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UNDER STRAIN

The Racial/Ethnic Interpretation of South Africa's 2004 Election

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ABSTRACT

An analytical framework that emphasises race and ethnicity has come to dominate post-apartheid electoral studies. In this view, race and ethnicity are regarded as primary analytical variables in explaining voting behaviour and are taken to be crucial in influencing the strategy and tactics of political parties. In this framework, South African society is considered to be characterised by such serious and insoluble racial and ethnic divisions that the prospects for democratic consolidation are imperilled.

Most explanations of voting behaviour and party politics in the 1994 and 1999 elections were based on this interpretation. The argument advanced in this paper is that such focus is misguided and flawed. It shows, through a reading and interpretation of the 2004 election, that this approach is limited. For there is emerging empirical evidence – revealed by the 2004 election – that race and ethnicity do not play a central role in explaining voting behaviour and the performance of parties. Thus the arguments embodied within the racial/ethnic view threaten democratic consolidation.

INTRODUCTION

One of the analytical frameworks used to interpret South African elections in the post-apartheid era accords primacy to racial and ethnic categories.² This view

¹ For an overview of this interpretation see Schlemmer 1994a, pp 149-167; Schlemmer 1994b, pp 17-22; Welsh 1994, pp 107-116; Johnson, 1996, pp 301-322.

* The author is grateful for the support of Rhodes University.

concludes that race and ethnicity pervade the behaviour of voters and political party programmes leading to the undermining of effective democratic consolidation. Counter arguments have contested this interpretation with respect to the 1994 and 1999 elections (Seekings 1997, Taylor and Hoeane 1999, Hoeane 2002). This paper focuses the debate on the 2004 election to assess the relevance and efficacy of the racial and ethnic view in providing a viable understanding of electoral politics and the prospects for democratic consolidation in South Africa.

It adopts the position that sufficient evidence is revealed by the 2004 election to challenge seriously the validity of this interpretation. It does so firstly by discussing the background to this racial/ethnic framework, outlining how it was used to explain the 1994 and 1999 elections, before providing countervailing evidence revealed by election trends and developments in the 2004 election results to challenge the contention that these factors are indeed influential in explaining the country's transition to democracy. It concludes by identifying some of the negative consequences embodied in this racialised and ethnicised interpretation of South Africa's democratisation process.

THE RACIAL/ETHNIC FRAMEWORK

This section of the paper discusses the background to the racial and ethnic interpretation, tracing its roots to the apartheid concept of race and ethnicity. It then shows how these concepts have been reformulated, basically distancing them from crude apartheid understanding to accord them salience in explaining post-apartheid South African elections.

The Apartheid Vision

In order comprehensively to understand the apartheid vision of race and ethnicity it is important to provide a general definition of the concepts. Race is primarily associated with physical features, such as skin colour, that are taken to set races apart. As James Kellas states, 'Races are discussed predominantly in biological terms with particular emphasis on "phenotypical" distinctions such as skin colour, stature etc, and presumed genetic distinctions' (Kellas 1991, p 15). Ethnicity, on the other hand, is defined as binding people around some normative behaviour such as culture, language, and religion based on socio-cultural traits (Drury 1994, p 13).

Apartheid thinking on the origins of race and ethnicity draws on the primordial view of the nature of human societies (Butler 1998, pp 224-25). According to this view, people are born into racial and ethnic groups, and being part of such a group is not a matter of choice or option. These identities are fixed and not subject to change; one is born into a pre-existing racial and ethnic group structure that defines one's place in a society and determines political behaviour.

A Reformulated View of Race and Ethnicity

It has to be acknowledged that the way in which race and ethnicity are used in contemporary South African electoral studies disputes the primordial interpretation as conceived in the apartheid vision. For what must be recognised, so it is argued, is that race and ethnicity are social constructs and can be utilised in an instrumental manner (Van Zyl Slabbert and Welsh 1979). That is, it is not outside the power of human beings to create and use race and ethnicity to achieve certain objectives and political projects – like apartheid. Therefore, apartheid was not a natural condition, as its architects and supporters claimed, it was a creation based on the construction and conceptualisation of race and ethnicity in a specific ideological manner. As Donald Horowitz, a leading scholar of ethnic politics, maintains: ‘Research has abundantly made it clear that ethnic groups are by no means given, that ethnic identities have an element of malleability, that groups form and reform their boundaries’ (1991, p 47).

Referring to the situation under apartheid, Arend Lijphart (1985, p 49) has criticised the way in which the apartheid state manipulated race and ethnicity, arguing that: ‘The use of racial and ethnic categories has two serious drawbacks: they are arbitrary, and they have been unilaterally imposed by the white regime instead of being voluntarily agreed upon’. Thus, in Lijphart’s view, individuals should be allowed to choose their racial and ethnic group attachment. Racial and ethnic boundaries should not be imposed from above by the state, as under apartheid, but freely decided upon by individuals.

Apartheid’s primordialist view clashes with the contemporary dominant racial/ ethnic interpretation then because the latter sees these concepts as fluid, malleable, and contextual. Lijphart, formerly a primordialist, has conceded that his earlier belief in ethnic differences as an ‘unalterable’ fact was a mistake and that, ‘More recently... I have been increasingly impressed with the empirical evidence of the variability and fluidity of ethnic loyalties in many instances’ (1993, p 94). Crucially, however, the racial/ethnic view does not deny the objective existence of race and ethnicity. It is acknowledged that race and ethnicity are independent variables that exert a significant sociological effect in their own right.

On closer scrutiny it is evident that the mainstream racial/ethnic viewpoint adheres to a dialectical understanding of the relationship between the primordial and the instrumental/constructivist reading of race and ethnicity. Lijphart maintains that those politicians who choose to ignore ethnicity in their policies are likely to be upstaged by their opponents, as ethnicity has ‘presence, in that others may choose to motivate and mobilise voters on an ethnic basis and defeat their opponents’ (Lijphart 1993, p 94). In this manner, the racial/ethnic view continues to grant race and ethnicity an objective reality. The important point is that race and ethnicity – although reformulated – have been retained as significant and important means of analysis.

RACIAL/ETHNIC PARTIES AND VOTERS

Those who hold this view contend that South African voters and political parties can best be understood by reference to their preoccupation with racial and ethnic views. Thus it is argued that when voters go to the polls their primary consideration is registering their vote along these lines, to the exclusion or non-emphasis of other factors. Voters are essentially registering their feelings of racial/ethnic identity and solidarity, as opposed to other variables, such as class, regionalism, age, gender, religion, and education, which influence voting behaviour. Hermann Giliomee (1989, p 114) has thus argued in relation to class, '...virtually all political parties ... are communally based and emphasise the promotion of communal interests rather than purely class objectives'.

In addition, despite their formal declarations and manifestos to the effect that they eschew racism and ethnicity, South African parties are said to exhibit racial and ethnic characteristics. It is assumed therefore that there is a direct link between a voter's race and ethnicity and the party he or she will vote for. As Lijphart has asserted, voters are said seldom to break this link and choose a party which does not correspond to their race or ethnicity. 'In deeply divided societies such as South Africa ... the interests and outlooks of the different groups diverge much more markedly and the voters' loyalties tend to be much more rigid, reducing the chances of a regular alternation of power' (1985, p 49).

As a result 'blacks' vote for 'black parties' and 'whites' vote for 'white parties'. As Lawrence Schlemmer has concluded with respect to the 1994 election: 'The first election, while formally an interest-based, non-racial, non-ethnic contest, had sufficient ethnic and racial content to signal a warning for the future' (1994a, p 166).

The main categories employed in explaining voting behaviour are delineated from tables and graphs featuring the groupings of white, black, coloured and Indian, which are, in turn, regarded as independent variables. In ethnic terms the most frequently used categories are Zulu, English, Sotho, Afrikaner, Xhosa and so on. So, probes into how voters arrive at their decisions group them into these racial and ethnic categories and the data are analysed from this standpoint.

Indicating how race is still prevalent in social scientific research related to South African voting behaviour, Hennie Kotzé noted that:

In terms of understanding voting behaviour in South Africa, I think that race is still important. It is one of those variables that you can use to explain certain things. If one looks at recent research, class is becoming very important as a factor in explaining the behaviour of people and choices they make. But at the moment, race is still at the fore, especially when one looks at the superficial voting trends in South Africa you can still use race very superficially as an indicator of people's preferences.

Interview with author

The racial/ethnic view directly opposes the pure primordial interpretation of the origins of race and ethnicity as espoused under the apartheid vision. It argues for a more sophisticated interpretation, which allows for the understanding that race and ethnicity are malleable concepts that can be manipulated to socially engineer society. It differs with the apartheid vision in that the latter applied the concepts to construct an unjust system whereas the same concepts may be utilised to construct a democratic society. In this view, race and ethnicity, once they have been constructed, are resilient. It is thus argued that race and ethnicity will continue to play a crucial role in the democratisation process in a post-apartheid society. Politics will largely continue to be framed by the parameters of race and ethnicity. Political parties orientations and policies, voters' intentions and behaviour will still largely be determined by racial and ethnic factors. The imperative, it is asserted, should be how to mediate these identities so that they do not destroy society

THE 1994 ELECTION AS A ' RACIAL / ETHNIC ' CENSUS

Lawrence Schlemmer (1994, p 19) has characterised the election of 1994 as follows: 'The pattern of results comes uncomfortably close to being a census of mobilised racial-cum-ethnic categories in South Africa.'

It is held that there exists a dividing line between black and white voters predisposing them to vote in particular ways for those parties that match their racial profiles. It is also maintained that such is the weight of racial sentiment that, as Schlemmer continued in his analysis of the 1994 election, 'The election, regrettably, was not quite the unfettered exercise in evaluation of competing policies which democracy is ideally supposed to be' (Schlemmer 1994, pp 18-19).

In line with such thinking, Giliomee asserts that in divided societies 'The basic political unit is the racial or ethnic or religious group, and where they have the chance people continue to vote overwhelmingly for parties representing the respective segments' (1990, p 299). Among the 'black' parties, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) is seen as the main party explicitly advocating a racial position. The central message of the PAC has always been the return to the black 'indigenous' people of 'Azania' (the PAC's name for South Africa) of the land stolen by whites. This stance of black militant nationalism, alongside a policy of denying party membership to whites, has earned the PAC a lot of criticism that it is racist and anti-white. The PAC has, however, consistently denied these charges, insisting that being African has nothing to do with skin colour (author's interview with Philip Kgosana).

Despite such protestations, the criticism has not diminished, and during the 1994 election it was argued that 'The threat of an anti-white, uncompromising counter-racism clearly emerged in the PAC' (Adam 1994, p 28). As Martin Meredith has written, 'its message to the electorate was simple; all land would be appropriated by the state and redistributed to Africans' (1994, p 157). In this election, it was estimated that PAC support was 94 per cent black and 6 per cent coloured – and the party had no white or Indian support (Mattes 1995a, p 24).

Although it projects itself as non-racial, the ANC is interpreted as being a racial party (black) with particular appeal to one ethnic group (Xhosa). This view of the supposedly racial nature of the ANC is supported by statistics that suggest that of the total ANC vote in the 1994 election, 94 per cent was black, 4 per cent coloured, 1,5 per cent Indian, and 0,5 per cent white (Reynolds 1994, p 191).

The Democratic Party (DP), like the ANC, was seen as a party with both a racial (white) and an ethnic (English) support base. Andrew Reynolds (1994, p 197) estimated that 'Between 80 to 90% of the DP's vote came from the white community, and predominantly the white community in the metropolitan suburbs of Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban ...'

A different set of reasons has been advanced to explain the voting behaviour of Indian and coloured people – it is generally argued that these apartheid designated racial groups are more inclined to vote for white parties. The fact that Indians and coloureds were disadvantaged under apartheid – although not to the same degree as blacks – would lead one to expect that they would vote against the National Party (later the New National Party) and for the liberation movements. Reflecting on this assumption, especially with regard to coloureds in the Western Cape, Robert Mattes has noted that 'Many on the left see anti-black racism as the reason why coloured citizens apparently voted against their own interests' (*Saturday Weekend Argus* 19-26 August 1995, p 16). What has transpired is that the voting behaviour of Indians and coloureds has been reduced to 'a racial group loyalty that translates into either a greater cultural affinity with other minority groups, or a fear that an African government would discriminate against them' (Habib and Naidu 1999, pp 190-91).

Overall then, the 1994 election was seen as a 'blood election' – typical of contests in ethnically and racially divided societies in which 'party choice [is] determined by the voters' colour and culture' (*The Star* [Johannesburg] 21 August 1999, p 5). In sum, race is clearly regarded by many people as a crucial factor that determined how both parties and voters behaved in the April 1994 election.

The dominant view is that the ethnic sentiments (whether 'black' or 'white') of South African voters are manifested along party lines. The main defining feature of an ethnic group is taken to be language.

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) is characterised as the most ethnic of the 'black' parties. It is said to be 'Zulu'-based and is seen to derive most of its electoral support from this ethnic group. Evidence presented to this effect is that in 1994 about 85 per cent of its support came from blacks and almost all were Zulus, while 86 per cent of its national support came from KwaZulu-Natal, the province in which Zulus form the majority (Reynolds 1994, p 194). It is assumed that because KwaZulu-Natal is an area largely populated by Zulu speakers, Zulu ethnicity is a very powerful force in the province.

What the Zulus are to the IFP, the Xhosas are said to be to the ANC. It is formulated that despite the ANC's image and its efforts to project itself as a non-racial, non-tribal movement it is, nevertheless, 'popularly' seen as 'Xhosa' (Mattes

1995b, p 19). Marthinus van Schalkwyk, then media director of the NP, said the ANC was 'a party which in practice is a black organisation that favours Xhosa speakers' (*Die Burger* 1 February 1994). The relationship between territory, ethnic group, and voting behaviour is once again said to be reinforced in the ANC's case. The ANC's overwhelming level of support in its 'Xhosa heartland' of the Eastern Cape was not 'unexpected', given that blacks comprise 84 per cent of the population in this region and that – according to Reynolds – over 90 per cent of the electorate is of 'Xhosa stock' (1994, p 205).

'White' parties are also presumed not to be immune to the force of ethnic identity. The Democratic Party (DP) – the successor to the United Party (UP) and Progressive Federal Party (PFP), two long-time liberal opponents of the apartheid system – was also characterised as ethnic because of its overwhelming support from English-speaking voters. Such a view would seem to clash with core liberal values and principles, which are not rooted in group identities of race and ethnicity, but in individualism. However, in the South African context, the DP is characterised as having failed to escape this ethnic character. It was estimated that, in 1994, 69 per cent of DP supporters were white and English speaking and that therefore it qualifies as an ethnic party (Mattes 1995a, p 24).

Unlike the other two main 'white' parties, the DP and NP, the Freedom Front (FF) explicitly identified itself as an Afrikaner party. Its major aim was to secure a homeland for Afrikaners – a 'Volkstaat'. The party was formed by General Constand Viljoen in early 1994 and joined the election process after stalling and threatening violence. One of its office bearers, Joseph Chiole, in discussing the ethnic base of the FF, and why Afrikaners in general are tied to parties with strong Afrikaner images, observed that: 'If you look at the 1994 election for example, you will see that the Afrikaner to a great extent sort of voted for the Freedom Front and to a certain extent for the National Party, but for instance not the Democratic Party' (Interview with author).

The logic here is that just as Zulus cannot identify with Xhosas and their party and vice versa, Afrikaners cannot vote for English parties and vice versa. Thus Mattes has noted that '100% of FF supporters are white, 83% of them Afrikaans speakers' (Mattes 1995a, p 8).

THE 1999 ELECTION: THE RESILIENCE OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

In an interview after the 1994 election F W De Klerk (the then NP leader and second vice-president in the Government of National Unity (GNU)) optimistically declared that 'The next election will not be about liberation, it will be about fundamental principles, about values needed to build society' (*The Star* [Johannesburg] 13 August 1999, p 5). De Klerk was reiterating the view that the 1994 elections had been a 'racial/ethnic census', while expressing hope that the next election would be marked by what he saw as a greater degree of political maturity – with parties and voters moving away from race and ethnicity in their outlooks and behaviour. Racial and

ethnic explanations, however, continued to be affirmed in debates about the interpretation of the 1999 election as the main determinants of voters' choices.

Clearly reflecting this continuing trend, Tony Leon, the leader of the DP, stated at a campaign rally in Soweto after his entourage was jeered by young blacks that: 'It would take a long time for voting patterns to shift from a racial formation, where blacks voted for "black" parties and whites for "white" parties' (*The Star* [Johannesburg] 17 May 1999, p 5).

Some political parties ascribed their inability to attract voters from across the racial divide to the hardening of racist attitudes among voters and their reversion to past practices. The IFP's spokesperson, Musa Zondi, for example, partly attributed the decrease in white support for the party since 1994 to a retreat 'into the laager of the DP and NNP' (South African Press Association [Sapa] 8 June 1999).

The ANC was identified as one of the parties that had failed to transcend this racial divide and to attract other racial groups (whites, coloureds, and Indians) into its ranks. It was still taken to be 'black' and it was assumed that it would continue to be so for a long time, if not forever. According to Koos Malan, a member of the executive committee of the Group of 63 (an Afrikaner intellectual movement): 'The ANC is the liberator and political vehicle of the black majority. Its political and legislative programme is sharply focused on the empowerment of the black majority ... thus; the ANC is a typically sectional political movement, catering primarily for one sector of the population' (*Mail & Guardian* 14-19 December 2001, p 17).

In a post-election newspaper column in *The Star*, Temba Sono, (former academic turned politician) put it bluntly: 'Beneath the veneer of civilized discourse, along appearances of tolerance, exists among most South Africans a hardened racial crust' (8 June 1999, p 8).

Beyond this, the DP's move to the right has been interpreted as reflecting the willingness of South African parties to resort to racist posturing to win votes. Political Studies Professor Jeremy Seekings put it this way: 'The critics of the DP were quite correct in saying that the party played an implicit race card in the 1999 elections. I think that is correct. The DP was clearly playing on minority group fears, saying that if you are a member of a minority group this is an important thing' (interview with author).

This new character of the DP alarmed the historically black parties. As the Azanian People's Organisation's (Azapo) Pandelani Nefolovhodwe commented: 'The opposition called the DP really, really of late ... in Azapo we believe that they are actually at the level of the Nationalist Party before ... They have gone into the white laager, they are just about to do the *swart gevaar* [literally black danger]. If they say they are hitting back ... that is why they were able to get many whites around them' (interview with author).

The success of the DP in displacing the NNP from the status of official opposition has also been interpreted in racial terms. The DP is said to have been the major beneficiary of the NNP's loss of support, especially the conservative

Afrikaner vote that switched allegiance and voted for the DP. An official of the NNP, Vincent Thusi, noted that: 'Look at the DP, it has made strides because white people voted for it; the majority of whites, especially Afrikaners ... but very few went to the ANC' (interview with author). Thus there was no way that Afrikaners could have voted for a 'black' party. Rather, they chose the DP, which, although liberal, is at least 'white'.

Beyond this, Indians and coloureds were seen to have continued to behave racially in exercising their vote in 1999. Ashwin Desai, a sociologist, commented with regard to the Indian vote in KwaZulu-Natal that: 'I think the Indian vote has still been a racial vote in this province for parties [NNP/DP] that have attempted to promise marginal groups that their lives would be destroyed by the black masses. I think that they have been largely successful' (interview with author). Cyril Madlala, the editor of *The Independent on Saturday*, a major newspaper in KwaZulu-Natal, noted that 'Indians and coloureds, who were oppressed under apartheid, find more comfort in traditionally white parties such as the NNP and the DP than in those that opposed that system' (*The Independent on Saturday* 2 May 1999, p 8).

The leader of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), Reverend Kenneth Meshoe, commented on the appointment of a black ANC Chief Whip in the National Assembly over a white acting officer of the party in the following terms: 'The only reason ... for Mr Doidge's disqualification is that he belongs to the wrong tribe. Of the three ANC Chief Whips past and present, all are Xhosa, and we, as the ACDP, see this as nothing but tribalism' (*Sunday Times* 9 December 2001, p 9).

The NNP's extremely poor showing at the polls, reflected in its huge loss of Afrikaner support, has been ascribed to its attempt to move to the centre of the political stage – thereby abandoning its ethnic Afrikaner base, to its detriment. As the 'New' National Party it tried to shake off its political past as a party for Afrikaners and whites and to become a party for all. However, this alienated its power base – the Afrikaner vote, which would not go along with the 'new' move, primarily, it is reasoned, because these voters are still steeped in a racial and ethnic understanding of South African politics. Before the election DP official Phillip Grobler aptly noted this dynamic of NNP politics.. 'The NP's turn to liberalism will probably kill it at the polls' (*Sowetan* 22 April 1999, p 9).

The continuing influence of ethnicity in 1999 is considered to have further manifested itself in the re-emergence of political parties associated with the apartheid Bantustan system. One of these was the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) of former Bophuthatswana leader Lucas Mangope in the North West Province. What is significant about the UCDP is that its power is concentrated mainly in urban areas – particularly Mafikeng, the provincial capital. Here the UCDP won close to 50 per cent of the vote. And yet this was the very area that spearheaded the ANC's ousting of Mangope in 1994 (Taylor and Hoeane 1999, p 139). The UCDP's success has been attributed to the fact that it played an ethnic 'Tswana' card. The party consistently pointed out that under the 'Xhosa' rule of the ANC conditions in

the province had deteriorated, and it was time to restore the party to power, as under 'Tswana' rule things would be different and better (*The Sunday Independent* 30 May 1999, p 7).

Similarly, the success of the United Democratic Movement (UDM) in the former Transkei Bantustan, which is now part of the Eastern Cape, was explained in terms of playing a 'Xhosa' ethnic card. Although the UDM portrayed itself as a non-racial, non-tribal party, its support base was largely drawn from the Eastern Cape, which is dominated by 'Xhosas' – prompting the DP to label it an 'emergent Xhosa ethnic party' (Southall 1999, p 43). Moreover, 60 per cent of UDM nominees for Parliament were from the Transkei (Lodge 1999, pp 105-106). In striking similarity to the UCDP, it also showed a strong following in urban areas. In Umtata, the capital of Transkei, the UDM won over 50 per cent of the vote.

The racial/ethnic paradigm clearly constituted the main interpretative framework for analysing the 1999 elections. As in the 1994 elections, race and ethnicity continued to be regarded as the starting point from which to judge what transpired. Political parties and voters were presumed to be best understood within this framework. Political parties were regarded as still locked into their traditional racial/ethnic backgrounds, with minimal chances of appealing to broad based support. Voters were still attached to their racial/ethnic backgrounds, which determined their choice of political party. Race and ethnicity were taken as powerful and resilient variables that explain voting behaviour.

THE RACIAL/ETHNIC VIEW UNRAVELS: THE 2004 ELECTION

The third democratic election, held in April 2004, has continued to elicit the interpretation that South African politics is based on racial and ethnic categories.² Thus, voters and parties are viewed as having largely continued to subscribe to identity sentiments. Voters are seen to have continued to vote along racial and ethnic lines, with political parties still primarily considered to be 'black' or 'white'. For example, the retired F W de Klerk asserted in a post-election media comment that '...the political scene will continue to be characterised by ethnic rather than policy driven politics' (*The Star* 21 April 2004, p 13). It is pertinent to provide an interpretation of pre-election surveys and election results, to point out the source of these contentions, before providing evidence that this reading is flawed.

The South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) conducted in 2003 by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) records the racial support bases of political parties and in this analysis reference will be made to the then four largest parties in Parliament – the ANC, DA, IFP, NNP and UDM. The survey reflects the

2 See, for example, Laurence 2004; Edigheji 2004; Brook 2004.

ANC, IFP and UDM as having more than 90 per cent black support. The DA's racial support base is recorded as about 77 per cent white. The NNP was the only exception, with a mix of supporters – fewer than 30 per cent of them white, its assumed 'traditional' base.

In terms of ethnicity such patterns continued to be affirmed when the results are analysed. The IFP's support still came overwhelmingly from KwaZulu-Natal (93%), reinforcing assertions about the 'Zulu' basis of this party. Lucas Mangope's 'Tswana' UCDP's support was still largely based in the North West Province (93%), where the bulk of members of this ethnic group reside. Fifty-three per cent of the UDM's support was drawn from its so-called 'traditional' base in the Eastern Cape, reinforcing its 'Xhosa' roots. The 'Indian' Minority Front (MF) was peculiar in that its provincial support in KwaZulu-Natal surpassed its national support by 29 per cent, indicating its firm base in the province and, in tune with this line of thought, also indicating its strong 'Indian' roots.

Given this scenario then, the assertion of the saliency of racial and ethnic voting patterns in South Africa would seem to be accurate. To this end, predictions that South Africa's democracy will be imperilled by the persistence of these identity patterns seem to be affirmed.

However, as indicated below, there is emerging evidence from the 2004 election that indicates that this interpretation is highly contestable and that explanations of electoral behaviour and political party performance that use racial and ethnic categories merit serious revision and inquiry. In as much as race and ethnicity still appear in South African electoral politics, there is countervailing evidence that a close analysis of trends revealed by the 2004 election seriously challenge this view and the resultant conclusion that democracy is at risk.

This counterview will be addressed with reference to and analysis of election campaigns, political party alliances and a reading of the election results.

POLITICAL PARTY CAMPAIGNS

Political party campaigning that is viscerally defined by reference to racial and ethnic posturing by political parties has tainted post-apartheid electoral contests. Given South Africa's history it is understandable that racial and ethnic factors cannot be absent from such contentious political processes as elections, where power is at stake. However, recognition of this fact does not in itself accord primacy to the view that these variables in and of themselves define and dominate political contestation.

The 1999 election was especially symptomatic of a polarised, racialised campaign, exhibited in the ANC and then the DP's battle over the 'fight back' campaign slogan (Taylor and Hoeane 1999, p 136). 'Fight back' was the DP's main campaign slogan, intended to portray a formidable resistance and challenge to the ANC and translated by the latter, especially in the Western Cape, into 'fight blacks', leading to acrimony between the parties.

The 2004 election, however, was notable for the reduction in explicit racial undertones in political party campaigning. Notably, the ANC and the DA desisted from this racial bickering, bowing to the imperative to try to break ground and address constituencies other than their traditional ones. For example, the DA launched its election campaign in Soweto – the largest black township – and the ANC held numerous rallies, led by Thabo Mbeki, in white areas (*Sunday Times* 14 March 2004, p 1). Thus, the two main South African political parties tried resolutely to woo support from other racial groups and this made for a relatively clean campaign bereft of the type of racial arguments that had characterised the 1999 campaign.

On this basis there is evidence that, despite the racial support bases of these parties as revealed in pre-election surveys, as indicated above, there is indeed recognition that racialised politics do not benefit political parties. Therefore, the mere racial support bases of these parties should not and cannot be assumed to govern the behaviour of voters and political parties. As Seekings has pointed out, 'People's perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of their interests correlate with race in some cases, not completely, but in quite a significant way. What is harder to see is how race structures a set of other considerations. This, I think, is the really difficult question about the role of race in politics and electoral behaviour. To what extent do voters actually look at skin colour when they are assessing candidates?' (Interview with author). Thus it should not be assumed that voting behaviour is determined by identity, as there is no direct, observable relationship between the two.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALLIANCES

Much more cogently than campaign strategies, which can, at some levels, be dismissed as mere window dressing by parties to draw votes, the emergence of political alliances between parties – especially the major ones – provides a basis for questioning this interpretation of South Africa electoral studies. The 2004 election was defined by the widespread formation of alliances between political parties (Booyesen 2004, p 11). Although the nature of these alliances was fluid in that the parties continued to have separate campaigns, they were much more formalised than they had been in previous elections.

The most notable alliance was that between the ANC and the NNP, which was described as a 'cooperative alliance'. The negative perception of this alliance is that it was motivated by opportunism in both parties – the ANC wanted to gain a foothold in the Western Cape and the ailing NNP was thought to be seeking a lifeline from the ANC (*City Press* 14 March 2004, p 17).

This viewpoint is emphatically contradicted by the election results in the Western Cape, where the ANC won 45,25 per cent of the vote, over seven per cent of the combined strength of the two 'white' parties in the province, where the DA received 27,11 per cent and the NNP 10,88 per cent, indicating that the ANC is the

strongest party in the province. What is significant about electoral contests in the Western Cape is that, despite the perception that the ANC is weak in this province because it is a 'black' party, it has steadily gained ground since 1994, having won 33 per cent in 1994, 42 per cent in 1999 and jumped to 45 per cent in 2004. In fact, the ANC was the majority party in the province in 1999 and was kept out of power by a coalition of the NNP and the DP.

Thus, there must be reasons other than racial imperatives to explain the alliance between the supposedly 'black /Xhosa' ANC and the 'white/ Afrikaner' NNP.

The other significant coalition was between the DA and the IFP – perceived as 'white/English' and 'black/Zulu' parties, respectively. The two parties came together in what they called a 'coalition for change' and their leaders – Tony Leon and Mangosuthu Buthelezi – held joint rallies around the country, notably in Soweto, where they jointly launched their alliance (*Sunday Times* 2 November 2003, p 5).

As in the case of the ANC/NNP alliance the challenge in explaining the 'coalition for change' between the DA and the IFP lies in seeking a different set of reasons, as the two parties appear to represent divergent racial and ethnic groups. These cross racial/ethnic alliances between the two main contending blocs of political parties require a much more considered explanation.

In interpreting the ANC/NNP alliance it is important to note that the NNP broke away from the DA alliance in 2002 on the basis that the latter was isolating it by clinging to the politics of fear of minority groups (*Mail & Guardian* 2-8 November 2002, p 23), which it asserted was not in the interest of a united South Africa. The NNP moved to the centre of the political spectrum, bringing it much closer to the ANC in terms of economic policies, for example. The core of hardline NNP members, who opposed policies like affirmative action and eschewed the ANC alliance with left-wing parties, deserted the party in 1999 to join the DA, leaving behind a segment of support that was much more accommodating towards the ANC's centre-left policies (Hoeane 2002, p 126). Here we see economic issues coming to the fore, refuting the basis of the racial /ethnic view. So the ANC/NNP alliance can be interpreted as a left-of-centre coalition in the scheme of political party configuration in South African politics, indicating the tenuous nature of the racial/ethnic explanation.

Similarly, the 'coalition for change' between the DA and the IFP requires a much more sophisticated analysis than a simplistic racial/ethnic assessment. Given that the DA is still strong on protecting 'minorities' and the IFP is prone to pandering to its 'Zuluness' the question to answer in this regard is: what is the glue that holds the two parties together? Once again the answer lies in material economic interests and ideological positions. Both parties have an economically conservative ideological outlook; both support unfettered free market policies, construe affirmative action as biased towards ANC elites and are critical of the left-wing allies of the ANC, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) (*Sowetan* 11 November 2003, p 15). Thus the 'coalition for change' should be seen to represent the coalescence of a

conservative understanding and expression of South African politics over and above the ethnic and racial identities of the DA and the IFP.

In the light of the above, it is clear that any interpretation of the 2004 elections must factor into the equation coalition building based on ideological interests rather than on race and ethnicity.

The fact that South African politics is shifting towards politics based on material interest rather than on racial and ethnic divides is a positive sign for the consolidation of democracy. It is pertinent to note that the only two parties, apart from the newly formed Independent Democrats (ID), that won over any significant number of voters in the 2004 elections were the ANC and DA, suggesting clearly that their politics makes sense to the electorate.³ And it cannot be assumed that this is related to the racial backgrounds of these parties because, as indicated below, other 'black' and 'white' parties performed poorly.

The ANC's achievement of a two-thirds majority in the 2004 elections can be traced to the fact that its economic policies are not generally hostile to the interests of the black majority (*Sunday Times* 25 April 2004, p 21) rather than to the 'liberation party' interpretation that has been used in the past to explain its success (Johnson and Zulu 1996, p 94). For there is ample evidence that another 'black liberation' party, the PAC, has consistently done poorly in post-apartheid elections. Although there has been some dispute over the ANC's transformation policies (most pronounced in tensions with its partners in the Tripartite Alliance, the SACP and Cosatu), in other areas it has not abandoned its progressive concern for the socio-economic rights of the majority of South Africans.⁴

On the other hand, the rejection of the IFP and the DA by the electorate – especially the black majority – can be directly attributed to policies that do not resonate with the interests of the largest segment of the South African electorate, the black voters. For example, their insistence on unbridled privatisation – a factor that is seriously contested within the Tripartite Alliance and has arguably made the ANC tread cautiously⁵ – clearly pits the DA/IFP alliance against the majority of voters. Adam Habib, of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (*ThisDay* 13 August 2004, p 11) has observed with regard to the policies of the DA and its inability to attract black voters, 'The DA's problem is that its policy choices preclude it from becoming viable. This is not because of the racialised pattern of voting in our society, as its leaders believe. Rather, it is because its policy package does not speak to the interests of the majority of black people.'

3 The ANC gained the two-thirds majority that had eluded it since 1994 and the DA gained close to 400 000 voters – a significant number in South African electoral contests. Other parties, such as the African Christian Democratic Party and the Freedom Front Plus, which gained voters, were insignificant because their gains had no appreciable impact on their strength.

4 A Markinor/ SABC poll released in October 2004 indicated that over two-thirds of South Africans approved of the ANC government's policies.

5 The widely held public perception that the ANC is wedded to voracious privatisation policies is not altogether accurate; indeed the DA's main criticism of the ANC's macro economic policy, the Growth Employment and Redistribution strategy (Gear), is that it does not call for rigorous enough privatisation.

Beyond these alliances between major parties other minor alliances were formed that were clearly not based on identity factors. One of the most interesting of these was that between the IFP and Solidarity (Sapa 3 March 2004), a white right-wing trade union with strong Afrikaner roots that is noted for its conservative policies. It is not difficult to surmise what drew the 'Zulu/ IFP' and the 'white/ Afrikaner' Solidarity together: both are strongly anti-affirmative action and are opposed to the ANC's left-wing alliance of Cosatu and the South African Communist Party (SACP) and, indeed, the basis for their agreement was that the IFP sympathised with white workers who, it claimed, were victims of affirmative action, a policy it believes only benefits the ANC elite (Sapa 3 March 2004).

The DA also worked out an agreement with the Green Party of South Africa (GPSA), a development that cannot remotely be explained by any racial or ethnic interests – their joint statement announcing the pact noted that the two parties shared an interest in environmental policies.⁶ In another example, the PAC aligned itself with the Dikwankwetla Party (DK) of the former Sotho homeland of Qwaqwa. Since the PAC, given its hostility and opposition to tribal politics, would not cooperate with an ethnically-based party, this pairing indicates that some other common interest was at play here. The DK is known for its opposition to the ANC (it allied itself with the DP in the 1999 election) and the basis of its agreement with the PAC related to their common opposition to the ANC not to any racial persuasion. Any attempt to explain the alliance between the PAC and the DK in racial terms – 'black' parties coming together against the ANC – would be tortuous indeed, and would need to address the question: why are 'black' parties aligning against other 'black' parties?

The other signal of the paucity of the racial/ethnic view is the flip side of alliance formation by political parties: parties that are grounded in similar racial backgrounds but fail to align themselves on that basis. This is most pronounced with respect to 'black' parties such as the PAC, Azapo and the Socialist Party of Azania (Sopa). It has been suggested that one of the ways these parties might provide an alternative to the ANC is if they unite and pool their strengths. However, since 1994, the 'black' parties have tried many times but have failed to achieve unity (*City Press* 18 January 2004, p 2).

Over and beyond the fact that their unity is frustrated by other issues such as petty personal squabbles (author's interview with Philip Kgosa) it is quite persuasive to argue that their ideological positions set them apart. For example, Sopa and Azapo, especially the former, have committed themselves to fight for 'Scientific Socialism' based on the black working class⁷, while the PAC is well known

6 Joint Statement by DA and Green Party released on 13 April 2004, found at <http://www.da.org.za/da/Site/Eng/News/Article.asp?ID=3807>

7 Separate interviews with Sopa President Lybon Mabasa and Azapo Deputy President Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, in Johannesburg in 2000.

for its hostility to any communist ideas and adherence to militant African nationalism (Lodge 1994). Thus, 'blackness' as a factor is not enough to bring these parties together – their contradictory and mutually opposed material ideological bases militate against unity.

UNDERSTANDING THE 2004 RESULTS

The other indicator that points to the severe limitations of the racial/ethnic argument and its lack of potency in adequately explaining South African electoral politics is that those parties that have expressed an adherence to explicit racial and ethnic politics performed poorly in the 2004 election, as they did in 1994 and 1999.

The Failure of Racial Parties

The NNP's performance in this election offers compelling evidence to refute the racial understanding of South African politics. This supposedly 'white/ Afrikaner' party lost a massive 76 per cent of the support it had in 1999. Although the NNP has continued to be seen as an 'Afrikaner' party, empirical evidence indicates that this is an assumption fraught with serious inaccuracies. This is particularly significant because as far back as the first democratic election, in 1994, there were already signs that the NNP was shedding its 'white/ Afrikaner' image, with close to half of its support already being drawn from non-white groups (Reynolds 1994, p 192). Indeed, as the HSRC's SASAS survey indicates, the NNP's support base was about 30 per cent white (not all of it Afrikaans speaking), with the majority of its supporters coloured (40%), black (20%) and Indian (10%). Indeed, to the extent that the party could have been regarded as 'white/ Afrikaner', this would only apply up to just before the 1999 election, as most of its core Afrikaner supporters deserted the party to vote for the DP (Kotzé 1999). Furthermore, it is an indictment of the misdirection of the NNP's electoral campaign in that its 2004 election manifesto – despite clear evidence that the party was the most racially mixed in South Africa, as shown above – continued to emphasise targeting 'minorities' instead of projecting itself as non-racial.

At another level there is evidence to indicate that it is difficult to sustain the explicit racial /ethnic view that voters act as a group. For example, just to take one ethnic group, the Afrikaners, support (and the vote) is spread among such diverse parties as the centrist NNP, the right-wing Freedom Front Plus (FF+) and the centre-right DA. This indicates that there is no single political programme based on an Afrikaner identity with which this community identifies. Social scientific inquiry should thus focus on other reasons for the behaviour of 'Afrikaner' voters.

The 'black' parties that expose the limitations of the adherence to racialised politics are the PAC, Azapo and Sopa, for whom there was almost no improvement on their electoral performance in 1999. The PAC has effectively remained in the same position, winning only 387 more votes in 2004 than it did in 1999. It retains

three seats in the National Assembly (NA) – something of a comeback after losing one of its seats when Patricia De Lille defected to form the ID in 2003 – nevertheless this is a less than impressive performance. The party is represented in two provincial legislatures. Viewed against the background of the marginally lower voter turnout in 2004 (Kotze 2004) than in 1999, which affected all parties, the PAC's weakness becomes even more pronounced. Azapo also managed to retain one seat in the NA and once again failed, as it did in 1999, to gain any representation in the nine provincial legislatures. Sopa failed once again to gain in any representation in the National Assembly and also has no provincial representation. This is clear evidence that the racialised approach of these 'black' parties is flawed as it has failed dismally to resonate with the interests of supposedly 'black' voters, who have clearly rejected the parties.

The party associated with an explicit 'Indian' message in electoral campaigns in post-apartheid South Africa is the Minority Front (MF), led by Amichand Rajbansi. It is important to recognise that the MF – despite its avowed aim to represent Indian interests – has never managed to garner the majority of voters in this community, even in its stronghold of Natal, where the majority of South Africa Indians live. In 2004 it lived up to its reputation as a minority party, maintaining one seat in the NA.

THE WANING OF ETHNIC PARTIES

Two other parties that stand out as evidence of the weakness of the ethnic interpretation of South African electoral politics are the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) and the FF+.

The UCDP's support actually fell, both nationally and provincially. Nationally its support decreased from the 0,78 per cent it gained in 1999 to 0,75 per cent, while provincially in the North West, although it maintained its position as the official opposition, its support declined from 9,6 per cent to 8,49 per cent. Thus, a party that is strongly associated with strong representation of supposedly true 'Tswana' ethnic interests failed to draw significant support from this ethnic group.

The FF+, which claims to represent Afrikaner ethnic interests, has also not managed to make any convincing headway to indicate that it really represents the interest of this community. Its national support increased marginally from 0,80 per cent to 0,89 per cent in 2004 – a poor performance when it is taken into consideration that the new style Freedom Front Plus is actually an alliance of three 'Afrikaner' parties – the former FF, the Conservative Party (CP) and the Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging (AEB). So, even though it absorbed two other parties, the FF was only able to increase its support by 0,09 per cent, a very low figure by any standard. The fallacy of the ethnic ethos of parties like the FF is indicated by the fact that it has been estimated that even if it convinces its entire target audience the party is only like to win 6 per cent of the vote – a low figure indeed in overall South African electoral terms (*Mail & Guardian* 12-18 March 2004, p 8). Lastly, the National Action

(NA), formed by the defection from the AEB by its leader Cassie Aucamp during the floor-crossing period in 2003 and also claiming to represent 'Afrikaner' interests, failed to be returned to Parliament.

In juxtaposition to the above-mentioned parties, which have used the racial and ethnic view to gain support from the electorate and have failed, are the ACDP, the UDM and the ID, all three of which have shown that there is potential to exploit political space in South African that is based on issue politics.

The latter three parties have, each to a different degree, been relatively successful in establishing a presence on the political scene without reference to race or ethnicity. Admittedly they are not strong enough to challenge the ANC, but they offer a compelling argument that continuing to be trapped in racial and ethnic paradigms of contextualising South African politics is a serious political limitation.

The ACDP is a fundamentalist Christian party that was established in 1993 during the transition negotiations. Its message is conservative, woven around calls for the reintroduction of the death penalty, vehement opposition to abortion and to legal rights for homosexuals and lesbians, and it advocates a conservative macro economic policy (Piombo 1999). An analysis of the party's electoral history reinforces the optimistic view that issue-based politics have a role to play in South African opposition politics, in this case the pursuit of religiously focused policies with a conservative message.

Clearly, there are South Africans who have strong conservative feelings which are enunciated by the ACDP. It should be borne in mind that the ACDP was the only South African party that voted against the final Constitution of 1996, on the basis that the document embraced too many anti-Christian views (author's interview with Reverend Kenneth Meshoe).

In 1994 the party, then only six months old, surprised observers when it gained representation in the NA, with 0,45 per cent of the national vote, coming sixth on the national list with two MPs. In 1999 the party fared much better, doubling its support to 1,34 per cent and sending three MPs to Parliament. It performed sufficiently well to become the fifth largest opposition party in Parliament, doing significantly better than more established parties such as the FF and PAC, who had come in ahead of it in 1994.

In 2004 the ACDP increased its support marginally, to 1,60 per cent, but has fallen back into sixth position among the opposition parties in Parliament. What is significant about the ACDP's support base is that it is not grounded in any dominant racial and ethnic group (Lodge 1999, p 73). And unlike that of most opposition parties the party's support is more widely spread around the country: in the 2004 elections it achieved representation in six provinces. The IFP – the second largest opposition party – is represented in only two provinces.

The UDM was co-formed in 1997 by Bantu Holomisa, a former leader of the Trankei Bantustan and later ANC Cabinet minister who was expelled from the party, and Roelf Meyer, who had been the chief negotiator for the NP in the transition talks. The party has shown some form of resilience in South African politics, given

its relatively short existence. It made a significant impact in the 1999 election, when it became the fourth-largest opposition party, with 3,42 per cent of the national ballot and fourteen MPs. It nearly suffered a serious catastrophe in the floor-crossing period in 2003 when it lost ten MPs, but made a comeback in the 2004 election when it won 2,28 per cent of the vote, becoming the third-largest opposition party, with nine MPs. Its presence has largely been in the Eastern Cape, where it became the official opposition in 1999 and maintained this position in 2004.

Significantly, although the UDM has not seriously threatened the ANC, the Eastern Cape in the 1999 election and to some extent in the 2004 election was one of the provinces where the ANC's dominance has been seriously challenged in electoral contests. Although the party has been accused of showing signs of pandering to covert ethnic sentiments (Ndletyana 1999) shaped around 'Xhosa' images, its success is much more rationally explained by its issue-based politics. For if 'Xhosa' ethnicity has any relevance in the politics of the Eastern Cape, why is the supposedly 'Xhosa' ANC doing much better than a similarly 'Xhosa' UDM in this supposedly 'Xhosa' dominated province of South Africa?

The UDM's main policy platform is based on positioning itself as the party that will rectify the policy deficiencies of the ANC (Southall 1999), a stand that has been identified as one of its weaknesses. Although it is not fundamentally opposed to many of the ANC's policies, it would like to see some modifications. For example, its chief criticism of the ANC's macro-economic policy, Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear), adopted in 1996, is that there is a need for restraint in conceding state control over economic issues.⁸ It is also very strident in calling for tougher anti-corruption measures, an area, in which it perceives the ANC as weak. Indeed, its leader, Holomisa, was dismissed from the ANC after he accused some of its senior officials of corruption. Thus, in its battle for power with the ANC, the UDM's performance is much more rationally explained by the kind of policies it follows rather than by any imputation that it is a 'Xhosa' party.

The ID is the most significant party to have emerged from the floor-crossing period in 2003, when its leader, Patricia De Lille, defected from the PAC. The party campaigned in the 2004 election on a platform that was far removed from any racial or ethnic posturing, focusing mainly on issues such as the eradication of crime, HIV/AIDS, confronting corruption, gender equality and the protection of women and children.⁹ This was despite media reports that suggested that the ID, like other South African opposition parties, was ethnically based, with one newspaper headline proclaiming 'De Lille's Appeal Growing Among Marginalised Coloured Voters' (*Weekend Post* 10 April 2004, p 4). However, the party ran an effective, well-organised and technologically advanced electoral campaign that was very innovative, making use of a vibrant website, cell phone technology and so on.

8 See UDM Manifesto, National Election 2004

9 See ID Manifesto, National Election 2004

The ID did well in the 2004 election given that it was less than a year old, winning 1,73 per cent of the vote and sending seven MPs to the NA, becoming the fourth-largest party in Parliament. It is represented in three provincial legislatures (Western Cape, Northern Cape and Gauteng). The party's support is heavily concentrated in the Western Cape, where it draws 47 per cent of its national support and 57 per cent of its provincial support. Quite significantly, attesting to the strength of issue-based politics, the ID attracted double the number of votes of De Lille's former party, the PAC.

However, these parties are still weak, given the power and dominance of the ANC, and this can be ascribed to their narrowly focused issue campaigning (the ACDP with its emphasis on religion) the over reliance on strong and popular leadership (the ID's De Lille, the UDM's Holomisa) and the inability to carve a policy framework distinct from that of the ANC (ID, UDM).

The ACDP's over reliance on politics focused largely on and defined by conservative religious precepts restricts its capacity to cross over and draw support from the ANC's constituency. The ID and UDM's reliance on the popularity of their leaders is pursued at the expense of thorough policy formulation to challenge the ANC, especially with regard to economic policy, arguably the most important policy terrain, which opposition parties are failing to exploit in challenging the ANC. They have no clear economic policies that would allow them the political space to challenge the ANC for power. The ID has been particularly criticised for lacking clear economic plans and De Lille has, herself, curiously, asserted this. When asked to elaborate on her economic policies she said her party was focusing on 'constitutionalism rather than ideology' (*Mail & Guardian* 23-30 April 2004, p 4). Unlike the DA/IFP, which have clear economic policy objectives that are different from those of the ANC (but do not appeal to the majority of South Africans), the UDM's economic policy is practically indistinguishable from that of the ANC.

In general, the failure of opposition parties effectively to challenge the ANC for power or at least to provide an effective channel for grievances against the ruling party was revealed in the 2004 election with respect to voters' behaviour. Although there has been a high turnout of registered voters in the past three elections: 86,86 per cent in 1994, 89,30 per cent in 1999 and 76,69 per cent in 2004 (an average of 84 per cent for the three elections) the fact that it is eroding is cause for concern. This erosion (it is estimated that about 43 per cent of eligible voters did not vote in 2004) also provides evidence that many voters have no political home and that neither the ANC nor the opposition parties is catering to their views (Kotzé 2004, p 2).

There is a variety of reasons, both positive and negative, for this voter abstention. The positive view is that South Africa is becoming a mature democracy, following global trends; the negative one is that there is serious disillusionment within the electorate. There has been no comprehensive study of the actual reasons behind the serious apathy in 2004, thus it is not quite clear which position accurately depicts what is happening. However, it is indisputable that a large percentage of

South Africans can be attracted to the ballot box to strengthen the country's democracy and this poses a challenge to the opposition parties, given their weakness. It can be surmised that the racial/ethnic posturing of most South African opposition parties is one of the factors deterring voters from supporting them. This fact is underlined by empirical evidence that generally South Africans who are disenchanted with the ANC stay away from the polls rather than vote for opposition parties (Lodge 2001).

This view refutes the racial/ethnic view's assertion that there are strong bonds between the identities of individuals and how they will vote, as significant numbers of South African voters between electoral contests regard themselves as independent from political parties.¹⁰ If voters were tied to racial and ethnic identities and voted for parties accordingly this supposed affinity would be constant and not only visible during elections.

Thus, a careful analysis of the behaviour of voters in South Africa with respect to elections and political parties does not seem to support the assumptions that are embodied in the racial/ethnic view that that these factors are primary in South African politics. Political parties are either forging policies that are counter to voters' interests (DA/IFP) or assume that racial and ethnic factors are attractive to voters (PAC, FF+, Azapo, Sopa).

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY

This characterisation of South African politics in racial/ethnic terms has serious and negative consequences for effective democratic consolidation. As opposition political parties interpret and construe their reading of society as steeped in these restrictive boundaries the effect is that they place emphasis on winning votes from their own 'niche' markets, whether black or white (*Mail & Guardian* 18–25 March, p 8), a situation which renders them weak and unable to challenge the dominance of the ANC. The final section of this paper addresses these implications: the consequences of voter apathy and the dangers of ineffectual regionalism.

VOTER APATHY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

One of the dangers inherent in this weak opposition is that it may lead to voter apathy – a present and real threat, as revealed by the large number of eligible voters who did not participate in the 2004 elections. By advocating these parochial racial and ethnic sentiments these parties alienate segments of the electorate which do not subscribe to these views and yet do not support the ruling ANC. As Lodge has written: 'If left unchecked over time, dissatisfied voters with no place to turn to may become apathetic, may not care about the survival of democracy, and may become increasingly more discontented' (1999, p 106).

10 See, for example, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) Public Opinion Report of 1998.

This trend may be very serious for South Africa's developing democracy, as it is important that as many citizens as possible be engaged in issues which affect the development of the country, especially during the early consolidation of democracy.

What can be even more threatening to the democratisation process is if this apathy turns into deep discontent and an aversion to democratic principles. That is, voters may feel so alienated that they would choose not to operate under the accepted procedures of democratic practice and, in the extreme, this could result in violence.

This is especially likely if the socio-economic disparities between blacks and whites are not adequately addressed by the Government's economic policies. This criticism has already been raised in various circles, especially by the ANC's alliance partners, Cosatu and the SACP, in relation to Gear (Marais 1998; Habib, Naidu and Taylor 1999). This threat has already become a reality on occasion, with social movements critical of government policies staging demonstrations that have led to violence. One such movement, the Landless People's Movement, threatened to disrupt the 2004 election.

The Government has enjoyed some success in delivery of social services, for instance it has provided 1,5 million government subsidised houses for lower income groups; provided access to clean water for 7 million people; and installed 2,5 million electricity connections between 1994 and 1999 (*Sunday Times* 18 November 2001). However, the unemployment rate has risen to 23 per cent from 20 per cent in the same period. (www.sairr.org.za) It is in such circumstances that politicians may exploit voters, arguing that democracy has not brought any tangible benefits, especially for black voters. As Mcebisi Ndletyana has observed, 'Opportunism might set in and the rise of demagoguery could occur' (interview with author). And that segment of the disillusioned white electorate that feels it is being excluded may also resort to extra-parliamentary means to express its feelings. Evidence emerging in the Boeremag Treason Trial¹², the first such trial in post-apartheid South Africa, indicates that there is a very real danger of such a response.

INEFFECTUAL REGIONALISM

The other impact of this racial and ethnic view is that parties that operate within its framework are increasingly becoming regional in outlook, with declining levels of support on the national stage. Any effective opposition to the ANC lies in the presence of political parties that appeal to the interests of a broad and national cross-section of South African society. However, racial and ethnic appeals tend to tie parties down, as their power bases roughly correspond to regions, as Horowitz

12 The Boeremag is a right-wing Afrikaner organisation that tried to topple the government by setting off bombs in black townships. In April 2003 more than 20 of its member were arrested and charged with treason.

(1985) has argued. 'Parties and politicians concerned solely with parochial ethnic conflicts find themselves unable to expand beyond their locality.'

The performance of most of these political parties has revealed that they have regionally based support, an assertion borne out by the results of the 2004 elections. For example, the IFP draws a massive 93 per cent of its support from KwaZulu-Natal; 58 per cent of the UDM's comes from the Eastern Cape; the MF's regional support in KwaZulu-Natal is greater than its national support, while the UCDP's main base is in North West, from which it draws 93 per cent of its support.

Regionalism is not intrinsically anti-democratic or negative. However, shaping and basing policies on racially and ethnically driven perspectives is fraught with danger for the democratisation process, engendering, as it does, in the electorate a deep sense of racial and ethnic outlooks. In this sense, a project to fashion a common nation, with common interests at the centre will be adversely affected.

Admittedly this trend to regionalism based on race and ethnicity is not strong, but it does have the effect of retarding a common vision of a united South Africa. Another problem is that if parties become increasingly regionally based there will be very few parties left on the national stage to fight for political power. Even the dominance of two parties on the national stage is not healthy for democratisation as it restricts voters' choices. Strong national parties are essential to a thriving democracy.

CONCLUSION

The racial/ethnic interpretation of South African elections maintains that these factors are pervasive in South African society and have negative consequences for the effective consolidation of democracy. Those who hold this view argue that because of South Africa's divided past race and ethnicity continue to define the boundaries of politics in the country. It should be noted that identity politics in South Africa have not totally disappeared and have surfaced in electoral contests, lending partial credence to the racial/ethnic view. However, there is abundant empirical evidence that suggests that racial and ethnic perspectives in South African society are not of primary importance. Incrementally from 1994 to the 1999 and 2004 elections this view is seriously unravelling, thus challenging its pessimistic conclusion that South Africa's democracy is imperilled.

This interpretation of South African politics embodies within itself serious implications for the consolidation of democracy by reinforcing these views within the electorate and among political parties. Thus, instead of democracy being imperilled by superficial trends shaped around race and ethnicity, it is clear that the view itself is limited in explaining the unfolding democratic process and, indeed, has negative consequences for it.

In relation to the 2004 election, a study of the conduct of political parties which did not emphasise racial and ethnic factors indicates that these elements are waning and the cross racial/ethnic political alliances that were formed (mainly by the major

parties) further indicate the invalidity of the racial/ethnic view. In addition, the failure of parties that continue to be held captive to both racial and ethnic interpretations is evidence that these categories are increasingly becoming irrelevant to South African politics and portends a more rational politics based on issues – just as it is in any democratic country.

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POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING IN THE 2004 ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

The paper concentrates on public funding of political parties during the 2004 general election. The fact that no regulatory framework exists for private funding is detrimental to the proper regulation of public funding so the Institute for Democracy in South Africa has launched a court action to compel parties to disclose their private sources. International experiences and comparisons are used as a point of reference to analyse the South African situation. South Africa's framework for party funding consists of the African Union and Southern African Development Community agreements, the Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act and its Regulation, and the Electoral Code of Conduct. South African parties represented in the national and provincial legislatures are funded on the basis of a formula consisting of proportional and equitable components by a fund appropriated mainly by Parliament and managed by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The parties' accountability to the IEC is hampered by a lack of statutory powers.

INTRODUCTION

The funding of political parties – especially at election times – is an unavoidable but controversial dimension of any functional democracy. There is a general perception that access to funds translates into more electoral profits. Hence, parties with fewer financial resources than the others are ostensibly systematically disadvantaged. The most radical view is, therefore, that a multiparty and democratic dispensation will reach an optimal point where party funding is most equitably distributed. In practice, the financial resources of parties are always unequally spread, and this should not be perceived as inherently anti-democratic.

A fundamental question is, however, what the balance should be between self-generated funds and public funds. Self-generated funds are often divided into domestically-raised funds and funds from abroad, as well as 'hard' and 'soft' money (depending on the nature of private donations). Public funds can serve as a balancing

factor, to act as a substitute for a lack of self-generated private funds, but they will never be an equaliser of financial resources.

In this paper the focus is primarily on public funding in South Africa – specifically insofar as it applied to the April 2004 general election. It is a generally accepted notion that public funding is inextricably linked to the parties' private funding, especially insofar as it affects the regulatory or oversight mechanisms devised to enhance public accountability. The 2004 election campaign witnessed a concerted effort by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) to intervene in this respect.

IDASA'S CALL FOR TRANSPARENCY

In late 2003 Idasa instituted a court application against the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the New National Party (NNP) and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP). (The ACDP has since been removed from the list.) The application was made in terms of the *Promotion of Access to Information Act* 2002, in order to gain access to the records of private donations to the parties and to their other sources of income. All the legal preparations for the court appearance were completed by the end of 2004 and court hearings were expected to commence in early 2005 in the Cape High Court (interview, Judith February: 2004).

Idasa started with a campaign in 1997 to enhance the parties' transparency in the absence of any specific legislation regulating private funding for political parties. In the near future South Africa will have to demonstrate its adherence to the African Union *Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption*, adopted on 11 July 2003 in Maputo. Article 10 of the convention reads:

Each State Party shall adopt legislative and other measures to:

- a) Proscribe the use of funds acquired through illegal and corrupt practices to finance political parties; and
- b) Incorporate the principle of transparency into funding of political parties.

Idasa's main argument is based on the constitutional principle of political equality and its concern that undisclosed private funding can encourage corruption. Equality is relevant insofar as everyone should have an equal opportunity, including donations, to influence political processes through participation. South Africa, according to Idasa, is, however, a developing country with systemic socio-economic disparities and serious demographic differences. Hence unregulated party funding would have a real potential to compromise the democratic nature of multiparty competition and influence decision-making. Idasa recognises that regulation will not be the panacea for all the problems but believes 'that transparency is just one

instrument in a family of laws and policies that must be employed to deal with the issues that interlock around the relationship between democracy and capital' (Idasa nd).

Idasa applauded the announcement made by AngloGold in December 2003 that it would voluntarily release details of its donations of R3,2-million to political parties for the 2004 elections. 'The advantage of knowing is that an assessment of policy decisions can be made with all the relevant knowledge. Being able to make an informed choice is surely a critical element in a healthy democracy' (Idasa).

AngloGold's example was followed by Standard Bank (with a R5-million donation) and the Liberty Group (R1,5-million), the latter funding almost all the parties represented in Parliament (Mamaila 2002, p 2; Msomi 2004). Sanlam also announced that it had donated R1-million each to the ANC and the NNP. Early in 2004 it emerged that the mining magnate, Brett Kebble, of Johannesburg Consolidated Investments, had donated R500 000 to the ANC's Western Cape provincial structures. Earlier, he had allegedly made a R400 000 donation to the governing NNP in the Western Cape in exchange for their helping a developer secure rights to develop a golf estate in Plettenberg Bay (Msomi 2004; Wa Afrika, Jurgens & Bezuidenhout 2004). Another mining investor, Tokyo Sexwale, of Mvelaphanda, made public donations to both former presidents Nelson Mandela and F W de Klerk (Nduru 2004). Groups like AngloGold, Liberty and Standard Bank developed criteria for their allocation of donations, which contribute towards public accountability (Msomi 2004), but the parties still refuse to reciprocate with disclosures from their side.

Idasa's argument for public disclosure rests also on a concern about the potential for corruption. It considers the absence of any regulation of private funding a gap in an otherwise strong anti-corruption public apparatus. 'Our advocacy is based on the premise that where there is no regulation of private funding to political parties and donors are able to give as much they wish, in secret, the opportunity for corruption increases'.

The overall objectives of the Idasa campaign – supported by the Institute for Security Studies, the Open Democracy Advice Centre, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, the South African Council of Churches and The Black Sash – are to:

- constrain undue influence on political parties, public representatives and the governing party;
- lessen the likelihood of, or at least reduce the incidence of, patronage;
- expose patronage appointments in the public service and bring to light the relationship between certain Government decisions and large private donations.

In the next section we compare briefly party funding and guidelines and options based on international experiences.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS AND FRAMEWORKS

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) recently published comparative research on party funding (Austin & Tjernström 2003) and concluded that it raised two main questions: how much information about party finance should the voter be entitled to have and to what extent should public money be used to support and develop political parties?

Answers to these questions can be found in the following four broad funding options derived from international experience (Austin & Tjernström 2003, pp 10-13):

- a) **Autonomy option:** Political parties are voluntary associations entitled to unregulated privacy of their internal organisation and financial management. Competition between political parties serves as a guarantee of self-regulation and provides for self-correcting mechanisms.
- b) **Transparency option:** Voters have the right to know how parties are funded. The regulatory power of competition is not sufficient and the public must serve as a watchdog.
- c) **Advocacy option:** A public agency is required which can monitor, control and enforce sets of rules regulating party funding. It is also required to be a public watchdog.
- d) **Diversified regulation option:** This combines benign neglect, precise regulation, public incentives and occasional sanctions.

In view of the fact that political parties are considered an important component of civil society and that multiparty contestation for the status and privilege of government should occur without any government or state interference, private funding is generally accepted. Public funding, on the other hand, is more contested as a political practice. Austin & Tjernström (2003, pp 4-8) summarise the reasons for and against it in the following points: Public funding is deemed to be a necessary cost of democracy. It is also justified as the bridge between voluntary, private donations and required or necessary spending by political parties. Public funds are considered as a means to level the playing field between parties, and which will arguably enhance parties' chances to be elected.

Opponents of public funding fear that parties may lose their independence and become reliant on funding. There are also differences of opinion about the distribution formula for the allocation of funds and public funding is generally unpopular with the public. A compromise is reached in the form of regulatory frameworks, such as limits (mainly on expenditures, disclosure of income and bans on sources of funding). Banned sources tend to be anonymous donations, foreign

donations, donations from public sector contractors, corporate donations and trade union donations. Regulations on public funding pertain mainly to a disclosure of expenditure and prohibitions on the use of funds.

The frameworks within which party funding in South Africa have to be conducted are: the African Union (AU) *Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption*, adopted in Maputo, 11 July 2003; the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*, SADC summit, Mauritius, August 2004; the *Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act* 1997, and the Regulation under section 10(1) of the Act, 1998; and The Electoral Code of Conduct, Schedule 2 s 99 of the *Electoral Act* 73 of 1998.

The AU Convention includes party funding in the context of corruption and related offences. The relationship between the two is explained in terms of undue advantage or improper influence, which is more relevant in the case of private funding than of public funding. In Article 4(1)(f) acts of corruption in this respect are described as:

the offering, giving, solicitation or acceptance directly or indirectly, or promising of any undue advantage to or by any person who asserts or confirms that he or she is able to exert any improper influence over the decision making of any person performing functions in the public or private sector in consideration thereof, whether the undue advantage is for himself or herself or for anyone else, as well as the request, receipt or the acceptance of the offer or the promise of such an advantage, in consideration of that influence, whether or not the influence is exerted or whether or not the supposed influence leads to the intended result

AU 2003, p 8

Article 9(2) of the South African Electoral Code of Conduct appears to have the same objective. It prohibits any person from offering any inducement or reward to another person to join or not to join a party; to attend or not attend a public meeting, march, demonstration, rally or other public political event; to vote or not to vote, or to vote or not to vote in a particular way; or to refuse a nomination as a candidate or to withdraw as a candidate (*Electoral Act* 1998: Schedule 2, s 99). These forms of prohibited conduct can include the use of funds – and in South Africa public funds are an important component of the parties' electoral resources.

SADC has been slightly more specific in its recently adopted Principles and Guidelines, though they pertain only to election observation. One of the guidelines, 'to determine the nature and scope of election observation', is set in paragraph 4.1.6: 'Where applicable, funding of political parties must be transparent and based on an agreed threshold in accordance with the laws of the land' (SADC 2004, p 2). This stipulation is ambiguous because it does not specify the public or private nature of the funding. One can assume that it includes private funding, but it is not clear whether it also includes public funding. Though the SADC guidelines are

supposedly directed at setting standards for the region, this stipulation is not formulated in a prescriptive format: 'in accordance with the laws of the land'. South Africa, for example, does not have a statutorily agreed threshold. Therefore the SADC stipulation is weak – if the qualification 'where applicable' is also added – and will hardly contribute to greater transparency.

Reference to a threshold is an interesting addition to the discussion about party funding. Even in developed economies and consolidated democracies there is increasing support for the imposition of limitations on the amount of money spent by political parties. For example, at the 3rd European Conference of Specialised Services in the Fight Against Corruption, held in Madrid in October 1998, the participants concluded that at national level one of the principles to include in European conventions on corruption, is to 'impose an upper limit on political parties' and election campaigns' expenditure' (Madrid 1998, p 2). In 2001 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation 1516, 'Financing of political parties', which included this principle (Parliamentary Assembly 2001, p 2). Another recommendation by the Council's Committee of Ministers followed in 2003. Article 1 of Recommendation 4 (2003) states that the 'state should provide support to political parties. State support should be limited to reasonable contributions. State support may be financial.' The recommendation suggests limits on expenditure: 'States should consider adopting measures to prevent excessive funding needs of political parties, such as, establishing limits on expenditure on electoral campaigns.' States should require all political parties to specify all the donations they have received (Committee of Ministers 2003, pp 2-4). The forty-six members of the council, therefore, gradually move towards a highly regulated funding regime for political parties.

The relevance for South Africa is that, in view of the closer scrutiny of elections in general and the greater emphasis on 'good governance', which includes anti-corruption and anti-fraud measures and early attempts at setting standards for the African continent and Southern Africa in particular, one can expect increasing attention to be paid to party funding. International comparisons indicate that funding is, globally, a delicate issue, and that Southern and South Africa do not necessarily lag behind in measures to improve its regulation. In the next section the focus is specifically on South African regulations applied in the 2004 general election.

SOUTH AFRICAN FUNDING REGULATIONS

Public funding of political parties in South Africa is regulated by the *Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act* 103 of 1997, and the *Regulation under Section 10(1) of the Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act 1997* (Regulation R117, 1998), issued on 20 November 1998.

Section 236 of the Constitution of 1996 stipulates that to 'enhance multi-party democracy, national legislation must provide for the funding of political parties

participating in national and provincial legislatures on an equitable and proportional basis’.

Article 2 of the Act provides for the establishment of the Represented Political Parties Fund. The fund’s money will come from allocations made annually by Parliament, from contributions and donations made to the fund coming from any sources, from interest earned on moneys deposited and invested, and from any other sources.

Table 1 reflects the allocations from Parliament received by the fund since the 1998/1999 financial year.

Table 1

Financial Year	Parliamentary Allocation (Rands)	Percentage Increase
1998/1999	53 000 000	–
1999/2000	55 650 000	5,0
2000/2001	57 880 000	4,0
2001/2002	60 983 000	5,36
2002/2003	63 683 000	4,43
2003/2004	66 653 000	4,66

The following interest was earned by the fund (in Rands):

1998/1999	463 589
1999/2000	2 883 194
2000/2001	2 606 610
2001/2002	526 659
2002/2003	617 695
2003/2004	442 985

SOURCE: IEC 2001, pp 40, 44; IEC 2002A, pp 56, 62; IEC 2002B, pp 58, 64; IEC 2002C, pp 58, 64; IEC 2003, pp 56, 61; IEC 2004, pp 70, 74

According to officials of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) responsible for the fund’s management, it has not yet received any donations or any other forms of contributions. A few small return payments made by a number of recipient parties constitute the remainder of the fund’s income (interview, Chaplog-Louw & Hendrickse 2004).

According to the Act, the fund is managed and administered by the IEC's chief electoral officer in her capacity as the commission's head of administration. She is the fund's accounting officer and chief executive officer. In practice, the fund is managed in the IEC's Financial Management Department and specifically in its section Budget and Political Funding. This department accounts for its management functions to the IEC's Chief Financial Officer, who is accountable to the commission's Chief Executive Officer (interview, Chaplog-Louw & Hendrickse 2004).

Article 5(1)(b) of the Act determines that the moneys allocated from the fund to a political party 'may be used for any purposes compatible with its functioning as a political party in a modern democracy'. They include the following (article 5(1)(b)(i-vi)):

- The development of the political will of the people.
- Bringing the political parties' influence to bear on the shaping of public opinion.
- Inspiring and furthering political education.
- Promoting active participation by individual citizens in political life.
- Exercising an influence on political trends.
- Ensuring continuous, vital links between the people and organs of state.

Article 5(3)(a-d) identifies the use of moneys *excluded* from public funding, namely:

- moneys used to directly or indirectly pay any benefit to a member of any legislature or anyone who holds any other office of profit in any sphere of government;
- financing anything in contravention of a code of ethics in any of the legislatures;
- moneys used for business purposes or to acquire immovable property, except property used for ordinary party political purposes;
- any other purpose which is incompatible with a political party's functioning in a modern democracy.

The question is whether these moneys can be used for election purposes. Chaplog-Louw and Hendrickse (2004) interpret the Act in strict legal terms as not explicitly excluding electioneering from the purposes for which funding may be used. No specific reference is made in the Act to elections. In practice, the parties are using the allocated moneys for election campaigning.

The Act makes one specific reference to the use of money for elections: in article 9(3)(a) and (b) it determines that not more than twenty-one days before an election of Parliament and/or a provincial legislature, the political parties represented in those legislatures which have received public funding have to close their accounts funded by public money. Not more than one day before the election they must repay to the fund (and therefore to the IEC) their unspent balances as

they were twenty-one days before election day. Within fourteen days of the election they have to submit an audited statement of their accounts to the IEC.

In practice, this means that parties can use their public funds for election campaigning up to three weeks before election day. Most of the parties participating in the 2004 election campaigned for between eight and ten weeks, which means that for the majority of the period public funds could be used. The IEC is unsure about the rationale for the twenty-one-day cut-off period, except to guess that it might serve as a gesture to create a more level playing field for represented and unrepresented political parties (interview Chaplog-Louw & Hendrickse 2004). Such a rationale would be valid only if the election campaign period were very short and all the parties had equitable access to private funding. A level playing field is merely a constitutional principle, but, in reality, the differing strengths and levels of popular support for parties are also reflected in their resources and financial capacities. Though financial resources are indispensable to modern-day election campaigns, no direct correlation has yet been established between spending on campaigns and electoral support. A level playing field is therefore neither a political reality nor an absolute prerequisite for a fair election.

Reference was made in the discussion of the Act's Article 5(3)(a-d) to the uses excluded from public funding. This raises the question of who is responsible for enforcing parties' compliance with the Act, and who, therefore, determines violations of these prescriptions. The IEC's approach is to leave the matter in the hands of each party's external auditors, whose reports must indicate whether the allocated moneys were used in accordance with the Act. The IEC relies on the Auditor General's review of all these reports to identify any violations. Between 1998 and 2004 no such violations were reported (interview, Chaplog-Louw & Hendrickse 2004).

Parties receive public funding based on a particular allocation formula. These formulae are often contested and IDEA (Austin & Tjernström 2003, p 9) has identified them as one of the problem areas in public funding. In South Africa, the Act stipulates two components for the formula:

the principle of proportionality based on three variations, namely a party's proportional representation in the National Assembly, or the provincial legislatures, or a combination of both. [It is important to note that local authorities are excluded.]

and

the principle of equity based on the following two variations, namely:

- a) a fixed threshold for a minimum allocation to each of the parties represented in a legislature, or
- b) a weighted scale of representation for an allocation to each of the political parties represented in a legislature [excluding local legislatures].

The Regulation (1998) specified the legislative provisions in more details. Of the total amount of funding allocated to the parties, 90 per cent is distributed in terms of proportionality and 10 per cent in terms of equity. For the 2004/2005 financial year this amounts to R63 759,40 (proportionality) and R7 084 443,60 (equity). The 90:10 distribution principle was decided upon by the joint parliamentary committee responsible for the Regulations issued in terms of the Act. The IEC did not play any role in determining this ratio.

The Regulation (1998) determines that proportional allocation is calculated by dividing the 90 per cent of the total amount among the participating parties in all the national and provincial legislatures in accordance with the number of seats awarded to each participating party in the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures jointly. (It therefore uses the third option mentioned in the Act.) The formula is, therefore: number of representatives per party (National Assembly plus all provinces) \div 830. For example, after the 2004 election the African Christian Democratic Party received six National Assembly seats and eight provincial legislature seats (Western Cape 2, KZN 2, Limpopo 1, Gauteng 1, Northern Cape 1, Free State 1). Therefore its proportional funding allocation is $(14 \div 830) \times 63\,759\,992,40 = \text{R}1\,075\,469,75$.

The equitable allocation of 10 per cent is based on a fixed threshold and is determined by the following two steps:

- a) the 10 per cent of the total amount is divided amongst the nine provinces in proportion to the number of seats in each provincial legislature, and
- b) the allocation per province is divided equally between the represented parties in that provincial legislature.

This can be illustrated by looking at the allocation in the 2004/2005 financial year:

Step 1: Proportional Allocation Amongst Provinces (see Table 2)

The formula is (seats per province \div 430 - the total number of seats in all the provincial legislatures) \times R7 084 444 (the 10% allocation).

An example is the Western Cape: $(42 \div 430) \times 7\,084\,444 = \text{R}691\,969$ in total for all the parties in the legislature.

Step 2: Equal Allocation Within Provinces (see Table 3)

The intervals at which these allocations are paid to the parties are important for the purpose of planning a party's use of the moneys for elections. The Act and Regulation determine that payments must be made in four equal instalments, each

within three months of the previous payment. The first instalment must be paid within four weeks of the beginning of the financial year. The fund's financial year is from 1 April to 31 March. In practice, the instalments are therefore paid in April, July, October and January.

Table 2

Province	Percentage of Seats (%)	Allocation per Province (Rands)
Western Cape	9,767	691 968,91
Limpopo	11,395	807 297,06
Eastern Cape	14,651	1 037 953,36
Gauteng	16,977	1 202 707,87
KZN	18,605	1 318 036,02
Northern Cape	6,977	494 263,51
North West	7,674	543 689,86
Mpumalanga	6,977	494 263,51
Free State	6,977	494 263,51

Table 3

Province	Number of Represented Parties per Province	Allocation per Party (Rands)
Western Cape	6 (691 968.01÷6)	115 328.15
Limpopo	4	201 824.27
Eastern Cape	4	259 488.34
Gauteng	8	150 338.48
KZN	6	219 672.67
Northern Cape	6	82 377.25
North West	4	135 922.46
Mpumalanga	5	164 754.50
Free State	4	123 565.88

Taking into account the 21-day restriction placed on the use of public funds and the timing of these instalments, the election date of 14 April 2004 had the following implications:

- a) Funding for the election was given in the 2003/2004 financial year, because the parties had to close their public funding accounts by 25 March 2004 and thereafter could not use any of the funds for election purposes.
- b) Parties could not receive the first instalment in the 2004/2005 financial year on 1 April 2004 (ie, before the election) but had to wait until after the election results were certified.
- c) The April instalment was therefore calculated on the basis of the 2004 election results.

Michael Hendrickse of the IEC highlights a complex legal implication. According to Article 5(1)(a) of the Act 'every political party is entitled to be allocated moneys from the fund for any financial year that it is represented' in the various legislatures. Does it mean that the party's entitlement to its amount for the coming year is determined on 1 April, irrespective of changes in its representation (elections, floor crossing, etc) during the course of that year? Or can the allocations change between two instalments in the same financial year? The fact that the 2004 election was held in April meant that the first instalment after the election overlapped neatly with the first instalment of the new financial year. The same applied to changes in representation and therefore funding allocations after the floor crossing in the national and provincial government spheres in April 2003 (interview, Chaplog-Louw & Hendrickse 2004).

MANAGEMENT OF THE FUND

The management framework of the fund is determined by the regulations drafted by the joint parliamentary committee. The annual parliamentary allocation is incorporated in the budget of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, presented to Parliament for approval as part of the national Budget. The IEC has, therefore, no discretion in respect of the criteria for managing and taking decisions about the fund (interview, Chaplog-Louw & Hendrickse 2004).

An interesting aspect of the IEC's management of the fund is, however, the correlation between the parliamentary allocation to the fund and the eventual allocation made to the political parties. It is presented in Table 4.

The allocations to the parties were always less than the parliamentary allocation, except in 2001/2002 and in 2002/2003. On average the parliamentary allocation increases incrementally by 5 per cent per annum, while the percentage increases (or decrease) in the allocation to parties show no pattern. There were above average increases in the financial years 2001/2002 and 2002/2003.

Table 4

Financial Year	Number of Parties	Parliamentary Allocation (R)	Allocation to Parties (R)	Increase/decrease (%)
1998/1999	8	53 000 000	52 103 000	–
1999/2000	13	55 650 000	54 708 147	5,0
2000/2001	13	57 880 000	57 880 000	5,7
2001/2002	13	60 983 000	62 886 155	8,65
2002/2003	13	63 683 000	67 405 856	7,19
2003/2004	20	66 653 000	66 604 023	-1,19
2004/2005	12	NA	70 844 436	6,37

We can also look at the fund's annual surpluses or deficits and the balance in its accounts (Table 5) to explain the IEC's style of management.

Table 5

Financial Year	Surplus/(Deficit) (R)	Balance (R)
1998/1999	759 940	759 940
1999/2000	2 998 042	3 757 982
2000/2001	1 765 415	5 576 386
2001/2002	(1 869 665)	3 706 721
2002/2003	(3 479 050)	227 671
2003/2004	45 476	273 147

SOURCE: IEC 2001, p 39; IEC 2002A, p 55; IEC 2002B, pp 57-58; IEC 2002C, pp 57-58; IEC 2003, pp 55-56; IEC 2004, pp 69-70

The two deficits in 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 and the above average increases in allocations to the parties in those years are explained by the high interests received in 1999/2000 and 2000/2001. In both these years there was a substantial surplus and a very healthy balance on the accounts. The 'over'-spending in 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 was intended to appropriate the accumulated interests. In 2003/2004 the fund was managed in such a manner that a small surplus was declared in order to settle on a balance of about R250 000 per year. This management intervention required a *decrease* of 1,19 per cent in party allocations between 2002/2003 and

2003/2004, while the parliamentary allocation continued to increase by almost five per cent.

These aspects of fund management require discretionary decision-making and it could not be established who was responsible for taking these decisions. It is probable that the IEC managers played an important part in the decisions.

Taking cognisance of the fact that the IEC is responsible for the fund's management and administration, but that the parliamentary allocation is channelled through the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development's budget, while a joint bicameral parliamentary committee is responsible for its statutory aspects, the question can be posed: is there a mechanism whereby the represented political parties can interact with the IEC in relation to the fund? IEC officials indicated that no special liaison bodies exist within the IEC to perform such a function. According to Michael Hendrickse, the only available institutional mechanism is the Party Liaison Committee (PLC), situated in the IEC's Voting, Democracy Development and Liaison Department. Between general elections each of the represented parties has a seat on the PLC, while, during election periods, all the parties registered for participation are represented on the committee. The IEC could not recall any PLC meeting at which any aspect of the fund was raised by any party. At the time of the 1999 general election the United Democratic Movement complained in the PLC of the fact that it had no access to public funding because it had been formed after the 1994 election and did not qualify as a represented party. This move suggests that parties do not perceive the IEC as the real decision-maker in relation to the fund and public funding in general. It is, however, difficult to determine where the real locus of decision-making lies, and how the parties relate to it.

Another aspect of the IEC's fund management is that it does not have real powers to enforce the Act and lacks the statutory powers to enforce credible accountability. IEC officials refer specifically to the overlapping forms of party funding. For instance, parties receive funding from other sources to enable them to establish and maintain constituency offices. Because parties are not required to place the public funding they receive in trust accounts, it is impossible for auditors or persons outside the parties to link expenditure items to particular income sources. This enables political parties to engage in inventive bookkeeping between different accounts. The Act does not prevent them from arbitrarily deciding which expenses to include in their public funding account and which to transfer to other accounts. Malpractices in this respect can only be detected by their external auditors, but the IEC lacks the powers to perform independent audits.

IEC personnel who manage the fund have also expressed their concerns about a widely-held suspicion that political parties utilise their public funding as security for bank credit. Though the Act and Regulation do not explicitly prohibit such a practice, the IEC has doubts about its ethicality (interview, Chaplog-Louw & Hendrickse 2004).

Taking into account the above-mentioned reservations about the parties' effective and credible public accountability, the fund's regulations (1998, pp 2-3)

identified six descriptive expenditure categories for the utilisation of public funds. Parties must organise their annual audited financial statements in accordance with these categories. Table 6 indicates the parties' financial practices during the 2003/2004 financial year (these are relevant to the 2004 election).

Table 6

	ACDP	ADP	ANC	AZAPO	CP
Allocation for the year	1 404 822	72 274	42 573 853	72 274	198 002
Less: total expenditure	(1 550 278)	(60 823)	(42 572 100)	(72 837)	(198 026)
1) Personnel Expenditure	453 000	6 152	21 556 123	12 600	156 077
2) Accommodation	150	–	59 805	–	–
3) Travel	112 978	–	614 781	694	–
4) Arrangement of Meetings, Rallies	138 255	3 931	13 510	–	–
5) Administrative	404 349	35 773	5 482 659	59 543	35 163
6) Promotion and Publications	418 187	14 638	14 845 222	–	1 500
Fixed Asset Expenditure	23 359	329	–	–	5 286
Unspent money at year-end	(145 456)	11 451	1 753	(563)	(24)
Plus: interest and other income	14 160	3	3 802	461	32
Surplus/(deficit)	(131 296)	11 454	5 555	(102)	8
	DA	FA	FF	IAM	ID
Allocation for the year	7 087 154	342 551	933 740	72 274	270 277
Less: total expenditure	(6 949 563)	(359 451)	(1 940 798)	(71 096)	(257 609)
1) Personnel Expenditure	4 934 463	64 175	353 053	13 802	–
2) Accommodation	–	–	12 795	–	–
3) Travel	21 798	96 034	88 305	7 088	–
4) Arrangement of Meetings, Rallies	–	–	7 775	2 515	257 000
5) Administrative	1 857 816	199 242	839 615	12 283	609
6) Promotion and Publications	135 486	–	639 255	35 408	–
Fixed Asset Expenditure	–	–	–	–	–
Unspent money at year-end	137 591	(16 900)	(1 007 058)	1 178	12 668
Plus: interest & other income	15 352	110	33 079	–	56
Surplus/(deficit)	152 943	(16 790)	(973 979)	1 178	12 724

	IFP	MF	NA	NLP	NNP
Allocation for the year	5 050 841	371 830	72 274	202 480	4 702 101
Less: total expenditure	(5 111 225)	(389 658)	(72 326)	(202 273)	(4 723 160)
1) Personnel Expenditure	3 159 309	19 950	71 845	113 161	1 224 106
2) Accommodation	–	–	–	11 900	35 740
3) Travel	84 714	–	–	8 050	240 278
4) Arrangement of Meetings, Rallies	195 442	–	–	16 145	227 825
5) Administrative	1 354 148	169 397	481	7 258	1 179 875
6) Promotion and Publications	52 053	196 652	–	45 759	1 815 336
Fixed Asset Expenditure	265 559	3 659	–	–	–
Unspent money at year-end	(60 384)	(17 828)	(52)	207	(21 059)
Plus: Interest and other income	22 678	46	5	35	–
Surplus/(Deficit)	(37 706)	(17 782)	(47)	242	(21 059)
	PAC	PDP	UCDP	UDM	Total
Allocation for the year	610 995	227 281	535 951	1 779 752	66 653 000
Less: Total expenditure	(791 629)	(218 852)	(539 895)	(1 655 704)	(67 737 303)
1) Personnel Expenditure	413 874	624	164 497	356 597	33 073 408
2) Accommodation	–	2 256	6 503	37 360	166 509
3) Travel	20 092	14 035	40 523	277 378	1 626 748
4) Arrangement of Meetings, Rallies	61 991	30 041	–	89 499	1 043 929
5) Administrative	209 632	6 714	207 191	471 939	12 533 687
6) Promotion and Publications	82 689	165 182	108 314	422 931	18 978 612
Fixed Asset Expenditure	3 351	–	12 867	–	314 410
Unspent money at year-end	(180 634)	8 429	(3 944)	124 048	(1 084 303)
Plus: Interest and other income	188	105	1 842	5 657	97 611
Surplus/(deficit)	(180 446)	8 534	(2 102)	129 705	(986 692)

SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FUND, PREPARED BY THE IEC (IEC 2004, p 76)

The fact that the parties' expenditure is structured into six categories (plus a fixed asset expenditure), means that the external observer or the public can hardly gain a sense of the real nature of how the moneys have been used. It is even more of a problem if one takes into account the broad purposes of the funds set out in Article 5(1)(b) of the Act. In the end the parties' integrity, and not the statutory provisions, is the only guarantee that the moneys have been correctly utilised.

CONTENTIOUS ASPECTS OF THE FUNDING

Two categories of parties excluded from public funding in South Africa are those not represented in any national or provincial legislatures and those represented only in local or municipal councils. Because only parties that are represented may receive funds parties that are formed between elections experience a systemic bias and are at a disadvantage when they fight their first election. (That was the predicament of the UDM in 1999.) The counter-argument might be that if they have sufficient popular support, the two opportunities for floor crossing in the second and fourth years of a legislative term will provide them with the chance to receive some representation before an election, and that public funding for them will be adjusted in response to that situation. Floor crossing cannot, however, be considered a reliable barometer of public opinion or general electoral support.

The Independent Civic Organisation of South Africa (ICOSA) raised the problem of the exclusion of local parties in response to its disqualification from participation in the 2004 election. In its view, the exclusion of local parties from funding is discriminatory and unfair, and it therefore calls for an amendment to the Constitution. It also calls for 'equal funding for party elections campaigns to promote multi party democracy' (Affidavit 2004, p 2; Letter, Dhlamini 2004, p 3). In principle, the exclusion of local parties appears to be an anomaly and contradictory to the purpose of public funding. The special electoral system used in the local government sphere would, however, complicate practical implementation of funding. Half the seats in municipal councils are filled by a system of proportional representation and party lists. Public funding for them might still be manageable. The other half are filled by ward representatives who may be individual, independent candidates. By-elections, as well as the two floor crossings per legislative term, may also complicate changes in representation more than they do those at the national and provincial levels. Public funding for them would be senseless and would pose an administrative nightmare. Alternatives to funding, such as the free use of public facilities for electioneering, might be more feasible.

CONCLUSION

The funding – whether private or public – of political parties poses major challenges for the public, for watchdog institutions in civil society, and for statutory bodies responsible for enforcing party accountability. Access to financial resources will always be considered by contesting parties as the crux of their success or failure. The public tends always to be suspicious that big donors – mainly corporate businesses – will gain a disproportionate advantage in public decision-making processes, which approximates to corruption or undue influence.

Regulating party funding is, therefore, a compromise option. But regulation can engender credibility and trust only if loopholes are closed and one way of doing so is to regulate both public and private funding. European practices involve

far more regulatory interventions and limitations than do those in South Africa. In addition to the fact that South African lawmakers are not willing to compromise the privacy of their donors, they might also be sensitive about being seen to limit the freedom of political competition. The belief that African governments are interventionist in order to hamstringing their opponents might make funding regulations unpopular in ANC circles, despite the fact that similar regulations operate successfully in the European context.

The main characteristic of public funding in South Africa, and its administration by the IEC is that the IEC has almost no powers to enforce the regulations. Public accountability assumes a prescribed form, but its content cannot be verified independently. For the smaller parties public funding provides probably more of a support base than it does for the larger parties, which can rely more on private donations. In this respect, public funding does make a contribution to multiparty participation, especially in a developing political system.

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THE TURNOVER OF POWER IN KWAZULU-NATAL

A Growing Commitment to and Engagement with the Democratic Process

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ABSTRACT

The 2004 South African election culminated in a turnover of power in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The province, formerly governed by the IFP, was won by the ANC. Various theories have been put forward to explain the IFP's loss and the ANC's consequent victory in KwaZulu-Natal. The IFP believes its loss has to do with the ANC's determination to win the province while the ANC puts its victory down to having been able to permeate IFP strongholds and increase its percentage of the vote in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Other factors, too, may well have contributed to the turnover of power in the province. These include the IFP's inability to shed its Zulu nationalist image, decreased levels of violence, and higher standards of election monitoring. While the ANC's eventual control of all the provinces is viewed in some circles as a sign of a party-dominant democracy, the peaceful turnover of power (albeit at a provincial level) may be interpreted as a positive step towards democratic consolidation in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The 2004 election marked ten years of democracy for South Africa. This places the country well beyond the transition stage and at a point where analysis of democratic consolidation has set in. Samuel Huntington (1991, p 267) contends that a democracy becomes consolidated when an electoral regime is fully entrenched and capable of delivering free and competitive elections and if 'the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of transition loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to the winners of a later election'. While a turnover of power at the national level in South Africa is not imminent, the 2004 election marked a turnover of power at the provincial level for the first time since the transition to democracy.

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is a case in point. In the first democratic election of 1994 the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) won control of the province with 50,32 per cent of the provincial vote and forty-one seats in the provincial legislature. In the 1999 election the IFP managed to retain control of the province, with 41,90 per cent of the vote and thirty-four seats in the legislature. In the 2004 election, however, the IFP only managed to secure 36,82 per cent of the vote and thirty seats in the legislature, effectively losing control of the province to the African National Congress (ANC) (CPS 2004a).

The IFP's steady decline in KwaZulu-Natal in the past three elections has been concurrent with the ANC's ascendancy. In 1994 the ANC won 32,23 per cent of the vote and twenty-six seats; in 1999 it won 39,38 per cent and thirty-two seats and in 2004 it won 46,98 per cent and thirty-eight seats (CPS 2004a). Much is made of the lack of electoral opposition to the ANC at national level, now, with its victory in KwaZulu-Natal (and in the Western Cape), it seems that provincial level electoral opposition is also diminishing. Notwithstanding the dilemmas and dangers associated with party-dominant democracy, the ANC's eventual victory in KwaZulu-Natal signals a growing commitment to and engagement with democratic processes in the province. The IFP's decline, on the other hand, has much to do with its inability to break away from its image as a Zulu nationalist organisation, its loss of support within its traditional rural stronghold, decreased levels of violence, higher standards of election monitoring, reports of poor governance in the province and the success of the ANC's election campaigning in KwaZulu-Natal.

Table 1
Provincial Legislature Results: KwaZulu-Natal 1994, 1999, 2004

	1994			1999			2004		
Party	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats
ANC	1 181 118	32,33	26	1 167 094	39,38	32	1 287 823	46,98	38
IFP	1 844 070	50,32	41	1 241 522	41,90	34	1 009 267	36,82	30

SOURCE: CPS 2004b

INKATHA AND ZULU NATIONALISM

Much is made of the IFP being a Zulu nationalist party. Indeed, at its inception in 1975, Inkatha was not marketed as a political party but as a national, cultural liberation movement, Inkatha ye Nkululeko ye Sizwe. According to its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'all members of the Zulu nation are automatically members of Inkatha if they are Zulus' (Mare and Hamilton 1987, p 57). The other thrust of Inkatha politics, however, was a 'revival' of the ANC (after the ANC had been

banned in 1960 and could no longer operate from within South Africa). Buthelezi, taking a more nationally directed stance, commented that 'We in Inkatha see ourselves as committed to the ideals of the ANC – not as it operates now but to the ideals propagated by the founding fathers in 1912' (Mare 2000, p 67). It has always been difficult to reconcile Inkatha, the Zulu organisation, with Inkatha, a liberation movement. While maintaining, in 1979, that 'Inkatha plainly declares itself to be an instrument of liberation, the business of black liberation is our business' (Mzala 1988, p 120), Buthelezi was also full of Zulu nationalist rhetoric. 'The Zulus are a closely knit political unit which has reached a state of nationhood that no other black group has reached in the whole of South Africa. In fulfilling the destiny of this country for all its people, the importance of Zulu coherence must never be underestimated by anyone' (Mzala 1988, p 121).

Despite Buthelezi's constant invocation of Zulu nationalism in the form of the triumphs of the great Zulu warriors such as Shaka, Cetshwayo and Dingaan, as well as the unwavering authority of the chiefs and the Zulu royal family, it is questionable whether support for Inkatha, and later for the IFP, was really grounded in people's beliefs in their 'Zuluness'.

A study conducted in 1995 on ethnic identity in KwaZulu-Natal revealed that ethnic identity was not 'strongly foregrounded in people's narratives'. People did not seem to be engaging with their 'Zuluness' at the same level of intensity and urgency as they were with gender or age. They showed little interest in or knowledge of Zulu history and no spontaneous invocation of a glorious Zulu past. They also showed little sense of threat to their Zulu group membership, although they did see other groups as threats to them as 'black people' or as 'Africans'. The study concludes that the form of Zulu ethnic identity constructed by Buthelezi is not immediately relevant in the lives of the people interviewed for the study – 'not only does he [Buthelezi] not appeal to the full complexity of their life experiences ... but he emphasizes customs that cannot be practiced as readily as before and a glorious warrior past that cannot be remembered or recaptured' (Campbell, Mare and Walker 1995).

The IFP's election to provincial government has seen it attempt to move away from its Zulu nationalist preoccupations and focus more on issues of governance. Popular belief, however, is that it has been unable to reinvent itself in a manner that the provincial electorate can relate to or identify with (author interview with Maseko 2004).

THE IFP'S RURAL SUPPORT BASE

The use by Inkatha of the Zulu nationalist ideal probably has much to do with Buthelezi also having occupied the position of leader of the KwaZulu homeland (in the province formerly known as Natal) during the apartheid regime. Buthelezi's rationale for agreeing to the homeland concept was that he was 'working within the system in order to change it' (Mare 2000, p 67). Buthelezi's leadership of the

KwaZulu homeland also probably accounts for the fact that the IFP has its stronghold in the rural areas of what is now KwaZulu-Natal.

Lawrence Schlemmer, in 1980, claimed that Inkatha's members were predominantly Zulu and located in the rural areas of the KwaZulu Bantustan – despite its efforts to mobilise outside the Zulu ethnic group and territory 95 per cent of its membership was Zulu and, of its nearly 1 000 branches, only 36 existed outside Natal, while only 203 were in urban areas (Mzala 1988, p 128).

Until recently the IFP's stronghold of support has been in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. Many have argued that the decline in its support in the rural areas has to do with increased levels of urbanisation – the 1996 census recorded the rural-urban divide in KwaZulu-Natal as 57 per cent to 43 per cent, while the 2001 census recorded it as 54 per cent to 46 per cent. The IFP's declining support in the rural areas may, however, have more to do with the effects of democratisation on a post-homeland electorate than on the forces of urbanisation.

During the apartheid regime homeland residents were effectively governed without any democratic input and it appears that Inkatha's strong rural support could be attributed to the local traditional chiefs who, as ex officio members of the KwaZulu homeland legislative assembly, had much to gain from mobilising their constituencies to support the party. They did this through a mixture of intimidation and offering incentives. Those most vulnerable to intimidation and coercion by chiefs were women left on their own while their husbands sought migrant work. This would account for what Roger Southall labelled the 'disproportionate amount of females who are members [of Inkatha]' (Mzala 1988, p 130). Incentives were also used as a means of persuasion for Inkatha members. Reports surfaced that chiefs and Inkatha officials had the power to distribute resources. Rank and file members of Inkatha in rural areas knew that it was easier to get land, housing and reference books by joining the party. Migrant workers from KwaZulu had also reported that unless they could display their Inkatha membership card at the labour bureau they would not be given access to jobs in the industrial areas.

In 1978 Buthelezi went so far as to state in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly that Inkatha membership would in the future be taken into account when promoting civil servants. Oscar Dhlomo, KwaZulu Minister of Education made it clear that teachers who were not members of Inkatha would be regarded with suspicion. Buthelezi sanctioned this with the comment that 'It is important for our political survival, the survival of our people and our cultural survival, that headmasters and school inspectors be imbued with the spirit and principles of Inkatha' (Mzala 1988, p 131).

In 1983 *The Star* (19 October) reported that 'tribal authorities are unpopular with the people they control; many allege that they have to pay bribes to get land or pensions'. There were stories about chiefs using their acquired power to extort taxes from peasants before granting permits for, for example, cutting wood or, thatching grass or brewing beer. Large amounts of money, much of it in bribes, were collected by the chiefs from the rural masses (Mzala 1988, p 129). Indeed,

Roger Southall has questioned whether payment of a membership fee to Inkatha is a real indication of support or merely a tribal levy imposed by the chiefs. Southall also argues that Inkatha's popular support was exaggerated and achieved through sheer force of repetition and a well polished propaganda machine rather than through any acquaintance with the situation on the ground (Mzala 1988, p 129).

With the advent of democracy, and if the last three sets of election results are anything to go by, post-homeland rural communities are becoming accustomed to the variety of political visions to which they can subscribe during an election. In short, KwaZulu-Natal's rural electorate is beginning to realise that it can exercise a choice about who governs it.

VIOLENCE IN KWAZULU-NATAL

My main fear is not about who will win the elections. Almost everyone knows that the MC (ANC) will. After all how can it be otherwise after what the chiefs and Inkatha have done to the children? My biggest worry is what they will do to us when they come to learn that they have lost.

You say that a person can walk into that office and put a cross opposite the candidate or party of her choice, what happens if some eye planted up in the roof witnesses where I put the cross and takes my photograph?

Schlemmer and Hirschfield 1994

This testimony from two women in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal just before the 1994 election illustrates the levels of fear of the IFP that existed in the province and which effectively hindered the advent of free and fair elections.

Political violence in KwaZulu has claimed the lives of as many as 20 000 people since 1984. More than half of these deaths occurred after 1990, that is, after the unbanning of the liberation movements. The three-month period that preceded the 1994 election saw the death of 1 000 people and, between 1994 and 2000, a further 2 000 people were killed (Taylor 2002).

That the violence was politically motivated is not in dispute, documentation of the Shobashobane massacre in 1995, in which nineteen ANC supporters were murdered by a group of Inkatha supporters; the Richmond killings, which, from 1988 onwards, saw territorial battles waged between the Inkatha chiefly authority and youth comrades; and the Nongoma assassinations that followed the ANC setting up a branch in Nongoma, an IFP stronghold, in order to attract support for the 1999 election and precipitated serious conflict between the IFP and the ANC, resulting in attacks and the murder of seven IFP and six ANC leaders, clearly show how the conflict between rival political parties culminated in violence.

Apart from the deaths, another major effect of political violence is the intimidation that goes with it and is aimed at increasing and maintaining support. For example, during the Nongoma crisis residents in the suburb of Redhill complained that IFP supporters fenced off their suburb and began demanding that all residents pay them for the 'security service'. Failure to pay resulted in severe beatings (Taylor 2002). Reports indicate that this type of situation was compounded by police, who perpetuated the violence and seemed to have the support of the provincial government. 'Most police, themselves from the Nongoma district, have continued to act as if they were still in the KwaZulu police – when Inkatha political interests overtly dictated the form and content of policing' (Taylor 2002, p 23). Indeed, during the Shobashobane massacre, after which a special investigative team was set up by the Government, the IFP argued that policing in KwaZulu-Natal was a provincial matter. 'We are not saying that the central government should not be involved in security matters in KwaZulu-Natal. But Schedule 6 of the Constitution says policing is also a provincial issue and as long as national intervention is done in a unilateral way this is invariably a partisan approach' (Taylor 2002, p 10).

According to Rupert Taylor (2002) violence in the 1990s had much to do with paramilitary forces from both the ANC and the IFP (Umkhonto We Sizwe and IFP armed and militia wings trained and organised in the 1980s), who continued to drive it. Outside investigative units found it hard to make significant headway and successful prosecutions were few and far between.

So why then was there a marked decline in violence in the run-ups to the 1999 and 2004 elections, and why has this decline coincided with the IFP's loss of support in the province? Many have argued that violence as a means of competing for power is not an option; that the use of violence is rendered less fashionable as democracy matures (Ngwenya and Ndhlela 2004). Indeed, elections in South Africa are usually marked by the signing of a code of conduct by all political party leaders, who commit themselves to upholding free, fair and peaceful elections. Makubetse Sekhonyane of the Institute for Security Studies argues that people in KwaZulu-Natal are 'war weary' and are not as easily stirred to violence as they once were, especially since those who were involved in political killings at the height of the violence have been charged and convicted for their crimes. Sekhonyane argues that people are also beginning to approach government with their problems rather than resorting to violence and that, since being elected to govern the province, the IFP has concerned itself more with service delivery and development than with the pursuit of political hegemony (Mottiar 2004a).

Despite the general consensus that violence in KwaZulu-Natal has declined dramatically there are some who remain critical. Laurence Piper (2004) argues that violence, although largely reduced thanks to a growing political tolerance in the province and commitments by all contesting parties to free and fair elections, still exists in the form of attacks and assassinations in areas beyond the media's gaze and aimed at creating a climate of fear and compliance. He adds that these attacks have reportedly been committed by many of the same people who were involved

in the violence in 1994, drawing on old networks of support which extend into the police and criminal justice system. Piper points out that while this view is often dismissed as alarmist it is a view held by people researching violence.

Piper's warning is given credibility by various KZN Violence Media Reports which contend that political violence has not gone away. 'Simply because incidents of overtly political violence have diminished relative to 1994/1995 does not mean that other types of violence do not serve the same political ends [access to and the regulation of power]' (*Violence Monitor* 2001). The reports go on to outline how political killings are often made to look like common homicides and overlap with taxi violence and are also related to intra-IFP tensions with regard to the selection of office bearers.

The drop in the levels of violence in KwaZulu-Natal effectively has two consequences for an election. Firstly, voters are more inclined either to vote for the party of their choice or to exercise their right not to vote at all. In the 2004 election traditional IFP strongholds recorded an increase in votes for the ANC. Furthermore, it has been suggested by Michael Sachs (2004) that the curtailment of voter intimidation in traditional IFP strongholds has meant a drop in voting in these areas. For example, Ulundi, which had a turnout of what Sachs calls 'uncomfortably close to 100 per cent', that is, 94 per cent, in 1999, had a turnout of 82 per cent in 2004. This, according to Sachs, should be interpreted as voters exercising their freedom as opposed to them being apathetic. The second consequence of the reduction in violence in KwaZulu-Natal is that political parties are able to canvass more freely during campaign periods. This has been the case with the ANC which, in 2004, managed to permeate IFP strongholds in the province, thereby winning increased levels of support in these areas.

Table 2
IFP Strongholds: 1999 and 2004

	Ulundi		Nongoma		Msinga	
	1999	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004
Turnout	94%	82%	81%	77%	85%	74%
ANC	1 638	2 744	829	2 052	3 018	5 433
IFP	76 542	59 606	53 715	49 253	41 426	37 490

SOURCE: CPS 2004b

ELECTORAL FRAUD

Alongside the violence and intimidation factor the issue of electoral fraud must also be considered. The 1994 election in KwaZulu-Natal was reported by some critics to have been won by fraud in voting stations administered by KwaZulu officials. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) admitted that cheating in polling stations was wide spread. Roger Southall (1994) asserts that confidential reports from foreign observers revealed major electoral irregularities in KwaZulu-Natal such as the establishment of pirate polling stations in Inkatha controlled areas, the stuffing of ballot boxes with bogus votes in favour of Inkatha and the forced removal of IEC officials and ANC agents from counting stations in KwaZulu. Southall argues that, of the options open to it (including declaring the election in KwaZulu-Natal unfair), the ANC's decision to concede the province was offered in exchange for Buthelezi's willingness to participate in and signal his acceptance of the Government of National Unity. (Buthelezi had refused to take part in the 1994 election until the final hour). Tom Lodge (1995) argues, however, that the IFP's margin of victory was large enough for it to have won even if the election had been conducted with complete propriety.

The heavy security force presence in the 2004 election as well as a stronger presence of ANC party agents at polling booths kept electoral fraud of the nature reported in the province in the 1994 election to a minimum. Interestingly enough, though, in the 2004 election it was the IFP that claimed electoral fraud, with specific regard to voting irregularities. The party claimed that 300 000 voters had cast their ballots in voting districts where they were not registered and that the ANC had bused voters in from other provinces to skew the results (Mottiar 2004c).

THE IFP'S POOR DELIVERY VS THE ANC'S STRONG CAMPAIGN *

Much has been made of the IFP's poor service delivery in KwaZulu-Natal. It was reported in Durban's *Mercury* (26 April 2004) that the IFP in the province had offered '10 years of indifferent service delivery and a general churlishness'. The question that should be considered here is whether or not a rural electorate is, at this point, able to distinguish between provincial and national service delivery. In the case of KwaZulu-Natal the provincial government has earned itself a reputation for what is seen as its compliance with traditional leaders (chiefs) in rural areas. The *Financial Mail* (3 September 2004) reported that 'economic actors believe that first time ANC control of eThekweni municipality and provincial government might remove the political impediments to development that have long plagued the province'. This view is reflective of the scandal that broke out over an initiative by the National Department of Social Development to distribute food parcels to needy communities.

* The author is grateful to Steyn Speed of the ANC for his views on this subject.

Apparently the IFP Member of the Executive Committee for Social Development halted the programme in the province after stating that permission had yet to be obtained from the chiefs. The ANC responded angrily (and dexterously) that 'the local opposition holds that the KwaZulu-Natal Premier on several occasions has hampered the province's development and welfare out of respect for the powers of the amakhosi [chiefs]' (*Afrol News* 17 January 2003). Indeed, Michael Sutcliffe, eThekweni municipal manager, has been quoted as saying: 'The IFP thought that the poor were all north of the Tugela. More welfare resources were distributed there than to the whole of Durban, though 30 per cent of the poor live here' (*Financial Mail* 3 September 2004).

Whether or not poor service delivery in KwaZulu-Natal was a factor in the IFP's loss of support in the province, the ANC went all out to canvass on issues of delivery. Indeed, sources within the IFP argue that the ANC's victory in KwaZulu-Natal had more to do with its determination to win the province than with service delivery issues (author interview with Prof Mapalala, IFP). The ANC election manifesto referred generously to ANC achievements in the past decade, with references to the 'millions' of homes that had been built and the 'millions' of water and electricity connections made. The ANC's campaign in KwaZulu-Natal in the run up to the 2004 election was stepped up from its past efforts. Analysts of the 1999 election commented that the campaign 'seemed a little uncoordinated' and raised the question of 'whether the ANC in fact wanted the IFP to win the election' because in several areas within the province 'they have been virtually non-existent' (Lodge 1999, p 158). Commentators on the ANC campaign in KwaZulu-Natal in 2004, however, hailed it as 'vigorous and effective' (Southall 2004).

The ANC launched its national campaign at King's Stadium in Durban, where President Thabo Mbeki spoke of the violence in KZN (effectively reinforcing the association between the IFP and violence). The ANC also favoured person-to-person contact, unlike the IFP, which kept to its rally driven styles of 'years past' (Piper 2004). The ANC also concentrated on penetrating IFP strongholds and former 'no-go' areas such as Ulundi. Its campaigners in KwaZulu-Natal included twenty-five members of its National Executive Committee, led by Thabo Mbeki and Deputy President Jacob Zuma (Mottiar 2004b). John Daniel (2004) has described the ANC campaign as having a 'buzz and an energy' to it and cleverly exploiting cultural nuances, especially those pertaining to the Indian culture.

Indeed, the ANC managed to increase its support in most Indian areas in KwaZulu-Natal, especially in Phoenix and Chatsworth, taking votes that had, in 1999, been cast for the Democratic Alliance (DA). Commentator Adam Habib, Director of Governance and Democracy of the Human Sciences Research Council, suggests that the ANC's gains in Indian areas were a result of the fact that it dealt with issues affecting the Indian community (*Sunday Times* 18 April 2004). The party also attracted some 15 000 votes from white voters in Pietermaritzburg, who switched from the DA in a bid to retain Pietermaritzburg (rather than Ulundi) as the capital of the province.

The IFP campaign, on the other hand, has been described as 'lack-lustre and same-old', with its emphasis on Zulu nationalist issues (Daniel 2004). The IFP manifesto also had a distinctly negative flavour, claiming, as it did, that the IFP 'is not the kind of party that remembers the electorate three months before Election Day making wild promises that are soon forgotten'. The campaign focused quite intensively on the IFP traditional strongholds of power in rural and peri-urban areas. The party attempted to increase its support from the Indian electorate but in this it was not as successful as the ANC. The IFP also exhibited less in the way of election material such as banners and posters than the ANC, for which it blamed a lack of resources (Forrest 2004).

CONCLUSION

Looking beyond Huntington's two-turnover test, the IFP's loss in KwaZulu-Natal is illustrative of the fact that South Africa is moving towards a consolidation of its democracy. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) argue that a democracy can be considered consolidated when democratic processes become internalised behaviourally, attitudinally and constitutionally. Behaviourally, a democracy is consolidated when no significant political, social or economic actors attempt to achieve their objectives by creating a non-democratic regime. Attitudinally, a democracy is consolidated when a strong body of public opinion believes that democratic procedures and institutions are the best way to govern collective life. Constitutionally, a democracy is consolidated when governmental and non-governmental forces alike become subject to the resolution of conflict within the institutions sanctioned by the democratic process.

The IFP in KwaZulu-Natal, although probably anticipating a loss (opinion polls conducted before the election predicted a tight race in the province, with a likely ANC victory), still competed in the election and brought its complaints of electoral irregularities before the Independent Electoral Commission, signalling its willingness to accept its investigation and final decision. Likewise the KwaZulu-Natal electorate has begun to exhibit a familiarity with the democratic process. Voters are beginning to understand that they have a choice when it comes to elections and that the voting process is conducted to ensure their freedom and independence. To what extent this will become socially consolidated remains to be seen, as, will the general levels of voter apathy. The reduction in electoral fraud in KwaZulu-Natal is particularly heartening because it indicates a growing respect for the institutions of the democratic process and free, fair elections are, after all, the cornerstone with regard to consolidating a democracy.

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WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

The South African Electoral System and the 2004 Election

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the impact of the electoral system on women's representation and critically reviews the debate about women's representation in government. It shows that a shift has occurred from a concern with numbers (descriptive representation) to participatory representation where quantitative must be matched with qualitative representation. This means that more important than the numbers of women in government is the fact that their interests, experiences and perspectives should be voiced there. This shift has also altered the definition of 'critical mass' from one referring to a numerical value to one that notes the changes in institutional cultures and power shifts that are brought about by women. The significance of the results of the 2004 election is evaluated with these arguments in mind.

INTRODUCTION

The electoral system of any country is the mechanism that translates support for parties and individuals into seats in government. It determines who will govern and who will not. It can be viewed as the 'mechanic [sic] heartbeat' of the political process (Faure, in Wessels 1994, p 143). The electoral system is the constitutional and institutional process by which government by consent and fair representation are put into practice in democratic systems (Wessels 1994, p 143). It is also a key determinant of the nature of the relationship between elected representatives, political parties and constituencies (Hassim 2004, p 340). Lijphart (1991, p 91) argues that the electoral system is probably the most powerful instrument for shaping the political system. Following Sartori he calls it 'the most manipulative instrument of politics'.

In societies in transition the electoral system can play an important role in 'engineering' the results of democratic voting and, along with other institutional choices, can, to a certain extent, determine the nature of political parties and the general character of democracy (Sisk 1993, p 79). Electoral design creates strategic

opportunities for party political manoeuvring that can have a significant impact on the consolidation of democracy (Munro 2001, p 297).

The nature of the democratic society needs to be taken into consideration when designing an electoral system. Plurality and majority methods will work less successfully in divided or plural societies than in homogeneous ones. A plurality decision rule can, for example, lead to the permanent exclusion of certain parties or groups such as women. This will encourage conflict in deeply divided societies, especially if the division is along ethnic lines (Sisk 1993, p 81).

As Sisk (1993, p 82) argues, the proportional representation (PR) list system provides the 'truest' proportionality of votes to seats, is immune to gerrymandering, allows for delimitation of constituencies when desirable and offers some degree of intra-party competition (through open or free lists). It also leads to Cabinet durability. List PR systems are viewed as conducive to broad-based coalitions and consensus government.

List PR has been shown to be the most advantageous to women in terms of getting them elected when they are placed high on the list, but the system also privileges power brokerage within parties rather than constituency formation and representation (Hassim 2004, p 340). Representatives are accountable to party leaders not to voters and intra-party politics has an impact on policy making. As Hassim (2004, p 340) argues, the ability of women to mobilise and to challenge the power structures within parties will, to a large extent, determine whether they are effectively represented. Fixed lists very often lead to accountability and voter choice problems where the parties rather than the voters decide which candidates have the best chance of reaching Parliament. They can also limit the ability of the electorate to affect intra-party debates (Sisk 1993, p 83).

An electoral system should not be viewed in isolation from its political consequences. The type of system and the constitutional framework in which it operates have very definite consequences – the system may encourage or discourage coalition building and ethnic conflict and include or exclude minorities and women. (De Villiers 1991, p 44).

GENDER AND THE CHOICE OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The period between the start of the transition process and the first election evinced a growing consensus about the desirability of proportional representation (PR). This broad consensus became apparent in the 1991 Declaration of Intent of the first Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa), which was signed by all the major participants in the negotiation process. Very few women were included in the Codesa process, a fact that led to objections from the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL). To address the under representation of women in Codesa women from the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Party (DP) and the National Party (NP) called for the establishment of a gender advisory committee (GAC) (Albertyn, Hassim and Meintjes 2002, p 33).

The establishment of the Women's National Coalition in 1992, with the intention of drawing up a Women's Charter for Effective Equality, served to stimulate debate about women's participation and representation in politics. It was through debates at the national level and the efforts of women in the ANCWL who requested the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) to accept a 30 per cent quota that it was finally agreed (after initially being rejected by the NEC) that such a quota would be used in the 1994 election (Ballington 2002, p 76). The politicisation of women's rights and the presence of women during the negotiation process contributed to an awareness of the importance of having women representatives in the National Assembly and at provincial and local level.

While there was consensus about PR it did not bind the negotiating parties to any specific system of PR (Sisk 1993, p 84). In the 1992 Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa the ANC committed itself to 'an inclusive, accountable, and participatory multi-party democracy, with periodic elections, and an electoral system based on proportional representation' (Albertyn et al 2002, p 27). Codesa's Working Group 2 accepted the consensus about PR (Asmal and de Ville 1994, p 1). One of the main arguments was that it would benefit all parties, especially smaller ones, such as the NP (the now defunct New National Party (NNP)) and the DP (now the Democratic Alliance (DA)). A PR list system would also prevent ethnic mobilisation. But, as Albertyn et al (2002, p 28) point out, the different parties did not all interpret PR in the same way. The DP understood PR in the context of liberal democracy, with few limitations on individual freedom, while the ANC saw it within the context of greater participatory, inclusive and accountable democracy. The issue of gender was not a national concern but was debated at party political level.

The choice of an electoral system was also debated in the Technical Committee on Constitutional Issues of the Multi-party Negotiations Council (Faure 1996, p 90). Before 1994 proposals were put forward by political parties as well as by academics and consultants. One of the most important inputs was the Report of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs of the President's Council of the previous government on 'A Proportional Polling System for South African in a New Constitutional Dispensation'. This report was released in 1992 and recommended PR for the following reasons:

- An almost complete consensus that a majoritarian electoral system is unsuited for deeply divided societies.
- The fragmented nature of South African society, as shown by its party system, indicated that PR would be a solution (the necessity to include fringe parties).
- PR includes smaller parties and thus protects minority rights.
- That it would establish participatory democracy in South Africa

Report of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs 1992, pp 60-64

These recommendations were taken very seriously by the President's Council, although their implications for women did not come into the council's considerations. While PR plays an important role in giving smaller parties and previously excluded groups representation in government, it does not mean automatic entry for women into Parliament. The number of women who gain representation in Parliament is related to their position on the party lists. The use of a quota as a special mechanism to enhance women's representation was made possible by the ANC's acceptance of a voluntary quota. Quotas can be viewed as structural mechanisms to address the barriers of the past that prevent competition (Dahlerup 2003, p 2). Quotas indicate a shift from the classical notion of equality of opportunity to equality of result, based on the argument that equality of opportunity cannot exist if all barriers for women have not been removed (Dahlerup 1998, p 95).

The ANC is the only party in South Africa to have accepted a voluntary quota of women (one-third) and the number of women representing the ruling party compared with the limited number of women representing opposition parties in the South African Parliament is evidence of the importance of a quota in increasing women's representation.¹ It is clear that the spill over effect of the ANC quota to other parties has not occurred.

Parties such as the (now defunct) NNP and the DA claim that no special mechanism is needed to include women since they believe that the under-representation of women cannot be blamed on the electoral system or on political institutions but on socio-economic disadvantages and that only once these conditions change will there be an improvement in women's representation (Albertyn et al 2002, p 36). Quotas, in this context, are viewed as discriminatory and a violation of the principle of fairness (Dahlerup 2003, p 2).

The danger of voluntary quotas is that if a party's support declines the number of women representatives also declines, or if the electoral system changes women may lose out. A legislated quota would be more effective in ensuring that women remain in government. It would also force opposition parties to accept a quota. Such legislation might become even more necessary should the recommendations of the Van Zyl Slabbert Task Team (discussed below) that South Africa adopt a mixed PR and constituency system to counteract current problems of absence of accountability be adopted. In such a case the number of women in Parliament is likely to decline further. Evidence of this already exists at the local level, where more women are elected from PR lists than in ward elections.

There is no doubt that PR, combined with a quota, delivers the best results for women's representation. The issue of the impact of the electoral system needs to be understood in the broader context of the debate about women's representation.

1 In fact, most of the opposition parties are now so small and hold so few seats that it would be difficult for them even to consider a women's quota.

THE FEMINIST DEBATE ABOUT WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

Prior to the 1994 election the main strategy of women and women's groups concerned with the representation of women in government was to 'get women in' and to get the 'women's vote out'. The focus was therefore more on the numerical representation of women than on the contribution women could make once they were in power. While these two issues cannot be separated there has been a shift in the past ten years away from descriptive representation and towards substantive or participatory democracy.

Chaney and Fevre (2002) argue that there is a demand for descriptive representation in democracies because democracy is about the self-interest of participants and problems arise when participants represent the interest of groups that are very different from themselves. If women are not included in decision-making their views and interests are overlooked and if women are not represented in proportion to their presence in the population the principle of parity is violated.

Descriptive representation is an issue of parity with men that also gives women greater access to policy making. (See also Albertyn, Hassim and Meintjes 2002, pp 38-39; Goetz and Hassim 2003 and Voet 1998, pp 100-112). Others argue that representation on grounds of identity is undemocratic and could lead to manipulation by political leaders to the detriment of accountability (Albertyn et al 2002, p 36). The PR closed list system as used in South Africa is, however, open to manipulation by political leaders because it is they who put the final lists together, regardless of a quota.

Lowe Morna (2004, pp 27-33) in a comparative study of the representation of women in politics in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries (the 'Gender Links' study) refers to quantitative versus qualitative representation. She argues that representative democracy focuses on the quantitative representation of all groups, while participatory democracy is concerned with efficacy and focuses on the ways in which women's interests, perspectives and experiences enrich government. While women are not a homogeneous group they share certain life experiences and interests. The outcome of this shift in focus is a more responsive and accountable government.

This change in thinking about women's representation has also led to a change in the definition of 'critical mass'. With the focus on numerical representation critical mass was conceived as a numerical percentage of about 30 per cent women leading to a spontaneous change in organisational culture. With participatory democracy in mind critical mass is now viewed 'less as a fixed number and more as the point at which women, through a combination of numerical strength, enabling political environments, empowerment and conviction, feel able to raise critical questions in mainstream environments' Lowe Morna (2004, p 33). What research has shown is that merely increasing the number of women in governments does not necessarily contribute to a fundamental change in the sex/gender system in Parliament, nor does it necessarily have a lasting impact on legislation or its implementation. Often

women's contributions are hampered by the cultural norms of society, partisan constraints or a lack of interest in gender discrimination per se. There should be a quantitative presence of women who also have a qualitative significance such as an impact on legislation, policy making and holding political leaders accountable (Lowe Morna 2004, pp 27-28).

Once women are taken seriously in decision-making positions the concept, content and form of politics and governance start to change and power relations shift. A consequence of this is that the outcomes begin to be informed by the new paradigm (Lowe Morna 2004, p 34).

The arguments about the qualitative impact of women link representation to citizenship as those requirements referred to above are the core ingredients of citizenship. Women need more than the vote, they need a voice in government.

Hassim (2004, pp 338-339) translates this shift into the notion of a 'virtuous political circle' in which participation, representation and equality outcomes are interlinked. The conceptual elements include effective participation as a notion of shifting the patriarchal institutional cultures of political institutions. Included in the dual notion of representation is representation of self to others – or identity formation and interest representation through parties that entails consideration of both formal and substantive equality.

In the South African context identity formation and interest articulation have been contested because women have had to construct identities and interests across racial lines, a process often fraught with difficulties (because of the struggle between recognition and redistribution) (Hassim 2004, p 338). When equality is only constructed as formal equality the substantive interpretations needed for policy formation suffer. The 'virtuous circle' can only be completed when all these elements are linked in a way that ensures gender equality.

When we start to think about representation in this way the significance of the arguments for and against quotas diminishes and attention is concentrated on other factors that are important to women's successful representation such as the nature of the political system, the organisation of political competition, the nature of civil society and the way in which political strategies are formulated. Strategies cannot only concentrate on the acceptance or rejection of a quota (Hassim 2004, p 340).

In those countries that have already reached the numerical critical mass of 30 per cent a demand for parity (50% women's representation) has developed. An example of this is the 50/50 campaign spearheaded by the Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP) in South Africa.

The comparative study, done by 'Gender Links', has shown that women constituted only 19,4 per cent of political representatives in national assemblies in the SADC region in 2004. The PR electoral system in South Africa combined with the voluntary quota used by the ANC means that South Africa has one of the highest numbers of representatives. Women in constituency systems fared the worst. It is clear that the 30 per cent target has important cascading effects because it leads to a culture of zero tolerance of the absence of women in decision-making positions.

In the African context it led to the inclusion of five women commissioners in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) (Lowe Morna 2004, p 19).

Another comparative study of electoral systems within SADC done by Molokomme (2000) has also shown that countries using a PR electoral system elect more women than those using constituency-based systems. In single member districts women have to compete directly against men and far fewer women are elected. Women do better in multi-member districts but do the best in PR systems combined with a quota policy. There is also the hope that with PR there will be a spill over effect where parties adopt policies (such as a quota policy) from other parties (see Gouws 2000).

In South Africa women's effectiveness as representatives is hampered by the rules and procedures of institutional engagement and by one-party dominance, even though the party is gender sensitive (Hassim, in Goetz and Hassim 2003, p 83), as well as by the dual view that women have of representation – that of both representing and building a constituency (Hassim 2002). This means that women have to work to establish a common interest among themselves (which seems quite difficult if we look at the difficulties and immobilisation of the women's caucus in the South African Parliament). Women also have to be accountable to a 'women's constituency' and it is not always clear who comprises this constituency.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND THE 2004 ELECTION²

Since the 2004 election South Africa has had 131 women in Parliament – the eleventh highest total in the world. Women form quite a significant constituency, with 1 982 876 more women than men having registered to vote, so it is likely that the women's vote in the election exceeded that of the men.

The results of research, however, showed no significant gender gap when it came to voting behaviour (see, eg, Gouws 2002). A gender gap exists when, for a particular set of reasons, a significantly larger number of women than men vote for a certain party or for certain candidates. Many issues can contribute to a gender gap, among them the fact that larger numbers of women than of men die of HIV / AIDS; the impact of unemployment on women as primary caregivers; basic needs issues such as housing, water, electricity and education; and violence against women. The absence of a gender gap can probably be attributed to a lack of options among the different parties. During the 2004 election most parties dealt with the same issues and did so in a gender blind fashion. The exception was the ANC, which, in its manifesto, identified women as a constituency with particular interests (see www.womensnet.org.za/Elections2004/index downloaded 6 September 2004).

While the ANC has the best track record of delivery on gender issues, no party really attempted to mobilise the women's vote, even though women have the power

2 Some of the information reported below appeared in Gouws, Amanda. 2004. 'Women and the 2004 Election'. *EISA Election Update*, 9 May.

to swing an election. Voters are not mobilised by their gender identities. Racial and class identities and their intersection with gender and party loyalty play a more important role when it comes to voting behaviour in South Africa.

After the 1994 election women comprised 25 per cent of the South African Parliament. Of the 111 women members, 90 represented the ANC, 1 the DP, 10 the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), 9 the NP and 1 the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Women did not, by and large, feature at the top of lists in 1994. This changed during the 1999 election when women were put in positions on the list which made them more likely to be elected. In the 2004 election nearly every second name at the top of the list was that of a woman.

In the 1999 election the ANC increased the proportion of women on its national list to 39 per cent. After the 1999 election the percentage of women elected increased to just under 33 per cent (119 seats – 96 of them held by the ANC and 23 by all the opposition parties combined (Ballington 2002, p 93; see also Gouws 1999).

Table 1
Representation of Women in the South African Parliament 1994 to 2004

1994				1999			2004		
Party	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%
ANC	252	90	35,7	266	95	35,7	279	104	37
DP/DA	7	1	14	38	6	15,7	50	13	26
IFP	43	10	23	34	9	27,2	28	6	18,5
NP/NNP	82	9	10	28	4	14,2	7	0	0
UDM	–	–	–	14	1	7	9	4	44,4
ACDP	2	0	0	6	2	33	6	2	33
FF	9	0	0	3	0	0	4	0	0
UCDP	–	–	–	3	1	33	3	0	0
PAC	5	1	20	3	0	0	3	0	0
ID	–	–	–	–	–	–	7	2	28
Other	0	0	0	5	2	40	4	0	0
Total	400	111	27,7	400	120	30	400	131	32,75

In 2004, 69,68 per cent of the vote went to the ANC, which won 279 of the seats, 104 of them now filled by women. This is 82 per cent of the total number of seats held by women. In total there are 131 women in Parliament in contrast to the 119 elected in 1999. Women, therefore, constitute 32,75 per cent of the National Assembly, mostly thanks to the increase in the ANC's share of the vote and its commitment to a one-third quota of women. In this election nearly every second name on the ANC's national candidate list was that of a woman.

The opposition parties, with no quota system in place, succeeded in putting a few more women into Parliament. Of the DA's fifty MPs ten are women, the IFP has six out of twenty-eight, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) three out of nine, the Independent Democrats (ID) two out of seven, the NNP one out of seven, the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) one out of six, the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) one out of three, the Minority Front (MF) one out of two and the Freedom Front (FF)+, Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) and the PAC none. In the bigger opposition parties women may not be placed strategically on the list.

The proportion of women in Cabinet is approaching the 50 per cent mark with 41,2 per cent ministers and deputy ministers. Of the nine provincial premiers four (44,5%) are women. The ANC has shown its commitment to gender equality by appointing ten women ministers and twelve deputy ministers. Women now occupy some of the most powerful ministerial posts in government such as Justice (Bridgette Mabandla), Foreign Affairs (Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma) and Education (Naledi Pandor). These portfolios are not the 'soft ministries' usually assigned to women. Other ministries headed by women are Agriculture and Land (Thoko Didiza), Housing (Lindiwe Sisulu), Home Affairs (Nosivivwe Mapisa-Nqakula), Health (Manto Tshabalala-Msimang), Minerals and Energy (Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka), Public Service (Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi), Water and Forestry (Buyi Sonjica), and Communications (Ivy Matsepe-Cassaburri). While the social portfolios such as health and housing are also run by women, all these portfolios together form the key to social transformation in South Africa.

President Thabo Mbeki has made it clear that he needs ministers who can deliver on policies that will form the cornerstone of the ANC's 'contract with the people'. The fact that he has placed women in these important portfolios expresses his faith in their ability to deliver. Many of the women ministers are strongly gender conscious and may contribute to monitoring the gender sensitivity of the policies they are called on to implement. A relationship between women in Parliament and the National Machinery for Women is very important if gender issues are to be monitored effectively. In this regard the Joint Standing Committee on the Quality of Life and the Status of Women (JSQLSW) will be central to the monitoring process.

At provincial level the representation of women increased from 24 per cent in 1994 to 27,7 per cent in 1999 and 32,3 per cent in 2004 (see Table 2). Gauteng has the highest representation of women (42,2%) and the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal the lowest (26% each). The Western Cape has 28 per cent female representation. If

we discount the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, the two provinces where ANC support is weakest, have the lowest representation (www.genderlinks.org.za/gelections/pressrelease downloaded on 6 September 2004). These figures make it clear that the ANC's quota contributes to the number of women in both the national and the provincial legislatures.

The 2004 election has increased the numerical critical mass of women in Parliament and at provincial level, but mainly because the ANC has increased its share of the vote. Limited research exists into whether the 'virtuous circle' of participation, representation and equity policy outcomes is complete in the South African context, but, as Hassim's (2004, p 356) research on women's impact on policy-making has shown, there is a cost attached to being the party with the strongest track record on gender equality. Where the women's constituency is poorly mobilised the party may rest on its track record while the women in Parliament place considerable emphasis on intra-party debates in order to survive in the party. As she argues, without strong interest from the different constituencies, the 'virtuous circle' is reduced to its thinnest form – increasing the numerical presence of women without the necessary interest representation of a constituency of women.

Only two opposition parties, the DA and the IFP, got more than 2 per cent of the vote, leaving the opposition more fragmented than ever, with many parties

Table 2
Women in Provincial Legislatures in SA 1994 to 2004

	1994			1999			2004			
	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%	+/-
Eastern Cape	56	14	25	63	15	23,8	63	20	31,7	7,9
Gauteng	86	25	29	73	25	34,2	73	31	42,4	8,2
KZN	81	11	13,6	80	21	26,2	80	21	26,2	0
Free State	30	7	23,3	30	7	23,3	30	8	26	-2,7
Limpopo	40	11	27,5	49	15	30,6	49	16	33	2,4
Mpumalanga	30	6	20	30	8	26,6	30	9	30	3,4
North West	30	11	37	33	10	30	33	11	33	3
Northern Cape	30	7	24	30	8	26,6	30	11	37	10,4
Western Cape	42	10	23,8	42	10	23,8	42	12	28,5	4,7
Total	425	102	24	430	119	27,7	430	139	32,3	4,6

fighting for survival. With few members left in Parliament the opposition will not prioritise women's representation. This means that the ANC is the only party really to drive gender equality in Parliament. The fragmented opposition is further disadvantaged by the legalisation of floor crossing.

THE IMPACT OF FLOOR CROSSING

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Fourth Amendment Bill was approved by a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly on 25 February 2003. This Bill allows party representatives in the national and provincial legislatures to defect to other political parties without losing their seats. The court argued that 'the fact that political representatives act inconsistently with their mandates is a risk of all electoral systems...' (*Sunday Times*, 6 October 2002). It also rejected the argument that floor crossing will affect the PR system. Floor crossing was therefore judged to be neither undemocratic nor an essential component of multi-party democracy. Legislation to permit floor crossing was found not to be unconstitutional. The Constitutional Court made it clear that it could only rule on the constitutionality of the provisions not on their appropriateness.

Thiven Reddy has argued (*Sunday Independent* 8 December 2002) that floor crossing does not necessarily undermine proportional representation. The choice of PR as part of the transition was aimed at creating strong parties over time. As he states '[T]he power to choose candidates and "lock" them within the party organisation [the result of the anti-defection clause] creates for party elites an enormous source of disciplinary power. Over time the strength of the party's organisational and bureaucratic aspects grows.'

He argues that conditional floor crossing (at least 10% of members should want to cross during two window periods of fifteen days each) retains the basic intention of the original PR system because it does not change the procedure by which candidates are selected or the procedure by which seats are allocated proportionally to political parties. However, it reduces the control of party elites over representatives and this may democratise internal party debates and make internal party democracy more robust.

Another argument was that elected representatives should have the right to cross to other parties between elections to indicate a shift in party support. The question remains to what extent the representatives who have crossed the floor still represent the voters who have elected them, further enhancing fears about a lack of accountability.

A dominant view was that floor crossing is not necessarily undemocratic but is incompatible with a closed list system. The likelihood that floor crossing under the current system will distort proportionality is real and it deprives parties of their right to replace defectors from their own party lists. It increases the distance between voter and representative. If the argument is that it reflects a shift in public opinion then it should be tested with an election (Report of the ETT 2003, p 25).

During the first 15-day window period for floor crossing (in March 2003) many members defected, to the benefit of the ANC. The UDM, for instance, lost ten of its fourteen seats. Another negative aspect of floor crossing is that the gender balance in smaller parties can be severely affected when they have few women members and these members defect.

After this first window period seven new parties were formed. One, the ID, formed by a woman – Patricia de Lille, was created specifically with the aim of breaking out of the racial mould and attracting wide support from all voters. The ID gained 2,8% support in the 2004 election – a good start for a party that could not claim any voter loyalty, yet its leader did little to mobilise the women's vote.

The first floor-crossing period for local councillors in 2004 began on 1 September 2004. During this period about 50 per cent of the NNP's 353 councillors joined the ANC. In Cape Town twenty-three NNP councillors defected to the ANC. The DA gained twenty-eight councillors but lost twelve in the first two days and the ID gained eighteen (*Mail & Guardian* 3 September 2004). These results show how proportionality can be distorted by floor crossing. In local government, where the mixed ward and list system means there are already fewer women, some parties may end up with no women in local government at all. In an attempt to accommodate criticism of the electoral system and problems created by floor crossing electoral reform has been suggested.

THE POLITICS OF ELECTORAL REFORM

The electoral system should be transformed with the gender dimension in mind or the gains South Africa has made in the representation of women in government could be lost.

Taagepera and Shugart (1989, p 51) make the following important point about electoral reform: 'Electoral reform might be desirable, from a democratic viewpoint, when the existing rules seriously dampen or overamplify³ or distort changes in popular opinion, or if they are confusingly complex.' But electoral reform should not be taken lightly. Taagepera and Shugart advocate stability, arguing that stability induced by a familiar system may be more advantageous than an unfamiliar system, even if the latter might appear to be inherently more advantageous (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, p 49). Those who are disadvantaged by the existing rules learn strategies to minimise the disadvantages. Taagepera and Shugart argue that a problem with, for example, representativeness may often lie elsewhere and not with the electoral system. One would also be able to make this argument with regard to accountability – for instance that the problem does not lie in the electoral system but in the attitudes of representatives toward their constituencies.

An electoral system, like a party system, is part of developing democracy rather than something established in the early stage of democratisation (Taagepera 1998,

3 Amplification means that larger parties tend to get more seats than is justified by their vote shares.

p 69). The electoral system only becomes established once the rules are embedded in the political culture and when political actors have learned to handle the rules. When a serious crisis starts to build up it is because certain groups feel that the electoral rules operate permanently against them (Taagepera 1998, p 83).

As he argues:

Don't think the first election outcomes are characteristic of the properties of the given electoral rules. Parties and voters need time to learn how to use them to their best advantage. An electoral system consists of rules and skills in using these rules. If the rules are continuously altered, no stable electoral *system* can emerge [his emphasis].

1998, p 85

The need for electoral reform has been debated since shortly after the 1994 election and even more seriously since a meeting (*bosberaad*) in 1996 in Arniston in the Southern Cape where it seemed certain that the PR closed list system would be used again for the 1999 election. The most serious problem with the present electoral system is the lack of accountability of representatives.

ELECTORAL REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although the main criteria by which the electoral system has been measured are: fairness, representativeness, legitimacy and accountability the only problem singled out is accountability. Feminist scholars, however, have argued that the system is neither fair nor representative because it under represents women.

The issue of the lack of accountability of representatives to voters and constituencies arose shortly after the 1994 election because of the nature of the closed party list system where voters are elected from a list and not from a constituency. Even though constituencies are awarded on a post-hoc basis voters often don't know their MP or feel that he or she is an outsider to the constituency. The problems of accountability and constituency building experienced by women members of Parliament have already been alluded to and are supported by the above arguments.

In March 2002 the Cabinet appointed an Electoral Task Team (ETT), headed by Dr Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, to draft legislation for an electoral system for the 2004 national and provincial elections. The recommendations made by the ETT need to be contextualised within the broader debate about electoral reform in South Africa.

Shortly after the 1994 election political parties agreed that the lack of constituency representation was a problem and that the possibility of moving toward some form of constituency representation should be considered. In the past five years consensus has developed about both the strong and the weak points of the

present electoral system and the appropriate reform options available to the country (Faure and Venter 2003, p 16).

The present system, with its inclusiveness, simplicity, fairness and proportionality, transparency and its minimisation of conflict, was indeed appropriate for a transitional period. But, as Faure and Venter (2003, p 20) point out, 'democratic consolidation requires a higher degree of accountability by representatives, channels for the electorate to express a more sophisticated range of needs and choices, procedures for voters to "get rid of non-performers" and a higher degree of responsiveness to the needs of the electorate...'

The Recommendations of the Electoral Task Team

The ETT operated under severe time constraints. When it was appointed only two-and-a-half years remained before the 2004 elections. Any new electoral system that might be introduced would require extensive re-demarcation and voter education, which would not be possible in such a short time. The ETT's terms of reference did not imply that the current electoral system had to be abandoned or replaced, but the disadvantages and advantages of present system were to be thoroughly investigated.

The ETT found the current system generally acceptable with regard to fairness and inclusiveness but not with regard to accountability. It repeatedly stressed that the distinction between an electoral system that produces representatives and the subsequent behaviour of such representatives often does not lie with the system but is to be found in other factors. Nobody can force elected representatives to be accountable to the people who elect them (Report of the ETT 2003, p 18).

Consultation with the parties revealed that the ANC, the ACDP, the NNP, the Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging, the FF and the UDM favoured proportional representation. The DP, Federal Alliance (FA), IFP and PAC favoured multi-member constituencies, while Azapo preferred a 'first-past-the-post' (FPTP) system where 50 per cent of representatives are elected from a party list and 50 per cent from constituencies (Report of the ETT 2003, p 10). The ETT felt strongly that the preoccupation with accountability should not jeopardise the values of fairness, inclusiveness and simplicity. It was therefore not in favour of radically altering the present system. Giving primacy to fairness, inclusiveness and simplicity, the ETT produced both a majority and a minority report.

The majority supported single-member constituencies with a compensatory closed national list on the basis of the argument that the current electoral system is already a mixed proportional system where at least half the representatives are elected from nine regions, which are clearly defined geographic areas. The provinces can be viewed as multi-member constituencies with representatives elected from separate regional lists, with a separate quota applying in each case. The remaining 200 representatives are allocated from a compensatory national list to restore overall proportionality (Report of the ETT 2003, p 21).

The majority recommendation proposes that multi-member constituencies together elect 300 members and that 100 are elected from a national closed list, expanding the nine multi-member constituencies to sixty-nine. The number of representatives elected in such a constituency would vary between three and seven, depending on the number of voters.

It was argued that an open list where voters could rank candidates would improve accountability, but that the system would be too complicated for many voters. The majority suggested that the current system be retained for the 2004 election but that new legislation be passed thereafter. The minority proposed that the electoral system used in 1994 and 1999 be retained.

The ETT finalised its report in January 2003 and thus far there has been no official decision on the recommendations, with Van Zyl Slabbert accusing the government of lacking the political will to change the electoral system.

A mixed member system (electing some representatives on a closed list and some from constituencies) may go some way towards addressing the problem of accountability but it may also bring new problems, creating two categories of MPs – those who are accountable to the voters and doing the hard work in the constituencies and those who are elected on the closed list and feel they are accountable only to their parties. This may be a new source of conflict and instability.

Another problem that hampers the responsiveness of representatives to voters and may lie at the heart of the lack of accountability is one-party dominance. When representatives do not face the threat of losing their seats in a subsequent election why should they be responsive? The problem of accountability may not be a direct consequence of the electoral system but of MPs' perceptions of being accountable to parties rather than to their constituencies. The solution then lies in changing attitudes.

Neither the majority nor the minority report was concerned with the impact of the changes on the representation of women. A mixed system may help foster constituency building for women but it may also have a detrimental effect on women's representation. At local government level, where a mixed system of wards and lists is already employed, only 10 per cent of ward councillors are women compared to 27 per cent of list candidates (GETNET Report 2002, p 17). In the wards women compete directly against men and there is definitely a voter bias against them. Women will face the same bias if a mixed system is implemented at the national level.

CONCLUSION

Women are currently employing a two-pronged strategy – keeping the pressure on political leaders and not letting them off the hook even though numbers are no longer the issue (Lowe Morna 2004, p 18). What is effectively keeping women out of decision-making positions is the weak link between empowerment and decision-making. The Gender Links study shows that there is no correlation between

women's education, and class status and levels of representation in politics and decision-making (Lowe Morna 2004, p 46). It seems as though partisan loyalties play a far more important role in getting women into Parliament and this characteristic of women's representation is reinforced by the PR system, where accountability is to party leaders.

The politicisation of the electoral system in South Africa relates to one-party dominance and the 'politics of race' (how party politics has been shaped by race in the past and whether so-called 'white' parties (such as the DA) are able to attract the African vote. Gender politics and the impact of the electoral system on gender equality are subordinate to these concerns. These problems would not be solved by electoral reform ushering in a different electoral system. As Reynolds (1999, p 202) has demonstrated, a FPTP system would increase the one-party dominance of the ANC. In 1994 seven parties were elected to Parliament by the PR system; in 1999 thirteen parties and in 2004 twelve, with only four of them winning more than 2 per cent of the vote. An FPTP system would halve the number of parties in Parliament, giving the ANC a large bonus. Based on his calculations after the 1999 elections, Reynolds argued that the ANC would have won more than 300 seats. The DP, the NNP and the UDM would have lost seats and all other parties would have been excluded.

One-party dominance creates the danger of state and party interests becoming merged. With the lack of voter uncertainty and a sizeable floating vote party elites may become very complacent about entrenched interests over which there is little contestation. Because contestation around women's interests most often destabilises existing patterns of redistribution and resource allocation women representatives may find it very hard to articulate interests in this political climate. One consequence is merely paying lip service to gender equality. Another is that committed women might lose interest in politics and leave government.

One-party dominance is not a consequence of the electoral system in South Africa but a consequence of voter loyalty to the ANC, partly because the ANC is good on service delivery and partly because, in the eyes of ANC supporters, there is really no alternative party to vote for. With such strong voter loyalty in the face of the absence of service delivery in relation to HIV/Aids (which affects more women than men), a steadily increasing gap between rich and poor, and spiralling unemployment women representatives will have to concentrate on constituency building and forge much closer links with civil society if women representatives are to shift from merely constituting a large number in Parliament to the participatory democracy necessary for the equality that citizenship offers.

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DEMOCRACY, HIV / AIDS AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Focus on the 2004 South African Election

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ABSTRACT

While debate about the impact of HIV/AIDS on socio-economic development has been rife and robust, the political discourse around the pandemic has tended somehow to lag far behind. It is now well established that HIV/AIDS represents not only a health catastrophe but, primarily, a development crisis. Yet only recently have we come to accept that the epidemic is, in fact, a governance crisis too. Much as the epidemic tends to have adverse effects on socio-economic development, it also has deleterious effects on democratic governance. This article thus teases out the possible impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on democracy, specifically focusing on citizen participation in South Africa. Within this discourse I deal with the extent to which we can explain voter participation trends between the 1994 and 2004 South African elections as informed, in part, by the debilitating effect of HIV/AIDS on both infected and affected citizens. If this is correct, HIV/AIDS is surely contributing to one of the dangers (or deficits) of modern democracy, namely voter apathy.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy has a variety of essential elements and one of these is the extent to which citizens participate actively in the political process both during and between elections. Citizens' participation during elections mainly takes the form of voters' involvement in selecting leaders. Between elections, participation takes the form of people's involvement in policy formulation and implementation. Political participation is therefore critical for both the legitimacy of the political regime and the stability of the governance process. Participation is defined as an 'activity by individuals formally intended to influence either who governs or the decisions taken by government. Both the extent and form of participation vary between types of regimes' (Hague et al 1998, p 80).

Political participation often assumes two forms, namely (a) conventional (including voting) and (b) unconventional (including boycotts and demonstrations).

For purposes of the discussion in this article we focus attention on conventional forms of voter participation during elections and inquire into the possible impact of HIV / AIDS on citizens' involvement in various phases of the electoral process in South Africa.

Undoubtedly, democratic governance systems encourage wider participation of citizens in the political process, while authoritarian governance tends to be less participative. This brings into sharp relief the imperative to interrogate the flipside of participation, namely the notion of political exclusion, which 'refers to those people who through occupying a marginal position in society are effectively excluded from participation in collective decision-making' (Hague, Harrop and Breslin 1998, p 83). Like participation, exclusion can manifest itself both during and between elections. During elections fewer people take part in the selection of national leaders and between elections, especially when the form of government is fairly centralised, fewer people take part in the formulation and implementation of policies. Linking the discussion about participation and exclusion in South Africa's electoral process to the HIV / AIDS epidemic, this paper proceeds from the basis of the following assumptions or hypotheses:

- The HIV / AIDS epidemic increases morbidity and the mortality rate of voting populations and thus leads to reduced levels of voter participation.
- The all-pervasive political apathy (especially among the youth) intersects with the HIV / AIDS incidence in reducing participation rates during elections. Ironically, voters hardly consider HIV / AIDS as one of the key determinants informing their choice during elections.

The paper is organised as follows: the section following these prefatory remarks provides a sketchy overview of the centrality to democratic governance of participation. The third section interrogates citizen participation in South African elections since 1994, with particular focus on the 2004 election. The fourth, the anchor section, investigates the possible impact of HIV / AIDS on voters during the 2004 election. The fifth section surveys public attitudes to and opinions about the HIV / AIDS epidemic and how this intersects with the political process, especially elections. This is done through some sketchy comparative insights drawn from the experiences of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The final section wraps up the discussion and reiterates the main observations.

PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

One of the key ingredients of democracy is the extent to which the governance process is participative. Thus, surely, citizen participation both during and between elections is a quintessential element of democratic governance? Why and how does the HIV / AIDS epidemic become relevant to issues of democracy and participation?

One answer is provided by Alex De Waal.

Slowly and belatedly, we are awakening to the full implications of the HIV / AIDS pandemic in Africa. This is an epidemic like no other. It is quite simply the most important issue, bar none, in Sub-Saharan Africa for the coming decade. It has already set in motion processes that will transform the governance and economies of the afflicted countries.

De Waal 2003, p 1

De Waal's poignant observation is corroborated by Ryan Manning (2002, p 9), who also argues aptly that 'the basis for much of the thinking around HIV / AIDS and democracy lies in research on the link between poor health and political instability and between good health and democracy'. For instance, Robert Mattes (2003), in a recent analysis of the subject, proposes persuasively that the interface between HIV / AIDS can best be investigated in terms of the epidemic's possible impact on three key features of democratic governance, namely:

- political economy (resource endowment, national wealth, growth, and inequality);
- political institutions (professional civil service, strong courts, vibrant legislatures, effective executive organs, robust parties and rule of law); and
- political culture (legitimation and participation).

Our major interest is the latter point, given that political culture (or political socialisation) shapes and influences electoral processes in a number of ways and has a bearing on the nature and extent of citizens' participation and is thus crucial, ultimately, to the legitimisation of post-election regimes.

Political participation of citizens is one of the most important ingredients of a vibrant and working democracy. The extent to which citizens are able and willing to participate in the governance process in a country both during and between regular elections is one of the components of democratic governance. The *Encyclopedia of Democracy* captures the essence of participation for democracy vividly as follows:

Although popular participation does not by itself make a democracy, the opportunity for the average citizen to participate in the political process is essential for any democracy, and participation is often included in the definition of democracy. Voting is the most common form of political participation, but it is not the only form.

1995, p 913

There is no gainsaying, therefore, that democracy denotes not only a representative but also a participative form of governance. By extension, both representation and participation play an important role in legitimising rule and establishing the extent of political stability in a given country. In its recent global report on political participation and voter turnout, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) also notes the important link between representation, participation and political stability. The report observes:

A flourishing democracy presupposes citizens who care, who are willing to take part, and capable of helping to shape the common agenda of society. Indeed, participation, whether through institutions of civil society, political parties, or the act of voting, is increasingly being seen as an essential pre-requisite of any stable democracy. Competitive, 'multi-party elections' have become the watch-word of the 1990s and the concept of 'democracy' has spread its tentacles into almost every corner of the globe, but there remain a considerable malaise of functioning of democratic principles and institutions, not least in those states termed as 'established democracies'.

IDEA 1997, p 7

Most of the articles contained in *Critical Dialogue: Public Participation in Review*, the newly launched quarterly journal of the Centre for Public Participation, also emphasise the centrality of citizen participation to democratic governance, legitimacy and political stability. In that journal Claude Kabemba (2004, p 12) argues, for instance, that participation is one of the key principles of democracy and is 'a crucial determinant of the nature of democracy. A democracy revolves around the people. In the same journal Roger Southall also recognises that while the African continent performed fairly dismally with regard to political participation during the colonial period and for some three decades after political independence, much progress has been achieved in the post-Cold War and post-apartheid era which coincided with the onset of multi-party democracy. He concludes:

... many African states found themselves now embracing the basic tenets of liberal democracy via the re-constitutionalisation of liberal rights, and most notably, multipartyism and competitive elections. This found resonance in South Africa, too, where the negotiated transition of 1994 was founded upon the adoption of a constitution (finalized in 1996) which was one of the most advanced democratic instruments that the world had yet seen.

Southall 2004, pp 6-7

Steven Friedman (2004, p 23), however, is quick to add a caveat that participation may also be affected by the nature of resource distribution. According to him, 'representative democracy is also the most fruitful channel for participation by the poor because it is the one in which their greatest strength, their numbers, is rewarded. Participation processes, by contrast, tend to give advantages to those who have the capacities which come with access to resources.'

Conventionally, measuring citizen participation in a democracy through elections involves investigation into levels of voter turnout, the assumption being simply that the higher the turnout the more participative the political system, hence the more legitimate the political regime. The converse is also assumed, of course, namely that the lower the voter turnout, the less participative the system, and, by logical extension, the less legitimate the political regime the higher the likelihood of various forms of instability within the political system.

What is interesting about the existing literature about participation, including the three examples cited above, is that pertinent issues and questions about participation rates have been asked in order to gauge levels of citizen participation, especially voter participation. However, so far fairly little, if any, research and analysis has been undertaken in South Africa (and indeed anywhere else in the SADC region) into the possible impact of HIV / AIDS on levels of citizen participation in the governance process. Even globally studies of elections and democracy have not yet fully come to grips with the impact of HIV / AIDS on citizen / voter participation in governance and elections. For instance, the questions posed by the International IDEA in its investigation of participation rates and voter turnout on a global scale covering the period 1945-97 include the following that seem pertinent to this discussion.

- Does turnout drop off from founding election to second and third generation elections?
- Do the different legacies of colonialism affect in different ways turnout in the post-colonial independent states of the developing world?
- Is turnout higher in parliamentary elections than in presidential elections?
- Is there a link between institutional factors (i.e., compulsory voting laws and electoral system design) and voter turnout?
- Is there a link between the degree of competitiveness of the party system and voter turnout?

The significance of the above questions to this discussion is self-evident. However, what needs to be appreciated is that over and above political factors that either enhance or inhibit voter participation we also need to probe socio-economic factors and this is the arena where discussion about the possible impact of HIV / AIDS on citizen participation in elections is pertinent.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS, 1994-2004

In this section we gauge voter participation in South Africa's elections since 1994 by establishing variations on the data recording registration and voting patterns. The primary object is to reveal the levels of voter registration in relation to, on the one hand, the total number of eligible voters and, on the other, actual votes cast and voter turnout. Data on the South African elections in relation to eligible voters, voter registration and voter turnout during the three democratic elections since 1994 is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1
Voter Turnout in South African Elections, 1994-2004

Year	Eligible Voters	Registered Voters	Total Number of votes cast	Voter Turnout (as % of eligible voters)	Voter Turnout (as % of registered voters)
1994	Appr 23million	–	19 533 498	85,0	–
1999	25 million	18 172 751	15 977 142	68,3	89,3
2004	27 million	20 674 926	15 612 667	57,0	76,7

SOURCE: IEC ELECTION REPORTS 1994-2004; EISA *ELECTION UPDATE* 2004: SOUTH AFRICA, NO 1, FEB 2004; IEC ELECTION RESULTS 2004

It is not surprising that quite a large number of voters took an active part in the 1994 election and that the voter turnout was quite high in comparison to the overall SADC and African experience with founding elections.

Tom Lodge corroborates this observation thus:

South Africa's 1994 turnout was estimated at 85 per cent, much higher than the African average for 1990s founding elections which was 65.3 per cent. However, a very steep decline, or a decline within certain communities or distinct social groups would represent a danger signal of democratic fragility.

1999, p 3

A multiplicity of factors helps explain the high voter turnout in 1994. Among them are:

- commitment of the broad majority of the populace to the demise of the apartheid order;

- the enthusiasm and excitement of the populace engendered by the political settlement of a protracted violent conflict (achieved through the Convention for a Democratic South Africa [Codesa] negotiations) and which encouraged them to exercise their new-found freedom.
- broad perception of the electoral process as part and parcel of the constructive management of the violent conflict that had engulfed the country up to that historic moment;
- commitment by key political actors to a new democratic dispensation, marked, in the main, by broad representation and the inclusion of marginalised social groups;
- the presence of a fairly durable peace and reconciliation supported by key forces in the political system;
- the choice of a relatively fair electoral model.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there was a downward spiral in voter turnout in the second democratic election, in 1999, with 68 per cent of total eligible voters registered after the five years of rule by the Government of National Unity (GNU) under the premiership of Nelson Mandela. Be that as it may, the voter turnout of about 70 per cent suggested that the institutional anchor of South Africa's fairly embryonic democracy was still firmly in place and was gradually being nurtured and consolidated.

One of the challenges that faced the country's democratic governance as the 2004 election approached was exactly how voter turnout would play out. Three distinct scenarios suggested themselves: the worst-case scenario was a voter turnout of less than 60 per cent, much lower than the participation levels in 1994; the middle-ground scenario was a voter turnout of around 70 per cent, maintaining the participation levels of the 1999 election; and the best-case scenario was obviously a voter turnout of around 80 per cent, which would represent an improvement on the 1999 levels even if it was slightly less than that in 1994. In the event, the voter turnout for the South African election of 12-14 April 2004 was about 77 per cent of registered voters (a decline of 12 per cent from the 1999 turnout) and 57 per cent of all eligible voters (a decline of 28 per cent from the 1994 figure and a decline of 11 per cent from that in 1999). This suggests the worst-case scenario outlined above. While there are many reasons, including voter apathy, especially among the youth, for the decline in the voter turnout for the 2004 election compared to the two previous elections, the debilitating impact of HIV / AIDS on citizen participation in elections cannot be excluded as a possible explanatory factor.

The pattern of voter registration for the 2004 election reveals interesting dynamics in respect of age, gender, geographic and racial mix, as shown in Table 2. A total of 20 674 926 voters registered for the election and of these 11 334 038 were female while 9 340 898 were male voters. This indicates vividly that, in gender terms, women constitute a majority of the voting population, as they do of the overall population; a situation that pervades all the SADC countries.

Table 2
Voter Registration for the 2004 Election

Province	Female	Male	Total	Registered Voters (% of total)	HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rate (%)
Eastern Cape	1 656 102	1 193 384	2 849 486	13,78	21,1
Free State	713 344	607 851	1 321 195	6,39	26,3
Gauteng	2 350 019	2 300 575	4 650 594	22,49	29,7
KwaZulu-Natal	2 176 061	1 643 803	3 819 864	18,48	33,8
Limpopo	1 327 349	860 563	2 127 912	10,58	13,2
Mpumalanga	773 843	668 629	1 442 472	6,98	25,3
North West	919 635	829 894	1 749 529	8,46	23,1
Northern Cape	227 524	206 067	433 591	2,10	11,7
Western Cape	1 190 151	1 030 132	2 220 283	10,74	8,8
Total	11 334 028	9 340 898	20 674 926	100,00	25,5

SOURCE: IEC WEBSITE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH 2002

The correlation of these data with the actual voting patterns and the prevalence of HIV / AIDS is also instructive. The data in Table 2 suggest that the five provinces hardest hit by HIV / AIDS are KwaZulu-Natal (33%), Gauteng (29%), Free State (26%), Mpumalanga (25%) and North West (23%). In terms of voter registration it is worth noting that Free State and Mpumalanga rank fairly low, with 6 per cent and 7 per cent respectively of the total registered voters. Yet ironically, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, with their high incidences of HIV / AIDS, have high registration rates (22% and 18% respectively) and this may suggest that HIV / AIDS is not the only factor at work here. Thus, in terms of the nebulous link between HIV / AIDS and elections in South Africa the data available suggest the following:

- In areas where the HIV / AIDS epidemic is intense, quite a number of eligible voters may not be able to register to vote either because they are ill or because they are taking care of the ill and this is one possible explanation for the low registration rates in Free State and Mpumalanga.
- Yet this may not be the only explanatory factor, as, in other provinces with a high incidence of HIV / AIDS such as Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, registration figures were high, suggesting that various factors besides HIV / AIDS are definitely at work.

Available data suggest that quite a considerable number of ordinary South Africans spend a good number of hours caring for orphaned children, caring for sick household members and taking care of their own illness. A recent *Afrobarometer* survey conducted by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), in which 2 029 households country wide were asked specific questions on which a determination could be made about their socio-economic situation, reveals that about 99 per cent of respondents spend more than five hours a day caring for orphans, 99 per cent spend more than five hours a day caring for sick household member(s) and 98 per cent spend more than five hours a day attending to their own illness.

Although the data do not necessarily depict HIV / AIDS as the main illness, we are able to infer that it could be one of the illnesses referred to in the data. There is no gainsaying that HIV / AIDS is fast becoming the major factor in increasing mortality and morbidity rates and, according to the South African Human Development Report of 2003, this trend is bound to have tremendous demographic impact on, for instance, life expectancy. Between 1995 and 2001 the HIV infection rate in South Africa increased by 9,8 per cent, the major increase occurring in the age group 20-49. The total number of people living with HIV / AIDS reached 5,6 million in 2001, with more women than men infected. The provinces that have borne the brunt of the epidemic are KwaZulu-Natal (17,4%), Mpumalanga (15,2%), Free State (15,1%) and Gauteng (14,2%) (UNDP 2003, p 28). Between 1999 and 2001 the number of people who died as a result of AIDS rose from 250 000 to 360 000.

Linked to the AIDS death toll in 1999 was the fact that there were 420 000 AIDS orphans in the country and this figure rose to 660 000 in 2001. The heavy demands placed upon households, especially women, in caring for orphans are enormous. The recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report for South Africa (2003, p 85) reveals that 'the increasing pressure on grandparents to care and provide for growing numbers of orphaned children is placing a heavy burden on those who are already vulnerable. The number of households whose primary caregivers are under the age of eighteen years is also increasing.' Thus, it is evident that households are so overburdened as a result of the devastating impact of HIV / AIDS on their socio-economic situation that politics generally and elections specifically may be considered a lesser priority than the struggle for survival; a struggle in which the politicians have not done impressively well in the eyes of the electorate.

The UNDP report emphasises the inextricable link between the HIV / AIDS epidemic and deepening poverty in the country in a vicious causal relationship in which the disease is more prevalent among poor communities while at the same time it accentuates poverty. This vicious circle suggests that HIV / AIDS contributes significantly to the increase in poverty and that poverty itself reduces significantly the ability of poor people to cope with the disease (UNDP 2003, p 85). The report notes that 'HIV / AIDS has had a disproportionate impact on poor communities, permanently trapping many of its victims in poverty. The magnitude and far-reaching consequences of the HIV / AIDS pandemic mean that the disease is no longer a crisis

only for the healthcare sector but presents a major challenge to all sectors' (UNDP 2003, p 84).

The incapacity arising from AIDS related illness and other ailments coupled with the time spent tending the sick means that a fairly large number of people are unlikely to find time to spend on time-consuming issues such as elections. Eligible voters are probably more inclined to dedicate their time to caring for sick relatives or tending to their own illnesses, as the *Afrobarometer* studies have found. There is no gainsaying that part of these individual household responsibilities is explicable by reference to the HIV / AIDS epidemic, which, in turn, 'subtracts from individuals' personal commitments to other important issues including elections. Certainly, sickness, funerals and orphans play a big role in reducing participation in politics' (Chirambo 2004, p 7). Not only does the disease diminish the incentive for people to participate in political life, it also reduces their social well-being. According to the UNDP report, 'AIDS generates new poverty as people lose employment and housing tenure. Household incomes fall due to the loss of wage earners and rising spending, particularly on medical care and funerals ... Not only do household outputs and incomes decline, but household members, particularly women, have to make hard choices on allocation of their time between production, meeting household needs, child care and care of the sick' (UNDP 2003, p 85).

According to the *Afrobarometer* survey up to 14.2 per cent of South Africans spend between one hour and five or more hours tending to orphans. Some households are clearly over-burdened by the devastating impact of HIV / AIDS on their socio-economic situation. In the circumstances, families are likely to consider elections a lesser priority as they struggle for survival. *Afrobarometer* data suggest further that 15 per cent of South Africans spend more than three hours tending to sick household members and 22 per cent spend the same amount of time taking care of their own illnesses. Although the data do not necessarily depict HIV / AIDS as the main illness, we assume, given the extent of the pandemic, that one of the diseases referred to in the data could be HIV / AIDS. Until further research is conducted on public opinion we cannot say with certainty whether the failure by some registered voters to arrive at polling stations is a direct result of AIDS (Chirambo 2004, p 7).

Of the provinces with the lowest HIV / AIDS prevalence rate, Northern Cape (10%) has the lowest voting population while the Eastern Cape has a sizeable one. Thus, a post-election assessment of voter turnout in relation to the overall number of registered voters would be extremely crucial when linked with HIV / AIDS prevalence on a national scale and in relation, specifically, to provinces. The overall national prevalence rate is estimated at about 16 per cent.

IMPACT OF HIV / AIDS ON VOTERS DURING ELECTIONS

Undoubtedly HIV / AIDS impacts adversely on voters' effective participation in the electoral process. Anecdotal evidence can easily be adduced to show the impact of

the epidemic on voters' participation throughout the three phases of the process, namely the pre-election phase; the election or polling phase; and the post-election phase.

Recently, Chris Landsberg and Shaun Mackay of Johannesburg's Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) prepared an HIV / AIDS Strategy Paper for the Open Society Initiative in Africa in which they argue that:

To the extent that millions of people will be affected by the disease, we should prepare for the prospect that more and more people will become terminally ill ... [and] will not be able to exercise their democratic rights. In South Africa, the ANC-led government is already confronting the prospect that it could be voted into power with smaller numbers of majorities because people are becoming increasingly poorer and sick as a result of the pandemic. Indeed, even the uninfected could find themselves increasingly so preoccupied with issues arising from the pandemic – such as caring for the loved-ones, siblings and neighbours – that exercising their democratic vote becomes secondary to these issues. In such a situation, percentage polls could decrease considerably. As decreasing mandates are obtained to rule in the wake of the pandemic's devastation, the very legitimacy of government could be at stake. The very institutions of democratic governance could lack the necessary popular will and mandate to function effectively.

CPS 2003, pp 14-15

In the pre-election period, obviously the epidemic does impact on voter registration (voters are unable to register because they are infected and affected). During the election or on polling day the epidemic is bound to affect voter turnout as the infected and affected fail to vote. It is at this point that the effects of the epidemic intersect with the effects of voter apathy, thus confirming that the decline in the number of voters may not simply be explained by the fact that people are disaffected or disenchanted with governance but by the fact that they are unable to vote because they are ill.

During the post-election period, HIV / AIDS may lead to the reduced participation of citizens in governance at both national and local levels. This involuntary withdrawal is bound to have some impact on the legitimacy of the rule and the credibility of the policies of a sitting government. The discussion below throws more light on these and related issues.

The Pre-Election Phase

During the pre-election phase, the HIV / AIDS epidemic is likely to affect the voters adversely in respect of the following:

- Voter registration.
- Management and maintenance of the voters' roll.
- Staff recruitment and training for the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).
- The cost of election management.

Voter registration is the most crucial component of the pre-election phase. Pintor and Gratschew (2002, pp 23-24) correctly observe that 'voter registration is crucial for political participation in a democratic context. There must be a guarantee that the right to vote in elections is universal, equal, direct and secret.' Various factors, including the adverse effects of HIV/AIDS, may mean that voters may not be able to turn up in large numbers for registration. Furthermore, the IEC may find itself confronted with a problem of recruiting and retaining experienced registration staff who, historically, have largely been teachers – one of the social categories hardest hit by the epidemic.

For people affected by HIV/AIDS the location of registration stations is likely to influence whether or not they register; the closer the station, the more likely they are to go there.

Another problem is that the management and maintenance of the voters' roll becomes both tedious and onerous as the IEC must regularly ensure that registered voters who have passed away are removed from the roll, in order to avoid suspicion and criticism of 'ghost voters'.

once people register to vote, those voters' rolls must be kept up-to-date. As important as it is to make sure all those qualified appear on the rolls, it is equally important to make sure that the names of dead voters are regularly and efficiently removed ... In most countries, registration officials receive word about deaths from hospitals and morgues and subsequently remove those voters from the list ... Without some sort of change, poor maintenance of the voter rolls will only serve to further undermine the legitimacy of these elections. If elections lack legitimacy, the regime of democracy itself may lose legitimacy.

Youde 2001, p 17

The voters' roll is one of the most important instruments of elections for it contains information about who is supposed to vote and determines the formation of governments. It must be accurate and regularly revised in order to address the often politically charged allegations of the existence of 'ghost voters'. Undoubtedly, the increased mortality rate caused by the HIV/AIDS epidemic compounds the problem of updating the roll in that it places a further burden on the IEC.

An example of the serious problems that can arise when voters' rolls are not kept up to date has played itself out in Malawi's general elections since 1999. The

voters' roll was one of the most badly managed aspects of the country's recent elections. The various forms of roll used in Malawi contain inaccurate information about voters and there is little, if any, public inspection of the rolls. This problem led to one of the participants in a workshop organised by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) on 'AIDS and Governance in Southern Africa' to lament that

... in Malawi ... the voters' roll is highly bloated with dead voters. The electoral commission has never conducted a major exercise to deal with this, except for pilot exercises that were carried out in two constituencies. Although not fully patronized by the majority of registered voters, the outcome of the exercise indicated that a good number of voters had passed away. Drawing from the statistics obtained during the exercise, it is estimated that the commission has lost about 100 000 voters on its voters roll, about 2% of the total registered voters.

Ngwembe 2003

The Malawi voters' roll was found to have up to 100 000 voters unaccounted for, a situation that worsened during the election of 20 May 2004. The election had originally been scheduled for 18 May, but had to be postponed because of a highly charged political controversy triggered by the shoddy and sloppy voters' roll. A total of 6,7 million voters originally featured on the roll, sparking an enormous amount of feuding among political parties and criticism from civil society and the academic community in the country (see Chirwa 2004). After assessment by a team of independent South African assessors, the number of voters on the roll was reduced to 5,7 million. This reduction by one million voters raises a number of questions.

The recruitment and training of both the IEC staff and polling officers may become increasingly difficult and costly for a variety of reasons – a scarcity of the requisite skills, absenteeism and staff turnover caused by a high incidence of HIV / AIDS in the age cohort suitable for the tasks. These challenges will mean that the entire management of elections, which is already very costly, will tend to become even more demanding on the state treasury.

Youde's comment on this issue is particularly instructive. He observes:

Another important, yet often ignored, aspect of elections is their cost. Elections are not cheap. The South African elections in 1994 cost US\$200 million, which works out to US\$11.34 per vote. The 1999 elections were even more costly, with registration exercise alone costing US\$120 million

2001, p 17

Youde opines that the cost of elections has a bearing on democratic legitimacy and stability in two important ways.

First, AIDS places enormous strains on the budgets [of the countries concerned]. With health care costs threatening to eat up increasing amounts of national budgets, money allocated for elections could be a casualty. Instead of funding elections on their own, the state will have to rely on foreign donors to finance elections. This move can be problematic because donor funds often come with conditionality ... Second, donor fatigue is an increasingly real problem. The international donor community is increasingly reluctant to give larger amounts money for HIV / AIDS as the realities of the long-term nature of HIV / AIDS becomes more and more apparent.

2001, p 19

Increasingly the burden posed by HIV / AIDS tends to compete for scarce financial resources with democratic processes such as elections and the challenge for states is how to prioritise and earmark resource allocation in the most prudent manner possible in such a way that democracy does not suffer, while at the same time effective measures are put in place to mitigate the adverse impact of HIV / AIDS.

The Election Phase

During the election or polling phase the HIV / AIDS epidemic is likely to impact negatively on the electorate in regard to both polling stations and voting.

As is the case with registration, people who are ill are likely to be influenced in their decision whether or not to participate by the location of polling stations (both mobile and immobile); the closer the voting station the more likely it is that those living with HIV / AIDS will cast their ballot. Another problem is that voting may prove difficult if they are not provided with the special assistance that is provided to other sick voters and are forced to wait in long queues. These two factors suggest that the IEC will have to rethink the issue of polling stations and their accessibility. It is likely, for instance, that the number of mobile stations will have to be increased.

The Post-Election Phase

In the post-election phase, not many factors would influence the behaviour of HIV / AIDS-infected people apart from the fact that they may not have much interest in any new government that emerges if that government does not prioritise HIV / AIDS as a major challenge requiring clear-cut policy interventions. The legitimacy of an emerging regime may stand or fall by its response to the HIV / AIDS pandemic. In the eyes of the HIV / AIDS infected segment of the population legitimacy may be linked strongly to the winning party's policy pronouncements and strategies for mitigating the effects of the pandemic on their lives and livelihoods. In this regard, therefore, we must also appreciate the complex interface between political apathy

and the effects of HIV/AIDS on the electoral process in South Africa and other African countries. Whereas prior to the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic it was relatively easy to ascribe low voter turnout to political apathy, which denotes deliberate withdrawal or disengagement by some segments of the electorate from the electoral process, largely because of disenchantment or disaffection with the way in which the political game is played by the political elite, today it is relatively difficult to explain withdrawal in these terms.

The ostensible withdrawal from the electoral process, marked in the main by low voter turnout, may be explained in part by disenchantment and in part by ill health affecting the electorate. Specifically with respect to people infected with HIV/AIDS disenchantment may arise if political parties are not seen to embrace the urgent need for effective policy intervention aimed at mitigating the social burden imposed on poor households by the epidemic. For instance, it was widely accepted that the major issues that would differentiate the parties in the South African election of April 2004 would be:

- employment;
- poverty / destitution;
- crime / security;
- health and HIV / AIDS;
- education;
- housing
- the economy;
- foreign policy

EISA Election Update 2004: South Africa, No 2, 16 February 2004;

EISA Election Update 2004: South Africa, No 3, 1 March 2004

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO HIV/AIDS AND ELECTIONS

Although all major political parties tended to prioritise the HIV/AIDS issue in their manifestos as part of the campaign for the 2004 election, the complex question is whether they took up the issue with this apparent enthusiasm merely in order to win the hearts and minds of the affected and infected largely for purposes of gaining political mileage vis-à-vis their competitors or whether they are committed to putting in place viable policy mechanisms to deal with the disease.

This question can only be answered by assessing the post-election policy projections of the winning party against its manifesto promises. Linked to this question is the extent to which parties themselves have set in place appropriate policy measures to combat the epidemic within their own structures. As the old adage goes, charity begins at home. It may not be adequate for parties to propound good policy positions vis-à-vis HIV/AIDS if they do not have the internal policy instruments to deal with the disease as it affects their membership.

As Landsberg and Mackay aptly opine:

Consideration should be given to how political parties would be affected; they are the main bedrock of multiparty political systems. Members of political parties who are infected will naturally weaken these parties (especially where these are important leadership figures), which, in turn, will weaken democratization efforts. Also, there is an urgent need for strong political parties to engage communities and put the HIV / AIDS issue on the agenda. Political parties should also brace themselves for smaller and decreasing voting constituencies as the HIV / AIDS scourge affects them.

2003, p 15

While political parties have tended to raise issues relating to HIV / AIDS, especially during elections, the irony is that a considerable majority of people in Southern Africa still do not perceive the epidemic as a major policy priority for their governments. From the data collected by Idasa's *Afrobarometer* a bleak picture emerges of the attitudes of those interviewed when asked to list the most pressing problems in their respective countries (see Table 3).

Whiteside, Mattes, Willan and Manning (2002, p 20) conclude from the data above that 'Southern Africans simply do not list HIV / AIDS as a political priority for their governments'. The authors give five possible explanations for this paradox. First, it is possible that people perceive the responsibility for HIV / AIDS as resting more with individuals affected and infected and their communities than with governments. Second, it could be that 'people's living conditions are already so desperate that government action against AIDS is seen as a lower priority than action to address more immediate needs by creating jobs and holding down prices so that people can live decently. Thus, it simply becomes a question of priorities.

There is some support for this argument: 'as individual levels of poverty increase, people become less likely to cite AIDS as an important problem' (Whiteside et al 2002, p 20). Third, the figure above may also reflect the attitude and role of elected leaders and civil society agencies in respect of the prioritisation of HIV / AIDS in policy making. Where leaders and civil society are open and publicly forthright on the HIV / AIDS issue to an extent that reduces the degree of stigmatisation around the disease, people increasingly appreciate the urgency of policy interventions in the epidemic, as is the case in, for instance, Botswana and South Africa. Finally, the reverse is also true in those countries, such as Lesotho until fairly recently, where the leadership and civil society are not aggressive enough about policy imperatives for tackling HIV / AIDS. The authors argue that 'lack of public emphasis on AIDS as a national problem could reflect the way people "name and frame" political issues' (Whiteside et al 2002, p 21). It could as well be that those respondents who mentioned health as a major problem area had HIV / AIDS in mind.

Table 3
Most Pressing Problems

Botswana	Zimbabwe	Zambia	Malawi	Lesotho	Namibia	South Africa
Job Creation 58%	Economy 74%	Health 41%	Economy 48%	Job Creation 63%	Job Creation 54%	Job Creation 76%
AIDS 24%	Job Creation 37%	Job Creation 32%	Health 29%	Crime / security 28%	Education 46%	Crime / security 60%
Education 20%	Health 18%	Education 31%	Crime / security 28%	Food 20%	General Services 21%	Housing 25%
Poverty / destitution 17%		Farming / agriculture 26%	Food 26%		Health 18%	Education 13%
Farming / agriculture 14%	Economy 20%	Transport 16%			AIDS 14%	AIDS 13%
Crime / security 12%		Transport 18%	Water 16%			Health 12%
		Poverty /	Farming / agriculture 13%			Poverty / destitution 11%
		Poverty / destitution 14%	Farming agriculture 13%			Poverty / destitution 11%
			Education 12%			
			Poverty / destitution 11%			
			Job Creation 11%			
			General Services 10%			

CONCLUSION

That citizen participation is crucial for democratic governance, legitimacy of rule and political stability brooks no controversy at all. Participation of citizens in a vibrant democracy takes place during and between elections. In this paper we have narrowed the debate deliberately to voter participation during elections, hence the preoccupation with the incidence of voter turnout. Although information is readily available about the political imperatives and the factors that influence either a high or a low participation rate of citizens in elections, fairly little discussion has focused attention on the socio-economic dynamics of the problem linked to, for instance, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

It is abundantly clear that the HIV/AIDS epidemic does have an impact on the participation levels of voters in elections. It is likely that low levels of voter turnout can no longer be ascribed simply to voter apathy. However, this does not suggest that HIV/AIDS is the only determinant of low voter participation in elections. We have argued that the incidence of HIV/AIDS intersects inextricably with the incidence of voter apathy in many SADC states and in South Africa itself.

We also observe that the incidence of HIV/AIDS is directly and/or indirectly linked to the inability of some of the electorate to participate in the entire electoral process because of factors such as poverty and ill health; these are also surely accentuated by the pervasive spread of HIV/AIDS. It is highly possible that the fluctuations in levels of voter turnout since 1994 have been caused not only by the incidence of voter apathy but also by the incidence of HIV/AIDS. We have discovered that voter turnout as a proportion of eligible voters (57%) for the 2004 election amounted to about an 11 per cent decline from the 1999 figure of 68 per cent. The irony, though, is that while the incidence of HIV/AIDS is on the increase and taking its toll on citizens' participation in the governance process, voters hardly consider it a dominant issue when they choose their leaders.

It is imperative that both the political leadership and the citizenry at large consciously and deliberately consider HIV/AIDS not only a health crisis but both a developmental and a governance crisis that requires concerted policy interventions aimed at, among other things, building firmer foundations for sustainable democratic governance. If the political elite and the citizens fail to take the bull by the horns, so to speak, South Africa and the SADC region as a whole will be caught in a vicious circle of development-governance crisis. In the words of De Waal (2003, p 22) 'more widely, the scenario is of AIDS-impacted populations, economies and government simply failing to progress, and being caught for the foreseeable future in a structural impasse, in which development becomes simply impossible'. Our countries should endeavour, by all means possible, to avoid this seemingly apocalyptic scenario.

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THE ELECTION RESULT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTY CONFIGURATION

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ABSTRACT

As a competition for both popular support and political office, Election 2004 deepened the dominant-party system in South Africa. In terms of support, the African National Congress (ANC) did better than ever. Indeed, its leadership seemed more concerned about internal left-wing politics than about rival parties. Conversely, with the partial exception of the Democratic Alliance (DA), opposition parties did worse, and appear stuck in a zero-sum competition amongst themselves. In terms of office, ANC popularity meant greater national power and, for the first time, control of all provinces. Further, Election 2004 revealed that the more the ANC co-operates with its alliance partners the better it does at the polls, and the more influence the Congress Of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu)/South African Communist Party (SACP) have over policy. For opposition parties this dynamic is reversed. Those parties which co-operated with the ANC to get office lost popular support, while those which eschewed office did better at the polls. In sum, while popularity and office are mutually reinforcing for the alliance, they constitute a dilemma for opposition parties. Finally, while there are signs that broader social change will pose some class-related problems for the ANC, more profound racial obstacles await opposition parties. All this suggests that ANC dominance will grow still further in 2009.

INTRODUCTION

The outcome of Election 2004 and the trends in party support over the ten years of post-apartheid politics are important in determining government policy, the nature of the political system, and the consolidation of South Africa's young democracy. However, this paper will not address these questions directly. Rather it will address what the election means for the primary objective of parties in democracies: contesting political office through elections. As Joseph Schumpeter (1987, p 283) argues, 'a party is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the

competitive struggle for political power'. While it is the case that parties have various functions like goal formation, interest articulation, popular politicisation and mobilisation, and elite recruitment, these all flow from their role in linking the institutions of state to civil society. Without access to office all these other functions become pretty meaningless or unsustainable, and without elections (democratic) access to office is nearly impossible.

This starting point means that party configuration in South Africa is orientated towards two, closely related, objectives: securing popular support and accessing political office. While elections directly link support to office, outright electoral victory is not the only way in which parties can gain office. Thus, under certain electoral outcomes, minority parties can form alliances amongst themselves to govern. Further, the advent of floor crossing in South Africa has extended the possibilities of parties manoeuvring to access power without elections. For example, the Independent Democrats were launched as a result of floor crossing and had seats in Parliament before winning votes in an election. Conversely, access to office has a significant impact on electoral success. Indeed, one of the main claims of this paper is that access has had divergent consequences for the electoral success of the ANC and opposition parties. Consequently, the paper will review South African political party configuration in light of Election 2004 in terms both of competition for popular support and access to political office, reflecting on party strategies and exploring future scenarios.

In terms of popular support, Election 2004 was not really about the ranking of parties in the final result, as this was widely anticipated, but more about the extent of party support. In this respect, the paper makes two claims. First, Election 2004 revealed a growing electoral dominance by the ANC. Indeed, analysis of the electioneering reveals that the ANC elite's main concern was not an existing opposition party but a spectre that haunts the liberation movement: a lingering left-wing politics within. In this sense then, the real victory of the ANC in Election 2004 was less over an external party than over an internal disillusionment constructed in a left register. Second, Election 2004 confirmed the dwindling popularity of opposition parties and the disengagement of many opposition supporters.

In terms of access to office, Election 2004 both extended the ANC's national dominance over the constitutionally significant two-thirds mark and secured it the governments of all nine provinces for the first time. Conversely, the election was bad for opposition parties, with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) losing KwaZulu-Natal, and the DA failing to access office in the Western Cape, Gauteng or KwaZulu-Natal. Further, the election revealed a fascinating divergence in the relationship between party configurations and support at the polls. For the ANC, *toenadering* (getting together) with its alliance partners was good for electioneering and gave Cosatu and the SACP greater influence over government policy, at least for a time. For opposition parties however, access to office and popularity seem to exist in tension in the sense that those parties that chose to co-govern with the ANC did

poorly at the polls, whereas those which distanced themselves from ANC office did better. In short, opposition parties currently find themselves on the horns of a dilemma in South African politics where they must choose between access to power and greater electoral support, but cannot have both.

To my mind the outcomes of party competition for popular support and access to office in Election 2004 confirm trends in the political system that have been evident since 1994. The inverse relationship between popular support for the ANC and that for the opposition is mirrored in an inverse dividend from party co-operation in accessing political office. It is my view that all this suggests a deeper bifurcation of the South African electorate into two major groups – one for the government and one against – groups whose allegiances have proved remarkably stable over time. Moreover, I argue that the identity of these groups is linked to enduring apartheid era relations of racial, class and ethnic power such that today's government supporters were the unambiguous 'losers' under the apartheid system, whereas today's opposition voters were the comparative 'winners' in the past. Notably, this boundary seems the most fundamental one in the popular political landscape, with parties struggling to attract votes across this divide. This said, there is some evidence that the boundary is becoming more porous, although mostly in one direction – towards the ANC. The paper finishes by exploring key changes in the institutions of state, market and public sphere which help explain this emerging mobility, arguing that they suggest better fortunes for the ANC than for opposition parties. In short, there are good reasons to assume that, as long as the ANC attends to class-related challenges its dominance will increase in Election 2009 and probably even beyond.

In developing this argument I begin by considering the ANC's performance in 2004 in respect both of popular support and access to political office. I then examine opposition parties in the same way.

THE ANC IN ELECTION 2004

The Surprising Popularity of the ANC

As Southall (2004, p 3) observed, everybody knew that the ANC was going to win Election 2004, but 'it was the manner of its winning that confounded observers'. Many anticipated that the ANC would have a reduced majority and the DA would make gains as the principal opposition party. Two main reasons were given for the ANC's anticipated decline: the waning of the 'liberation factor' and the failures of delivery. Additional reasons included Thabo Mbeki's alleged lack of popular magnetism, the Government's poor record of job creation, and policies on HIV/AIDS and Zimbabwe. However, not only did the ANC do better than ever, the DA's gains were comparatively modest, the New National Party (NNP) was effectively destroyed and the IFP suffered moderate but significant damage, losing control of the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

In explaining the ANC's success, indeed in characterising party competition during Election 2004 more generally, most analysts have emphasised three variables: party 'branding', resources and organisation. While there is much to this approach I want to suggest that a closer look at the content and style of the ANC's campaign reveals a further, and crucial, element in party competition for the ruling elite: an internal left-wing politics. Much of the ANC's campaign in 2004, indeed, much of the ANC's politics of late, is not directly externally at opposition parties but internally at a left-wing politics that haunts party leadership, principally through the alliance. Let's begin with the conventional analysis of Election 2004.

The ANC did better in Election 2004 than ever before, both in terms of its total national support and its reach across the country. As shown in Table 1 it achieved the highest percentage of the vote yet in a post-apartheid election, with 69,68 per cent. It also improved on the absolute number of votes it won in 1999 by some 276 921 votes. Perhaps more importantly, Election 2004 revealed the ANC to be the largest party in all nine provinces for the first time. As shown in Table 2 (Sachs 2004, p 8) the ANC was especially impressive in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and the Northern Cape, indeed, it was only in these three that the ANC did better in 2004 than in 1994. This is significant as the ANC lost to other parties in these provinces in 1994, securing the Northern Cape in 1999 and the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal in 2004. As in 1994 and 1999, the vast majority of ANC support came from black and poor people, and it was they who voted for the ANC (Reynolds 1994, p 190; 1999, p 181; Sachs 2004, p 12).

In the aftermath of the ANC's victory many reasons have been advanced for the party's impressive showing, including the weakness of opposition parties and some strategic mistakes. However, many of the reasons given reflect creditably on the ANC, including a carefully conceptualised and well organised campaign (Lodge 2005); the strength of the ANC as an organisation, especially the revitalisation of branch structures in the previous couple of years (Lodge 2004); the vigorous defence of its record in government in the previous ten years (Southall 2004) and the ANC's effective use of the ten-year anniversary of democracy.

This story of the ANC's success, or a version similar to it, is pretty much common cause amongst the various commentators on South African politics. However, I want to suggest that it is important to analyse the specific content, and especially the style, of the ANC's campaign as it reflects a notable ideological difference from those of the major opposition parties, namely a left-leaning concern with the poor, the unemployed and the working class. While all significant parties talked about the same five problems (unemployment, poverty, HIV / AIDS, crime and corruption), the ANC did not speak about them in the neo-liberal register of the DA and IFP or, for that matter, of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy (Gear), but in the left register of its alliance partners. This concern with working-class politics is reflected both in the style of the ANC's 2004 campaign, and in the kind of political issues which have been foregrounded by Mbeki for his second term. In sum, Election 2004 saw the ANC return to the left ground it occupied in 1994.

The Return to the Left

Clearly the ANC had multiple objectives in Election 2004, including the 'liberation' of the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. Why ordinary citizens need to be 'liberated' from their free and fair choices of previous elections is a little puzzling, but one way of reading this is as election rhetoric intended to rekindle the ANC's liberation credentials. Indeed, this rhetoric makes sense in the face of what many saw as a growing disaffection amongst the ANC's core constituency with a lack of delivery since 1994. As Lodge (2005) notes, the ANC's own research revealed less of a vulnerability on issues of delivery than on the issues of crime,

Table 1
ANC National Election Results 1994-2004

1994			1999			2004		
Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats
12 237 655	62.65	252	10 601 330	66.35	266	10 878 251	69.68	279

SOURCE: IEC WEBSITE [HTTP://WWW.ELECTIONS.ORG.ZA](http://www.elections.org.za)

Table 2
National Votes for the ANC by Province 1994-2004

	1994	1999	2004
Eastern Cape	2 411 695	1 617 329	188 892
Free State	1 059 313	887 091	838 583
Gauteng	2 486 938	2 527 676	2 408 821
KwaZulu-Natal	1 185 669	1 176 926	1 312 767
Mpumalanga	1 072 518	962 260	979 155
Northern Cape	201 515	211 206	222 205
Limpopo	1 780 177	1 483 199	1 487 168
North West	1 325 559	1 052 895	1 083 254
Western Cape	714 271	682 748	740 077
Total	12 237 655	10 601 330	10 878 251

SOURCE: SACHS 2004, p 8

corruption and HIV/AIDS, with several national surveys confirming that unemployment was the issue of major concern for black voters.

In the face of this research, the ANC's focus on the material conditions of poor people is not surprising; indeed many parties talked about similar issues. More remarkable is the left register of the ANC's campaign, which stands in some contrast to the business-friendly tone of Mbeki's first term, founded on the neo-liberal policy of Gear with its commitment to fiscal discipline, privatising state assets and 'good governance', and a record of significant conflicts between government and Cosatu. Indeed, in ideological terms, Mbeki's first term was marked by a twinning of neo-liberal pragmatism with an Africanism expressed via the notion of the African renaissance and in the characterisation of South Africa as a society of 'two nations' bound by race. In the run-up to Election 2004 however, the plight of the unemployed and the poor took centre stage, and talk of 'two nations' gave way to 'two economies'. Some may argue that this was not so much an ideological shift as a new phase of government's grand plan, which recognised that 'sound economic policies' form the basis of a 'development strategy to create work and improved opportunities for the millions of South Africans who survive on meagre subsistence activities or on remittances or grants' (Manuel 2004). This has been a recurring motif in the speeches of the Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, ever since the introduction of Gear in 1996 (Lodge 1999, pp 23-4). Responding to criticism that Gear had replaced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) Manuel said that Gear was a precondition for the RDP, not a replacement.

That the 'return to the left' is not a 'return' in that it was always part of the grand plan is not a debate I want to try and settle here, not least as my main argument does not depend on the outcome. Whatever the reasons for the 'return to the left', and however short-lived this return might prove, the evidence suggests that the ANC elite is more concerned about internal challenge from its left flank than about external challenge from the right. This claim is based on three sets of evidence: the nature of the ANC's 2004 election campaign, the ANC's public defensiveness in respect of allegations of 'having failed the poor', and its attempts to patch up strained alliance relations before the election.

Perhaps the clearest statement of the ANC's return to the left was the party's election slogan 'a people's contract to create work and fight poverty' (ANC 2004, p 1). Notably, this slogan echoed the popular language of the 1994 RDP, a language which permeated the manifesto and, indeed, the ANC's entire campaign. A cursory analysis of the content of the manifesto reveals a profound emphasis on issues related to material well-being, like unemployment, poverty and service delivery. This is evident in the way the ANC projected its record in government in respect of water, electricity, housing, education, social grants and the economy. More revealing are the eight components of the ANC's 'Vision 2014', the first two of which are 'to reduce unemployment by half' and 'to reduce poverty by half' (ANC 2004, pp 6-7). Not only are the majority of these 'material' issues, the order suggests that unemployment and poverty are the main priorities. Further, the promises to reduce

poverty and unemployment by half are specific and bold commitments, more ambitious than 'creating the conditions for one million new, sustainable jobs within five years' as proposed by the DA (2004) or any other party for that matter, and quite striking, as Mbeki has avoided populist policies whilst in government. Indeed, in its manifesto the ANC committed itself to more specific targets for the next five years, including one million jobs through a public works programme and significant investment in infrastructure development.

Other ANC publications reflected similar issues. Thus, the party released two leaflets nationally entitled 'Create Work, Fight Poverty' and 'Safer Communities' [<http://www.anc.org.za/elections/2004/index.html>], and every edition of *ANC Today* from the ANC's campaign launch on 18 January to the election date of 14 April included at least one piece on uplifting the material conditions of South Africans. The pro-poor emphasis of election materials was reinforced by the style of the ANC's election campaign, which utilised door-to-door campaigning and the media rather than the extensive rallies of the past. While the door-to-door campaign was in part a pragmatic response to limited funds, Lodge (2005) notes that it was also an attempt to demonstrate responsiveness to the plight of ordinary people. This was reinforced by Mbeki's televised high-profile visits to the homes of poor people, a media event aimed at the public at large but nevertheless echoed in the deployment of all ANC leadership, including ministers, members of Parliament and councillors in door-to-door campaigning.

What is remarkable about the ANC's campaign is not just that the party talked about the plight of the poor and visited them in their homes, but that it did this despite the fact that no other major party was engaging the poor in this left-leaning way. Indeed, the ANC made a point of not attacking opposition parties, refusing the DA's attempt to organise a televised debate and generally declining to be drawn into various attempts at agenda setting in the media. In brief, the form and content of the ANC's 2004 election campaign represent something of a shift to the left in the party's public image since 1999. As Jeremy Cronin (2004), Deputy General Secretary of the SACP put it, Election 2004 'was NOT a campaign fought on a programme of privatisation and liberalisation, it was not a programme of labour market flexibility'.

There are two further sources of evidence that affirm the ANC's 'return to the left' in Election 2004. One is the process of reconciliation between the ANC and its alliance partners, especially Cosatu, the other is ANC defensiveness over allegations of having lost touch with the poor. An example of the latter is an article by ANC research co-ordinator Michael Sachs in which he argues that Election 2004 showed both that democratic citizenship is valued in South Africa and that 'the ANC's gains in percentage and absolute terms were especially strong amongst the poorest sections of black and rural electorate' (2004, p 8). A similar claim that 'the poor believe in the poll' was made in an article in the *Mail & Guardian* on 21 May 2004. More revealing, however, are Mbeki's comments at the election victory party of the ANC (Mbeki 2004). Here he said:

There are some in our country and the rest of the world who had invented stories about our government and our movement. They said we had lost contact with the people. They claimed that the people were angry and disillusioned with the ANC because we had failed to respond to their aspirations. They said that the failures of the ANC government had led to disillusionment and apathy among the youth of our country. They said all we had done was to enrich a few politically well-connected cronies of the leadership of our movement. They claimed that the ANC government was little more than a bunch of corrupt individuals intent on stealing from the people. They said we did not care for the interests of our country's national minorities. They claimed that the traditional leaders were so disaffected that they would mobilise the rural masses to reject our movement. They said the failures of the ANC government had resulted in the birth of so-called social movements that would succeed to persuade our people to boycott the elections. They said that the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance were paralysed by internal divisions and factional fights that would make it difficult for us to act together to reach out to the people of South Africa. This week, more than 10 million South Africans, 70% of those who voted, categorically rejected all these false accusations.

I think it is significant that, at the moment of victory, Mbeki chose to highlight criticisms of the ANC at all and, moreover, the particular criticisms that he did. These choices indicate a sensitivity to allegations of popular disillusionment caused by enduring joblessness and poverty. It seems safe to infer that these concerns were a significant spur to the ANC's electoral design and its *toenadering* with Cosatu, especially when many of these popular perceptions were confirmed by the party's own work with focus groups (Lodge 2005). Just as suggestive, however, was the ANC's public rapprochement with its alliance partners in 2003.

The claim that until mid-2003 relations within the alliance were strained was expressed in no less a publication than the *ANC Today*. The edition of 12-18 October 2001 reported that the ANC was reflecting on its relationship with Cosatu and that the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) was due to hold a series of bilateral meetings with the SACP and Cosatu. According to the paper, 'tensions within the alliance came to a head by Cosatu's general strike against government's programme of restructuring state assets, which coincided with South Africa's hosting of the World Conference Against Racism in Durban. This came against the backdrop of problems in the alliance for at least the last five years, blamed on a range of ideological, policy, strategic, structural and tactical differences.' Further on, the paper states: 'The NEC identified an increasing tendency within the SACP, Cosatu and even the ANC to try to "detach" the working class and working class struggles from the broad multi-class struggle for national liberation ...' It warned of the dangers of this approach: 'Lessons from other struggles teach us that the surest way to defeat the working

class is to fight a pure class struggle.' It would, in the process, also defeat the struggle for national liberation and social transformation, it said. Similar comments were made in the *ANC Today* of 18-24 January 2002. In the *ANC Today* of 19-25 September, Mbeki affirmed the importance to the alliance of realising the goals of the national democratic revolution, denouncing those who sought to weaken and destroy the alliance by driving 'wedges between the ANC and Cosatu'.

A similar story of tensions within the alliance and moves toward reconciliation emerges from reports on, and press releases from, the SACP and Cosatu. At its eighth National Congress, in September 2003, Cosatu considered and adopted what it called the '2015 programme', its core strategic document for the following ten years. According to the plan (Cosatu 2003, p 7) 'an intense struggle is being waged internally and outside to win the hearts and minds of Cosatu' on three main fronts. First, 'some in the ANC' want 'to encourage "new" unions and workers interested only in shop floor issues. This seeks to transform Cosatu and the labour movement as a whole into salesmen of capital and sweetheart unions, whose main responsibility would be to get workers to "understand" the constraints facing government. This tendency was reflected in the ANC's vicious 2001 briefing notes, which labelled Cosatu, and in particular its leadership, as ultra left.' The second front is a 'weak but increasingly vocal extreme-left group ... impatient with the limits and alliances required in a National Democratic Revolution' and wanting Cosatu to break the alliance and form a workers' party that would challenge the ANC. Third are opposition parties, which recognise Cosatu's power and want to use it to advance their interests.

Further, the 2015 programme (p 8) complains of a shift to the right in government economic policy, with Gear and the rise of a right-wing hegemony in governance brought about by a lack of working-class consultation, especially in the alliance, where Cosatu 'must compete to influence government policies, not just with other civil society formations, but – much worse – with capital itself'. Indeed, 'the balance of forces in the Alliance favours those who want only a limited role for the Alliance and indeed the ANC itself ... In the run-up to elections relations improve and a new sense of unity and respect for one another emerges. Once elections are over we go back to the reality of being sidelined for another five years.' In conclusion, 'the Alliance has been reduced in practice to a crisis manager, mediating mostly between the state and Cosatu. Moreover it has become clear that the state will not necessarily abide by agreements within the Alliance – or for that matter, even ANC resolutions' (Cosatu 2003, p 9).

Nevertheless, the programme concludes, 'the Alliance remains the only weapon in the hands of the people to deepen transformation and take our National Democratic Revolution to new heights ... Above all we recognise that the displacement of the working class leadership of the National Democratic Revolution is temporary, a result of our failure to tilt the balance of forces and manage contestation within the Alliance' (Cosatu 2003, p 10). To redress this imbalance the 2015 programme talks about the need to 'shift the balance of power, debate in the

Alliance and government' (Cosatu 2003, p 11) through various measures, including playing 'a decisive role in the 2004 elections and shaping the elections platform, and subsequent elections' (Cosatu 2003, p 14).

While the Cosatu congress adopted the 2015 programme, including its recommitment to the alliance and the 2004 election in particular, other proposals that concerned limiting the ANC's powers to appoint premiers and a 20 per cent quota of ANC MPs to be from Cosatu were rejected (*The Star* 17 September 2003). Writing in the *ANC Today* Mbeki affirmed the outcome of the Cosatu Congress, stating that 'our alliance has a continuing responsibility to lead our country, a people's contract to push back the frontiers of poverty' (Sapa 19 September 2003). Cosatu President Willie Madisha stated that the union was starting with a 'clean slate' in its relationship with its alliance partners now that tension with the ANC was out of the way (*Saturday Star* 20 September 2003).

In many ways the rapprochement between the ANC and its key allies was driven by the same sets of concerns that drive party competition in liberal democracies. On the one hand, the ANC needed Cosatu and the SACP for ideological legitimacy and organisational help in winning votes. On the other hand, Cosatu and the SACP need the alliance to influence government decision-making. These incentives of popular support and access to power are the same that motivate opposition parties. I will argue below that the logic of opposition party competition is such that these incentives are, in effect, mutually exclusive. Opposition parties can secure either access to power in conjunction with the ANC or sustained support from voters, but not both. The case with the ANC and the alliance is the opposite, as power and support reinforce each other. The more the alliance gets access to power, the better the ANC does at the polls. Thus, while the relationships of the alliance are framed by the same principles that guide party competition in the political system, their logic is different.

That Cosatu and the SACP took advantage of this rapprochement with the ANC at election time is manifest in a flurry of activity from the two alliance partners after April 2004. For example, on 16 September 2004 Cosatu unions went on the biggest strike in the public sector since 1994 over government's refusal to grant a 7 per cent increase. The strike pitted government against Cosatu, with government making a small concession, increasing its final offer from 6 per cent to 6,2 per cent. It also attempted to visit its fraternal union in Zimbabwe, contrary to government wishes, only to be thrown out of that country. The SACP launched its Red October campaign on land and agrarian reform, pulling together a range of civil society organisations and the ANC behind a review of the land reform process in South Africa, especially the 'willing-buyer, willing-seller' principle (SACP press release 15 October 2004). This direct challenge to current land reform policy has yet to prompt a direct response from government, and seems to indicate a shift of sorts in alliance politics.

Of course the question is how long will this 'return to the left' last? Will Cosatu and the SACP manage to put the alliance at the centre of government decision-

making, or, as Cosatu's 2015 programme puts it, now that elections are over will the alliance partners be sidelined for another five years? Only time will tell, but early indications are not very positive for Cosatu and the SACP. Whatever transpires, however, the point is that concerns about vulnerability on its left flank significantly affected the nature of the ANC's 2004 election campaign. To what extent the left-leaning nature of the campaign was directly influenced by Cosatu/SACP and to what extent it was engineered solely by the ANC is hard to know. Lodge (2005) makes no mention of alliance input, so perhaps the party chose to frame the campaign in left-leaning terms reminiscent of alliance co-operation around the RDP in 1994 rather than being overtly pushed by its alliance partners.

Translated into terms of party competition for votes this means that the greatest perceived challenge to the ANC in Election 2004 was not from other parties, but from disillusionment born of a left politics most often articulated by the party's alliance partners. This is a politics without a home in the current system of party competition, so it is the politics of a phantom. That the ANC was more concerned about this phantom than about existing parties reveals just how insignificant formal party competition is in South Africa. Nevertheless, I would suggest that these engagements within the alliance do act as a check on the accountability of ANC elites in the name of the working class and the poor. Of course, just how significant this accountability is, is debatable. Habib and Taylor (1999) have argued that the alliance has, on balance, proved ineffectual in enabling Cosatu to influence government policy, especially as the adoption of Gear trumps gains made for workers' rights in laws like the Labour Relations Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. Moreover, as noted above, the Cosatu 2015 programme points out that the alliance partners are largely ignored by government, except at election time.

While it might be true that the influence of Cosatu through the alliance is limited, the question arises whether it would indeed be greater if it were an independent workers' party. I think not. Firstly, it seems unlikely that such a party would defeat the ANC at the polls, and it would have sacrificed its special relationship with the Government to complain from opposition benches. Secondly, the costs of leaving the alliance would be huge. Southall and Wood (1999, pp 78-9) argue that there is a good chance that such a divorce could turn ugly, with the ANC accusing Cosatu of 'betraying the liberation struggle', and leading to 'some combination of a split within Cosatu and within its individual affiliates, bitter struggles of ownership of union assets ... and the formation by the ANC of some rival union'. Further, the new party would have to find resources to fund itself in a world unfriendly to left-wing parties.

Currently, from Cosatu's point of view, a key strength of the alliance is some notion of normative obligation from the ANC thanks to a shared fraternity born of the struggle against apartheid. This fraternity makes it difficult for either side even to imagine leaving without invoking feelings of betrayal. Leaving the alliance effectively means leaving the community of the oppressed, a community whose mission is yet unfinished. This sentiment is reflected in Mbeki's comments that the

alliance is the 'united response of the oppressed' (Sapa 19 September 2004) and Cronin's (2004) point that Cosatu doesn't want to lobby or bargain with the ANC, but wants 'an ANC (that includes communists and non-communists) united around a national democratic revolutionary programme'. Indeed, the only scenario in which the alliance is likely to split is a somewhat desperate one where economic policy fails and unemployment and poverty rise, creating grounds for a populist reaction, which will probably do more harm than good.

In sum, there are good reasons to assume that the alliance, and Cosatu in particular, helps keep the ANC accountable to an important constituency, even if only at election time, and that this is better done through the alliance than through the formation of a workers' party. Somewhat paradoxically then, in South Africa at this time, elections do deepen government accountability to the organised working class despite the lack of a workers' party. Further, the special relationship forged in the alliance between Cosatu and the ANC means that this is a form of accountability stronger than that likely to be secured by a secessionist workers' party 'traitorous to the struggle'. Of course this argument holds as long as Cosatu remains strong and the sense of a struggle fraternity endures. Indeed, the stronger Cosatu and the SACP become, the more likely it is that they will be able to influence governance between elections as well as for a brief period once every five years. In this respect it is notable that Cosatu's 2015 programme commits it (and urges the SACP to commit itself) to building itself as an organisation and engaging the alliance and government more 'proactively'. Given the foregrounding of unemployment and poverty as the key issues of Mbeki second term, and given the clear determination of the Left to try harder, there is some chance that the 'return to the left' could be more than an epiphenomenon of elections. If so, the ANC's alliance partners might play more of a role in governance in Mbeki's second term than they did in the first.

In conclusion, Election 2004 confirmed both the growing popularity of the ANC and the usefulness of the alliance in securing both a better return for the ANC at the polls *and* greater Cosatu/SACP influence on government policy, at least during election periods. These findings are largely consistent with those of preceding elections and suggest that, in the case of the ANC, party configurations for popular support and power are mutually reinforcing. For opposition parties the inverse is true. Not only are they increasingly unpopular with the public, but must choose between access to office through co-operation with the ANC and longer-term popularity

THE OPPOSITION PARTIES IN ELECTION 2004

Unforeseen Misfortune at the Polls

As Booysen (2004) notes, Election 2004 provided some 'sobering realisations' for South African opposition parties, whose position is arguably weaker than ever. Table 3 illustrates how, despite the fact that there were more opposition parties on

the national ballot than ever before, the total percentage of the vote accrued by these parties shrank from 37 per cent in 1994 to 20 per cent ten years later. Further, the support for the largest opposition party has diminished from the 20 per cent of the NP in 1994 to the 12 per cent of the DA in 2004. Indeed, apart from the modest 2,8 per cent growth of the DA in 2004, almost all opposition parties have lost support or held level. The only new party to do well was the Independent Democrats (ID), but even it came in below the United Democratic Movement's (UDM) first-time performance in 1999.

Table 3
Parliamentary Opposition Party Support, National Ballot, 1994-2004

1994		1999		2004	
Party	%	Party	%	Party	%
NP	20,39	DP	9,56	DA	12,3
IFP	10,54	IFP	8,5	IFP	6,97
FF	2,17	NNP	6,87	UDM	2,28
DP	1,7	UDM	3,42	ID	1,73
PAC	1,25	ACDP	1,43	NNP	1,65
ACDP	0,45	FF	0,8	ACDP	1,6
		UCDP	0,78	FF+	0,89
		PAC	0,71	UCDP	0,75
		FA	0,54	PAC	0,73
		MF	0,3	MF	0,35
		AEB	0,29	AZAPO	0,27
		AZAPO	0,17		
Total %	38,35		33,65		30,32
Total votes	7 295 843		5 375 812		4 734 416

SOURCE: SACHS 2004, p 11

Commentators have identified two general problems that beset opposition campaigning in 2004. The first was a lack of obvious differentiation from government on key issues and the policies needed to deal with them (Southall 2004, p 3). As implied in my argument above, this point is not as convincing as it appears at first, for although the ANC might have talked about the same issues as other parties,

and even shared certain broad policy outlooks, its campaign was situated significantly to the left of those of the main opposition parties. To put the point differently, in respect of content but especially of style, the ANC differentiated itself very effectively from its opponents.

The second general problem (Kotzé 2004; Sachs 2004) was a lower turnout of opposition voters (see Table 3). Kotzé suggests that the timing of the election (immediately after the Easter weekend) might have hurt opposition parties, whose supporters were more likely to have been away on holiday. He also refers to apathy caused by the certainty of ANC victory, and the lack of a viable alternative to the ANC as 'the spectrum of opposition parties was too fragmented and sectoral' (2004, p 2). Sachs (2004, p 12) claims that the lower turnout of the more affluent and the racial minorities was a non-violent form of rejecting democracy by turning to the 'apathy of the cluster home' and/or was due to the lack of appeal of the DA's Leon's robust anti-ANC style. My hunch is that the low turnout had much to do with perceptions of efficacy of participation in the face of a clear ANC victory, a rational choice reinforced by a sense (revivified by the 'ten years of freedom' celebrations) of being on the 'wrong side of history'. In effect, interest and identity combined to erode the motivation of opposition voters to participate, much as it combined to spur the enthusiasm of ANC supporters.

Table 4
Estimated Turnout by Selected Demographic Category

Demographic Group	Estimated turnout of registered voters
Eastern Cape Metro Africans	84,9%
Western Cape Metro Africans	82,3%
Gauteng Metro Africans	76,7%
Limpopo Rural Africans	75,6%
KwaZulu-Natal Metro Africans	74,3%
Northern Cape Rural coloureds	73,6%
Gauteng Metro Indians	68,4%
Western Cape Metro Indians	62,0%
KwaZulu-Natal Metro Indians	61,5%

SOURCE: SACHS 2004, P 10

Aside from these general problems, however, commentators have pointed out various mistakes made by the different parties. Thus, while the DA had some reason to be upbeat about its growth, the party did not realise its election objectives. Firstly,

its 'coalition for change' with the IFP failed to reach the 20-30 per cent support level it desired. Secondly, the DA did not conclusively consolidate the opposition; securing far less than half the opposition vote, despite the collapse of the NNP¹. Thirdly, Booysen (2005) states that the DA's share of the black vote rose from 0,4 per cent in 1999 to 1,7 per cent in 2004, nowhere near the 10 per cent it had hoped for. Moreover, these black recruits 'originated in the UDM and the IFP, rather than in the ANC'. Thus, in addition to not consolidating the opposition vote, the DA has made almost no gains amongst government supporters. For Booysen, a major reason for the DA's disappointment was its failure to project a consistent identity to the public, vacillating as it did between liberalism and opportunism. At best, the DA is 'liberal, multi-faceted and engaging in vigorous multi-partyism', at worst it is 'a contradictory-in-terms of policy, internally inconsistent and opportunistic vote-garnishing apparatus'. Booysen attributes this ambiguity to the problems of unifying a 'broad church of anti-ANC sentiment' from diverse backgrounds and an ambiguity in ideological position and leadership style

The next biggest party, the IFP, had neither the vision nor the resources to prepare and execute a compelling campaign, spending disproportionate amounts outside of its stronghold in KwaZulu-Natal and relying too much on the loyalties of its core rural voters. This was despite being confronted by the ANC's most impressive campaign yet in KwaZulu-Natal. Further, as I argue elsewhere (Piper 2005), the ANC undermined the IFP's attempts to sell itself to opposition voters as an inclusive and competent conservative liberal alternative by continued reference to violence and apartheid-era politics. More generally the IFP finds itself in a dilemma where it can no longer prosecute old-style coercive politics but, because of the deadening effects of the authoritarian leadership style of its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, it struggles to operate as an effective modern party. This failure to transform has left the IFP increasingly vulnerable to the better organised and better led ANC. Recent attempts to rectify this problem have been simply too little too late. The party has lost the key benefit of being in power in KwaZulu-Natal and it is hard to see how the ANC will now let slip its advantage.

In respect of the rest of the minority parties, the NNP's 'dizzying flight from government to opposition and back' undermined its already waning credibility in the eyes of voters (Southall 2004, p 5). Consequently, its more conservative supporters left for the DA, and the more left leaning headed to the ANC. Further, poor organisation and a lack of resources saw parties like the UDM, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) holding steady at best. With the exception, perhaps, of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), the rest of the opposition parties were no real threat to start with.

While these subjective party weaknesses are important, it is my view that they may explain gains and losses made amongst opposition parties but they do

1 Notably, where the combined DP/NP support in 1994 was 22,12 per cent, the combined DP, NNP, FA support in 1999 was 16,97 per cent and in 2004 it was 14 per cent.

not really explain the overall decline in the opposition vote. Winning votes from opposition parties is one thing, winning votes from the ANC is another altogether, and something that even a party which had consolidated all 30 per cent of the opposition vote would struggle to do. Simply put, there is just so much an opposition party can do given the dominance of the ANC, and indeed there is more to the dominance of the ANC than good governance and good campaigning.

Key here are the attitudes of ordinary South Africans. To my mind a significant proportion of the ANC's supporters endorse the party because they see it as the party of the oppressed, and the oppressed still need (mostly economic) liberation in the new South Africa. This reasoning is based on observation of the patterns of party political affiliation since 1994. Two claims are important here. First, the past three national elections have revealed that the divide between the ANC and the opposition parties is not sociologically random but follows certain widely acknowledged social categories. More specifically, the supporters of the ANC are overwhelmingly those who were the losers under the apartheid system: black and poor people. Conversely, those who were (relatively speaking) the 'winners' under apartheid, namely racial minorities, the wealthy and some Bantustan beneficiaries, support opposition parties. This bifurcation of popular support is testimony to the enduring and powerful legacy of apartheid. Thus, while the size and ranking of opposition parties has changed quite dramatically since 1994, the overall levels of support and the profile of opposition voters has not changed much at all. In addition, with the exception of some losses by the IFP and NNP to the ANC in the last election, very few voters have changed from one side of the apartheid divide to the other.

Second, this suggests that, until the racial, class and ethnic bases of power are reconstituted, party competition occurs largely within one of these two groups so that the ANC, PAC, Azapo, and so on, contest the 'apartheid losers' group, and the DA, NNP, IFP, UDM and UCDP contest the 'apartheid winners' group. In practice then, opposition electoral politics has been a zero-sum gain amongst opposition parties rather than between opposition parties and the ANC. In this context the strengths and weaknesses of parties help explain how they do within each group, but there is little that parties can do in the short term to win support across group boundaries. Of course both these claims are somewhat crude and require further nuance. The ambiguous position of traditional leaders and of racial minorities like Indian and coloured people needs further investigation, as do the emergent changes in racial, class and ethnic relations. Nevertheless, it is my view that the general description stands and that, when added to the quest for political office – the *raison d'être* of political parties – it introduces the central dilemma of opposition politics: access to office versus popular support.

The Dilemma of Popularity Versus Power

In the context of a bifurcated electorate where the vast majority return the ANC, opposition parties have very little chance of winning office. This means that, in

order to hold office, opposition parties find themselves forced to consider alliances either with each other, in the rare circumstance that this is possible, or with the ANC. The most significant example of an opposition party alliance for power was the NNP/DA alliance after election 1999 to secure the government of the Western Cape despite the ANC being the largest party in the province. However, other instances have occurred at local government level. Indeed, after the 2000 local government elections the DA and the IFP agreed to share power in local councils wherever possible.

On the whole, though, party coalitions for power have more commonly seen opposition parties making some arrangement with the ANC. In 1994, 1999 and 2004 the ANC and the IFP agreed to various power-sharing arrangements in the national and KwaZulu-Natal governments on a *quid pro quo* basis such that IFP access to national power was traded for ANC access to KwaZulu-Natal. While, from the IFP's point of view, this arrangement was driven by a desire for power, from the ANC's standpoint it was more about reducing conflict in KwaZulu-Natal. Experience of IFP brinkmanship during the transition years had taught the ANC leadership that IFP compliance was better achieved through inclusion and recognition (especially of Buthelezi) than through exclusion (Piper 2000).

It is my view that this cooperation between the IFP and ANC has hurt the IFP in two ways. First, it has directly undermined the IFP in the eyes of (mostly white) opposition voters looking for a robust challenger to the ANC. This is a constituency the IFP has targeted in every election since the 1996 local government elections with decreasing success over time. Thus, where the party secured something like one-third of white voters in KwaZulu-Natal in the provincial ballot of 1994 (Piper & Piper 1995), this proportion had declined significantly by 2004. Perhaps part of the reason for this is the IFP's unremarkable record in government in KwaZulu-Natal, but another is its ambiguous relationship with the ruling party. This conclusion is affirmed by the fact that, today, most white and many Indian voters in KwaZulu-Natal support the DA, with its vigorous anti-ANC stance. Second, co-operation in government with the ANC has moderated the IFP's militant Zulu nationalism of the transition years, creating the opportunity for the ANC to gain increasing access to IFP supporters and to win over more and more significant numbers with each election. Such is the shift in popular support since 1994 that the claim that rural Zulus of KwaZulu-Natal support the IFP and urban black voters endorse the ANC is no longer true. By Election 2004 the IFP had shrunk to a constituency of rural Zulu people north of the Tukela, with most rural people in the south endorsing the ANC.

Perhaps the best known alignment for power between an opposition party and the ANC involved the NNP. Following the successful coalition between the NNP and DP which won them power in the Western Cape after election 1999, the NNP under its new leader, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, and the Federal Alliance (FA) entered into a formal alliance with the DP called the Democratic Alliance. This alliance contested the local government elections of October 2000. Shortly thereafter,

however, Van Schalkwyk decided to withdraw the NNP from the DA as 'he and his ilk were unable to stomach playing second fiddle to the more cerebral and feisty Tony Leon and engaging in the politics of vigorous opposition' (Southall 2004, p 5). Then, following the floor-crossing period of 2002-3, Van Schalkwyk decided to join up in a loose coalition with the ANC to seize control of the city of Cape Town and the government of the Western Cape. According to Southall (2004, p 5) the ANC played to Van Schalkwyk's 'personal ambition for office, his party's lack of commitment to principled opposition and its lingering lust for power', in a 'blatant case of a cynical, up-and-coming bridegroom marrying a vainglorious elderly widow for her tawdry wealth'. Whatever the reasons, the NNP's behaviour cost it hugely in the 2004 polls, and shortly afterwards the party decided to merge with the ANC.

In short then, the lesson to be learned by opposition parties is that co-operation with the ANC may help with access to political office in the short term, but it is likely to cost votes over time, with (mostly white) anti-ANC voters going to the DA and (many black) supporters switching to the ANC. This reflects the fact that the boundary between government and opposition supporters is perhaps becoming more porous, but mainly in one direction, with some black opposition support now moving to the ruling party. My view, which space prevents from developing here, is that this has something to do with changing social relations in post-apartheid South Africa and, more directly, with the ANC's capture of key elites.

In contrast to the lesson that co-operation for power costs votes, there are a couple of opposition parties, principally the DA and perhaps the ID, who have benefited at the polls because of an overt challenge to ANC power. The DA's record in this respect is well known, and mostly associated with the advent of Tony Leon as party leader after the 1994 election. As Southall (2004, p 5) puts it, 'Leon takes delight in pinning his criticisms of the ANC to the mast, and sailing into battle. He loves the smell of blood, the electorate senses it, and some buy his fighting message gladly.' In the 1999 election this confrontational anti-ANC politics was expressed in the party's 'fight back' campaign, which succeeded in drawing large numbers of mostly white NNP voters disgruntled with their party's cuddling up to the ANC. Confronted by accusations that it was appealing to racial prejudice (the ANC pilloried 'fight back' as 'fight blacks'), in more recent times the DA has looked to take its campaign to the townships and has formed the coalition for change with the IFP to 'oppose the ANC at a national level and co-govern at provincial and municipal levels' (Leon 2003).

While it is clear that the DA's anti-ANC position has greatly boosted its popular support, this is clearly a support with a ceiling. Indeed, Election 2004 suggests this ceiling is well below the 30 per cent mark of opposition voters. Further, attempts to win over black converts have not really worked, despite the work in the townships and alliance with the IFP. Indeed, to my mind the coalition with the IFP undermines the DA's attempts to win black voters, given the widespread popular perception of the IFP as 'an apartheid collaborator' and 'ethnically chauvinist' (Southall 2004, p6).

The lesson of the last few elections is that overt challenge to the ANC may mean foregoing political office, but it is one way of winning votes. In many ways, the success of Patricia de Lille's Independent Democrats in Election 2004 confirms this pattern. The ID's success had much to do with De Lille's public image as a robust critic of the ANC and with the fact that she is a former PAC leader with good struggle credentials (Hoeane 2005).

The voting patterns for opposition parties since 1994 suggest that access to power through co-operation with the ANC sits in some tension with popular support amongst opposition voters, especially white opposition voters. When added to the analysis of ANC support, this pattern confirms the picture of the South African electorate as divided most profoundly into two groups: poor black people who support the government and racial minorities, the wealthy and some Bantustan constituencies. This apartheid boundary has proved remarkably important in the last three national elections, with the percentage and identity of opposition support remaining pretty constant, especially if one considers the reduced turnout of opposition voters in 2004. What this means is that opposition parties must either resign themselves to a future with little power but a good chance of retaining opposition votes (like the DA), or access to power through some arrangement with the ANC, but at great risk to their future support (like the NNP and IFP).

However, this not the end of the story, as Election 2004 provided evidence that the boundary between apartheid 'winners' and 'losers' is become more porous, although mostly in one direction – from the opposition to the ANC, and mostly from groups of opposition voters who were only comparatively winners under apartheid: coloured minorities and Bantustan constituencies. This is obviously good news for the ANC and bad news for the opposition parties, especially those like the DA that rely on strong anti-ANC sentiment. It also suggests that under Tony Leon's confrontational anti-politics the DA may fast be approaching its ceiling amongst opposition supporters.

FUTURE PARTY CONFIGURATION

Describing these trends is one thing, explaining them is another. So far I have largely avoided explanation, other than to suggest that the fundamental divide in the South African electorate places limits on the significance of subjective factors of party performance. Thus, no matter how hard it tries, the ANC may be reaching the zenith of popular support unless opposition voters dramatically change their beliefs. Similarly, no matter what it does, the DA's consolidation of the opposition vote limits it to 30 per cent of the popular vote, and probably far less under Tony Leon. To put the matter another way, I have stated that the boundary between government and opposition voters is based on deeper relationships and identities from the apartheid era, more specifically, enduring racial, class and ethnic power relations. However, these relations are changing, albeit to various degrees. While what follows is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a thorough assessment, I will make a few

comments about the trajectory and pace of these changes and what they might mean for future party politics.

To my mind there are three major axes of social change in South Africa that follow the institutions of state, market and public sphere. First, there have been dramatic changes in the institution of the state, which are eroding the racial and ethnic power relations of the apartheid era, both in respect of the exclusion of black South Africans from voting and from office in branches and levels of direct rule in urban areas, and the ethnically-couched configurations of indirect rule in rural areas (Mamdani 1996). However, this movement is not absolute. The realities of demography mean the non-racial state is *de facto* racialised in personnel and, more importantly, in some policies. This trajectory is reinforced by the propagation of race thinking in the discourse of transformation and ANC ideology as well as in lingering racism among many 'apartheid winners'. Perhaps unavoidably, perhaps unintentionally, race retains a radically reduced but still significant link to state practice, if not explicit state design. It is this variable which places limits on the openness of racial minorities to the ANC. In respect of ethnic power, the ambiguous status of traditional leaders in state design effectively slows the decay of undemocratic governance, if not government, in many rural areas. This is a key factor in maintaining IFP support, and helps explain why, unlike the NNP, the IFP will not suddenly collapse.

Second, there have not been fundamental changes in the institutions of the economy and this has perpetuated much of the racial character of the class divide in South Africa. Some important caveats apply, however, the most significant of which is the growth of a black middle class in South Africa, chiefly through access to resources of the state, but increasingly through policies of black economic empowerment in the market place. Also significant has been greater class inequality within all racial groups. Taken together these suggest that class divides are beginning to cross cut racial divides, unlike the isomorphism of race and class under apartheid. Critically, the untangling of race and class is lopsided in that, to date, it has mostly been about the emergence of a multiracial middle class, but the working class and poor have remained disproportionately black and are arguably worse off than they were in 1994. In political terms this dynamic is expressed in tensions within the alliance, especially between government and Cosatu and, as reflected in party behaviour, is the most important challenge for the ANC leadership to contain.

Third, there have been significant changes in the public sphere which have great cultural significance. While the public sphere is a more ambiguous entity to define than state and government, economy and market, I use it here to refer to the realm of public debate and it is markedly influenced by the reformed state and enduring market players. This influence is exercised through systems of mass communication, especially 'global' communication, with its Americanised popular culture and westernised 'modern' political culture. Perhaps the least anticipated of the major institutional changes, the partial 'globalisation' of South Africa's public realm, is still powerful and has implications for popular and political culture, as is

poignantly manifest in the often 'cosmopolitan' quest for cultural identities evident among the younger members of South Africa's 'first economy'. In this context the resonance of Africanism is not irrelevant as much as transformed into forms that seek admission to the world. The resonance of Africanism within the 'second economy' is likely to be quite different and constructed in terms we are more familiar with, not least xenophobia towards immigrants.

In sum, the overall trajectory of institutional and cultural change since 1994 is changing apartheid political identities, albeit in different ways and at different speeds. On the one hand, the ascent to power of black leadership combined with the enduring economic position of most black people has opened tensions within the black community (represented in alliance politics) and has reinforced a sense of collective unfinished business. The ANC has been wise enough to turn this to its advantage, using a semi-racialised communitarianism to trump class divides. Nevertheless, blackness is not what it used to be. On the other hand, opposition voters' fear of ANC (and perhaps black) rule is being eroded by experience of relatively competent government which has mostly secured the interests of the middle classes and above. The ANC has been very successful in incorporating into its governance many of this elite, especially the less privileged of the apartheid era 'winners'.

To my mind the real struggle for the future of South African party politics lies in the recruitment of the middle class, as it is they who dominate government, the market and the public sphere. In this respect the major challenge for the ANC is to maintain the support of both the powerful middle classes and poor black people. Hence it is more (if still only moderately) concerned about an internal left politics represented in the alliance than it is about opposition parties. For opposition parties, and especially the DA, the major challenge is race politics. Can it, in the next five years, start to overcome its white middle-class image to transform itself into a party for the black middle classes? While the party has made some tentative moves, they are far too modest and are undermined by the historically racialised thrust of Leon's approach. To its commitment to opposition, the DA needs to add credible black leadership and especially a new leader, preferably someone with struggle credentials. It also needs a clear strategy for recruiting the black middle classes. Clearly then, the competitive challenges for the opposition are far higher than those for government. It is hard to imagine the opposition making significant gains unless government begins to slip up, and the chances of that are remote under President Mbeki. Real challenge might be possible under a new president, and, if it is to have any hope of growing in future elections, the DA needs to prepare for that distant opportunity.

CONCLUSION

Election 2004 has confirmed the dominance of the ANC in terms both of popular support and of control over political office. That much is common knowledge.

However, the election also revealed some significant changes. In respect of the ANC these involved a 'return to the left' in the content, but especially the style, of its election campaign. When added to a certain public defensiveness and rapprochement in the alliance, ANC electioneering suggests a greater concern with an internal left politics than with extant opposition parties.

Election 2004 also revealed that the alliance is good for all its members, at least during election time, as it boosts ANC support and Cosatu/SACP influence over government. Moreover, there are good reasons to believe that, during election time especially, the alliance helps keep the ANC somewhat accountable to labour, and more effectively than would an independent workers' party. Thus, contrary to the liberal-pluralist model and to the expectations of many commentators, government accountability is currently not better served through competition from a workers' party than through existing non-party channels.

In contrast to the growing popularity of the ANC and the synergies of alliance configuration, Election 2004 revealed declining opposition support and the dilemma of popularity-versus-power-sharing that faces opposition parties. This means that opposition parties must either resign themselves to a future with little power but some potential for growth, or access power through some arrangement with the ANC, but at great risk to their future survival. Opposition politics centres on trading off marginality but long-term survival against short-term, but short-lived, power.

This paper also suggests that the dynamics of party configuration for support and political office are only partly explicable in terms of subjective party choices. Also important is a fundamental and enduring divide in the electorate between poor black people who were the unambiguous 'losers' under apartheid and wealthy racial minorities and Bantustan constituencies who were comparative 'winners'.

Where changes in racial, class and ethnic power relations are beginning to redefine popular interests and identities, this is an uneven process which is producing a multiracial middle class, still marked by racial divides, but increasingly distinct from the huge class of poor black people. While these changes are starting to see the ANC recruit from the black members of the apartheid 'winners' category, it also suggests that marrying this with working-class interests will be the party's largest challenge. Conversely, the DA needs to recruit from the black middle classes whilst retaining an oppositional stance if it is meaningfully to challenge the ANC for support and office in 2009. This looks the far harder task. The DA will not only have to overcome perceptions of racial exclusivity but also the ANC's effective control of key social resources and domains. This is highly unlikely outside of a widespread failure of government, especially in the economic realm.

What, then, is the future of party alignment in South Africa? If current trajectories continue we can expect, on the one hand, the ANC's domination of popular support and office to increase as it absorbs a larger share of opposition support and leadership, especially from the IFP. Indeed, I would suggest that this would be guaranteed if the ANC could demonstrably deliver on the issues of jobs and poverty in the next five years. In this context we can also expect the ANC to be

more concerned about alliance relations and class politics than about the challenge from opposition parties. On the other hand, we can expect the oppositional stance of the DA to continue to secure it more support, but in a shrinking pool of opposition voters and parties, until it approaches a ceiling well under the 20 per cent mark.

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THE DOMINANT-PARTY SYSTEM

Challenges for South Africa's Second Decade of Democracy

By
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ABSTRACT

The existence of a dominant-party system in South Africa has raised growing concerns over its implications for the consolidation of democracy. This paper argues that while there appears to be no real threat to democracy in South Africa it does face several challenges, and successful democratic consolidation will depend upon alertness to signs of undemocratic practices associated with dominant-party systems. It is crucial to ensure that government remains accountable to its citizens. The ANC has demonstrated commitment to democratic principles and there remains sufficient debate and activism within society to keep a check on authoritarian tendencies. However, South African politics is characterised by weak opposition parties that continue to be associated with racial identity and hold little credibility amongst the electorate. South Africans also continue to vote in racial blocs, and the existence of a dominant party and a weak opposition has resulted in emerging voter apathy and withdrawal amongst some sections of the electorate. If the opposition is to fulfil its role in safeguarding accountability and democratic practice it must regain credibility and break away from racial politics to appeal to the African community. Civil society's role in ensuring government accountability is also pivotal, particularly in the absence of a strong political opposition. The left-wing members of the ANC and its allies face similar challenges – they must work to retain their leverage and political influence within the Tripartite Alliance.

INTRODUCTION

The implications of a dominant-party system for the successful consolidation of democracy has long been an issue of interest amongst political scientists in democracies the world over¹. In a context in which one party dominates the political landscape and faces little prospect of electoral defeat concerns arise about the possibility of declining government response to public opinion, loss of accountability, and the overall erosion of democratic principles and development of authoritarian methods of rule. Since 1994, elections in South Africa, which have resulted in repeated overwhelming victory for the ruling African National Congress (ANC), have succeeded in projecting the nation's young democracy into the limelight with regard to this particular political debate. The national celebrations marking ten years of freedom and democracy in South Africa in April 2004 took place against the backdrop of a clear ANC electoral victory at the 14 April polls, in which the ruling party and former liberation movement succeeded in securing 69.68 per cent of the national vote. Given that the ANC is now set to rule at least until 2009, what challenges does the dominant-party system present for South Africa's second decade of democracy?

There is no doubt that the ANC has won a legitimate electoral victory. However, surveys of public opinion and voter intentions have suggested that this is not matched by unquestionable voter satisfaction and contentment with the current government and its delivery. Space, in fact, exists for a political opposition that would appeal to the interests of the electorate, not least South Africa's black majority. In the absence of a credible opposition, however, South Africans continue to vote largely according to racial identity. This has entrenched the political dominance of the ANC, which continues to be perceived as the party representing the black majority, and has spurred the withdrawal from the democratic process of those sections of the electorate who do not identify with the dominant party.

The weakness of the political and parliamentary opposition equally raises concerns about how we can ensure that government remains accountable to its citizens. As a result, 'increasingly the debate is not just about whether democracy in South Africa will survive, but about the *quality* of that democracy' (Southall 2001, p 1). While there appears to be no real threat to democracy in South Africa, it does face several challenges over the coming years, and successful democratic consolidation will depend upon alertness to the emergence of the undemocratic features frequently associated with dominant-party systems.

This paper therefore explores these challenges. It begins by considering the theoretical arguments and debates surrounding the dominant-party system and democracy. The following section then seeks to provide an understanding of the

1 See, for example, Pempel. (1990) for a study of party dominance in advanced industrialised countries. Arian and Barnes (1974) discuss the dominant-party systems of Italy and Israel. Giliomee and Simkins (1999) look at the dominant-party regimes of South Africa, Mexico, Taiwan and Malaysia.

nature of the dominant-party system in the South African political setting. This is done through a brief overview of the nation's three democratic elections and examination of both the ruling ANC as dominant party and the role and nature of political opposition in South Africa. This is followed by an analysis and discussion of the implications of this system and the challenges for South Africa's second decade of democracy.

CONCEPTUALISING DOMINANT-PARTY SYSTEMS: A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

In a recent issue of EISA's *Election Update*, Matlosa and Karume (2004, pp 9-10) categorised the dominant-party system as a system 'in which despite the multi-party situation, only one party is so dominant that it directs the political system and is firmly in control of state power over a fairly long duration of time that even opposition parties make little if any dent on the political hegemony of a dominant ruling party'.

This scenario is clearly a cause for concern if we concur with the negative view that the dominant-party system is inimical to democracy. Much of the debate surrounding the incompatibility of the dominant-party system with democracy centres on the theory that the alternation of power is crucial for democracy.² It has been argued that 'one party dominance becomes problematic when a governing party sees less and less need to respond to public opinion because it is assured of re-election' (Africa, Mattes, Herzenberg & Banda 2003, p 2). The existence of political opposition within a competitive party system presents alternatives to the governing party and therefore stimulates debate within society about ideas and policies and allows society to question the actions and choices of government. Moreover, it is argued that countervailing forces, the most effective of which is the existence of a strong political opposition, are essential to check moves by the incumbency towards authoritarian tendencies and abuse of power (Giliomee & Simkins 1999, p 337). This viewpoint is vehemently argued by Giliomee and Simkins in their useful, although somewhat cynical, analysis of one-party domination and democracy, *The Awkward Embrace*. For them, in a dominant-party system 'the vital elements of democracy, namely genuine competition and uncertainty in electoral outcomes, are removed in a process that is self-sustaining' (1999, p 340). It is argued that this process is characterised by a blurring of the boundary between party and state, which has the effect of reducing the likely formation of independent groups from within civil society that are autonomous from the ruling party; and a growing 'preponderance' of political power, leading to abuse of office and 'arbitrary decision-making that undermines the integrity of democratic institutions, particularly that of the legislature and its ability to check the executive' (1999, p 340).

2 See, for example, Huntington 1991; Przeworski & Limongi 1997; and debates in Giliomee & Simkins 1999.

The dominant-party system has, therefore, frequently been linked to concerns about the emergence of autocratic regimes and the one-party state, not least within the African context. While the definition of democracy should by no means be reduced to the holding of elections, elections are undoubtedly a key vehicle by which the political leadership is able to retain dominance. A number of states, for example, have seen the manipulation of electoral laws and regulations by the incumbent party with the intention of disadvantaging opposition and ensuring the retention of power. Elections in Zimbabwe in 2000 and 2002 are a case in point. The ongoing political crisis of legitimacy currently being played out in the country lends credibility to those aspects of 'the process of entrenching dominance' (Giliomee & Simkins 1999, p 340), which extend beyond the formal electoral arena to undermine the entire democratic system. The dominant party trend in a number of African states since independence has resulted in the regression and reversal of democratic gains of successful transitions in the region and threatens attempts at democratic consolidation.

On the other hand, some advocate caution in branding the dominant-party system irreconcilable with the advancement of democracy. Arian and Barnes, in fact, in an article aptly entitled 'The Dominant-party system, A Neglected Model of Democratic Stability' (1974), hail the system as a 'stabilising mechanism'. Writing in 1974, their analysis is based upon examination of the dominant parties and party systems in Israel and Italy from the 1960s and 1940s respectively. The authors provide relevant insights into the nature of these systems which could be applied to others, and prove particularly useful to a study of the dominant-party system in South Africa. Their contention that the dominant-party system be conceived as 'a model of how democracy and stability may be combined under difficult conditions' (1974, p 593), as well as 'its superiority as a means to stability in fragmented polities' (1974, p 600), is worth considering in the South African context.

Furthermore, while dominant-party systems have not infrequently been characterised by the use of illegitimate means, such as the aforementioned electoral manipulation and even coercion, as a method of retaining power and electoral dominance, it is crucial to note that this is not a feature which can be applied to such systems across the board. Rather, political dominance can equally be achieved by democratic means. Therefore, in some cases, although possibilities for alternation may seem remote, dominance has been won through competitive elections and the 'politics of consensus' (Matlosa & Karume 2004, p 14). Not only does this confer a legitimacy on the dominant ruling party by the electorate, the party cannot ignore the existence of political opposition (Chan 1976, p 4, cited in Friedman 1999, p 100) and also, therefore, voter preferences (Friedman 1999, p 100).

South Africa formally has a multiparty system in which one party is dominant. Hence it is not a 'given' that the dominant party can rely on continued dominance. Rather, Arian and Barnes (1974, p 599) propose that 'the politician of the dominant party can rely on electoral stability if he makes the appropriate decisions; he can rely on the cooperation of the satellite parties and the harmlessness of the opposition

if he has electoral stability' (1974, p 614). The issue of the ability to retain dominance therefore acquires added importance. Under circumstances in which continued dominance is not inevitable, Arian and Barnes suggest that 'political strategy is determining' and the dominant party must position itself strategically within the society and strategise 'vis-à-vis' the opposition.

Under a system in which party dominance has been won within the democratic rules of the game, the dominant party has to function within the boundaries of the democratic system. Within this system are rules and institutions which administer checks and balances on abuse of power – although it should be noted that their effectiveness is dependent upon how advanced the system is, and the effectiveness and autonomy of the mechanisms and institutions in place. Equally, the ideology by which the party is identified by the electorate puts certain constraints on its 'freedom of maneuver' (Arian & Barnes 1974, p 597). However, while continuing dominance is by no means assured, Arian and Barnes (1974, pp 599-600) have also argued that 'the dominant party is the authority that defines the boundaries between the permissible and the unacceptable' (1974, p 597). It therefore has a distinct advantage over the opposition. When the dominant party is a former liberation movement with a particularly symbolic identity and which plays an historically significant role, this gains added weight. The dominant party is able to consume the national political agenda. Giliomee and Simkins (1999, p xvi), drawing on the work of Pempel (1990), refer to the party as administering a 'historic project', generating 'even more dominance'.

However, it should be noted that much also depends on the nature and legitimacy of that dominance. Using the aforementioned example of those parties that emerged from the liberation struggle against colonial rule, such parties are able to use their liberation credentials to retain support (Baregu 2004; Suttner 2004). Moreover, the manner in which such credentials resonate with the majority of the electorate should not be underestimated. Often it serves not only to legitimate the party as a hegemonic power, but also to delegitimize the opposition. As the dominant party comes to represent the nation and democracy, opposition can be depicted as opposing the national project (Myburgh 2004; Suttner 2004). On the other hand, it is also important not to overstate the case, as Friedman points out that 'delegitimation' of opposition is by no means a 'gift' given to the dominant party. Rather, 'conditions must exist in which the electorate is open to delegitimation' (Friedman 1999, p 101). Society's response to and continuation or cessation of support for the dominant party is therefore also determined by its perception of the opposition and its identity, strategy and actions. Given the political weight of the dominant party, however, this perception is likely to be greatly influenced by the strategy of the ruling party.

Needless to say, therefore, this is an interconnected and dialectical process. The continued dominance of one party is inextricably linked to both the opinion of the electorate (on whom the dominant party relies for its continued political legitimacy) and to the existence of political competition in the form of opposition

parties – neither of which it can ignore. However, a crucial point raised by Arian and Barnes is that ‘dominant parties exist in *dominant-party systems*. Long dominance by one party affects the way the other political forces perceive the political system ... the dominant party comes to be identified with the regime and even with the epoch. Opposition parties are reduced to a role of carping and sniping rather than that of developing immediate alternatives’ (Arian & Barnes 1974, p 599). As such, within the confines of this ‘system’, in which one party is dominant, the strategy and response of the opposition inevitably come to be driven by that of the dominant party.

Given this outline of some of the theories concerning the nature of the dominant-party system and its relationship to democracy, it is important next to contextualise our analysis. The discussion that follows seeks to facilitate an understanding of the extent to which some of the arguments surrounding the dominant-party system and its compatibility (or otherwise) with the development and consolidation of a healthy democracy apply to the South African case.

THE ELECTORAL DOMINANCE OF THE ANC

The ongoing debate surrounding South Africa’s dominant-party system has gained increased significance in the nation’s three democratic elections. To enable a more informed examination of the South African context, this section will briefly cover the results of these elections.

In 1994, the ANC entered into the Government of National Unity (GNU) with 62,65 per cent of votes, alongside the National Party (NP) – now the New National Party (NNP), with 20,39 per cent, and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), with 10,54 per cent (EISA 1999). The political transition of 1994 brought about the end of a racially exclusive and discriminatory political system and the extension of democratic rights to the majority. Realistically, the results of the 1994 election were preordained – there was no other probable outcome than that the ANC would win a majority. The election was largely symbolic, ‘a rite of passage’ rather than a contest between parties (Daniel 2004, p 13). However, the formation of the GNU, born of ongoing negotiation between parties, brought about the need for South Africa to embrace a politics of unity and consensus building.

The GNU was crucial to the formation of the new democracy, ‘incorporating the three largest parties, each representing major racial and ethnic segments of the electorate’ (Schlemmer 1999, pp 281-82). In a deeply divided and unequal society, historically constructed along racial lines, it is no surprise that voting patterns were along racial lines. A random sample survey conducted at the time suggested that 75,2 per cent of blacks voted for the ANC, compared to only 0,8 per cent of whites; while 48,3 per cent of whites voted for the National Party (Idasa, Market and Opinion Surveys 1999).

In 1999 the ANC’s share of the votes rose to 66,35 per cent. Some commentators saw the 1999 election as a ‘consolidation election’ (Southall 1999, p 15). The ANC

returned to power as the dominant party and South Africans witnessed the smooth succession to power of President Mbeki; some have suggested that the 'reformulation' that took place amongst some opposition parties signified a movement away from the politics of the past; the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) played an invaluable role in overcoming many of the organisational problems of 1994; and the election served as a confirmation of what Southall (1999, p 15) terms 'South Africa's broad acceptance of democratic rules of the game'. It has also been said that 1999 'represented the first "normalised" test of South African political attitudes given that the 1994 elections had been an emotionally charged "liberation election"' (Louw 2000, p 218).

Table 1
Election Results (% votes for those parties that won seats in the National Assembly)

Party	Election Results, % Votes		
	1994	1999	2004
ANC	62,65	66,35	69,68
NNP (NP)	20,39	6,87	1,65
IFP	10,54	8,58	6,97
DA (DP)	1,73	9,56	12,37
UDM	–	3,42	2,28
ID	–	–	1,73
ACDP	0,45	1,43	1,6
PAC	1,25	0,71	0,73
FF	2,17	0,80	0,89
MF	0,07	0,30	0,35
FA	–	0,54	–
AEB	–	0,29	–
AZAPO	–	0,17	0,27

SOURCE: EISA 1994, 1999; INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION 2004

However, 1999 also saw a weakening of the political opposition in Parliament. As indicated in Table 2, in 1994 148 seats were occupied by six opposition parties, whereas, in 1999, the opposition gained only 134 seats, this time shared between twice as many parties. Having left the GNU in 1996 – feeling it would be able to do more to represent its constituency if it were in opposition – the NP saw a dramatic

reduction in its support from 20,39 per cent of the vote in 1994 to a mere 6,87 per cent in 1999. This is despite the resignation of F W de Klerk in 1997 and the party's attempt to revamp itself as the New National Party (NNP). In its place, the election saw the Democratic Party (DP) emerge as the official opposition under the leadership of Tony Leon, obtaining 9,56 per cent of the vote, up from 1,73 per cent in 1994. Support for the IFP, while still considerable, fell from 10,54 to 8,58 per cent in 1999. Although the election witnessed the emergence of some new extreme left- and right-wing parties, their share of the votes remained fairly insignificant and, while a sizeable proportion of white voters transferred their allegiance from the NNP to the DP, the voting in the 1999 election continued to reflect the fact that people vote largely in racial blocs. The newly formed United Democratic Movement (UDM), which hoped to attract both black and white voters – and particularly to win some black support away from the ANC – succeeded only in garnering support from some disgruntled blacks in the former Transkei (Louw 2000, p 221).

With regard to 2004, the efficiency and professionalism that characterised the election were undoubtedly encouraging. The work of the IEC, and the attitude and involvement of civil society and of the political parties themselves contributed to what appeared to be a broad national project to ensure that the elections were carried out successfully, and signified the commitment of South Africa to the strengthening of its own democracy. However, the 2004 election has also fuelled growing concern about the future of democracy in South Africa as results indicated a consolidation of the dominant-party system. The most significant outcome for the opposition in this election was the increasing popularity of the Democratic Alliance (DA) – formerly the DP in the 1999 election. The party reaffirmed its place as the main opposition, with 12,37 per cent of the vote, up from 9,56 per cent in 1999. By contrast, the election represented an affirmation of the diminishing role of the NNP in the South African political scene, with the party emerging with a mere 1,65 per cent of the vote. Other opposition parties fared poorly, though the IFP's vote increased slightly compared to that in 1999 and the newly formed Independent Democrats (ID), led by former Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) member, Patricia De Lille, managed to draw a fairly impressive number of votes for its first election, securing 1,73 per cent. The ANC won an overwhelming 69,68 per cent – an increase of 3,33 per cent since 1999. While an ANC victory may have come as no surprise, the diminishing challenge posed by the opposition, and the consummate strengthening of the ruling party's hold over the national political agenda, raises some crucial questions about the direction democracy in South Africa will take in the second decade of the country's liberation.

The past ten years have demanded of commentators patience and a certain amount of caution when making predictions for South Africa's future. In many ways it has been too early to predict how sustainable this young democracy will be, or, as some cynics have projected, whether South Africa will conform to the stereotype of other African states, declining into authoritarianism and a steady abuse of power. The immense social and economic challenges faced by the new

ANC government of reversing the inequalities of apartheid would prove challenging for any new democracy, let alone one laden with a legacy of racial inequality and discrimination. With its status and widespread support base, the ANC was arguably the only party capable of carrying out this project successfully. It was generally accepted that change would not occur overnight, and appreciated 'that a well-intentioned government is faced by remarkably difficult circumstances' (Southall 1999, p 14). The need to right the wrongs of the past and the significance of the extension of the democratic right to the majority can, in part, help to account for why elections based on real policy issues, and the conduct of successful opposition campaigns grounded in the provision of real policy alternatives, have not been forthcoming. Nonetheless, ten years on, given the tremendous hold on political power by the ANC and the nature of the political opposition which has emerged within this context, the key concern is what implications this carries for South Africa's second decade of democracy.

It has been established that dominant-party systems are by no means uniform (Giliomee & Simkins 1999, pp xvii-xviii). The rise of one party to dominance may take place by democratic or inherently undemocratic means. Giliomee and Simkins (1999, p xviii) categorise South Africa as 'a democratic system with a dominant party playing according to some liberal democratic rules, but still well short of the alternation of power'. They take a particularly negative stance on the ANC's dominance and the prospects it holds for democratic consolidation.

This issue of adherence to the rules of liberal democracy is critical to our analysis. In a paper presented at EISA in May 2004 Rod Alence, senior lecturer in International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand, highlighted a crucial point – that in South Africa 'the emergence of a single party dominant regime has coincided with the institutional strengthening of political contestation and constitutional government' and, moreover, that the growth of this dominance 'has not been taken as licence to dismantle [these institutions]'. In fact, Alence goes on to state that in contrast to the abuse of power and the unconstitutional tendencies of some of the ruling party's counterparts on the continent, 'the government has more consistently treated the consolidation of democracy as a central component of its project of postapartheid governance'³. The ANC government has given no indication that it wishes to suppress opposition. On the contrary, 'the South Africa [sic] Constitution provides for a liberal regime for the formation and operation of political parties, which the government has upheld' (Edigheji 2004, p 17).

It is therefore necessary to place our analysis within South Africa's specific political setting, and to exercise some caution when making pessimistic predictions

3 Suttner (2004) also provides an interesting discussion point. He challenges the argument that the existence of a political opposition capable of becoming an alternative ruling party (and therefore able to keep a check on the abuse of power by the incumbent) is a requirement for democratic consolidation. Rather, he points to the effectiveness of and trust in constitutional mechanisms and institutions in South Africa, which are far more likely to facilitate the preservation of democracy.

about the future of democracy. The cooperation of political parties in the 2004 election and the relative freedom given to institutions such as the media and civil society organisations involved in the electoral process serve to exemplify this. Time and resources were put into ensuring that the 2004 election was run efficiently, in strict accordance with the electoral law, and with consideration of the rights and needs of the electorate. Indeed, the 2004 election appears to have evinced a growing respect for the role and authority of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) amongst both the electorate and the political parties themselves. If, as Southall (1999, p 9) has argued, 1999 was a reflection of South Africa's acceptance of democracy as the only 'game in town', then 2004 can only be seen as an encouraging indication of democratic consolidation in the country. To reiterate the point made earlier, the ANC is not a party that has achieved dominance by undemocratic means.

This said, however, it is necessary to go beyond the definition given by Giliomee and Simkins above, and to expand on and outline some of the features of the dominant-party system as it is in South Africa. Matlosa and Karume (2004, p 10) have described what they see as some key features of the South African setting. These are 'continuous electoral victories of a dominant party over time by huge margins and, as such, reducing oppositional contest to second fiddle; political hegemony of the ruling party over state institutions, including control of the largest share of the legislature and local government authorities; and sole determination and direction of development policy trajectories by the ruling party with little challenge or credible policy alternatives from opposition parties over time'. Of equal importance when applying particular theories of the dominant party debate to South Africa is to understand the specific nature of the ANC as ruling party and the origins of democracy in South Africa, from which we cannot divorce the country's unique political history. The protracted struggle against apartheid means that the historical role of the ANC carries tremendous significance. It is therefore futile to analyse South Africa's democratic development without placing it in the context of its history of apartheid politics and racial separation on the one hand, and the politics of liberation on the other. No one would disagree that this still fundamentally serves to shape the nature of contemporary South African politics.

South Africa is by no means unique in the fact that the leading nationalist liberation movement during its struggle became the governing party. Such parties have been able to command significant political legitimacy and support during the post-independence era, such that they are assured of a period of political power to embark on a 'nation-building project' as the new government. The result has been that systems characterised by the dominant party syndrome have tended to emerge in this context.

The ANC, since its formation in 1912, has been able to extend its appeal and expand its support base to varying groups within society so that it has within its ranks supporters who are at differing points along the ideological spectrum (Reddy 2002, pp 7-8). This feature has become more pronounced because of the precariously balanced relationship of the party with both business and capital, and with the

Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) in the Tripartite Alliance (see Suttner 2004). This balance has to be carefully maintained: as Faull (2004, p 10) points out, the party's manifesto must be crafted to 'tie in the votes of trade union members, communists, the urban and rural poor, and the leafy suburbanites of the emergent middle class'. An additional dimension of the dominant party in the South African context is therefore its historic alliance with labour and the political left. However, while Cosatu played a valuable role in the political struggle, its influence on the ANC government's policies post-1990 has given labour far less to shout about, as the government has moved away from leftist policies towards the global economic orthodoxy of neo-liberalism. There consequently exists a contentious power balance within the alliance, in which labour and the Left must consider which is the lesser of two evils: they can 'cooperate and face marginalization', or oppose their ally but risk 'a government coming to power that is less friendly towards labour' (Webster 2001, p 271).

The breadth of the ANC comes from the party's long history and evolution as a liberation-movement-cum-political-party. Having moved in its inception from the middle-class black politics of an educated elite to the politics of mass protest and the urban uprising of the 1970s and 1980s, the party extended both its ideological influence and moral authority, while its longstanding policy of non-racialism broadened its influence amongst some non-blacks during the struggle against apartheid. As a result, its extensive influence, 'strong organisational structures' (Reddy 2002), and centralised leadership (Butler 2003, pp 8-9) have enabled the party to contain the varying viewpoints and policy stances within it in order to retain the cohesion and authority of the party (Butler 2003; Reddy 2002).

Interestingly, the dominant-party system headed by the Congress Party in post-colonial India – widely seen as having *nurtured* the development of a democratic system in the country – has been likened by Reddy (2002) to the ANC. Challenging the assumed negative correlation between ANC dominance and democracy, and drawing on work by Arian and Barnes (1974), he argues (p 1) that 'both parties bring three necessary ingredients for democratic consolidation: political stability, legitimacy and a democratic value system'. These three ingredients provide a useful means by which to understand both party dominance in the South African setting and how these factors can have positive implications for democratic consolidation,

Firstly, with regard to political stability, if we reflect on the theoretical arguments touched on earlier regarding the benefits of a dominant party to fragmented societies, a party whose authority the electorate respects is a stabilising and unifying force. Negotiation, cooperation and compromise between parties became crucial to both a smooth and peaceful transition and a long-term environment of stability if South Africa was to survive – let alone set itself on a path toward democracy. By the end of apartheid, the ANC and its leadership had commanded a sufficient amount of the support and authority vital to overcoming past divisions and bringing society at large on board the nation-building project

for a new South Africa. To this extent we can see how the broad support base of the ANC offered significant political stability.

Secondly, the liberation credentials of the ANC give it a political legitimacy that is difficult to rival and – perhaps more importantly – a moral legitimacy. This is undoubtedly reinforced by the liberation leadership of Nelson Mandela and his cohorts: the democratic principles that formed the pillar of the party's mandate, its condemnation of violence, and its popular appeal and mandate of non-racialism. Through the ANC's pivotal role in the protracted struggle, the party has commanded a sustained political hegemony.

Thirdly, with regard to bringing about a democratic value system, fundamental to the South African context is that the ANC 'played a major role in crafting the country's democratic constitution' (Giliomee & Simkins 1999, p xvi). Moreover, the founding of the party was grounded in democratic principle and the extension of democratic rights to the majority.

These three features provide a backdrop that helps to explain the emergence of ANC dominance. Nonetheless, as the ANC looks set to dominate South African politics for the foreseeable future, this has inevitably raised simultaneous concerns about the *detrimental* implications for democracy. A key concern relates to South Africa's continued adherence to the principles of liberal democracy. One argument proposes that liberal democracy is being steadily 'eroded' in South Africa, and that the domination of politics by one party and the seemingly bleak prospects for the alternation of power are instead directing South Africa toward 'mere majoritarianism and electoralism' (Giliomee & Simkins 1999). Despite the provisions and mechanisms in place to protect the Constitution and prevent the abuse of power, Giliomee and Simkins (1999, p xviii) argue that there is 'an acute tension ... between the sovereignty of the constitution and the "sovereignty" claimed by a party with an overwhelming majority'. Others have expanded on this to state that, as the ruling party sees itself as 'synonymous with "the people" (meaning the black majority)', democracy has come to be interpreted as 'indistinct from ANC rule' (Myburgh 2004). This, therefore, has a significant effect both on the way the dominant party perceives its political opposition and on the nature of the relationship they conduct with one another. This will be elaborated on in the next section of this paper. Needless to say, this relationship is, to a large extent, determined by the dominant party.

However, if, in a democratic system, the dominant party is unable to ignore the existence of political opposition party strategy becomes crucial to the continuation of dominance (Arian & Barnes 1974, pp 599-600). Moreover, the legitimacy of the government rests on its ability to deliver the promised goods to its citizens. In the South African context, this point needs further exploration. Despite questionable government performance and policy choices, continuing impoverishment of the black majority, and the limited reach of the government's transformation project to address socio-economic inequalities, the ANC retains a far-reaching hold over the South African polity. A survey conducted by the Helen Suzman Foundation

in 2002 'showed that only 11 per cent of ANC supporters felt that poor people and the unemployed benefited most from government policies', while '77 per cent felt that poor people were the most neglected group' (Schlemmer 2004a). The fact that the ANC is enjoying an increasing percentage of the nation's vote despite its failure to bring about substantial socio-economic transformation may appear something of a paradox. How can we explain this continued support?

Arian and Barnes (1974, p 598) have referred to one aspect of the dominant party's strategy as 'selective mobilisation'. The dominant party 'needs majority or near majority support in order to remain in power', but, at the same time, it must be careful about promising 'everything to everyone'. The party therefore needs to ensure that it uses its ability and reach to give the appearance of representing the nation, selectively mobilising and meeting demands of groups throughout society. They suggest that, while many groups will be left 'dissatisfied' with the party and its delivery, 'power remains elusive for those denied access as long as the dominant party can grant sufficient rewards to maintain its dominance'.

The continued support for the ANC can, of course, be partly accounted for by the 'symbolism of liberation', which still remains influential amongst sections of the electorate (Schlemmer 2004a). However, Schlemmer also astutely comments that 'a common feature of non-mobilised poor people in unequal societies is self-pity. This self-pity creates a powerful need for demonstrations of sympathy and for a leadership that "cares".' He also notes (2004a) that despite the limitations and absence of some government welfare programmes, therefore, aspects such as expanded social pensions, child grants, comprehensive social subsidies, and the ANC government's 'infinite patience in the face of non-payment of local rates, service charges and housing bonds have reinforced its image as a "caring party"'. Such notions were reinforced by the personalised and door-to-door campaigning of President Mbeki during the recent election, and the ANC campaign slogan – 'a better life for all'.

In light of this, Butler's conclusion (2003, p 13) that 'the movement's popular reach and legitimacy help to render the majority's dire circumstances politically supportable, and its institutions ameliorate and contain the society's diverse conflicts' appears quite plausible. Although continuing dominance cannot be assured, a political environment and system are created in which the party's dominance is essentially stabilised. Having said this, to reiterate that 'dominant parties exist in "dominant-party systems"' (Arian & Barnes 1974, p 599), it is crucial to understand the other part of the equation in this system – the political opposition.

THE STATE OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES

Southall (2001, p 1) has observed that in South Africa, there is considerable debate over 'the role, functions, legitimacy and capacity of political opposition'. As Table 2 shows, the past three elections have seen the opposition occupy a decreasing number of seats in Parliament, which, simultaneously, are being shared between a

growing number of opposition parties. The strength of an opposition, however, is not solely defined by the number of seats in its possession. The fragmentation and weakening of the opposition is also indicated by the various party identities, strategies, alignments and realignments over this period.

Table 2
National Elections:
Seats in Parliament and Seats Lost/Gained in 1994-2004

	1994	1999	2004		
Party	No of seats	No of seats	+/-	No of seats	+/-
ANC	252	266	+14	279	+13
DA (DP)	7	38	+31	50	+12
IFP	43	34	-9	28	-6
UDM	–	14	+14	9	-5
ID	–	–	–	7	+7
NNP (NP)	82	28	-54	7	-21
ACDP	2	6	+4	6	
FF+	9	3	-6	4	+1
UCDP	–	3	+3	3	
PAC	5	3	-2	3	
MF	0	1	+1	2	+1
AZAPO	–	1	+1	2	+1
AEB	–	1	+1	–	-1
FA	–	2	+2	–	-2
Total seats	400	400		400	
Total opposition parties in Parliament	6	12	+6	11	-1
Total opposition seats	148	134	-14	121	-13

SOURCE, TABLE COMPILED FROM FIGURES FROM THE IEC 1994, 1999, 2004

Many analysts have predicted that the racial census of 1994 will, in time, come to be replaced by policy and issue-based voting as race loses its significance amongst the electorate. Moreover, as democracy matures in South Africa, this will, of course, be accompanied by the emergence of strengthened opposition parties challenging government power. The opposing argument, however, seriously questions the prospects of this happening in South Africa, given the nation's unique political history. This political history has served, for the moment at least, to map out the nation's political demography largely along racial lines and, subsequently, has seen the emergence of a dominant ruling party representing the black majority.

Theoretical discussions about the significance of the *system* in which dominant parties function suggest that the role of opposition comes to be dependent on, and determined by, the dominant party. In South Africa, the powerful liberation symbolism of the ANC gives it significant leverage within the system. As Reddy (2002, p 3) has argued, 'the scope of opposition politics is undoubtedly narrowed and limited to relating to the dominant party'.

A key strategy of the dominant party, which, in turn, limits the cards that the opposition can play, is that in assuming 'the "centre" of the ideological and policy spectrum', while at the same time housing a diversity of opinions and viewpoints (Reddy 2002), it is able essentially to take the sting out of challenges and criticisms that come from the opposition. In the 2004 election campaign, for example, the campaign strategies of opposition parties such as the DA and UDM who targeted criticism of government performance – particularly with regard to service delivery and response to HIV / AIDS – largely failed, as the Government had already taken note of these issues prior to the election (Schlemmer 2004b, p 7). Indeed, the ANC appeared to have dealt with many of the issues raised by the opposition, and more, within its 'a better life for all' manifesto. By focusing on the party's achievements in the past ten years, while also pledging that it would continue to do better, the ANC managed to cover the salient issues and opposition campaigning on the grounds of government failure to meet expectations in areas of service delivery and job creation was met with and counteracted by the 'people's contract to create work and fight poverty'.

Perhaps the more salient issue, therefore, has been opposition failure to present manifestos substantially different from that of the ruling party. Parties take similar stances on many major issues, such as macro-economic policy, with the ANC and DA both advocating promotion of economic growth and job creation through investment (Herzenberg 2004, p 15). For Schrire (2001, p 141), the major political parties in South Africa do not vary greatly in 'ideology' (in terms of being left, centre or right on the political spectrum) but, rather, are broadly 'centrist'. Absence of a class-based politics in South Africa has re-emphasised, instead, political affiliation based on historical ties (Schrire 2001, p 141). The black majority continues to identify with the ANC, and the political opposition, rather than compete with the ANC for the African vote, has turned to appealing to those groups outside of the ANC's hold – largely the white, Indian and coloured communities.

South Africa's apartheid legacy, combined with the boundaries of the dominant-party system within which political parties operate, serves to highlight the continuing prevalence of racial identity in South African politics. The tendency, therefore, has been for party campaigns to mirror racial identities as the opposition continues to seek support from South Africa's minority and, historically, more privileged communities. Furthermore, with the exception of white business, the ANC does not need the vote of the white minority to retain dominance (Giliomee, Myburgh & Schlemmer 2001, p 167).

Although parties such as the DA and NNP may take a more 'pro-business' stance than the ANC, and therefore seem more likely to court the interests and favour of capital, even this avenue remains closed to the opposition as Southall (1999, pp 11-12) points out that business has entered into agreement with the ANC as 'only [they]...could both call on *and contain* majority support while also implementing a neoliberal program'. Hence, while the years since 1994 have seen the emergence of a wealthy black middle class, this group are the beneficiaries of the ANC's policies of affirmative action and black economic empowerment. We are therefore still to see the growth of an autonomous, and indeed multiracial, grouping from within the middle classes that would hold prospects for the formation of an independent political force challenging the ruling party. That being said, however, polls conducted by the Helen Suzman Foundation/Mark Data have shown that only 40 per cent of Africans with middle-income levels (R8 000 per month) hold the ANC as their first choice of political party (Schlemmer 2004a). This group could clearly, therefore, be open to alternatives.

Opposition parties have hence largely been criticised for failing to 'transcend identity politics' (Edigheji 2004, p 16), and their election campaign strategies targeting minority communities have lent credibility to this accusation. Many of the parties that have emerged out of the apartheid era are unavoidably tarred with the brush of racism. This has arguably been the fate of the NNP, and events following the 2004 election have seen the party formally disband. Despite its change in leadership since 1994 and the about-turn in its strategy – it has decided to work in co-operation with the ANC government, as opposed to against it – as the party that created and administered apartheid it was never likely to win over the black majority. Furthermore, its ambiguous stance left its supporters and target groups in the white and coloured communities uncertain of its policies and principles, and feeling that the party provides its constituency with no security or solid guarantees.⁴

The manifestos of many of the smaller parties appeal to too narrow and specific an interest group. The far-right white parties, such as the Afrikaner Vryheidsfront Plus (VF/FF+) or Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging (AEB), for example, making demands for a separate Afrikaner nation, have found no real place for themselves

4 See Lanegran 2001 for a deeper analysis of voter perceptions of opposition parties, campaign styles and strategies.

in the new South Africa, and both the PAC and the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) have seen a decline in their support base in the years since 1994. These Africanist parties, rejecting a non-racial politics and advocating an extreme left viewpoint, have failed to posit a realistic and viable plan for South Africa's future that would inspire the trust of any significant portion of the electorate. The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), while it saw a marginal increase in votes in the 2004 election and has retained all six of its seats in Parliament, is appealing to a narrow interest group and has made little dent in the political landscape.

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the second largest opposition party, has, in the past ten years, succeeded in maintaining sufficient support to give it political weight in South Africa – particularly in its traditional stronghold of KwaZulu-Natal. However, this support is gradually declining. In fact, one of the most interesting outcomes of the 2004 election was the party's loss of this highly contested province to the ANC. The ANC received 46,98 per cent of votes in KwaZulu-Natal compared to its 39,38 per cent in the 1999 provincial election, whereas the IFP percentage declined to 36,82 compared to 41,9 in 1999 (IEC 2004). This represents some significant gains for the ANC, which now holds all nine provincial premierships. This result perhaps serves to show a combination of changes taking place amongst the electorate in the province, in the form of the maturation of the electorate in the urban centres; and the growing concern of voters with socio-economic issues rather than with Zulu nationalism and the history of the Zulu nation. For the IFP, the election result is a reflection of the limitations of relying on the symbolism of ethnic identity to retain support.

The DA continues to retain its position as the main opposition, and emerged stronger from the 2004 election, with 12,37 per cent of the vote and fifty seats in Parliament, compared to 9,56 per cent and thirty-eight seats in 1999. Since positioning itself as a major contender, the DA has posed a threat to ANC authority – particularly in its strategy of raising 'uncomfortable issues and questions' about government decisions, attempting to distract the electorate from ANC 'successes' by bringing up issues of government accountability and corruption (Rapoo 2004, p 20).

Although the DA has proven itself to be a largely white party, as many previous white supporters of the NNP have transferred their allegiance to it, it has also garnered support from sections of the wealthier coloured electorate. The 2004 election campaign also saw the DA attempting to make inroads into the black community. The party has acknowledged that to increase its support base by any significant degree will require attracting the votes of the African majority. However, the past two elections have seen the party make little headway in this regard. In 1999, the DA made a major campaign faux pas with its 'fight back' slogan – far too easily interpreted as 'fight *black*' (Lanegran 2001, p 94).

Indeed, its slogan for the 2004 campaign, 'South Africa deserves better' – while attempting to suggest that all South Africans 'deserve better' than the ANC has been able to muster over the past ten years – could similarly be taken to hold

connotations of South Africa deserving 'better' than a black government. Such campaigns are likely to have a detrimental impact on the black majority's perception of the political opposition. Unfortunately the party's predominantly white leadership only serves to reinforce this image. As Lanegran (2001, p 93) notes, the 1999 'aggressive "Fight Back" message was clearly directed to racial minorities who felt threatened by their country's rapid changes in general and affirmative action in particular'.

In 2004, therefore, the DA had to work to rid itself of the image of being a white party. However, while this time it approached the election under a banner claiming that it was working for the betterment of all South Africans, a prominent feature of the campaign was still the use of the 'politics of fear' (Landsberg 2004). A major element of the 2004 election campaign was the attempt to raise in the minds of voters the dangers of the ANC obtaining a two-thirds majority, and hence having the power to alter the Constitution. A further tactic used by Tony Leon was to instil in South Africans the fear of their democracy turning into a one-party state, with encroaching authoritarian tendencies and worrying levels of centralised power should the ANC be re-elected to government (Edigheji 2004, p 17).

This tactic of instilling fear into the electorate fuelled criticism that the opposition had failed to formulate concrete policies on which to campaign and which would persuade the electorate that they posed a viable alternative to the ANC. The DA also strongly criticised the government's dealings with President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. While President Thabo Mbeki's stance on the Zimbabwean situation has been an issue of concern to many South Africans, it is unlikely to be a vote-winner amongst the black majority. Crucially, the weakness in opposition campaigning was its failure to appeal to black majority interests. Instead of the issue of an ANC two-thirds majority, it is socio-economic issues such as the high unemployment rate, poverty and growing inequality that are uppermost in the minds of the majority of black voters (Schlemmer 2004b, p 7). Edigheji argues that underlying the 'one party state' campaign issue of the opposition is the fact that minority parties in South Africa want 'an entitlement to votes, whether or not they identify with, and speak to, the wishes and aspirations of majority [sic] of voters' (2004, p 17).

The smaller opposition parties continue to represent too narrow a policy agenda or target support group to appeal to or capture the vote of any significant number of voters. This can be said of parties such as the ACDP, the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), the FF+, the (Indian) Minority Front (MF), and the IFP. In short, 'the electorate does not see current opposition parties as representing their interests' (Habib & Taylor 2001, p 215). In addition, the growing number of opposition parties has led to increased fragmentation of opposition to the dominant ANC in Parliament and has largely negated opportunities for any potential challenge to its power.

Having outlined the nature both of the ANC as dominant party and of the political opposition that has taken shape to date, what can we say of its implications?

Opposition party alignments and strategies, voter behaviour and participation, and the extent and reach of the dominant party's political power and hegemony present certain challenges to the consolidation of democracy in South Africa in the next ten years.

CHALLENGES FOR THE SECOND DECADE OF DEMOCRACY

One of the most significant aspects of the democracy debate is the response of the electorate (and, particularly in South Africa's case, the various racial segments of the electorate) to the dominant-party system. A crucial aspect in this regard is that, despite the ANC's electoral dominance, surveys of voting intentions and party preference have revealed that while the ANC has secured its dominance by consensus through the ballot, the African vote for the ANC is by no means set in stone. Whereas in October 1994 61 per cent of voters stated that they would vote for the ANC in a national government election, by October 2002 this proportion had decreased to 42 per cent. Confining this survey to black voters, 79 per cent expressed the intention to vote for the ANC in September/October 1994. This decreased to 76 per cent in February/March 1999 and to 55 per cent by September/October 2002 (Africa et al 2003). The ruling party is therefore clearly not insulated from loss of support. The figures cited earlier, reflecting voter scepticism about the extent to which the poor actually benefit the most from government policies, lend credibility to this.

The crux of the matter, however, is that because the opposition has failed to present voters with any viable or attractive alternatives to the current government the electorate is continuing to vote along racial lines. The fear politics promulgated by sections of the opposition that South Africa will decline into a one-party state is an insult to the intelligence of voters and to their ability to make an independent choice that will guide their own future. As Butler (2003, p 9) quite legitimately suggests, 'it may be the current absence of credible opposition parties reflecting the interests of the discontented, rather than unshakeable affiliation, that secures current ANC control'. Edigheji (2004, p 18) has gone so far as to say that it is this situation 'that will give rise to a one party state, rather than anything the ANC does'.

A point which is particularly relevant to countries in the developing world – not least South Africa – is that 'democratic consolidation ... is dependent on the government's ability to address the widespread poverty and economic inequalities within the society' (Habib & Taylor 2001, p 210). The lack of serious policy alternatives from the opposition goes some way to explaining the continuous re-election of the ANC to power, despite indications of dissatisfaction amongst its support base over government delivery. The major challenge for opposition parties, therefore, is to begin to appeal to the African voter, and this will require a significant change in the opposition's strategy. As Schlemmer (2004b, p 9) has argued, parties 'will have to try to convey the additional benefits that alternative policies could

yield'. More importantly, however, he argues that such a strategy needs to be administered through 'sustained engagement' with voters, rather than just 'mass rallies or "whistle stop" bus excursions', 'and a demonstration of what a stronger constructive opposition can offer' (2004b, p 9). As Habib and Taylor (2001, p 209) quite concisely put it, 'parties must not only exist in a legal or organizational sense, but they must also be mechanisms that enable representation and express the social interests of significant constituencies in society'.

A further challenge for the opposition is to reverse the demotivation and withdrawal from the democratic process of those sections of the population who do not identify with the ANC – namely South Africa's white, Indian and coloured communities. One view would predict that, at best, this could amount to a more pronounced apathy and resignation in forthcoming years. At worst, dissatisfaction may take the form of outright rejection of the principles of democracy and the values it seeks to instil. One such consequence, for example, could be that extremist and separatist groups who do not feel a part of the new South Africa may begin to take a more organised form. Either way, marginalisation is likely to be compounded by both the continuation of racial politics under a dominant-party system in which South Africa's minorities do not feel they are represented and the political ambiguity and weakness of opposition to the dominant party, which, instead of increasing the influence of minority groups, is likely only to further their withdrawal.

This is a trend that has already begun and could be set to continue should there be no significant shifts in political competition in the next decade. It should be said, however, that analysis of this trend cannot be restricted to minority communities alone, as South Africa's three democratic elections have witnessed declining voter turnout and indications of widespread voter non-participation. Voter turnout decreased from 89,30 per cent in 1999, to 76,73 per cent in the 2004 election (Kotzé 2004). This amounts to approximately 15,8 million people who voted – 76,73 per cent of registered voters – slightly less than 60 per cent of the eligible population (IEC 2004; Schlemmer 2004b).

Afrobarometer surveys have also revealed that increasing numbers of people are expressing the intention not to vote (Africa et al 2003). While declining voter participation is a common feature of maturing democracies, the concern is that in South Africa it is symptomatic of party dominance and, more importantly, that it may become more pronounced in coming years. The worrying connotation of these figures is that in a political system in which the outcome of elections is a foregone conclusion, voters tend to think that there is no point in casting their vote. Given the lack of confidence voters appear to have in available opposition parties, some votes for the ANC may come from those voters who feel it is the only party likely to get into power.

The two key issues of concern arising from the identity politics and narrow policy programmes of the opposition within the dominant-party system are, therefore, that they maintain the alienation and marginalisation of South Africa's minority communities into exclusive racial political groupings and also act as a

deterrent to the support of the African electorate, which continues to see the opposition as unrepresentative of its interests. The tendency of some parties to rely on adverse criticism of the ANC will only strengthen both the dominance of the ruling party and its tendency to portray the opposition as racist opponents of socio-economic transformation. This serves only to 'play into the hands' of the dominant party (see Giliomee & Simkins 1999, pp 12-13), which is able to convince its own supporters of the opposition's desire to subvert the national project and reverse the gains of the black majority. For the ruling party and its supporters 'opposition is frequently identified with the creation of obstacles to delivery and the protection of illegitimate special interests' (Schrire 2001, p 147).

If racial politics are to be overcome, the challenge to maintain and consolidate democracy lies as much with the ruling party as it does with the opposition. Since the ANC does not need the support of the white minority to retain its dominance, it has displayed a tendency to abandon non-racialism and has instead placed emphasis on its 'liberation struggle heritage' (Maloka 2001, p 235) in order to appeal to its own supporters. Continued elevation of the liberation struggle in the politics of the ruling party may have a destabilising effect on democracy.

The current political predicament in Zimbabwe has demonstrated the volatility of the racial issue within politics, and the threat to democracy that a failure to move fully beyond race can present. In Zimbabwe, a threat to the power of the long-standing dominant party has seen the issue of racial identity resurface and be manipulated by a political leadership determined to retain that power. Some commentators on South Africa have therefore understandably warned of the authoritarian and oppressive tendencies that can emerge from this type of unrivalled dominance.⁵

Of further significance to the dominant-party system debate in South Africa are the conflicting interpretations of the ruling ANC and the political opposition of the role that opposition should play in the new democracy. Thus, while South Africa is formally a multi-party democracy with institutionalised political opposition, 'the key debates revolve around which interests should be represented by which party and how should this opposition be expressed' (Schrire 2001, p 141). South Africa's political history of discrimination against the black majority renders this a delicate and controversial issue. A prominent concern has related to the tendency for the ANC leadership to display intolerance of criticism (both from opposition parties and from within its own ranks) and to view the opposition as enemies of the transformation project (Myburgh 2004). As Schrire (2001, p 140) has noted, while the ANC 'recognizes the philosophical justifications for an opposition, it harbours serious reservations about the nature of opposition ... Given its unqualified commitment to 'transformation', it maintains that opposition based upon a rejection of fundamental socio-economic change is not legitimate...[and]...it does not accept

5 See, for example, Giliomee and Simkins (1999, pp 343-50). Their analysis emphasises the 'dangers' of dominant-party rule and its potential to suppress political competition.

the legitimacy of opposition parties that are based upon the representation of minority interests’.

This can be seen most starkly in the ANC’s response to the DA. In contrast to the formation of various alliances between major opposition parties and the dominant ruling party, the DA has become known for its more ‘robust’ and adversarial stance. This created a considerable degree of animosity between the DA and the ANC government in the 2004 election. If we concur with Myburgh’s interpretation (2004) that ‘for Mbeki the opposition were welcome to participate in the elections, but once the will of the people had been freely expressed and the ANC returned to power, there should be unity in action, and the minority should submit to the majority’, then increasing intolerance of opposition – in particular when opposition takes a critical stance against the ruling party – could well be a warning sign to look out for.

It is therefore necessary to look closely at the forms of political strategy that have emerged under the dominant-party system⁶. For some parties, the limited scope available to the opposition has cast the politics of cooperation with the ruling party in a more attractive light and as having the potential to be the most electorally lucrative option for opposition parties. The strategy of the NNP has involved allying itself with the ANC, claiming that it will best be able to represent the interests of its supporters through cooperation with the ruling party, rather than through continuous ‘attacks’ on its actions (Schrire 2001, p 142). However, the strategy has both spurred ongoing decline in the NNP’s support base and added to the parliamentary strength of the ANC. Most have argued that NNP leverage and influence within the alliance has been largely negligible (Schrire 2001, p 143), and events since the 2004 election have culminated in the effective disbanding of the party and its merger with the ANC.

In equal contrast to the DA has been the ‘co-optive opposition’ strategy adopted by the IFP. This has provided the party with participation in government and policy (Schrire 2001, p 142) but the benefits have largely accrued to ‘party leaders individually’ (Schrire 2001). The lack of influence that this form of politics has given the party as a whole and the limited extent to which IFP supporters have benefited are reflected in the party’s declining support since 1994 (see Tables 1 and 2).

The strategies of both the IFP and the NNP are indicative of party desire to retain access to the channels of power rather than to retain party principles or prioritise the concerns of supporters. Indeed, the NNP’s brief fling with the DP in the formation of the DA in 2000 (when the former witnessed large numbers of its supporters fleeing to the DP in the 1999 election), only for it to enter into an alliance with the ANC in 2001, is but one example of this. Under ANC dominance, it could be argued that an ‘if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em’ mentality has taken root amongst sections of the political opposition. This opportunism on the part of some parties –

⁶ Schrire (2001, p141) has identified and provides analysis of what he sees as ‘three broad opposition strategies: robust, co-optive and co-operative’.

both the ruling ANC and the opposition (Habib & Nadvi 2002, p 333) – can be interpreted as symptomatic of the dominant-party system. As mounting an effective challenge to the ruling party seems so out of reach, parties have instead ‘sacrificed political principle for short term electoral gain’ (Habib & Nadvi 2002, p 333). The ANC, possessing greater political leverage, is equally able to use this to its advantage. A recent controversy of this sort was over the removal of the anti-defection clause from the Constitution. Legislation was amended in 2002 to allow floor crossing at the local government level and in 2003 at the national and provincial level. The floor-crossing legislation has been widely criticised as a deliberate ploy by the ANC to strengthen itself as it allows councillors to cross the floor to another party without losing their seats, while also stipulating that they can only do so if at least 10 per cent of party members wish to cross. This has conveniently protected the ANC from losing members to the opposition as it is unlikely that as many as 10 per cent of the dominant party’s members will wish to cross, while the legislation has ‘deprived [smaller parties] of a vital shield’ (Myburgh 2003, p 34). The enactment of the floor-crossing legislation demonstrates how the ruling party is able to use its position to consolidate further dominance (see Tables 3 and 4).

At the same time, some opposition party members have seen the legislation as an opportunity to retain personal access to power by joining the dominant party. In the floor crossing of March-April 2003, NNP defections in the Western Cape saw the province handed over to the ANC, while in the National Assembly, nine MPs from the UDM crossed over to the ANC (Myburgh 2003, p 34). In the floor-crossing window between 1 and 15 September 2004, the ANC acquired 326 councillors. The only parties that did not lose were the ID and the DA, although they only gained thirty-nine seats and twenty seats respectively (IEC 2004). The significance of these political re-alignments is that they entail a loss of accountability to supporters and diminishing competitiveness of the multi-party system. As Myburgh states, ‘There is little incentive for a defector to the ANC to represent the interests of his electorate once he has crossed over. From the moment a defector joins his new party, he falls under its discipline ... There is no real mechanism by which aggrieved voters can make such defectors to the ruling party answer for their actions either’ (2003 p 36).

Under the dominant-party system, this type of politics therefore presents certain challenges to democracy in the longer term. On the one hand it has been argued that South Africa cannot afford a robust opposition because it has a destabilising effect in such an ethnically and racially fragmented society (Schrire 2004, p 144). Moreover, such a strategy coming from parties still considered predominantly ‘white’ has encouraged, and will encourage the ruling party increasingly to play ‘the race card’ (Schrire 2004, p 144) and ‘tempt the ANC to use its overwhelming majority to dominate parliamentary politics’ (Nijzink 2001, p 67). On the other hand, the continued presence of a feeble – and indeed, ‘co-optive’ and ‘co-operative’ – opposition (Schrire 2004, p 142), could result in a dangerous amount of power in the hands of the ANC. The party’s increased parliamentary power creates the risk of a ‘shift of real authority away from the constitution (and

Table 3
Floor Crossing Results 2002 (Local Government Level),
Movements to the ANC

Party	No of Councillors
Action Independent Peoples Party	1
African Christian Democratic Party	2
Alliance for the Community	1
Azanian People's Organisation	1
Breedevallei Onafhanklik	1
Civic Alliansie/ Alliance	1
Democratic Alliance	51
Independents	6
Independent Civic Organisation of South Africa	1
Inkatha Freedom Party	7
Middelburg Residents Organisation	1
Pan Africanist Congress	10
People's Forum	1
United Christian Democratic Party	3
United Democratic Movement	16
Verenigde Gemeenskap Organisasie	1
Witzenberg Onafhanklike Vereniging	1
Ximoko Party	1
Zibambeleni Development Organisation	1
Total	107

SOURCE, IEC 2002

constitutional structures) to the ruling party' (Myburgh 2003, p 36); and its increased assurance of electoral dominance poses a significant threat to government accountability and responsiveness to the needs of citizens.

While it has been argued that 'for a party to be termed opposition, it must envision and organise itself as an alternative governing party' (Edigheji 2004, p 18), the role of the opposition is not confined to being able realistically to displace the ruling party. Rather, opposition must be a credible and legitimate voice in the

polity, whose views will be listened to (Friedman 1999, p 110) and which is able to hold government to account (Southall 2001). Given the current weakness of the opposition in South Africa, some would argue that such a possibility cannot readily be envisaged. A key question in the current situation will therefore be how we can safeguard government accountability, as well a party's accountability to its supporters. What needs to be emphasised in the coming decade is that in a context in which the likelihood of displacing the dominant party is so marginal, the equally crucial role of the opposition of ensuring that the existing government remains accountable to the electorate becomes all the more important. Unless the opposition changes its current strategies and works hard to regain credibility, however, its ability to fulfil this role could well be undermined.

South Africa's political development is so complex that any party failing to fulfil this role inevitably lends further advantage and political weight to the dominant party. As discussed above, however, any effective counterweight to party dominance is not going to come from parties opposing the current government's policies of affirmative action and black economic empowerment. Although the ANC's macro-economic policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) may continue to be criticised by the political Left within the party's own ranks, the

Table 4
Floor Crossing Results 2004 (National and Provincial Level),
Movements to the ANC

Party	No of Councillors
ACDP	4
Alliance 2000+	1
AZAPO	2
Dabolorivhuwa Patriotic Front	1
DA	31
Independents	6
IFP	25
NNP	195
PAC	17
Simunye in Christ Organisation	1
Thembisa Concerned Residents Association	1
UCDP	7
UDM	45
Total	336

SOURCE: COMPILED FROM IEC 2004 FLOOR-CROSSING RESULTS

promotion of black economic empowerment has afforded the ANC significant influence amongst the African population. This will remain the case unless opposition parties also adopt policies that seek to redress South Africa's racial inequalities. Indeed, unlike other faltering democracies on the continent, in which a growing educated black middle class has emerged as the main source of opposition during the post-independence period, in South Africa it is this group that has been the prime beneficiary of government policy. For Giliomee and Simkins (1999, p 3), therefore, 'a middle class which has risen as a result of ruling party patronage does not play any significant role in broadening and strengthening democracy. It may, in fact, stifle such a development'.

OPPOSITION FROM WITHIN THE DOMINANT PARTY

It is clear that a recurring issue in the dominant-party debate in South Africa is the safeguarding of democratic practice and accountability. Despite the ANC's electoral dominance, its supporters and contending voices within the party itself have remained divided over party policies and, frequently, over the direction taken by a centralised leadership. The limitation of the benefits of government policies to a narrow stratum of the population has generated resentment from the Left. While it is not the purpose of this paper to detail the debate surrounding the political economy in South Africa, it is a hot topic and brings to our attention a further important issue in the debate about the future of South Africa's democracy – that the ANC's dominance presents challenges to those members of the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance who disagree with the macro-economic policy direction of the Mbeki presidency.

While the ruling party has an historical alignment with labour, there is significant debate about the extent to which the political Left actually retains meaningful influence within the alliance. This balance of power is of concern as, given the weakness of opposition parties in South Africa, internal pluralism and debate within the alliance itself has come to be seen as playing an extremely crucial role in maintaining checks on government power and ensuring that democracy is not undermined by arbitrary and centralised decision-making. Government has been criticised for deploying the more loyalist party members – known to be uncritical of decisions taken at the centre – to more prominent positions within state organs (Southall 2001, p 17). Such actions have functioned as mechanisms to curb criticism from within. As a result, healthy debate within the party is stifled, and critical voices have come to be portrayed by party leadership as enemies of the movement (Southall 2001, pp 17-18).

One opinion about the direction of South Africa's democratic future, therefore, is that while the pact between labour and the ANC served its purpose during the years of political struggle, the best prospects for healthy democracy and representative government now lie in a formal split within the alliance itself (Habib & Taylor 2001). In Habib and Taylor's opinion, the establishment of a labour-oriented

party presents the only possibility for the formation of a significant opposition to the ANC in South Africa. From their standpoint, 'the alliance is undermining the attempts of both COSATU and the SACP to achieve their [social-democratic] goals' (Habib & Taylor 2001, p 221). The likelihood of such a scenario emerging is, however, debatable. Suttner opposes Habib and Taylor's suggestion, arguing that neither the SACP nor Cosatu is likely to leave the ANC, particularly given that numerous positions within the party have been filled by individuals from the two organisations (Suttner 2004, p 115). Moreover, in light of the party's composition, the ANC equally 'fears the electoral consequences of a split' (Suttner 2004 p 115).

A further key issue is that the ANC's move away from leftist policies towards the dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy advocated by the western liberal democracies in fact places some self-inflicted constraints on the party. While the move is frequently interpreted as a reflection of the party's weakening commitment to its liberation promises, the flip side is that in terms of abuse of state power, the ANC is, to an extent, kept in check (Schrire 2001, pp 145-146; Butler 2003, p 10). The Government's adoption of neo-liberalism has integrated South Africa into the world economy while seeking to reverse inequalities in wealth and opportunity through affirmative action policies (Habib & Nadvi 2002, p 336). In these circumstances South Africa's reliance on capital and foreign investment, as well as its leading role in the African Renaissance and as an exemplar of economic development and governance on the continent, places its democracy far too directly in the global eye for government to risk stepping out of line.

Given the tenuous relationship between the ANC and some of its followers that has ensued as a result of economic policy, the party cannot afford either to abuse the position and authority that has been conferred on it by the electorate, and hence risk losing their support, or to deter investors and international actors by creating a climate of political instability – despite the fears generated by opposition parties about the dangerous consequences of an ANC two-thirds majority.

Realistically, the chances of the left-wing partners breaking from the ANC in the next decade appear unlikely. The pros of remaining with a party assured of electoral dominance somewhat outweigh the opportunities implied in opposing it. Given both the SACP and Cosatu's long-standing ties with the ANC and the immensity of the challenge of denting the hegemonic power of the ruling party, the prospect of 'going it alone' is daunting. Rather, they 'prefer access and influence to opposition and exclusion' (Lodge 2002, p 155). A key factor, according to Webster (2001, p 267), is that the Cosatu leadership has suffered from a 'brain drain', losing many of its strong leaders to the Government during the transition to democracy. This has diminished the political orientation and strength that characterised the trade union movement during the 1980s.

Having said this, the confrontation that has arisen on occasion between the ANC and adversarial voices within Cosatu (Southall 2001, p 281) has succeeded in keeping the Government on its toes. Equally, the ANC has, since coming to power,

introduced an array of labour legislation to protect workers. While the party leadership's intolerance of dissenting viewpoints is worrying, the fact that sections of the alliance continue to demonstrate openly their refusal to conform to the about-turn in the party's neo-liberal economic policy since 1994 is a welcome indication of the role that the Left still has to play in ensuring accountability. Additionally, despite the argument that South Africa cannot presently afford a robust and adversarial opposition because of its political history and the relative youth of its democracy, 'fragmentation' of the ANC could also have destabilising effects (Butler 2003, p 6).

Nonetheless, these arguments do not perhaps sufficiently make up for the political principles and goals being sacrificed by many on the political left. The existence of a dominant party – let alone a dominant party with the extensive reach and hold boasted by the ANC – renders the challenge of guaranteeing both representation and accountability within a competitive party system far greater. In light of this, major challenges in the next decade are likely to lie *within* the party and the Tripartite Alliance. Proponents of left-wing policies must retain sufficient influence to make their voices heard; and rise above the temptation to choose the rewards offered for loyalty to the centre over their commitment to the goals and principles of their organisation. In the case of Cosatu, Webster (2001, p 271) proposes that it adopt the role of 'a "left pressure group" inside the alliance pushing for redistributive policies'. The argument proposed earlier, regarding the vital importance of opposition being regarded as a credible voice able to ensure government accountability without necessarily needing to be an electoral threat, should apply equally to internal voices, regardless of their alliance with the ANC. Moreover, their value as a check on authoritarian tendencies and policy decisions will be more crucial than ever.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

South Africa's unique political history has inevitably shaped its current politics and the formation of a dominant-party system. Indeed, it would not be overstating the case to argue that only a movement with the historic role, moral authority and hegemony of the ANC could hope to lead South Africa out of the dire circumstances of pre-1994 to a new democratic dispensation. The unifying effects of the 'catch-all' dominant party have doubtlessly helped to mediate conflicts and have contributed to a peaceful and smooth transition. While the consolidation of ANC domination has raised legitimate concerns about the prospects of successful democratic consolidation taking place simultaneously, there appear currently to be no serious threats to such consolidation.

The argument that the dominant-party system in South Africa is inherently undemocratic and is leading the nation into steady authoritarian decline requires reconsideration. Prospects for democracy are far more positive and it is unlikely that a one-party state will emerge in South Africa. Fear-mongering by some members

of the opposition about the ruling party's desire to curb political freedom and to move towards a one-party state are merely tools to win votes, and are unsuccessful at that. The institutional checks and balances on the ruling party and its track record of recognition of civil liberties; adherence to the terms of the Constitution and the rule of law; the existence of an institutionalised political opposition and the strengthening of institutions of democracy and governance since 1994 lend credibility to this argument.

These issues aside, however, there nonetheless remain significant challenges for those playing a prominent role in South Africa's democracy. Butler (2003, p 12) summarises the predicament fairly accurately when he states that 'South Africa's fundamental political dilemma is that liberation movement domination is a necessary condition for the entrenchment of democratic practices and institutions, but it is also and at the same time a threat to them'. One-party dominance becomes a threat to democracy when the governing party is assured of electoral victory and, as a result, 'sees less and less need to respond to public opinion' (Africa et al 2003, p 2). Hence, issues of government accountability are of tremendous importance in a dominant-party system, and a key question is how such accountability can be ensured when the ruling party faces no threat of electoral defeat? The ability of the opposition to fulfil its role in holding government to account is undermined by its weak position within the polity. This can partly be understood as symptomatic of the dominant-party system, the strength and leverage of opposition is essentially limited by both the symbolic identity and the extensive political power of the dominant party. The ANC's control has most recently been demonstrated in effecting the controversial floor-crossing legislation, allowing the party to increase its dominance in both Parliament and the provincial legislatures.

However, while the ruling party has frequently been able to use both its liberation heritage and political hegemony to 'delegitimize' opposition parties, as Friedman has asserted, 'conditions must exist in which the electorate is open to delegitimation' (1999, p 101). There currently exists no opposition presenting a viable alternative to the ANC, while the insistence of some parties on formulating tactics that focus on criticism of government and, therefore, of black majority policies, undermines their legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate. Furthermore, tendencies toward political opportunism are equally undermining their credibility. Given that opinion polls have shown that many South Africans are open to alternatives, should they present themselves, the ANC's electoral victory says more about a feeble opposition and the absence of credible alternatives than it does about undying support for the party.

The abstentions from voting and the withdrawal from political involvement of South Africa's minority communities in particular – who do not feel represented by the current government – indicate more than any other factors the need for an opposition able to rejuvenate their participation. The co-optive and co-operative politics of some parties have served only to fuel this withdrawal.

A key feature linked to this is that political demography in South Africa continues to mirror racial divides. Opposition parties will need to make an effort to break away from narrow racial appeals and traditional constituencies and to start appealing to a more 'diverse set of constituencies' (Habib & Taylor 2001, p 216). If the dominant-party system is to be broken, an opposition party must emerge that, through policies that appeal to the majority of South Africans, is able to split the loyalties of the black community to garner a proportion of the ANC vote. A key challenge, therefore, is for South Africans to be driven to vote on the basis of policies offered rather than according to racial groupings. Until political parties transcend this racial politics, this is unlikely to happen. Moreover, the effectiveness of the tendency exhibited by the ruling party to play the race card in response to opposition criticism is unlikely to be thwarted. The ruling party must, however, also demonstrate greater tolerance of opposition. Racialised politics will equally only be overcome if the ANC is willing to let go of 'race' as a convenient political tool to defend its actions and policies or to scapegoat a critical opposition.

Given that the ANC is the party of liberation and that it is only ten years into South Africa's democracy, the ability of opposition parties to present themselves as a viable alternative governing party to the ANC is perhaps restricted. The ANC has historically been a 'catch-all' party and commands a sustained hegemony which is difficult to rival. However, it is precisely under these circumstances that the ability of opposition parties to keep a check on the governing party's power and hold the party accountable becomes all the more crucial. When an opposition lacks credibility amongst the electorate, its ability to fulfil its accountability function is undermined.

Within the ruling party itself, it will also be crucial to maintain sufficient political weight among those sections more critical of centralised decisions. The central leadership cracks the whip within the party and the Tripartite Alliance, and far too easily succeeds in portraying internal critics as self-seeking radicals and disruptors of the national project. If the ANC's left-wing partners choose to remain in the alliance, the greatest challenge for them will be to continue to pressure the Government to hear their views and act upon them. This, of course, requires a co-operative and tolerant ANC leadership. It is business rather than Cosatu and the SACP that exerts greater leverage over the ruling party. The Left's influence over government policies will therefore need to be significant, and it must prove itself a force to be reckoned with. As has been argued, however, the global environment and the neo-liberal policy direction the ANC has chosen do place certain limitations on state power, which might be beneficial in warding off the undemocratic tendencies often associated with dominant-party systems.

Challenges for South Africa's second decade of democracy, therefore, remain numerous. The immensity of these challenges is greater because of the long-standing racial cleavages and skewed distribution of wealth amongst the population. However, it is important to note that, unlike those in some African states, South African civil society is active, well organised and, historically, politically charged. Unions and civic-based organisations have not failed to stand up and make their

voices heard – indeed, given the weakness of the political opposition in South Africa, the role of civil society in holding government to account is all the more important. Of equal significance is that the ANC's traditional support base is a group with high expectations. The promises of both social and economic equality implicit in freedom from apartheid rule place limitations on the current government's deviation from its pledge to serve the majority.

Nonetheless, if we are to look out for the warning signs of the undemocratic tendencies that have been attached to dominant-party systems, the watchdog role will be a pivotal one. Those concerned to see the successful consolidation of democracy in South Africa in the next ten years would do well to be vigilant of ANC intolerance – on the part both of the current president and that of his successor, whoever that may be. The overwhelming political power of South Africa's dominant party and the risks this poses both to the competitiveness of the multi-party system and to the authority of the Constitution should not be underestimated. A key task for South Africa's second decade of democracy will, therefore, be careful and ongoing monitoring of government actions by all. In short, the institutionalised means by which power has been conferred on the ANC should not lead to complacency about the party adhering unquestionably to democratic methods of rule. That said, however, many problems also lie in the weakness of South Africa's opposition, who will need to alter their strategies and present themselves as credible players within the polity, whether or not they can realistically displace the ANC.

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POST-ELECTION SOUTH AFRICA

The Continuing Case for Electoral Reform

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ABSTRACT

In May 2002, the South African government appointed an Electoral Task Team (ETT), headed by Dr Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert and composed of a mix of academics, lawyers, electoral specialists and senior officials of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), to consider the case for reform of the country's proportional representation (PR) electoral system. The latter had provided the framework for the highly successful conduct of South Africa's first two democratic elections in 1994 and 1999, yet the country's final Constitution (promulgated in 1996) had dictated that the electoral system should be reviewed, with the proviso that any change would result 'in general' in proportional representation. In the event, the ETT submitted a majority report that recommended adoption of a Mixed Member Proportional Representation system (MMP) (although the report did not call it that) and a minority report that favoured retention of the existing national list system of PR. The government responded by accepting the recommendation of the minority report, ensuring that the 2004 general election would be conducted along exactly the same lines as the two previous elections, although recommending that further consideration be given by the new Parliament to electoral system change. Consequently, now that the African National Congress (ANC) has been returned to power with an increased, and overwhelming, majority it is appropriate not only to consider anew the case for electoral reform but to assess the political dynamics which would appear to determine its likelihood.

THE ANC'S REJECTION OF ELECTORAL REFORM

South Africa presently votes according to a PR system which features a pure list system of one national list (for 200 seats in a 400-seat National Assembly) and nine provincial lists (for another 200, the length of provincial lists varying according to population size of the nine individual provinces) with no minimum threshold for

parties to gain representation beyond the vote required to win one seat.¹ There is no doubt that this system, overall, has served South Africa remarkably well. It was adopted during the negotiation process which preceded the transition to democracy in order to ensure maximum representivity of opinion within Parliament, and has served to ensure that all minority parties that enjoy a reasonable level of support have secured representation: seven parties gained representation in the National Assembly of 1994, twelve in that of 1999 and twelve in that of 2004, these parties ranging widely across the racial and ideological spectrum. Within this context, of course, the ANC's proportion of the vote has grown from 62,65 per cent (252 seats) in 1994 to 66,36 per cent (266 seats) in 1999 to 69,68 per cent (279 seats) in 2004, this reflecting not merely its overwhelming popularity among the electorate but the fragmentation and relative lack of appeal of the parties of opposition. However, although the ANC's predominance is unchallenged, the outcome of its growing dominance of Parliament has led to widespread argument that it has become a 'dominant party'. Guaranteed recurrent victories at the polls, its dominance has translated into behaviour that undermines the spirit and practice of democracy via, *inter alia*, the steamrolling of minority opinion in Parliament, the use of the majority in Parliament to deny appropriate scrutiny of the affairs of government; the effective construction of a 'party-state' by the 'deployment' of party loyalists to positions of state, and the effective de-legitimisation of opposition (and most notably of the Democratic Alliance, the official opposition, which is regularly depicted as serving the reactionary interests of only white South Africans)². Now, whether or not the full implications of this categorisation of the ANC as a 'dominant party' are accepted, it is evidence that co-existent with majority support for the ANC there is widespread popular concern that Parliament as a whole, and individual members of Parliament (MPs), are inadequately accountable to the electorate.

It was precisely this concern that led to the Majority Report of the ETT, which argued for the adoption of 69 multi-member constituencies electing 300 MPs, who would be topped up by 100 MPs elected by national list PR. This recommendation had been made because, while accepting the need for and the popularity and representivity of the past electoral outcomes provided by PR, the majority of the ETT also accepted that there was a widespread demand not only for MPs to be accountable but to represent particular geographic areas. In part, this flowed from widespread memories of the constituency system as it had operated before 1994. To be sure, racially restricted and defined electorates had predetermined

1 The same system, suitably adjusted, operates in the nine provincial elections, which have hitherto been conducted simultaneously with the national election. The discussion about reform which follows applies as much to the provincial level as to the national level, but for reasons of clarity and simplicity the article will refer only to the national system.

2 Arguments about whether the ANC is a 'dominant party' continue to reverberate and, although they are more often associated with the criticism that comes from the DA (and associated academics), they also emanate from the Left. The issue was central to the debate about the role of opposition parties published after the general election of 1999 (Southall 2001).

undemocratic outcomes, whether elections – all conducted via the plurality or first-past-the-post system – had been for the whites-only National Assembly, the Indian and coloured chambers of the tripartite Parliament introduced from 1984, elections for the numerous Bantustan parliaments, or even (going further much further back in history) for the three (white) Native Representatives who, between 1936 and 1959, sat in Parliament on behalf of qualified African male voters from the Cape. Nonetheless, for all the obvious flaws of the pre-1994 electoral systems, they had offered a direct connection, via geographic constituencies, between the voters and individual representatives which was broken with the adoption of the PR system in 1994, and there are indications that the loss has been sorely felt. (In this regard, it is worth recalling that racially restricted franchises meant that the electorates for constituencies, for whatever the fora, were relatively small, allowing for fairly close connections between representatives and voters; a proximity which was probably enhanced by the rural nature of much of South African society, not least in the sense that it facilitated the survival of small town, face-to-face election campaigning until the very end of apartheid). Hence it was that the hankering after a closer relationship between voters and MPs was demonstrated by the survey commissioned by the ETT to examine popular attitudes towards the existent electoral system (Southall and Mattes 2002; Mattes and Southall 2004).

Because respondents were unlikely to have detailed knowledge of the differences between alternative electoral systems, the questions posed about electoral system preference in the survey were necessarily indirect. Nonetheless, the responses received were highly informative. Seventy-two per cent of respondents felt that the post-1994 national list PR electoral system was ‘fair to all parties’ and 81 per cent felt that it included ‘many voices in Parliament’, even though, almost inevitably in South Africa’s racially segmented society, there was a marked tendency for blacks to be happier about the virtues of the system than whites. Nonetheless, for all this relatively high level of satisfaction about the representivity and fairness of the system there was simultaneously a strong undercurrent of concern about the extent to which it provided for accountability. Certainly, 68 per cent of respondents answered positively the question ‘Does the voting system help voters hold the parties accountable for their actions?’ but only 60 per cent answered positively a follow-up question which asked: ‘Does the voting system help voters hold individual representatives of government accountable for their actions.’ Meanwhile, the survey also gave a strong indication that South Africans want an electoral system that enables them to select their legislators more directly than is allowed for by the party list system, and to have more direct access to legislators so that they can better represent their interests and opinions. Hence, for instance, 71 per cent said they wanted to vote for a candidate from the area in which they lived (43 per cent feeling that local candidates would represent people’s opinions or interests more adequately, 23 per cent recording answers which focused on issues of proximity, fairness and trust, and 22 per cent highlighting issues of constituency service).

Alongside such views there were other answers which indicated that a majority of respondents (51 per cent) agreed that elected representatives should be free to criticise their own political parties, while 47 per cent stated that MPs should be able to vote according to their own beliefs (rather than always having to follow their party's line) (Mattes and Southall 2004, pp 58-65). As the individual autonomy of representatives tends to be strongly enhanced by their being elected from geographic (especially single-member) constituencies, these views amongst respondents were further indications that respondents to the survey wanted to combine the national list system's advantages of representivity with adjustments to it which would strengthen the bonds between voters and individual MPs. In conclusion, as was noted at the time, South Africans were generally satisfied with the electoral system, yet significantly higher proportions were dissatisfied than was desirable. Meanwhile, South Africans also emphasised other values – such as the virtues of independent-minded legislators accountable to grass-roots opinion – that the national list system of PR had difficulty in producing. Finally, reference was made to findings of the July-August 2000 *Afrobarometer* survey, which indicated that the two Southern African countries with PR systems (South Africa and Namibia) also had the lowest levels of citizen contact with national legislators (a mere 1 per cent compared with a range of between 5 and 8 per cent of voters in most other countries in Southern Africa). It was concluded that, while the introduction of some form of constituency system would not be *sufficient* to enhance politicians' accountability, it was manifestly a *desirable* step which would provide citizens with some sense of ownership of their representatives in Parliament.

To be sure, there were some strong objections to any introduction of constituencies from a gender lobby, which argued that this would lead to a reduction in the number of women in Parliament (eg, Morna 2002). This was easily rebutted by two responses. The first was that even if women were to find difficulty in securing nominations to represent parties at constituency level, parties could compensate by packing their PR lists with women to ensure an adequate female legislative presence. Second, and more convincing, was the argument that – as demonstrated by the ANC's decision to place sufficient women on its national list to ensure a 30 per cent presence of women in Parliament – the key factor in guaranteeing the election of female MPs lies in parties' commitment to gender equality far more than it does in the nature of the particular electoral system chosen. In other words, if parties want to secure the election of women they can find a way of doing so.

A second set of objections to the introduction of MMP for the 2004 elections revolved around practicability. What is notable in this regard is that the issue of demarcation of constituencies should *not* have been a problem, for the 69 constituencies (which would have between three and seven members) recommended by the ETT majority had already been identified and demarcated geographically and electronically by Mr. Norman Du Plessis of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) on the basis of the IEC's own list of registered voters within already delineated municipal boundaries (with appropriate variations in

size and the number of MPs being allowed for by reference to geography, density of population, sense of community, and so on). Furthermore, because the IEC already operated on the basis of neighbourhood voters' rolls, the introduction of constituencies would not require any major reconception of the computer based electoral list (for a recent discussion, see Amato 2004).

More convincing, perhaps, was the argument that if a change to the electoral system in favour of MMP was introduced the IEC would have to undertake a massive campaign to educate voters about the mechanics of the new system. Nonetheless, even if this was a serious issue, this objection failed to take into account that the move from a constituency based to a MMP system had been achieved remarkably swiftly and successfully in neighbouring Lesotho for that country's 2000 general election. This example was heralded publicly before the ETT at an open workshop to discuss electoral alternatives (Matlosa 2003), with the key factor in this regard being that voters had adapted to the new system readily, with remarkably little confusion (Fox and Southall 2003). Any suggestion that the mass of voters would be incapable of understanding a new system must therefore be deemed patronising. Overall, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the MMP recommendation contained in the majority report of the ETT was rejected out of the ANC's sense of self-interest.

The national list PR system had clearly served the ANC's interests well in returning successive proportional majorities. Yet why would there have been an objection to the introduction of MMP, whose proportional list mechanism would have compensated for any lack of proportionality introduced by constituencies? The ANC's public answer was indicated by its submission to the ETT, which was approved by its National Policy Conference in 2002. In the submission, whilst conceding that a mixed system would provide for overall proportionality, the party argued that smaller parties would be unlikely to win constituencies (and hence would be divisive), while, because the ANC would be likely to win the large majority of constituencies, it would have fewer PR seats to distribute and hence would find it difficult to achieve overall representivity amongst its MPs (ANC 2002). The ANC therefore preferred to stay with the present PR system, onto which it has informally grafted a constituency system whereby it has allocated individual MPs to take responsibility for particular geographical areas.

While these issues are certainly real ones, which do require debate, the more likely reason why the ANC chose to reject reform would seem to lie in a reluctance of the senior party hierarchy to reduce its ability to manipulate who is elected to Parliament. At present, the ANC requires its structures, from branch up to provincial levels, to select and rank their candidates in what are, in effect, primary elections. This, commendably, is done openly, but subsequently, the ANC at national level takes it upon itself to confirm, and if need be, adjust such nominations and rankings. In part, this allows the party to ensure that its lists offer female and (racial) minority candidates in appropriate proportions. Yet, importantly, it also confirms centralised authority, serving as a bulwark against party division and factionalism; such central

control a counterpart to the President's retention of the right to appoint premiers over the heads of provincial structures, whose preferences – expressed in terms of election of provincial ANC chairpersons – have, in quite a number of cases, been deliberately ignored. The rejection of constituencies would appear to follow the same logic: the party at national level, acutely conscious of the factionalism that has bedevilled a number of provincial party structures (notably in the Free State and Eastern Cape), appears determined to prevent the introduction of constituencies, selection of candidates for which would require intra-party competition between individual aspirant candidates. Such local battles could well encourage local factionalism while simultaneously providing individual MPs with a demarcated geographical base which could render them less dependent upon the goodwill of the party at national level.

This interpretation is strengthened by the recent allegations made by Frederick van Zyl Slabbert that the ANC had appointed the ETT merely because it was compelled to do so by the Constitution, and that it had never had any intention of implementing any recommendations for a change in the electoral system (*Sunday Independent* 3 October 2004). It is also supported by the strong suspicion that the minority of the ETT members who favoured retention of the national list PR system were swayed principally by their loyalty to the ANC.

THE CONTINUING, AGGRAVATED CASE FOR ELECTORAL REFORM

The case for South Africa to move to a form of MMP is now stronger than it was before the 2004 election. This is indicated, firstly, by further evidence that the voting public would welcome an adjustment of the system to provide for a greater sense of ownership of MPs, and secondly by the reaction both to the latest bout of floor crossing and to what the media has called the 'Travelgate' scandal.

In the lead-up to the recent election, the Democracy and Governance research programme of the Human Sciences Research Council collaborated with the Sociology of Work Unit of the University of the Witwatersrand in a survey of the political attitudes of some 650 members of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). As with surveys undertaken prior to the 1994 and 1999 elections, this one was conducted in the principal centres of industrial activity (Gauteng, Durban, Port Elizabeth/East London and Cape Town) and across diverse sectors of the economy.³ Overall, there were four sets of answers that relate, directly, or indirectly, to the issue of electoral reform.

First, and particularly significant for our purposes, is that the results of the survey indicated that Cosatu workers remain at the core of ANC support; fully 73 per cent (compared to 75 per cent in both previous surveys) indicated that they

3 The findings are to be published by the HSRC in a collection to be edited by Sakhela Buhlungu of the University of the Witwatersrand.

intended to vote for the ANC. This compares with an election result that saw 70 per cent of the electorate voting for the ANC.

Second, 65 per cent of workers agreed that 'elected institutions are the best place to pursue worker interests'. This compared with 59 per cent (1994) and 57 per cent (1998) of workers who agreed that 'parliament is the best forum to pursue worker interests'. Although the 2004 question was more broadly phrased than the earlier ones, the responses suggest that workers' faith in the democratic polity is increasing rather than decreasing – although the 26 per cent minority of workers who disagreed with the question in 2004 (9 per cent remaining neutral) was sizeable and stands firmly alongside the 54 per cent who felt that political parties could not be trusted to pursue worker interests. Hence, while workers were giving their broad stamp of approval to democratic institutions, they displayed a strong streak of scepticism about political parties.

Third, when Cosatu workers were asked whether if Cosatu representatives elected (under the aegis of the ANC) to political institutions 'do not do what workers want, they should be recalled or removed from parliament' an overwhelming majority (87%) responded in the affirmative. However, the message they gave was ambiguous, for a simple majority (57%) of respondents said that such representatives should be recalled through the electoral process (ie, at the next election, despite the fact that voters vote for parties rather than individuals), while only 30 per cent said that such representatives should be recalled 'through mass action'. Nonetheless, despite the ambiguity, the replies would seem to indicate workers' desire for more direct electoral control over individual MPs.

Fourth, the previous finding is given some considerable support by workers' answers to the question whether they would prefer to be represented by members elected to Parliament through a party list, constituency or mixed electoral system. The response was very divided, with 39 per cent supporting the party list system, 34 per cent supporting a constituency based system, 21 per cent supporting a mixed system and just 7 per cent answering 'don't know'. Overall, therefore, 55 per cent of Cosatu workers, who remain at the core of the ANC support base, favoured a change that would introduce constituencies into the electoral system in some form, while 60 per cent explicitly favoured the retention of overall proportionality.

Of course, the above findings are only indicative, but they do meld well with commentary to the effect that ordinary South Africans, whatever their political orientation, want MPs to be more directly accountable to the voters.⁴ This feeling has almost certainly been strengthened by the remarkable changes which have

⁴ In his column 'Separation of Powers' in *The Sunday Independent*, Rob Amato ran his own highly unscientific poll on whether his readers wanted to see a reintroduction of constituencies. He received 82 replies, all of which favoured constituencies; four of them explicitly advocating mixed systems. Their motivations were summarised by the submission of Tony Voss who, in arguing for constituencies, wrote his reasons as (i) reputation and accountability (ii) regional variety and local knowledge. But Amato worried that only four of his respondents were identifiably black. 'Readers want their own MPs', *Sunday Independent*, 22 August 2004.

taken place in the party political arena following the popular casting of votes in the election of 2004.

The most immediate casualty of the 2004 general election was the New National Party (NNP), which was reduced to just 1,65 per cent of the vote and seven seats. In 1994, the then National Party secured 20,39 per cent of the vote and eighty-two seats and served as the junior partner, under its leader, former President F W de Klerk, in the Government of National Unity (GNU). Subsequently, after the promulgation of the final Constitution in 1996, it had left the GNU for the opposition benches. Following a poor performance in the election of 1999 (6,87 per cent of the vote and 28 seats) under the inexperienced leadership of Marthinus van Schalkwyk, it merged with the then Democratic Party to form the Democratic Alliance (DA), again as the junior partner. However, Van Schalkwyk swiftly found himself uncomfortable with the vigorous opposition pursued by the DA under its leader, Tony Leon. Consequently, he fairly swiftly took his party out of the DA to join up once again with the ruling party in a loose coalition that enabled the ANC and NNP acting together to seize control of the Western Cape and Cape Town City Council as a result of the floor-crossing saga of 2002-03. First in government then out of it, then in alliance with the DP, then out of the DA, then in informal alliance with the ANC once again – this was too dizzying a ride for the majority of the NNP's voters, most of whom shifted to the DA and the new Independent Democrats in the election of 2004. It was therefore scarcely surprising when, after the election, Van Schalkwyk accepted a Cabinet post in the ANC-led government, and subsequently announced that he would be joining the ANC and advising the rest of the members of his party to accompany him. Although constrained from formally crossing the floor of Parliament until the next window opens, Van Schalkwyk has, in essence, pronounced the death of the party of apartheid and the seven NNP MPs have in effect (albeit not yet in law) crossed to the ANC.

The Constitution, as originally promulgated, had prohibited floor crossing, exemplifying the logic that once voters had decided upon the representation of political parties in legislative assemblies through nation list PR, politicians should not have the liberty to change it. However, politicians from diverse backgrounds were soon complaining that this arrangement was too inflexible. This was particularly the case at local government level. At national and provincial levels, although individuals could not change parties, parties could change alliances (thus enabling the NNP to switch its affiliation from the DP to the ANC). However, at local government level, where the NNP and DP had contested the 2000 elections as the DA, NNP councillors were locked into the DA, even though they now wanted to align themselves once more with the ANC. It was in this context that, having already collapsed DA rule at provincial level in the Western Cape, the ANC introduced Bills (for national and provincial assemblies, and for local government separately) that would enable floor crossing, albeit at pre-ordained windows of opportunity, as long as those crossing the floor constituted ten per cent or more of a political party's representation in a given forum. The result was predictable: in

due course, the ranks of the ANC in Parliament were swelled by the addition of some ten MPs, and at local government level, the DA lost control of half the councils on which it had gained majorities in the 2000 local government elections.

As noted, the NNP's capitulation after the 2004 general election has not yet led to formal floor crossings in Parliament. However, an indication of what is in store has been provided by the most recent bout of floor crossings that have taken place at local government level, where, during a fourteen-day window period, many councillors sought to position themselves better to secure re-election in the local government elections scheduled for 2005. Overall, between 1 and 14 September 2004 some 486 councillors changed political allegiance and 160 of the country's 284 municipalities were affected by floor crossings. Overall, the NNP lost 283 councillors, the overwhelming majority of them crossing to the ANC, which gained 330 new councillors and control of eight municipalities. In contrast, the DA gained 66 councillors, and the Independent Democrats 39 (*This Day*, 20 September 2004; *Mail & Guardian Online*, 21 September 2004).

There can be little doubt that, overall, these shenanigans – the NNP leadership deciding to merge with the ANC without formal reference to its membership just weeks after a general election, and the further mass exodus of councillors from parties for which they had previously presented themselves to the voters – have seriously dented the popular image of politicians. An *Afrobarometer* survey (cited in the *Financial Mail*, 24 September 2004) has recorded that fully 63 per cent of voters disapprove of floor crossing and are alienated by what they see as cynical moves by politicians to secure power and financial advantage. 'Out with chequetrocracy', calls Motsoko Pheko, president of the Pan Africanist Congress, who refers to floor crossers as 'cheque crossers' because of their acceptance of offers made to them in secret. 'Voters in this country vote for Parties, not cheque-crossers. Floor-crossing encourages corruption and self interest. It violates the electoral right of the voters' (Pheko 2004). Floor-crossers, echoed an editorial in *Business Day* (2 September 2004), are 'Crosstitutes'.

Meanwhile, the reputation of politicians has plunged further thanks to the so-called 'Travelgate' scandal that rocked Parliament after the elections. This refers to a list of some 136 MPs, including four Cabinet ministers, two deputy ministers, two premiers and senior office holders within Parliament, who are being investigated by the anti-corruption unit, the Scorpions, for irregular use of travel vouchers – a scam that, overall, has cost the taxpayer some R17-million. It must be stressed that, at time of writing, no allegations against any MPs have been proved, and that in many cases the corrupt misuse of travel vouchers may have been the responsibility of four Cape Town travel agents rather than that of the MPs themselves (*ThisDay*, 2 September 2004). None the less, not least because the ANC in particular made a determined bid to prevent the names of the MPs who are being investigated from being published only to be thwarted by the (now defunct) newspaper, *ThisDay*, which the ANC threatened to sue for defamation!), the affair has severely sullied the reputation of Parliament, and those who belong to it. It can

only increase the popular sense that politicians are unwilling to render themselves accountable to those who elect them.

Significant commentators are beginning to argue that a re-introduction of constituencies would render legislative representatives more accountable to voters. According to DA leader Tony Leon, only 175 ward (local government constituencies) councillors have crossed the floor during the two local government floor-crossing periods, compared to 388 proportional representation councillors (*Sunday Times* online, 2 October 2004). Not surprisingly, given that floor crossing has hugely benefited the ANC and extended its already overwhelming dominance, the DA has committed itself to reforming the floor-crossing system as it presently operates, and it is also clear that it favours some re-introduction of constituencies. In this at least, the DA seems to be putting itself at the head of popular opinion, and it is likely to be joined by the other parties of opposition, most of which (notably the UDM and IFP) have suffered badly as a result of floor crossing. Yet this, of course, spells danger – for if the issue of electoral and legislative reform becomes even more crudely politicised along party lines, it is only the ANC that will win.

ELECTORAL REFORM AND POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Developments since the 2004 election have strengthened the case for electoral reform featuring the introduction of multi-member constituencies, alongside a compensating proportional list system. Such a system of MMP has been successfully introduced in Lesotho, where, in contrast to contemporary South Africa, historic reliance upon a first-past-the-post constituency system produced huge imbalances in Parliament in the elections of 1993 and 1998 and resultant political instability. The addition of a PR list system to the existing constituencies in the 2002 election corrected representative imbalances, and considerably eased political tensions in a country with an unhappy past.

There is no reason, save that of the self-interest of the ANC, why a reverse approach to MMP cannot be engineered in South Africa, whereby the undesirable political consequences of proportionality can be addressed, at least in part, through the sort of mixed system which was proposed by the ETT. All the indications are that, overall, such a change would be favoured by a majority of the electorate, including – if the recent Cosatu worker survey is anything to go by – a majority amongst the ANC's own support base.

The government has promised that the present Parliament will address the issue of electoral reform once more. However, there is, at present, little indication that the ANC will advance from its present strict adherence to the list system PR that has been so advantageous to it. The list system has immensely facilitated centralised control of party structures, and has enabled the party leadership to contain factionalism at provincial and local government levels. Meanwhile, its considerably more cynical espousal of floor crossing has increased its electoral dominance at all three levels of government well beyond the degree voted for by

the electorate. Significantly, survey results indicate that the electorate disapproves of this manipulation of the popular will and would prefer to see the dominance of party leaderships curbed. This, it must be recalled, appears to be the attitude of all voters, including those who are aligned to the ANC.

Constituencies are favoured because individual voters want to have a direct electoral connection with MPs who they feel know particular geographical areas and have their interests at heart. Voters feel that it is more likely that they can render constituency MPs, who have to take notice of local interests as well as following the instructions of party leaderships, politically accountable. Constituencies, it is felt, will provide MPs with a degree of independence from their party: they will be accountable downwards (to constituents) as well as upwards (to the party leadership). Furthermore, the introduction of constituencies is seen as inhibiting the extent of floor crossing, for floor crossers elected by constituencies will face the wrath of their constituencies at a following election. Finally, a further advantage often adduced for constituencies is that their introduction would allow individuals to stand as independents, which they are unable to do under the present national list PR system. Although it is rare for independent candidates ever to be elected for constituencies in modern political systems, the capacity for independents to rattle cages at local level during election campaigns remains highly valued.

It must be stressed that the introduction of multi-member constituencies alongside a PR list, as the ETT recommended, is a very modest change. It would not affect the size of the ANC majority, and is highly unlikely to impinge seriously on the capacity of party leaderships to impose day-to-day party discipline. It would, certainly, require of political parties that they adjust their candidate selection procedures, and there is nothing to stop them devising procedures whereby candidates who do not subscribe to their principles and behavioural demands can present themselves for selection as constituency candidates. (For instance, individuals seeking election as Labour Party MPs in the United Kingdom first have to gain access to a nationally approved list of potential candidates). It would also mean that, to ensure an appropriate representation of women, the ANC and opposition parties would have to devise suitable procedures for candidate selection at constituency level, while also being prepared to use the national list to ensure adequate gender compensation.

The advantages would be that (i) voters would feel closer to constituency MPs than they do to PR MPs; (ii) constituency MPs would have a constitutional responsibility to represent the views and interests of their constituents; (iii) the introduction of constituencies would enhance the personal accountability to voters of individual MPs; and (iv) enhanced accountability of constituency MPs might facilitate political communication between ordinary people and the government, while encouraging a capacity for independent thinking and action amongst parliamentary representatives.

Overall, it is argued that the introduction of multi-member constituencies alongside PR, as suggested by the ETT, will increase Parliament's legitimacy. Yet it

also needs to be stressed that the beneficial effect of any such change is likely to be completely negated unless the blatantly undemocratic effects of the floor-crossing system are also addressed. Floor crossing as it currently operates manifestly works in favour of the ruling party, undermines opposition (and hence the potential for accountability), and runs completely counter to the logic of PR. Importantly, too, it severely detracts from the legitimacy of Parliament and of politics in general by encouraging the view that politicians are far more interested in their own futures than they are in the pursuit of public interest.

There is, of course, an immediate remedy at hand: alongside electoral reform as envisaged by the ETT, legislation could require (i) that floor crossing by MPs elected by PR be prohibited completely; (ii) that constituency MPs who cross the floor should be allowed to remain in Parliament for a given period (long enough for them to raise issues of principle) before being required to submit themselves to re-election in a by-election.

Such changes would require of the ANC in particular that it make certain sacrifices, yet they would in no way seriously threaten its capacity to govern. In contrast, they would confirm a commitment to the virtues of parliamentary democracy for which the party struggled so heroically for so long.

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THE ANC AFTER THE 2004 ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

In the 2004 election the ANC obtained a larger share of the vote than ever before – nearly 70 per cent. About 200 000 more people voted for it than had in 1999, despite a decline in overall turnout. In 2004, the ANC's gains were concentrated chiefly in the Transkei, in the Western Cape and in rural KwaZulu-Natal. It obtained more than 270 000 fewer votes in Gauteng, though, despite a likely increase of about 20 per cent in the population of the province. These statistics are revealing because they offer useful indications of the ways in which the ANC has changed since its accession to power. Moreover, as the ANC's political base shifts geographically and alters sociologically, we can also discern trends that may offer pointers to the party's future.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The ANC was a mass-based liberation movement from the 1940s onwards, with its following concentrated in cities, amongst the most urbanised groups within the African population. The organisation's three centres of strength were on the East Rand (and to a lesser extent Johannesburg), in Durban and in Port Elizabeth. During the 1950s to a very large extent the organisation was built around a burgeoning trade union movement – in Port Elizabeth and on the East Rand, especially, local leadership was concentrated in the hands of trade unionists. In its social composition the ANC was essentially a workers' movement and this fact had an impact on its values and ideas. Marxism influenced even non-communists within the ANC's leadership (Nelson Mandela was one of them). With its adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1956, the ANC embraced a programme that envisaged substantive social reform, including the expansion of public ownership and land redistribution.

These trends continued in exile. Increasingly the ANC projected itself as a revolutionary movement, and a constituent in a wider movement of 'transition to the socialist system', to cite the policy statement it adopted at Morogoro in 1969. When the organisation was once more capable of building clandestine networks within South Africa, its main bases were again in the townships of Gauteng, in

Durban, and in Port Elizabeth and East London. These vicinities supplied the main arenas for guerilla operations during the 1980s. Then, to use the words of Steve Tshwete, the working class constituted 'the backbone of the struggle' (Suttner & Cronin 1986, p 212). Meanwhile, leading exponents of 'Charterist' politics argued 'that any programme to end racial oppression ... *has* to attack the key power centres of capitalism with which racial oppression is so interlocked' (Suttner & Cronin 1986, p 29). Most township participants in 'struggle politics' saw themselves as engaged in a movement that, if victorious, would change social and economic arrangements very profoundly indeed.

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL TRENDS WITHIN THE ANC

Today the ANC presides over a robust capitalist democracy. If anything, the private economic sector is stronger than ever as a consequence of privatisation and market liberalisation. Senior ANC leaders enjoy increasingly close connections with business, as even a cursory glance at the parliamentary register of private interests will reveal. Entrepreneurial undertakings by husbands and wives of politicians tighten the links between politics and boardrooms even further. Many of the struggle leaders of the 1980s have now become extremely wealthy. The ANC in government finds itself at odds with its former allies in the trade union movement (as well as, to an extent, the Communist Party) over aspects of foreign affairs, over macro-economic policy, and over land reform. More significantly, in relative terms, the ANC feels *electorally* most vulnerable in the former heartlands of its historic support, in the townships of Gauteng and elsewhere. Here significant numbers of working class citizens prefer to stay at home rather than vote. A battery of new protest movements hope to convert dissatisfaction with the performance of municipal councils into support for a Left alternative to the ANC. Meanwhile, the ANC's electoral strength is more and more concentrated in the countryside amongst the poorest and most marginalised. Those who approve most strongly of the Government's performance are most likely to be living in rural areas and to be recipients of pensions, disability grants and other kinds of welfare payments. Their numbers have quadrupled since 1994.

How do we explain these changes? Of course, to an extent, the ANC's choices in government have been circumscribed by the imperatives of the global economy as well as by the constitutional restraints that governed its accession to power. But neither of these factors explains the enthusiasm of the embrace of entrepreneurial values demonstrated by many ANC leaders. Contributing to the ANC's transformation is the inevitable alteration in its relationship with society that is a consequence of power. The party – or at least its leaders – can now allocate resources, and, in the countryside (though not to the same degree in the cities), patronage can command loyalty, particularly in those communities in which political values are still conservative and patrimonial.

An illustration of such power was the abuse of the social grants system cited at the end of 2004 by the Minister of Social Development, Zola Skewyiya. In several

small towns in southern KwaZulu-Natal disability grants were being distributed to supporters of local political personalities through committees those personalities had constituted: as a consequence, several districts were registering implausibly high numbers of beneficiaries of such grants.

In the former 'homelands', when the ANC reconstructed itself during the early 1990s, its rapid political ascendancy was a result of an alliance with local notables, chiefs and bureaucrats, former subalterns of the apartheid regime. For a time at least, the former rulers and leading bureaucrats of at least five homelands – Transkei, Venda, Lebowa, KaNgwane and KwaNdebele – assumed prominent positions in regional ANC hierarchies. The venality of several provincial administrations, notably that of Mpumalanga, is a legacy of this deft transitional ploy.

The implications of the ANC's shift to becoming the major component in an electoral party system deserve more elaboration than they have received in most commentaries. ANC spokespeople continue to insist that the ANC remains a liberation movement and has yet to become an ordinary political party. In making such protestations they have two concerns. One is that, in their perception, parties in a parliamentary political system are socially partial, in other words, they represent relatively narrow social interests, whereas the ANC's history continues to constitute it as a broad nationalist coalition of groups that would normally find themselves in opposition in a party system (Jordan 1997). This position is not especially persuasive; in many well-established liberal democracies many parties attempt to represent, and even succeed in representing, a broad range of interests, even across major class divisions. Political organisations in the United States are good examples of 'catch-all' parties, as is the Congress Party in India.

The second strand in the ANC's continued assertion of its status as a liberation movement is that the organisation attempts to accomplish a wider range of political functions than simply those of interest and electoral representation; in this vein it points to the mobilising role that parties may perform in the service of developmental projects, as well as to its continued capacity to inspire and incubate protest movements locally, and even nationally – with respect to the latter, the Treatment Action Campaign, whose leaders emphasise their political affiliation to the ANC, would be a case in point. Here its claims to being rather more than a conventional electorally oriented political organisation are more credible.

But while ANC leaders may genuinely feel that their 'liberation' tasks remain incomplete, that even in power they continue to belong to a revolutionary movement, such claims should not divert attention from what changed in 1994. In the immediate period before the 1994 election and in the years that followed it, the ANC developed what it could never accomplish before: a national organisation with a structured, disciplined following of activists and officials in every significant population centre; in the countryside as well as in the cities. This organisation is partly sustained, as was the case with the ANC historically, by voluntary commitment, but, and this is the contrast with the ANC's previous history, it is also the effect of power, the capacity for patronage, and control over public resources.

Arguably, with the acquisition of vast new rural/small town constituencies the earlier sources of political radicalism among followers of the ANC, in particular those resulting from its alliances with working class organisations, became much less influential. The ruralisation of the ANC's following may also help to strengthen patrimonial kinds of leadership and weaken the influence of those democratic norms introduced during the 1980s into the 'mass democratic movement' by trade union officials. Inkatha's poor showing in the 2004 poll, as well as its evident inability to find a successor to its founder, once again opens up the possibility of its absorption into ANC ranks. Such a development would certainly expand the role of patron-client politics in the ANC's KwaZulu-Natal organisation.

Social changes have also helped to shift the ANC away from its Jacobin traditions. During the 1990s the South African middle class – white-collar workers, professionals, technicians, managers and businessmen – became more black than white, and this group has become a vital source of political support. Social stability in South Africa both today and in the future will depend on the government's ability to continue, through its distribution of public goods, to improve the lives of the very poor, while at the same time expanding opportunities for the black middle class. Above inflation-rate wages and protection for existing jobs will keep the labour movement more or less on side, but essentially the ANC's political predominance depends on its near hegemonic appeal amongst middle-class black South Africans and the homage it receives from the rural poor.

Does this mean that the much-heralded split between African nationalism and labour is about to happen? This would be more likely if the ANC were in a state of organisational decay. In fact, though, the movement maintains a vigorous inner life, in the cities as well as the countryside, supported by expanding inflows of funds from local business. A survey undertaken at the end of 2002 by the Political Studies Department of the University of the Witwatersrand, in which students interviewed 500 or so branch members, mainly in Gauteng, showed that the organisation continues to maintain a culture of local activism and remains capable of extracting idealistic commitment from its membership. The latter was evident during 2002 and 2003 in the enthusiastic responses from many branches to President Mbeki's appeals to ANC followers to participate in voluntary development activities (*Letsame*). The survey cited above revealed that about 70 per cent of Gauteng respondents had taken part in *Letsame* activities: cleaning up public buildings and repairing schools, visiting AIDS patients, organising sports days, and so forth¹. At this level the ANC continues to resemble a social movement rather than an electoral machine. Urban working-class ANC members are extremely likely to be trade union members and, as such, are as likely to defend the nationalist-labour alliance. As one acute observer noted in 2002, speeches by trade unionists at regional Cosatu meetings indicated 'the lower one moves down the hierarchy [in trade unions] the

1 For more detail see Lodge 2004, pp 194-196.

more direct the felt connection with the ANC' (Forrest 2002). It is, however, a misconception that the ANC depends on trade unions to 'deliver' its urban constituency at the polling stations. When trade unionists are active as party canvassers their activism is an expression of their involvement in a lively culture of local political life, not a response to the injunctions of shop stewards.

To be sure, the ANC would rather not lose the loyalty of trade union officials – a trade union sponsored opposition would certainly draw some support from its base – but it is quite conceivable that the ANC could win an election *without* formally expressed trade union support. The continuing trend, evident in 2004, of the ANC's most steadfast adherents becoming increasingly rural will certainly influence relationships between the party and its historical allies. It is already doing so – the increasing assertiveness of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) leadership is a consequence of this stage. The league claims to have 500 000 members, predominantly drawn from unemployed rural school leavers. In the last few months the leadership of the league has been sharply at odds with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) over the latter's efforts to defend civil liberties in Zimbabwe, and with the ANC Women's League, with respect to the issue of succession to the leadership of the ANC.

Youth League officials support Robert Mugabe's land seizures and deride the Zimbabwean president's opponents and critics as local proxies for Western powers. The league has also emerged as the champion of Deputy President Jacob Zuma's aspirations to ascend to the presidency: there should be no debate about this forthcoming development, leaguers insist, for such an appointment would conform with previous ANC practice (Ndlangisa 2005). Both positions are probably genuinely popular with the league's rural supporters (radical land reform on the Zimbabwe model finds little support in cities (Mannak 2004).

The Youth League's assertiveness is also an expression of its relatively independent financial status, a consequence of a sequence of lucrative 'empowerment' arrangements which include a close association between the league's Lembede Investment Holdings and Johannesburg Consolidated Investment's (JCI) main shareholder, Brett Kebble. During 1994, Lembede, together with two other well connected empowerment groups, purchased a R1,5-million asset portfolio from JCI (Deane 2005). Brett Kebble's and the leaguers' business undertakings have attracted unwelcome attention from both the press and the National Prosecutions Authority's [NPA] Scorpions and the Youth League's hostility towards the NPA's investigation of corruption allegations against Zuma was hardly disinterested.

ENTRENCHMENT OF THE DOMINANT-PARTY SYNDROME

Within South African political analysis it has almost become conventional to portray the country's democracy as curtailed by a dominant party. From this perspective the ruling party itself is perceived as becoming increasingly hierarchical and

centralised, with power concentrated in its leadership². Such beliefs are buttressed by the Leninist organisational language and phraseology sometimes employed by ANC leaders. In reality, however, the ANC's organisational expansion during the 1990s may have made the party more difficult to manage and may have *increased* its susceptibility to division and, even, internal challenges to authority. For what ANC leaders call factionalism is partly a consequence of the movement's geographical spread as well as its reconstitution over the dispersed centres of power represented by provincial governments³ and municipalities, both crucial and often lucrative sources of patronage and business empowerment for ANC notables and their kinsfolk and associates.

Significantly, modern ANC factions seldom appear to be animated by formal ideological or programmatic differences with central or more senior ANC leaders; rather the fault-lines that separate the factions appear to be the effect of regional identities, as in the Free State provincial ANC, or ethnic jealousies, as in Limpopo, the latter making a reappearance in ANC social life after a long absence since the 1930s. Interestingly, the Youth League's support for Jacob Zuma's candidacy for the movement's presidency appears to have little to do with ideology: up to now Zuma has normally been associated with the left wing of the organisation and, indeed, in any bid for the presidency would probably enjoy the backing of many trade unionists. Jacob Zuma's political ascendancy would probably represent a setback for 'neo-liberal' party modernisers grouped around the current presidency and would signify a triumph for rank and file assertion within the organisation. Zuma is undoubtedly popular with party activists, not least because of his own presentation of himself as a Zulu 'traditionalist' commoner.

Electoral advances, even past the symbolically important level of two-thirds support (which theoretically increases leadership discretion to enact constitutional alterations), do not translate into corresponding increments in leadership authority. Public policy of successive ANC governments has been shaped to a much greater degree by the sociology of the movement in power than its critics recognise. The most striking characteristic of South African government policy and performance is not the presidency's commitment to the modern conventions of market oriented macroeconomic public management, steadfast as this is. The importation of business models into public affairs is now routine internationally. As we have seen also, here they reflect the new intimacy between African nationalism and business that can be expected as a consequence of the nurturing of black business through racially preferential state procurement.

What is remarkable, though, is the retention and expansion of the state's commitment to welfare, especially with respect to provision of pensions (unusually generous by any reasonable international comparisons), disability grants and child

2 For arguments in this direction see the concluding chapter in Giliomee and Simkins 1999.

3 For a useful discussion of provincial politics during the Mandela administration see Hawker 2000, pp 631-58.

support (see Seekings 2002, especially pp 1-5). In general, welfare budgets account for more than half the Government's expenditure and have been increasing proportionately. Such commitments are not necessarily a consequence of the influence on the ANC of organised labour: government has been more than ready to confront labour over foreign trade policies that have caused considerable job losses. It makes more sense to view the massive expansion of welfare provision – assiduously encouraged by political leadership – as an effect of the ANC's incorporation of the countryside into its political domain.

More widely, since 1994 government resource allocation has demonstrated a bias towards the countryside, a predisposition that can only be strengthened and confirmed by the 2004 election results, and a reflection of the ANC's continued susceptibility to social pressure from its support base. The apparent shift in government strategy with respect to the future of the remaining parastatal corporations, in which they are likely to remain substantially publicly owned, is probably a response to broad developmental imperatives – in particular the extension of rurally located 'infrastructure' – rather than a concession to trade union antipathy to privatisation. The evidently stronger commitment to land reform – signalled by a doubling of the budgetary allocation this year – is a striking expression of the growing influence of the ANC's rural following.

The other feature of government policy which is singular and certainly differentiates it from the *laissez-faire* conventions of neo-liberal governance is the prominent status assigned to black empowerment measures by Thabo Mbeki's administration, particularly since the passage of the Black Economic Empowerment Act at the beginning of 1994. An official 'scorecard' that balances different aspects of empowerment, including black participation in ownership and management, has prompted the development of a range of 'charters' defining empowerment targets for different industries. This is likely to stimulate an unprecedented degree of state and public agency regulation of the internal operations of the private sector. Strengthening likely state commitment to the achievement of empowerment targets is the degree to which former political leaders and senior civil servants, as well as the families and associates of present political leadership, have been beneficiaries of empowerment transactions in which new black-owned companies have acquired substantial stakes in established industrial concerns. Such developments are likely, incidentally, to increase the flow of funding from South African business to the ruling party, which, until the present, has remained heavily dependent on foreign donations.

BEYOND THE 2004 ELECTION

In these areas it is reasonable to expect continuity in the next few years. A more populist presidential style after 2007, the year the ANC is expected to elect its new leadership, might not guarantee comparable commitment to other current policy positions, especially those that command only weak public support. A recent series

of political attacks on the judiciary and judicial agencies such as the NPA by ANC officials and parliamentarians probably accords with wider public predispositions: the justice system still lacks legitimacy and this continues to render the Constitution vulnerable. Opinion polls register higher levels of mistrust in the courts than in any other public institution (including Parliament and local government) except for the police (See, for examples, Rule 2000, p 58 and Mattes, Davids and Africa, p 34). To date, it must be said, South African political leadership has generally honoured its constitutional obligations, even when judges have found its proposed laws and policies to be unconstitutional, as when the courts compelled the government to expand the provision of anti-retroviral medication to HIV/AIDS patients.

In a context, though, in which powerful political personalities find themselves more deeply at odds with legal agencies, as has been the case with Jacob Zuma, procedural democracy might be tested very severely indeed. One of the distinctive features of Thabo Mbeki's presidency has been its evident commitment to leadership renewal. Ten members of Mbeki's new Cabinet after the 2004 election were fresh appointments to ministerial office. Only eleven members had held office under Mandela. In a Cabinet composed of men and women whose political apprenticeship was served mainly during the 1980s and 1990s most of the architects of South Africa's constitutional democracy, those with a personal stake in its maintenance, have long since departed.

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REVIEW

Contemporary South Africa

Anthony Butler

Palgrave-Macmillan

Contemporary South Africa is a useful and informative reference work on the current geo-political, economic and social make-up of South Africa. Published in 2004, the book is both topical and relatively current in its discourse, examining, through the contextual lens of historical perspective, some of the burning issues in South Africa, including socio-economic development, racial and gender transformation and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The author examines the historical context which gave rise to the constitutionally entrenched system of apartheid and the consequences of this policy, and subsequently offers perspectives on the present state of South African society. The book is the sixth publication in the series *Contemporary States and Societies*, a collection of reference works.

In keeping with the format of the series, *Contemporary South Africa* is not written in formal, academic English and is deliberately presented as an easily accessible reference volume. The book does not make use of excessive referencing, and sometimes avoids delving too deeply into theoretical models and explanations of events described. However, this does not seriously detract from the content and commentary, as Butler is both insightful and distinctive in his observations and remarks.

Each chapter is prefaced with a brief historical background, and explanations of subsequent events frequently refer back to key events and sequences which Butler has previously noted. Butler is also not shy to dispute or contradict prevailing and accepted viewpoints, repeatedly challenging dominant sentiments and providing the basis on which he disputes a particular standpoint. In this regard, the chapter examining the South African Government is particularly apposite, de-mystifying some of the structural relationships between the various organs of the state, as well as the ruling African National Congress party, and concisely noting some of the key areas of strength and weakness in the South African model.

It is the conciseness of the volume that is both the book's greatest strength and its weakness. Butler is able to capture the essence of his subject in such a way that numerous complex topics are rendered simple by his analysis. Although this enhances the book's value as an introduction to the society that is contemporary South Africa, Butler sometimes runs the risk of becoming excessively reductionist, and, on occasion, his style is overly narrative. For example, the examination of contemporary political life in South Africa in Chapter 6 is light on the perspective which Butler brings to large parts of the book, summarising the political conditions

prevalent prior to the South African general election in 2004, without the degree of insight into the social dynamics of the topic of many of the other chapters.

In a sense, the brevity of Butler's observations both intrigue and disappoint, generating a desire for further insight into the issues he raises by hinting at and lightly examining the topical issues that confront contemporary South Africa. Butler's objective – to produce a manageable text – and his ability to capture what are the essential aspects of South African society have generated a work more suitable for readers being introduced to South Africa for the first time than to a reference work for more academic purposes. The author also spends more time on the historical and current state of affairs than on predicting patterns for the future, preferring to leave inferences about future trends in contemporary South Africa to be drawn by the reader.

The book was completed prior to the 2004 general election that returned the African National Congress to power, and, as a result, anyone looking for analysis of the impact this event has had on South African society will not find it useful. However, the numerous diagrams and tables, combined with evidence of extensive background research, provide a superb base from which the author builds his descriptions, and are, therefore, potentially useful if the reader is looking for a factual, accurate and informative overview of South African society.

The publication has, therefore, achieved its objective of providing a useful summary of the conditions and make-up of this diverse and complex nation and, as such, is recommended as an excellent resource through which to begin to understand the current state of South Africa.

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