The Ethnic Heritage of Party Politics and Political Communication in Lusophone African Countries FREE

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Summary

The processes through which ethnicity becomes visible are varied, and its impacts have not always been the same throughout history. Investigating the roles ethnicity played in Angolan, Mozambican, Cape Verdean, and São Tomé and Principean histories makes clear that colonizers themselves placed different emphases on the relevance and the role of ethnicity in these countries. Currently, partly due to the traumas engendered by decades of conflict in Angola and Mozambique, ethnicity is mostly a silent factor, operating in the ways people interact with one another but not overtly mentioned by politicians. The insular nations' (Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe) history with ethnicity is different from that of their continental counterparts, – partly due to the influence of Creoleness – but is not devoid of tensions; nevertheless, politicians from both archipelagic countries tend to downplay the influence of ethnicity, even if its effects can also be occasionally but subtly felt. More recently, mainstream political discourses focused on the idea of the "unitary nation" are being paired with those of spontaneous movements advocating the valorization of local cultures and languages, which are being boosted by the use of social media.

Keywords: Angola, Cape Verde, democratization, ethnicity, media, Mozambique, party politics, political communication, São Tomé and Príncipe, race and ethnicity communication

Subjects: Communication and Technology, Communication and Social Change, Political Communication

Introduction

This article looks at the ethnic heritage of politics in the Lusophone African countries, including both countries with ethnic fragmentation and those with more homogeneous ethnic roots. It assesses formal and informal constraints on the expression of ethnic diversity, such as constitutions limiting how differences can be expressed, mandates enforcing political parties' national character, or the unequal treatment of different tribes and ethnic groups. The approach thus examines both countries with more homogeneous ethnic roots (Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe) and those where ethnic fragmentation is relevant (Angola and Mozambique) in order to evaluate the role and discuss the importance of ethnicity in shaping these countries' political processes, from the independence and democratization processes to political competition in elections and political communication in general.

We are interested in assessing whether and how ethnicity has been framing these countries' democracy-building processes and party politics; and how the role attributed to ethnicity has changed over time in the course of their recent history. The approach is supported by interviews with experts and document analysis (e.g., political parties' manifestos and speeches by political

leaders), on the basis of which it considers the most representative discursive repertoires and the main features of political discourses focused on ethnicity, as well as the role of different types of media in nation-building efforts and the assertion of local ethnic identities.

The Role of Ethnicity in the Independence and Democratization Processes

Despite their differences, all of Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe's histories became associated with ethnic diversity through Portuguese colonialism, which was an important vector for the politicization of ethnic diversity, especially during the independence period and at the beginning of the democratization process. In former Portuguese colonies, as in other territories subjected to colonialism, ethnicity was not only shaped by history and familial or communal relationships but also by policies including forced labor (in its different guises), assimilation, religious conversion, and the drawing of political borders that did not reflect the spaces occupied by different African populations (Fortuna & Cahen, 2013; Jerónimo & Monteiro, 2020; Neto, 1997, 2017).

The political representation of ethnic diversity represents inclusion and the solidness of democratization processes. Thus, one would expect to find ethnic diversity to be a prominent feature of contemporary democracies, particularly in ethnically heterogeneous countries. Although some authors point to the political participation of minorities and majorities alike as crucial for ensuring the legitimacy and stability of democratic governance (e.g., Just, 2022, February 04), Lusophone African countries illustrate a different understanding of the role of ethnicity in politics. In fact, diversity was often overlooked in these countries' nation-building projects, which favored an idea of unity against the common enemy of colonialism as well as the territorial fragmentation that could potentially lead to conflict and eventually war. This was the most prevalent narrative in the Lusophone African countries, and particularly in Angola and Mozambique, where ethnic diversity was, and still is today, an important demographic feature. The importance of diversity was often overlooked in nation-building strategies under the banner of antitribalism: during the anticolonial wars, the need for joint efforts to fight against the common enemy that was Portuguese colonialism was stressed, along with the desire to avoid territorial fragmentation, while, after independence, former liberation movements turned into political parties, such as the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO).

The Independence Processes

These narratives were hegemonic in Lusophone African countries, but especially in Angola and Mozambique, where there is a greater degree of ethnic diversity and, therefore, the issue was more salient. However, as experts posit (e.g., Fernando Florêncio, online interview, 25 June 2021), a distinction could be drawn between the official elite political discourse and the agency of specific populations. For instance, while at no point did the Angolan or Mozambican governments emphasize ethnicity, since it was incompatible with their nation-building efforts, this does not mean that it does not play a role in how people see and interact with each other in those

countries, as well as in their electoral choices. Its influence lingers in regional stereotypes (e.g., Martins, 2015), as well as in the fact that parties are still associated with the regions they occupied during the war: for instance, the Maputo province in Mozambique still predominantly votes for FRELIMO. In Angola, ethnicity was also used as a weapon: the MPLA accused National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) of an "ethnic fundamentalism," while after the massacres of the end of October 1992, certain ethnic and racial groups accused the MPLA government of waging a war of "ethnic cleansing" (Messiant, 1994).

As Atlantic archipelagos, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe were uninhabited islands when Portuguese explorers found them in 1460 and 1470, respectively (Seibert, 2014). Initially, settlers tried to exploit agricultural goods on the islands, but the main roles of both archipelagos in Portuguese naval expansionism were as outposts where enslaved people captured in continental West Africa were kept on the way to Brazil in the triangular Atlantic trade system (Castro, 1978). This coerced movement of people along with the presence of white Portuguese colonists resulted in interracial relationships and, with it, Creoleness, one of the main frames through which both Cape Verdean and Santomean identity is conceptualized, as noted by experts such as Armindo Ceita, Odair Barros-Varela, Olavo Bilac Cardoso, and Isabel Ferreira. This basically means a way of being which is not quite European and not quite African, and that sometimes causes tensions between Cape Verdeans and mainland Africans (e.g., Alves Furtado, 2012; Lopes, 2014a).

The complexity of São Tomé and Príncipe's demographic history and ethnic identity increased in the 18th and 19th centuries during the so-called second colonization period (Seibert, 2018); cacao and coffee plantations were developed, triggering a new wave of African arrivals, namely "contract workers" from Cape Verde and Angola. This is especially noticeable on Príncipe Island where, today, a large percentage of the population are descended from these workers. According to Seibert, the archipelago's population is composed of a large majority of *forros* (descendants of freed Santomean slaves), around 84.9% of the total; 8.5% are descended from Cape Verdean workers, and 6.6% are descended from the *angolares* (continental workers).

Angola and Mozambique, on the other hand, had long been home to a plethora of ethnic groups and several kingdoms – such as Kongo, Ndongo, and Wambo in Angola – all of which had thrived in those territories prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, (Caregnato, 2011). The major ethnolinguistic groups in Angola are: Ambundu, Bakongo, Khoisan, Ovadonga, Ovahelelo, Ovakwanyama, Ovanyaneka, Ovimbundu, Tchokwe, and Vangangela (Instituto de Geodesia e Cartografia de Angola, n.d.), while in Mozambique these are: Ajua, Anguro, Barue, Chengua, Chicundá, Chope, Chuabo, Lomué, Maconde, Macua, Maganja, Ndau, Ngoni, Nhanja, Nhungue, Podzo, Ronga, Sena, Shangaan, Swahili, Swazi, Tauara, Tonga, Tsua, and Zimba (Castro, 1978).

Despite the colonists' having landed in northern Angola for the first time in 1482 and in southern Mozambique less than 20 years later, effective exploration and settlement of Angola and Mozambique were only spurred in the late 19th century, when the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) enshrined the principle of effective occupation as a requirement for the major European powers to recognize land claims (Lains, 1998). Explorers and cartographers were driven inland and thus into direct contact with largely unknown, ethnically diverse populations. Up to that point, Portuguese land possessions had been limited, the number of settlers small, and economic

activity almost exclusively tied to the trade of enslaved people and extractive activities like mining. Agriculture only started to develop from the 1840s, and Portugal continued to lack resources in comparison with other colonizers, maintaining low levels of capital investment and small numbers of Portuguese inhabitants until the Second World War (Seleti, 1990), meaning low levels of contact between some African populations – especially those living farther from the sea – and the colonizers. Additionally, while other European powers invested in anthropological expeditions to study the societies living in the territories they occupied, the Portuguese did so to a lesser extent, precluding the development of different frames of interaction with different groups, even if based on biases and inaccuracies that tainted those studies (Martins, 2021).

Thus, the development of the idea of ethnic communities was slower in Angola and Mozambique than in other African countries. Heywood (2000) states, regarding the Angolan Ovimbundu, that notions of local belonging or loyalty to a local leader trumped the idea of belonging to a larger group. Vail (1989) highlights how the culture of Bible studies was instrumental for the codification of local languages, customs, and traditions, while Neto (1997) explains the relevance of Baptist, Methodist, and Congregationalist missionaries in developing shared Ambundu and Ovibundu identities integrating theretofore distinct groups. Similar dynamics were described in Mozambique by Cabaço (2007), or Serva Pereira (2019), for example.

The subject of ethnicity became more fraught in Angola and Mozambique with the advent of the liberation movements. In Angola, multiple strands of nationalism emerged which, according to Pearce, were "the product of the differentiated colonial presence across Angola and the political and economic changes that were imposed by the Portuguese Estado Novo . . . in the late colonial period" (Pearce, 2015, p. 24). Although Pearce, following other researchers, rejects the distinction between the "modernizing nationalism" attributed to the MPLA and the "ethno-nationalism" attributed to other movements (Pearce, 2015, pp. 25–26), the first liberation movement to appear (in 1954) was the Holden Roberto–led UPNA (Union of North Angolan Populations), whose original aim was the restoration of the historical Kingdom of Kongo. It reconfigured after its plans were derided as "anachronistically tribal" in 1958's All-African Peoples Conference, where Ghanian prime minister Kwame Nkrumah's pan-Africanism was well received: African leaders thought it would be wiser to keep extant colonial borders than to run the risk of upheaval, but those elites' political imaginaries were themselves defined by those borders (Fortuna & Cahen, 2013). Thus, the UPNA became the UPA (Union of Angolan Populations), despite remaining heavily associated with Bakongo ethnicity (Martins, 2021, p. 93) and territorially ensconced in northern territories bordering Congo and in the Cabinda exclave.

Although there were exceptions, like Mozambique's UNAR (Rombézia National Union), most liberation movements did not advocate for territorial separatism and claimed antitribalism as part of their ideology. Nevertheless, different movements became associated with ethnicities or, at least, places of origin and, in Angola, different religious sects. For instance, UNITA was linked with Ovimbundu living in the Central Highlands and Congregationalist evangelical Christianism, and its first leader, Jonas Savimbi, was indeed a Congregationalist Ovimbundu who spoke Umbundu fluently (Martins, 2021). Similarly, the MPLA was perceived as a northern "Kamboyoko" movement, especially in rural Eastern Angola, due to its urban character and the salience of Cabinda and Kongo recruits and cadres, despite having been founded by Methodist

Ambundu, mixed-race intellectuals and white Angolans living in Luanda and the Musseques, the outer neighborhoods; this led other movements—especially UNITA—to deride MPLA as a movement borne from the offspring of colonialism (Bittencourt, 1997; Mabeko-Tali, 2018).

In Mozambique, there was a late-19th-century change of colonial capital from the Island of Mozambique to the small town of Xilunguine (renamed Lourenço Marques) reflecting an economic realignment from slave trading and agriculture to a service economy dependent on South Africa. This meant that African, Luso-African, Luso-Indian, and Luso-Arab elites living in the north of the country were marginalized, precluding the formation of a movement with Creole elements like the MPLA (Cahen, 2017). Thus, when FRELIMO coalesced in the capital around figures such as Eduardo Mondlane and Samora Machel, both southerners, it found most of its support in the adjacent region, populated by the Tsonga-Shangaan, but also in the northeastern province of Cabo Delgado, predominantly inhabited by Maconde peasants (Chichava, 2007). Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), on the other hand, was initially backed by Portuguese, Rhodesian, and South African reactionaries (Florêncio, 2002), but became entwined with populations during its years in the bush as a guerrilla force, eventually becoming associated with the Ndau ethnic group, which provided it with leaders like André Matsanganiça and Afonso Dhlakama (Chichava, 2008).

Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe's transitions to independence were very different from those of continental Lusophone African countries, as well as from each other's, owing to different historical, geographic, and demographic characteristics. The role of ethnicity in the Cape Verdean liberation movement, embodied by the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea [Bissau] and Cape Verde) and its charismatic Guinean-born Cape Verdean leader Amílcar Cabral, was only indirect. While in the archipelago the discourse of Creoleness was already hegemonic, that was not true on the mainland, where several distinct ethnic groups coexisted. Cabral hoped to unite both territories under the same administration (Cabral, 1978), but that never came to pass, and the Cape Verdean and Guinean branches of the party became independent after Cabral was murdered in 1973 and Guinea–Bissau proclaimed its own independence. The PAICV (African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde) would then rule Cape Verde as a single party for 25 years, striving to build a unitary nation state which, in the party's view, rested on the narrative that the Cape Verdean nation preceded its state (Alves Furtado, 2012).

In São Tomé and Príncipe, the issue of independence was more closely intertwined with those of race and ethnicity. In fact, tensions and resentments between colonists and the ethnic majority of *forros* had begun to build up in 1953, in the aftermath of the Batepá massacre, when the forceful commandeering of *forro* workers for public works precipitated a revolt which the Portuguese forces violently repressed (Newitt, 2004; Rosas, 2018); this event still resonates in contemporary Santomean culture (Nascimento Rodrigues, 2018). As a reaction, Santomean elites, including Miguel Trovoada, Manuel Pinto da Costa, and Carlos Graça, coalesced in a group that started to demand independence, eventually founding the MLSTP (São Tomé and Príncipe Liberation Movement) in 1972 (Newitt, 2004). Like the PAIGC in Cape Verde, this was the only liberation movement in the country, and it too did not see combat, instead negotiating its independence

with Portugal's new democratic regime. Also like the PAIGC, the MLSTP then became São Tomé and Príncipe's single party until 1990, when the International Monetary Fund demanded democratic reforms in exchange for economic aid (Seibert, 1998).

The Democratization Processes

Angola and Mozambique experienced violent anticolonial wars, directly followed by the eruption of equally fierce civil conflicts between the liberation movements that negotiated independence—MPLA in Angola and FRELIMO in Mozambique—and their main rivals—UNITA and RENAMO, respectively. During this period, the liberation movements' ethnic roots were reinforced, despite all sides rejecting the "tribalist label" for themselves and foisting it onto others (e.g., Chichava, 2007). This is exemplified, for instance, by the fact that the MPLA proclaimed its antitribalism in the first two articles of its original program (MPLA, 1975), while Jonas Savimbi, the first leader of UNITA, stated in an interview in 1979, "UNITA is the only one fighting tribalism," asserting that UNITA's being mostly connected with southern Angola was a mere reflection of where the liberation movements were at the start of the war (Rosa, 1979, p. 44). He accused the MPLA of "using tribal appeals to undermine UNITA's political rise and to break democratic rules" (Rosa, 1979, p. 14).

During the anticolonial wars, despite overtly rebuffing tribalism, the liberation movements had used ethnicity as a useful tool to counteract the lack of feeling of national belonging among Angolans and Mozambicans (Batsîkama, 2015; Chichava, 2008). Martins asserts that the current Angolan and Mozambican political systems developed from "ethnic embryos," especially since the liberation movements in the anticolonial struggle became the warring factions in the civil wars, and the most important parties in the democratization processes (online interview with Vasco Martins, 6 June 2021 Vasco Martins, 2021). After independence, during the civil wars, ethnicity remained a useful recruitment tool, owing to geographic, historic, pragmatic, and social factors. Savimbi's argument regarding the starting points of liberation movements was maintained by his immediate successor in the UNITA leadership, Isaías Samakuva (Samakuva, 28 January 6th 2016), while the party's current president, Adalberto Costa Júnior, emphasizes its national character and rejects the suggestion that it is associated with specific provinces or "the South" at large (Santos, 2019). It is true, however, that Angolan liberation movements tended to settle and build infrastructure around their home bases and not to expand their territory dramatically, meaning that the areas from which they could expect to draw recruits were generally associated with specific ethnic groups (Marcum, 1978). Furthermore, the movements were aware of the power of ethnic appeals, particularly after the UPA's success in mobilizing the Bakongo (see e.g., Messiant, 1994), so it became a way of operating: they reinforced their appeal by, for instance, conducting awareness campaigns in local languages and developing clientelist networks through which people from certain ethnic groups could obtain scholarships to study abroad or other material benefits (as posited by experts, such as Hitler Samussuku and Vasco Martins in online interviews in 24 and 16 June 2021 respectively). This approach brought in new recruits beyond those motivated by political conviction, family or other social ties, or simple geographical proximity to the areas where movements operated.

The history of Mozambique's liberation movements is different from that of those in Angola, primarily because, unlike in the latter territory, only FRELIMO was present before independence, so it was that movement that negotiated the terms of that independence and undisputedly occupied the seat of government in the capital Lourenço Marques, which it renamed Maputo in 1976. The new government quickly embarked on a campaign of "authoritarian modernization" through the nationalization of the inchoate private sector and steamrolling of ethnicity, labeled as tribalism and obscurantism, in favor of nationality (Cahen, 2017; Emerson, 2014). These policies were unpopular but were violently enforced, alienating populations, particularly in rural areas, and paving the way for RENAMO's success, since it promised to protect traditional ways of life (Lourenço, 2012). This explains RENAMO's success in recruitment in the populous northeastern Zambézia province, where damage caused by the ensuing civil war were particularly severe and blamed on FRELIMO, which was seen as representing the southern provinces (Chichava, 2007). RENAMO became progressively 'Bantuized' as the war wore on, relying on Ndau operatives. Afonso Dhlakama was a driving force in this process, which also entailed the adoption of Chindau as the movement's official language (online interview with Fernando Florêncio, 25 June 2021).

In the spirit of the Rome General Peace Accords'sarticle 2's statement that parties could not follow "regionalist, tribalist, separatist, racial, ethnic, and religious" agendas, the new constitution required parties to have a national scope, defend national interests, and contribute to the strengthening of the Mozambican nation (Emerson, 2014, art. 75 no. 2). Further regulation required a minimum number of signatories per province (Moroff, 2010; online interview with Celestino Joanguete, 29 June 2021). Regardless, the number of new parties exploded, although none were overtly ethnic in nature. Civil society organizations, many regional in nature, also boomed, as did community radio stations broadcasting in local languages.

Under the leaderships of Joaquim Chissano, Armando Guebuza, and Filipe Nyusi, FRELIMO has tried to reconcile itself with the more traditional aspects of Mozambican culture, partially as an insurance against RENAMO which, in the period following the introduction of multipartyism, began to electorally threaten the dominant party's rule. In the mid-2000s, Carbone (2005) and Chichava (2007) reported the permanence of an uneven distribution of votes and the enduring unpopularity of FRELIMO in northern provinces, although Cheeseman and Larmer (2015) showed the effectiveness of the party's new strategy in decreasing ethnopolitical cleavages. However, tensions have recently reemerged in the northern Cabo Delgado province, with the emergence of the secessionist, religious extremist Al-Shabaab. Ossufo Momade, RENAMO's current leader, has used this development to emphasize his proximity with northern Muslims and blame FRELIMO for failing to quell the unrest; in turn, President Filipe Nyusi accused his rival of stoking ethnic cleavages for political gain (Chichava, 2019); with this accusation, he effectively returned to civil war discourse.

Similarly, in Angola, the party in power during the civil war (MPLA) used state authority to impose a "MPLA model of nation state" (Batsîkama, 2014, p. 59), based on the idea of an unitary nation "from Cabinda to Cunene" (dos Santos, 8 September 2018), despite its original manifesto's proclaiming that "each ethnicity shall have the right to use its language, codify it in writing, and conserve and renew its cultural heritage" (1975, p. 4, article 2). The fact that MPLA's

state-building efforts were largely confined to the cities and areas it could militarily secure rendered its discourse less plausible in other Angolan settings (Pearce, 2015). UNITA reacted by leaning into and manipulating traditional and rural ways of life, and used them to enhance its territorial control, which it exercised in a way reminiscent of colonialism's indirect rule; namely, by co-opting *sobas*, that is, local kings (Florêncio, 2010; Orre, 2009). The MPLA had access to a larger pool of resources, allowing it to achieve some success in nation-building and in weakening ethnocultural ties, but positions on "traditional Angolanness" reverberate even in peace: for instance, MPLA cadres still tend to use Portuguese-language names, like President João Lourenço, and the party is still perceived as standing for "modernization" and "westernization"; in contrast, UNITA is associated with cultural conservatism and traditionalism and its cadres have tended to use names from local languages, like former leader Isaías Samakuva and Savimbi himself (online interview with Hitler Samussuku, 24 June 2021).

The fact that São Tomé and Príncipe is made up of small, scarcely populated islands made it difficult to establish a political system capable of looking beyond traditional elites, personal relations, and clientelist networks, meaning that despite the regime change and the democratization process initiated in the 1990s, the political protagonists remained much the same as those from before multipartyism (Seibert, 1998), namely the Pinto da Costa and Trovoada families. Manuel Pinto da Costa, the MLSTP's leading figure, was the president before and after multipartyism (1975–1991 and 2011–2016), while Miguel Trovoada who inspired the new party the ADI (Independent Democratic Action), was president from 1991 to 2001. Trovoada is also the father of Patrice Trovoada, another leading figure in the same party, who was prime minister in 2008, 2010–2012, 2014–2018, and from 2022. Seibert (1998) explains that "political actions are mainly connected with personal relations based on individual contact instead of indirect, administrative relations," which makes São Tomé's politics highly personalized and contributes to a stasis among its elites, with "all party leaders coming from the same small elite" (Seibert, 1998, p. 7). Its parties' support is heterogeneous, since they do not stand for different socioeconomic interests and political loyalty is frequently based on personal loyalty and clientelism.

The dominant narrative regarding the relation between politics and ethnicity in São Tomé and Príncipe is that the latter plays no role in the former, as clientelism and socioeconomic status are more important factors. Nevertheless, experience has shown that there are advantages to being a member of the dominant *forro* group, as experts noted in interviews (e.g., Armando Ceita and Gerhard Seibert). This ethnic group has occupied almost all political offices since independence, while the first time a descendant of Cape Verdeans was elected as an administrator in the Príncipe Island was in 2020, despite this group's making up around 80% of the population. The case of the new political party MCISTP (Movement of São Tomé and Príncipe's Independent Citizens) is interesting because of its intimate connection with the Caué neighborhood, where the Angolar group is dominant: this party was not only founded in Caué, in 2018, but it also obtained 1,659 votes of a total of 2,267 in that area, which have allowed the party to elect two MPs (Nascimento, 2019). Although political exclusion in São Tomé and Príncipe is not based on ethnicity, experts (e.g., Gerhard Siebert) note that it does not seem likely that someone from outside the *forro* ethnic group will become the country's prime minister or president, at least in the near future.

In Cape Verde, the PAICV, despite having ruled as a single party prior to 1990, became one of the main political parties in what is considered one of the most successful democracy-building processes that have taken place in Africa (e.g., Freedom House, 2021). Cape Verdean Creole identity had been enforced before democratization to such an extent that it became even more integral to the national *ethos* than it was in São Tomé and Príncipe, to such an extent that it is not even considered controversial in Cape Verdean politics (online interview with Olavo Bilac Cardoso, 9 July 2021). Regionalism and localism are considered as more relevant cleavages, exacerbated by inequalities among the islands. Simultaneously, the idea of a homogeneous Creoleness is questioned by the existence of different dialects, specific to the islands they evolved in: despite the fact that Badio, from Santiago Island, is the most dominant dialect, Cape Verdeans from other islands chafe at its perceived imposition (Lopes, 2014b). Cape Verdean politicians recognize the importance of regional differences and try to adapt by employing adequate words and idioms when addressing different populations, to ensure they are understood by potential voters (online interview with Olavo Bilac Cardoso, 9 July 2021), even if those differences are framed as a natural and necessary part of Cape Verdean unity.

Political Competition

Although it is usually combined with other elements, there seems to be evidence of—at least—a latent influence of ethnicity in politics, and thus of ethnicity playing a role in shaping political competition and, by extension, political communication, particularly in Angola, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. Literature focused on other African countries has noted this relevance and underlined its complexity. Koter (2019), for example, has found evidence that the election of a coethnic politician for president increases national identification, while Lynch (2018) has demonstrated that the realities of ethnically delineated political support reflect pragmatism and expectations of patronage. Even though Cheeseman and Ford (2007) showed that the majority of African political parties are not ethnic in nature and that, on average, opposition parties tend to be less ethnically diverse than those in power (and trends show that ruling parties are becoming more diverse and less polarized), these authors concluded that the evolution of ethnicity as a political cleavage is complex: while the ruling parties' need to build coalitions has pushed them into multiethnic political alliances which can be presented as truly national, opposition parties have often tried to mobilize ethnically homogeneous communities, exaggerating the salience of ethnic cleavages.

As Bogaards et al. (2010) explain, African countries have dealt differently with ethnic and otherwise particularistic parties. Some decided to ban ethnic parties outright, fearing (a) that the politicization of ethnicity would lead to majoritarian, exclusive, and suppressive policies; (b) that oppression would lead minority groups to resort to violence or other nondemocratic means to protect their interests; (c) that ethnic politics would lead to more emotional appeals and, eventually, to conflict; and that (d) they would entrench societal divisions instead of bridging them.

Despite the initial orientation of the liberation movements and the fact that several conflicts in Angola were rooted in ethnic exclusion and violence (e.g., several assassinations of Ovimbundu and Bakongos for political reasons, in 1992 and 1993, in the lead-up to the reignition of civil war), ethnic elements have become less visible in Angola since then. Such elements are even sometimes considered taboo and are stigmatized due to their association with the civil war. Currently, the older political parties (MPLA, UNITA) have members and supporters from all ethnic groups, and newer ones, such as Broad Convergence for the Salvation of Angola - Electoral Coalition (CASA-CE), do not have an ethnic purpose or a political agenda that is closely related to ethnical issues. There is no explicit exclusion from active political life based on ethnicity, but there are occasional squabbles in politics in which ethnic origin is referred to derogatorily.

Although neopatrimonialism is the most relevant dynamic in the distribution of resources (Messiant, 2019; Oliveira, 2015) and ethnicity is not a central element in the political system, the latter has been a factor influencing political mobilization and political choices. During the MPLA's rule, some tribal stereotypes and prejudices have been reflected in the division of labor and in the distribution of benefits (e.g., provision of scholarships for Ambundus, who were considered more capable academically, while the Chocué were mobilized for war due to their perceived physical skills), and these still bear some influence. Such decisions have created lingering inequalities between the different tribes and ethnic groups, as some have had less access to education and therefore to political positions and prominent, high-status professions. More recently, there has been a movement toward the valorization of local languages and cultures, partly boosted by social media use.

The MPLA still promotes "Angolanness" through "common national values" (MPLA, 2017, p. 8), and engages voters in electoral campaigns by using local languages; but this is not as easy for a party mostly centered in Luanda as it is for its competitors, and this forces the party to look for local supporters who can communicate the party's message effectively. National MPLA leaders are frequently unable to speak local languages beyond simple pleasantries, so provincial candidates are selected based on their notoriety, with the assumption it will positively impact the party's share of the vote. A noteworthy exception in the past was the choice of Marcolino Moco for the position of MPLA's general secretary; the appointment followed an ethnic logic and was successful in the sense that it meant an increase of votes for the MPLA among the Ovimbundus, but he was also the target of ethnic-based protests by the Ambundus.

Furthermore, ethnicity can, in some cases, become a determining factor in party identification, particularly if it is associated with personal relationships, in the sense that if the most visible members of a tribe vote for a given party, their electoral behavior will very likely influence the rest of the members of the tribe to vote for the same party. The relevance of the ethnic vote is also confirmed by the fact that parties sometimes try to manipulate and corrupt the local authorities and particularly the *sobas* (Florêncio, 2010), not only because of the latters' prestige in local communities, but also because they directly control ballot boxes, which are often placed in their houses (online interview with Hitler Samussuku, 24 June 2021). The MPLA is usually more successful in influencing the *sobas*' choices and in instrumentalizing their local power, despite some sobas choosing to influence local populations' votes based on ethnicity.

UNITA's (2012) electoral manifesto signaled this issue, proposing a different policy:

> The current government, unfortunately, has invaded, subverted, and politicized traditional power. Many *sobas* and kings have been arbitrarily removed and substituted by people controlled by party leaders. This is a full-on attack on our cultural and historical values. UNITA's government will strive for a state that recognizes traditional authorities as valid and responsible interlocutors in social and political life. It will respect each region's traditions and, thus, will not interfere in the choice of traditional authorities (2012, p. 14)

In the 2022 campaign, Adalberto Costa Júnior professed his respect for Angolan cultural and ethnic diversity, and met with traditional authorities, blasting the government for "mistreating" them (Novo Jornal, 2022; Televisão Pública Angolana, 2022), thus showing a continuity in UNITA's strategy regarding traditional, local authorities.

As in Angola, the topic of ethnicity is still somewhat taboo in Mozambique, and the recognition of its role in conflicts is avoided. Nevertheless, experts like José Flávio Teixeira have observed that the Tsonga-Changana (in the Maputo province) and the Maconde (in Cabo Delgado), remain overwhelmingly in favor of Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), receiving political power and material resources like access to jobs and benefits in exchange. Despite evidence of ethnicity losing salience in Mozambican politics (Cheeseman & Ford, 2007), fraught dynamics occasionally reemerge, as happened in the 2019 elections, when Al-Shabaab's attacks disrupted registration and voting and dominated politician's campaign speeches (Chichava, 2019).

All Mozambican political parties strive to ensure their membership is ethnically diverse (online interview with Celestino Joanguete, 29 June 2021), and most are engaged in efforts to reactivate local traditional cultures. This represents a significant change to FRELIMO's policy preferences (Campos, 2015), in part as a ploy to dispel the perception that it is antitraditionalist and to court support in rural areas, especially as RENAMO's political significance increases. RENAMO's electoral manifestos, including the latest (RENAMO, 2019, p. 18), highlight the vow to "value traditional authorities and reinforce cooperation with them, to support local development." The reorientation of FRELIMO regarding traditional authorities started in 1994, when President Chissano promoted a major change in policy that aimed at reconciliation with localism and traditionalism. This included, for instance, mandating bilingualism in electoral campaigns where parties were forced to choose candidates able to communicate in local languages. But is main objective was to instrumentalize traditional authorities and promote "neo-patrimonial indirect rule" (online interview with Fernando Florêncio, 25 June 2021). Nevertheless, FRELIMO's (2019) electoral manifesto still considers "national unity [as] the most potent and versatile weapon developed by the FRELIMO to achieve national independence, edify the Mozambican state, and defend the country's sovereignty" (2019, p. 23).

Historically, the political weight of ethnicity has been exploited for different purposes. Former President Armando Guebuza employed nakedly nationalist rhetoric but simultaneously promoted local languages (Mboene, 2016), in contrast with earlier leaders, like Samora Machel, who would try to neutralize ethnic cleavages (Chichava, 2007; Mutsvairo & Salgado, 2021). Ethnic tensions have been manipulated by different political actors in Mozambique. Today, this takes the form of

pandering, and the use of local languages—seen as signaling proximity to shared roots and customs—to increase engagement by local populations. This is particularly common in the provinces where the largest ethnic groups live.

Norris and Mattes (2013) have also found evidence supporting the importance of ethnic voting, as ethnic-group membership appears as a significant predictor of partisan attachments in several countries. Nevertheless, as these authors underline, ethnic voting is only part of a more complex set of considerations that includes the citizens' instrumental appraisals of the parties' performances in government, which suggests a growing importance of other elements, such as political communication or issue stances. In fact, considering that there might be cultural and linguistic barriers that arise from different existing ethnic and regional loyalties, how political ideas and opinions are communicated is of the utmost importance. Furthermore, the opportunities provided by modernization, as well as by the nature of party competition and most parties' relative lack of programmatic depth, have been seized upon by political actors who fuse ethnolinguistic appeals and antielitist, populist language coupled with critiques of the service-delivery, housing, and employment markets; these tactics tend to attract urban impoverished communities, creating a sort of "ethnic populism" (Resnick, 2010). Media control is also an important factor, as political information can be, and often is, leveraged for political gain.

Political Communication, Languages, and Media

News media coverage in the Portuguese-speaking African countries is usually unbalanced, favoring the party in power (e.g., Ceita, 2015; Ribeiro, 2019; Salgado, 2014). Nevertheless, there are some cases in which the media have had an important role in democratization and in giving a voice to alternative political actors, which in turn impacts the visibility of local cultures and languages and the salience of ethnic issues.

In Mozambique, although public media providers such as Televisão de Moçambique are considered "the most blatant mouthpieces of the ruling party" (Mare, 2014, p. 17), the diversification of media outlets has allowed the emergence of actors that are not committed to FRELIMO's nation-building project, engendering an increase of political discourses focused on ethnicity. Local languages and cultures have also been promoted by media outlets producing programs in different languages and showing elements of local cultures. Community radios broadcasting in local languages are especially important in the dissemination of local cultures and ethnic diversity, despite initial FRELIMO resistance to this UNESCO-supported program, due to lack of control over content; regional journalists and nonprofessional reporters (i.e., citizen journalists) have also taken up an important position in the Mozambican media landscape by creating their own websites, like Pinnacle News, using conversational language which resonates with local populations and those lacking formal education. This vernacular use of language and the prominence of local languages invokes ethnic identities that are usually hidden. Separately, FRELIMO considered implementing the teaching of local languages in primary education at the national level, but eventually abandoned the project due to insufficient number of teachers, but also because it could have been detrimental to the nation-building project by emphasizing difference.

In Angola, the ruling party, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), decided to nationalize all media as soon as it came to power in 1975, using the media—and especially RNA (Angola National Radio)—as a weapon against National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Becker & Carlos, 2015); the latter tried to counteract it by creating a radio station, VORGAN (Voice of the Black Rooster Resistance) in 1979 (Candumba, 2021). After peace, the Angolan media landscape was opened up to private initiatives, but news media, especially state-owned outlets, are closely aligned with the MPLA (Salgado, 2014). Thus, following its policy, issues related to ethnicity and the diversity of the Angolan populations are not frequently reported on, despite an uptick resulting from the implementation of decentralization policies by the Lourenço government, since 2017. Additionally, since the MPLA was successful in weakening ethnocultural ties, the news on offer related to ethnicity and local traditions is virtually inexistent: there is no coverage of issues related to ethnicity and to the ethnic diversity of the Angolan population. Exceptions include local radio stations partially broadcasting in local languages and, nationally, Ngola Yetu, which broadcasts in all local languages, seeking to represent different linguistic communities. Televisão Pública de Angola, the public TV corporation, has a news service showcasing different local languages in rotation, but the show's main objective is to convey government propaganda to non-Portuguese speakers, not to highlight, valorize, or promote local languages or different ethnic groups.

Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe are, inherently, very small media markets, which struggle to sustain a plural environment. The inclusion of regional specific features and local customs in political messages and communication appears mostly as part of strategies by political parties to appeal to voters. This holds true even in Cape Verde, where the population is more linguistically homogeneous, but there are still regional specificities. Voters seem to relate better to politicians who express closeness to them, or who at least demonstrate knowledgeability about their local cultures and ways of speaking. In Cape Verde, news media outlets make an effort to include news coverage of regional issues and the most excluded populations, but they struggle with a pervasive lack of resources. This is all the more important as electoral turnout is usually low in Cape Verde (online interview with Olavo Bilac Cardoso, 9 July 2021).

Social media platforms have been seen as important tools to promote local cultures and ethnic identities. In the Lusophone African countries in general, social media platforms have promoted political participation and have made active citizenship possible, mostly for citizens who were already engaged but did not have the means to express their views and regularly participate in debates. As mobile phone reception and Internet market penetration have increased substantially, social media platforms have been relevant in lending visibility to local customs and reviving local cultures, simply by attracting more users. Angola is a prime example, since activists have used social media platforms to promote the reactivation of local customs and cultures. But these are often individual efforts, which are hampered by the MPLA's nation-building strategy. This detachment is particularly noticeable in urban settings, as in the rural communities manifestations of traditional cultures, languages, and rituals have persisted, despite MPLA policy. Social media platforms have been used to create communication channels for ethnic groups (e.g., "filhos dos Bakongos"), but these are not usually linked to political parties and do not engage in open partisan discussions.

In Mozambique, the use of social media platforms for political participation is more salient and this trend has particularly empowered younger generations, as their participation in popular demonstrations promoted via social media (e.g., Facebook) shows. Social networking platforms have been used to monitor the government, denounce injustices and frauds, and to push political transparency (online interview with Celestino Joanguete, 29 June 2021). Freedom of expression has undoubtedly increased in Mozambique due to the Internet, and the democratization of publication tools has transformed journalism (Salgado, 2012, 2014). In fact, the emergence of online newspapers, blogs, and Facebook especially have been relevant factors in the democratization of Mozambique's public sphere, which now features a more diverse set of voices.

In Cape Verde, social media platforms have also been somewhat impactful. Political movements, such as the "Sokols," have gained momentum due to their use of social media and have been able to mobilize growing amounts of participants for political demonstrations and other initiatives. However, it seems like most of the participants in these political online conversations were already politically engaged, so the number of newly politicized Cape Verdeans online is small. Nevertheless, online spaces—and social media platforms especially—have had an impact on the electoral growth of new parties such as the UCID (União Cabo Verdeana Independente e Democrática—Democratic and Independent Cape Verdean Union) and PTS (Partido do Trabalho e da Solidariedade—Labor and Solidarity Party), as well as helping excluded parts of the country, like Santiago Norte, to gain visibility. But it is important to note that the emergence and success of new political actors is not entirely explained by the use of social media: the growing discrediting of mainstream parties (such as the PAICV and MpD) also helps explain why these new formations have been successful (online interview with Olavo Bilac Cardoso, 9 July 2021).

Conclusion

The political salience of ethnic identifications in Africa is still a matter of dispute in scholarly research (Bannon et al., 2004); nevertheless, ethnicity has been identified as a key issue defining politics in several countries, and a set of different macropolitical strategies has been applied in a number of new African democracies to deal with ethnic heterogeneity (Hartmann, 2019). The present research looked at the ethnic heritage of politics and political parties in the Lusophone African countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe) and assessed the extent to which Lusophone African political parties act by reference to their ethnic identity and exploit issues related to ethnicity in their political and communication strategies.

Even if for a variety of different reasons (e.g., national unity, nation-building strategies, or historical racial mixing of the population), the issue of ethnicity has not been a predominant one in the Lusophone African countries. Nevertheless, looking more closely at different moments in history (independence processes, democratization processes, and political competition in democracy), it is possible to observe a latent, persistent weight of ethnicity in politics. Ethnic belonging was used as a mobilization tool both in the liberation movements and in the birth of the ensuing political parties. More recently, the revival of local cultures and languages and the use of social media have been pushing ethnic identities further to the fore, even if the final goal is often electoral gain.

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List of Interviewees

Armindo Ceita (researcher, ISEG-ULisboa)

Celestino Joanguete (professor, consultant, and researcher, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane)

Cláudia Correia (researcher, Cape Verde's National Archive)

Fernando Florêncio (researcher and professor, CES-UCoimbra, FCTUC and ISCTE-IUL)

Gerhard Seibert (researcher, CES-UCoimbra and ISCTE-IUL)

Hitler Jessy "Samussuku" Tshikonde (political scientist, activist)

Isabel Lopes Ferreira (political scientist)

José Flávio Teixeira (researcher and former diplomat)

Odair Barros-Varela (professor, Uni-Cape Verde and ISCJS-Cape Verde)

Olavo Bilac Cardoso (professor, Uni-Cape Verde)

Vasco Martins (researcher, CES-UCoimbra)

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