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Populism, Democracy, and Party Institutionalization in Africa

Political Parties in the Age of Populism
University of Birmingham
April 26, 2018

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Narrowing the focus



Analyze populist leaders in Africa's democracies, which are relatively "young"

- Not focusing on earlier generations of populists under military regimes
- Not focusing on the use of exclusionary populism under authoritarian regimes

Who are we talking about?

- Charismatic leaders forge direct ties with heterogeneous, unorganized constituency for opportunistic purposes
- Public performances that rely on theatrical antics, embrace of anti-intellectualism, and an assertion of being "one" with the "people"
- Rhetorical discourse between the corrupt elite and "the pure people"

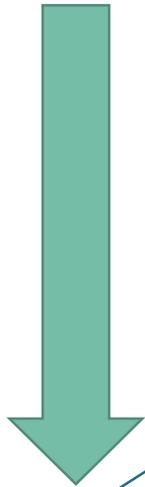
Drivers of Contemporary Populism



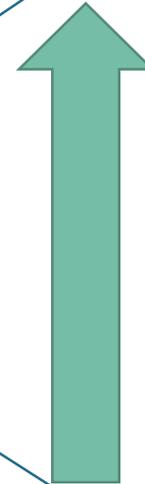
Supply Side Party System Drivers

- Disappointment with democracy
- Critical juncture in the party system

Window of opportunity for savvy politicians



Set of grievances on which to capitalize



- Economic resurgence with vast inequalities
- Rapid urbanization and expansion of urban poor

Demand Side Economic and Demographic Drivers

Populist Governance



Only a few cases of populist leaders who became president



Common tendencies

- Intentional weakening of opposition
- Frequent ministerial turnover
- Attempts to control succession trajectory
- Contraction of public debate and participation
- Undermine public institutions aimed at constraining executive power

Sata's Legacy: Weakened Institutions and Rights



High level of support from Zambia's urban areas, especially the poor compounds



In office, undermined the country's judiciary, civil society, political freedoms, and policy frameworks

- Expelled judges
- Local Government Services Commission used to control councils
- Enforced Public Order Act
- Attacked the media through defamation suits and blocking of news sites

Sata's Legacy: Party Flux and Polarization



Centralization of the PF around Sata

- Created deputy minister positions to encourage defections to the PF
- Excessive cabinet reshuffling
- No openly declared successor

Edgar Lungu has become Zambia's Maduro

- Shut down *The Post*
- Declared “state of emergency”
- Market arsons, surveillance at UNZA, perception of a Bemba-Tonga polarization
- Cultural of electoral violence by PF party cadres



MMD co-opted, proliferation of new parties (National Democratic Conference, Rainbow, Socialist) led by members of the old ones

Wade: Le Président de la Rue



Wade appealed to young, urban informal workers through his blue marches in 2000

High centralization of power once in office

- Removed 5 prime ministers during his tenure
- Applied Article 80 of the 1977 penal code
- National Council for the Regulation of Broadcasting established in 2006
- Manipulated constitutional council to stand for third term

Party proliferation contributed to high electoral volatility and violence in 2012 elections

- 39.2 between 2007 and 2012, compared with 13 between 1983-1998

Zuma's State of Capture



Zuma's selection in 2007 at Polokwane conference re-vamped party support, especially among Born Frees

- His 2009 campaign helped ANC garner one million more votes than it had obtained in 1994
- Involved coalition of odd bedfellows, requiring patronage in exchange for loyalty

Corruption worsened under Zuma's tenure

- Expenditure of more than \$23 million on his private home at Nklanda
- Family owns more than 100 company directorships
- Allowed the Gupta family to influence selection of cabinet members, resulting in multiple ministers of finance

Zuma's State of Capture



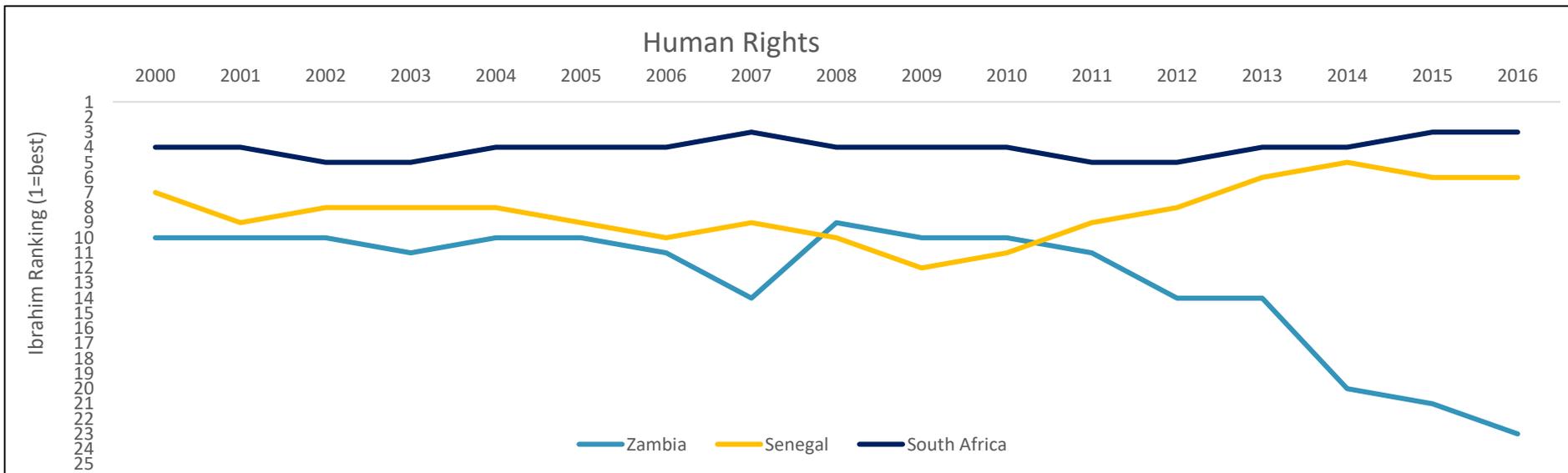
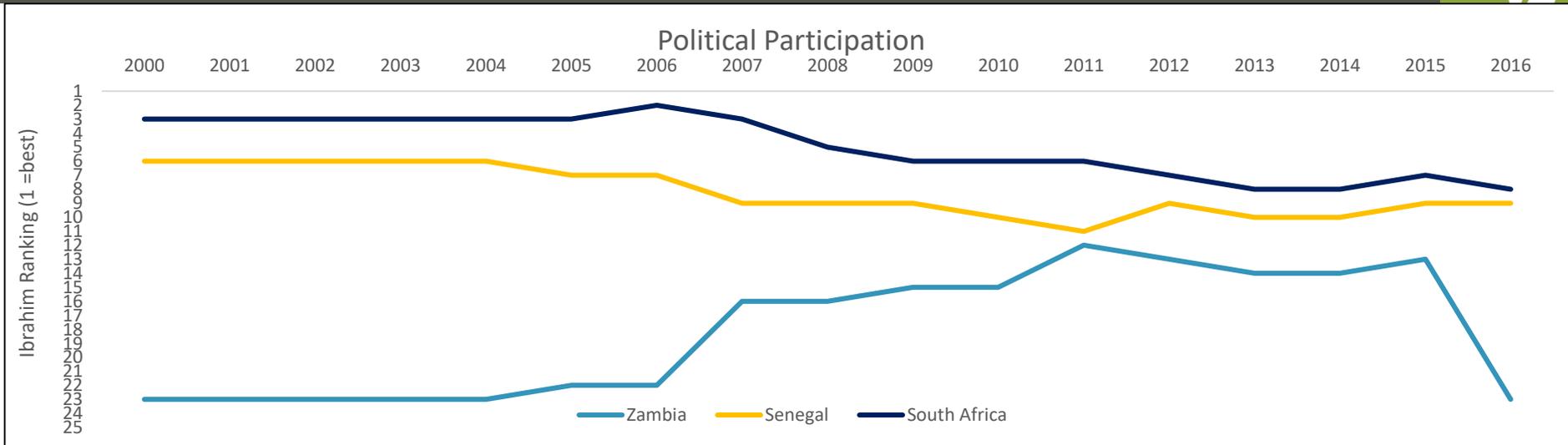
Undermined the country's judiciary, civil society, political freedoms, and policy frameworks

- Disbanded the National Prosecuting Authority (Scorpions)
- Signed Protection of Information Bill in November 2011
- Utilized the National Key Points Act to restrict locations accessible to public
- Undermined the independence of the South African Broadcasting Company

Party unity threatened...but maintained

- Motlanthe vs. Zuma in 2012 conference
- Hegemony of party diminished with results of the 2016 elections
- Candidate selection processes more opaque
- Multiple no-confidence votes fomented divisions in party
- Intense rivalry between Ramaphosa and Dlamini-Zuma

Rankings on Participation & Rights



Populist Governance in Africa



On the one hand...

- Upset traditional party establishments, increased turnout, and resonated with the poor
- Inspired other opposition parties



On the other hand...

- Populists portray themselves as both **above the party** *and* **with the people**, resulting in a disdain for democratic institutions and civil liberties that inhibit personal or policy agendas
- The strength and nature of the party system---fragmented versus dominant--prior to the rise of populist leaders plays an important role