

THE IMPENDING COLLAPSE OF THE HOUSE OF MAMPHELA RAMPHELE

Agang SA

***Mashupye H Maserumule, Ricky Munyaradzi Mukonza,
Nyawo Gumede and Livhuwani L Ndou***

Ricky Munyaradzi Mukonza is a Lecturer in the Department of Public Management, Tshwane University of Technology, Polokwane Campus
e-mail: mukonzarm@tut.ac.za

Nyawo Gumede is Academic Manager in the Faculty of Humanities and Lecturer in the Department of Public Management, Tshwane University of Technology, Mbombela Campus
e-mail: gumedenb@tut.ac.za

Livhuwani L Ndou is a Lecturer in the Departments of Public Management and Journalism, Tshwane University of Technology, Soshanguve Campus
e-mail: ndoull@tut.ac.za

ABSTRACT

In the 2014 general elections Agang SA won 52 350 votes (0.28% of the 18 654 771 votes cast) and only two seats in the National Assembly. The electoral performance of the newly-formed party was dismal, especially in comparison to that of its fellow debutant, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This article explores the reasons for Agang SA's poor performance and concludes that they may include both the fact that its political message did not resonate with the wider population and the fact that its campaign strategy was ineffectual. However, it would seem that the main reason for the party's failure was that it was formed around the character and personal successes of one individual – its founder, Dr Mamphela Ramphele. Ramphele's reputation wittingly or unwittingly shaped the character and orientation of Agang SA, and her political indiscretions compromised its electoral potential. The future of Agang SA is bleak and its collapse almost inevitable.

INTRODUCTION

Twenty years into democracy new political parties continue to emerge, with the aim of challenging the African National Congress (ANC), which, since 1994, has dominated South African politics. Their emergence and participation in electoral politics must be understood as a feature of democracy in praxis.

Agang SA entered the political space with great fanfare, largely because of its high-profile founder, Dr Mamphela Ramphele. Under her guidance the party fashioned itself as a credible political alternative to the existing parties and vowed to achieve the promises of the liberation struggle, which, it argued, remain unfulfilled. Its campaign strategy largely targeted members of the black middle class, who were disgruntled with the ANC but would not consider voting for the Democratic Alliance (DA) or any other political party.

This article attempts to understand the reasons for Agang SA's dismal performance in the elections by interrogating the context of its emergence and existence, its political message and campaign strategy and other related factors. In a broader context this exercise contributes to the discourse on why some political parties are able to survive for centuries, while others fail to stand the test of time. In other words, while the birth of some parties generates interest and hope among citizens some disappear into political oblivion.

Agang SA clearly falls into the latter category and the collapse of the house of Mamphela Ramphele is imminent. But what does this mean for the formation of new political parties in South Africa? Is the space for their existence necessarily foreclosed by the ANC's domination of the political scene? Is the political market saturated and, if not, why do new political formations mostly appear unable to exploit it? These questions are examined in the course of an attempt to answer the main question – why did Agang SA perform so badly?

UNDERSTANDING AGANG SA

Agang SA was established on 18 February 2013, although its first official congress only took place on 22 June of that year. The standing of its founder, Mamphela Ramphele, is incontestable. She is a well-known anti-apartheid activist, a medical doctor, an academic, a businesswoman and a former managing director of the World Bank. Agang SA, for which she raised R30-million, began as a civil society movement and was subsequently transformed into a political party that could be described as a charismatic party with elements of a programmatic party. Charismatic parties are defined here as those whose political essence embodies the personality of their founder or founders. Their founders and leaders are usually drawn from the academy, religious formations, business, labour, royalty

or simply middle-class elites, and their survival depends on their leaders, who usually use their personal wealth to capitalise them. Charismatic leaders regard the political parties they have founded as their property (Kitschelt 1995, p 449).

Programmatic parties, on the other hand, are established on the basis of the programmes crafted to define their existential essence and used to establish a relationship between themselves and the voters. Programmatic parties are action-oriented and differ from clientelistic parties, which are 'characterized by an unequal balance of power' in which the 'patrons and clients are tied to durable relationships by a powerful sense of obligation and duty' (Hopkin 2006, p 2). Kitschelt (1995, p 449) observes that clientelistic parties violate fundamental democratic principles, giving preference to their constituencies in the allocation of state resources – a tendency in the ANC to which Agang SA was vehemently opposed.

Charisma and programmatic orientation may complement each other, enabling new parties to sustain themselves and eventually prosper. However, clientelistic parties cannot survive in a democratic setting. In Ramphele, Agang SA had a charismatic leader. Its programmatic orientation is expressed in the philosophy of progressivism. This appeared to be a winning formula.

In its campaign Agang SA detailed how it intended to unlock the development potential of South Africa, naming its programme SMART 5Es and maintaining that 'Empowerment, Education, Entrepreneurship, Effective Government and Employment' are critical to the development of the country. Its configuration as a political formation transcends the binary logic of being defined as either a charismatic or a programmatic party – it is a combination of the two.

The passion associated with the articulation of its programmatic offering exemplified a commitment to live up to the name Agang, a Sotho phrase meaning 'let us build', a phrase that punctuated Ramphele's pronouncements throughout the election campaign. Agang SA was formed to build South Africa. Beyond its literal meaning, Agang is about the collective effort to make a success of something, which, in the case of this new political formation, is South Africa.

Some caution against deriving a political party's significance from its name, arguing that in many cases parties act contrary to the meanings of their names. But naming a party correctly is very important for identity and political capital-building. Agang SA views itself as a party that seeks to build a 'stronger democracy in which citizens will be at the centre of public life' (Agang SA 2013).

An important variable in trying to understand a political formation is its ideological disposition. So, the question is: What is the ideology of Agang SA? The question is not easily answered, its ideology has never really been clear. However, some analysts, comparing it with the extreme left-leaning Economic Freedom Fighters Party (EFF), characterise it as being centre-right. But what does

this mean? In some instances Ramphela made pronouncements that presuppose leftist politics. For instance, in addressing university students in the Western Cape, she stated that the party supported free tertiary education – a statement at odds with the nature of a centre-right party.

On its website and in its founding documents Agang SA identified anti-corruption and progressivism as its ideological orientation. But are these really aspects of ideology? An ideology is a system of ideas that undergird a particular economic or political theory, from which the form, character, identity and relevance of a political formation to social reality is derived. To assume an anti-corruption stand in campaigning is necessary, as it demonstrates dissatisfaction with the status quo. However, an anti-corruption stand is not an ideological expression and cannot, therefore, be used as the basis of a political party.

Agang SA conflated anti-corruption with ideology, but an anti-corruption stance does not give a political party an ideological identity. In fact, almost all the major political parties that stood in the 2014 general elections proclaimed themselves to be against corruption. So, the question still persists: What is Agang SA? Perhaps the answer lies in progressivism.

In his book, *History of the Idea of Progress*, Robert Nisbet (1980) describes progressivism as a philosophy whose proposition is that science, technology, economic development and social organisation are important aspects of human development. Is there any significance in defining progressivism as a philosophy? Does this presuppose that philosophy differs from ideology? If indeed it does, did Agang SA establish itself on the basis of a philosophy rather than an ideology? Is this how political parties are created?

Any attempt to answer these questions must start with definitions. Heywood (1997, p 41) defines ideology 'from a social-scientific viewpoint' as a 'more or less coherent set of ideas that provide a basis for organized political action, whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power relationships'. He explains the function of ideology as being to 'offer an account of the existing order, usually in the form of a world view; provide a model of a desired future, a vision of the good society; and outline how political change can and should be brought about' (Heywood 1997, p 41).

In *Consciencism* Kwame Nkrumah (1970) defines philosophy as the 'instrument of ideology'. This means ideology and philosophy are not the same thing. However, a crude distinction between ideology and philosophy to the point of binary opposites trivialises their significance in the continuum of knowledge (Maserumule 2011, p 209). Nkrumah (1970, p 66) explains that ideology is the function of philosophy, while philosophy is the theoretical basis of a particular social order. This explanation is consistent with Heywood's view that 'at a fundamental level, ideologies resemble political philosophies' (1970, p 41).

Nisbet (1980, p 4) writes that 'no single idea has been more important than the idea of progress in Western civilization for three thousand years'. In invoking progressivism as its ideological disposition is Agang SA not conflating philosophy with ideology? Can a political party assert its political identity on the basis of a philosophy rather than an ideology? On the basis of the theory of political party formation the answer would have to be 'no'. Ideology is important for party political identity and political capital-building. It is used to map the 'problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience' (Geertz 1964/1973, pp 218-219).

It would not be surprising if Agang SA, under the charismatic leadership of Ramphela, was more philosophical than ideological in its political outlook and this would explain its programmatic orientation? Ramphela is an esteemed academic and the orientation of an academic is to seek the truth. This is the function of philosophy. In addition, some of the party's policy pronouncements indicated that Ramphela's position as an executive at the World Bank may have influenced the ideological essence of the policy position of Agang SA (Bodirsky 2014e). For example, its positions on labour and on the role of government in the economy reflected a centre-right orientation (Mngxitama 2013), defined as 'less state intervention in the markets and more private role in the functioning of the market mechanism' (Alkin 2010).

As Cristobal Kaltwasser (2013) explains, 'centre-right parties are programmatic' in their orientation. The notion of centre-right appears to be a euphemism for liberalism. But it could also refer to the ideological disposition of a party that gravitates towards the right of leftist politics.

Does the above exposition assist in answering the questions 'What is Agang SA?' and 'How can it be understood as a political formation?' This article defines the party simply as a charismatic centre-right party with strong programmatic orientation and liberal pretensions.

William Gumede (2014) makes a very important observation which authenticates the definition of Agang SA in these terms. The centre-right ideological orientation, he writes, is characteristic of 'most of the existing opposition parties and new parties formed after 1994' in South Africa, including Agang SA, which 'are to the right of the ANC and its mass black support' (*Mail & Guardian*, 10 January 2014). The article now proceeds to analyse Agang SA's performance in the 2014 general elections.

PERFORMANCE

The party initially aimed to win 5% to 6% of votes cast, but this aim became more optimistic as the election date drew closer. In an interview, Ramphela said she

expected her party to win between 10% and 15% of the vote or more. She based her expectation on the passing of ANC icon Nelson Mandela in December 2013 – four months before the elections (*News24live*, 13 January 2014).

Ramphela also spoke of what she termed ‘shifting political space’, which, she believed created an opportunity for the opposition. She referred specifically to the rifts within the Tripartite Alliance (the ANC, the Congress of SA Trade Unions – Cosatu, and the South African Communist Party). One of Cosatu’s strongest affiliates, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa had declared publicly that it would no longer support the ANC.

Agang SA, she said, would target about 13-million voters who were disgruntled with the ANC but did not consider any of the other opposition parties an option. The ‘uncertainty of conditions’ – a situation where the efficiency of minority parties creates uncertainty about electoral outcomes – does not exist in South Africa. It refers to instances where ‘a minority would be able to win over a section of the majority party to moderate its behaviour in office and protect the interest of all’ (Giliomee, Myburgh & Schlemmer 2001, p 162).

The DA, which became the official opposition party in 1999, and whose percentage of voter support is increasing, still does not have sufficient numbers to create the ‘uncertainty of conditions’ – a mission that Agang SA appropriated to itself and failed dismally in its pursuit. In the eyes of millions of South Africans the DA is a white party with which the majority of black South Africans would find it difficult to associate. In South Africa race still influences voter behaviour. Agang SA interpreted this as a political opportunity. However, it failed dismally to seize it (*News24live*, 13 January 2014).

Ramphela’s expectation of how her party would fare in the general elections was not ambitious, especially in the context of the relatively impressive performance of some of the post-apartheid political formations that had contested elections for the first time, notably the United Democratic Movement (UDM), the Independent Democrats (ID) and the Congress of the People (Cope). In 1999 the UDM won 3.43% of the votes cast; in 2004 the ID won 1.73% and in 2009 Cope won 7.42%. This indicates that, despite the hegemony of the ANC, there is an opportunity for new political formations in post-apartheid South Africa. However, the challenge has always been sustaining their existence. This challenge is dealt with extensively below. At this point it suffices to point out that, compared to the post-apartheid opposition parties referred to above, which all started relatively well, Agang SA, in entering electoral politics for the first time in 2014, performed dismally, winning a mere 0.28% of the total votes cast (52 350 of 18 402 497) – a far cry from its pre-election target of 5-6% – and being allocated only two seats in the National Assembly.

By contrast, the EFF, which was established in the same year, won 6.35% of the vote, giving it 25 seats. Even a little-known political party called the African Independent Congress (AIC), without a national profile or a leader of Ramphela's stature, performed better than Agang SA, winning 0.53% of the vote and receiving three seats in the National Assembly. Agang SA came 11th of the 29 parties that contested the elections, avoiding complete obliteration from the national political radar by a very small margin. Its performance in the provinces was equally dismal (see Table 1).

Table 1
Agang SA's performance in the provinces

Province	Party votes	Valid votes	% Party Votes
Eastern Cape	2 372	2 180 464	0.11
Free State	2 065	1 014 663	0.20
Gauteng	18 258	4 382 163	0.42
KwaZulu-Natal	0	3 836 009	0.00
Limpopo	5 197	1 462 186	0.36
Mpumalanga	1 705	1 336 259	0.13
North West	4 736	1 088 450	0.44
Northern Cape	0	422 431	0.00
Western Cape	6 398	2 121 153	0.30
Total	40 731	17 843 778	0.23

Source: Electoral Commission of South Africa 2014

The party did not win even 1% of voter support in any of the provinces, received no votes at all in KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape and failed to reach the required threshold for representation in any provincial legislature. This failure is surprising in the light of a poll conducted by IPSOS South Africa in 2013, which gave it 2% support in the provinces (IPSOS South Africa 2013).

Financial services group Nomura had predicted that it would receive about 6% of the vote (Montalto 2013) and, as stated above, Ramphela had forecast 10-15% percent. Rejecting the results of less optimistic surveys held closer to the elections, by which point the hype attending the party's formation had already begun to fade, Agang SA maintained that it would become the third-largest party in South Africa, displacing Cope, which had clearly lost the confidence of most of the 1 256 133 people who had voted for it 2009.

What led to Agang SA's dramatic collapse? It had a leader with outstanding credentials, its manifesto was geared more towards implementation than

ideological rhetoric and it focused on the types of actions that make nations prosper. Its programme was tangible, visible and realistic, fulfilling Kitschelt's criteria for success (Kitschelt 1995, p 449). Only weeks before the elections two independents analysts, Ian Cruickshanks and Michelle Pingo de Abreu, assessed the economic viability of Agang SA's manifesto and the turnaround plan it had proposed for the country and described it as realistic and realisable within the existing budget allocations.

The party had analysed the political market to determine the space for its existence and had targeted the 41% of eligible voters who had not voted in 2009 elections, or who were disgruntled with the ANC but did not consider the DA or any other party as an option (Ramphele, *News24live*, 13 January 2014).

The death of Nelson Mandela, challenges within the Tripartite Alliance and the extent to which Cope had betrayed the people who had voted for it in 2009 presented an opportunity for Agang SA to do well and its political message was carefully crafted to avoid the blunders of opposition parties in many African countries who failed to acknowledge even the visible achievements of the ruling party.

Agang SA seems to have realised that blind criticism of the party in power does little to generate voter trust and offered a positive assessment of the ANC. In one campaign speech Ramphele (2014) conceded that

[w]e have a government that promised a better life for all. And it has succeeded. Of that there can be no doubt. Since 1994, there are tarred roads where there were none before. There are more schools. There is electricity in homes. We have rights that we did not have before. And yes, we can vote.

It takes extraordinary political courage for a party to publicly pronounce on the achievements of the party in power and this should have counted in Agang SA's favour. To advise it on its strategy the party had engaged the services of Benenson Strategy Group, the group believed to have helped US president Barack Obama to win the 2008 presidential election (Sapa, 23 June 2013).

The party also used modern campaigning strategies, employing social media to lure mostly young voters. It had a Facebook page and a Twitter account on which its message was shared at the click of a button and developed a website where information about the party was readily accessible. The Agang SA News website contained news that promoted the party and informed people of its campaign programme.

Two months before the elections an online presence effectiveness survey that analysed the websites and social media presence of political parties indicated that

Agang SA had a 52% on-line presence, below the DA's 58% but well above the ANC's 46%, Cope's 35% and the IFP's 21% (*News24*, 4 February 2014).

UNPACKING AGANG SA'S ELECTION PERFORMANCE

The flaws in Agang SA's political message and campaign strategy are the subtext of the bigger challenge that inhibited its electoral potential – the fact that it was formed around the character and personal successes of Dr Mamphela Ramphele. In the words of Philip Machanick, the party's former spokesman,

Mamphela Ramphele put an enormous amount into founding this movement. She travelled the length and breadth of South Africa to establish support for a new party, and raised 30 million in cash donations based purely on her own good name.

City Press, 11 July 2014

Her own good name! What did this mean? Was it a 'gift of grace', 'authority of revelation', or an 'Alfa-individual' exemplifying heroism, 'exceptional sanctity' and exemplary leadership (Tucker 1968, p 731)?

Leaders of charismatic parties are revered and any attempt to challenge them is necessarily an attack on the party. Their downfall is the downfall of their parties, which are built on their personalities. Charismatic parties are vulnerable. They are a threat to their own existence because their future depends on the impulses of their leaders and the faults of the leaders are a liability to their parties.

The party's failure can largely be attributed to Ramphele's political indiscretions. Her public flaws compromised its electoral potential. During her 'listening campaigns' Ramphele created huge expectations about her ability to tackle the ills of society. In this pursuit, as Mncube (2013) observes, she 'seems to believe that she has exemplary leadership qualities that can save South Africa from its immediate demise'. However, eventually her balanced critique of the ANC deteriorated and she began to resort to less temperate language, as exemplified in the following:

A better life has also produced load shedding, tenderpreneur politicians who have abused our trust, who continue to lie, cheat and hide. Money being stolen from citizens so that broken schools and hospitals cannot be fixed. Our rand is collapsing, making the life of citizens harder every day. This is not the country our heroes struggled for. Mandela, Biko, Kathrada, September and thousands of others would be disappointed.

Ramphele 2014

Agang SA began to expose faults in the way the ANC-led government managed public affairs, arguing that the ANC had not fulfilled the aspirations of the liberation struggle and should therefore be replaced. This message was expressed in the party's slogan, 'restoring the promise of freedom'. Despite its attempt to avoid unsystematic criticism of the ANC, Agang SA began to attack the governing party, thus aligning itself with most of the other opposition parties, whose campaign strategy consisted largely of attacks on the ANC rather than on a more positive focus on what they offered as an alternative.

Like the EFF and the DA, Agang SA portrayed the ANC government as corrupt and as abusing power and public resources. It, too, cited scandals such as the incident in which the Gupta family, with its close ties to Jacob Zuma, was allowed to land a private plane carrying wedding guests at the Waterkloof Airforce Base and the R248-million of public funds spent on so-called security upgrades to Zuma's private residence in Nkandla, KwaZulu-Natal.

Like the other parties, Agang SA also condemned the government's handling of the prolonged strike in the platinum belt and the massacre of 34 striking miners by members of the South African Police Service as well as the increase in the number of service delivery protests that had taken place on Zuma's watch (Mbulawa 2013). Unemployment figures, which fluctuated around 24%, and continued inequalities also did not help matters (Bodirsky 2014).

Such a state of affairs required strong leadership, Ramphela contended, presenting herself as the solution. Agang SA positioned itself as a party willing to tackle corruption and able to attend efficiently to all the governance issues. Among the party's campaign posters was one that read, 'Send the strongest anti-corruption team in politics to parliament, Vote Agang'. In one of her campaign messages Ramphela stated that 'our candidates believe in a clean, competent government, with zero tolerance towards corruption' (IOL 2014).

Among the candidates on the party's list were Paul O'Sullivan, a forensic investigator by profession, and Mike Tshisonga, former deputy director-general of the Department of Justice, both of whom well known for their fight against corruption. Their inclusion in the party list was intended to demonstrate the seriousness of the party's anti-corruption message. Despite the appropriateness of the messages, however, few voters were attracted to the party, which appeared to be merely reiterating information that had been in the public space for some time. It is not enough to establish a party on the basis of a concern about corruption, history has shown that parties that have managed to sustain themselves have been those with a clear ideological position that resonates with a broad section of society.

To assert its legitimacy Agang SA invoked the martyrs of the liberation struggle and freedom to justify its political course. The names of anti-apartheid

icons such as Nelson Mandela and Steve Biko featured consistently in Ramphela's public pronouncements. In using them Agang SA was contesting the ownership of the struggle against apartheid. This was not a strategic move. Agang SA does not have a history of liberation struggle. However, its leader has. She was active in the Black Consciousness Movement, working closely with its leader, Steve Biko.

Ramphela's invocation of anti-apartheid icons could be seen as an act of desperation, but it was not a clever move. A new political formation should create its own history in order to acquire political capital and build its identity. In the minds and souls of South Africans Mandela and other leaders of the ANC Ramphela invoked are part of the political capital of the ANC. To invoke their names for anti-ANC purposes exposed her to accusations of opportunism. Agang SA was dismissed as a party without history, claiming the history of other organisations for its political ends. Ramphela was dismissed as having moved away from the Black Consciousness Steve Biko had stood for – Biko had detested liberalism and Agang SA styled itself as a charismatic centre-right party with strong programmatic orientation and liberal pretensions.

Ramphela's major mistake, though, was the confusion created when she agreed to be named as the presidential candidate for the DA. Her dalliance with the DA, an avowedly liberal party, and her agreement to be its presidential candidate was a strategic blunder that dealt Agang SA a fatal blow and vitiated its electoral potential. Ramphela appeared not to have discussed with her colleagues her plans to associate Agang SA with the DA, let alone her decision to become its presidential face. Like the rest of the country they learned about it through the media and neither they nor the party's members and potential supporters forgave Ramphela – effectively, she destroyed the party she had created.

ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe's description of Agang SA as stillborn was no exaggeration. The euphoria about its existence faded before it could cash in on it and it squandered its opportunity to benefit from being a new party without baggage, participating in the elections for the first time.

Ramphela's evident belief that there was no need to consult her colleagues about her decision is typical of the leaders of charismatic parties. As Kitschelt (1995) and Hosu (2012) explain, charismatic leaders find it hard to operate within a democratic setting, hence they tend to be dictatorial in their approach. While some get away with it, Ramphela did not. She was forced to withdraw from the agreement with the DA after pressure from within her party.

In the aftermath of the debacle she contended that she had merely entered into a 'partnership' with the DA and the move had not required consultation. She even insinuated that Mandela would have done the same – a very unlikely scenario. Mandela believed in collective leadership within an organisation that maintains its internal cohesion through democratic centralism. In her political

affair with the DA Ramphele laid bare her inadequacies with regard to political leadership, acumen and sense of judgement.

As Gareth van Onselen (3 February 2014) put it:

In the real world, for all her virtues, the public was exposed to many of Ramphele's flaws. When it comes to politics, it turns out, the empress has no clothes. Yet all Zille seems to be able to see is royalty dressed in the finest robes money can buy; the robes she wore in days gone by.

Ramphele alienated those potential voters who were disappointed in Cope but were not looking to the ANC or any other existing political party as an option. Her behaviour confused the political market. For the question was, if Ramphele stood as the DA's presidential candidate what would happen to her party. She appears not to have understood that she could not be the DA's presidential candidate unless she joined the party, effectively conflating the two parties and depriving potential voters of an alternative to the DA.

Her flirtation with the DA created a political conflict of interests which damaged Agang SA. Following a rebellion within her own party Ramphele withdrew from the deal, but the damage had been done and Agang SA was trounced at the polls.

In courting Agang SA DA leader Helen Zille had seen an opportunity to woo black voters to her party, which is largely perceived as a white party. When the deal fell apart she attacked Ramphele as a person who cannot be trusted. The public spat between the two leaders did not enhance the image of either party, exposing the fact that both were desperate for power, not unlike their common foe, the ANC.

In another incident Ramphele again exposed herself to criticism with an 'unstrategic' public attack on the ANC's economic empowerment policies, from which she conceded she had benefited, to the tune of some R55-million. Her disclosure of her wealth prompted some to question the veracity of her party's promise to remedy the plight of the poor. She retorted by again invoking Mandela's name: 'I am one of the leaders of this country, as with President Mandela, who was not poor.' Her constant references to Mandela to extricate herself from sticky situations was another act of desperation.

Also on the subject of personal wealth, Ramphele called on President Zuma to declare publicly what he was worth. Government responded with a statement that, as head of state Zuma declared his financial interests following the prescribed protocols of government. This frustrated her attempt to deflect public attention from her disastrous detour as the leader of Agang SA.

Ramphele's indiscretions in the public space became an electoral liability for Agang SA, with her blunders perceived as those of the party. Because of its charismatic nature Agang SA also failed to build up its organisational capacity – it did not have well-organised structures advancing its political work and failed to provide voters with a party with which they could identify. Ramphele could not be everywhere, which explains why the party failed to win votes in KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape (see Table 1).

As argued above, the theme of Agang SA's political message, what came to be known as the SMART 5Es, was sensible and the party's packaging had a programmatic orientation. However, Ramphele's public flaws and the liability of the party's recent entry onto the political stage compromised the effectiveness of the message (Freeman, Carrol & Hannan 1983) because, unlike more established parties, Agang SA had no record to fall back on and had not yet built up a legacy of trust.

As Kitschelt (1995) explains, lack of experience in governing makes new parties less attractive to voters. This is because, as Boulding (2004, p 136) puts it, like people, organisations exist 'not only in time and space but in history'. A history of political organisation is an important part of the political capital required to contest elections.

This does not necessarily mean that the space for new political formations is foreclosed? In the light of the glaring blunders most dominant parties commit, which alienate their followers, the political market is not saturated. However, opportunities have to be created, which requires political ingenuity and sophistication, not merely a desire to defeat a dominant ruling party in a contest for state power.

Most new political formations enter electoral politics before the market is ripe for new entrants, in other words, before they can ensure that their mapping of the 'problematic social reality and matrices of collective conscience' is embedded in the minds and souls of the voters (Geertz 1964/1971, pp 218-219). This is a very important 'function of systematic factual assertions about society' and 'aesthetic and moral statements about human situation' (Birnbaum 1960, p 91).

Agang SA was too quick to launch itself as a political party to contest elections that were scheduled to take place a year after its birth. Parties that are conveniently established in the face of a looming election raise questions about the genuineness of their political projects and are frequently charged with seeking the affluence of public office rather than making their goal the creation of a good society. The capacity of South Africa's opposition parties to challenge the ANC's dominance is depleted by their multiplicity and by the fact that they tend to put out similar political messages. The political space is therefore not necessarily foreclosed by

the hegemony of the ANC but by the multiplicity of opposition parties singing the same political hymn and failing to co-operate with each other.

In order to create a political market new parties should establish themselves in a way that seeks to align opposition politics strategically and should contrive collectively to present a better vision for society than that created by the dominant party (Downs 1957, pp 96, 147).

Despite Ramphela's pronouncements on the realignment of opposition politics the parties' efforts remain scattered. Agang SA contributed to this problem. Following its failed marriage with the DA, it went to the polls alone and was reduced to yet another small party on the periphery of South African politics. So, what does the future hold for it? Before answering this question it is important to refer to its ideological disposition.

Agang SA is defined in this article as a charismatic centre-right party with a strong programmatic orientation and liberal pretensions. It envisaged a growing economy driven by renewed investor confidence, accelerated investment and higher quality skills and education levels. This is consistent with its philosophy of progressivism. It maintained that government's role is to create an enabling environment for the private sector to create jobs and generate wealth (Agang SA 2014, p 13). To do this it envisages a minimalist state that is in sync with a capitalist state. Is this not at odds with some of the leftist policy positions of its leader, which, among others, included free tertiary education? How can free tertiary education be achieved in a capitalist state?

Proponents of a capitalist state argue that a government that governs the least is the best government. It contends that the role of government should be limited to creating a conducive environment for non-state actors such as business and civil society to perform their roles. This is a neoliberal logic reminiscent of the structural adjustments programme of the Bretton Woods Institutions, of one of which, the World Bank, Ramphela had been a managing director. The global financial meltdown exposed the limitations of a minimalist state, proving Francis Fukuyama's thesis that neo-liberalism marks 'the end point of man's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government' (1992, p 4).

In invoking neo-liberal templates in her political messaging Ramphela demonstrated adherence to an idea whose time has long gone. In the words of Cristobal Kaltwasser (2013), 'it is an anachronism to strictly defend the neoliberal model ... to continue to oppose citizen demands for equity-enhancing reforms and a better functioning democracy'. In an article titled 'If ANC's Rivals Are All Right, What's Left?', William Gumede appears to share Kaltwasser's view. As he writes, 'the majority of black voters, in terms of economic beliefs, appear to be on the mainstream left, even if they may be socially or politically conservative', yet the

‘existing opposition parties and new parties formed after 1994 [in South Africa] are to the right of the ANC and its mass support’ (*Mail & Guardian*, 10 January 2014).

What he is suggesting is that the economic orientation of the centre-right parties is irrelevant to the majority of black votes and Agang SA is one of those parties. Does this suggest that leftist parties such as the EFF have a more promising future than centre-right parties? Perhaps this explains the EFF’s good showing in the 2014 general elections. But is the notion of centre-right necessarily the antithesis of the leftist leanings in relation to certain aspects of the economy? As explained above, centre-right may also mean an ideological disposition towards the right of leftist politics and not a contradiction of leftist politics.

Since the global trend in terms of the future of the ideology gravitates more towards the centre-left, not the extreme leftist posture of the EFF or the centre-right of Agang SA and the DA, post-apartheid opposition parties in South Africa are inappropriately positioned ideologically. The centre-right has a reputation for achieving economic growth, but it is also notorious for its inability to achieve equity in the distribution of public resources.

In the light of the placing of Agang SA as a centre-right party, who might have voted for it had Ramphela not more-or-less single-handedly destroyed its prospects?

POTENTIAL VOTERS

As detailed above, the polls, political commentators and Ramphela herself initially forecast a range of possible results, ranging from 2% to Ramphela’s optimistic 10%-15%. Where were these voters expected to come from?

The party itself forecast that its supporters would come from the 41% of voters who had declined to vote in the 2009 general elections. The reasoning was that these voters were disgruntled with the ANC but would not consider voting for any of the existing opposition parties. Analyst Somadoda Fikeni agreed with Ramphela. Many studies had suggested that support for the ANC among the middle class (the relatively affluent population group concentrated largely in the urban areas) was declining. As Ndletyana explains (Zibi 21 June 2013), middle-class voters easily switched ‘allegiances as they are likely to question the state’s performance’, despite the fact that some depended on the state of their income.

In addition, Agang SA appeared to have had its eye on disgruntled former supporters of Cope, which was in the process of disintegrating. As Songezo Zibi (21 June 2013) explained, Cope ‘has lost the confidence of its core voters – those disillusioned with the ANC under Jacob Zuma’s presidency and who are looking for an alternative’. This created a political market, which, had Ramphela acted adroitly, she might have captured. Just the day before the launch of Agang SA

Zibi (21 June 2013) opined that Cope 'voters are likely to form the core of Agang SA's targeted audience'.

The disgruntled ANC and Cope voters formed part of a much more diversified demographic base that Ramphela envisaged for Agang SA. Her speech at the time of the party's launch was crafted to appeal to a very broad audience. She intended to attract a variety of groups, among them 'the poor, dispossessed, slacktivists on Twitter [and Facebook] who can't bring themselves to vote for the DA' (Britten, 18 February 2013), women in the rural communities of Limpopo and Eastern Cape and the middle class in Gauteng (Marrian, 7 August 2013). Agang SA 'would build a bridge between generations and reach out to all South Africans, young and old' (Marrian, 22 June 2013).

Her strategy appeared to be to broaden the party's electoral prospects, not to confine its appeal to a particular segment of society. Her statement that 'after almost 20 years the country's leaders had failed to deliver on the promise of freedom for which so many fought and died' was intended to galvanise those disgruntled voters, hence the clichés that punctuated her persuasive rhetoric: 'twenty years is too long; no more time; enough is enough; it is time to bring down the curtains on this government!'

Paul Whelan, in an opinion piece for *Business Day* (25 June 2013), titled 'Agang SA Promises Something Entirely Believable' wrote:

Ramphela wasn't rushing in where even fools fear to tread. She knows her prime target in these times is not the loyal, but the gathering of disloyal. Few are voters at the moment; they probably abstain. Fewer still are disloyal because of specific policies, which is why it is pointless to offer specific alternatives that are hostages to fortune. Agang SA's strategy is to appeal to the growing number of floating voters – put in more familiar terms, to the gatvol, irrespective of colour, creed, gender, age or party affiliation.

In the black townships and rural areas Ramphela tried to appeal to the poor and to those who had issues with the quality of the public service. She talked to those still forced to use the bucket toilet system and those living in squalid conditions on farms about ending 'the humiliation and disrespect of our apartheid past'. In directing the party's message to this group, Agang SA hoped to capture the black vote. However, her disapproval of the use of violence, which characterised most service delivery protests, weakened her potential grip on this segment of society, creating an opportunity for the EFF, which, with its extreme leftist politics appears to encourage just such violence. In the event, it was the EFF that stole

Agang SA's electoral thunder, especially among the poor and the dispossessed in the townships and rural areas.

Ramphele's affluence and her dalliance with the DA engendered doubt in the minds of the poor about the genuineness of her intention to address their plight and the party's centre-right position exacerbated scepticism among those in the lower social strata, while endearing her to those inclined to mainstream right ideologies. She spoke about mechanising mining and agriculture to optimise efficiency, control input costs and achieve a highly skilled workforce' (Zibi, 21 June 2013), thus raising fears of the possibility of job losses.

In these circumstances it was unlikely that Agang SA would attract the vote of the poor and the marginalised. According to Gumede (10 January 2014), 'the majority of black voters, in terms of economic beliefs, appear to be on the mainstream left'.

Another factor is that many of those in the lower economic strata receive state social grants. Since the ANC came into power in 1994 the numbers of people receiving such grants have reached close to 15 million, a substantial proportion of those who had registered prior to the 2014 elections.

Mcebisi Ndletyana (Zibi, 21 June 2013) underscored this point in his contention that, 'despite the credibility of its leader, Agang SA may find the going very tough [as] many people cannot easily forget that their survival is sustained by state benefits which they receive under the ANC government'.

Agang SA appears to have been aware of this reality and this segment of society appears not to have been its strategic gaze. Instead, as one of its officials indicated, its primary focus was on the youth, especially those who would vote for the first time in 2014, and it used modern technology to lure these voters. Underscoring the strategic significance of the youth, in an interview with the *Financial Mail* Ramphele said her decision to enter electoral politics was largely inspired by the insistence of the young people of South Africa, quantified as constituting millions of voters, who could 'be casting a ballot for the first time likely less burdened by loyalties to the ANC' (Zibi, 21 June 2013).

At the launch of Agang SA Ramphele urged the youth of South Africa to 'vote for the future and not the past'.

AFTER THE ELECTION

Ramphele left Agang SA soon after the election as a result of deepening internal divisions, taking with her a substantial number of followers and leaving the party without its *raison d'être*, its founder's reputation.

She was succeeded by Mike Tshisonga, a former deputy secretary of the ANC and chairperson of the South African Civic Association in Meadowlands

(Kuenda 2010, p 45), who has a fairly low political profile, though he is known to have exposed corruption in the liquidation industry and the Department of Justice, where he moved through the ranks from clerk of the court to deputy director-general.

However, Tshisonga was suspended from the party for not carrying out its mandate in Parliament and for bringing it into disrepute. He retorted by threatening legal action and it seems that the squabbles within the leadership of Agang SA are destined to play themselves out in the courts. As the Cope experience indicates, settling internal political issues in the courts is unwise, especially for a party whose survival, following the departure of its anchor, is hanging by a thread.

Following Tshisonga's suspension, Agang SA deputy president, Andries Tlouamma, took over as acting president. Tlouamma, a former chairperson of Cope in Gauteng, appears to be making a practice of leading failed political projects.

CONCLUSION AND PROGNOSIS

This article has examined the reasons for Agang SA's dismal performance in the 2014 general elections and ascribed them to the fact that the party was formed around the character and personal success of its founder, Dr Mamphela Ramphele, whose demeanor wittingly or unwittingly shaped the party's character and orientation, thus making it vulnerable.

Agang SA's failure to attract voters can be attributed to Ramphele's political indiscretions, which compromised its electoral potential and threaten its existence.

In Parliament the party is dwarfed by the performance of the EFF and its most proactive action to date has been the tabling of a motion of no confidence in President Zuma and the Speaker of the National Assembly, Baleka Mbete. Tlouamma filed papers in the Constitutional Court requesting that the motion of no confidence in Zuma be decided by secret ballot and that the Speaker be declared unfit to preside over the proceedings of Parliament because she has shown bias in handling the issue of the vote of no confidence.

The issue is very important to parliamentary politics but because of Tlouamma's lack of the public profile it does not get as much media or public attention as it might have.

The inevitable conclusion that can be drawn from the failure of Agang SA's election bid and the subsequent turmoil within the party is that the collapse of the house of Mamphela Ramphele is imminent. Agang SA may not make it back to Parliament after the 2019 general elections.

— REFERENCES —

- Agang South Africa. 2013. About Agang. Available at: web.archive.org/web/20130221091548/http://www.agangsa.co.za/about-agang
- Agang South Africa. 'A citizen's manifesto and plan for South Africa'. Available at: agangsa.org.za/
- Alkin, E. 2010. The meaning of centre-right. *Daily News*, 22 November.
- Bawn, K, M Cohen, D Karol, S Masket, H Noel & J Zaller. 2012. 'A theory of political parties: Groups, policy demands and nomination in American Politics'. Available at: journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPPS%2FPPS10_03%2FS1537592712001624a.pdf&code=e8abe375e129b6591e3a1a9fe14560df
- Birnbaum, N. 1960. 'The sociological study of ideology (1940-60): A trend report and bibliography'. *Current Sociology* 9(2).
- Bodirsky, D. 2014. *Election report: South Africa*. Available at: www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/election-report-south-africa-4933/
- Booyesen, S. 2009. 'South Africa'. In D Kadima & S Booyesen (eds). *Compendium of Elections in Southern Africa 1989-2009*. Johannesburg: IESA.
- Boulding, K. 2004. 'General system theory – the skeleton of science'. *E:C* 6(1).
- Britten, S. 2013. 'Will Agang take off?' *Mail & Guardian*, 18 February.
- Croissant, A & W Merkel. 2004. 'Political party formation in the presidential and parliamentary system'. Available at: library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/philippinen/50072. Accessed on 16 September 2014
- Downs, A. 1957. 'An economic theory of political action in a democracy'. *Journal of Political Economy* 65(2).
- Du Plessis, C & S Ndlangisa. 2013. 'Predictions for Agang'. *City Press*, 23 June.
- Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC). 2014. '2014 National and Provincial elections results'. Available at: www.elections.org.za/resultsNPE2014/
- Freeman, J, G R Carrol & M T Hannan. 1983. 'The liability of newness: Age of dependence in organizational death rates'. *American Sociological Review* 48.
- Fukuyama, F. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.
- Geertz, C. 1964/1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books
- Giliomee, H, J Myburgh & L Schlemmer. 2001. 'Dominant party rule, opposition parties and minorities in South Africa'. *Democratization* 8(1).
- Gumede, W. 2014. 'If the ANC's rivals are all right, what's left?' *Mail & Guardian*, 10 January.
- Heywood, A. 1997. *Politics*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Hopkin, J. 2006. 'Conceptualizing political clientelism: Political exchange and democratic theory'. Available at: personal.lse.ac.uk/hopkin/apsahopkin2006
- Hosu, I. 2012. 'Charismatic leadership and political communication'. *Revista Transilvană de Științe ale Comunicării* 1(15).

- Independent Online (IOL). 2014 a. 'Agang candidates "to fight corruption"'. Available at: www.iol.co.za/news/politics/agang-candidates-to-fight-corruption-1.1663968.
- IOL. 2014b. 'Faction against Ramphele: Agang SA'. Available at: www.iol.co.za/news/politics/faction-against-ramphele-Agang-SA-1.1704729
- IPSOS South Africa. 2013. *IPSOS Survey: Political party support six months ahead of the elections*. Available at: www.ipsos.co.za/SitePages/Support%20for%20political%20parties.aspx
- Ishiyama, J, A Batta & A Sortor. 2011. 'Political parties, independents and the electoral market in sub-Saharan Africa'. *Party Politics* 19(5).
- Kaltwasser, C R. 2013. 'Elections in Chile: A triumphing centre-left and centre-right at the crossroads'. *OpenDemocracy*, 27 December.
- Kitschelt, H. 1995. 'Formation of party cleavages in post-communist democracies: The theoretical propositions'. *Party Politics* 1(4).
- Kuenda, L. 2010. *Whistleblower: The Mike Tshisonga Story*. Lynnwood: Abunda Publishing Services.
- Langlois, J. 2013. 'Agang: South Africa launches a new political party to challenge ANC'. *GlobalPost*, 22 June. Available at: www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/Africa/south-africa/130622
- Letsholo, S. 2005. 'How the ANC won the 2004 elections: Perspectives on voting behaviour in South Africa'. *EISA occasional paper* number 31. Available at: www.content.eisa.org.za/pdf/OP31.pdf
- Lodge, T & U Scheidegger. 2006. 'Political parties and democratic governance in South Africa'. Johannesburg: *EISA Research Report* No. 25
- Lupu, N & R B Riedl. 2012. 'Political parties and uncertainty in developing democracies'. *Comparative Political Studies* 46(11).
- Machanick, P. 2014. 'Why I quit Agang'. Available at: opinion-nation.blogspot.com/2014/07/why-i-quit-agang.html
- Mail & Guardian*. 2014. 'Ramphele: DA-Agang merger a "joint mistake"'. Available at: mg.co.za/article/2014-02-03-ramphele-da-agang-merger-joint-mistake
- Marrian, N. 2013. ' "Vote for the future", says Ramphele at party launch'. *Business Day Live*. 22 June 2013
- Maserumule, M H. 2011. 'Good governance in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): A public administration perspective'. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of South Africa.
- Mbulawa, Z. 2013. 'Which party can take SA forward?' Available at: www.iol.co.za/the-star/which-party-can-take-sa-forward-1.157022#.Uh9zHKqtzqo
- Mcfaul, M. 2001. 'Explaining party formation and nonformation in Russia: Actors, Institutions, and Chance'. *Comparative Political Studies* 34(10).
- Mncube, B. 2013. 'The political survival of Agang SA and the Economic Freedom

- Fighters is perilous'. Available at: journalismiziko.dut.ac.za/feature-review/the-political-survival-of-Agang-SA-and-eff/
- Mngxitama, A. 2013. 'Why I didn't join Agang SA'. Available at: www.citypress.co.za/columnists/why-i-didnt-join-agang%E2%80%89sa/
- Montalto, P A. 2013. 'Nomuras View on SA: Road to 2014 Elections'. Available at: www.ujuh.co.za/nomuras-view-on-sa-road-to-2014-elections/
- Nisbet, R. 1980. *History of the Idea of Progress*. New York: Basic Books.
- Nkrumah, K. 1980. *Consciencism. Philosophy and ideology for de-colonisation*. London: Heinemann.
- Ramphela, M. 2014. Agang South Africa Manifesto launch speech. Available at: agangsa.org.za/pages/manifesto-launch-speech
- Republic of South Africa. 1996. The Constitution. Pretoria: Government Printers
- Republic of South Africa. 1996. Electoral Commission Act 51 of 1996.
- Roskin, M, R L Cord, J A Medeiros & W S Jones. 1997. *Political Science: An Introduction*. New York: Prentice Hall International.
- SAPA. 2013. 'Agang to use Obama strategy team for 2014 elections', 23 June.
- Schattschneider, E E. 1942. *Party Government*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart.
- Sukhedo, J. 2014. 'Agang expects 10-15% of vote'. Interview with Mamphela Ramphela, News24studios, 13 January.
- Southall, R. 2001. 'Opposition in South Africa: Issues and problems'. *Democratization* 8(1).
- Southall, R. 2014. 'Zuma: Party leadership as electoral liability'. *Review of African Political Economy* 41(140).
- Squire, P, J M Lindsay, C R Covington & E R Smith. *Dynamics of Democracy*. New York: Brown & Benchmark Publishers
- Tansey, S D. 1995. *Politics: The Basics*. New York: Routledge
- Tucker, R C. 1968. 'The theory of charismatic leadership'. *Daedalus* 97(3).
- Van Biezen, I. 2005. 'On the theory and practice of party formation and adaptation in new democracies'. *European Journal of Political Research* 44.
- Van Onselen, G. 2014. 'DAgagang: The DA's 2014 election meltdown'. *BusinessDay*, 3 February.
- Ward, S. 2013. '“What's there to hide?": Ramphela declares net worth and calls on Zuma to do same'. Available at: www.thesouthafrican.com/news/whats-there-to-hide-ramphela-declares-net-worth-and-calls-on-zuma-to-do-same.htm
- Whelan, P. 2013. 'Agang SA promises something entirely believable'. *Business Day Live*, 25 June.
- Zibi, S. 2013. 'Can Agang change the game?' *Financial Mail*, 21 June.