field

4.1. Political Parties Funds

Although there's a broad consensus among academics about the centrality of financial resources in sustaining a democratic party system, some divergences persist on how to access financial resources, whether public, private, or both, and on the moment (electoral campaign or non-campaign) to guarantee a fair access to these resources (Randall & Svasand, 2002); (Sanchez, 2018).

Political Parties with parliament seats in Angola receive two types of public funds: current resources and resources for electoral campaign. The first one is proportional to their votes almost 1,5 \$/vote; another, is equal for all admitted by Constitutional Court to run for General Elections⁹. In addition of this resources, the political parties and coalitions of political parties can legally benefit from other types of financing that are intended solely to support them in the pursuit of their corporate purpose or political campaign.

The political parties aren't allowed to receive additional money from foreign governments or governmental institutions, Autonomous State bodies, Local State bodies; public law associations, institutes and legal persons of public benefit, public companies¹⁰.

The public funding of the political parties that we have just described, although designed with the logic of creating parity of conditions of competition between the parties, especially the funding allocated in the electoral year, it ends up having a double impact on two important dimensions of the party system, creating advantages to the parties with greater parliamentary representation: in the electoral competition "it induces unequal conditions of presentation to the electorate between the existing parties and the emerging parties"; and in parliamentary representation: "the position of existing parties in parliament crystallizes, making it difficult for new actors to access" (Cruz, 2018).

Finally, if we agree that Angola is a predominant political party systems in a competitive authoritarian regime, we've also to admit that the ruling party enjoys a great advantage over others and can discretionary receive indirect financial support from its various members, from managers of public companies to private managers who, expect the maintenance of their positions and continuity of access to public funds, through business with the Government. For example, contracts for public works and for

⁹ The articles 2, to 5 of the Law on Political Parties Financing, 10/12, 22th March; and the Organic Law on General Elections, 36/11, of December 21.

¹⁰ The article 17, no. 2 (h) of the Angolan Constitution

the supply of goods and services to the Government; or in the political public meeting, the public servants are afraid of reprisals if they miss the meeting or don't take their colleagues till there (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007).

4.2. The public and private media

Although all political parties have equal access and legal rights to a fair treatment by the public media, in practice, mainly in pre and electoral campaign era, not all political parties have free access to the public press. The ruling party is the most favored by the public media. Fernando Macedo, the Angolan academic and civic activist, considers that "*the opposition political parties have not had equal treatment in the State media (...). That are transformed into propaganda organs of the ruling party*" (Macedo, 2015).

If one may have the illusion that the situation changed since Macedo, on May 24th Moniz, Angolan journalist and sociologist, wrote "*in electoral fraud, the mainstream public media have in their hands the herculean task of attacking, ostracizing and persecuting political actors of the opposition, sponsoring press conferences and other forms of quarreling, instigating and sowing public hatred against those who think outside the monopoly party or totally intimidated, they become promoters of a cold war, in which they assume themselves as one of the contenders*" (Moniz, 2021).

The private media, mainly owned by the former Dos Santos inner circle are being closed one by one or given to the state once they were financed by public funds. For example, the Media Nova Group (TVZimbo, Rádio Mais and Jornal o País) owned by General Dino (Former chief of the Operations and Communications of the Security House of the Presidency), Kopelipa (Former minister of State and Chief of the Security Houses of the Presidency) and Manuel Vicente (Former SONANGOL Boss and Vice-President). Other that aren't perceived that are on the Government side faces administrative challenges and were suspended on last April 20th for an indefinite period: TV Record (Owned by IURD – Brazilian Evangelical Church), Zap Viva (Owned by Isabel dos Santos) and Vida TV (Owned by Tchizé dos Santos). Those that are working faces several financial challenges.

Nowadays, the environment of the mass communications in Angola faces a monopoly of media concentration on the State side. As with the financial situation, this had the likelihood of unfair access to public even private media for all political parties. Saying that, we can't assume that opposition political parties had a real chance of winning elections, because as pseudodemocracy (Diamond, 1997) or competitive authoritarian regime (Levitsky & Way, 2010) with predominant party system (Sartori, 2012), "*the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents*" (Levitsky & Way, 2010).

4.3. The Electoral System

The multiparty era started in 1991 with the signature of the peace agreement at Bicesse (Portugal) between the Government of MPLA and the rebel movement of UNITA. The first multiparty elections

took place in 1992, and the MPLA was announced the winner. But the process was interrupted by the post-electoral war that ended in 2002, with the death of Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA's leader. The second legislative elections were held in 2008, and again the MPLA won with the large majority of 81,6% expressed popular votes, and 191 parliamentary seats out of 220. The third general elections were in 2012, and also was won by MPLA with 71,8% of expressed popular votes, and 175 seats out of 220. The fourth general elections, in 2017, again MPLA won by 61,1% of the expressed popular votes and 150 seats out of 220.

The Angolan electoral system divided the country in 18th electoral provincial constituencies corresponding to the Angolan provinces and each one elect 5 MP's (90 MP total) and one national electoral constituency that elect 130 MP's. On the electoral provincial constituencies, they used the Hondt formula to convert votes into seats and in the single national electoral constituency they utilize the Hare formula. Since the Angolan population even voters aren't equally distributed across all provinces, the egalitarian provincial electoral constituency had a likelihood to be a source of high disproportionality, mainly on the provinces highly populated like Luanda with almost 30% of the electorate when compared with Bengo or Namibe with only almost 3% of the electorate.

The Angolan electoral system of proportional representation produces a considerable level of disproportionality (measured as LSq index), with an average of $D = 5.14$; low electoral fragmentation (measured as ENEP), with an average of $ENEPP = 1.99$; and lower parliamentary fragmentation (measured as ENPP), with an average of $ENPP = 1.75$. From a longitudinal point of view, there is an increase in the three indices, between 2008 and 2017, except for the LSq index, with a slight decline in 2017 (from 6.41 to 5.84). The values of the last two indices (ENEPP and ENPP), in the 2017 elections, suggest the presence of two political parties in the electoral and parliamentary arenas, that is, there's a party that disputes the electoral and parliamentary domain of the MPLA.

Table n° 1 – Legislative elections in Angola: disproportionality, electoral fragmentation and parliamentary fragmentation

Electoral year	Parties	% Vote	% Mandate	LSq index	ENEPP	ENPP
1992	MPLA	53,8	58,6	3,95	2,46	2,24
	UNITA	34,1	31,8			
	PRS	2,3	2,7			
	FNLA	2,4	2,3			
	PLD	2,4	1,4			
	PRD	0,9	0,5			
	AD-Coligação	0,9	0,5			
	PSD	0,8	0,5			
	PAJOCA	0,4	0,5			
	FDA	0,3	0,5			
	PDP-ANA	0,3	0,5			
	PNDA	0,3	0,5			
	2008	MPLA	81,6			

	UNITA	10,4	7,3			
	PRS	3,2	3,6	4,34	1,47	1,31
	FNLA	1,1	1,4			
	ND-EU	1,2	0,9			
2012	MPLA	71,9	79,6			
	UNITA	18,7	14,6			
	CASA-CE	6,0	3,6	6,41	1,80	1,53
	PRS	1,7	1,4			
	FNLA	1,1	0,6			
2017	MPLA	61,1	68,2			
	UNITA	26,7	23,2			
	CASA-CE	9,5	7,3	5,84	2,21	1,91
	PRS	1,4	0,9			
	FNLA	0,9	0,5			
Total (Average)				5,14	1,99	1,75

Source: author elaboration from EISA data – EISA Angola: [Election archive](https://www.eisa.org/wep/angelectarchive.htm) <https://www.eisa.org/wep/angelectarchive.htm> (consulted on 25.05.2021) and Gallagher, Michael, 2019 Election indices dataset at http://www.tcd.ie/political_Science/people/michael/EISystems/index.php (consulted on 17.03.2021).

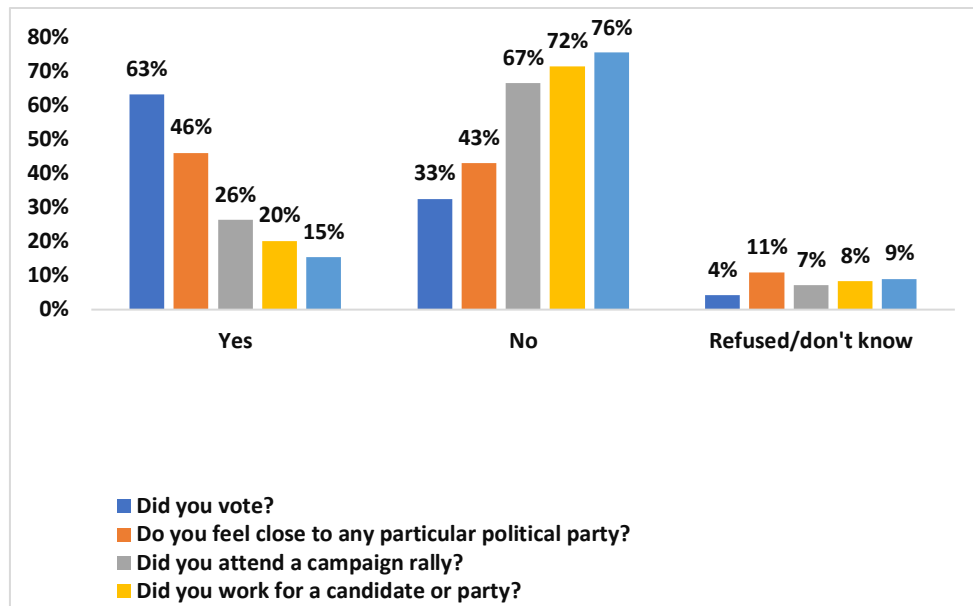
N.B.: LSq index = Disproportionality between the distribution of votes and the distribution of parliamentary seats (Least Squares Index); ENEP = Effective Number of Electoral Parties and ENPP = Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties.

5. Political and Civic Engagement

5.1. Political and Civic Engagement

Angolans' civic and political participation is very weak. However, the exercise of voting is revealed as the form of political participation that most mobilizes Angolans. Data from the Afrobarometer survey indicate that 63% of Angolans voted in the 2017 general elections. With regard to party proximity, 46% of respondents said they felt close to a political party. However, during the 2017 election campaign, more than two-thirds (67%) of respondents did not participate in public election campaign activities; 72% did not work for a candidate or political party; and more than three quarters (76%) were not contacted by representatives of competing political parties. With regards to their age, only 47% of the respondents with 18-25 years old voted in the last election; 45% with 18-35 years old feel close to any particular political party (Pacatolo & Boio, 2019).

Figure 1: Political Participation of Angolans – Angola 2019



Question asked: Do you feel close to any particular political party?

Thinking about the last national election in 2017:

a) Did you attend a campaign rally?

b) Did you work for a candidate or party?

c) Did any representative of a political party contact you during the campaign?

People are not always able to vote in elections, for example, because they weren't registered, they were unable to go, or someone prevented them from voting. How about you? In the last national election held in 2017 did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted?

The low levels of civic and political participation of Angolans may also indicate the veiled presence of a "castrating" culture of freedoms of thought, expression and association, as a reminiscent of the authoritarian single party regime or the culture of fear.

5.2. Popular Voting Intention

One of the ways to know if the MPLA will consolidate its condition as the dominant Party in the Angolan political system is to look at the intention to vote, that is, when Angolans decide to vote, do they do it for ethnic considerations? Economic? Partisanship? Religious? Regionalists? Or others?

To answer these questions, we will closely follow the conceptualization of (Bratton, Bhavnani, & Chen, 2011) for whom the intention to vote is an excellent guide to understand the current electoral behavior, although its reliability decreases with the temporal distance of the next election. Explanatory variables such as ethnic identity, economic interest, party identification is considered in their multiple dimensions, as they may have different explanatory power. In order to avoid the circular relationship between party identification and the vote in the respective party, the aim is to reach the same result through the distinction between sincere vote and strategic vote (Bratton, Bhavnani, & Chen, 2011).

This preliminary analysis uses data from the first national Afrobarometer 2019 survey in Angola (Pacatolo & Boio, 2019).

Preliminary data indicate that there are no significant differences in voting intentions according to gender, poverty level (LPI Categorical), future perspectives regarding the evolution of economic conditions (Economic interest) and ethnic discrimination (ethnic identity).

As for ethnic identity, the sample indicates greater support for the MPLA in all ethnic groups, with the greatest difference to UNITA being registered in the Ochikwanhama group (Cunene – MPLA gains the 5 seats since 1992) and in the Nhaneka-Humbi (Huíla, where the MPLA won the 5 seats in the 3 elections). Considering the economic interest, the MPLA is the strongest party, even among those who assess the current economic situation as "very bad", although among those who assess the economy positively, the percentage of voters is more expressive. The same trend is maintained whether in the assessment of the economic conditions themselves or in the assessment of the country's past economic conditions.

As for political considerations, to avoid the circularity of the issue of party proximity, it was decided to consider those who negatively assess the performance of either the government or the president himself, in order to capture the vote of the sincere militant or of the "ignorant" voter. Thus, with regard to the assessment of economic policy (inflation, unemployment, income distribution and economic growth), despite considerable levels of refusal to respond (26%), the MPLA continues as the strongest, even among those who assess negatively the government's performance. The same happens with the evaluation of the President's performance, as the MPLA prevails in all, even among those who strongly disapprove of the President's performance. As for the militant strategist who expects a reward, the MPLA is strong among those who fear "always" or "often" reprisals if they vote in opposition and the MPLA wins. The MPLA also dominates among other strategist voters who expect reward, that is, those respondents who were informed about the entity responsible for the inquiry, but in the end claimed to be the government, a political party or a political personality.

The consistent levels of support for the MPLA challenge to consider other dimensions such as demand for democracy and supply of democracy. Here, although there is greater refusal to respond among those demanding more democracy, support for the MPLA prevails at all levels of democracy, but is particularly strong among people with lower demands for democracy (agrees with 1 of 4 components) and (no demand for democracy). On the contrary, although there is still a higher percentage of refusals among the supply of democracy, the percentage of support for the MPLA among people who "perceives in the supply" is much lower.

Finally, a look at the sociodemographic dimension helps to better understand the results presented. As for the area of residence, the MPLA remains dominant, being stronger in the rural area, which is consistent with the country's more rural provinces (Cunene and Huíla). It is also in the southern region

of the country (Cunene 5, Huíla 5 and Namibe and 4) where the difference between MPLA and UNITA is greater (59.7% vs 13.2%); followed by the central region, according to the rurality group (Benguela 4, Bié 3, Cuanza Sul 5 and Huambo 3) with 51% vs. 12.6%; and the central north region (Bengo 4, Cuanza Norte 5 and Malanje 5) with 47.2% vs 8.1%. On the other hand, the difference is almost non-existent in Luanda 18.5% vs 16.2%, which is also the most urban province in the country, with 98% of the population living in urban area. These data are also consistent when we consider age and education, although the MPLA is predominant in all age groups, its preponderance tends to grow with older voters with low education (in formal education or primary school), while register very high levels of “no vote/Ns/Nr” in younger and more educated people.

6. Tentative Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can state that the Angolan party system is moving towards its consolidation as a predominant party system, as the conditions that made it possible remain in the terrain of political competition:

1. The process of transition to democracy and peace, led by the MPLA to better control the rules of the game, made it possible to regulate and rationalize the political liberalization necessary for the separation of party and state: Unfinished process;
2. Unfair political competition arena: access to financial resources outside public funds; access to the public press, the only one with a national dimension (Radio Nacional de Angola, Public Television of Angola, Jornal de Angola and Angola Press Agency); disproportionality of the 18 provincial constituencies, especially in the five most populous provinces (Luanda, Huila, Benguela, Huambo and Bié);
3. Consistency of national support that the MPLA continues to earn from voters, regardless of ethnic, economic and political considerations;
4. The voter abstention of younger, educated and urban residents is a challenge to be taken into account in the future studies and elections outcomes.

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