

THE KEY TO ONE-PARTY DOMINANCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED STATES¹

Some lessons for South Africa?

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ABSTRACT

Since the ascent to power of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 the concept of one-party dominance has dominated the South African political landscape. It is argued that the magnitude of the ANC's victories in four consecutive elections raises questions about whether South Africa is headed for a one-party dominant political system achieved through democratic rather than authoritarian means – a feat achieved by only a few political parties in the past century. The argument in this article is that the ascension to power of parties which have attained dominance has been preceded by extraordinary circumstances prevailing within their states and that it was the successful involvement of these parties in resolving these circumstances that was responsible for their victory in subsequent elections. However, other factors also contributed to the continued electoral success of the parties. The ANC also traces its ascension to power back to the extraordinary circumstances that prevailed in South Africa and which the party assisted in resolving. This article assesses the possibility that the ANC will attain dominance in the South African body politic as parties in other countries have done. This necessitates a study of the factors the parties exploited in order to be continuously voted into power. The ANC emerged victorious from South Africa's fourth non-racial democratic election in 2009, a victory that moved the party closer to fulfilling the criteria of a dominant party – winning four consecutive elections and holding power for 20 years or more.

1 This article is based on a completed DLitt et Phil thesis in Politics under the supervision of Prof A J Venter at the University of Johannesburg 2006.

INTRODUCTION

The victory of the African National Congress (ANC) in four national elections, with an overwhelming popular majority, has led academics to speculate about the possibility that South Africa will turn into a one-party dominant state (see Welsh 1996; Lanegran 2001; Giliomee 1998; Simkins 1999 for some representative views).

One-party dominance, a rare feat, which has been achieved by only a few political parties in the past century, is considered an anomaly, an aberration, and a deviation from the norm (cf Pempel 1990, p 5). While there is debate about one-party dominance, there is also broad consensus over what constitutes this concept. Sartori (1979, p 194) maintains that it is defined by one party outdistancing all others in several consecutive elections. Duverger (1964, p 308) puts forward the view that it is defined by one party being larger than the others. Like Sartori he argues that the party should outdistance its rivals over a certain period. Both Sartori (1979) and Duverger (1964) express the view that the party must win a majority of votes. According to Shalev (1990, p 83), 'simplistically defined, dominant parties are those that head governments for long periods (on the scale of the number of decades rather than of Cabinets) continuously or with only ephemeral interruptions'. He adds that dominant parties are not necessarily majority parties, but that they always enjoy a plurality of the popular vote. We accept this definition for the purposes of this article.

In order to assess the possibility of the ANC becoming a dominant party the article will focus on five political parties that have become dominant: the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), the Indian National Congress (Congress), the Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael (Mapai) in Israel, the Christian Democratic Party (Democrazia Cristiana, DC) in Italy and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in Sweden.

The common feature of the rise to power of these parties has been identified as unusual circumstances prevailing prior to the parties' ascension to power. The parties were at the forefront in seeking a resolution to deep divisions in their respective societies. They reaped the fruits of these endeavours when, in the founding elections held soon after the resolution of the conflicts, the parties were elected to power. A political party that comes to power during a crisis has an advantage over its rivals because the voting public will remember its role in extricating the nation from the crisis.² A party that is perceived as a national saviour is difficult to defeat (Thackrah 2000, p 5). However, this tells only part of the story.

2 A full account of the unusual circumstances surrounding the coming to power of the five parties is presented in my doctoral thesis. Constraints of space preclude my going into detail in this article.

The important question to be answered is how these parties, from their advantageous start, entrenched themselves in power by winning elections consecutively for 25 or more years? What did they do to continue to retain the confidence of the voters for two decades? An advantageous start is not an adequate explanation for such domination, other factors over and above this precondition also contributed to the electoral success of the parties.

The article will focus on identifying the factors that consolidated the dominance of the parties and will try to determine whether they are common to all of them. It will then extrapolate the analysis of these factors to the ANC to determine if it is following in their tracks.

FACTORS FACILITATING THE RISE TO ONE-PARTY DOMINANCE

Extraordinary conditions facilitated the rise to power of the five parties under consideration, but their continued victory cannot be ascribed to these conditions alone. When the parties came to power none of them had any notion that they would become dominant. What was important was winning the next election. Dominance, according to Pempel (1990, p 341), 'is more easily recognised in the cycle of its continuance than in the seeds of its regeneration'.

Below I outline the extraordinary circumstances that pertained in each of the countries before the ascent to power of the parties.

- Botswana: The marriage of Sir Seretse Khama to a white woman led to his being forced to relinquish his traditional position as heir apparent of the Bamangwato tribe and to his later being exiled by the British. This upset the Batswana people, who reacted by voting for his party, the BDP, in the country's first election, in 1965, and others that followed.
- India: Congress fought a relentless and sometimes brutal battle with the British for the liberation of India.
- Israel: Jewish settlers fought with Arabs in order to form the state of Israel. The Arabs were opposed to a Jewish settlement in what they regarded as their territory.
- Italy: The ascent to power of Mussolini in 1922 brought to an end Italy's fragile democratic political system. Mussolini had dragged Italy into the Second World War, with tragic consequences. The DC was one of the parties which had participated in the resistance to Mussolini's Fascist Party.
- Sweden: Prior to the 1932 election which brought the SDP to power there was an economic crisis in Sweden which the government could

not solve. Sweden suffered greatly as a result of the Great Depression, which exacerbated the country's economic problems and led to a rise in unemployment and to general unrest.

These parties could not rest on their laurels and continued to rely on the abnormal circumstances responsible for the victory that first brought them to power. In order for them to ensure that they continued to win elections they had to devise other means of maintaining and increasing their electoral support.

The factors that perpetuated the dominance of the parties were: organisational strength, the continued support of a strong socioeconomic bloc, penetration into society, pragmatism, patronage, the role of symbolism and the association with the resolution of extraordinary problems.³ These factors are considered systematically below.

Botswana

Organisational strength

A well-organised organisation is more likely to be successful than a disorderly one. The BDP was better organised than the other political parties in the country and had a head start when it was endorsed by the British colonial authorities, who bestowed on it the status of a government-in-waiting. The colonial authorities also gave the party material and human resources. From the formation of the party the BDP leadership consisted of the wealthy and influential sector of the Tswana community, a sector that included cattle and land owners as well as traditional leaders, teachers, and business people (Molutsi 1991, p 70) who contributed handsomely to the party's coffers during the elections. Danevad (1995, p 398) points out that the party's members provided the financial and organisational assistance that was responsible for its electoral success.

The BDP is the only party in Botswana which is organised nationally, with branches throughout the country (Osei-Hwedie 2001, p 60). It also has a full-time organiser, a luxury the other parties cannot afford (Polhemus 1983, p 414). The party has thus been able to generate sufficient resources to enable it to launch effective election campaigns by producing high-quality pamphlets detailing its programmes, policies and successes (Polhemus 1983, p 416). During election campaigns the party is able to reach voters in remote areas as it has access to four-wheel drive vehicles owned by some of its wealthy members (Polhemus 1983, p 416).

3 See the above-mentioned thesis, especially chapters 2, 3, 4 for a detailed analysis.

Support from a strong socioeconomic bloc

A large proportion of the BDP's vote in the five elections in question came from rural voters. On independence about 90 per cent of Botswana's population lived in rural areas dominated by traditional leaders. Molutsi (1998, p 370) points out that after independence this predominantly peasant society voted overwhelmingly in support of Sir Seretse Khama, who most Batswana recognised as their chief, even though he had been deposed. The BDP used the powerful traditional leaders to mobilise support for the party (Somolekae & Lekorwe 1998, p 196).

Although the BDP is strongly supported by the rural masses across the country Holm (1988, p 191) points out that its mainstay is the Bamangwato and Bakwena tribes, who, together, constitute more than 50 per cent of the population. In the country's first four elections the BDP did not lose one parliamentary seat in the Bamangwato area (Holm 1988, p 191). Danevad (1995, p 396) states that the party continued to receive this support in the country's post-independence elections. The same applies in the Kweneng area, where it has won with at least 73 per cent of the vote. The Bamangwato and Bakwena tribes perceive the BDP as representing them.

Penetration of society

Although when it came to power the BDP reduced the powers of the traditional leaders it was mindful of their influence in the rural areas and recognised that it must establish cordial relations with them if it was to use them to garner the support of the peasants. This support is canvassed through meetings known as the *kgotla*, where representatives of the party inform the rural population of developmental programmes.

Picard (1985, p 203) points out that the BDP also used cooption as a method of penetrating society, targeting senior members and sympathisers of the opposition as well as former civil servants. It encouraged retired civil servants, who were previously not allowed to take part in politics, to contest elections at both local and national level under the banner of the party, in an attempt to prevent them from joining the opposition. In 1979 the BDP government appointed Daniel Kwela, a senior opposition member, as a special member of Parliament.

Pragmatism

From the time of its formation the BDP was a moderate party. Unlike nationalist movements involved in the liberation struggle in other parts of Africa it did not adopt radical socioeconomic policies such as socialism. Beaulier (2005) points out that there were no statues of Marx or Lenin in Botswana and that the party did not discard everything associated with colonialism (Beaulier 2005, p 7). Rather than run from institutions left behind by the colonialists the new government

embraced them, campaigning on the basis of the retention of a multiracial society and a free-market economy. Instead of unsettling the expatriates, forcing them to leave the country, it kept them in the civil service. Although it reduced the powers of the chiefs it retained the traditional system (Molutsi 1998, p 368), a move which, far from antagonising them, won them over to the side of the party.

Patronage

Scholars such as Picard (1985), Tsie (1996), Legum (1981/1982), Charlton (1993), and Danevad (1995) have identified patronage as a strong factor in the BDP's electoral success. Charlton (1993, p 340) states boldly that instances of partisan patronage distribution in Botswana are present in form and intent.

He distinguishes, however, between partisan and evenhanded patronage, stating that Botswana has avoided the highly partisan patronage that takes place in other African countries. Evenhanded patronage benefits all parts of the country irrespective of whether the region is a BDP or an opposition stronghold. But he warns that this does not mean that there is no partisan patronage in Botswana (Charlton 1993, p 342). The BDP uses patronage in the form of development programmes to win the support of impoverished rural voters. Danevad (1995, p 391) points out that the BDP's strategy for rural constituencies and its distributionist policies have been applied as a means of nurturing political loyalties.

It is easy for the BDP to dispense patronage because it has presided over a fast-growing economy and the wealthy land and cattle owners who occupy leadership positions within the party are able to use patronage to attract support. Picard (1985, p 175) uses the example of the 1974 elections to argue his point about the BDP's use of patronage. In those elections, the BDP used the Accelerated Rural Development Programme (ARDP) to win the support of rural voters. The move came after the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF) had won three seats in the 1969 elections, taking the BDP by surprise (Picard 1985, p 179). Tsie (1996, p 605) argues that the ARDP was explicitly political and was designed to garner support from the peasants by demonstrating the benefits of development.

Symbolism

The trials and tribulations Sir Seretse Khama endured endeared him to the Batswana people, who revered him and were impressed by his humility and his readiness to meet his people whenever they asked him to come and address them. Khama, who was both a chief and an intellectual, made common cause with ordinary people. He was a founder member of the BDP and was regarded as the father of the nation, who had led the country to independence without having to embark on the armed struggle so common in Africa.

India

Organisational strength

As a first step towards consolidating its power Congress transformed itself from an all-embracing nationalist movement into a political party that would seek votes, win elections and rule the country (Weiner 1957, p 16). In pursuit of this goal Congress eliminated from its ranks individuals and organisations which were part of the nationalist movement but were not amenable to working with its leaders. It ruled that nobody should owe allegiance to two parties – only to Congress (Weiner 1957, p 17).

Weiner (1967, p 461) argues that Congress owes much of its success to its internal cohesiveness and its relations with its members and the larger Indian community. The party, which was run from New Delhi, was represented in states, cities, towns, dwellings, and villages (Park & de Mesquita 1979, p 129) throughout the country and communicated with its members by using the party's structures. This enabled it to communicate constantly with grassroots supporters and to keep members informed of its activities (Weiner 1967, p 461).

The party also informed members of its activities through publications produced in both English and local dialects. Senior party members made themselves available to grassroots supporters, visiting branches in rural areas to listen to their problems and giving them a feeling of belonging (Weiner 1967, p 462). At the local level party cadres offered assistance to their members, most of whom were poor and illiterate, in dealing with the authorities. Congress arbitrated in factional, caste, and linguistic disputes involving the community as it was considered to be more neutral than an arbitrator from the area. It had members who devoted themselves to settling disputes wherever they occurred, be it in rural or urban areas (Kochanek 1968, p 323).

Support from a strong socioeconomic bloc

While still operating as a nationalist movement the Indian Congress attracted to its ranks diverse members of society, irrespective of caste, language, religion, ethnicity, occupation, or political ideology. The groups came together with the single purpose of supporting Congress in its fight against British colonialism. After independence some of these groups left Congress to contest the elections on their own, but the majority of the Indian community continued to support Congress, resulting in its success in successive elections. Park & De Mesquita (1979, p 134) point out that the party expanded its organisation, and thereby its access to manpower and other resources, to include workers, peasants, students, and other groups. This enabled it to mobilise support, win elections, and implement programmes, which, in turn, contributed to its great popularity.

Congress also has the backing of strong socioeconomic blocs, including the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the Farmers' Forum and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). INTUC was formed in 1947 with the blessing of Congress, whose policies it has supported (Hardgrave Jr 1980, p 107). INTUC organised manpower and finances that benefited the party during its election campaigns. The union also provided leadership for the party. No less a leader than Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru served his apprenticeship in the labour field (Park & De Mesquita 1979, p 134). FICCI draws its membership from representatives of major industrial and trading enterprises and represents 100 000 firms which employ more than five million workers. Hardgrave Jr (1980, p 135) argues that the members of this organisation took their cue from its president and voted for Congress, hoping to be given preference in the awarding of government contracts.

Penetration of society

Although the Indian Congress had built up a great deal of support during the struggle for independence it did not take this for granted but continued to recruit support throughout the country. Robinson (1982, p 36) points out that during the struggle period Congress did not penetrate all parts of the country. It was only in the 1950s and 1960s, when people were drawn to politics after independence, that it began to attract more people, particularly from the rural areas. According to Suri (1974, p 202) it was only at the start of the Fifties that Congress became a national party. Suri (1974, p 203) points out that while support for Congress came from the poorer classes and the lower castes and rural people were the backbone of the organisation it also attracted business people who were not part of the nationalist movement and finally expanded to include workers, peasants, students and professional people.

Pragmatism

Hardgrave Jr (1980, p 149) writes that Congress was prepared to adapt its policies in order to win support from different groups. During the first two decades after independence it incorporated individuals with different political ideologies and constituencies. In the rural areas it sought and won the support of landowners, villagers, and local cooperatives. It was a pragmatic organisation in which people with different backgrounds coexisted. Suri (1974, p 203) writes,

Indeed, a striking feature of the Congress party's position is that it straddled the past and the present, tradition and modernisation, conservatism and progress; it brings together high castes and low castes, big business and landless labourers.

Candland (1997, p 22) argues that Congress's appeal to a wide range of people was the fact that it was not a revolutionary ideological party. Park & De Mesquita (1979, p 130) describe it as a centrist party, leaning 'somewhat to the left'. It had a rhetorical commitment to socialism, while the economy was still in the hands of the private sector (Park & de Mesquita 1979, p 29), which, they state, allowed it to accommodate people of differing persuasions, from large industrialists to Indian peasants and pragmatic socialists. This ideological flexibility divided the opposition and allowed Congress to attract support in the first five elections.

In the view of Robinson (1982, p 37) Congress's victory in the 1952, 1957, and 1962 elections could be credited to the fact that it frequently adapted its policies to attract a particular constituency. If elements in a state raised the spectre of political separatism Congress would become the voice of regionalism; when a socialist party planned a major thrust Congress resolved to support the development of a socialist pattern of society, he writes. In rural areas it would speak the language of both caste and traditionalism even though it was opposed to both, adopting whatever position was necessary to win support.

According to Hardgrave Jr (1980, p 149), for three decades Congress was the only genuinely all-India party capable of appealing to virtually all sections of society. He adds that in consolidating its power after independence the party sought to achieve a national consensus through the accommodation and absorption of dominant social elements that had kept aloof from the nationalist movement (Hardgrave Jr 1980, p 150).

Patronage

When it came to power Congress, being in control of the country's limited resources, was able to dispense patronage. Morris-Jones (1964, p 216) argues that this patronage was the oil that lubricated the Congress party machine and was an important factor in its dominance. As the party tightened its rule over India the state expanded its developmental role and, in the process, accumulated more resources for distribution to party members. Congress, he points out, enjoyed the benefits of a 'virtuous cycle' in which its electoral success gave it access to economic and political resources that enabled the party to attract new supporters.

Wealthy members of Indian society derived prestige from being associated with Congress. Powerful individuals were proud to be seen with leaders of the organisation, particularly during visits to their areas. Individuals seeking political power and favours were more inclined to join Congress than other parties which had nothing to offer (Morris-Jones 1964, p 216). Membership of Congress opened previously closed doors to advantages such as admission to university or the granting of a trading licence (Weiner 1967, p 450). Hardgrave Jr (1980, p 135) adds that 'contributions to the Congress by business also served to facilitate political

access, and the Congress, as the party in power, frequently extracted contributions from businesses dependent upon Government favour, a process all too familiar in the American context'. In addition, Gupta (1990, p 236) points out that Indira Gandhi, as leader of the party and as prime minister of the federal government, which controlled the strategic points of the economy, could command larger resources to buy support than her opponents.

Symbolism

Gandhi and Nehru, both of whom played important roles in the events that resulted in India eventually being granted independence, were immortalised in India as symbols of the struggle for independence. Their role in the struggle was a constant refrain during election campaigns and Congress derived much of its prestige from its association with them.

Israel

Organisational strength

When the state of Israel was formed Mapai, already a well-established political party, attracted newly arriving immigrants. Medding (1972, p 89) points out that after statehood Mapai grew both in the number of its branches and in membership. Rank and file members were divided geographically and connected to the party through local branch and regional structures which permeated the country, with the biggest in the towns of Tel Aviv and Haifa. By the middle of the 1950s the party had 400 branches and its membership grew from 40 000 in 1948 to 196 000 in 1964 (Medding 1990, p 44).

Support from a strong socioeconomic bloc

Mapai, which ruled Israel from 1949 until 1965, when parties aligned to labour merged, owes its success and dominant position to Histadrut, the labour federation formed in 1920 during the period of the British mandate in Israel, and described by Rolef (1987, p 145) as 'a trade union, a mutual aid society, a productive economic system, and a centre of cultural activities, sports and learning'. Mapai was formed ten years later and the close association between the two was forged at the height of the struggle to establish the state of Israel, in which both participated. Medding (1972, p 46) puts forward the view that no Israeli government between 1948 and the early 1970s could succeed without the steady cooperation of Histadrut.

As Israel did not have a strong working class Histadrut was established specifically to create one. This was done by encouraging the immigration of

European Jews. When this immigration was restricted by the British the Histadrut brought immigrants into the country illegally (Samuel 1960, p 176). The new arrivals, who were offered employment, automatically became members of the Histadrut. Bernstein (1957, p 61) argues that Mapai's status as the party that had led Israel to statehood enabled it to absorb the new arrivals more effectively than its rivals.

Histadrut, with its massive membership, spread its tentacles throughout Israeli society. It controlled two-thirds of the country's economic activities by 1962, operating manufacturing, contracting, and marketing corporations, clinics, and hospitals, rest homes, buses, and theatres (Kraines 1961, p 66). By 1963, 15 years after the new state was created, 90 per cent of the nation's employees were members of Histadrut (Medding 1972, p 48) and wives of members automatically also became members (Medding 1972, p 50).

Penetration of society

According to Medding (1972, p 45) one factor which contributed to Mapai's success was its ability to penetrate organisations. He writes:

... competitive organisational penetration was a major mechanism of political recruitment and socialisation, facilitating Mapai's efforts to integrate and incorporate diverse social forces into its structure and to aggregate their interests. Its main feature was the way in which it sought control of functional and occupational organisations in order to gain secure political support and to impose a degree of political direction over their activities.

Mapai did not rely on individual membership but on large or corporate membership. It infiltrated organisations, took over their leadership and brought their policies in line with its own. It penetrated most structures of Israeli society, including agricultural settlements, industrial workers, artisans, and professionals (Medding 1972, p 19).

The party's greatest success was in penetrating and controlling worker committees, the basic cells of the Histadrut, which exist in every workplace and are elected every two years (Medding 1972, p 49) – each has a secretary and Mapai's aim was to ensure that the secretary was a member of the party, allowing the committee to canvass support for the party.

Eventually Mapai controlled more than 100 000 workers committees, a factor that proved particularly valuable at election times, when Mapai members on the committees actively sought support for the party on a direct, informal and personal basis, either at the plant or by visiting workers' homes (Medding 1972, p 50).

Pragmatism

Mapai recruited increasing numbers of new immigrants, absorbing them into the party and adapting its policies to suit both old and new members. The party was flexible, incorporating a diversity of viewpoints as it co-opted more groups. Initially a large percentage of its members were agriculturalists but, with increasing urbanisation, it directed its focus to town dwellers and assumed the status of a workers' party (Medding 1972, p 16).

Immigration also introduced ethnic diversification and heightened consciousness of differences relating to sex, age and religion (Medding 1990, p 44), which Mapai catered for by adopting different approaches for different groups. In relation to defending the sovereignty of Israel Mapai was flexible enough to explore a variety of avenues to bring peace to the territory (Medding 1990, p 47). On economic issues the party adopted a 'middle-of-the-road' policy which embraced elements of both socialism and capitalism, shunning the nationalisation of property as it was wary of frightening away private investors.

Patronage

Histadrut owned by far the largest construction companies in the country, providing employment for a large number of workers who, invariably, would vote for Mapai (Shalev 1990, p 102). Through Histadrut Mapai controlled labour exchanges which exerted substantial control over the distribution of employment (Medding 1990, p 60).

But Histadrut was not the only source of patronage in Israel, the civil service was another. When the state was created recruitment for the civil service was conducted directly by the ministries – the Civil Service Commission was only established in 1951 (Medding 1990, p 157). The result was that appointments were made on the basis of political and personal acquaintance. Medding (1990, p 157) points out that 'a significant proportion of the early appointees were placed there by their political parties'. As Mapai was in control of government it was also responsible for the appointment of most of the civil servants.

Symbolism

Mapai, one of the biggest parties formed before the state was established, assumed the leadership of the immigrant Jews, becoming a political force to reckon with and gaining a reputation as the party which stood firm against the Arabs and fought for the establishment of the state. It was under Mapai that Jewish settlers formed structures and organised society in the disputed territory. One of the party's original leaders, David Ben-Gurion, has become a legend in Israel.

Italy

Organisational strength

After the Second World War and the fall of Fascism Italy's political parties reorganised themselves in order to contest for power. The Christian Democratic Party's support was bolstered when the remnants of the Italian Popular Party (PPI) joined it. The DC launched a recruitment drive, attracting massive support and growing into one of Italy's strongest parties, under the leadership of Alcide De Gasperi, who became prime minister in 1945. In 1945 the party established 7000 local offices and recruited half a million members, with whom it communicated through its nine daily newsletters and eight weeklies. By 1953 membership had reached one million and by 1973, 1.8-million (Spotts & Wieser 1986, p 22). The DC became a mass party organised on a national, regional, provincial and communal basis, with membership open to people over 18, drawing its members from an array of societal organisations, housewives being the single largest group. Its base unit was the section to which its members belonged at the grassroots level (Zuckerman 1979, p 85).

Support from a strong socioeconomic bloc

Hughes (1979, p 159) characterises the Italian DC as a catchall party, its supporters including a rainbow of social classes and tendencies: the DC was 'a political movement of great landowners, poor peasants, industrialists, Catholic workers and different types of the middle-class', he writes. However, diverse as these people were, they were held together by their belief in Catholicism because, although it is not a specifically Catholic party, the DC has essentially been a party of Catholics and Catholic support, a pre-existing bloc, is seen by scholars such as Sassoon (1986), Zuckerman (1979), Hughes (1979), Pasquino (1980), and Leonardi & Wertman (1989) as the major factor behind the DC's electoral victories throughout the period of its dominance. Pasquino (1980, p 89) points out that from the start the party was dependent on outside support, particularly that coming from and produced by Catholic organisations. The major component of DC strength has 'always been and still is the large, stable support of Catholics who constitute about 98 percent of the Italian population' (Pasquino 1980, p 90).

Sassoon (1986, p 143) goes further, contending that the DC was seen as the long arm of the church, to which many civil society organisations in Italy, including trade unions and organisations for professionals, women, landowners, farmers, youths, and students, are aligned. In order to strengthen its support the DC also formed organisations that, invariably, were dominated by Catholics (Sassoon 1986, p 229). Among these were those for the youth, workers, school teachers, women, and lawyers.

Penetration of society

Sassoon (1986, p 8) argues that the DC, recognising that if it was to maintain its dominant position it would not be able to rely forever on the church, went out of its way to form its own support base independent of the church. This resulted in it developing a presence in all sectors of society through the creation and control of non-party organisations. Spotts & Wieser (1986, p 15) express the view that 'so broad and effective was the DC's control of society that it eventually developed into a veritable symbiosis of party, government, and the state'. The party's influence permeated society through a network of structures which gave it an organisational presence in every community and city quarter in the country (Leonardi & Wertman 1989, p 46). It also effectively used its control of broadcasting to relay its message to the wider community.

Pragmatism

After the fall of Mussolini's Fascist regime Italy had to establish a new political system, a task that was complicated by the presence of Catholicism. De Gasperi adopted a middle position for the DC when he fused Catholicism and liberal democracy (Spotts & Wieser 1986, p 23), integrating the mass of Catholics for the first time into democratic parliamentarism. Leonardi & Wertman (1989, p 46) contend that the DC was forced to become a centrist party because it was operating in a system that was fragmented among various classes, ideologies and socioeconomic organisations. This enabled it not to be identified with any class or grouping within society, which made it easy for the party to act as arbiter among different groups. In the economic sphere the DC adopted a middle position, embracing both socialism and capitalism, a socioeconomic system lying between the alternative of a completely free enterprise system and a socialised economy (Leonardi & Wertman 1989, p 45).

Patronage

The DC used patronage to perpetuate its hold on power and to withstand the challenge of the opposition, particularly that of the Communist Party. It did this by using its control over public money to support specific social groups and interests, developing a network of clienteles through its possession of funds and the creation of jobs.

Italy experienced an economic boom, which made jobs in the public sector available and the DC's control over the bureaucracy enabled it to place many of its supporters on the public payroll (Sassoon 1986, p 8), thus transforming them into clients. Zuckerman (1979, p 82) posits the view that the DC's control of the bureaucracy permitted those interest groups and individuals associated with the party to get what they wanted from the government as they had easy access to

ministers. He adds that political considerations coloured appointments to senior positions in government. The DC was also in control of public corporations, which were an important source of employment, investment credit, and DC patronage. Pasquino (1980, p 94) is in two minds about the impact of patronage on the DC's success. In one instance he expresses the view that 'nowhere is clientelism alone the basis of the strength of the party'. However, he later contradicts himself when he points out that clientelism came to constitute one of the pillars of DC support. He argues that the establishment and subsequent enlargement of the public sector resulted in the creation of a clientelist system. Pasquino (1980, p 94) expresses the view that this 'produced the prerequisites for the inauguration of a modern, managerial system of clientelism'.

Symbolism

The defeat of Mussolini's Fascist Party and the end of World War II gave the Italians an opportunity to adopt a new political order. De Gasperi, who survived the excesses of Fascism, applied his mind to this problem from the safety of the Vatican, where he had taken refuge, laying the foundation of Italy's new democratic political system and leading the country away from the crisis and chaos which were the results of Fascist rule, and towards stability.

Sweden

Organisational strength

Board (1970, p 91) states that the SDP was the most highly organised party in Sweden, its support being evenly spread throughout the country. According to Andren (1961, p 27), SDP supporters included local organisations and worker communes based on both individual membership and block affiliation through trade unions. The structures of the party included youth and women's organisations. The party had its own publications, which were distributed throughout the country. It boasted a stable leadership with a low turnover (Hancock 1972, p 115). Between 1932 and 1969 it only had two leaders – Per Albin Hansson (1932-1946) and Tage Erlander (1946-1969) (Hancock 1972, p 115).

Support from a strong socioeconomic bloc

Scholars writing about the domination by the SDP of Swedish politics agree that it was made possible by the relationship between the party and the labour movement, a relationship that was strengthened after the party came to power and persisted through all succeeding elections.

Sweden's labour movement grew in strength when the country experienced rapid industrialisation in the first three decades of the 20th century (Tomasson

1970, p 33). This, according to Castles (1975, p 177), created a large working class, which became the main object of the SDP's social recruitment and mobilisation campaigns. Organised labour was the major pillar of socialist electoral support. The labour movement experienced a phenomenal growth after the rise to power of the SDP and there was a correlation between the increase in the number of workers and the votes received by the party – from slightly fewer than 740 000 voters in 1932 to about 870 000 in 1944 (Lewin 1972, p 281). The majority of workers were unionised and accounted for about 70 per cent of the party's support (Board 1970, p 92).

The fact that a large proportion of the party's members were collectively affiliated to the SDP through their trade union membership ensured funding, membership, and voter mobilisation for the party (Esping-Andersen 1990, p 43). The trade union not only supplied the votes it also put its shoulder behind the wheel, providing manpower, financial support for the party's publications, and actively campaigning for and financially supporting the election of the SDP (Tomasson 1970, p 35).

Penetration of society

The SDP had a foothold in major organisations in the country such as cooperative movements, tenant and pensioner organisations, education and leisure societies (Esping-Andersen 1990, p 43). In an effort to reach consensus on contentious issues the party consulted organised groups throughout the country, seeking their views on various issues (Castles 1975, p 176). By the 1950s regular meetings were held among the prime minister, union leaders, and business people. Explaining the purpose of these meetings, Castles (1975, p 176) states that they 'clearly contributed to the enduring success of the SDP'. Although the SDP was initially opposed to the flourishing of the temperance movement it changed its attitude when it realised that the movement had a strong following. While it was initially opposed to its members forming cooperative movements it was forced to soften its attitude when workers continued the practice (Castles 1975, p 177).

Pragmatism

Although the SDP initially espoused Marxist socialism, on assuming power it introduced a new variant of socialism which did not include the nationalisation of property, but recognised the importance of the free-market system (Board 1970, p 92), adapting its policies in order to attract the support of other sectors of the community. It won over the support of the agrarian sector when it paid attention to its interests (Hancock 1972, p 115) and made inroads into the middle-class constituency by advocating comprehensive measures to sustain economic growth and ensure social justice and welfare (Hancock 1972, p 117). In doing

so, the SDP became a party with broad-based appeal. When the population of farmers decreased, resulting in a large number of people moving from rural to urban areas, the party shifted its attention to the growing number of white collar workers who, though unionised, did not owe allegiance to any party (Esping-Andersen 1990, p 47).

Patronage

The SDP's use of patronage and the benefits it derived from it is clouded by ambiguity. Patronage was underplayed, to the extent of almost being denied – nobody wanted to admit openly that it existed. Despite these denials, what is at issue is the extent to which it manifested itself and its benefit to the SDP. Sweden has a very large public service consisting of dozens of state boards which employ thousands of people. The key positions on the boards are those of the directors-general, which are filled at the discretion of the government (Elder 1970, p 63). Board (1970, p 164) is ambiguous about the existence of patronage, first writing that very few jobs could be regarded as 'political', then going on to state 'but during the past decades, in some departments, party affiliation seems to have played a part in recruitment for some lower positions as well'. He qualifies this by adding that Sweden cannot be regarded as having a highly developed system of political patronage. His assertion is supported by Elder (1970, p 78), who contends that the number of persons with an obvious political affiliation appointed to head politically sensitive boards is quite small.

Hancock (1972, p 96), on the other hand, unambiguously reveals the existence of patronage when he points out that between 1945 and 1965 the governing executive appointed 49 provincial governors, so that there were more governors from the SDP than from any other single party. Elder (1970, p 78) avers that although civil servants were apolitical career officials some were known to be members of the SDP or in open sympathy with its policies and political involvement at the top level of under secretaryship was a source of complaint in the opposition press (Elder 1970, p 85). However, he qualifies this by stating that in Sweden, unlike in Britain, it is regarded as nothing out of the ordinary for under secretaries to be active sympathisers with the government, as they do not have to divorce themselves from politics. Swedish ambassadors, according to Elder (1970, p 85), included a sprinkling of men and women aligned to the SDP.

Symbolism

Before the SDP came to power in 1932 Sweden was faced with economic problems and high unemployment. Efforts to resolve these two issues were unsuccessful. Before the election the SDP had unveiled a socialist plan to solve these problems and, as a result, was voted into power by a population anxious for relief from

unemployment. The party went on to implement a pragmatic socialism which led the country to unparalleled prosperity, endearing it to the people, who returned it to power in successive elections.

ADVERSE CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF OPPOSITION PARTIES

Although dominant parties won elections through their own efforts, the weakness of the opposition contributed to their unusually lengthy stays in power. Political parties, by their nature, seek to capture state power and form governments and once they do so the defeated parties must pick up the pieces, go back to the drawing board, and plan for the next election in order to take over power. Macridis (1973, p 51) argues that opposition is an organised and structured attempt to replace a government according to certain constitutional rules. The following have been identified as factors responsible for the weakness of the opposition: an inappropriate ideology, similar policies to those of the ruling party, factionalism, a particularistic support base, lack of resources, a proliferation of opposition parties, and a failure to form alliances.⁴

CONCLUSION

The BDP, Congress, Mapai, the DC, and the SDP were confronted with the challenge of intervening in the unusual circumstances that prevailed in their countries and bringing normality to their societies. Their involvement was successful and led to political stability. At the helm of these parties in Botswana, India, and Israel, though not in Sweden, were individuals who made an immense contribution to the resolution of these unusual circumstances, who were in the forefront of the formation of new political systems, and whose inspirational leadership was recognised by the citizens of their countries.

After ascending to power the parties could not continue to rely on the circumstances that brought them to victory and had to devise other means to ensure that they continued to win the support of the electorate. Among these means were organisational strength and coherence, continued support of a strong socioeconomic bloc, penetration into society, pragmatism, patronage, the founding symbolism of the party, and a charismatic leader associated with the resolution of the problems prevailing at the foundational elections.

A weak opposition, ironically, contributes to one-party dominance since it fails to act as a bulwark against the domination of the political system by one

4 Again space precludes me from a full discussion. These elements are full treated in the thesis.

party – without a strong opposition voters have no incentive to transfer their votes from the ruling party, even if they are not satisfied with its performance. The opposition parties in the study were all marked by weakness and by the fact that they had a far smaller support base than that of the ruling party.

ANC DOMINATION OF THE SA BODY POLITIC

I would argue that similar factors favour the ANC retaining its dominance in South Africa for quite some time. Its ascent to power was assisted by the role it played in the resolution of the extraordinary circumstances which existed in South Africa in the early 1990s. The party is also acknowledged to have played a far more prominent role than other parties in the struggle against apartheid and, after the organisation was unbanned in 1990, the ANC, led by charismatic Nelson Mandela, played a leading role in the negotiations which established a new political order. Mandela, with his drive, commitment, personal magnetism, and the respect he commanded, was credited as a major factor in the party's victory in the country's first democratic elections, in 1994. The party is also supported by a strong socioeconomic bloc in the form of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Lodge 2004; Rantete 1998).

Once it was unbanned the ANC absorbed the structures of the United Democratic Front and consolidated its support by creating 900 branches and signing up 500 000 new members. It also devised means similar to those of the other parties in this study to consolidate its support. Although the party has made some progress in improving the lives of its largely African constituency it still has a long way to go to keep promises made during election campaigns, but this has not deterred voters from supporting the party in increasing numbers. The ANC employs a ubiquitous system of political patronage at all levels of government and parastatal bodies, using its control of state resources and institutions to dispense patronage not only to its members and sympathisers but to the black community as a whole.

An internally coherent institution, it has penetrated South African society very successfully, thus ensuring that it maintains control of the commanding heights of the society. Not taking its support for granted, it has gone out of its way to retain and increase its support base by infiltrating the informal settlements which have mushroomed in urban areas and by including prominent black people in its parliamentary election lists.

The party has also displayed pragmatism in extending an olive branch to people who served in the former Bantustans and in appointing individuals from opposition parties to serve as the country's ambassadors. Economically, it has dispelled the notion that it is wedded to nationalisation of property.

The party's three election victories have been aided by the fact that there is a weak opposition – a plethora of political parties has contested all three elections and each of the three leading opposition parties appeals to a particularistic support base, some of them associated with the discredited apartheid ideology. As a result they could not make inroads into the ANC's predominantly African constituency, which suffered the most during the apartheid era. At each general and local government election the ANC could count on its symbolism as the party of liberation to convince the electorate to continue to support it despite its failure to deliver services (Booyesen 1999; Habib & Taylor 2001).

From the above exposition it can be concluded that the ANC is following a similar route to that of the five parties that gained dominance in the countries cited above and that it is likely to maintain a position of dominance for at least 25 years, or five consecutive elections.

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