Report on the Conference:

Survival and Growth of Political Parties in Africa - Challenges and Solutions Towards the Consolidation of African Political Parties in Power and Opposition

February 27 – March 1, 2005, Accra; La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra

Organised by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Institute of African Affairs (Institut für Afrika-Kunde, IAK), Hamburg, Germany

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1. Background of the Conference[1]

The third wave of democratisation that hit the shores of Africa 15 years ago has undoubtedly produced mixed results as regards the democratic quality of the 48 countries south of the Sahara. However, one finding can hardly be denied: the role of political parties has evidently changed dramatically. Notwithstanding few exceptions such as Eritrea, Swaziland and Somalia, in almost all sub-Saharan countries regimes legally allow multi-party politics. This is in stark contrast to the single-party regimes and military oligarchies that prevailed before 1990.

Yet, it is surprising how little research has been done on political parties and party systems in Africa, their distinct characteristics and determinants as well as effects in terms of democracy and governance. In recent years only political parties and party systems in Africa have been attracting growing interest (Erdmann 1999; van de Walle/Smiddy Butler 1999; Randall/Svasand 2002; Salih 2003; Bogaards 2004; Lambright/Kuenzi 2001/2005).

Likewise, development cooperation has focused on almost everything in the political arena – decentralisation, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), elections – but the promotion and support of political parties in Africa has received a relatively small share of attention. Western development agencies and African political parties have been "hesitant bedfellows" (Gero Erdmann) and relatively few organizations have been explicitly engaging in such programmes. Amongst them are the *US Agency for International Aid* (USAID), the *National Democratic Institute for International Affairs* (NDI), the British *Westminster Foundation for Democracy* (WFD) and a number of organizations from smaller European countries, particularly the Swedish *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (IDEA) and the Netherlands *Institute for Multiparty Democracy* (NIMD).[2]

The German foundations such as the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) etc. – although being close to political parties in Germany – have been cautious to engage in bilateral cooperation with particular political parties, although FES has been cooperating with so-called privileged partners such as South Africa'S ANC and Mozambique's Frelimo.

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[1] This report was prepared partly on the basis of the Rapporteur-General's Report, prepared by Akunu Dake, Heritage Development (Consultants & Practitioners), Accra, March 2005.
[2] The *Electoral Institute of Southern Africa* (EISA, South Africa) and the *Centre pour la Governance Démocratique* (CGD, Burkina Faso) are among the few institutions based in Africa. For a more comprehensive overview on organizations providing assistance to political parties worldwide refer to http://www.idea.int/parties/links.cfm (access December 2005).

However, political parties keep on attracting growing attention in this community and in this context, FES and the *Institute of African Affairs* (*Institut für Afrika-Kunde*, IAK) in Hamburg,Germany jointly organized a conference on the "survival and growth of political parties in Africa". The three-day workshop, held in Ghana's capital Accra February 27 to March 1, 2005, convened both practitioners and academics from 13 African countries as well as Germany. Responsible for local (and smooth) organization was FES's representative in Ghana, Jörg Bergstermann and the local staff of the FES office. Dr. Gero Erdmann, Senior Research Fellow at the IAK and director of a research project on political parties in Anglophone Africa (funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, DFG) was in charge of the academic aspect of the conference. The main objective of the workshop was to identify particular challenges as regards the role of political parties in contemporary Africa and to discuss solutions to promote their "survival and growth".

This report seeks to describe, summarize and analyse the main findings of the conference. It begins with a concise description of the opening as well as the thematic sessions and summarizes their main findings. The report then proceeds to a more analytic assessment of the conference. Finally, open questions and future challenges are outlined.

2. Opening Session

The opening session of the conference included speeches by both officials of the conference organizers and high ranking politicians, including the Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Alhaji Aliu Mahama. Unanimously, the speakers endorsed the key role of political parties in democracy in Africa and the need to resolve existing problems to overcome obstacles to democracy and good governance.

In his opening remarks, *Jörg Bergstermann* welcomed the participants and outlined the objectives of the conference. He reminded the participants that the effectiveness of political parties will to a large extent determine the future of democracy, peace and stability on the continent. In particular, some deficiencies such as the lack of experience and organizational resources, limited internal democracy and ethnic support bases may hinder democratisation. It was one of the major objectives of this conference to identify such problems and search for solutions.

Dr. Gero Erdmann described the academic background of the conference and focused on three problems. Firstly, the support of political parties is a sensitive issue given the fact that donors are keen on maintaining a non-partisan approach. However, civil society – which has been receiving the lion's share of financial support – does not enjoy the democratic legitimacy political parties gain in democratic elections. Secondly, as representative opinion polls have revealed, political parties in Africa enjoy the least trust among the population, particularly in comparison with other institutions such as the presidency and the military. Thirdly, as already mentioned at the beginning of the report, systematic theory-guided research on political parties in Africa is still largely missing. Finally, Dr. Erdmann argued, the conference reflected the growing interest in political parties in both academia and the donor community and outlined the thematic topics of the workshop which centred around their central characteristics and deficits, measures to promote their performance, intra-party relations (factions, parliamentary groups), and relations between parties (in coalitions, opposition vs. government parties) (for more details see 3.).

In his welcome address, *Dr. Werner Puschra*, Head of the Africa Department of FES stressed the increasingly important role of political parties in Africa over the last 15 years. He informed the participants about FES' work in general and their work with political parties in Africa. In Ghana, for instance, FES helped cooperation between the parties' youth organizations as a means to avoid violence in the recently held general elections.

The Honourable President of the Senate in Madagascar, *Guy Rajemison Rakotomahora,* outlined the state of political parties in his country. He assured both the organizers and participants that the conference would be a unique opportunity to learn about the experiences of other countries.

In his keynote address, *His Excellency Alhaji Aliu Mahama,* Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana, stressed on the importance of the main topic of the conference. After years of marginalization during autocratic rule, politics parties have (re)gained their key role in democratic politics by mediating between politics and society. He noted that multi-partyism paved the way for genuine parliamentary opposition and the strengthening of parliaments in decision-making. However, he reminded the participants that several shortcomings still remain: African political parties suffer from low organizational capacity and a lack of internal democracy.

Dominated by individual leaders, oftentimes lifelong chairpersons and "Big Men", youth and women remain marginalized within party structures. A central point of concern raised by the Vice-President were the relations between government and opposition parties; often characterised by rancour, acrimony and hostility. He urged ruling parties in Africa to develop a culture of tolerance, "give-and-take" and the respect of minority opinion. Although himself a representative of the ruling party in Ghana, he emphasized the central role of opposition in a democratic polity: Opposition parties check the government, enhance accountability and tend to minority interests.

3. Thematic Sessions

The sessions comprised six main topics which focused on the following questions:
- What are the general characteristics of political parties in Africa? Do African parties differ from political parties in other regions?
- To what extent can political parties be regulated by state intervention and what is the balance sheet in Africa thus far?
- How do political parties in Africa relate to internal groupings, especially factions?
- Which policy options do opposition parties have, particularly after and between elections?
- How do political parties relate to their parliamentary groups? Are relations characterised by cooperation, competition or control?
- What is the experience with political parties and coalition governments in Africa?

3.1 Session One: Do Political Parties in Africa Differ From Parties in Other Regions?

The first thematic session, chaired by Mandla Nkomfwe (Chief Whip ANC, Gauteng-Legislature, South Africa), dealt with the distinct characteristics of African political parties. In his presentation, Dr. Gero Erdmann laid emphasis on four aspects: How parties in Africa can be described, the party type known as the ethnic congress party and the causes of its predominance in Africa as well as future prospects for the development of political parties.

According to Erdmann, most – not all – political parties display the following features:

- Barely distinguishable and essentially meaningless programmes;
- Weak bureaucratic organization, including unreliable membership data and poor funding base;
- The dominance of informal relations such as patronage and clientelism as well as strong personalism;
- Lack of internal democracy;
- High degree of factionalism;
- Weak formal links to civil society and
- Predominantly regional or ethnic-based membership and electorate

As for the predominant type of political parties in Africa, Erdmann drew on a global typology developed by Richard Gunther and Diamond (2001) who have identified five main types of political parties: Elite-based; mass-based; ethnicity-based; electoralist and movement parties. According to Erdmann, the ethnicity-based party seems to be most salient in Africa, while other types, although not completely absent, do not apply to Africa because they demand a high level of bureaucratic organization, professional electoral campaigns or distinct ideological positions. However, "ethnicity-based" must not be understood as a support base in one single ethnic group but rather a coalition of different ethnic groups. This subtype of "ethnic congress party" seems to be the most prevalent type of political parties in Africa.

According to Erdmann, the preponderance of this party type can be explained by the specific political and social cleavage structure of most African states. The classical European cleavages (urban-rural, church-state, capital-labour) are relatively weak; it is frequently the multiethnic structure of African states that shapes their political landscape. Since one group rarely comprised a majority of the population, party leaders have to build multiethnic coalitions in order to be successful in elections.

He reiterated that a lot of future research is necessary. However, preliminary conclusions can be drawn: An ethnic congress party could be transformed into a more universalistic type of party. Although the emergence of mass-based parties is very unlikely given that they were a distinct feature of industrialised countries in the 20th century. Political parties in Africa can develop into truly democratic institutions

when African leaders (begin to) promote bureaucratic organization, internal democracy and accountability as well as transparency.

In his comments, Dr. Neo Simutanyi (University of Zambia) generally agreed with Erdmann's views but also added some controversial aspects. He noted that some of the shortcomings of African parties can be explained by the fact that most parties are relatively young, specifically designed to contest elections and therefore lack experience with programme drafting. They are not the product of social interest groups but largely formed by individuals whose main interest is the access to power. He added that African political parties tend to be characterised by factionalism, which – unlike factionalism in Europe – is not properly managed. Instead of arranging a compromise, dissidents within parties are usually hounded out. On the issue of ethnicity-based parties, Simutanyi questioned what was wrong with organising along ethnic lines if political parties are intended to reflect social cleavages. They need a social base they can draw support from. The real issue is how the organization along ethnic lines is managed and whether it leads to exclusion – or not.

The discussion, including several questions and comments, centred around the validity of the typology presented by Dr. Erdmann, the role of ethnicity in party politics and causes for some of the deficiencies in political parties in Africa.

Apart from questions relating to clarification and country-specific comments, several participants questioned the validity of the typology of political parties. It was suggested that several party types should be included in the typology: In particular, the first generation (of) nationalist parties in Africa – especially liberation movements, some of which are still in power (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia) – need to be added to the typology. Another point of criticism concerned the fact that the universal typology did not take into account Africa-specific studies. Moreover, participants urged the presenter to rethink whether there were other parties in Africa than ethnic congress parties, e.g. nationalist, socialist, state and government parties.

As for ethnicity, one participant remarked that "ethnic" can apply to different levels of party organization: The membership, structure, leadership or a combination of all aspects. It was further argued that ethnicity remains an important part of identities in Africa. Although ideology in the European sense is widely absent in Africa, ethnicity, as a social construct, can be considered as a sort of ideology. As regards the poor performance of African parties, several participants justified their respective shortcomings with the desperate socio-economic situation in many African

countries. Voters do not care for particular programmes when they want to get the next meal. In general, the poor performance of African parties, especially in terms of bureaucratic organization and funding, is essentially an expression of poverty and development problems.

3.2 Session Two: The Role of the State in Regulating Political Parties - To What Extent Are Political Parties "Structured" by State Intervention?

Two papers were presented in this session which dealt with the topic of state intervention into party politics; the session was chaired by Prof. Chris Peter Maina (University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania).

At the beginning of his presentation on "*Concepts and possibilities of regulating political party by legal means*" Professor Kofi Kumado (Legon Centre for International Affairs, LECIA, Ghana) discussed the key terms of "structuring", "state" and "political parties". "State" can refer to the legislature, the judiciary, the executive, with the latter being the most important one. "Structured" can mean conditioned, controlled, organized or determined. In democratic polities, "political parties" are the end product of the freedom of association, but they possess a distinguishing quality because they strongly influence society by sponsoring individuals for political office. He argued that political parties are vital in the democratic competition for ideas, for power and for influence. Given the weakness of democracy to defend itself against those who want to use its freedoms to undermine it, the law must ensure that democracy does not degenerate into competition as an end in itself.

Prof. Kumado named three means to "structure" political parties: the Constitution should address only the broad tapestry, such as the recognition of a political party as a governance organ, the need for internal democracy, their non-sectarian and secular character as well as their operational freedom which includes access to the (state-owned) media. The statutory laws (party laws, electoral laws) should include the exact definition of political parties and finances, including state funding, disclosure rules and mechanisms as well as the role of the electoral commission. Also, statutory laws should provide for the nomination of candidates, measures to ensure the national character of political parties, the control of external influence, gender equality within parties and especially election-related offences such as intimidation, vote buying etc. Moreover, as a third source of structuring, political

parties should be governed by their own constitutions, which should mirror the spirit of the National constitution and respective statutory laws.

In the second presentation, Dr. Matthias Basedau (IAK, Germany) gave a preliminary note on the empirical evidence as regards the regulation of political parties in Africa. He posed four guiding questions:

1. Why regulate political parties?
2. How can one regulate political parties?
3. What has been done in Africa?, and
4. What can we learn from the experience gained thus far?

On the first question, Dr. Basedau indicated that it is simply the dissatisfaction with political parties that brings about the desire to improve their performance. As the very agents between government and society, political parties must translate various groups' interests into effective government policies. Too many parties usually hinder the formation of a stable government, while poorly organized parties tend to fall short of the resources to draft programmes and present a government-in-waiting. Moderate parties, in terms of ideology and conduct, avoid confrontational politics, which has been one of the most serious problems in African countries since independence. As regards the tools of regulation, Dr. Basedau agreed with Prof. Kumado that national Constitutions and statutory laws are the most prominent strategies to influence parties. He added that there are also informal measures such as informal inter-party conferences.

A survey on the empirical experience with different forms of party regulation formed the backbone of the presentation: Tools to reduce the number of parties include strict requirements for (continued) registration (minimum support in the whole country and geographical subunits, inner-party democracy, existence of party programmes) and disproportional electoral systems. However, the effect of electoral systems seems to be limited given that there is no strong link between the applied electoral system and the general fragmentation of the party system. Creating viable parties will depend, he argued, on resources. Funding is a particularly sensitive issue because it involves who gets funding and how (transparent) it is used. As for empirical evidence, he noted that according to a survey by the Swedish IDEA, almost two thirds of all countries employ some sort of regulation of the financing of political parties. Yet it appears too early to comment on the effects. As for moderate inter-party relations – probably the most important goal of party regulation - he identified

codes of conduct for election campaigns, electoral systems that avoid "winner-takes-all" effects and constitutional provisions that ban sectarian (i.e. ethnic, religious, regionally based) political parties. However, the balance sheet is difficult to judge at this point in time.

Dr. Basedau concluded his presentation by urging the participants to keep in mind that any type of regulation might limit the freedom of association; and there seems to be a thin line between the benign regulation of political parties and the abuse of it. Furthermore, the success of any measure of regulation will depend on its enforcement and implementation. Banning parties can have particularly negative and unintended side-effects on inter-party relations. Finally, there is no simple blueprint for successful regulation. Instead, measures must be designed according to country-specific conditions.

The discussion that ensued questioned some of the remarks made in the presentations. It was clarified, for instance, that political parties in Malawi just need 50 supporters to register. Some participants pointed to the misuse of provisions and institutions of party regulation by the government and called for a more level playing field: In Tanzania, the concentration of power in the hands of the Registrar of Political Parties has produced intense conflict. As a legacy of colonial times, the Zambian government abuses the Public Regulations Act to its advantage. In Botswana, the ruling party rejects public party funding on the grounds that it is too expensive. In many countries, members of the electoral commissions are appointed by the government, and the ruling party restricts the access of opposition parties to the state media. It was argued that the presence or absence of inner-party democracy is difficult to operationalise. The concern was raised that a new legal environment would create new problems. Furthermore, regulation, to some extent, works against democratic rights, such as the freedom of association. It was also questioned whether government financing is in fact the main problem, given that opposition parties in Ghana have survived 40 years without any noteworthy public funding.

On a more optimistic note, positive examples were brought to the attention of the participants. A special body regulates political campaigns in South Africa, and in Mauritius there is a select committee on funding of political parties. In Germany, political parties enjoy a special status in the Constitution, and they are not allowed to participate in elections unless they prove to have had held proper party congresses and primaries. Prof. Kumado observed recurring controversies and argued in favour

of a balanced management system of funding, including provisions for enforcement. Dr. Basedau emphasised once more that one should be cautious about the reform of political parties, especially to guard against too high expectations.

3.3 Session Three: Political Parties and Internal Groupings
Mr David Kanga, Deputy Commissioner of the Electoral Commission, Ghana, chaired the third session on internal groupings within political parties. Unlike the previous sessions, four panellists from Ghana, Botswana, Nigeria and Germany - all representing ruling parties - gave brief statements on four guiding questions including a) the role of "mass organization" and "wings", b) the role of factions, c) the management of the centrifugal and integral potential of these groupings and d) the implications for the consolidation of a multi-party system.

On the role of mass organizations and wings, all panellists highlighted the role of youth and women wings in the parties. Dr. Botlang C. Serema from Botswana intimated that rural women play an important role in the party membership and the electorate. Oyedokun Oladepo (PDP, Nigeria) outlined the major wings, adding an "Elders Council" and "Extraneous Ones", all of them being critical and paramount. Mustapha Hamid, NPP's Youth Organiser (Ghana), stressed on the young executives forum, which is a major force behind the neo-liberal and business ideology of NPP. In addition, the "Nasara group" tries to improve the party's standing in the Northern region of Ghana, where the party has performed relatively poorly in elections. Inken Wiese from one of Germany's ruling parties SPD (Member of the National Board of Young Socialists and Staff-Member of SPD-Executive) named the youth wing as the most critical wing of the SPD. Women have been empowered within the party since 1988, when a 40% quota was introduced. Trade unions form a traditional backbone of SPD support and are also well-represented in the party structures.

The nature of factions and the raison d'etre of their existence was the second concern of the session. Mr. Hamid informed the participants that there are no mass factions in NPP. Before elections and important programmatic decisions, factions emerge, but they dissolve immediately after elections have been conducted and once single-issue controversies have been settled. According to Inken Wiese, Germany's SPD has three official factions, which are based on political orientation and operate an own budget. Dr. Serema highlighted the invisible power brokers behind factions

rather than ideological differences. Although causing problems from time to time, at the end of the day there are (usually) compromising positions.

As for the inner dynamics of factions and internal grouping within parties, the panellists agreed that factionalism must be managed properly and can also have integrative effects. Dr. Serema argued that the fear of losing power can indeed help ruling parties hold centrifugal factionalism at bay. Inken Wiese held the most optimistic view. In Germany's SPD, factions have a constructive function. They encourage discourse within the party, and it is much easier to deal with organized networks than to control free flowing dissensions. Contrarily, Mr. Oladepo blamed factions within Nigeria's PDP, especially the "Elders", to rather produce problems by fighting for political power. Factions must be managed properly, but eventually, everybody must subscribe to the principle of supremacy of the party in general. Mr. Hamid informed the participants that any longstanding faction within NPP is fiercely resisted.

The ensuing discussion focused on two aspects. Firstly, a proper definition of faction and factionalism and, secondly, the controversial issue of whether or not factions serve the integrity of political parties. With regard to definition, a call was made to carefully define factions and the causes of their emergence. Factions must not be confused with formal political party institutions. Political scientists tend to focus on formal institutions, yet factions may be the more relevant phenomena. Ghana's Minister of Information, Mr. Dan Botwe, was convinced that a party who wants to survive should not encourage factions. Varying opinions within a party should be allowed, but that does not necessarily mean that there must be factions. Contrarily, it was noted that in Germany, the issue of factionalism is managed through the principle of compromise, although even the SPD has (at times) expelled members.

The final question on the implications for the consolidation of a multi-party system was discussed without prior statements by the panellists. Three major issues were raised: Firstly, there is a need to differentiate between destructive and positive factions. Destructive tendencies are usually built around individuals and along ethnic lines, but factions in general are a normal feature of democratic party organization. Secondly, the fundamental question remains why factions emerge in the first place. Failed expectations lead to polarisation and division, but the politics of exclusion also produces factions. As a consequence and thirdly, the challenge is how to manage

factions. There is a need to listen to their proposals and grievances. A party that fails to accommodate factions will fail itself.

3.4 Session Four: Policy Options of Opposition Parties after (and between) Elections

Four panellists from Kenya, Ghana, Botswana and Tanzania, mostly members of opposition parties, shared their views on the topic of policy options of opposition parties after and between elections. The session dealt with the concerns of a) whether the consolidation of political parties were possible in opposition, b) which were the merits of confrontational or co-optional policy strategies of opposition parties and c) under which circumstances may public funding support opposition parties.

In his opening remarks, Chairman Prof. Gyimah-Boadi (Director, Centre for Democratic Development, Ghana) noted that opposition parties are rarely successful in ousting incumbent governments and enjoy little public trust, as revealed by Afrobarometer surveys. He indicated that opposition parties have to carefully design their strategies and to take care of their financial bases.

On the question of how to sustain or even consolidate opposition parties after election defeat, all panellists agreed that opposition parties operate in a difficult environment. Hon. Dr. Wilbrod Slaa (Secretary General of CHADEMA, Tanzania) noted that it needs an internally well-structured party, human resources and an appealing programme. Hon. Felix Owusu-Agyang (Majority Leader, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, NPP Ghana) recalled the days when NPP was in opposition. It was the upholding of values and principles, along with a certain measure of support, that helped the NPP survive in 40 years of opposition. Shem O. Onyango (Secretary for International Affairs, KANU, Kenya) experienced the ousting of his party as a ruling party in 2002. He argued in favour of a strong opposition for democracy to flourish and called for a stable public funding of opposition parties. Hon. Akanyang Magama (Minority Leader & General Secretary General BNF, Botswana) complained about the difficulties many opposition parties are faced with in Africa. They are denied access to the media and suffer several types of harassment. He stated that the BNF has been in opposition for 39 years but still maintained national visibility. The BNF holds political education seminars between elections in addition to regular party congresses. Some of the successes of BNF as an opposition party include the reduction of the voting age. If certain efforts are made, it is possible to consolidate a

political party in opposition. Discussants added some aspects to the panellists' statements. As suggested by KANU's example, previously a longstanding ruling party, one needs to differentiate between opposition parties. On the point of patronage it was implied that opposition parties often have no choice but to be co-opted into government, while another participant asserted that staying out of government forces opposition parties to stand on their own feet.

On the concern of the merits and demerits of confrontational or co-optional policies by opposition parties, the panellists held diverging views: Hon. Magama claimed that there was no confrontational stance in Botswana. Mr. Onyango suggested that the prevailing circumstances in Kenya will determine his party's tactics. Hon. Owusu-Agyapong warned that confrontation may eventually lead to the breakdown of democracy. Questioned by the Chairman whether his stance reflected the fact that NPP was now in power, the Hon. defended his position. Even the NPP's electoral boycott in 1992 was conducted in a non-confrontational manner. In the ensuing discussion it was affirmed that co-optation may hinder opposition parties to develop a distinct identity vis-à-vis the ruling party. Discussants suggested that co-optation and confrontation are bedfellows in politics and both may have healthy or necessary aspects. Sometimes confrontation is necessary, albeit not necessarily violent. If the government rejects access to media, opposition can react with walkouts and demonstrations.

The final round of statements referred to the question of the role that funding should play in the consolidation of opposition parties. While both panellists and discussants agreed that there must be some sort of financial background for opposition parties, the exact source proved to be controversial. Hon. Slaa underscored the point that people in general, and accountants in particular, are intimidated to support and work for opposition parties. While Hon Owusu-Agyapong made it clear that funding is critical to political parties, he observed some problems with state funding, such as the rent-seeking mentality of "briefcase" parties without any noteworthy following. Discussants emphasized the point that the deprivation of funding is a particular restraint on opposition parties. Apart from seeking funds from private and membership sources, there should also be public funding. However, it was also asserted that any funds for political parties should be disclosed in order to ensure the proper use of such funds. In his closing remarks, the Chairman noted that the discussion had stressed on the demand side, i.e. the opposition parties, but not

on the supply side, i.e. those individuals and groups expected to provide the funds for political parties.

3.5 Session Five: Political Parties and the Parties' Parliamentary Groups: Cooperation, Competition, Control?

The relations between political parties and their parliamentary groups were the focus of the conference's fifth session. Chairman Prof. Southall (Human Science Research Council, South Africa) outlined the guiding questions and concerns for the three presentations: a) the relationships between political parties and their parliamentary groups (who controls whom?), b) the actual cohesion and influence of parliamentary groups in parliament, c) the balance between individual interests of MPs and the parliamentary groups, d) the possible weakening effect of independent candidacies and e) the conditions under which floor-crossing may be (dis)allowed.

In his presentation on "*Parties in Parliament: The Relationship between Members of Parliament and their Parties in Zambia*", Dr. Neo Simuntanyi (University of Zambia) began by stating that MPs find themselves in a conflict of loyalties vis-à-vis their constituents who elected them and the political parties on whose ticket the MP was elected. Generally, he noted that African parliaments are weak and, with very few exceptions, remain under the control of the executive, namely the President. On the other hand, he observed that it is the political party that controls the parliamentary groups and the individual MP rather than vice versa. Looking at Zambian history he claimed that the country had had a brief experience with multi-party politics. Following a nine-year period of multi-party politics after independence in 1963, a one-party constitution was introduced in 1973 and it was not until 1991 that multi-party politics was re-established. The then single party UNIP was ousted by the MMD. At present, there are four parliamentary groups in the Zambian National Assembly: the MMD, UPND, UNIP and FDD. However, all these groups have no offices, technical support staff nor schedules of meetings and therefore lack cohesion and coordination. They only meet for the convenience of ensuring that certain bills are passed and members support them. All in all, MPs are incapable of representing their constituents. Parties, especially the ruling MMD, use several tools to discipline their MPs, such as appointments and other incentives. At times of doubt they face victimisation by the party.

"*Consolidating Democracy in Botswana: the Executive vis-á-vis the Legislature*" was the topic of Prof. Mpho G. Molomo's (University of Botswana) presentation, in which he outlined Botswana's unique history. Botswana has maintained a liberal democracy as well as held free and fair elections since its independence in 1966, even in times when most other African countries opted for one-party or military rule. However, as he noted, several shortcomings persist and scepticism has grown since the 1990ies. Such deficiencies include a weak opposition and civil society, declining levels of participation and, particularly, a predominant party system. The ruling BDP has been ruling continuously since 1966, and the alternation of political power through the ballot box remains a test still to be passed in the country.

Regarding the topic of the session, Prof. Molomo noted that despite being a frontrunner in democratic politics and the many years of parliamentary rule – unlike almost all other African countries the President in Botswana is elected by the National Assembly –, parliament (as a institution) has not gained ground vis-à-vis the executive. The predominance of one party, which alone dominates both the executive and the legislature, tends to undermine the autonomous role of the legislature. Parliamentary committees remain poorly supported and MPs are caught between playing an active role in such committees or doing constituency service.

In his brief presentation, Hon. Dr. Usman Bugaje informed the audience about the situation of parliamentary groups in Nigeria. Since MPs have offices, the capacity of parliament has been enhanced. There are two main types of caucuses: the parties' caucuses and the groupings based on the numerous regions of the country. There is also a multi-party forum that brings together members of several parties to discuss issues related to the problems of democratic development in Nigeria. Yet the executive shows contempt for the legislature, and in a presidential system as in Nigeria, the main resources are allocated to the executive.

The discussion focussed on three major issues: Additional information on country cases, the effect of the general set-up of institutions on the role of parliament, and, particularly, the issue of floor-crossing. It was stated that a weak position of the legislature may depend on how the chief executive is elected. The directly elected presidents in Zambia, for example, indicated that their constituencies were bigger than those of the MPs. It was generally agreed that parliaments need more resources to enhance their capacities. On the subject of floor-crossing, discussants outlined the

situations in their countries to their fellow participants. In Botswana, floor-crossing happens from time to time, but it is viewed as a betrayal of the people's mandate when one joins another party, whereas in Zambia, constitutional provisions even prohibit floor-crossing. In Malawi, the issue remains legally controversial but now, MPs can leave their political parties as long as they do not officially join another party. In Mauritius, it is not considered floor-crossing when a party leaves the coalition; this only applies to individual MPs.

3.6 Session Six: Political Parties and Coalition Governments

The last thematic session stressed on a rarely addressed issue in African party politics: political parties and coalition governments. Chaired by Akashambatwa M. Lewanika (Official Spokesperson, MMD, Zambia), the key concerns of the session were a) where in Africa have coalition governments existed or currently exist?; b) what are causes for the rarity of coalition governments? c) what determines the strength, success or failure of coalition governments?

In his presentation on *"Coalition Politics and Governments in Africa: A Survey",* Prof. Walter Oyugi (University of Nairobi, Kenya) noted that coalition governments have been rare in Africa. Apart from some pre- or immediate post-independence experiences with coalitions such as in Zimbabwe or Nigeria, only four countries come to mind where post election government coalitions were formed after 1990: Mauritius, South Africa, Kenya and Malawi (to some extent). He explained the infrequency of this phenomenon with the nature of power politics: Political parties enter into alliances for or after elections in the hope of attaining a working majority in parliament (or presidential elections). From this observation, coalition formation can only take place because neither or none of the cooperating parties can win an election and govern on its own, exemplified by the case of the National Rainbow Coalition (NRC) in Kenya in the run-up to the 2002 elections. Ironically, it is not the culturally divided societies in Africa but Central Europe where no party can expect to win an absolute majority.

Prof. Oyugi described government coalition as a "necessary evil" and opinion was still divided about its efficacy. On the nature of coalitions in Africa he intimated that, unlike in Europe or Latin America, differences between coalition partners are not based on class but ethnicity.

On the possible causes for the emergence or absence of coalition governments, he named the electoral system as one of the major factors. In plurality systems, such as the First-Past-the-Post-System, coalitions are unlikely because these systems tend to produce clear-cut majorities. Proportional representation systems, which are widely absent in Anglophone and Francophone Africa, are far more likely to produce coalition governments.

As for the conditions for coalition governments, Prof. Oyuki indicated that the experience with coalition politics in Africa since the sweeping reintroduction of multi-partyism has been characterised by instability rather than stability. Coalitions of like-minded parties may work, but ethnic identities that shape party politics have been the driving force behind centrifugal tendencies.

In the brief discussion that ensued some participants clarified country-specific issued. For instance, it was noted that the Rainbow Coalition in Kenya (NARC) was brought into existence in order to exercise popular will for political change. In the Zambian case there was also a need for the opposition to unite in order to unseat the MMD government. The participant confirmed the speaker's assessment of the role of the electoral system. There is no coalition pattern in Zambia, essentially because of the First-Past-the-Post electoral system. In a proportional representation system, MMD would have needed a partner to achieve a working majority in parliament. As regards a possible additional reason for the presence or absence of coalition governments, one discussant queried whether a federalist state structure, such as in Nigeria, was favourable for coalition-building. Federalist structures may favour regional or state-based based political parties without nationwide majorities, forcing them to build coalitions on the federal level. Finally, the speaker's view of coalitions as a "necessary evil" was questioned. It may not always be the only way forward for multi-party politics in Africa. However, it was suggested that coalitions could be a stabilizing factor in Africa too.

3.7 Summary of the Main Findings of the Thematic Sessions

Session one: Although the role of political parties in Africa has changed dramatically since the sweeping reintroduction of multi-party politics in the early 1990s, Africa's political parties remain deficient in many ways, particularly their organizational capacity, programmatic profiles and inner-party democracy. *They do indeed differ*

from political parties in other regions, and their main feature seems to be their ethnic support base. However, the ethnic fragmentation in African societies expresses itself in ethnic congress parties that comprise ethnic coalitions rather than political parties representing one particular group (which will be too weak to attain an electoral majority).

Session two: Given the central role of political parties in liberal democracies – they have to mediate between society and the state – there is a clear case for an improved performance of political parties in Africa, possibly or particularly by means of *state regulation*. Some of the shortcomings such as mushrooming of parties, weakness of parties and confrontational policies of parties can be addressed by several types of legal tools, namely the national Constitutions, party and electoral laws, and party constitutions. More precisely, these tools include certain electoral systems, registration requirements, provisions for party funding and codes of conduct. Given the sketchy academic work on the subject of party regulation it is too early to make precise recommendations. However, party regulation by the state also includes problematic aspects such as the restriction of the freedom of association, its abuse for narrow ambitions in power politics, unintended side-effects, questions of enforcement and the "illusion of omnipotence" as regards its efficacy.

Session three: African political parties have to deal with two types of *internal groupings*: Formal groupings such as youth and women wings tend to play a rather marginal role; women in particular, remain widely underrepresented in African political parties. Informal "factions" enjoy distinctly higher importance. "Factionalism", frequently associated with ethnicity, has pejorative connotations in African politics given its potential and actual centrifugal effects on the integrity of political parties. However, factions are not a problem per se. If managed properly (moderate) factions can even contribute to party integrity by accommodating differences of opinion within political parties.

Session four: Generally, *opposition parties in Africa* suffer from a lack of capacity, particularly between elections. As a result, they are liable to co-optation and/or marginalization by ruling parties. The key issue seems to be increased (public) party funding for opposition parties, but also credible principles and appealing

programmes. Confrontation and cooperation are not mutually excluding policy options for opposition parties, but must be adapted to the general situation and policies of the ruling parties. However, outright violence or patronage-driven satellization should be strictly be avoided.

Session Five: In Africa, the *relations between parliamentary groups and political parties* are characterised by a playing field which is not level. It is political parties that dominate parliamentary groups and not vice versa. Parliamentary groups lack cohesion and capacity, individual MPs find themselves in an uneasy balance between the party on whose ticket they are elected and their constituencies. However, the relationship between parliamentary groups and the party is over-structured by the dominance of the executive over weak parliaments. Besides, strongly presidential forms of government and the prevalence of First-Past-the-Post electoral systems undermines the strength of political parties and parliamentary groups.

Session Six: *Coalition governments* have been a rare phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa since the re-emergence of multi-party politics in the early 1990ies, confined to a few cases such as Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius and South Africa. Some of the electoral institutions, for instance plurality electoral systems, are not conducive to coalition-building since they tend to favour the concentration of the party system (and, hence, individual parties can govern alone). Coalition-building seems to be a feature within parties rather than between parties. It remains an open question whether or not coalition-building will be a promising model for African governments in the future.

4. General Observations, Open Questions and the Road Ahead

Political parties and party systems offer a wide variety of aspects which attract the attention of both scientists and practitioners. It is therefore hardly surprising that many questions could not be sufficiently addressed during the conference. Generally, the study of political parties and the development of practical recommendations covers four main areas:

1. The systematic description of political parties and party systems

2. The analysis of causes of certain features of political parties and party systems such as bureaucratic organization, support base or inter-party relations

3. The analysis of effects of certain features of political parties and party systems, especially as regards democracy and governance in general

4. The evaluation and development of existing or promising measures to improve the performance of political parties and party systems

Certainly, each involves numerous aspects that deserve deeper probing or even constitute a topic in its own right. Generally, there is almost no aspect that does not require further study and attention. As indicated by Dr. Erdmann at the beginning of the conference, there remains a need for a theory-guided systematic study on political parties and party systems in Africa (Erdmann 2004; Basedau/Erdmann/Mehler forthcoming), which might lay the foundation for drafting promising measures of strengthening political parties in Africa.

4.1 Systematic Description of Political Parties and Party Systems

Given the countries of origin of most of the participants there was a remarkable *Anglophone bias* in the conference, although the attendance of participants from two to three Francophone countries (Ivory Coast, Madagascar, partly Mauritius) compared favourably to other workshops (who have exclusive attendance in this respect). However, findings on Anglophone Africa might not apply to Francophone or Lusophone countries. Hence, a more inclusive approach in this respect is one of the future tasks ahead.

Many, if not all sessions dealt with the descriptive features of African parties, but several areas remained neglected. For instance, the functioning of political parties at the *grassroots level and in districts* need to be studied in detail.

Moreover, the conference focussed on political parties rather than *party systems*. The party system and its characteristics (mainly fragmentation, institutionalisation and polarisation) may reveal more insights into the functioning of African political systems on the whole.

In particular, *dominant party systems*, i.e. where one particular political party dominates politics, are a central feature of African party systems and the issue deserved more attention given its alleged negative effect on democracy. Besides

institutionalisation, which was fairly well covered at least on the level of individual parties, it is the relation *between* parties – polarisation – that will be one of the most relevant topics in party research.

4.2 Explaining Political Parties and Party Systems

Although to some extent a descriptive characteristic, the support base of African political parties is mainly about the link between society and political parties and the party system respectively.

It seems to be conventional knowledge that ethnicity shapes the landscape of political parties in Africa and this was well-reflected in the presentations and discussions during the conference. However, as Dr. Erdmann made unmistakably clear, there is no simple pattern, but a more complex one that involves complex mechanisms of ethnic coalition-building. Moreover, contrary to the conventional wisdom , there is reason to believe that ethnicity may play a weaker role than commonly assumed. No study has been able to demonstrate on the individual level that ethnicity determines voting behaviour, which might also be explained alternatively or complementarily by other phenomena (rural-urban cleavages, dis/satisfaction with government policies). The more sophisticated concept of ethnic coalitions requires an in-depth study of cases, which is still missing. In any case, the link between ethnicity and party systems will be a key topic in the future.

Representation of societal groups is not confined to ethnic groups. Especially gender issues (or civil society) did not receive a fair amount of attention. At least partly reflecting the marginalized role of women in African party politics, there were only three female participants (the organizers pledged to see to a more balanced ratio in the future).

Institutions such as a presidential form of government and the (disproportionate) First-Past-the-Post electoral system were deemed critical by most participants. Although the potential of electoral and constitutional engineering must not be overplayed, the effects of institutions should be scrutinised thoroughly in the future.

Rather informal aspects of power politics were inevitably mentioned from time to time, but they may have deserved a focus of their own. Rigging of elections and the dominance of "Big Men" in clientelist networks certainly has a strong effect on party politics.

4.3 Analysing Effects on Democracy and Governance

The effects of the particular features of political parties as well as party systems were widely discussed. However, the whole conference treated effects from the standpoint of a "defectology". It was generally assumed that political parties and party systems fail to fulfil their very functions in the democratic system. Certainly, negative effects of weaknesses cannot be denied, yet the whole issue requires more empirical knowledge, and there might be positive features too.

To what extent the characteristics of party systems influence democracy and governance in general is far from being known precisely. There is reason to believe that a large number of other pertinent variables such as the role of the military, leadership qualities as well as the dynamics and level of socio-economic development are of superior relevance for the success or failure of democracy. The role political parties actually have on democracy will be the subject of future research.

Even the alleged prominent role of ethnicity in structuring party systems may be less detrimental than generally assumed. If party systems should reflect the underlying social structure - and ethnicity is the major feature of African societies –, then it is the very function of the party system to translate it into the political arena and manage it properly.

It became clear during the conference that the effect of certain characteristics of political parties depends on the management of the intra- and inter-party politics. Hence, management and governance are not only phenomena affected by the party system but it is also true vice versa. The quality of governance influences the quality of political parties and party systems.

As already mentioned, inter-party relations will be the key party system characteristics in terms of the link between democracy/political stability and party systems, including aspects such as electoral violence, general strategies and coalition-building. Remarkable, although not mentioned in the respective thematic session of the conference, is the prevalence of so-called oversized coalitions, where dominant parties, though commanding comfortable majorities, co-opt small and smaller (opposition) parties into their governments, such as in Angola, Chad, Gabon or Mali.

4.4 Addressing Challenges: Evaluating and Developing Solutions and Practical Recommendations

Generally, the presentations and discussions did not neglect the issue of solutions and practical recommendations. One particular session was entirely devoted to the topic of regulation, though focussing on intervention by the state, and constructive comments on how to overcome obstacles and weaknesses were made during all other sessions as well.

It was certainly one of the major assets of the conference to bring together people with very different geographical, professional and biographical backgrounds and to reduce the kind of mutual isolation which so often prevails: Academics and practitioners, both in development cooperation and political parties, came together, discussing and learning from each other. Academics had to leave the ivory tower and confront their ideas with the sometimes very different experiences of practitioners. Party officials might have acquired new ideas on how to deal with their everyday problems on the ground.

Different geographical backgrounds proved highly fruitful too. Participants from the North and the South on the one hand, and from different African countries – often knowing less about neighbouring countries than European countries – on the other, came together to exchange their experiences. In terms of accommodating inter-party relations, probably the most inspiring fact was that delegates from the same country who represented either opposition or ruling parties met in a different environment, socialising and discussing problems.

However, there were some more problematic areas as well. As a matter of fact, it seems questionable whether Western political parties can or should be role models for the very different African context. Especially German political parties were portrayed as such examples, but problematic aspects of party politics in Western countries, such as "state capture" by political parties or illegal practices in party financing despite generous public party funding paint a more balanced picture.

Moreover, there was a certain tendency to stress on economic issues, particularly as regards measures to build capacity in opposition parties. While any political organisation cannot perform its functions without a sound resource base, it should be clear that it is the quality of management rather than the quantity of resources that will make the difference.

Finally, there is no doubt that the conference discussed solutions and several "tools" for party regulation. However, as was expected, the conference did not produce a blueprint of practical recommendations to strengthen political parties that any donor or domestic actor can readily use to resolve existing problems. Country-specific experiences remain different, and the study of contemporary party systems, their causes and effects is still in its infancy. The regulation of political parties is a politically highly sensitive affair and, hence, external donors, especially the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, have good reason to uphold their cautious approach based on the principles of social democracy. The main challenge ahead is to deepen our understanding of the whole issue and to systematically use this knowledge to carefully and jointly develop strategies to overcome problems. Smooth organization and a climate of constructive and committed discussion made the conference an inspiring experience and a pleasure to attend. Yet it was certainly only one step on a long road ahead.

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27.02.05

Arrival of Participants

OPENING: 17:00 – 19:00 h

- **Introduction into workshop program and objectives**
  G. Erdmann (IAK-Germany)
- **Welcome address**
  W. Puschra (Head of Africa Department, FES-Bonn)
- **Keynote address and official opening**
  Guest of Honour: H.E. Alhaji Aliu Mahama (Vice-President of Republic of Ghana)
- **Introduction of Participants and Participant´s Expectations**

Chair: J. .Bergstermann (FES-Accra)

Dinner 20:00h

28.2.05

8:30 - 10:30 h

Topic 1 **Do political parties in Africa differ from parties in other regions?**
Presenter: *Dr. Gero Erdmann, IAK-Germany*
Discussant: *Dr. Neo Simutanyi, University of Zambia*
Chair: *Mandla Nkomfwe (Chief Whip Gauteng ANC-Legislature, South Africa)*

(1) Which different identities of parties (ideological/programmatic, regional/ethnic, religious/cultural) are currently pre-dominant? How can a certain predominance of ethnic/regional identities be explained?
(2) Do ethnic congress parties evolve as result of legal requirements, of political power considerations or for other reasons?
(3) What do we know about the abilities and disabilities of further expansion, growth and consolidation of previously ethnically or regionally based political parties?

Coffee break **10:30 – 11:00 h**

Topic 2   **The role of the state in regulating political parties – To what extent are political parties 'structured' by state intervention?**

Presenter 1:   *Concepts and possibilities of regulating political parties by legal means (Kofi Kumado, Ghana)*

Presenter 2:   *Regulations of political parties – empirical evidence (Dr. Matthias Basedau, IAK-Germany)*

Chair: *Prof. Chris Peter Maina, Tanzania*

(1) Which are the currently most relevant constitutional provisions and legal frameworks for Political Party´s Set-up and Activity in Africa?

(2) Which relevance and impact do party laws and other legal provisions currently have on matters of -

➢ party-organisation (financial audit, membership rolls etc.)

➢ representation (national representation, ethnic, religious, regional parties; successes and failures of these laws) and

➢ inner party democracy?

Lunch break   **13:00 – 14:30 h**

Topic 3   **Political parties and internal groupings**   **14:30 – 17:00 h**

Panel: *Dan Botwe (Minister of Information and former Gen. Secr.. NPP-Ghana)*

Hon. Dr. Botlang C. Serema (Executive Sec. BDP, Botswana)

Hon. Dr. Haruna Yerima (ANPP-Nigeria)

Inken Wiese (Sec. for Internat. Affairs, JUSOs, Youth Wing of SPD-   Germany)

Chair: *Dr. Afari Gyan (Chairman Electoral Commission, Ghana)*

(1) Which role and function do "Mass Organizations" and "Wings" fulfil within Political Parties? Have certain of such internal organizations outlived themselves whilst others are gaining importance?

(2) What is the nature of factions or camps within political parties? What triggers the development of internal camps/factions within political parties? What are the dynamics of such factions or camps?

(3) How do Parties deal with both the centrifugal and integral potential of their internal grouping, i.e. how do they incorporate their constructive potential without ending up fragmented?

(4) Which are the implications for the consolidation of a multi-party system?

8:30 - 10:30 h

Topic 4   **Policy options of opposition parties after (and between) elections**
Panel: *Shem O. Onyango (KANU, Secr. for International Affairs,*
                     Kenya);
                     Hon. Felix Owusu-Agyapong (NPP, Majority Leader & Minister
                     of Parliamentary Affairs, Ghana)
                     Hon. Akanyang Magama (Gen. Secr. BNF, Minority Leader)
                     Hon. Dr. Wilbrod Slaa (Secr. Gen. of CHADEMA, Tanzania)
Chair: *Prof. Gyimah-Boadi (Director, Centre for Democratic*
                     Development, Ghana)

(1) Are the consolidation and institutionalisation of a political party possible in
     opposition? How can a political party survive or even gain strength in
     opposition without governmental patronage?
(2) Which are the merits and dismerits of confrontational or cooptational
     politics in opposition?
(3) Under which circumstances may public financing of Political Parties
     support the consolidation of parties in opposition? How can the potential
     negative segmentational/fragmenting effects of public funding of political
     parties in opposition (i.e. emergence of mere fund-raising "parties") be
     avoided?

Coffee break   **10:30 – 11:00 h**

11:00 - 13:00 h

Topic 5   **Political parties and the parties' parliamentary groups: cooperation,**
                     competition, control?
Panel: *Dr. Neo Simutanyi, University of Zambia,*
                     Prof. Mpho Molomo, Botswana,
                     Hon. Dr. Usman Bugaje (PDP, Chairman Foreign Relations
                     Committee, Nigeria)
Chair: *Prof. R. Southall, South Africa*

(1) Which relationships between political parties and their parliamentary
     groups do we currently find, empirically? Who controls/leads whom: The
     Party the Parliamentary Group or the Parliamentary Group the Party? How
     is the relationship organized (through caucuses, whips, Party-NEC, etc)? Is
     there any need and possibility to strengthen the Party against the
     Parliamentary Group?
(2) How influential and cohesive are parliamentary groups in current African
     Parliaments really? Does this relative strength or weakness have anything to
     do with the party-relations of the parliamentary group at all or does it only
     depend on the overall "powers and independence" of the resp. parliament?
(3) How is the structural conflict being dealt with that exists between the
     individual´s election and responsibility towards the voters on the one hand

and obligations towards the party on whose ticket the MP is elected on the other? Which powers do parliamentary groups need towards dissident MPs?

(4) Does the general possibility of independent candidacies weaken the role of Political Parties within Parliament

(5) Under which conditions may carpet crossing be (dis)allowed?

Lunch break 13:00 – 14:30 h

Topic 6   Political parties and coalition governments   14:30 – 16:30 h

Presenter: **Prof. Walter Oyugi, University of Nairobi, Kenya**

Discussant: Hon. Veda Baloomoody (Member Central Committee, MMM-Mauritius.),
Knox Gomes Varela (Secretary General, PPM-Malawi)

Chair: Akashambatwa M. Lewanika (Official Spokesperson, MMD-Zambia)

(1) Where in Africa have coalition governments existed/do coalition governments currently exist? In which cases did they come about as result of power sharing arrangements prior to elections? To what extent did these cases adhere to legal requirements or concordance models for transformation periods? In which cases did coalition governments come about only after elections, i.e. as an outcome of election results?

(2) Which reasons can be identified for the rarity of coalition governments?

(3) What determines the strength, success or failure of coalition governments? Under which circumstances can coalition governments be stable?

Coffee Break   **16:30 – 17:00 h**

CLOSING: **Conclusions and the way forward**   **17:00 – 18:00 h**

Chair: *G. Erdmann*

Dinner   **20:00**

END OF CONFERENCE

Appendix II: Participants

NAME	COUNTRY	ORGANIZATION	POSITION HELD	CONTACT DETAILS & EMAIL ADDRESS
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