

The anti-authoritarian populisms: ideologies of opposition in Tanzania, Zimbabwe and electoral-authoritarian regimes worldwide

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Abstract

Contemporary theories of populism do not, like past theories, define populism as a reaction to liberal democracy, which is therefore confined to liberal democracies. Nevertheless, they conclude that the populisms which they analyse articulate critiques of such regimes. What ideological forms, then, do populisms take in opposition in non-liberal democratic and specifically electoral-authoritarian regimes? I examine African opposition messages. Past studies designate most such messages as non-populist. I ask: do any of them contain hitherto overlooked populisms? I analyse the messages of Chadema (Tanzania) and the CCC (Zimbabwe). I argue that each not only articulates a populism in opposition in an electoral-authoritarian regime, but takes this regime as the context for its meaning-making and its authoritarianism as the subject of its critique. I call these ideologies anti-authoritarian populisms. I argue that they are instantiations of an unrecognized current of populisms in opposition in electoral-authoritarian regimes in Africa, and perhaps, worldwide.

Keywords: populism, anti-authoritarianism, democracy, electoral authoritarianism, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Africa

Word count (excluding front-matter): 8,000 words

Past theories define populism as a reaction to liberal democracy (Arditi, 2004; Canovan, 1999; Taggart, 2004). Contemporary theories, though, do not. In the discourse-theoretic (de Cleen et al., 2018) and discourse-performative conceptions (Moffitt, 2020), populism consists of an imaginary of popular struggle generated by the division of the social into ‘the people’ against ‘the elite.’ This opens up the possibility that populisms are articulated not only in liberal democracies, but in electoral-authoritarian regimes, and not only in government in such regimes, but in opposition to them. The same possibility exists in the ideational conception, in which populisms advocate illiberal democratic regimes, but not necessarily from within liberal democracies. However, to date, studies of populist ideologies have little explored this possibility. Most still determine that the populisms which they study articulate (diverse) ideological critiques of liberal democracy (Mudde, 2021; Vergara, 2019). Such ideologies bear little relevance to opposition in non-liberal democratic regimes. What ideological forms, then, do populisms take in opposition in electoral-authoritarian regimes?

To it explore this question, I turn to the region with the largest number of electoral-authoritarian regimes in the world: Africa. For 2021, V-Dem designated 10 African states as closed autocracies, 30 as electoral autocracies, 14 as electoral democracies and two as liberal democracies (Alizada et al, 2022). Studies of African opposition messages conclude that few of them are populist (on such populisms, see Fölscher et al., 2021; Fraser, 2017; Melchiorre, 2021). Instead, they determine that most carry valence appeals (see, recently, Saidou and Bertrand, 2022) about democracy (Bleck and van de Walle, 2018). I revisit these messages. I ask: do any of them contain populisms which prior studies have mis-designated as non-populist? In other words, have any populisms in opposition in contemporary electoral-authoritarian Africa remained hidden in plain sight?

To answer these questions, I begin by studying the message of Tanzania’s leading opposition party: Chadema (*Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo* – Party of Democracy and Development). Tanzania

was widely categorized as a competitive electoral-authoritarian regime until 2020, when it was recategorized as a hegemonic electoral-authoritarian regime amid an authoritarian turn (Collord, 2021; Paget, 2021: 68). Chadema's message stands near the central tendency of African opposition messages in electoral-authoritarian regimes; past studies have concluded that its message principally carried democratic valence issues and was *not* populist (Kwayu, 2022; Mmuya and Chaligha, 1994; Paget, 2017).

I challenge these prior interpretations. I argue that Chadema's message combined a democratic cause with a populist imaginary. However, it not only articulated a populism in an electoral-authoritarian regime; it took that regime as the principal context in which it made meanings. Like many populisms, Chadema portrayed 'elite' corruption as the source of popular hardships. Unlike them, it claimed that this corruption was enabled by a system which, despite the country's ostensibly democratic constitution, it called 'authoritarian.' It assembled 'the people' by connecting their hardships and joining their demands in unity against 'the elite' and 'authoritarianism' alike. It constructed 'the people's' demands as 'democracy.' It presented a democratic system as an alternative to the existing authoritarian one, and therefore as the means to relieve popular hardships. It was not only a populism in opposition *in* an electoral-authoritarian regime, but *to* it. I call its message an anti-authoritarian and democratic populism, or anti-authoritarian populism for short.

This anti-authoritarian populism has gone unrecognized because previous studies have adopted three further configuration of concepts. First, some have theorized that populisms necessarily advocate a particular form of electoral-authoritarian government, not a liberal democratic one (Urbinati, 2019). Second, Africanist studies in particular have theorized populism as a mobilization strategy which prioritizes socio-economic redistribution, not democracy. These conceptual choices make the combination of populist imaginary and liberal democratic subject-matter inconceivable.

Third, Africanist studies define valence issues so loosely that they (mis)categorize advocacy of a democratic system in opposition to an authoritarian one as a democratic *valence* appeal. This makes the *positional* appeals inherent to anti-authoritarian populism unrecognizable in practice. I advocate a different configuration of concepts. Populisms need not advocate an electoral-authoritarian regime and need not be about socio-economic redistribution. Therefore, anti-authoritarian populism *is* conceivable. Once the definition of democratic valence issues has also been tightened, it becomes recognizable empirically.

This study of opposition ideology in Africa's fifth-largest country is significant in its own right. Yet Chadema's ideology also has a wider significance. If past analyses of Chadema's message determined that it consisted of democratic valence issues, when in fact it contained an anti-authoritarian populism, might the same not be true of other African opposition party messages in electoral-authoritarian regimes similarly analysed? To explore the viability of this idea, I turn to another such case. In accordance with principles of interpretivist case-comparison (Simmons and Smith, 2019), I explore the similarities and differences between them. This second case is the speech of Nelson Chamisa, who led Zimbabwe's leading opposition party Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC Alliance) from 2018 to 2021, and the Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC) from 2022. Zimbabwe went from a competitive to a hegemonic electoral-authoritarian regime in 2008 (Raftopoulos and Eppel, 2008). The speech of these parties and wider movements have been analysed as anti-authoritarian, but not simultaneously as populist (Dendere, 2019; Marongwe, 2022). I argue that Chamisa's message, too, resembles an anti-authoritarian populism. This shows that the case of Chadema is not anomalous, and indicates that other African opposition messages in electoral-authoritarian regimes may also have been similarly misinterpreted.

I argue that these cases may also be indicative of a wider body of anti-authoritarian populisms which are articulated in opposition in electoral-authoritarian regimes, worldwide. In failing to designate these struggles as populist, past research has left unrecognized that these movements present their democratic struggles as those of low against high. This not only mischaracterizes their ideologies, but amounts to a significant omission from the global map of populist ideologies. In this article, I begin the work of correcting this omission.

Of course, the proponents of such anti-authoritarian populisms, in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere, are more than capable of self-expression. This raises a question about the ethics of speaking for others. These ethical questions are amplified by the position of privilege from which I write. My answer to them is this: Chadema and CCC thinkers do not, to the best of my knowledge, understand their ideas as simultaneously anti-authoritarian, liberal democratic *and* populist. I identify the resemblances between their political thought and these academic constructs. This facilitates the interpretation of their ideas and reveals in what ways they merit the ascription ‘ideological.’ I offer it as part of an ongoing conversation with these movements’ intellectuals, and therefore as a proposal of how their ideas might be interpreted, rather than an imposition of my interpretation of their ideas over theirs.

For this analysis, I collected and analysed a series of Chadema documents dated from 2006 to 2020. I further analysed transcripts of eight Chadema rallies from 2015, two available on YouTube and six which I attended and recorded. I conducted a discourse analysis of these texts. This involves identifying themes that run across them in an iterative process of theme-generating coding (Gee, 2004). I use this analysis to interpret the meanings they make (Taylor, 1994). I offer a reconstruction of those meanings in the text below. I draw on eight years of sustained research about Chadema, including eight months of ethnographic field work in 2015. I interviewed 12 members of Chadema’s Central Committee and a further six high-level officials; 15 of its MPs and

its nominated parliamentary candidates (of which, six Central Committee members); 86 of its active members and officials, spread across 35 party organs at the zonal, district, ward, branch and foundation-level. Finally, I have developed correspondences with several senior Chadema members and associated activists named in the acknowledgements, and developed this paper in dialogue with them. Documents in Swahili were professionally translated.

For the study of CCC, I principally analyse five major addresses given by Chamisa between 2018 and 2022, which I detail in the list of references. I selected these texts for prominence and relevance. They are in English and perhaps intended especially for elite, diasporic and international audiences. I conducted an equivalent, iterative and interpretive discourse analysis of these texts. I have not done field research in Zimbabwe; this affects my ability to interpret these texts in context. However, I interpret them in the context of other texts (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012). These include three further major addresses, three minor addresses, eight further press conferences and four television interviews by Chamisa. More widely, they include news coverage of Zimbabwean politics, and elite dialogue on social media. I have refined my analysis in a dialogue with CCC thinkers, named in the acknowledgements.

In the first section, I consider what populist ideologies might emerge in opposition in electoral-authoritarian regimes and develop a theory of anti-authoritarian populism. In the second, I reconfigure concepts to make anti-authoritarian populism both conceivable and recognizable. In the third, I demonstrate that Chadema articulated an anti-authoritarian populism. In the fourth, I show that Chadema was not alone; the CCC also articulated one. Finally, I consider the possibility that these are emblematic cases of a wider current of anti-authoritarian populisms in Africa and beyond.

Populism in electoral-authoritarian regimes

What populist ideologies, if any, are articulated in opposition in electoral-authoritarian regimes? For an older generation of populism theories, this question has a simple answer: none. Populism, they theorized, emerges in reaction to liberal democracy, and so is tethered, parasitically, to it. It rises in critique of it (Taggart, 2004), from the gap between its two faces (Canovan, 1999), or as its 'spectre' or 'shadow' (Arditi, 2004). However, the predominant theories of populism today do not thus define it. I adopt one such theory of populism: that of the discourse-theoretic perspective (de Cleen et al., 2018). This perspective has been refined and developed from the ideas of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001). In it, discourses are (necessarily incomplete) systems of subjective meanings. They are fixed through key signifiers, which express collective identities. Proponents of the discourse-theoretic perspective analyse how seemingly disparate meanings systems are assembled through the same pair of logics of articulation. In the first, many actors' demands are presented as equivalent. A political identity – an 'us' - is built out of these demands. Whatever the separates the actors that hold them, they are united because they hold them. In the second, those against whom the demands are made are hemmed together and constructed as a 'them.' Thereby, the political landscape is reduced to an 'us' and a 'them' separated by a frontier of demands.

In this discourse-theoretic perspective, populism is a particular sort of meaning-system in which the social is thus divided into an 'us' and a 'them': one in which their meanings are fixed through the signifiers 'the people' and 'the elite,' respectively. This also closely resembles the discourse-performative conception (Moffitt, 2020). Thus defined, a populist imaginary is one of a simplified popular struggle of low against high (de Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017). Nothing about this confines populism to liberal democracies. Therefore, it need not be absent from opposition in electoral-authoritarian regimes. Even if I had adopted the ideational conception of populism or one of its

variants, this conclusion would still stand. It envisages that populisms advance an illiberal form of government (on which, more in the next section), but it does not insist that they do so from within liberal democracies (Mudde, 2017). Populism *can* pose as a corrective or a threat to liberal democracy, they hold, but it need not (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012: 205).

To enquire what ideological forms populisms take, I situate this discourse-theoretic perspective in Michael Freeden's analytical perspective on ideologies (Freeden, 1996). Of course, the ideational conception of populism (which draws on Freeden) is rival to the discourse-theoretical conception. However, as others have recognized (de Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017; Moffitt, 2020), Freeden's ontology itself is partially compatible with a discourse-theoretic one. An ideology, he stipulates, fixes the meanings of a set of concepts by arranging them in relation to one another. This concept-meaning-set facilitates the fixation of a wider system of meanings. Below, I analyse not only whether meaning systems are fixed in relation to signifiers generated through the aforementioned logics of articulation, as in the discourse-theoretic perspective, but in relation to arrangements of such signifiers, as in Freeden's.

While contemporary theories of populism do not *define* it as a phenomenon that necessarily arises in reaction to liberal democracy, many studies of contemporary populist ideologies nevertheless determine that they express critiques of liberal democracy. In these populist imaginaries, studies conclude, liberal democracies carry pathologies (Mudde, 2004: 557-8), such as undemocratic illiberalism (Mudde, 2021), oligarchic domination (Vergara, 2019) or popular exclusion (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012: 207). Therefore, these studies offer little insight into what ideological forms populisms might take in opposition in electoral-authoritarian regimes. Some studies do recognize populisms in such contexts, such as those in Thailand (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2008), the Philippines (Curato, 2016) and Pakistan (Yilmaz and Shakil, 2021). However, their analyses indicate that there is little, if anything, that these ideologies share, other than the features of populism itself.

They articulate disparate ideological projects, and their shared electoral-authoritarian contexts appear at most peripherally in their meaning-making.

I propose that an electoral-authoritarian regime provides a context in which a particular system of meanings can be made; it enables the articulation of a particular populist ideology. I advance a theory of such an imaginary of popular struggle. In it, popular hardships are caused by ‘elite’ corruption and power. They, in turn, are enabled by an ‘authoritarian’ system of government. ‘The elite’ rules through that system, and continually develops it. It assembles ‘the people’ below in reference to their common hardships and by uniting their demands in opposition to ‘the elite’ above. It constructs the demands of ‘the people’ as ‘democracy,’ which it presents as a system of government which stands in opposition to the existing ‘authoritarian’ one. It characterizes this ‘democratic system’ as *the* means to check ‘elite’ power, eliminate ‘elite’ corruption and alleviate ‘the people’s’ demands. It does not only use the term ‘democracy’ as a signifier; it specifies its meaning in accordance with liberal democratic theory. Therefore, in this populist ideology, ‘authoritarian-’ stem terms appear not only as modifiers for ‘the elite’ or its synonyms (i.e. ‘the authoritarian elite’) but as a distinct signifier for a system which is envisaged as the root underpinning of elite domination. In electoral-authoritarian regimes, of course, authoritarian practices are veiled under the pretence of democracy (Levitsky and Way, 2002). In that context, the critique of authoritarianism which this ideology provides is particularly contentious; it contradicts the standing claim that the regime is democratic. I call this an anti-authoritarian (and democratic) populism.

I develop this theory in particular reference to electoral-authoritarian regimes in Africa. In 2009, Lise Rakner and Nicolas van de Walle (2009: 118) forecast that ‘more and more’ African opposition parties would become populist. The 13 years since seem to have contradicted that forecast. Few populisms have been identified in opposition in Africa, and fewer still in opposition in electoral-

authoritarian regimes. Parenthetically, another current of liberation ideologies have, disputedly (Fraser, 2017), been designated as populists in power (Melber, 2018). Most that have been designated as populist in opposition fall into the ideological canon of the radical-left. Its contemporary exemplar is the Economic Freedom Fighters in South Africa (Fölscher et al., 2021), which is among the most liberal democratic of African regimes. Other instantiations include Kenneth Komba in Botswana (Resnick, 2013: 190) and Michael Sata in Zambia (Cheeseman and Larmer, 2015). This leaves a remainder of three recognized populisms in opposition: Raila Odinga's fleeting ethnopopulism in Kenya (Cheeseman and Larmer, 2015), Abdoulaye Wade youth populism in Senegal (Resnick, 2013), and Bobi Wine's generational populism in Uganda (Melchiorre, 2021).

As few studies of opposition messages designate them as populist, logically, most such studies, at least implicitly, designate them as non-populist. Instead, they analyse them as carriers of valence issues (Bleck and van de Walle, 2018). Valence appeals are a type of programmatic appeals about public policies. In programmatic *positional* appeals, a party claims that they will deliver policies which, as they construct them, stand in contrast to those of rival parties. In programmatic *valence* appeals, parties claim that they are better able to deliver on some issue better than rival parties can. They make appeals by claiming superior competence. In a cross-national study, Jamie Bleck and Nicolas van de Walle study conclude that apart from 'development,' African opposition parties (including those in electoral-authoritarian regimes) mention one valence issue more than others issues, and they mention it far more than ruling parties do: constitutionalism and democracy (2018).

This literature is ready for revision. I argue that a subset of African opposition messages which have been analysed as carriers of democratic valence appeals in fact express anti-authoritarian populisms, which have gone overlooked hitherto. These opposition populisms amount to a

distinct ideological current of populisms in electoral-authoritarian regimes across contemporary Africa. They may, I speculate, be emblematic of wider such current in such regimes across the world.

Is anti-authoritarian populism paradoxical?

The recognition of anti-authoritarian populism and its constituent ideologies in Africa and elsewhere has been occluded by the ill-configuration of three further sets of concepts. These configurations make meaning-systems that both advance democratic and anti-authoritarian causes *and* are articulated through populist logics of articulation inconceivable and/or recognizable. The first such configuration places populism in opposition to *liberal* democracy. Above, I elucidated how the ideational theory of populism, does not, like older theories thereof, define it as phenomenon in reaction to liberal democracy. Therefore, it does not foreclose the possibility that it emerges in electoral-authoritarian regimes, even though many studies in this canon determine that the populisms they study articulate critiques of liberal democracy. While this is true, ideational theories also stipulate that populisms necessarily advance what Nadia Urbinati calls ‘a new form of representative government’ which stands apart from liberal democracy (Urbinati, 2019: 1). For Mudde, advocacy of this *illiberal* democracy springs from populists’ claims about duality, morality and sovereignty (2017). Populists construct ‘the people’ as homogenous and moral, and ‘the elite’ as immoral. Therefore, he theorises, populists further claim that as there is only one legitimate opinion, there is no right to express dissenting opinions. Similarly, he holds, populists attribute to ‘the people’ a Rousseauian general will, which is infallible, sovereign and expressed by the leader. This makes contradiction, obstruction and compromise of the leader’s will illegitimate.

From these principles springs advocacy of an electoral system of government in which ostensibly multiparty elections stand alongside a concentration of power in the executive, the elimination of

alternative sites of power and censorship. These ideas are echoed in recent Africanist studies of populism in discourse (Fölscher et al., 2021: 542–545) and practice (Melber, 2018). Therefore, despite not ruling out the emergence of populism in opposition in electoral-authoritarian regimes per se, the ideational approach, and others like it, do consider that by definition, populisms advocate a form of electoral-authoritarian government. While this is compatible with the idea that a populism exists in government in such a regime, it stands in contradiction with the notion that a populism would express opposition *to* it.

However, while ideational (and some discursive) theories of populism recognize advocacy of such electoral authoritarianism as innate to populism, one need not. As others argue, ideologies which construct a people/elite divide need not claim that ‘the elite’ should be denied liberal rights (Vergara, 2019). Likewise, they need not mischaracterize the people or their will or opinion. Therefore, one can conceive of a meaning system which is generated by the division of the social into ‘the people’ and ‘the elite,’ as in the discourse-theoretic perspective, without building-in an electoral-authoritarian project (de Cleen et al., 2018). Thus conceived, populism *can* articulate a democratic and anti-authoritarian cause (Vergara, 2019).

This configuration of concepts removes one obstacle to making anti-authoritarian populism conceivable. However, another remains. It arises from conceptions of populism as a strategy. Comparative studies theorize populism as a strategy of rule. Africanist studies theorize it, distinctly, as a strategy of mobilization (Resnick, 2013). Specifically, Danielle Resnick conceives of populist mobilization strategy as a bundle of clientelist, charismatic and programmatic appeals which mobilizes the intersection of young, urban and poor (2013).

This conception of populist mobilization strategy becomes, by stealth, a distinct theory of populist ideology. It specifies properties of the meaning-systems which populists express and the

programmatic policies which they adopt. The implication of Resnick's conception, and others, is that populisms construct world views that privilege socio-economic inequality. They construct the 'poor' against 'the political *and economic* elite [emphasis added]' (Resnick, 2013: 42–43) or 'the subaltern "poor" or economically excluded' against the 'wealthy' (Cheeseman and Larmer, 2015: 23). They advocate, Resnick specifies, 'a program of social inclusion' (Resnick, 2013: 42). This program is 'oriented around providing goods, services, and recognition to those who have been excluded' (Resnick, 2013: 42). In the words of others, it focuses on 'unsung...economic grievances' (Cheeseman and Paget, 2014: 79–83), and promises to 'radically improve living conditions' (Cheeseman and Larmer, 2015: 26).

This specification of populism as mobilization strategy makes anti-authoritarian populism as defined above unthinkable; if populisms must put socio-economic redistribution first, meaning-systems which put anti-authoritarianism or indeed democracy first do not qualify. However, a discourse-theoretic conception (and, in fact, most conceptions) of populism permit wider discursive range than this. Populists *can* construct redistribution and social inclusion as their causes (Cheeseman and Larmer, 2015), but they need not. Equally, populists may construct 'people' vs. 'elite' as 'poor' vs. 'wealthy', but need not make these material identities their only or their principal ones. They can alternatively, or simultaneously, them as powerless vs. powerful or common vs. cultured, for instance (de Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017).

Thus reconceived, ideologies that combine anti-authoritarian democratic causes and populist imaginaries *are* conceptually possible. Nevertheless, anti-authoritarian populisms would go misinterpreted in Africa. As I defined it above, anti-authoritarian populism involves advocacy of a democratic system as an alternative to the current, authoritarian one. This constitutes a programmatic positional appeal about democracy. In Africanist studies, such a message would go miscategorized as a valence appeal. Bleck and van de Walle (2018) inadvertently fix a definition of

democratic valence issues which is overly broad. They offer many text-book examples of valence politics. For example, they describe how parties ‘leverage their relative position to champion democratic values’ and extol ‘their historic role’ in delivering democracy; these are appeals to competence and credibility (Bleck and van de Walle, 2018: 196). However, they also describe the following as democratic valence appeals: ‘opposition actors frame themselves as defenders of democracy and criticize incumbents for actions perceived to limit freedoms or consolidate their own power’ (Bleck and van de Walle, 2018: 196). Such claims are emphatically *not* valence appeals. They amount to claims that they, the opposition, are fighting *for* democracy, while the incumbent is acting *against* it. In other words, they put themselves and their opponents on *different sides* on the issue. They are better interpreted as positional appeals, which may be part of anti-authoritarian populisms.

Therefore, it may be that there are anti-authoritarian populisms in electoral-authoritarian regimes in Africa, and indeed around the world, which have gone overlooked hitherto, shrouded by those configuration of concepts. With these concepts thus reconfigured, anti-authoritarian populisms become both conceivable and recognizable in practice.

Tanzania: ‘The citizens’ again ‘the corrupt’

I explore this possibility by studying the message of Tanzania’s leading opposition party: Chadema. Chadema was founded by a network of businesspeople at the moment of Tanzania’s reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1992. Chadema’s ideology has been analysed as liberal (Mmuya and Chaligha, 1994: 61), meaning neo-liberal. Its founder-leaders advocated competitive markets and fiscal conservatism. The election of Freeman Mbowe as chairman in 2004 marked a discursive shift which was taking shape by 2006. Chadema did not disavow its market liberalism (Mbowe, 2014). Past analyses judge that Chadema’s altered message in this period gave prominence

to valence issues: anticorruption, democracy and resource nationalism (Paget, 2017: 160–161). In Bleck and van de Walle’s categories, the latter would qualify as a ‘sovereignty and international relations’ issue. The former two would qualify as ‘democracy and constitutionalism’ issues.

I am aware of two analysts that connect populism to Chadema. First, in passing, Sabatho Nyamsenda describes Chadema’s 2010 presidential candidate – Wilbroad Slaa – as populist (2020). Second, Maria Sarungi Tsehai writes that Chadema’s 2015 run would have been anti-establishment, but for their choice of presidential candidate (2016). These exceptions aside, research leaves unspoken the notion that it expressed a populist discourse.

Chadema’s revised message merits reinterpretation. Between 2006 and 2014, a succession of mega-corruption scandals broke in Tanzania. Chadema belaboured the origins of these corrupt practices at the top. They called the instigators ‘*mafisadi*’ (the high-corrupt). Chadema characterized these instances as not independent, but connected through the ruling party, CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi* – Party of the Revolution). Slaa imagined ‘a CCM corruption syndicate’ which stood atop the party and state (2014). He named eleven of its members, including two presidents and one premier, in a ‘List of Shame.’ Chadema portrayed corruption as emanating from this elite nexus. In this vein, Chadema parliamentary candidate Jesca Kishoa said that CCM leaders ‘cut deals to enrich themselves and their families’ (2015). Therefore, consistent with populism, Chadema constructed an ‘elite’ above.

Chadema also constructed a popular actor below: ‘the citizens’ (*wananchi*). Slaa said that ‘all of us are experiencing a very difficult life that has more than doubled for the ordinary person. The cost of living and specifically on basic needs: beans, charcoal and cooking gas are beyond the common man’s reach’ (2014). ‘Citizens’ were thus joined in reference to their common deprivation. Chadema placed this popular suffering in contrast to the luxurious lifestyles of the CCM-elite. For

example, Kishoa vividly described CCM's MP offering people \$0.3 beer, while themselves drinking \$10 whisky (Kishoa, 2015: currencies converted).

The unity of 'the citizens' was also in reference to their common perpetrator: the CCM-elite. They blamed CCM corruption for lacklustre government services, high taxes and even high prices. Then Chadema MP David Silinde said 'Everything is expensive, a pair of shorts, kanga, everything; these are results of voting for CCM' (Silinde, 2015a). Silinde also exemplified this logic of construction in his speech almost perfectly in dialogue with a rally audience. 'Who is injured here? (Audience: CITIZENS!) We are the ones that suffer... and Chama cha Mapinduzi is what destroys this country' (Silinde, 2015b). Moreover, as the above-mentioned quotes illustrate, the 'citizens' and 'CCM' were overlaid with several dimensions of low and high respectively. Therefore, contrary to prior analyses, Chadema's message *was* populist. Then-Chadema central committee member Mwesiga Baregu seems to have recognized this in substance if not in nomenclature. 'Chadema,' he said, 'has positioned itself to be home of all of these forces demanding change' (Baregu, 2015).

In 2015, Chadema temporarily relegated corruption in its message. That August, it nominated CCM-defector and List of Shame member Edward Lowassa as its presidential candidate. Months later, CCM candidate John Pombe Magufuli was elected president and began a performative anti-corruption war. The same year, CCM initiated an authoritarian turn, of which Magufuli became the face and engine (Paget, 2017). In that context, Chadema's critique shifted focus from corruption to dictatorship. This regime, they alleged, was increasingly violent and arbitrary. Increasingly, Chadema united 'citizens' in reference to their common status as victims of Magufuli's dictatorship. Chadema 2020 presidential candidate Tundu Lissu wrote that 'Tanzania has become a land of people crippled – physically and psychologically – by the violence of the Magufuli government' (2020). Therefore, Chadema's message remained populist throughout, but its portrayal of the CCM elite shifted in focus from corruption to oppression over time.

Chadema's populism was democratic. It called for 'change' (*mabadiliko*). Chadema partially fixed its meaning as 'democracy' (*demokrasia*). Its self-proclaimed vision was for 'Tanzania to be a truly democratic country' (Slaa, 2014). Chadema fixed what it meant by 'democracy' through the national constitutional process convened in 2012. A Constitutional Review Commission wrote two drafts. The second became known as the 'Warioba Draft' for its lead author, long-serving CCM politician Joseph Warioba. Its contents reduced and checked presidential powers, empowered parliament, gave autonomy to the archipelago state of Zanzibar, and enshrined various freedoms, among other things. Chadema (and other opposition parties) embraced the contents of this draft as their platform, wholesale. Therefore, Chadema not only used the term 'democracy' to signify its cause. It advocated a programme that was consistent with the institutions and principals of liberal democracy.

Chadema presented this democratic programme as a departure from the status quo. Chadema's constitution states that 'the [existing] systems and structures of governance in the country do not exist for the benefit of the people, but rather [for] the... few people' (Chadema, 2019: 15). In particular, the nation's 'constitution has remained a monopoly of the government' (Chadema, 2019: 15). In the context of the authoritarian turn initiated in 2015, Chadema argued that CCM wished to advance and these anti-democratic aspects of the existing system and extinguish democracy altogether. Baregu wrote that Magufuli had 'launched an open, unapologetic and unrelenting onslaught on democracy' (2018). It re-presented its cause as the Alliance Against Dictatorship in Tanzania (*Umoja wa Kupinga Udikteta Tanzania*). Therefore, Chadema defined its cause with increasing clarity as not only for democracy, but against authoritarianism. Altogether, Chadema did not claim to have superior competence to *deliver* democracy. It portrayed its advocacy of 'democracy' as an alternative, both to the authoritarian status quo and the CCM-regime's

direction of travel. Therefore, Chadema constructed ‘democracy’ not as a valence issue, but as a programmatic positional issue.

After the CCM-dominated Constitutional Assembly heavily revised the Warioba Draft constitution in 2013, Chadema presented this action as the denial of ‘the people’s’ express wishes. This was far from clear. The Warioba Draft was written *after* public consultations, but *by* an expert committee. Nevertheless, Mbowe said that ‘CCM and its government were not ready to respect people’s views contained in the second [Warioba] draft constitution’ (Mbowe, 2014). Indeed, Chadema and three other opposition parties formed a fleeting alliance, entitled *Umoja wa Katiba ya Wananchi* (UKAWA), or ‘Coalition for the People’s Constitution.’ Slaa described UKAWA as engaged in a ‘relentless fight for a people’s centred constitution’ (2014). Therefore, Chadema constructed its democratic cause as the fight against the CCM-elite to realize the people’s will. This made CCM ‘enemies of the people’ (Mbowe, 2014).

In sum, Chadema constructed an anti-authoritarian populism. ‘Democracy,’ it claimed, was a side-taking issue between democratic and authoritarian systems, in which the former was the will of ‘the citizens.’ It advocated this cause with and for them against the ‘CCM syndicate.’

Zimbabwe: ‘People’s struggle’ for democracy

Analyses of MDC (and its most prominent successive splinter-descendants: MDC-Tsvangirai (MDC-T), MDC Alliance and CCC) differ. Some argue that it articulated a ‘liberal’ ideology (Gallagher and Chan, 2017: 52). Others argue that it presented itself as for democracy and against dictatorship (Marongwe, 2022), not least MDC leaders themselves (Tsvangirai and Bango, 2011). Studies recognize that such self-presentations were articulated through historical texts (Barure and Manase, 2020), in autobiography (Nyanda, 2017), and by citizen-activists (Dendere, 2019).

Others judge that the much-studied message of the MDC-T in 2013 was ‘[valence-]issue based’ (Zamchiya, 2013: 956). It principally claimed a superior ability to deliver on issues of material wellbeing such as jobs, economic management and public service delivery in 2013 (Zamchiya, 2013) and since (Beardsworth et al., 2019: 589–590). One study concurs that it was issue-based, but concludes that the MDC-T’s issue-message about democracy and human rights cut through more than its issue-messages about such material issues (Gallagher and Chan, 2017: 64–6). In each of these readings, MDC messages are not populist. Indeed, implicitly, the emphasis on its ‘liberal’ and ‘technocratic language’ (Zamchiya, 2013: 957) connotes that there is distance between its message and populism. Gift Mwonozora and Obert Hodzi analyse Chamisa’s 2018 ‘narrative’ as populist (2021). So do some commentators (Hofisi, 2019; Melusi, 2018). However, they do so principally in pejorative reference to his mode of intra-party politicking and his evangelicalism (Mwonozora and Hodzi, 2021). To my knowledge, no analysis recognizes MDC or CCC messages as simultaneously anti-authoritarian *and* populist.

In this section, I analyse Chamisa’s discourse from August 2018 to March 2022. I show that Chamisa articulated an anti-authoritarian populism that displays remarkably close resemblances to Chadema’s. This is not to say that Chamisa’s discourse is reducible to either an imitation of Chadema’s or an anti-authoritarian populism alone. Chamisa’s speech changed during this period and varies across these texts. It also displayed features which Chadema’s did not, some of which I draw out.

Chamisa consistently portrayed Zimbabweans as suffering from an omnibus of hardships, which he listed: ‘I know that you are suffering. I know that you have no grants, you have no fuel, you have no power, no food, there is no money, we have no jobs’ (2022). By juxtaposing these deprivations, he implicitly connected those that bore them in a close likeness of the equivalence-

rendering mode of articulation theorized by Laclau and Mouffe (2001). He assembled identity groups in a similar way. ‘Businesses have suffered... workers have been retrenched. For years, youth and war veterans have received empty promises’ (Chamisa, 2022). Implicit in his speech is that the hardships of business, workers and youth were connected. Thereby, like Chadema, and consistent with populism, Chamisa constructed a popular actor below (he switches between ‘the citizens’ and ‘the people’) in reference to their material hardships. That said, there were also subtle distinctions between these Chadema’s and Chamisa’s constructions of ‘the people.’ For instance, Chamisa set popular suffering in the present in contrast to what he imagined as the ‘glory days’ of Zimbabwean independence, when education was exemplary and there was plenty (2020).

Chamisa consistently singled-out the party-regime as the source of this suffering. ‘Not one single citizen is not a victim of our government. You have a grievance against the government because of being driven into deadening poverty’ (Chamisa, 2022). In his imaginary, this suffering took two forms. First, the ruling Zimbabwean African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), he said, also doled out violent oppression to its citizens which amounted, he said, to a parallel ‘pandemic’ (2021). Second, the ZANU-PF regime perpetrated corruption in a myriad of forms. This ‘hell on Earth,’ Chamisa said, was ‘the result of corruption, bad governance, human rights abuses, [and] failed reforms’ (2019). Therefore, consistent with Chadema’s discourse and populism alike, Chamisa constructed the unity of ‘the citizens’ in reference to their shared opponent: the ZANU-PF regime.

Chamisa explicitly described this party-regime as an elite and made the signifiers ‘regime’ and ‘elite’ synonyms. Through corruption, he claimed, the regime had enriched itself at the expense of others. ‘We are all,’ he said, ‘in extreme poverty, but we have a minority that is enjoying the cream of our country’ (2022). Chamisa was clear where this ‘minority’ was located; ‘corruption,’ he said, ‘starts at the top’ (2021). He described a ‘rotten pinnacle’ of the state which had been captured by *parasitic*

elites who are bent on rent-seeking, racketeering, and... exploiting the poor' (2022: emphasis added). This elite enjoyed the luxury and privilege of '5-star hotels, [and] five-star hospitals' (Chamisa, 2019). Therefore, further consistent with Chadema's discourse and populism, Chamisa constructed the enemy of 'the citizens' in unmistakably elite terms.

Following his MDC forebears, Chamisa advocated democracy as the remedy to all of these ills. To this end, he advocated 'a raft of political reforms' (2021) to institutionally check and limit state power, reinstate due process and defend human rights. Therefore, like Chadema, he made liberal democracy his cause. Unlike Chadema, he did not single-out *constitutional* change, as the MDC had already played a leading role in rewriting the constitution in 2013. Instead, they held that many provisions enshrined in the constitution had either been circumvented, or never been implemented. The 'raft' of reforms was needed to enact and instate those provisions.

Constitutional democracy would usher in a wider programme of what Chamisa, like his MDC forebears (Dorman, 2016), called 'change.' 'Change' as the MDC name specified, meant *democratic* change. Even more than Chadema, he portrayed the struggle for democracy as a liberation struggle. For a study of prior contestations of Zimbabwean liberation discourses, see Dorman (2016: Chapter 5). 'The liberation ethos,' Chamisa claimed, had always been 'one man, one vote' (2018). Therefore, 'the liberation struggle was a democratic project' (Chamisa, 2020). This should be read in the context of ZANU-PF increasingly reviving the language of liberation to delegitimize the opposition (Dorman, 2016; Tendi, 2013).

Therefore, Chamisa envisaged the 'democratic struggle' as 'a people's struggle' (2021) embedded in a new 'citizen consensus' (2021). He not only constructed 'the people' by connecting their shared hardships and their shared antagonists, as described above. He also assembled them by summoning them to unite in struggle. 'It's about you the citizens. Are you a professional? Do

something. Are you a builder? Do something. Are you a worker? Do something. Are you a student? Do something' (Chamisa, 2022). He constructed this 'convergence' of people as the Citizens Coalition for Change: the re-founded party launched in 2022. Even before this moment, he had presented his party as a vehicle for the people's struggle. 'It is your party; it is your struggle' (Chamisa, 2021).

Chamisa, like Chadema, claimed that these 'parasitic elites' stood opposed to democracy. 'The regime and the oppressors,' he said, 'have embarked on a relentless assault and onslaught upon democracy and upon the people's party' (2021). He declared that the regime's authoritarian opposition to this coalition amounted to resistance of the will of the citizens. In 2018, he portrayed the [alleged] manipulation (Beardsworth et al., 2019) of the 2018 election as a 'coup against the *will of the people*' intended to 'advantage a *particular elite*' (Chamisa, 2018: emphasis added).

Therefore, there were important features of Chamisa's ideology that mark it apart from Chadema's. Nevertheless, it evidently expressed an anti-authoritarian populism.

Across Africa, and the world?

Chadema's public message did not advocate an electoral-authoritarian regime; nor did it principally advocate a programme of socio-economic redistribution; instead, past studies determined that it made democratic valence appeals. I have shown that, nevertheless, its message was populist. These statements are not mutually contradictory. A populist imaginary *can* be combined with a liberal democratic cause, even if it has been misinterpreted as a democratic valence appeal.

Chadema articulated this populist ideology in opposition in an electoral-authoritarian regime. Unlike other recognized populisms thus located, it took this regime as the central context in which it constructed 'people,' 'elite' and struggle. It made its authoritarianism the subject of its critique

and the animus of its cause. Thereby, Chadema articulated a populism tailored to opposition in an electoral-authoritarian regime: one which stands in opposition to electoral authoritarianism itself.

Recognized populisms in Africa express radical-left ideologies in opposition, and, disputedly (Fraser, 2017), liberation ideologies in power (Melber, 2018). Chadema's anti-authoritarian populism does not fall into either of these canons. Nevertheless, it is not an outlier among African opposition messages. On the contrary, my analysis of Chamisa's discourse demonstrates that at least one other case closely resembles it. Therefore, there is not just a theoretical, but an empirical basis to conclude that there is a third current of populist ideologies in Africa, one found in opposition in and to electoral-authoritarian regimes. If Chadema and the CCC are the first two recognized instances of this current, there is a clear candidate for the third. Forthcoming work shows that Bobi Wine's National Unity Platform in Uganda constructs a struggle for democracy which closely resembles anti-authoritarian populism (Melchiorre, 2021).

The question remains how wide this current of anti-authoritarian populisms is. Future research should take up this question. It should begin with the African opposition party messages in electoral-authoritarian regimes analysed as democratic valence issues. However, it should not be bound to one continent. The anti-authoritarian populism which I have distilled from the political thought of Chadema and the CCC offers a critique which has *prima facie* resonance in electoral-authoritarian regimes far afield. In fact, it bears at least partial resemblances to anti-authoritarian democracy movements as far flung as El Salvador, Venezuela, Hungary and Turkey. These resemblances make this research particularly timely. The globe is amid a wave of autocratization. Wherever it crests, movements form to resist it. If these movements wage their struggles for 'democracy' and against 'authoritarianism' in the people's name in populist imaginaries, we should recognize that they do so.

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