

Critical Junctures and Political Development: The Legacies of Liberation in Southern Africa

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Abstract

While social scientists have developed compelling accounts of causes and processes of social revolutions, national conflicts, and other transformative historical events, the long-term outcomes of these contentious political phenomena remain undertheorized. This paper explains political development in five Southern African countries—Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe—following violent, mass-mobilizing “liberation struggles” for freedom from settler-colonial domination and building more inclusive, equitable, nonracialist nations. Today, political and social structural legacies of the twentieth-century national revolutions are characterized by sharply contrasting political regimes, social inequalities, and national cleavages. Moving beyond case-specific structuralist or voluntaristic accounts, this study offers a comparative-historical explanation of political development in post-revolutionary Southern Africa. It focuses on a critical juncture—defined as the liberation reform period—when revolutionary actors assumed state power and pursued diverse reform approaches, which set the countries on diverse path-dependent trajectories of political and sociological change that culminated in contrasting legacies. The analysis sheds light on how structure, agency, and historical contingency shape the outcomes of national-social revolutions and other contentious movements; challenges the rebel-to-ruler paradigm dominant in conflict studies; and rethinks path dependence as dynamic processes involving both institutional stability and change—as opposed to inertia or mere lock-in—that is gradual, adaptive, and path-constrained.

Keywords: revolutions, political development, regimes, critical junctures, path dependence, institutional change, policy feedback.

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Social scientists have developed compelling explanations of the causes and processes of social revolutions, violent national conflicts, and other transformative historical events. Yet the long-term outcomes of these contentious phenomena remain less theorized. This study explains political development following anticolonial national revolutions in Southern Africa: i.e., Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. These countries share distinct historical antecedents of settler colonialism, racial domination, and violent “liberation struggles” for more equitable and inclusive non-racial nations. Following these conflicts, revolutionary national liberal movements (NLMs)—with radical agendas to fundamentally transform the state, economy, and society after settler-colonial rule—also assumed state power and dominated national political arenas. However, today’s Southern Africa is defined by markedly different legacies of liberation: less inclusive semi-democracies with moderately unequal, post-racial societies (i.e., Mozambique and Angola); an exclusionary, militarized regime with a less unequal society (Zimbabwe); and inclusive multiracial democracies with extreme structural inequalities and polarization along racial and post-racial divisions (i.e., South Africa and Namibia).

To explain these puzzling legacies of Southern Africa’s historic struggles, this study applies a theoretical approach that emphasizes the causal significance of critical junctures. These are generally understood as relatively brief periods of significant, discontinuous change that tend to have more enduring legacies.¹ During these junctures, actors enjoy a greater degree of agency from structural constraints to make strategic choices, which powerfully shape subsequent outcomes by initiating path-dependent processes with more ‘deterministic’ causal outcomes.² Hence, in this approach, some episodes are much more ‘critical’ than others because they lead to the formation of certain institutions that, by setting into motion relatively deterministic processes, define subsequent paths or trajectories of political development. I apply this prevailing

understanding of path dependence, but emphasize that path-dependent processes are marked by both institutional persistence and gradual institutional change, adaptation, and reconfiguration.

The analysis shows that the varied legacies of liberation in Southern Africa are path-dependent outcomes of a critical juncture episode—defined as the “liberation reform period”—during which revolutionary liberation actors assumed political power and pursued structural reforms in all five countries (see Table 1). These actors pursued three different reform approaches during this key juncture—i.e., radical (Mozambique and Angola), liberal (South Africa and Namibia), and an abortive liberal approach (Zimbabwe)—that varied widely in the pace and scope of change. I then show that the contrasting reform approaches set the countries on path-dependent trajectories of political and sociological change that culminated in unique structural legacies. The reforms generated distinctive “reactive sequences”³ involving predictable patterns of backlashes and counter-backlashes among different political and social actors as well as governments. While the reactions caused institutional adaptations, reforms, and reconfigurations, the counterreactions helped stabilize and reinforce state, political regime, and social structures produced at the critical juncture. These more durable institutional and structural patterns represent enduring liberation legacies, which consolidated in Mozambique, Angola, and Zimbabwe by the 2010s and have fully crystallized in South Africa and Namibia in recent years.

The study offers the first comprehensive explanation of the political and social structural legacies of liberation in Southern Africa. The outcome or legacies of liberation is operationalized in terms of political regimes, structural inequalities, and conflicts. The argument is supported by extensive archival and secondary sources, supplemented by historical statistical evidence. I employ comparative-historical methods suitable for analyzing configurations of macro-historical causes and large-scale processes that unfold over time and across a small number of cases.⁴ I use

“controlled comparison”⁵ to identify causal patterns, formulate explanatory hypotheses, and assess rival explanations. The more aggregate causal propositions formulated through broad cross-case comparison are evaluated using small-N qualitative methods for highly contextualized examination, using within-case analysis, counterfactual reasoning, and causal process-tracing.⁶ The analysis shows that the critical liberation juncture offers greater leverage to explain divergent paths of political development in postcolonial Southern Africa as opposed to more deterministic structural conditions or alternative historical periods.

The argument carries broader implications for the analyses of revolutionary change, political development, and institutional change. The article contributes to recent comparative-historical studies of revolutions and regime development, bridging the gap in the study of national revolutions and long-run political change. It underscores how domestic and international factors contingently shape the outcomes of national-social revolutions, empirically demonstrating Theda Skocpol’s assertion that revolutionary leaders “ended up accomplishing very different tasks and furthering the consolidation of quite different kinds of new regimes from those they originally (and perhaps ever) ideologically intended.”⁷ Additionally, it calls to question core assumptions of the rebel-to-government paradigm in conflict studies, emphasizing the significance of structure, agency, and historical contingency over wartime rebel institutions, norms, and ideologies.

Finally, conceptually, the study offers crucial propositions, assumptions, and tools for the systematic application of critical junctures to studying the legacies of national revolutions, social movements, civil wars, and other episodes of contentious politics. I draw on theoretical works on critical junctures and path dependence, emphasizing the significance of structures, agency, and contingency in interactively shaping actor behavior during such junctures. I also reframe path dependence to emphasize path-dependent institutional persistence as well as change as opposed to

its association with inertia and lock-in in the foundational social science literature. Path dependence should refer to a small set of causal processes triggered by critical junctures and marked by both institutional stability and change that is gradual, adaptive, and path-constrained.

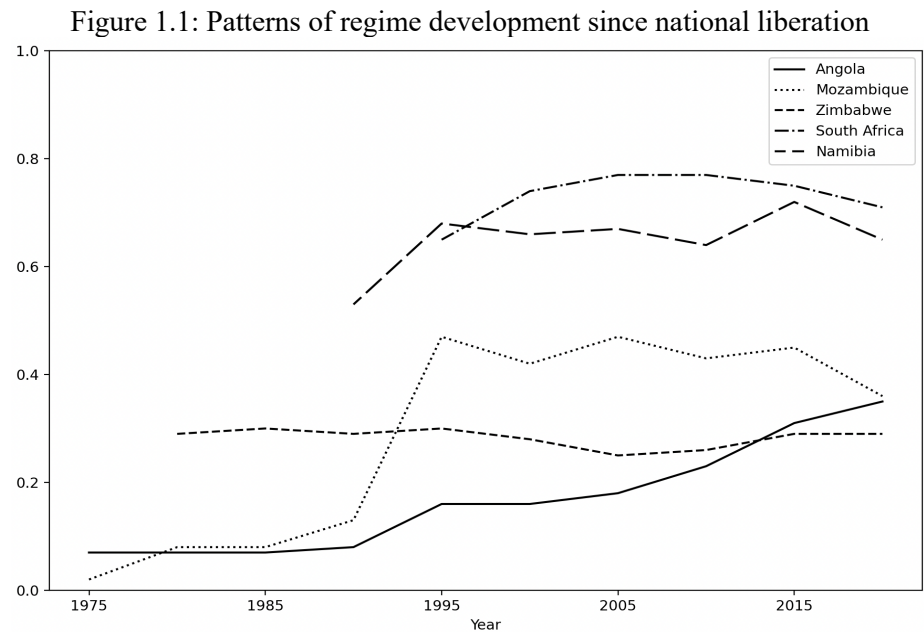
Empirical Puzzle and Alternative Explanations

Table 1: Settler Colonialism, Liberation Struggles, the Liberation Reform Episode, and Radical NLMs in Southern Africa

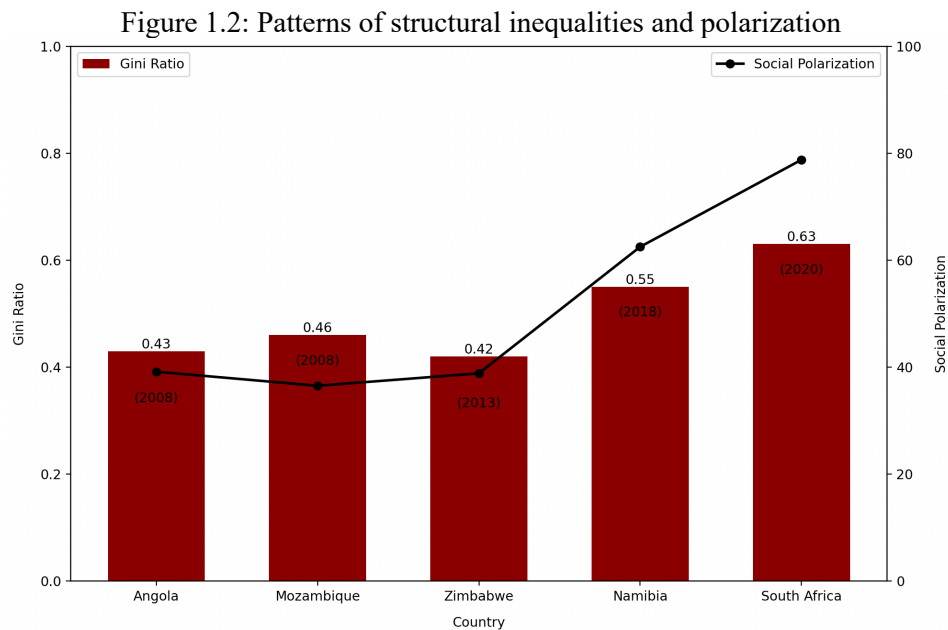
	Settler Col. Period	Liberation Struggle	Liberation Episode	Radical National Liberation Movement (NLM)
Angola	1498 – 1975	1961 – 1974	1975 – 1982	<i>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</i> (MPLA)
Mozambique	1575 – 1975	1962 – 1974	1974 – 1983	<i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i> (FRELIMO)
Zimbabwe	1888 – 1980	1964 – 1979	1979 – 1990	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)
Namibia	1884 – 1990	1966 – 1990	1989 – 2004	South West African People's Organization (SWAPO)
South Africa	1652 – 1994	1961 – 1990	1990 – 2004	African National Congress (ANC) & South African Communist Party (SACP)

Politics and society in ‘post-liberation’ Southern Africa have been typically interpreted through the lens of twentieth-century liberation struggles against settler-colonial systems opposed to racial equality and black majority rule. Following these violent, ideologically-driven, mass-mobilizing national revolutions, *revolutionary* national liberation movements (Table 1) seeking to build more equitable, democratic and racially inclusive nations assumed political power in all five countries and have dominated national politics in subsequent decades. Yet, the legacies of liberation in the region differ dramatically; the historic struggles led to diverse trajectories of political development that remain undertheorized. As Fig. 1 shows, Mozambique and Angola followed an authoritarian path, culminating in narrowly inclusive, semi-democratic regimes; in contrast, South Africa and Namibia took a democratic trajectory with highly inclusive, democratic regime outcomes. Meanwhile, Zimbabwe started on a democratic route but veered to authoritarianism, producing a highly exclusionary and militarized political regime. These political legacies are accompanied by varied patterns of structural inequalities and national polarization, including relatively low and

largely post-racial disparities in Mozambique and Angola, and high racial and class divides and high polarization in South Africa and Namibia.



Source: Michael Coppedge, et al, “V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v13”
Note: Derived from the v-dem “electoral democracy index” variable measured in an interval scale from “0.0” (least democratic) to “1.0” (most democratic).



Source: The World Bank, “Poverty and Inequality Platform,” pip.worldbank.org.
Note: Gini ratio measures income distribution: “0.0” = perfect equality, “0.1” = p. inequality.

The contrasting liberation legacies in Southern Africa are striking. The countries share historical commonalities of settler colonialism,⁸ racial domination, and peripheral position in the world economy, while the victorious revolutionary actors had shared ideological beliefs and agendas for more equitable, democratic, and inclusive non-racialist nations. Existing approaches fail to adequately explain these divergent outcomes. For instance, theories of social revolutions typically stress authoritarian trajectories with more durable, party-based regimes following revolutions.⁹ Yet, this expectation does not fully account for post-revolutionary political development in Southern Africa, especially the democratic paths in South Africa and Namibia. Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, for example, broadly assert that liberation struggles in the region fostered “identities, norms, and organizational structures” that eventually undergirded durable authoritarian regimes—a claim primarily based on Mozambique and Zimbabwe.¹⁰ More generally, sociological theories still treat social revolutions as the dependent variable and are unsophisticated when it comes to their long-term political consequences.¹¹

Most approaches to political and social change in Southern Africa privilege colonial history, emphasizing *deterministic* structural variables, such as institutions, inequalities, and conflicts. For instance, commonplace arguments link ‘liberal’ British colonial legacies to democracy in South Africa and Namibia,¹² and corporatist authoritarianism of Estado Novo Portugal to postcolonial development in Angola and Mozambique.¹³ While colonial legacies certainly matter, they alone cannot explain the varied legacies of liberation. For example, South Africa has a dual British-Dutch colonial heritage that produced apartheid, democratic Namibia lacks a British colonial past, and postcolonial Zimbabwe descended into authoritarianism despite its liberal British colonial inheritance. In fact, more liberal racial institutions in colonial Angola and Mozambique were by no means less conducive to democracy than racially exclusionary white-

minority rule in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.¹⁴ Similarly, theories that tie democracy to capitalist development or social inequalities¹⁵ fare no better: Zimbabwe was the second-most advanced economy in the region but veered to violent authoritarianism; Angola failed to democratize despite high GDP per capita; and South Africa and Namibia consolidated democracy despite extreme inequalities often viewed unfavorable to democratic development.

Dominant patterns of social inequalities and conflict in contemporary Southern Africa also diverge from historical antecedents of the settler-colonial period. In Angola and Mozambique, these are based on class and geographic divides, not race. Meanwhile, despite its colonial history of racial segregation and conflict similar to South Africa, Zimbabwe is today marked by post-racial social disparities and polarization. Even in South Africa and Namibia, structural inequalities encompass both old racial and new post-racial disparities, leading some scholars to argue that “race had given way to class.”¹⁶ Likewise, socioeconomic variables that liberal and neo-Marxist analysts associated with revolutionary outcomes cannot explain the different reform approaches: radical change occurred in less unequal and less modernized Angola and Mozambique, while liberal reforms prevailed in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, despite their pronounced racial-class exploitation, inequalities, and advanced national economies. These anomalies are explained by focusing on the liberation reform episode.

A third perspective—the wartime-institutions approach—stresses authoritarian political legacies of conflict-period guerrilla structures and norms.¹⁷ Southern African scholars argue that an illiberal ‘liberation’ political culture forged during the struggles constrained democratic development in the region.¹⁸ Yet, while post-conflict politics rarely start on a blank slate, the rebel-to-government paradigm struggles to explain the divergent political outcomes. As much as wartime structures reflect guerrilla ideologies and strategic objectives, post-conflict realities

demand political pragmatism and flexibility. In Southern Africa—where ideological differences among former liberation movements were minimal—wartime institutions, norms, or ideology fail to offer a predictive key for varying post-liberation reform choices and their consequences. Most nationalist leaders in the region ended up pursuing agendas that diverged sharply from their original revolutionary visions, leading to different state and social structures. As some conflict scholars note, domestic conditions, peace arrangements, and external factors played key roles in (re)defining post-liberation priorities and possibilities.¹⁹ Additionally, painting a broad-brush picture of authoritarianism in Southern Africa obscures stark political variations seen earlier. Hence, this study departs from that paradigm by focusing on the critical juncture of liberation reforms, considering similarities and differences across the countries to offer a more nuanced explanation of political development. It also broadens the analytic lens beyond the narrow focus on political institutions and democracy, examining wider macro-historical processes and outcomes to provide a more holistic account of liberation legacies. As Charles Tilly argued, explaining political development in postcolonial Southern Africa requires attention to “big structures,” and “large processes” that shape long-term macrosocial change.²⁰

Finally, some scholars point to other episodes as the critical juncture, with the armed struggles being the primary candidate.²¹ But, while certain hypotheses may hold for specific countries or outcomes, the struggle period provides limited leverage in terms of the region as a whole as well as the broader politico-social legacies of liberation beyond democracy. Some scholars argue that civil wars represent critical junctures due to their transformative “social processes.”²² Nonetheless, the Southern African anticolonialist conflicts were strictly not civil wars, and significant changes with lasting legacies—the defining property of critical junctures—in all five countries occurred in their aftermath. Even in Mozambique and Zimbabwe—where

nationalist movements launched basic reforms in rural areas during conflict—fundamental changes with lasting consequences took place later. Thus, how conflicts end is often more “critical” for their legacies and, as Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way contend, with national social revolutions, “The aftermath of the seizure of power may be understood as a critical juncture, during which the behavior of the revolutionary elite can have powerful long-term consequences for the regime.”²³ Following this logic, this study centers the liberation reform period *after* the conflicts—not the armed struggles—as the pivotal moment shaping political development in postcolonial Southern Africa.

Country specialists also cite later events as potential critical junctures, such as civil wars in post-independence Mozambique and Angola or Zimbabwe’s violent land redistribution in the early 2000s. Yet these conflicts were themselves outcomes of earlier reform choices. The electoral authoritarian regimes and persistent political divisions in the former countries mirror those established in the 1970s, indicating the decisive influence of the liberation reform period. That Angola is similar to Mozambique today, despite the importance of oil and distinctiveness of the conflict, further underscores the lasting impact of that formative episode on political development. Similarly, violent land appropriation in Zimbabwe—often viewed as the most transformative event in the country’s political history—can only be understood in relation to liberation reforms. The delayed radical land reforms were the dramatic culmination of dynamics that began in the reform period. Rather than shifting the country’s political trajectory, they reinforced the repressive regime institutions and deepened national polarization rooted in the liberation episode.²⁴

This study therefore conceptualizes the liberation reform period as the critical juncture. I apply consistent criteria to delineate this period (see below) and exclude later policies (e.g., the fast-track land redistribution in Zimbabwe) from the definition of radical, liberal, and abortive

liberal reform approaches. Historians and social scientists of Southern Africa use the term “liberation period” somewhat loosely, sometimes conflating liberation-period reforms with later changes. In contrast, I treat later policy or institutional shifts as political reactions and counterreactions set into motion by the original choices made during the liberation reform years. Focusing on the liberation reform period as foundational to political development aligns with historically oriented African politics scholarship emphasizing institutional choices at decolonization²⁵ and with broader comparative-historical studies stressing how, for example, post-revolutionary state-building strategies²⁶ and contentious nationalist episodes shape long-run political trajectories.²⁷ These works commonly highlight how these critical moments set enduring patterns of political and institutional development.

Critical Junctures and Path-Dependent Change

Comparative-historical analysts have emphasized the importance of critical juncture periods for explaining political and social change.²⁸ They argue that certain outcomes cannot be understood in terms of constant gradual change or short-term causal processes, but as long-term trajectories punctuated by critical junctures. These are understood as relatively short episodes of major, discontinuous change with enduring legacies,²⁹ or as “choice points” when key actors select a particular option (e.g., policy, institution, coalition) that is momentous for future outcomes.³⁰ Such episodes are ‘critical’ in that, once a decision has been made, it becomes increasingly difficult to return to the initial choice point—or road fork—when multiple options existed.³¹

Recent debates on critical junctures advance different theoretical views. I will thus highlight key assumptions this study makes in using the conceptual framework, whose building blocks are sketched in Figure 2. First, critical junctures are marked by relatively rapid, discontinuous change that produces strikingly divergent outcomes. These moments allow key

individual or collective actors to make key decisions because, as James Mahoney cogently noted, critical junctures are periods of heightened agency and “relative structural indeterminism,” in which actors shape “outcomes in a more voluntaristic fashion than normal circumstances permit.”³² Yet, rather than being entirely random, actor choices are shaped by prior conditions, processes, and power dynamics. Moreover, change during critical junctures can arise from endogenous sources rather than merely exogenous shocks,³³ and the scale of such change can vary widely, ranging from small-scale, less disruptive shifts to large-scale, dramatic transformations—variation that helps explain why a similar critical event may produce diverse legacies across contexts. Relatively ‘small’ factors can push the outcome one way or another; we cannot assume that ‘large’ effects are the result of ‘large’ causes.³⁴

Second, actor decisions at these critical points are understood as contingent outcomes. That is, not only do actors exert greater influence than under usual circumstances, but the resulting outcomes are also unpredictable from the standpoint of established theory, relevant model, or well-known variables with predictable outcomes.³⁵ Analysts employ “contingency” to highlight either “small events” or chance occurrences that set self-reinforcing processes in motion, or to emphasize agency, deliberate choice, and unpredictability. Both views rest on the core assumption that seemingly small events or decisions exert disproportionate influence on subsequent processes because structural constraints are significantly relaxed at such junctures, allowing strategic decision-making “in a situation of high uncertainty and unpredictability.”³⁶ Put differently, more than one outcome is possible at the critical turning point, and prior conditions influence—not determine—actor choices in a probabilistic fashion.

This should not imply that outcomes are purely random occurrences. As Kathleen Thelen notes, critical junctures are rarely moments of wide-open fluidity in which anything can happen;

even if sometimes these junctures can be highly contingent, available options and actor choices are defined by preexisting institutions, organizational legacies, and power relations.³⁷ This leads to a third assumption that actors choose from a historically defined set of alternative options, and antecedent conditions help explain why one option rather than another was selected. Some antecedents act as “permissive conditions” that undermine structural constraints and expand agency; others serve as “productive conditions” that operate with permissive conditions to define the range of feasible options and likely outcomes.³⁸ Additionally, the historical context of a critical juncture matters: a critical moment that unfolds in different world-historical settings may lead to different choices and generate divergent state, political regime, or social policy trajectories.³⁹ Additionally, while the conjuncture of the juncture with different historical processes (such as transnational developments) can greatly influence outcomes,⁴⁰ the sequence in which actors make choices *relative* to actors in another context can crucially define strategic actor calculations through learning process, as evidence from Southern Africa shows below.

Antecedent conditions that help explain actor behavior should not be treated as direct causes of subsequent development trajectories. These are rather outcomes of the critical juncture itself—notably the political, institutional, or other choices actors make. The latter produce structural and institutional variables that help predict future outcomes. In some contexts with dissimilar antecedents and prior political divergence, what Dan Slater called “critical antecedents”—or prior structural conditions that allow a particular critical juncture to take shape—combine with the juncture dynamics to lead to long-term divergence.⁴¹ This offers an alternative explanation to one that focuses exclusively on the critical juncture, as this study does. The critical-juncture hypothesis can still hold if critical antecedents are shown to be partial causes of later outcomes. In this sense, a critical-antecedents hypothesis may function as a complementary or

competing—but not necessarily mutually exclusive—explanation alongside a strictly critical-juncture explanation.

Fourth, decisions made during critical junctures initiate relatively ‘deterministic’ causal processes marked by path dependence, whereby early choices “place institutional arrangements on paths or trajectories, which are then very difficult to alter.”⁴² To assert that a hypothesized critical juncture has such effect, one must demonstrate how a given policy or institutional choice “activates key variables that favor certain outcomes over others. Although the choice itself may have been caused by prior events, it is the variables activated by the choice, not the antecedent conditions that led to the choice, that predict final outcomes.”⁴³ Analysts distinguish between two types of path dependence. In self-reinforcing path-dependent processes, positive feedback mechanisms (e.g., increasing returns, adaptive expectations, cultural norms) continuously reinforce established institutions even when better alternatives emerge, with powerful actors using power imbalances to resist change.⁴⁴ In contrast, reactive processes are driven by self-undermining logics: initial choices trigger a chain of causally linked reactions and counterreactions that tend to transform—not reinforce—and even reverse early structures.⁴⁵

I emphasize both institutional persistence *and* gradual change as defining properties of path dependence. As Thelen argued, path-dependent arguments are still premised on a “punctuated equilibrium model” of moments of rapid institutional change followed by long periods of “institutional stasis or ‘lock in,’” drawing “strict separation” between institutional origins and institutional change.⁴⁶ Instead, change is central to path-dependent development, and institutional reproduction is accompanied and enabled by institutional reform, innovation, and incremental change short of wholesale breakdown or replacement. This logic of institutional persistence and change is better conveyed by a “branching paths” view of path dependence, where initial choices

constrain future options and limit the possibilities of path alteration over time.⁴⁷ Path-dependent processes channel—rather than prevent—institutional change into particular paths through positive (increasing returns) and reactive causal loops. Once a path is taken, as Douglass C. North suggested, previously possible alternatives become “increasingly remote” as certain institutions lock in place and relevant actors adjust their strategies accordingly.⁴⁸ Path-dependent change takes place through what theorists of gradual institutional change label “layering” (adding new rules or institutions to existing ones), “conversion” (reinterpreting the purpose institutions serve), and “drift” (unintended changes due to shifting social environment),⁴⁹ without fully displacing foundational institutions.

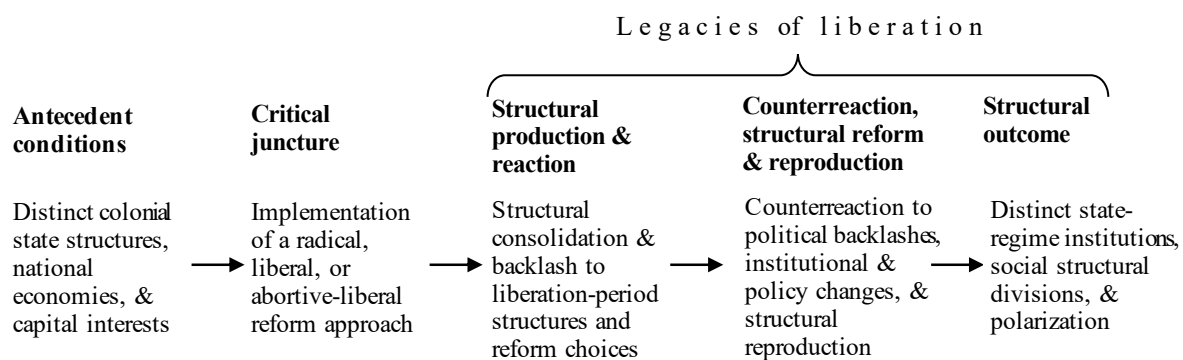
Historical institutionalists stress how institutions often evolve through what Margaret Weir called “bounded innovation.”⁵⁰ But they emphasize incremental yet *transformative* change, including institutional displacement and reversal. Instead, path-dependent institutions are open to incremental development that constrains fundamental institutional transformation or replacement. Path-independent change is distinct from path-independent processes of gradual shift because, with path-dependence, initial events or choices early in a sequence lead to relatively predictable or ‘deterministic’ processes. In this “branching” model of path dependence, as Paul Pierson suggested, institutional arrangements established at a critical juncture push “social development on distinct tracks” by limiting easy reversal of the initial choice.⁵¹ Path-dependent change tracks down a path taken at a juncture as initial choices progressively close off alternative paths. Moreover, unlike models of continuous gradual shift, gradual path-dependent change is punctuated by critical junctures and is path-structured, unfolding along a trajectory defined by an initial choice as “adaptive,” “bounded,” and path-constrained form of change⁵²—until new events erode mechanisms of reproduction and allow rapid change.

Path-dependent dynamics are rarely driven by single processes of institutional reproduction and change. Rather, overlapping processes undergird institutional resilience and evolution. More broadly, self-reinforcing and reactive mechanisms can interactively shape path-dependent dynamics, typically with one mode dominating the overall or different stages of institutional development. Self-reinforcing processes dominate initial institutional lock-in and reproduction at later stages; reactive mechanisms tend to emerge once structures are ‘locked in,’ contributing to institutional instability and reconfiguration. Yet, like self-perpetuating dynamics, reactive mechanisms can still lead to institutional adaptation and persistence because institutional change is always contingent on the balance of power, dominant ideas, and resource distribution between powerful groups and actors seeking change.⁵³ Institutional adaptation and reproduction is common if pro-reform actors are weaker. Explanations emphasizing self-reinforcing or reactive dynamics in a given context usually reflect competing—but not mutually exclusive—hypotheses about underlying mechanisms.

Finally, structures established at critical junctures generate political conflicts, which eventually culminate in a more enduring legacy or “heritage.”⁵⁴ These legacies typically emerge much later as the path-dependent dynamics require considerable time to play out.⁵⁵ More stable than the structures produced during the juncture itself, the durable legacies also resemble the initial structures, especially when institutional adaptation and self-reinforcement dominated the post-juncture institutional contestations and reforms. With reactive dynamics, mechanisms of institutional reinforcement can limit the effects of reaction-driven instability and transformation, allowing structural persistence despite significant reconfiguration.

Path-Dependent Political Development in Southern Africa

The liberation-reform period in Southern Africa was a critical juncture that led to divergent trajectories of postcolonial political development. It helps to explain the diverse political and social legacies of the twentieth-century liberation struggles. To show how, I apply the critical-juncture framework of analysis just outlined above to Southern African politics and history since the late-settler colonial period. Figure 2 provides a guide to the examination that follows. The overarching argument is that political development in post-liberation Southern Africa followed path-dependent trajectories set into motion by reform choices pursued during the critical juncture. The political and institutional dynamics that unfold since this juncture encompass broader legacies of liberation. However, I distinguish between the institutional and social structural patterns in the aftermath of the liberation reform episode and the more *enduring* legacies that ultimately consolidated with the resolution of political conflicts, following institutional adaptations, reconfigurations, and reproduction.



The Critical Juncture of Liberation Reforms

The critical juncture of liberation reforms was defined by distinct state, socioeconomic, and nation-building changes. Table 1 summarizes the beginning and endpoints of the liberation reform period for each country. Its opening was marked by revolutionary-elite decisions to pursue a particular reform path: e.g., liberation leaders' acceptance of the Lancaster House agreement (1979) in

Zimbabwe and decision to renounce the armed struggle (1990) in South Africa, both serving as preconditions for negotiated transitions to majority rule and adopting a liberal reform option. The endpoint is less precise, particularly in contexts of less dramatic, gradual liberal reform. But it usually coincided with a notable interruption or departure from the reform agenda that defined the liberation period (i.e., Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe) or the introduction of a second-generation reforms after exhaustion of the first wave of reforms (i.e., South Africa and Namibia).

Before liberation, all five countries were characterized by more or less racialized state, economic, and social structures that marginalized black majorities. Liberation elites faced a common challenge of democratizing the state, overhauling racial capitalism, and building more inclusive, non-racialist nations. They responded to these tasks with a “radical” or “liberal” reform choice that differed in the scope of state restructuring, socioeconomic transformation, and nation-building efforts.⁵⁶ The radical option introduced in Mozambique and Angola entailed rapid and basic changes, involving fundamental transformation of inherited state structures, socialization of capitalist economies and eliminating racial and class inequalities, and pursuing authoritarian nation-building by suppressing subnational differences. By contrast, the liberal option fully implemented in South Africa and Namibia involved limited and incremental reforms, including gradual restructuring of racialized state institutions, the liberalization and deracialization of capitalist economies, gradual reduction of inherited inequalities, and democratic nation-building emphasizing racial reconciliation, national inclusion, and tolerance to social diversity. Liberation leaders in Zimbabwe initially adopted a liberal option that they eventually derailed, resulting in an *abortive* liberal approach that defined the reform episode.

Table 2: Overview of reform measures of the liberation reform period

Policy Measures	Radical Approach	Abortive Liberal	Liberal Approach
National liberation & majority rule (1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dissolution of racially oppressive laws (2)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rapid reorganization of old-state structures (3)	Yes	Yes	No
Rapid & coercive power consolidation (4)	Yes	Yes	No
Nationalization of industry & capital (5)	Yes	No	No
Rapid income redistribution (6)	Yes	No	No
Radical land and agrarian reforms (7)	Yes	No	No
Democratic inclusion (8)	No	No	Yes
Racial & national reconciliation (9)	No	Yes	Yes
	Basic & rapid	Pattern of change	Limited & gradual

Note: Measures 1 & 2 concern the attainment of national liberation, policy measures 3 & 4 pertain to key state reforms and power consolidation, policy measures 5 to 7 refer to major socioeconomic changes, and measures 8 & 9 relate to major nation-building strategies.

Table 2 summarizes the reform approaches with three main dimensions: state restructuring, socioeconomic change, and nation-building.⁵⁷ (See Appendix A for conceptualization, measurement, and archival sources). Whereas Southern African liberation leaders successfully ended settler-colonial domination and promptly dismantled its racial foundations, they pursued reform packages with fundamentally different agendas, policies, and strategies. In the radical reform contexts of Angola and Mozambique, liberation elites seizing political power in 1974-5 launched generally sweeping revolutionary measures, involving the rapid establishment of centralized state structures and consolidation of political power through military means. They also implemented socialist policies—e.g., nationalization of industry, banking, and colonial capital; socialization of basic services; and collective farms, rural cooperatives, and communal villages—to dismantle inherited inequalities, destroy capitalist relations, and rapidly transform backward national economies.⁵⁸ Lastly, high-modernist nation-building strategies defined the reform years in these contexts,⁵⁹ with leaders seeking to forge unified national communities under hegemonic party-state frameworks by suppressing political, ethnic, and regional differences. The reforms were less far-reaching in Angola due to military conflicts from the outset, but the reform strategies

in both countries were radical in orientation, commonly producing repressive party-state regimes, centralized states, and dismantling preexisting racial and class inequalities.

The situation was radically different in the liberal reform contexts of South Africa and Namibia. Here, upon assuming state power in the early 1990s, liberation actors incrementally deracialized state institutions and consolidated power through democratic means during the reform years. In the socioeconomic arena, they pursued gradual racial redress and neoliberal reform policies emphasizing capitalist growth over redistribution. Reforms aimed to *transform*—not destroy—racial capitalism and foster capitalist growth to gradually reduce racial inequalities and poverty among historically marginalized blacks through black economic empowerment, employment, promotion of black-middle classes, and expanded service provision.⁶⁰ Pro-market policies trumped redistributive imperatives, and land reform was based on a liberal “willing-buyer, willing-seller” market framework, which preserved racially skewed landownership patterns. Finally, South African and Namibian leaders pursued liberal nation-building projects, emphasizing national reconciliation, cultural diversity, and democratic inclusion of diverse actors in order to unify deeply fractured societies. Consequently, in contrast to radical reforms, the liberal approach produced democratic regime and state structures, but failed to dismantle entrenched racial disparities or prevent the emergence of intra-black class inequalities.

The abortive liberal approach in Zimbabwe in the 1980s shared some basic features of the liberal reform approach. But Zimbabwean elites deviated from the liberal choice, enacting quasi-liberal state reforms that involved rapid Africanization of the white-dominated civil service, increased power centralization, and violence against opposition. Socioeconomic reform policies remained largely liberal under a “growth with equity” framework for gradual racial redress and black advancement without undermining the white-dominated capitalist system. Plans for

deracializing the private sector, rural development, and land reforms based on “willing-buyer, willing-seller” principles were even less effective than in South Africa and Namibia.⁶¹ Lastly, liberal nation-building was ultimately repudiated in favor of a one-party nation-building model resembling Mozambique and Angola.⁶² Therefore, the reform period in Zimbabwe institutionalized authoritarian regime institutions with centralized state structures, while preserving inherited racial disparities. Before turning to the structural consequences, I will briefly explore historical determinants of the reform approaches.

Antecedent Conditions and Reform Choices

To understand the origins of the radical, liberal, and abortive liberal approaches, it is essential to examine the antecedent conditions shaping the critical juncture. Dominant approaches typically emphasize either deterministic structural variables of the late-colonial period⁶³ or political-organizational features the liberation movements. However, neither approach adequately explains the variation in reform strategies across Southern Africa since standard predictors of revolutionary versus non-revolutionary outcomes—such as racial exclusion, inequality, modernization, or ideology—do not align with observed reform paths (App. B). Paradoxically, revolutionary change unfolded in contexts with lower levels of racial exclusion, structural inequalities, and modernization—and vice versa. Nor are ideological beliefs reliable predictors as Skocpol argued: revolutionary liberation movements that assumed power broadly shared Marxist-Leninist principles and goals, and minor variations among them cannot account for the contrasting reform choices.⁶⁴ Instead, the radical and liberal reform choices emerged contingently from a combination of *theoretically* unanticipated domestic-structural conditions and the immediate political circumstances of the critical juncture.

As Fig. 3 illustrates, these factors can be analyzed using a two-dimensional framework capturing the *mode* and the *timing* of liberation. The mode of liberation—negotiated or non-negotiated, military decided—was shaped by distinctive antecedent conditions (i.e., state power, economic structures, and capitalist class interests) prevailing before liberation. In Mozambique and Angola, a weak settler-colonial state disintegrated amid decolonization, permitting nationalist leaders to seize power militarily and pursue a radical reform option. These countries also had underdeveloped, predominantly agrarian economies that deteriorated rapidly amid revolutionary upheavals. Liberation elites reacted to this with *contingent* state “intervention” measures that paved the way for coordinated socialist changes. Finally, settler-colonial capital was also historically less influential and abruptly departed fearing nationalization and redistribution. Facing economic sabotage, infrastructural breakdown, and declining productivity, nationalist leaders were pushed toward radical-reform strategies despite their hesitation to launch radical measures that would risk economic instability and sudden departure of settler-colonial capital and skilled manpower.⁶⁵ While ideology mattered, the radical reform choice was less a doctrinal choice than a response to challenges and opportunities facing liberation elites.

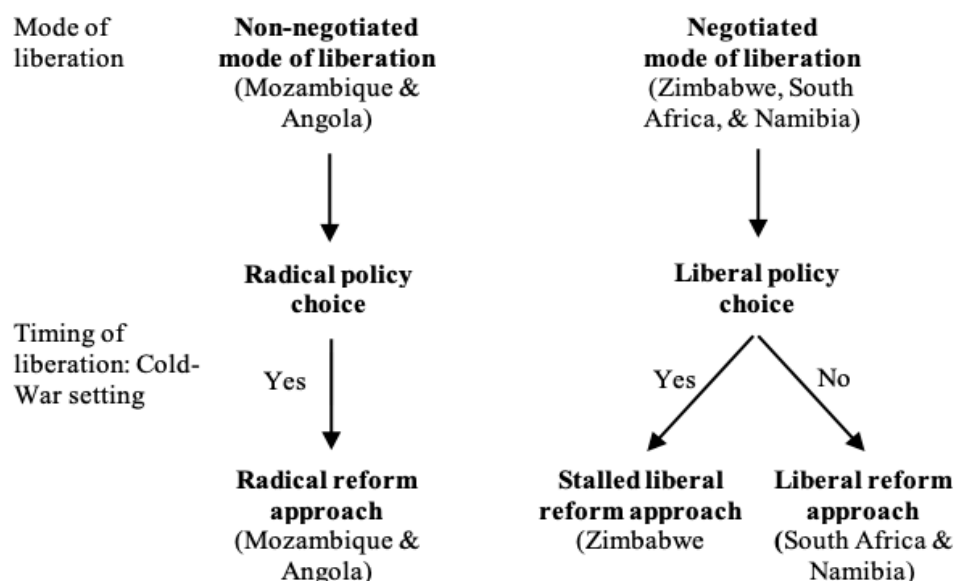


Figure 3: The mode and the timing of liberation and the reform approaches

In South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, national freedom was achieved through negotiated settlements. In these contexts, the settler state was historically powerful,⁶⁶ preventing revolutionary movements from wresting power and embarking on radical changes. The capacity and incentive for coercive state-rebuilding and power consolidation that favored radical changes were absent. Additionally, these countries possessed relatively advanced capitalist economies before liberation and entrenched settler capital, large sections of which favored a negotiated transition to majority rule.⁶⁷ Negotiated settlements, with property rights guarantees, were seen as the only path to avert large-scale economic disruption and confrontation with dominant capitalist interests. Reviving the ailing economies, gradually transforming racial capitalism, and leveraging dominant capital for national reconstruction offered the best prospect for addressing past social injustices, poverty, and fulfilling aspirations of the black majorities through racial redress, redistribution, employment creation, and inclusive national development. The liberal option thus emerged as the most feasible strategy given these constraints and opportunities—and considering the economic devastation previously wrought by radical policies in Angola and Mozambique.⁶⁸

The mode of liberation is nevertheless insufficient to fully account for dynamics of the critical juncture. The timing of liberation also crucially defined both the range of policy options available to liberation actors and their adherence to the initial reform choice (Figure 3). As Theda Skocpol argued in the context of modern social revolutions,⁶⁹ transnational and world-historical contexts decisively influenced the processes and outcomes of Southern African revolutionary struggles. This was more because the timing of liberation in the region variously coincided with late-twentieth-century international geopolitical and economic changes, granting elites varying sets of opportunities, resources, and challenges. In Angola and Mozambique, independence

occurred in the mid-1970s in a tense Cold-War international setting that provided national leaders with greater freedom and international socialist backing for radical transformations. The reform episode was marked by external conflicts and destabilization by Western-backed South African and Rhodesian settler oligarchies,⁷⁰ prompting rapid state-rebuilding, coercive power consolidation, and close alliance with the Soviet bloc that favored a radical reform approach.

In contrast, liberation in South Africa and Namibia in the early-1990s coincided with Cold-War ending, Soviet communist demise, and the global rise of neoliberalism, with international financial institutions (IFIs) exerting virtual control over macroeconomic policy. These epochal international shifts sharply constrained the radical reform path, making liberal economic policies a practical necessity for accessing foreign investment, markets, and development aid.⁷¹ Consequently, Swapo's Sam Nujoma embraced a "pragmatic liberal approach" prioritizing the private sector, foreign investment, and economic growth,⁷² while Nelson Mandela abandoned ANC commitments to nationalize mines, banks, and monopoly industry, warning that "we either keep nationalization and got no investment, or we modify our attitude and get investments."⁷³ More generally, revolutionary social change and modernist nation-building projects had become costly by the 1990s amid the global diffusion of liberal political, economic, and governance norms. Still, the liberal choice by ANC and Swapo leaders was not inevitable; other policy options—e.g., conservative, developmentalist, and progressive alternatives—were still available, and the same actors might have pursued other policies under a slightly different context, underscoring the relative indeterminism of the reform choices. Beyond Southern Africa, victorious liberation movements in Ethiopia and Eritrea implemented far-reaching social changes in the 1990s despite similar international constraints.⁷⁴

Lastly, the reform period in Zimbabwe in the 1980s unfolded in a less restrictive international setting, allowing leaders greater room to deviate from the liberal choice they initially embraced. Adherence to liberal economic reforms and accommodating large capital was necessary to avert capital flight, apartheid South African destabilization, and consequent economic disarray, as Mozambique and Angola had proved by the early 1980s. Nevertheless, Zimbabwean elites enjoyed greater political latitude and faced external threats that justified coercive power centralization and social control. As such, they gradually abandoned liberal power-maintenance and nation-building strategies in favor of a one-party regime prevalent before democratic transitions in Africa in the 1990s.⁷⁵ This shift would have been far more difficult had liberation occurred in the liberal 1990s international context. By the same counterfactual logic, South African and Namibian leaders would likely have pursued anything but the liberal approach had they achieved power in a pre-1989 world environment, just as Mozambican and Angolan leaders would likely have adopted a liberal approach had independence transpired in the post-1989 liberal international order.

Therefore, the reform strategies pursued by Southern African elites were contingently shaped by a conjuncture of distinctive domestic antecedents and world-historical setting of the critical juncture. Established theories did not anticipate their impact on actor choices, except for the state's role, which sociological scholarship had identified as central in shaping revolutionary processes and their outcomes.⁷⁶ Accordingly, I emphasize the settler-colonial state's variable strength—which correlates with the different reform choices—over largely similar and difficult-to-measure rebel characteristics (e.g., internal coherence, military power), which lack a systematic relationship with how the liberation struggles concluded.⁷⁷ Additionally, while liberation actors did learn from one another—particularly from the crises following radical changes in Mozambique

and Angola—there is no evidence that elite learning was the principal driver of their reform strategies. The reform choices were thus contingent but not random; they reflected historically specific combinations of power, opportunity, and constraint at the pivotal moment of liberation.

Reactive Sequences and Path-Dependent Change

The liberation period proved crucial to political development by producing enduring state-regime⁷⁸ institutions and social structures. The reform strategies and accompanying political institutions provoked distinctive reactions by various political and class actors that developed into political backlashes for regime change (Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe) or policy and institutional reforms (South Africa and Namibia). A “backlash” is a strong mobilization by actors excluded or harmed by a reform policy or institution, seeking to undermine, erode, or reverse it.⁷⁹ The conservative, social-democratic, and liberal backlashes in turn prompted liberation regimes to counter with new policy and institutional reforms. The institutional adaptations, recalibrations, and changes ultimately resulted in more stable structures that represent the final outcomes (Fig. 2). The reactive dynamics generated varying patterns of institutional instability and path-dependent change. Overall, however, the backlashes failed to overturn the state, regime, and social structures produced during the critical liberation juncture, which allowed the stabilization and reproduction of these structures with the resolution of political conflicts.

Radical Reforms and Conservative Backlash

As the reform period concluded, radical changes in Mozambique and Angola had institutionalized authoritarian party-state structures undergirding Marxist-Leninist political regimes. These relied on coercive power and mass organizations for popular mobilization, with highly centralized state structures subordinated to party authority. Moreover, socialist changes dismantled preexisting

racial and class privileges with the forced departure of Portuguese settlers, economic nationalizations, and rapid “Africanization” of administrative and managerial roles.⁸⁰ Yet mixed-race, urban African, and *assimilado* elites continued to hold advantages, creating new—if less stark—racial-class divisions,⁸¹ particularly in Angola, where the consolidation of state power by an Mbundu-Luanda *assimilado* elite within the MPLA fostered deeper rural and black grievances. Moreover, the reform period generated new class divides around access to party-state institutions, state resources, and wartime economies, replacing the old settler-commercial class with a petty bourgeoisie of educated African bureaucrats and political elites. Urban-centric reform policies widened gaps between regime-linked urban constituencies and marginalized rural communities,⁸² especially pronounced in Angola, where oil wealth and a surviving capitalist enclave reinforced these divides.

The reform-period structures triggered violent conservative backlashes that began with the onset of radical reforms, driven by ‘anti-socialist,’ ‘anti-mestiço,’ ‘black-oriented’ Africanist armed movements rooted in ‘traditional’ rural structures.⁸³ Revolutionary efforts to radically transform existing political and social orders almost always trigger violent reactions by “armed counterrevolutionary movements” backed by foreign powers, often resulting in civil war.⁸⁴ The urban-oriented reforms, rural agrarian disruption, and attacks on traditional elites created fertile ground for conservative rural mobilization, while repressive power consolidation and nation-building strategies left rural insurgency as the only opposition channel.⁸⁵ In Mozambique, intrusive state institutions, collectivization and villagization, erosion of customary authority, and forced reorganization of rural life generated profound rural grievances among traditional elites and peasants. Historical divisions between Frelimo’s southern core and central and northern provinces further intensified the alienation of agrarian communities in the latter regions. These grievances

were exploited by groups excluded from power, which coalesced into the antisocialist *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo) backed first by Rhodesian and then Apartheid South Africa. Positioning itself as the defender of African tradition and rural autonomy, Renamo tapped into this reservoir of rural discontent to wage a devastating antirevolutionary guerrilla insurgency that engulfed much of rural Mozambique by the 1980s.⁸⁶

In Angola, the conservative backlash—linked to preexisting conflicts—quickly developed into a full-scale civil war with massive external intervention. Despite radical reform limitations, the MPLA's efforts to build a socialist state and administrative expansion, erode church and customary authority, and state controls over rural production similarly created conditions for a conservative backlash. Not only did the MPLA lack a strong national appeal and rural presence, but its policies also reinforced an urban-coastal bias that privileged Luanda and the modern sector, worsening historical disparities with the Ovimbundu central highlands, where the disruption of agrarian markets, religious institutions, and local elites fueled resentment toward the MPLA's modernist project. For peasants in the central highlands, the new state appeared extractive and domineering, a perception reinforced by the regime's repression of pluralism and reliance on coercion.⁸⁷ The *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), a former liberation movement rooted in the central highlands, capitalized on rural traditional and ethnoregional resentments to mobilize a rural insurgency against the urban, creole-dominated MPLA elites' non-racist, socialist, and modernist policies, bolstered by South African and Western military backing.

Although the violent reactions that intensified after the reform period were portrayed as externally driven, the evidence shows that the backlashes were fundamentally rooted in the liberation period choices. In Mozambique, the political and social discontents outline above

allowed Renamo's evolution from a pseudo-terrorist proxy to a peasant-based anti-communist national movement with a liberal, pro-capitalist political program, targeting reform-period state structures, socialist economic projects, and infrastructure.⁸⁸ As Christian Geffray argued, only "the political choices made by Frelimo in building its power in the countryside can explain the fact that [the conservative reaction] was grounded in the social fabric of rural Mozambique."⁸⁹ Similarly, in Angola, rather than being fueled simply by previous conflicts or external intervention, the post-independence civil war was fundamentally a clash among national actors with competing agendas, morphing into a rural backlash to the MPLA's revolutionary agenda. Hence, UNITA embedded itself in the countryside to mount a sustained rural counterrevolution mobilizing peasants, traditional elites, and religious leaders behind a conservative program for black power, democracy, and a capitalist economy.⁹⁰ Consequently, the backlash ultimately outlasted Cold-War conflicts in the region, underscoring profound domestic opposition generated by the radical reform approach.

The conservative backlashes and ensuing national crises forced liberation governments to abandon their radical reform agendas. These initial responses failed to contain the insurgencies, setting the stage for gradual liberalization after the mid-1980s that culminated in transitions to electoral democracy and market capitalism in the early 1990s. The shift was more significant in Mozambique, where the rural insurgency devastated the economy and threatened regime survival, involving measures to Africanize the state, reconcile with the Catholic Church, and restore traditional privileges. Frelimo redefined itself as a broad democratic front, formally abandoned party-state structures of the reform era, and liberalized the economy⁹¹—steps that allowed conflict resolution and democratization in the 1990s. Yet centralized regime and state structures persisted. With Frelimo retaining state power and resources, democratic reforms were layered atop—and ultimately constrained by—enduring party-state institutions. The conflict faultline thus hardened

into antagonistic national blocs: Frelimo, strong in urban areas and southern and far-northern provinces, and center-right Renamo, rooted in rural areas and the central regions.⁹² Sweeping economic liberalization deepened post-racial inequalities in the 1980s, undermining egalitarian legacies of earlier changes. Inequality rose sharply as the lower classes that benefited during the reform years were marginalized, and a small black-upper class of politicians, bureaucrats, and regime-aligned capital captured the gains of liberalization.⁹³

In Angola, intensified backlash forced the MPLA regime to initiate political and market reforms in the late-1980s. Yet, unlike Mozambique, the delayed reforms did not allow conflict resolution and democratization; backlash continued through the 1990s, challenging commonplace claims that emphasized international factors. These turn of events allowed the regime to tightened control through renewed repression, power centralization, and cooptation into a vast oil-funded patronage empire, entrenching liberation-period party-state institutions and national cleavages.⁹⁴ While mineral wealth helped prolong the conflict, the more decisive factors lay Angola's distinctive political development itself. The post-liberation conflict drew on deeper sociological, political, and regional divides between former liberation movements than in Mozambique, making elite reconciliation far more difficult. Besides, the MPLA elite's delayed and limited institutional reforms did little to address root causes of the backlash. Meanwhile, economic liberalization in a context of limited institutional reforms and vast oil-fueled patronage system also exacerbated inequalities as a small upper-class of lite families, businessmen, and an 'oil *nomenklatura*' (former politicians, security officers, and civil servants) accumulated wealth from privatization of state assets, state contracts, and patronage.⁹⁵

In both countries, by the 2000s, the institutional reforms and weakening of the armed opposition helped reinforce less inclusive state and regime institutions. The destruction of

autonomous civil society and societal penetration during the liberation reform period meant that social foundations for strong democratic opposition mobilization were nearly absent.⁹⁶ Frelimo elites used state power and resources to roll back democratic reforms under President Armando Guebuza (2005-2015), who re-asserted party control over the state and renewed dominance through patronage, repression, and broader mobilization.⁹⁷ This reproduced the still centralized, partially democratized party-state structures of the liberation reform period. Consequently, with Renamo's continued exclusion from power and resources, the rural-urban national divide consolidated into pernicious national polarization⁹⁸ intertwined with bifurcated neoliberal class inequalities. In Angola, institutional adaptation, layering, and reinforcement intensified in the 2000s, facilitated by UNITA's military defeat, oil-fueled patronage, and post-conflict economic boom. The MPLA reinforced far less inclusive party-state regime institutions through slow constitutional reforms, expansive patronage, and party cooptation of political and civil society.⁹⁹ This ensured UNITA's continued political marginalization, perpetuating the rural-urban and ethnoregional cleavages rooted in the liberation-reform period, along with rising intra-black class inequalities deepened by privatization and crony capitalism.

The state, regime, and social structural legacies of liberation in Mozambique and Angola thus resemble those produced at the liberation episode. While the reactive dynamics in previous decades caused major institutional instability and reconfigurations, self-reinforcing mechanisms (i.e., power, resources, and legitimation) contributed to subsequent institutional stabilization and reproduction. Ruling elites used political power and resources to preserve enduring but gradually changing structures through institutional reform, layering, and conversion to survive in changed political and social milieu. Democratic consolidation proved elusive particularly after significant institutional reforms in Mozambique. Path-dependent change prevents fundamental institutional

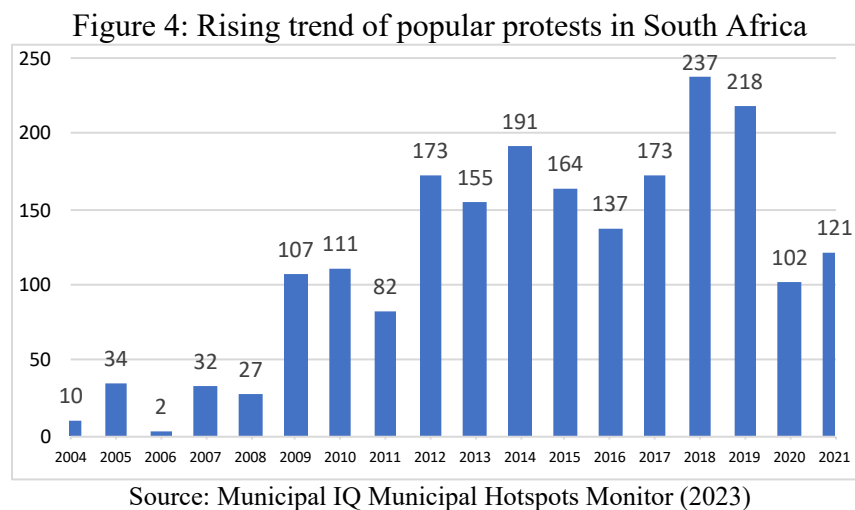
transformation and departure from established trajectories because, as Paul Pierson argued, “institutional arrangements that are in place for an extended period can structure the conditions for their own revision.”¹⁰⁰

Liberal Reforms and Social Democratic Backlash

In the liberal reforms context, the reaction emerged as a social-democratic opposition pro-market policies and their social consequences. Liberal state and nation-building reforms helped avert the rise of armed opposition seen in Mozambique and Angola and the liberal challenge witnessed in Zimbabwe. As reforms concluded, South Africa and Namibia were vibrant democracies in Africa broadly. Yet, despite marked improvements in socioeconomic conditions—particularly in Namibia, where black poverty dropped drastically since liberation¹⁰¹—liberal reforms left apartheid-like racial disparities, deepened class inequalities, and generated persistently high poverty and rising unemployment among black majorities (see App. C).¹⁰² Social transformation proved too slow, and both countries ranked among the world’s most unequal nations, dashing black aspirations and the liberation governments’ agendas for social-democratic societies.

The resulting social grievances produced by the early 2000s strong social-democratic backlashes for progressive policy change, centered in urban popular sectors (i.e., the lower and lower-middle classes). Major institutional and policy choices generate feedback effects by mobilizing beneficiaries with incentives to defend them and opposition among groups disadvantaged by their design.¹⁰³ In South Africa, anti-liberal backlash gained momentum after President Thabo Mbeki assumed the presidency (1999-2008), driven by anti-market labor mobilization, social movements, and widespread community protests over poor governance, service-delivery failures, and socioeconomic exclusion. Deeply alienated by the pro-capital reform direction, organized labor mobilization escalated by the late-1990s after the Congress of South

African Trade Unions (Cosatu)—the largest trade union federation and part of the ruling Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and SACP—failed to push the government towards a more progressive reform path.¹⁰⁴ Cosatu pushed for redistributive and welfare policies, linking with movements of the poor and unorganized workers. Meanwhile, a host of post-apartheid “new social movements” sprang up, contrasting the neoliberal policy direction and addressing liberal state shortcomings.¹⁰⁵ Finally, in the early-2000s, local community or “service delivery” protests surged as persistent service-delivery failures, municipal corruption, and negligence compounded apartheid-era inequalities, poverty, and deprivation in urban and peri-urban areas. These protests, often escalating from peaceful demonstrations to disruptive violent actions, became a defining grassroots response to the liberal reform approach.¹⁰⁶



After the mid-2000s, the backlash in South Africa intensified as disparate racial, class, and communal discontents converged into a broader popular mobilization. Following the 2004 elections, organized labor militancy escalated amid government failure to curb unemployment, declining real wages, and growing employment informalization. Cosatu and its affiliates mounted a powerful anti-liberal challenge, seeking both power realignment within the Alliance and an ANC policy “left turn.” As union membership declined, non-unionized workers and the “working poor”

emerged as the leading force.¹⁰⁷ This working-class militancy ultimately led to the 2007 downfall of Mbeki—the architect of the neoliberal turn in the late-1990s and main target of lower-class anger—and the populist Jacob Zuma’s rise to power. Meanwhile, sporadic community protests coalesced into a sustained “rebellion of the [urban] poor,” as inequality, poverty, and joblessness fueled militant uprisings in formal townships and informal settlements (Fig. 4). Mbeki’s removal did little to stem the backlash as liberal social legacies deepened amid governance failures, economic slowdown, and a liberally constrained state.

In Namibia, the social-democratic reaction developed more slowly and remained less vigorous, reflecting distinct national structural conditions—a smaller working class and manufacturing sector, lower urbanization, and improved service delivery and living standards during reform years—alongside Swapo control over unions and broader society. Still, from the early 2000s onward, episodic popular blowback gradually expanded, involving anti-liberal labor strikes, rural land conflicts, and community protests in response to social disparities, service-delivery failures, and elite-oriented land reforms.¹⁰⁸ Grievances over rural land reform policies among minority communities in southern and central Namibia—the heart of settler colonialism and land dispossession¹⁰⁹—gave the backlash a rural and ethnoregional dimension. Over time, relatively less disruptive and localized mobilizations by trade unions, public-sector workers, township residents, and community organizations grew into a broader backlash, fueled by continued government adherence to neoliberal policies, worsening socioeconomic conditions, and aided by civil-society networks, social media, and youth activism.¹¹⁰ In rural areas, minority communities and farmworkers mobilized for equitable land and resource distribution,¹¹¹ sometimes coalescing into political parties advocating radical redistribution.

The social-democratic character of these backlashes was evident in government counterresponses. Beginning in the early 2000s, the liberation regimes corrective policies including expanded affirmative action, black empowerment, and land reform. After 2004, Mbeki launched pro-left policies aimed at inclusive growth, job creation, poverty alleviation, racial redress, and transformation, making a partial shift away from neoliberal policy orthodoxy of the reform years.¹¹² The backlash also forced the ANC to embrace a new national program in 2007 emphasizing fundamental “economic transformation” and a stronger developmental state, echoing Cosatu’s leftist demands for labor-market regulation, expanded public works, and greater economic planning.¹¹³ Namibia’s Presidents Sam Nujoma (1990-2005) and Hifikepunye L. Pohamba (2005-2015) responded with similar but more modest initiatives.¹¹⁴ Overall, while the policy and institutional reorientations were notable, the reforms failed to reconfigure institutional arrangements of the reform years as resistance from white-dominated big capital, emergent black-business middle classes, and state bureaucracies limited the scope of change. It was also difficult for ruling elites to deviate from the liberal path where accommodating business and gradual racial redistribution became mutually reinforcing political imperatives.

The policy-institutional reforms helped consolidate liberal institutions and momentarily defuse the reactions, but failed to address racial and class contradictions. This set the stage for broader popular-sector backlash after the late 2000s as socioeconomic conditions worsened with the rising class inequalities, unemployment, and economic downturn following the 2008 global financial crisis and steady deindustrialization, especially in South Africa. Widespread misgovernance exacerbated these pressures: in South Africa, endemic corruption, patronage, and “state capture” under President Jacob Zuma (2008-2018) hollowed out state capacity, compounding liberal constraints on policy implementation, dwindling service delivery, and elite

enrichment.¹¹⁵ Consequently, as Fig. 4 shows, popular-sector protests surged in the early 2010s, earning South Africa the label “the protest capital of the world.”¹¹⁶ In this phase—with economic informalization and resultant trade-union decline—non-organized labor, unemployed youth, and community-based movements became the main drivers, and the backlash turned into a more militant, fragmented, and ever-widening popular revolt. Additionally, in both countries, mid-decade student uprisings known as the *Fallist* movements challenged the liberal “sociopolitical order” since liberation, condemning the liberal settlements, lingering racism and inequalities, and demanding genuine decolonization of universities and broader society.¹¹⁷

The heightened backlashes eroded the ANC and Swapo’s long-standing political hegemony. The once pro-poor liberation parties lost vast support among the black-middle and working classes and the urban poor after the mid-2010s sociopolitical turmoil, particularly the ANC that suffered an internal crisis culminating in Zuma’s 2018 ouster.¹¹⁸ Yet, despite their intensity, the backlashes did not engender the kind of major political-economic transitions seen in Angola and Mozambique. Instead, when the backlash subsided in late-2010s, government counterresponses with successive policy adaptations and institutional layering helped stabilize democratic institutions while reproducing polarized social structures inherited from the liberation-reform era. The fragmentation of the lower-class mobilization, weakened trade unions, and, in South Africa, the rise to ANC helm of a liberal faction under Cyril Ramaphosa were crucial to preventing decisive shifts away from the liberal development path. Positive feedback mechanisms—including liberal institutional self-enforcement, popular policies, and ruling-party power regeneration through elections, patronage, and liberation ideology¹¹⁹—contributed to the persistence of liberal institutional legacies. Meanwhile, reactive processes of policy-institutional

reform and layering in response to social-democratic pressure helped absorb opposition and stabilize the liberal order rather than transform it.

Abortive Liberal Reforms and Liberal Backlash

The structural legacies of Zimbabwe's abortive liberal reforms generated a liberal backlash that emerged mainly as a social-democratic reaction. The reform period produced relatively centralized state and regime institutions with limited democratic pluralism, creating political conditions for a liberal blowback for regime change and authoritarian counteraction in the 1990s. As in South Africa and Namibia, highly liberal socioeconomic reforms reproduced racial disparities and solidified intra-black class inequalities. The overall abortive liberal approach failed to "address the serious challenges of land and economic-resource ownership, justice and equity, the reconfiguration of the nation-state ..." or lay down foundations of "a just, equitable and non-racial society" and "a truly democratic order."¹²⁰ These outcomes provoked a broad-based backlash involving the labor movement, urban popular sectors, and civil society seeking democratic inclusion and socioeconomic justice.

The reactions and counterreactions unfolded in three phases: liberalization and popular-sector reaction (1990-1997); broader liberal backlash, polarization, and regime militarization (1998-2008); and reinforcement of exclusionary and militarized state-regime structures (2008-2013). The backlash emerged in the early 1990s among labor and other popular sectors, catalyzed by structural adjustments policies that dismantled state protections, eroded "welfarist" gains of the reform period, and exacerbated structural disparities.¹²¹ Large-scale labor retrenchments, social-spending cuts, deregulation, and declining real-wages hit workers and the urban poor hardest, spurring a rapidly expanding wave of labor strikes led by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). Emerged as an autonomous oppositional force, ZCTU became increasingly

confrontational and, after mid-1990s, labor protests escalated into sustained mass-action despite rising state repression.¹²² Unlike South African and Namibia, Zimbabwe's brutal state response pushed labor mobilization from bread-and-butter struggles toward a broader urban-based backlash encompassing socioeconomic, political, and constitutional demands.

The labor-led reaction soon drew in other popular-sector and civil-society actors responding to rapid socioeconomic deterioration as well as growing authoritarianism. Although catalyzed by neoliberal policies, these reactions originated in the highly unequal socioeconomic and authoritarian political legacies of the reform period, and thus eventually turned into a political challenge. Student mobilization, rooted in the liberation era, intensified in the early 1990s and expanded from anti-austerity protests to national issues. As the state retreated from welfare provision, new urban community associations emerged to address deepening poverty and often adopted oppositional role.¹²³ Churches also became actively engaged socioeconomic rights and broader national issues as social conditions and regime repression worsened; leading church organizations became critical of the state's human rights record, and in 1993 the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) established a Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation (JPR) desk that became central to the liberal push for constitutional reforms. Finally, human-rights and development NGOs also proliferated, providing policy advocacy, service provision, and civic education. As the backlash intensified, these organizations built alliances with trade unions, churches, and social movements to challenge repressive laws and demand political reforms.¹²⁴

The regime countered the widening backlash with repression, selective distribution, and cooptation—strategies reminiscent of the reform era. While constrained by neoliberal conditions from adopting progressive policies, the regime's response was shaped more by authoritarian legacies of the reform period, resorting to increased violence and repressive laws to consolidate

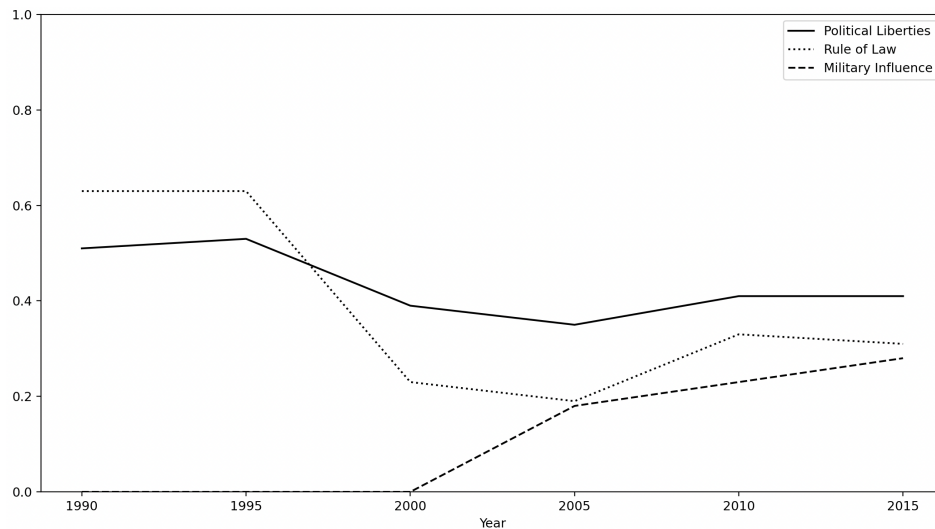
power in both urban and rural areas. This began a gradual militarization of state structures as President Robert Mugabe increasingly relied on the security forces to quell growing liberal opposition. At the same time, limited inclusion and redistribution measures exploited racial and class grievances linked to liberal reforms. As the white-minority backed backlash intensified, Mugabe abandoned reform-period policy of racial reconciliation that fueled black grievances in the 1990s: land-hungry peasants invaded commercial farms, the black-business class marginalized during the reform years demanded greater economic control, and black affirmative-action groups pressed for deracializing land ownership.¹²⁵ Mugabe harnessed these racial-class grievances into an exclusionary black nationalist project centered on economic indigenization and radical land-redistribution, forging a “distributional coalition” of black business, war veterans, and other disaffected groups.¹²⁶

By the late 1990s, these dynamics ushered in a decade of heightened political confrontation and polarization over manifold national issues.¹²⁷ Popular backlash intensified in reaction to the regime’s intransigence and worsening socioeconomic conditions, and when it became clear to the labor movement that its goals could not be without governance and constitutional reforms. The disparate mobilizations converged into a more cohesive liberal opposition for democratic regime change. The backlash became a liberal challenge because ZCTU, which led the liberal mobilization for democratic change, embraced liberal ideals—reduced state economic dominance, state-business collaboration, and political freedoms—and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party that formed the liberal opposition adopted similar liberal political and economic goals.¹²⁸ To pursue this liberal agenda, the labor movement, human-rights NGOs, churches, and other civil-society associations formed in 1998 the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)—a broad-based constitutional reform movement for an inclusive constitution-

making process. The regime responded with its own Constitutional Commission (CC) focused on replacing the Lancaster House constitution that defined the liberation reform period, which deepened the political conflict and national polarization.¹²⁹

The conflict peaked with the MDC's formation (1999)—a labor-led, multi-class and multi-racial coalition of the labor and constitutional-reform movements—and a national referendum (2000) rejecting the government's draft constitution. Facing an existential liberal challenge and with entrenched political culture of repression, the regime unleashed a violent response and exclusion strategies similar to its liberation-era political behavior.¹³⁰ It launched violent invasions of white-owned commercial farmland to burnish its black nationalist credentials; cement the populist black coalition of party elites, war veterans, and small-scale black commercial farmers; and weaken the white minority and urban-popular sectors.¹³¹ While the deadly violence destroyed rural MDC structures, the process reinforced authoritarian regime institutions and sharpened intra-black social inequalities despite dismantling historical racial disparities. Additionally, after 2000, the regime sought to crush the liberal challenge through legal repression, political violence, and fragmenting trade unions, churches, and civil-society organizations.¹³² This was accomplished by ZANU-PF's capturing and weaponization of state structures against the liberal opposition, which deepened regime autocratization and militarization (Fig. 5) as Mugabe's filled key state institutions with military and security personnel. The powerful liberal challenge diminished over time; as Pierson argued, the power advantages allow dominant actors to shape institutions, rules, and resource flows in ways that systematically reinforce their position over time, creating self-reinforcing feedbacks that raise the costs of reversal, marginalize challengers, and lock in asymmetries of power.¹³³

Figure 5: Political liberties, increased violence, and militarization in Zimbabwe



Source: Michael Coppedge, et al, “V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v13”

The regime’s harsh counterreaction eroded social foundations of the liberal backlash. Additionally, economic collapse, hyperinflation, and socioeconomic hardships after the land invasions demobilized social forces behind the liberal opposition. Civic bodies like the NCA and civil society were “worn down by both the repression of the state and the corrosive effects of economic deterioration.”¹³⁴ This ultimately led to de-escalation of the liberal challenge and ZANU-PF’s reassertion of authoritarian control during the 2008-2013 Government of National Unity (GNU), when the MDC abandoned political confrontation and sought within-system reforms. While helping defuse the decade-long turmoil and resolve the reactive sequence, the political settlement produced little institutional change or democratic inclusion. Instead, it allowed ZANU-PF to restore its dominance and stabilize militarized state-regime institutions; as before, limited reforms served less to democratize power than to provide space for the ruling party to reassert power.¹³⁵ The heightened reactions and counterreactions deeply polarized Zimbabwean society into two confrontational blocs,¹³⁶ and entrenched post-racial inequalities—especially class and rural-urban divisions—with the breakdown of old racial and traditional class inequalities amid prolonged political and economic turmoil.

The Political and Social Legacies

The enduring structural legacies of liberation solidified once the reactive dynamics subsided. In Mozambique and Angola, these structures are marked by narrowly inclusive, highly centralized state-regime structures with blurred party-state lines—an inheritance of fused party-state institutions of the radical reform period. The political regimes exhibit intermediate levels of democratic inclusion and contestation (App. Table D1), channeled mainly through ruling parties rather than democratic institutions like during the liberation episode. Both countries also exhibit post-racial disparities and national cleavages (App. Table D2), primarily based on ethnoregional and rural-urban divisions that fueled post-liberation conflicts, and “polarized” class structures¹³⁷ without prominent middle classes that emerged with transitions to market economies. National polarization is moderate and appears in bipolarized party systems, electoral contestation, and periodic conflicts between the ruling former liberation parties and their conservative rivals.

By contrast, South Africa and Namibia are characterized by the most inclusive state-regime institutions and the most unequal national communities. State structures are far less centralized and subordinated to ruling parties, and the political regimes are broadly inclusive, competitive multiracial democracies. The ruling parties retain power through democratic elections, policy programs, and political patronage, rather than authoritarian repression, social cooptation, and electoral manipulation common in Angola and Mozambique. Yet these democratic legacies coexist with extreme inequalities and polarization along racial, class, and ethnoregional lines. Due to the liberal reforms, historical racial disparities persisted alongside new intra-black class inequalities,¹³⁸ including a sizable middle class that emerged from active promotion of black capital accumulation by liberation regimes. Racial and class conflicts trump ethnic, regional, and rural-urban national cleavages dominant in Angola and Mozambique.

Zimbabwe's liberation legacies differ from both categories. The political regime is the least democratic in 'post-liberation' Southern Africa, with institutionalized political violence and patronage serving as main mechanisms of regime survival and institutional reproduction. While the ruling party remains vital, state-regime institutions are uniquely militarized, with the military acting as the ultimate political arbiter exemplified by its intervention in ZANU-PF factional fights and Robert Mugabe's ouster in 2017. Meanwhile, the liberation legacies are marked by comparably low and post-racial structural inequalities but high national polarization, centered on a rural-urban cleavage hardened over the post-liberation decades.

These diverse liberation legacies also differ markedly those that prevailed in the late-settler-colonial period, underscoring the critical-ness of the liberation reform period. Mozambican and Angolan national societies can be considered post-racial, where postcolonial class, ethnoregional, and spatial disparities had replaced settler-colonial racial and other conflicts. In South Africa and Namibia, today's racially inclusive democracies contrast with pre-liberation racially exclusionary minority regimes lacking liberal constitutions and Bills of Rights undergirding post-liberation political development. The multifaceted structural disparities also differ from racial hierarchies of the settler-colonial era and today's racial inequalities, which endured due precisely to the liberal nature of liberation reforms, are less stark and cross-cut by a sizeable black-middle class.¹³⁹ Meanwhile, Zimbabwe resembles more Angola and Mozambique than South Africa and Namibia with which it shared colonial historical commonalities. The liberation reform period and post-liberation dynamics seen above generated more repressive regime institutions and post-racial disparities notwithstanding more pluralistic political institutions and high racial disparities of the settler-colonial era.

Conclusion

Some historical junctures are more critical to long-term political development. The liberation-reform period in Southern Africa represents such a juncture to understand the varied legacies of liberation. Reform choices adopted by political elites during this period set in motion path-dependent processes of reactions and counterreactions that shaped political and social change. Although the revolutionary liberation movements shared broadly similar radical aspirations, none fully achieved the goals of democratic, equitable, and inclusive non-racial nations. As opposed to Fanonian accounts that paint a general picture of neocolonialism, authoritarianism, and social disintegration, they failed in different ways and to different degrees due to the reform choices they pursued. Radical strategies contributed to less unequal, post-racial national societies but at the cost of violence and authoritarian legacies; conversely, liberal reforms laid foundations for democracy and inclusive nation-building, yet left societies torn by racial and post-racial divisions. Revolutionary violence is necessary for far-reaching social change, as Barrington Moore Jr. famously argued, and dictatorships proved more effective than democracy at rapid redistribution.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, the democratic gains achieved under liberal reformism came with profound limits on social transformation.

The argument has direct relevance to contexts of revolutionary decolonization and postcolonial political changes in Africa and beyond. It contributes to comparative-historical debates on regime development, democratization, and social change, especially following national revolutions, civil conflicts, and other contentious political episodes. The insights challenge the long-standing view that revolutions “from below” inevitably prompt abrupt social change and authoritarian political development. Instead, it highlights structure, agency, and contingency interact to shape post-revolutionary trajectories—and how changes in the international system

since the 1980s have fundamentally altered the relationship between national revolutions and political development. Outcomes depend not simply on revolutionary rupture, but on *how* and *when* revolutions end, reaffirming the Skocpolian insight that transnational dynamics decisively shape revolutionary outcomes and long-term paths.¹⁴¹ The altered international state and economic systems have also rendered national-social revolutions a rare mode of political and social change. Moreover, in line with Levitsky and Way, the analysis shows that postrevolutionary political development hinges less on the revolutionary process itself than on the state and social-reform strategies pursued after victory.¹⁴² It, therefore, calls into question the rebel-to-government paradigm, which typically reads off post-conflict trajectories of wartime rebel ideology, institutions, and agendas, downplaying historical context, contingency, and strategic choice in shaping outcomes.

The study demonstrates the value of critical junctures for understanding long-term legacies of national revolutions, social movements, and other transformative phenomena. Yet empirical research has lagged behind theoretical and methodological advances in the analysis of critical junctures, path dependence, and temporality in the past quarter century. Actor decisions made during critical moments of intense contestation, coalition alignment, and institutional formation can lead to path dependence as initial choices often generate certain variables that favor certain outcomes or paths over others. And as Paul Pierson urged, adopting a “slow-moving” analytic lens attentive to timing, sequencing, and macro-social processes¹⁴³ helps to better explain how contentious political episodes produce durable political, organizational, and policy trajectories that persist long after the original crisis has passed. Policy and institutional arrangements, once established at critical junctures, can prove remarkably durable and thereby ensure the legacies of

contentious political episodes are carried forward over extended periods to shape actor strategies, preferences, and conflicts.

The analysis also calls for rethinking dominant view of path dependence. Rather than equating it with inertia and lock-in, path dependence should be understood in terms of institutional persistence *and* structured change.¹⁴⁴ While the analyses of critical junctures and path dependence have led to significant insights into the sources of institutional formation and reproduction, institutions are often seen existing in stable equilibria until the next critical juncture—a punctuated equilibria model that, as Kathleen Thelen observed, “tends to distinguish sharply between periods of institutional creation and periods of ‘stasis.’”¹⁴⁵ In reality, path-dependent institutional development and persistence that appear relatively predictable and deterministic is marked by ongoing institutional reform, innovation, recalibration, and even transformation. Rather than structural stasis or mere lock-in, path dependence should convey how initial decisions and “paths not taken” shape future possibilities of change that is gradual and constrained by the inherited institutional terrain. Unlike endogenous models of gradual institutional change that stress open-ended, constant, and *path-independent* evolution, gradual path-dependent change is adaptive, choice-constrained, and path-structured. It is also initiated by a critical juncture and ends with abrupt change that potentially marks a new juncture.

Finally, path-dependent processes are rarely driven by a single causal dynamic or mechanism. Self-reinforcing or reactive processes often coexist and interact, with one pattern typically dominating the overall path or particular phases of path-dependent development. Self-reinforcing feedback processes that favor stability tend to dominate early institutional development and subsequent reproduction, while reactive mechanisms typically emerge once specific structures are consolidated, generating pressure for institutional instability and change. Importantly, what

Jame Mahoney originally formulated as “reactive sequences” are not limited to institutional instability and change.¹⁴⁶ They, with self-reinforcing mechanisms, can contribute to institutional persistence and reproduction—albeit in diminished and reconfigured forms—by encouraging continued institutional adaptation, recalibration, and readjustment to changing political and social environment. While this study offers initial theoretical and empirical insights, further work is required to refine our understanding of path dependence and bring it to par with historical-institutionalist theories of gradual institutional change.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declares no potential conflict of interest with regard to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Endnotes

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³ These are path-dependent sequences of temporally ordered and causally connected reactions and counterreactions. See Mahoney, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology,” 509.

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⁵³ Pierson, “Power and Path Dependence,” in Mahoney and Thelen, eds., *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, 134-41; Capoccia, “Critical Junctures and Institutional Change,” 160-65.

⁵⁴ The concepts of “aftermath,” “legacy”, and “heritage” in this study are from Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 1991. I use a slightly different framework with flexible boundaries between each stage; the conceptually distinctive temporal processes can transcend stages, and reactive sequences can begin during the critical juncture not exclusively much later after the juncture.

⁵⁵ Pierson, *Politics in Time*, 95; Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 1991.

⁵⁶ While the radical and liberal options were prominent other options that received no similar attention also existed, such as conservative, progressive, or social-democratic options.

⁵⁷ In-depth, chapter-length analysis of the reform approaches can be found in the original study on which this article is based: Salih O. Noor, *The Legacies of Liberation: Revolution, Liberal Reformism, and Political Development in Southern Africa* (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2023).

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⁶⁵ See, for example, Allen Isaacman, *A Luta Continua: Creating a New Society in Mozambique* (New York: State University of New York, 1978); Alexactus T. Kaure, *Angola: From Socialism to Liberal Reforms* (Harare: Sapes Books, 1999).

⁶⁶ Besides military power, other indicators like taxation and social welfare also underscore state institutional and infrastructural-power development. See, for example, Evan Lieberman, *Race and Regionalism in the Politics of Taxation in Brazil and South Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and "National Political Community and the Politics of Income Taxation in Brazil and South Africa in the Twentieth Century," *Politics & Society* 29, no. 4 (Dec. 2001): 515-55; Jeffrey Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe* (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1990); also, Thandika Mkandawire, "On Tax Efforts and Colonial Heritage in Africa," *The Journal of Development Studies* 46, no. 10 (June 2010): 1647-69.

⁶⁷ Southern Rhodesian and South West African economies were also closely integrated to—and dependent upon—the South African economy; liberation leaders proceeded with utmost caution because even minimally progressive measures risked retaliation by Apartheid South African and settler capital.

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⁶⁹ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 19, 24.

⁷⁰ Joseph Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbors: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Margaret Hall and Thomas Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence* (London: Hurst & Co, 1997).

⁷¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The ANC and South Africa: The Past and Future of Liberation Movements in the World-System," *Society in Transition* 28, no.1-4 (1997): 2-11; John S. Saul, *Liberation Lite: The Roots of Recolonization in Southern Africa* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2011); John S. Saul and Chris Saunders, "Mugabe, Gramsci, and Zimbabwe at 25," *International Journal* 60, no 4 (Dec. 2005): 953-75.

⁷² Bauer M. Gretchen, *The Labor Movement and the Prospects for Democracy in Namibia* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1994), 174.

⁷³ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk To Freedom* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1994), 526.

⁷⁴ Furthermore, authoritarian ruling elites in Africa manipulated international pressures for liberalization during this period. See Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2010); Salih O. Nur, "Third wave democratization in post-cold war Africa: The rise of illiberal democracy in comparative perspective," *CEU Political Science Journal* 10, no. 01-02 (2015): 51-83.

⁷⁵ See Aristide R. Zolberg, *Crafting Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa* (Chicago: McNally & Company, 1966); Naomi Chazan, et al. *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999).

⁷⁶ T. Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 3-37; J. Goodwin, "State-Centered Approaches to Social Revolutions," in J. Foran, ed., *Theorizing revolutions* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 9-35; and *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); J. A. Goldstone, "Comparative Historical Analysis and Knowledge Accumulation in the Study of Revolutions," in Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, 41-90.

⁷⁷ Radical reforms might appear natural outcomes of the NLMs previous politico-military advances and liberal reform might seem inevitable results of the NLMs' limited politico-military development. Yet the picture is more complicated and prominent experts had questioned the correlation between guerrilla campaigns and post-conflict change; e.g., P. Chabal, "People's War, State Formation, & Revolution in Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, & Angola," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 21 (1983): 104-125; Thomas H. Henriksen, "People's War in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14 (Sep., 1976): 377-399. The MPLA and ZANU-PF also challenge the presumed causal relationship between revolutionary radicalization and post-conflict reforms. The MPLA, which pursued a radical choice like the more successful FRELIMO, was plagued by endless internal crises, factionalism, and

politico-military inertia before liberation. By contrast, ZANU-PF waged a more successful revolutionary insurgency in the later 1970s and yet it eventually settled for a liberal reform option.

⁷⁸ I use the term “state-regime” instead of just regime institutions to highlight the interdependence between the state apparatus and the political regime. It captures the former liberation parties’ tendency to capture and deploy the state for political and social ends and the consequent blurred lines between party and state institutions. See Appendix B for further elaboration.

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⁸⁰ Gerald Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Isaacman and Isaacman, *From Colonialism to Revolution*.

⁸¹ David Birmingham, *Frontline Nationalism in Angola and Mozambique* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992); M. Anne Pitcher, *Transforming Mozambique: The Politics of Privatization, 1975–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁸² Tony Hodges, *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Christine Messiant, *L'Angola postcolonial: Sociologie politique d'une oléocratie* (Karthala, 2008); Pitcher, *Transforming Mozambique*; Jason Sumich, *The Middle Class in Mozambique: the state and the politics of transformation in Southern Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁸³ Chabal, “The Construction of the Nation-State,” 36.

⁸⁴ Levitsky and Way, *Revolution and Dictatorship*, 15; also, Theda Skocpol, “Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization,” *World Politics* 40, no. 4 (1988): 147-68; Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Stephen Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

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⁸⁶ Geffray, *La cause des armes au Mozambique*; Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan*, 117-37.

⁸⁷ Messiant, *Guerre et paix sans démocratie*; Tony Hodges, *From Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism*; Justin Pearce, *Political Identity and Conflict in Central Angola, 1975–2002* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁸⁸ Ibid., Alex Vines, *RENAMO: Terrorism in Mozambique* (London: James Currey, 1991); Hall and Young, *Mozambique Since Independence*, 123-30.

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- ⁹¹ Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan*, 196-202; Pitcher, *Transforming Mozambique*.
- ⁹² Chabal, "The Limits of Nationhood," 121-2; J. Weinstein, "Mozambique: A Fading UN Success Story," *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (Jan. 2002).
- ⁹³ Pitcher, *Transforming Mozambique*, 207; M. A. Pitcher, "Party System Competition and Private Sector Development in Africa," *The Journal of Development Studies*, 53 (2017): 1-17; Sumich, *The Middle Class in Mozambique*.
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- ⁹⁷ Adriano Nuvunga, "From Former Liberation Movement to Four Decades in Government," in R. Bereketeab, ed., *National Liberation Movements as Government in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2018): 57-71; Jason Sumich, "The Party and the State: Frelimo and Social Stratification in Post-socialist Mozambique," *Development and Change*, 41 (2010), 679-98.
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- ⁹⁹ Patrick Chabal, "E Pluribus Unum: Transitions in Angola," in P. Chabal and N. Vidal, eds., *Angola: The Weight of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1-19; Nuno Vidal, "The Angolan Regime and the Move to Multiparty Politics," in Chabal and Vidal, eds., 124-174; Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, "Illiberal Peacebuilding in Angola," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 49, no. 2 (2011): 287-314.
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¹⁴³ Pierson, *Politics in Time*.

¹⁴⁴ Katheleen Thelen (1999) and Paul Pierson (2004) carefully highlighted this limitation, but theoretical and empirical works continue to invoke stasis and inertia.

¹⁴⁵ Thelen, “How Institutions Evolve,” 19.

¹⁴⁶ See, Mahoney, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology,” and *The Logic of Social Science*.

Appendix

Critical Junctures and Political Development: The Legacies of Liberation in Southern Africa

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Appendix A. Conceptualization, Measurement, and Archival Sources

This section offers more details into conceptualization and measurement of the reform approaches and the outcome, besides listing select archival sources used in the coding and analysis of the reform approaches. Case selection is a straightforward process.

From the above discussion, it also follows that the case-selection process is a straightforward task. All cases of “liberation struggle” in Southern Africa are considered, allowing a more valid explanation for an historically, geographically, and culturally bounded set of cases, unlike most studies that portray an authoritarian picture based on vague conceptualizations encompassing “liberation struggles” with postcolonial origins in mainly eastern Africa.

Conceptualization

1. The reform approaches

The distinctive reform approaches constitute the independent variable in this study. A *reform approach* is defined as a set of interrelated reform policy measures, programs, and strategies adopted by Southern Africa elites in their efforts to reform and consolidate state power, pursue socioeconomic change, and promote nation-building following liberation from settler-colonial domination. Each reform approach is measured (see measurement and operationalization below) using nine indicators, subsumed broadly under the achievement of majority rule; restructuring state institutions; income, wealth, and land redistribution; and multi-racial nation-building. Even though

liberation movements in all five countries succeeded in dismantling the settler-colonial regimes and dissolving more egregious racial laws, the reform approaches markedly differed in the scope, speed, and substance of the policy measures.

- a. Radical approach: The radical approach pursued in Angola and Mozambique was by far the most transformative, involving liberation elites' rapid state restructuring and violent consolidation of power; rapid transformation of inherited racial and class disparities through radical redistribution of income, land, and other resources; and coercive and hegemonic nation-building strategies.
- b. Liberal approach: by contrast, the liberal implemented in South Africa and Namibia was relatively the least transformative, defined by democratic state reforms and power consolidation by liberation leaders; gradual reduction of preexisting social inequalities through affirmative action policies, black economic empowerment, and liberal land redistribution; and inclusive nation-building strategies tolerant to political and social diversity.
- c. Abortive liberal approach: This approach, which defined Zimbabwe, involved incremental reduction of racial inequalities in income, wealth, and land ownership alongside a gradual shift to authoritarian forms of state reforms and power consolidation and exclusionary nation-building strategies. Originally a liberal reform choice, it exhibited the traits of the liberal approach and was similar to the latter in terms of the liberal socioeconomic reforms. But, overall, it was neither fully liberal nor fully radical in its character to be lumped with the other reform types.

The reform approaches were broadly defined by distinct policies targeting state restructuring, socioeconomic transformation, and nation-building. While the liberal reform period was obviously defined by a wide array of reform policies and programs—too numerous and difficult to consider exhaustively here—this study focuses on three main reform dimensions that cover most of key state, political, and socioeconomic reforms. The choice is based on two key considerations. First, it reflects the primary reform goals articulated by the movements and their leaders before liberation. These actors had long-standing goals to, following the end of settler-colonial rule, to reshape, deracialize, and democratize the inherited state; to dismantle racial, class, gender, and other inequalities in pursuit of more equitable societies; and build more cohesive national states or communities by addressing the settler-colonial-period racial, ethnic, class, and regional divisions. In short, the reform approaches were essentially developed from the stated political goals of the liberation actors themselves.

The second rationale is both conceptual and logistical. The second rationale is both conceptual and logistical. On a practical level, it would be analytically unwieldy—and unnecessary—to examine all, or even most, of the reform policies initiated by liberation-era governments. Instead, this study focuses on three broad policy dimensions, which, conceptually, are sufficient to capture the core political dynamics and outcomes under investigation. Even if they may not encompass every relevant area or specific areas that might be of interest for specific outcomes, they offer a robust conceptual framework for sufficiently understanding the broader patterns of postcolonial political development and the varied legacies of liberation across in Southern Africa today. As discussed below, the outcome variable (legacies of liberation) is a composite variable that also reflects the long-term outcomes of the three distinct sets of reform strategies that defined the reform approaches.

Some indicators—such as "coercive consolidation of power" and "democratic inclusion"—may appear to be logically interdependent or even overlapping. This is not necessarily a flaw in conceptualization and measurement, but rather reflects the complex and overlapping nature of the reform processes in each context. In many cases, strategies in one policy arena (e.g., state reform) naturally spill over into another (e.g., nation-building), making full separation difficult in practice. Where overlap exists, conceptual delineation is used primarily to enhance clarity in measurement and analysis, rather than to assert that the policy dimensions are mutually exclusive. The aim of the conceptualization is not to construct perfectly distinct or exhaustive categories, but rather to meaningfully and validly capture the key dimensions of each reform approach. This approach remains analytically useful and justifiable as long as the selected dimensions and indicators—for instance, those defining a radical reform approach—are not logically inconsistent or perhaps internally contradictory.

2. The legacies of liberation

The “legacies of liberation” serves as the dependent variable in this study. In this sense, it refers to the more enduring structural outcomes that emerged after the resolution of major political conflicts that followed the critical juncture in each context. This outcome took shape earlier in Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, beginning from the mid-2000s onward, and more than a decade later in South Africa and Namibia. This variable is evaluated using three key indicators:

- a. State-regime institutions: The state structures and patterns of political contestation and inclusion that define a political regime. I use the term “state-regime institutions” instead of just political regime or “regime institutions” to highlight that the state structures—conceptually distinct from the political regime—are in and of themselves a crucial element

of the legacies of liberation. More importantly, the term state-regime institutions capture the overlap and interdependence between the state apparatus and the political regime—especially in contexts where the boundary between the two is blurred or fused. The liberation actors saw the state as an entity to be reformed, captured, and deployed as an instrument of postliberation political and social change, not to mention as a means of political dominance. They subordinated the state to the political party, blurring the line between the two in the process, and hence the line between state structures and regime institutions to varying degrees.

- b. Structural inequalities: The predominant racial, class, or geographic inequalities. I rely on the World Bank’s Gini Index for national scores, which measures income or consumption inequalities only in each country. But I look more broadly at disparities in land ownership, poverty, and access to opportunities.
- c. National polarization and cleavages: This dimension captures patterns of social and political divisions, polarization, and conflict based on race, ethnicity, class, and/or territory. *National polarization* refers to the widening divide in a nation, where citizens hold opposing views on core national issues, values, or policies. It encompasses both “political polarization”—the divergence of political attitudes away from the center, towards ideological extremes¹—and “societal polarization”—the increasing divisions between social groups based on factors such as income inequality, opposing values, or ideological beliefs, often leading to heightened animosity or conflict, reduced cooperation, and diminished social cohesion. *National cleavages* denote deep and persistent sociopolitical divisions (e.g., historical, racial, socioeconomic, or rural-urban) within a nation, which divide citizens into major, often antagonistic, groups with divergent political

interests.² These cleavages often mirror the principal axes of political and social polarization to determine patterns of national party systems, voting behavior, and conflicts. To measure national polarization, this study draws on data from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset, specifically the indicators “Political polarization” for political polarization and “Polarization of society” for social polarization. From these, a composite national polarization score is derived (see Table D2 in Appendix D).

This study adopts a broader definition of “legacies of liberation,” extending beyond the final legacies to the political, institutional, and sociological dynamics that had unfolded over the decades following the reforms. It examines these evolving legacies both cross-sectionally and over time since the liberation reform episode, under the broader rubric of political development—understood here as the process of change and continuity in political institutions, social structures, and conflict patterns since the liberation reforms. This conceptual approach aligns with comparative literature from other regions (notably Latin America) that applies the term “legacy” broadly—often encompassing both the dynamics that follow the critical juncture (e.g., institutional reproduction, struggles over meaning, feedback effects) and the long-term outcomes—because their focus is not just on what changes, but how and why those changes endure or evolve over time. The term “legacy” captures both the initial institutional break or innovation, and the long-term path-dependent trajectory that follows from it.

Some substantive literature on Southern Africa also employs the term “legacies of liberation” more broadly. To avoid confusion and to differentiate between the intermediate dynamics and long-term outcome or legacy, the analysis uses terms such as “final outcome,” “more enduring structures,” and “final legacies.” Additionally, in contrast to this scholarship that often uses the term narrowly—focusing primarily on political institutions, democracy—and more

vaguely, without clear temporal boundaries,³ this study makes a clear distinction between the political and social structural legacies that emerge in the aftermath of the liberation reform period, and the more enduring legacies of liberation that stabilize and crystallize following the resolution of conflicts in the critical juncture's longer aftermath. This distinction is especially crucial in contexts like Angola and Mozambique, where socialist dictatorships, relatively lower social inequalities, and violent divisions of the 1980s and 1990s differed markedly from the more inclusive state-regimes, higher structural disparities, and democratic contestations that came to define the more enduring, final legacies.

Coding and Measurement of the Reform Approaches

The reform approaches are measured using three policy dimensions that capture the thrust of the reform measures and sufficiently capture variations that explain subsequent trajectories of political and societal change. In addition, the variables are perhaps more aggregated than case-study scholars or experts of a specific domain (e.g., land reform, educational reform) would have liked. The higher level of aggregation allows for the kind of cross-country comparison this study is interested in; I admit that the strategy is not suitable for describing context-specific patterns (be it a country or a policy domain), but without some degree of aggregation, it is also almost impossible to identify broader similarities and differences in each reform area, across the countries, required for making cross-case comparisons and generalizations for analytic purposes.

The three broad dimensions of the reform approaches are, in turn, measured using a set of two to three indicators that concretely capture some key, more disaggregated reform policies: indicators 1-2 capture the two principal goals of ending settler-colonial and white-minority domination accomplished by all actors, indicators 3-4 measure state reforms, indicators 5-7 are for socioeconomic reforms, and 8-9 are for measuring nation-building strategies. As shown in the

table below, some of these indicators are categorical, which indicates the categorical presence or absence of a reform policy, or continuous, which indicates that a reform policy is present in varying degrees or values in different countries.

Variable	Indicator	Cont. or categ.
	National liberation & majority rule (1)	Categorical
	Dissolution of racially oppressive laws (2)	Categorical
State reforms	Rapid reorganization of old-state structures (3)	Continuous
	Rapid & coercive consolidation of power (4)	Categorical
Socioeconomic reforms	Nationalization of industry and capital (5)	Categorical
	Rapid income redistribution (6)	Categorical
	Radical land and agrarian reforms (7)	Categorical
Nation-building reforms	Democratic inclusion (8)	Continuous
	Racial and national reconciliation (9)	Continuous

In the main analysis, in Table 2, the indicators are simply coded as “YES” or “NO” for the sake of consistency as well as effective visual illustration of the differences between the three reform approaches. The above table offers more nuance. For the categorical measure, YES/NO means the PRESENCE/ABSENCE of the given reform measure, that is, a measure was either present or absent in a given context. For the continuous measure, however, NO indicates from ‘no’ or entirely absent to ‘less significant’ reforms, and YES implies ‘more significant’ to ‘very significant’ changes. The classification of the indicators as categorical or continuous is to offer some nuance that aligns with empirical analysis itself, whereby the varying degrees of existence (rather than mere presence) of some reform policies have important implications. Admittedly, measuring all indicators as continuous would have been the best approach, but those classified as categorical do not lend themselves to such conceptualization. For instance, the attainment of

national liberation is simply a categorical indicator that cannot be measured along an ordinal or interval scale. So are the indicators for socioeconomic reforms.

Some indicators for a specific dimension (e.g., “state reforms”) defy easy categorization or can be measured otherwise, e.g., “Rapid reorganization of old-state structures” (3) and “Rapid & coercive consolidation of power” (4). I categorize the first indicator as a continuous measure so as to capture significant variations in the actual policies. I chose to classify and analyze the second indicator as categorical, not because the use of violence did not vary in degrees, but in reality, the use of violence was often present or absent in a qualitative way that was sufficient to make a qualitative difference for the outcome. In this regard, what mattered for the analysis is more the qualitative rather than the quantitative difference in the employment of violence for political ends during the reform period.

In the table below, I use a 0-10 scale for all indicators to provide numerical measurements of the indicators. This approach offers a semi-disaggregated metric in which the scores for each reform approach sum up to certain points out of 70 points in total, 10 points maximum for each indicator. In this scale, categorical indicators are coded as either 0 (absent) or 10 (present), and continuous indicators are scored along the full range from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest). The values represent estimated average scores for the radical and liberal reform approaches, each including pairs of two countries. As such, for historians and scholars of one specific case, they may not satisfactorily or precisely capture the more country-specific value or the precise extent of reform for the individual country in the pair, a tradeoff made in favor of cross-case aggregation required for comparative analysis. Additionally, the indicators for nation-building are restated in this table in a way that allows for high scores for radical reforms and low scores for liberal reforms, consistent with scoring with other policy dimensions in each category.

Variable	Indicator	Reform approaches		
		Radical reforms	Abortive liberal reforms	Liberal reforms
		[Moz. & Ang.]	[Zimbabwe]	[S. Af. & Na.]
State reforms	Rapid state restructuring	10	7	5
	Rapid & coercive power consolidation	10	10	0
Socioeconomic reforms	Economic nationalizations	10	0	0
	Rapid income redistribution	7	0	0
	Rapid land & agrarian reforms	7	0	0
Nation-building reforms	Limited commitment to broader political inclusion	10	8	5
	Failure to promote racial & national reconciliation	8	7	4
Total score (70)		62	32	14

Archival Sources

I used both archival and secondary sources for coding and measuring the reforms, besides key and reliable secondary sources. The following table lists key archival sources that include party manifestos, conference minutes, and communiqués; government declarations, policy programs, and reports; parliamentary and other records; official and unofficial correspondence; newspaper and non-governmental reports; and personal collections of scholars and political leaders.

Between Summer 2018 and Winter 2023, I collected a large database of historical records (over 20,000 pages) in major archival collections in Southern Africa (all five countries), North America, and Western Europe. The largest of the dataset is made of records of the pre-liberation NLMs/parties (from the struggle period) and post-liberation parties and governments that encompasses party manifestos, conference minutes, communiqués; government declarations, presses, and reports; parliamentary records; official and unofficial correspondence; and newspaper analysis. The sources opened a rare window into the thinking and calculations of Southern Africa's liberation elites with regards to their long-term goals, the respective opportunities and constraints

they faced at national liberation, and the distinctive reform choices, policy measures, and programs they embarked upon, as a result. I supplement the archival evidence with statistical data on socioeconomic change, political competition and participation, inequalities, and societal polarization. Particularly used for measuring various outcome variables, this data comes from economic historical publications, public records, or large datasets (e.g., World Bank data, V-Dem dataset).

Reform Approach	Primary sources
Radical approach (Ang. & Moz.)	Mozambique: Bertil Eger., Mozambique: A Dream Deferred -- The Political Economy of Democracy, 1975-84 (Uppsala: Scandinavian Inst. of African Studies, 1987). FRELIMO, Estatutos e Programa (Maputo, 1983). FRELIMO. 1983a. FRELIMO Party Programme and Statutes. Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Information Center, London Metropolitan Archives, London. FRELIMO. 1983b. Building Socialism: The People's Answer. Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Information Center, London Metropolitan Archives, London. FRELIMO. 1983c. Out of Underdevelopment to Socialism. Report of the Central Committee Fourth Congress. John Marcum Papers, 1945-2013, Stanford University Library, Stanford, CA. FRELIMO. 1980/81. Plano Prospectivo Indicativo. Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, Maputo. FRELIMO. 1977a. Report of the Central Committee to the Third Party Congress. John Marcum Papers, 1945-2013, Stanford University Library, Stanford, CA. FRELIMO. 1977b. O Partido e as Classes Trabalhadoras Moçambicanas na Edificação da Democracia Popular. Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, Maputo. FRELIMO. 1977c. Documentos do 3o Congresso da FRELIMO: Directivas Economicas e Socias. John Marcum Papers, 1945-2013, Stanford University Library, Stanford, CA.

	FRELIMO. 1976. Guia Para o Estudo das Teses, FRELIMO Tereceiro Congresso. Maputo: Imprensa Nacional. Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, Maputo. FRELIMO. 1975. Documentos Base da FRELIMO, 1. Tempogr.fica: Maputo. Machel, S. Mozambique: Revolution or Reaction, 1975. LSM Information Center, Oakland CA. Machel, Samora. 1975. <i>A Nossa Luta</i>, Nov. 1975. Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, Maputo, Mozambique. Machel, Samora. 1982. <i>Notícias</i>, October 26, 1982. Notícias, 1976 Special Issue. <i>Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique</i>, Maputo, Mozambique. Departamento do Trabalho Ideologico da FRELIMO, <i>Documentos do 3º Congresso da FRELIMO: Directivas Economicas e Socias</i> (Maputo, 1977), 32-90. Angola: MPLA. 1977a. MPLA Report of the First Congress of the MPLA, Dec. 1977. Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Information Center, London Metropolitan Archives, London. MPLA. 1977b. Central Committee Report and These on Education. Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Information Center, London Metropolitan Archives, London. MPLA. 1976a. Documents of the MPLA Central Committee Plenary, 23-29 Oct. 1976. Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Information Center, London Metropolitan Archives, London. MPLA. 1976b. Resolution on Economic Policy of the Central Committee Plenum (Oct. 1976). Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Information Center, London Metropolitan Archives, London. M. R. Bhagavan, Angola's Political Economy 1975-1985 (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1986), Research Report No. 75, p. 35. JPRS (Angolan and Mozambique: Joint Publication Research Service (JPRS) Washington, D.C. Department of Commerce. Angola. JPRS 3-13-78, 70770, no. 1893: "Local Production, Better Distribution of Goods Planned." <i>Jornal de Angola</i>, 1-31-78. JPRS 4-14-78 70955, no. 1912: "Agricultural Seminar Discusses Formation of Cooperatives." <i>Jornal de Angola</i>, 3-2-78.
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	JPRS 5-19-78, 71148, no. 1930: "Reactionary Bureaucracy Must be Overcome." Jornal de Angola, 4-16-78. JPRS 6-9-78, 71270, no. 1944: "Reactionary Behavior of Angolan Petty Bourgeoisie." Jornal de Angola, 5-11-78. JPRS 1-4-79, 72555, no. 2046: "Official Cites Difficulties in Rectification Campaign." Jornal de Angola, 11-24-78. JPRS 2-5-79, 72773, no. 2061: "Neto New Year Message: State Must Be Subordinate to Party." Jornal de Angola, 1-3-79. JPRs 11-14-79, 74563, no. 2176: "Meeting on Agricultural Cooperatives Reaches Conclusions." Jornal de Angola, 9-23-79. JPRS 4-1-80, 75418, no. 2228: "People's Power Methods Detailed." Jornal de Angola, 1-29-80. JPRS 4-25-80, 75576, no. 2241: "Call for Intensive Coffee Harvest Campaign." Jornal de Angola, 3-16-80. JPRS 3-24-78, 70832, no. 1899: "Achievements in Various Sectors Since the Third Congress." Noticias. 2-3-78. JPRS 2-16-79, 72839, no. 2065: "Machel Comments on Party State Relationship, Class Struggle." Noticias, 1-2-79.
Liberal approach (S. Afr. & Nam.)	South Africa: African National Congress (ANC). 1998. "The State, property Relations, and Social Transformation." Umrabulo, 5. African National Congress (ANC). 1994. <i>From Resistance to Reconstruction and Nation-Building: Strategy and Tactics</i>. Discussion document for the 49th National Conference. Nelson Mandela. 1995. <i>Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela</i> (New York: Back Bay Books). African National Congress (ANC). 1990. <i>Discussion Document on Economic Policy</i>. ANC Department of Economic Policy. DEP Workshop, Sep. 20-23, Harare. TMO/018/0091/2. Liberation Movement Archives, University of Fort Hare, Alice. African National Congress (ANC). 1990. Declaration of the 48th National Conference of the African National Congress. July 6, 1990. TMO/016/0175/2. Liberation Movement Archives, University of Fort Hare, Alice.

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Abortive liberal approach (Zimbabwe)	Gov. of Zimbabwe [Rukuni Commission Report], Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Appropriate Agricultural Land Tenure Systems (Harare: Government Printer, 1991).

	Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU). 1981. "Zimbabwe's First Five Years: Economic Prospects Following Independence." Issue 111 of EIU special report, EIU. Government of Zimbabwe. 1986. First Five-Year National Development Plan, 1986-1990, Vol. 1-2. Harare: Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, 1986. Africana Library, Northwestern University, Evanston. Government of Zimbabwe. 1985. Main Demographic Features of the Population of Zimbabwe. Harare: Central Statistical Office. Africana Library, Northwestern University, Evanston. Government of Zimbabwe. 1983. Transitional National Development Plan, 1982/83-1984/85, Vol. 2. Harare: Government Printers. Africana Library, Northwestern University, Evanston. Government of Zimbabwe. 1982. Growth With Equity; Transitional National Development Plan, 1982/83-1984/85, Vol. 1. Harare: Gov. Printers. Africana Library, Northwestern University, Evanston. J. Cusworth. 1990. <i>Land Resettlement Issues</i>. Background Paper Prepared for the World Bank Zimbabwe Agricultural Sector Memorandum. Washington D.C.: World Bank. Cusworth, John and Judy Walker. 1989. <i>Land Resettlement in Zimbabwe: A Preliminary Evaluation</i>. ODA, London. Evaluation Report EV 434. Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. 1981. Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development (ZIMCORD)—Let's Build Zimbabwe Together. Harare: Government Printer. Mugabe, Robert G. 1983. Our War of Liberation: Speeches, Articles, Interviews 1976-1979. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983. National Archives of Zimbabwe, Harare. Ministry of Health. 1985. The Health Institutions of Zimbabwe. Harare: The Ministry, mimeo. Ministry of Labour, Manpower Planning and Social Welfare. Annual Review of Manpower, 1985. Africana Library, Northwestern University, Evanston. Southern Rhodesia. 1979. Report of The Lancaster House Constitutional Conference. National Archives of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe. The Herald. 1989. "Land distribution still major problem." December 20, 1989.
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Appendix B. Cross-National Variation in Late-Colonial Historical Antecedents

Appendix B1. Qualitative Scores for Antecedent Conditions Before the Liberation Episode

	ANG.	MOZ.	S.RH.	S.W.A.	S.AF.
Settler-Colonial Exploitation					
Land dispossession (1)	3	3	4	4	5
Labor coercion (2)	2	2	3	4	4
State Institutions					
Racial exclusion (3)	3	3	4	5	5
Ineffective settler state (4)	5	5	2	1	1
Socioeconomic Change					
Modernization (5)	2	1	4	3	5
Racial inequalities (6)	3	2	4	5	5
Black poverty (7)	2	2	4	5	5
TOTAL SCORE	20(4)	18(5)	25(3)	27(2)	30(1)

NOTE: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, 5 = very high

The numerical values are from the author's own coding. Scoring criteria are based on the qualitative analysis of scholars as well as statistical figures cited in secondary and primary sources. I use country names of the settler-colonial period for Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia) and Namibia (South West Africa).

Appendix B2. Racial Inequality and Modernization Before the Liberation Episode

	White settlers (share of pop.)	Land distr. (share of white land)	Income distribution (top 10% share)	Social and economic Modernization	
				Agriculture (% of GDP)	Urbanization (% of urban pop.)
Angola	8.9	- 50	-	22.50	14.96
Mozambique	2.5	- 50	-	25.00	8.99
Southern Rhodesia	4.6	~ 50	62.0	18.59	19.87
South West Africa	6.5	+ 70	71.5	7.39	26.37
South Africa	13.7	+ 80	85.9	4.90	51.51

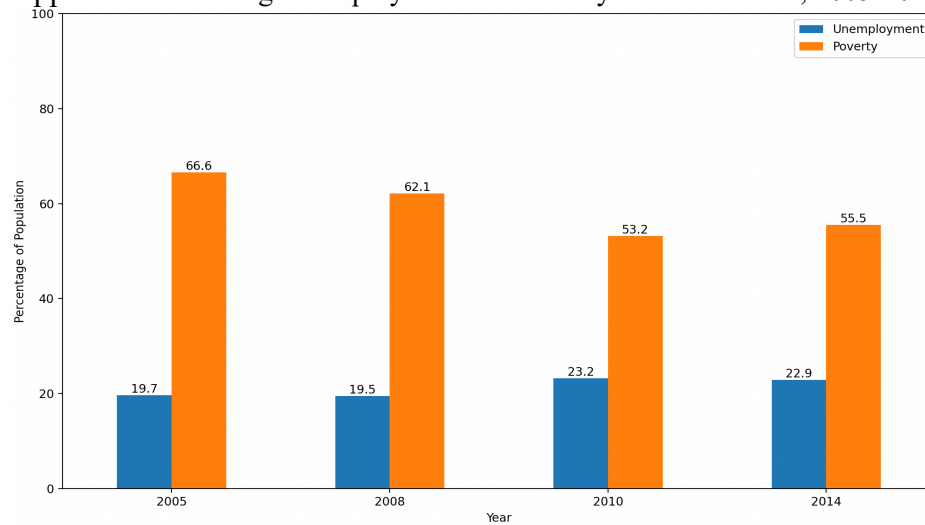
Note: Data on social and economic modernization is from the World Bank Database (<https://data.worldbank.org/>) except for Angola and Mozambique. For these cases, figures of share of agriculture (and fisheries and forestry) are derived from country studies and government reports like the remaining measurements. Most of the stats are for 1-5 years before the liberation episode in each case.

Appendix B3. Key Politico-ideological attributes of the NLMs and their reform choices

Country/NLM	Waged guerrilla insurgency	Established liberated zones	Marxist- Leninist influence	Internal party cohesion	Repressive internal culture	Initial reform choice
Mozambique/FRELIMO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Radical
Angola/MPLA	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Radical
Zimbabwe/ZANU-PF	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Liberal
Namibia/SWAPO	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Liberal
South Africa/ANC	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Liberal

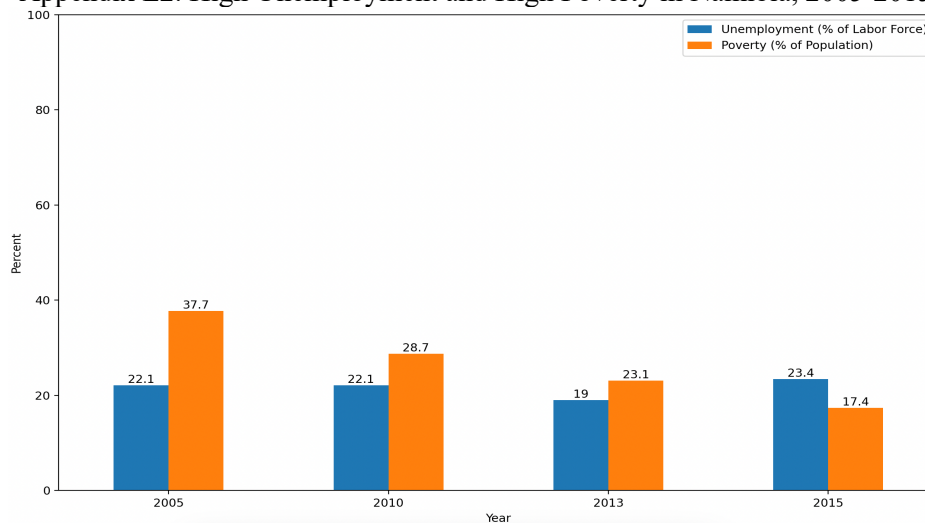
Appendix C. Enduring Structural Injustices, Poverty, and Unemployment among Blacks

Appendix E1. Rising Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa, 2005-2015



Source: The World Bank, “Poverty and Inequality Platform,” <https://data.worldbank.org/>

Appendix E2. High Unemployment and High Poverty in Namibia, 2005-2015



Source: The World Bank, “Poverty and Inequality Platform,” <https://data.worldbank.org/>

Appendix D. Patterns of Political Democracy, Structural Disparities, and Polarization in Contemporary Southern Africa

Table D1. Democratic Contestation and Inclusiveness, 2020

Country	Electoral democracy (1 = highest, 5 = lowest)	Political exclusion (1 = highest, 5 = lowest)
Angola	0.35 (4)	0.60 (3)
Mozambique	0.36 (3)	0.62 (2)
Zimbabwe	0.29 (5)	0.80 (1)
Namibia	0.65 (2)	0.41 (4)
South Africa	0.70 (1)	0.34 (5)

Source: Michael Coppedge, et al, “V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v13” Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. V-dem database (www.v-dem.net).

Note: (1) Data derived from v-dem “electoral democracy index” that measures the extent the chief executive is elected through regular free and fair elections, suffrage is extensive, and political and civil liberties are upheld. The value is an interval scale with “0.0” as least democratic and “1.0” as most democratic. (2) Data derived from v-dem “exclusion by political group index” for the degree individuals are denied access to services or participation in government based on their identity or belonging to a particular group. The rating is in reverse interval scale from “0.0” for most inclusive to “1.0” for least inclusive.

Table D2. Structural Inequalities and National Polarization

Country	Gini index (Year) (1 = most unequal, 0 = least unequal)	Social polarization (0 = minimum, 4 = maximum)	Political polarization (0 = minimum, 4 = maximum)	National polarization (2020) (0 = minimum, 4 = maximum)
Angola	0.51 (2018) (4)	1.98	1.87	1.92 (5)
Mozambique	0.54 (2014) (3)	3.19	1.61	2.40 (3)
Zimbabwe	0.44 (2017) (5)	3.86	3.94	3.90 (1)
Namibia	0.59 (2015) (2)	2.21	2.43	2.32 (4)
South Africa	0.63 (2014) (1)	3.21	2.39	2.80 (2)

Source: (a) Gini Index: World Bank, *Poverty and Inequality Platform*.

<https://pip.worldbank.org/home>. (2) Political polarization: M. Coppedge, et al, “VDem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v12” Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project.

Note: Values for “national polarization” are self-generated from separate v-dem scores for “political polarization” and “polarization of society.” The original score for “polarization of society” is an ordinal scale between 0 (most polarized) and 4 (no polarization). I first converted the scale for social polarization to 0 (min. polarization) to 4 (max. polarization), and then added each score with ‘political polarization’ to generate an average score reported as “national polarization” for each country.

Endnotes

¹ Delia Baldassarri and Andrew Gelman, "Partisans without Constraint: Political Polarization and Trends in American Public Opinion," *American Journal of Sociology* 114, no. 2 (September 2008): 408-46; Shanto Iyengar, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, and Sean J. Westwood, "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, no. 1 (2019): 129-46.

² See Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair, *Identity, competition, and electoral availability: The stabilization of European electorates 1885-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³ For example, Henning Melber, "The legacy of anti-colonial struggles in Southern Africa: Liberation movements as governments." Paper presented to the Conference on Election Processes, Liberation Movements, and Democratic Change in Africa. Maputo, 8-11 April 2010. Available at: links.org.au/node/1704. [Accessed 7 February 2015].; Sara Rich Dorman, "Post-Liberation Politics in Africa: Examining the Political Legacy of Struggle," *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 6 (2006): 1085-1101; Roger Southall, "Democracy in Southern Africa: Moving Beyond a Difficult legacy," *Review of African Political Economy* 30, no. 96 (2003): 255-72; Carolyn Bassett and Marlea Clarke, eds., *Post-colonial struggles for a democratic Southern Africa: Legacies of Liberation* (New York: Routledge, 2016).