



Centro de Pesquisas sobre  
Governação e Desenvolvimento

**Voter Turnout of Second Round Elections in Mozambique:  
An Exploratory Study of the 2018 Nampula City By-Election**

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## **About the Author**

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## Summary

Experiences from countries, such as France in 2017, tell us that second round elections can be characterized by demobilization of voters and thus result in low turnout rates. This finding is also supported by the 2008/9 Nacala-Porto elections in Mozambique.

Nevertheless, evidence from the 2018 Nampula City by-election appears to be different, as instead of demobilizing voters, the Nampula City second round by-election saw an increase in voter turnout.

This study finds that change in party support played an important role affecting turnout rate in the second round of the by-election. The change in Renamo party support for its candidate from the first to the second-round election appears to be a “strategy” that moved its candidate to win the election and also increase voter turnout. The support that the Frelimo candidate received from his party was high in both rounds of the by-election; it did not change significantly between election rounds. Other considerations including political capital and loyalty appear to have had no effect at all.

In order to improve analysis of electoral behaviour in Mozambique and better inform scholars and democracy practitioners, including public officers, donors and civil society agencies, there is a need for data collection, such as public opinion surveys with multi-stratified, random probability samples, to be conducted in the country when elections take place. Without this data it is not possible to provide evidence informed analysis and recommendations that can help improve and strengthen democratic and electoral processes in the country.

## Introduction

This is an exploratory study of second round elections in the context of Mozambique. Second round elections occur when none of the competing candidates manage to receive more than half of the votes in the first round election. Second round elections do not happen often, suggesting that what we know about them is limited. Perhaps what we know most about second round elections comes from the two round system of presidential elections in France. We know that, unless one of the second round candidates is considered an extremist candidate<sup>1</sup>, voter turnout of second round elections tends to be about the same or lower<sup>2</sup>.

One of the reasons for similar or lower turnout in second round elections could be that both candidates appear to not be popular enough to the extent that the vote becomes a choice of the lesser of two evils, or as some French commenters suggested in the 2017 election, a choice between ‘cholera or the plague’. The notion is that “voters are less likely to be motivated when they are voting against someone rather than for someone”.<sup>3</sup> In second round elections, many people may dislike or be indifferent to the two competing candidates making them to leave an empty ballot paper or just abstain from voting.

In Mozambique there have been two cases of second round elections. The first was in Nacala-Porto on 11 February 2009<sup>4</sup> and second in Nampula City on 14 March 2018.<sup>5</sup>

The trend of voter turnout of these second round elections varies, with Nacala-Porto being closer to the French case; and Nampula City moving away from it. As illustrated in Figure 1, voter turnout of the Nacala-Porto second round election dropped, although not significantly, while the turnout of the Nampula City by-election increased significantly from 24.9 percent to 32 percent.

This case leads one to ask the following question: Why is the voter turnout for the Nampula City second round election different? In other words, what factors account for the variation of this increasing difference?

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<sup>1</sup> In 2002 the far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen unexpectedly reached the second round of the French presidential elections to face the outgoing President Jacques Chirac. Subsequently voter turnout increased from 71.6% in the first round to 79.71% in the second round. See: <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/05/05/france.win/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40317135> ‘French voter turnout falls sharply in second round’, accessed on 20 June 2018.

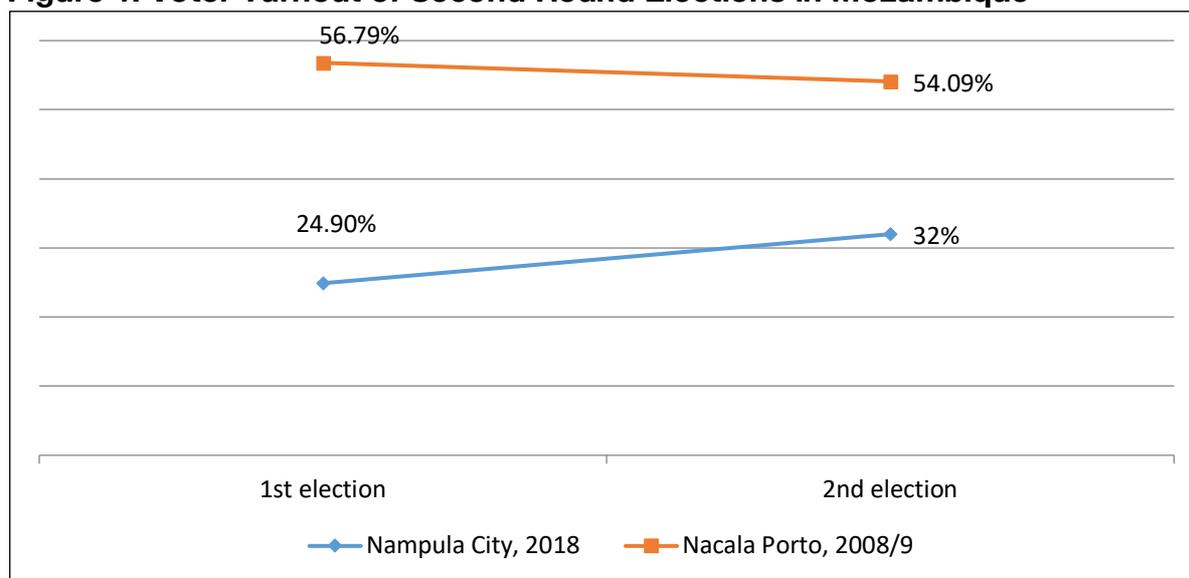
<sup>3</sup> <https://politics.stackexchange.com/questions/18706/why-was-the-voter-turnout-so-low-in-the-second-round-of-french-elections>, accessed on 20 June 2018

<sup>4</sup> The previous Nacala-Porto election was held on 19 November 2018. This was a normal election together with other 42 municipalities taking place at same in the country.

<sup>5</sup> The Previous Nampula City election was held on 24 January 2018. It was a by-election resulting from the death by assassination of the mayor on 4 October 2017.

This Briefing Paper analyzes the potential factors accounting for variation on voter turnout in Nampula City by using official election data and other data collected by the author on the basis of following news media on the election campaign of the first and second rounds of the Nampula City by-election.

**Figure 1: Voter Turnout of Second Round Elections in Mozambique**



*Compiled by the author on the basis of official election data from the following sources: Acordão 1/CC/2018, of 13 February; and Acordão 3/CC2018, of 4<sup>th</sup> April.*

## **Toward a Voter Turnout Theory for Second Round Elections**

### **Performance versus survival of the first most voted for candidates**

Perhaps one factor to consider when attempting to explain variation on the levels of voter turnout in second round elections is by comparing how the first most voted for candidate in the first round election performed or survived in the second round election. By relying on a few cases, we can try to develop a theory of voter turnout for second round elections. This is based on the following assumptions:

1. If the first most voted for candidate in the first and second round of an election is different (i.e. the most voted for candidate in the first round election lost in the second), then voter turnout will increase. In other words, this means that, if the first most voted candidate in the first election does not survive in the second then turnout will increase; and
2. If the first most voted for candidate in the first and second round of an election are the same, suggesting that the first most voted candidate in the first round was also the first most voted for candidate in the second round, then voter turnout will remain about the same or lower. This means that if the first most voted candidate

in the first round election wins the second round election then voter turnout will remain about the same.

The first assumption aligns to, or is supported by, the 2018 Nampula City by-election; whilst the second assumption aligns with the 2008/9 Nacala-Porto elections and is also similar to the theory developed around the second round of the 2017 French presidential election.

Since the author did not follow the Nacala Porto elections closely in 2008 and 2009 and no additional data on the Nacala Porto election is available, this paper focuses on the 2018 Nampula City by-elections by looking at:

- a) how much support candidates received from their parties and how party support changed over time;
- b) the strategies candidates or their parties used to mobilize voters and how the strategies changed from the first round to the second round of the election;
- c) what political capital the candidates brought to the election campaign and how the candidates' political capital changed between election rounds; and
- d) voters' loyalty and its variation over time.

## **Party Support**

How did political parties support their candidates in the Nampula City by-election? Of the two [second round] candidates, Amisse Cololo (Frelimo candidate) received more support from his party Frelimo in the first round of the election compared to the support Paulo Vahanle (Renamo candidate) received from his party Renamo.

“On the inauguration of the election campaign, Amisse Cololo was supported by his party secretary-general who introduced him in a rally and did voter civic education showing voters how to mark the ballot paper to support Cololo. Other top officials from his party were also there supporting his campaign and they remained throughout the campaign to the end” (Shenga 2018:4).

“It appeared that Vahanle was left on his own to run his election campaign. The secretary-general of his party was there but it appeared that he did not play a major visible role although there was a charismatic young spokesperson speaking on Vahanle's behalf to the media” (Shenga 2018:5).

## **Change in Party Support or Strategy**

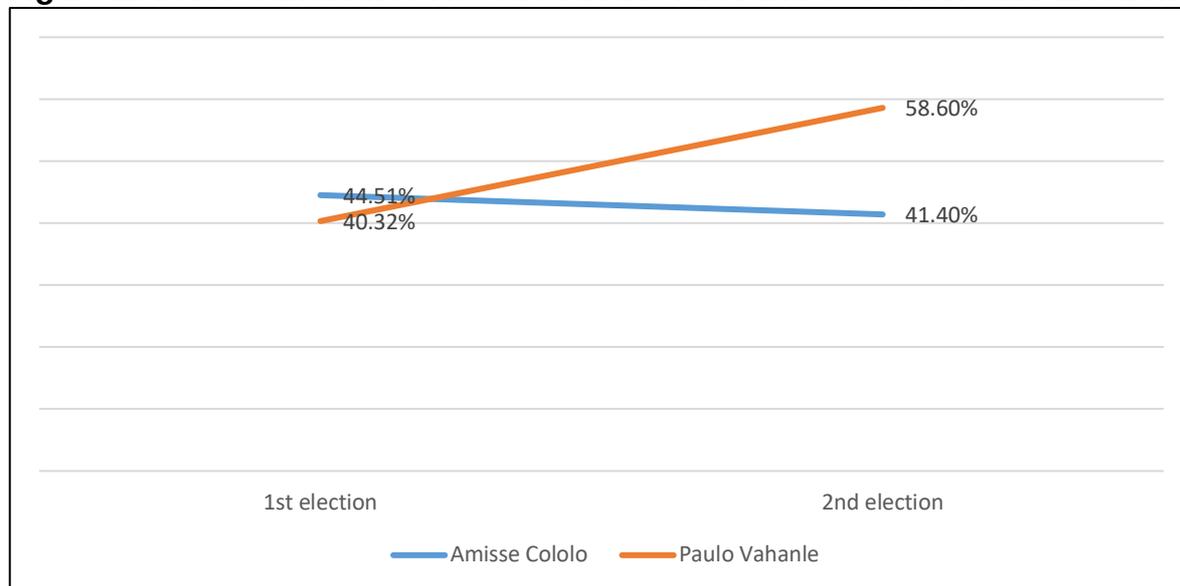
In the second round election campaign, there was no significant change in party support for Amisse Cololo. He continued to benefit from high levels of support from

his party as was provided in the first round of the election. But there was a change for Paulo Vahanle. He moved from receiving low to high party support from the first to the second round election. The same type of support that Cololo benefited from in the first round election and continued to benefit from in the second, Vahanle enjoyed in the second round election. The presence and visibility of top party officials from Renamo were observed supporting Vahanle in the second round of the election campaign.

With respect to this change, it is not clear whether Renamo realized, after the first round campaign, that it did not provide enough support to its candidate and then decided to improve its support in the second round campaign or whether this was a deliberate part of Renamo’s strategy to win the election. In other words, using a driving analogy, whether Renamo waited for its contender to be the first one to use its top gear so that Renamo could engage their top gear at the right moment towards the end of the race.

This change in increasing party support for Vahanle in the second round of the election campaign appears to have contributed significantly to his victory. It reduced election competition<sup>6</sup> and led the Renamo candidate to win the election. As illustrated in Figure 2, the Renamo candidate (Paulo Vahanle) came second in the first round election but moved into first place in the second round election.

**Figure 2: Votes Candidates Received in the First and Second Round Elections**



*Compiled by the author on base of election official data from the following sources: Acordão 1/CC/2018, of 13 February; and Acordão 3/CC2018, of 4<sup>th</sup> April*

Renamo’s increasing party support for its candidate appears to have triggered more of their voters, who did not vote in the first round election, to be mobilized to vote in the second round. Vahanle and his party’s support increased by 47.9 percent (26,703

<sup>6</sup> Defined as the difference between the first and second most voted for candidates.

votes) from the first round (29,029 votes) to the second round (55,732 votes) election as result of the change in their party support “strategy”.

However, the increase in voter turnout rate also results from the work conducted by Cololo and his party. Although there did not appear to be any significant change in the amount of support Cololo received from his party between the first and second round election, as the party support remained high in the two elections, he and his party also increased the number of voters that were mobilized to vote for him. In fact, there was an 18.6 percent (7,334 votes) increase in votes for Cololo from the first round (32,042 votes) to the second (39,376 votes) of the election. One group of voters that Cololo (or indeed Vahanle) may have mobilized in the second round election was university students<sup>7</sup> since a high percentage were absent in the first round as the election took place during the university holiday.<sup>8</sup>

## Considering other Factors in the Equation

Besides party support it is also interesting to view how other factors may have affected voter turnout rate. There are two aspects to consider: first, *political capital* - that is, the resources aspirants bring to the process of recruitment to a political position (see Norris 1997, Seligman 1964; Shenga 2014); and second, voters' *loyalty* - that is, the loyalty that voters attach to the parties they vote for, regardless of whether the party has performed well or badly.<sup>9</sup>

### Political Capital

During the process of political recruitment, aspirants to a political position bring different type of resources that may attract voters to vote for them (see Norris 1997). One of these resources is oratory skills (Seligman 1964) to speak out their electoral manifestos to voters. Other resources may be defined in terms of formal education, occupational status, experience of working for government, legislative and political party at national, local and grassroots levels (see Shenga 2014). For the purpose of this paper we look at oratory skills or charisma as an indicator of political capital.

In CPGD's previous Briefing Paper on the first round of the 2018 Nampula City by-election, we described, on the one hand, Cololo as having high skills to present his manifestos during the election campaign either to voters to mobilize them or to media.

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<sup>7</sup> This generation of people match with that of born free Mozambican citizens born from 1994 onwards. For more information, see Shenga, C. (2017) “Born Frees’ Attitudes towards Democracy in Mozambique: A Comparative Study of Political Generations”. CPGD Working Paper No 8.

<sup>8</sup> Those students living outside Nampula City were away spending Christmas and New Year holidays. The first election took place on 14 January 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Loyalty is determined by a sophisticated lifetime learning model including family loyalties absorbed as a child, adult socio-economic interests and enduring political values cumulatively (Rose and McAllister 1990).

On the other hand, we described Vahanle as being having weaker or less confident oratory skills.

Comparing the first and second round election, no significant change of political capital was seen by the two candidates. Their oratory skills stayed about the same from the first to the second round election. This may make sense as an individuals' oratory skills can take time to change. Less than two months - which is the period of time between the two election rounds, is a very short period to change one's skills.

In short, the lack of variation of oratory skills on election outcomes indicates that this consideration did not affect the election outcome either to make this candidate to win election or that to lose or to increase the electoral turnout rate.

### **Voters' Loyalty**

Of the two candidates, CPGD's previous Briefing Paper on the first round of the 2018 Nampula City by-election observed that Paulo Vahanle was low in party support and oratory skills to speak publicly about his electoral manifesto yet managed to receive a high number of votes to the extent of coming the second most voted for candidate. Additionally, it viewed Cololo to be high on party support and oratory skills which potentially led him to receive the highest numbers of vote, albeit not enough to avoid a second round run-off election. One explanation to frame how, with low party support and political capital, Vahanle managed to receive the numbers of votes he did, is the loyalty theory. That is, voters voted for Vahanle because they have loyalty to his party, regardless of what the party is or what the party does.

Whilst voter loyalty played a large role in the first round election for the Renamo candidate, comparing voters' loyalty between the first and second round election is not a straightforward task with the type of data used in this study. First, official election data is aggregated and only provides the total number of votes that each candidate received and how many people turned out to vote. Second, all other information on loyalty and other considerations (like public mood for change or alternation of power) has to be collected separately with relative low precision. With no individual level systematic survey data (ideally using a representative multi-stratified probability random sample) available, there is a lack of data and evidence to be able to inform our analysis.

Based on this limitation, we view that there was no significant change on voters' loyalty from the first to the second round election, suggesting that loyalty did not account for the variation in the election outcome in the second round election. If it did, the assumption is that it was not significant.

### **Conclusion**

In second round elections, many people may dislike or be indifferent to the two competing candidates making them to abstain from voting. This theory is illustrated by a number of cases of French elections but also one case in Mozambique – that is, Nacala-Porto in 2009. However, evidence from the 2018 Nampula City by-election appears to be different, as instead of demobilizing voters, there was an increased voter turnout for the second round of the election.

Contributing to the knowledge on second round elections, by comparing the 2018 Nampula City first and second round election, this study found out that party support played an important role affecting the number of votes the two candidates received and the voter turnout rate. The change in Renamo party support for its candidate from the first to the second round election appears to be a “strategy” that enabled the Renamo candidate to win the second round election and also increase voter turnout. Although on Cololo’s side, the support he received from his party was high in both elections, his party support did not vary significantly between election rounds.

Other considerations including political capital (measured by oratory skills that candidates may have brought to mobilize voters with) appear to have had no effect. There was no variation of candidates’ skills from the first to the second round election, voters’ loyalty appeared to not matter as well.

In order to improve analysis of electoral behaviour in Mozambique, contribute to academic knowledge and better inform democracy practitioners, including public officers, donors and non-government organizations, there is a need for more primary data to be collected such as conducting individual level systematic public opinion surveys with multi-stratified, random probability samples in the country when elections take place. This is because this type of data allows for more clear, precise and robust analysis to take place that can account for many considerations simultaneously with weights. The lack of independent, timely and systematic data is a common challenge that scholars of electoral behaviour in Mozambique encounter when dealing with this subject.

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