

## **THE STATE OF POVERTY IN THE STATE OF THE NATION: BETWEEN TRUMP CARDS AND STONES.**

This text aims to analyze the speeches made on 15 October 2024, in Luanda, at the National Assembly, by the President of the MPLA and of the Republic of Angola, **João Lourenço**, and on 11 October 2024, in Lubango, in a disadvantaged public space, by the President of UNITA, **Adalberto Costa Júnior**. While the MPLA, in power since 1975, is referred to as the ‘Light Government,’ UNITA, the largest opposition party, presents itself as the ‘Shadow Government.’

Both speeches were addressed to the Angolan nation, albeit under different conditions, resources, and axes of analysis. In this analysis, we have selected exclusively the passages related to poverty in Angola to establish a parallel between the government in office and the opposition self-styled as the ‘Shadow Government.’

This parallelism, using the metaphors of ‘light’ and ‘shadow,’ offers an opportunity to explore the contrasting approaches to poverty, inequalities, and social exclusion. While the ‘shadow government’ denounces ineffective government and uses poverty as a central element of criticism, the ‘light government’ emphasizes the actions implemented in the fight against poverty, highlighting achievements and changes that can **only be felt ‘in spirit.’**

This analysis confronts the critical points of both discourses with the theoretical approaches to poverty, highlighting the main differences in the critical aspects of each approach and proposing an assessment of which is most effective.

### **Discourses and Critical Frameworks**

#### **1. Light Government: Emphasis on Results and Initiatives**

The 'Light Government' discourse favors a narrative centered on the government's efforts and results in anti-poverty policies. Programs such as Kwenda, the creation of training and employment centers, and direct cash transfers are presented as pillars of an inclusive strategy. The rhetoric valorizes the positive impact of the initiatives, reinforcing the commitment to youth empowerment and the role of women.

However, this approach can be criticized on several counts:

- Superficiality in the indicators: the focus on metrics such as the number of Kwenda beneficiaries or the jobs generated is not accompanied by in-depth analyses of long-term sustainability or structural changes.
- Dependence on external funding: Kwenda's extension until 2029, for example, depends on a significant loan from the World Bank, similar to the conditions that dictated its advent. This may limit the financial autonomy of the program and raise doubts about the sustainability of the policies.
- Persistent inequality: despite specific actions, there is no clear articulation of how these initiatives reduce poverty regional and gender inequalities or improve the lives of Angolans. Affirmation is still very much based on faith.

## 2. **Shadow Government:** Structural Criticism and Emphasis on Social Reality

The discourse of the 'Shadow Government' adopts a critical stance, denouncing the ineffectiveness of the economic and social policies implemented by the government. It presents a deeply unequal Angola, with alarming levels of poverty, hunger, and social exclusion. Data from AfroBarómetro, UNICEF, and reports from international organizations are used to back up accusations of government mismanagement and inaction.

### **Critical points of this approach include**

- Focus on diagnosis: the discourse highlights problems such as unemployment, food insecurity, and the exodus of talent but offers few concrete proposals for tackling these challenges. However, for an opposition and considering the games of political chess, it may not be wise to 'give away free proposals.
- Use of emotional rhetoric: the description of children eating out of rubbish bins and the reference to the 'apocalyptic postcard' may mobilize feelings, but there is a lack of systematic evidence to correlate these images with the totality of Angolan reality.
- Dependence on external sources: the reliance on data from international organizations can be seen as valid, but the discourse lacks a more integrated national contextualization.

### **Comparison with theoretical approaches to poverty**

Amartya Sen's (1999) theory of capabilities emphasizes that poverty is not just a lack of income but the absence of opportunities and capabilities to lead a dignified life. This approach suggests that the fight against poverty should prioritize access to health services, education, and infrastructure, as well as strengthening social participation.

- The discourse of the 'Light Government' partially aligns itself with this vision by highlighting female empowerment and access to basic social services through programs such as Kwenda. However, the approach is merely rhetorical and limited, as it deals with poverty in a sectoral way without exploring the structural interdependencies that perpetuate social exclusion.

- The 'Shadow Government,' on the other hand, criticizes the absence of a robust welfare state, echoing authors such as Esping-Andersen (1990) and Swank (2001), who emphasize the need for inclusive social protection systems. However, the discourse is limited to a rhetoric of denunciation without offering practical alternatives or concrete policies for rebuilding this welfare state.

### **Fundamental Differences and Critical Aspects**

- Focus on results vs. structural diagnosis: while the 'Light Government' presents specific results to demonstrate progress, the 'Shadow Government' focuses on a generalized critique and diagnosis of structural flaws.
- Sustainability vs. urgency: the 'Light Government' emphasizes the continuity of externally funded programs such as Kwenda, while the 'Shadow Government' questions the lack of sustainable solutions but does not present practical proposals.
- Emotional vs. technical dimension: the 'Light Government' adopts a technical approach, but it is superficial and riddled with the cancer of maintaining power, while the 'Shadow Government' uses emotional rhetoric to mobilize popular support and invoke the need for alternation.

### **Better Approach and Justification**

The most effective approach would be a synthesis that combines the results-orientated vision of the 'Light Government' with the structural critique of the 'Shadow Government'. However, if a choice has to be made between the two discourses, neither is in a position to be taken as an impartial and rigorously constructed discourse.

The 'Light Government' appears to be more structured and action-orientated. However, it designs and pursues 'extremely mundane' and common sense-

loving anti-poverty policies, therefore lacking significant scientific rigor and empirical basis (evidence).

On the other hand, the 'Shadow Government' fails to propose practical solutions to the problems it denounces, which jeopardizes its ability to be a credible alternative. So, while the structural criticism is valid, it lacks operationality.

Effectiveness in the fight against poverty requires policies that address both immediate and structural causes, based on robust data and aligned with theories such as those of Sen (1999) and Esping-Andersen (1990), which emphasize the centrality of human development and sustainable social protection.

## **References**

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Swank, D. (2001). "Political institutions and Welfare State restructuring: the impact of institutions on social policy change in developed democracies", In Paul Pierson (ed.), *The new politics of the Welfare State*. Oxford University Press.