

Dissecting the latest discourse and Hengari's 'comparative analysis'

By Paul T. Shipale

My attention was particularly caught by the New Era editorial of Friday the 24 September which talked about 'the power dynamics and internal democracy inside SWAPO'. The editorial asserted that 'predetermined outcomes during leadership contests are becoming a thing of the past' and that 'the SWAPO primaries were a dress rehearsal of what to expect at the SWAPO congress in 2012 which is now thrown wide open by the current events'.

This goes to show that those old guards pinning their hope on co-option and factions were given clear red flickering warning lights that the youth are asserting themselves and in the process altering the power game without assistance from those who are supposed to wield power in the party, said the editorial. If anything, the SWAPO Party Youth League (SPYL), an



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official party structure, emerged as the only 'faction' during these primaries, concluded the editorial.

I am on record for arguing that a critical analyst will encourage us to find out, who gains what, who loses what when facts are added up and whose version of the story has not been told. Indeed, Critical thinking involves insight requiring a sharpened eye to distinguish what is from what ought to be, and

will unavoidably come under fire and earn the ire for maintaining a critical and objective stance. Let us dissect the latest discourse hopefully without touching some wrong nerves and ruffle some feathers while also treading carefully not to be perceived as supporting one faction or the other.

Surely, the 2012 indaba will be a crunch time for the 'Old Guard' and the 'Young Turks' and the Primaries' stage was the undercurrent of whatever may happen due to the arithmetic's of delegates to the big indaba. Arguably, so far the wings' strategy not to raise their stakes high and support all the top 4 leaders without vying for a particular candidate openly seems to have worked for them. The test however, will be whether they will succeed in treading carefully not to throw in their lot behind a particular candidate behind the scene as some seems to have done lately. It will be interesting to find out if they will hold their cards close to their chest

and not be impetuous because if they bet on a wrong horse, the fiasco will dent their plans almost irreparably and will be left licking their wounds but if their horse prevails, they will be hoisted and shouldered high.

One just hopes, this is not the much talked about "devambonizing" doctrine to "break the Majority's Monopoly" that saw some equally deserving candidates been labeled as 'Omusati clique' and 'Ndonga element' while the plot was thickening on the other side with some vying for a "minority" candidate and using the same campaign strategies of their erstwhile nemesis with the sole difference of riding on the back of prominent names. The stumbling block, however, to the alleged 'minority hypothesis' is whether it will prove successful after it failed in other parts of Africa with devastating consequences in east Africa when the perceived 'majority' felt discriminated reversely by those who thought it was their turn to eat from the supposedly revolving State kitty and pot.

The President of the Party will also surely have to endure indirect soft jibes on his leadership as he will attempt to play the unifier between the different factions in the party and not be drawn in any dispute while ensuring that there is no repeat of the 2003 extraordinary congress. So far, he too played safely by publicly defending the Founding President as prompted by the top leadership but one does not know if he too has a particular candidate he is supporting. Meanwhile, his tutelage will be under scrutiny as he plays his cards, including by the Founding President and Father of the Nation, Dr. Sam Nujoma, who still, from the fringes of power, remains Namibia's foremost undisputed kingmaker who threw his weight behind him.

Judging from some disjointed tidbits of anecdotes from those who know him over a long stretch of time such as Professor Mburuma Kerina and the Speaker Theo-Ben Gurirab, Founding President Dr. Nujoma was always a leader, a unifier and a man of destiny who is 'very observant and chooses to listen more to others than do the talking, a unique man of never ending self-actualisation and a good judge of character and loyalty' said the Speaker who too can not be ruled out of the race. Thus it will be prudent for the 'alliance' of the wings to first seek the Founding President's guidance and wisdom as most of those contemplating vying for political office know that they need to secure his blessing, without which their chances of success may be slender.

The Founding President as a staunch believer in the Nation's unity and a great visionary and strategist once advised some candidates with the potential to win, to withdraw for the sake of unity and political stability in the party and the country. What remains to be seen though is whether all will abide by this call as some are said to be vying for a 'None-Oshiwambo' candidate and other options while others were overheard saying they prefer someone from Kavango region, 'since year in and year out this region together

with the northern regions and others delivered a land slide victory to the ruling party SWAPO unlike some constituencies which are still predominantly controlled by the opposition parties such as UDF and NUDO'.

It has always been my belief as a pan-africanist that People should not just be catapulted and wheelbarrowed into leadership positions but earn their positions by virtue of their embodiment of certain values and principles regardless of their place of origin, tribe, race or sex. Taking a cue from what President Pohamba once said that "Nujoma is our leader", thus the only camp I know is the Nujoma Camp and the only faction I belong to is the Nation's faction and I will follow the good shepherd lest I go astray and get entangled and embroiled in labyrinths of tribal discords. On that score, I agree with the editorial that the time of pinning hopes on factions is long gone. Let the best man or woman win based on charisma, humility, ideas and leadership quality and not tribe. Anyway, who are these 'minorities' and 'majorities', none-oshiwambo and Omusati-clique, Ndonga element and Kwankala/Omukuruha (the ancient one we found here)? And I thought the Namibian people formed one nation? Wake up from your slumber my people! Don't you see this is the bad seed of division planted to divide us? It is another legacy of slavery perpetuated to see ourselves as tribes and not as a nation and fight among us as the Luos and the Kikuyus did! It all started with stereotypes.

Indeed, the Founding father is the backbone of the country, no wonder the virulent attacks launched against him under the pretext of 'self-defense' by some revisionist seeking to rewrite history who are now saying that they "don't know Nujoma" yet wrote full dossiers and conspiracy theories full of vengeance about him. Does that mean that these writings were concocted together with the 'infamous notes' by those who are saying they "regret being part of the liberation struggle" that brought about our independence and ended colonialism and apartheid in Africa and yet they want us to make alliances with those who inherited the assets and liabilities of slavery, colonialism and apartheid's legacy and stand beside and watch while they vilify and kill our prophets and liberators? If we talk about our history and leaders we are told that is "history politics" and "personality cult" and we are used as 'megaphones' by a 'third force'? Was it not the Founding father who against all odds, successfully completed an assignment given to him by Chief Hosea Kutako and formally handed the reins of State power and relinquished the presidency of the party he led for a good 47 years in a peaceful transition? Hapo, ovina ovikwaye mokati koshiwana?

On another note, the usual columnist of the Namibian, dubbed the 'perpetual PhD fellow', reacting to what he termed 'official and unofficial' responses to the judgment of the Supreme Court, the Namibian Newspaper columnist Alfredo Hengari went on to say that just like Cameroon, subject of the International Crisis Group (ICGs) reports titled "Cameroon: a fragile

state" and "Cameroon: the dangers of a fracturing regime", "there are fault-lines in our democracy that we allowed to perpetuate and mutate" and "what one senses in the political make-up of our leadership is a party driven autocratic instinct undermining the very bases of our democratic space... which fault-lines have the potential to lead the country to become a failed state like Cameroon". A fitting response to Hengari's allegations comes from none other than President Paul Biya himself who said on the occasion of his country's golden jubilee, "we are independent because we wanted to be independent" (not because independence was brought on a silver platter). "Let us rather ask the question: What have we done with our independence?" President Biya answered the question by looking at where Africa was at the time of independence, and how the continent had to build from scratch.

"We had to start by building our states. It was no easy task... starting from the bottom, we extended our school system upwards, up to the universities which were non-existent at the time of independence. For most of our countries, an economy that relied on cash crops for export to the former colonial powers was beyond our grasp... Our learning of the economy has taken place in state-owned enterprises with well known vicissitudes. "We have undoubtedly proceeded by trial and error. But could it have been otherwise? I have mentioned our unpreparedness and inexperience. I could as well have included hunger, pandemics, civil war (and western sponsored 'regime change' projects), external pressure, and even corruption to justify our failures. We prefer to accept responsibility and say: 'we have done our best'. "By the way, can we talk of failures? For, if we think about it carefully, most of us inherited vast territories, without geographical harmony, without ethnic homogeneity, without cultural cohesion, and without linguistic uniformity. And each one of us, with disparate puzzle pieces, has done what took old nations centuries to accomplish" concluded President Biya.

Cameroon is a microcosm of West and Central Africa as it lies dead on the border between the two great regions. You have all the characteristic of Africa thrown together in a huge melting pot with two "official languages", English and French, and over 200 different ethnic and linguistic groups. Unless Hengari is confusing Namibia with Eritrea, where "there is a growing dissatisfaction and exasperation amongst a significant portion of the population... reflected in huge waves of refugees leaving the country..." as ICG's Mark Schneider told the BBC. Hengari should rather mind his P's and Q's before he prattles and keep on building castles in the air and romanticizing about 'concrete jungles' as well as iPads and other gadgets.

Meanwhile, I will sit at my fire place to reflect, meditate and pray as an African and not some mimicking slave out of a Eurocentric university and taught by TVs some glutinous words that stuck to his teeth.

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