



**How the ANC Won the 2004
Elections: Perspectives on
Voting Behaviour in South
Africa**

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Introduction

Elections are a critical ingredient for democracy. It is through this process that the citizens are accorded a rightful and democratic opportunity to make their individual choices as to who has the power to govern a country. However, this process would be futile if the voting behaviour/trends are not taken into consideration. Voting behaviour refers to factors that determine the manner in which a particular group of people vote for a specific political party. Voting behaviour is determined by the political attitudes, assumptions, policy preferences, and partisan loyalties of individuals and the political and institutional context within which they cast their votes in an election¹. South Africa's political transition from apartheid to democracy is often regarded as a miracle because it was bloodless. The dawn of the new era brought with it high popular expectations. With its liberation credentials, the African National Congress (ANC) was voted into power by an overwhelming majority. In an effort to offer an explanation for the ANC's electoral victory in the period 1994 to 2004, the paper will discuss the voting patterns of South Africans with regard to economic policies, campaign strategies and alliances. A closer scrutiny of the voting reveals that the politics of identity rather than the "race" factor remain the most convincing explanation. In order to validate this stance, the paper will discuss voting patterns for the ANC together with those of the other political parties.

¹ *The Democracy Encyclopaedia*, 1995

The Dominance of the ANC in the South African Elections (1994, 1999 and 2004)

In introducing this discussion, it is useful firstly to delve into the reasons why the ANC is regarded as the dominant party in South African politics. The holding of the 2004 general elections against the celebratory backdrop of South Africa's first decade of democracy ensured widespread reflection upon the achievements and limitations of the post-apartheid order². Predictably, in the run-up to the 2004 elections, the opposition parties dwelled on the failures of the ruling party while the ruling party focused on its achievements. Regardless of the criticisms levelled against the ANC, the party has, since 1994, asserted its electoral dominance over other political parties. Parties are characterised as "dominant" when they:

- Establish electoral dominance for an uninterrupted and prolonged period;
- Enjoy dominance in the formation and running of governments and which, consequently;
- Shape and dominate the public agenda, notably with regard to pursuit of a "historical project"³.

Disputing the "Ethnicity" Argument in the Voting Patterns of South Africans

Donald Horowitz offers one of the most influential theories about the relationship between ethnicity, party systems, and voting behaviour in the developing societies⁴. In several instances this relationship becomes evident in South Africa's party politics. The politics of ethnicity serve as one of the major

explanations for voting behaviour in the country. However, evidence since the 1994 elections shows that the ethnicity argument does not hold much water. This section will discuss the performance of South Africa's so-called ethnic parties and try to test the accuracy or relevance of the theory. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), led by Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi is one such case. Formed in 1975, initially the party was called the Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement, and became known as the IFP in 1990. The party has some of its roots in the Inkatha established by King Solomon in the 1920s. King Solomon's Inkatha was a sincere effort to warn his people of the dangers of cultural domination and arrogance of, first, the British imperialists and then the Afrikaners⁵.

The party attained 43 seats nationally in the 1994 election but at the same time, it should be noted that the IFP's major source of electoral support is based largely in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The party is at its strongest in this province, especially in the rural areas where respect for traditional authority is still being practised today. The party's strong ethnic appeal is also deeply rooted in Zulu nationalism.

More recently, Lucas Mangope's United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) led by former ANC member Bantu Holomisa, had appeal to a specific ethnic groups. For example, the UCDP's electoral target was the Setswana-speaking people of the former Bophuthatswana, while Holomisa targeted the Xhosa-speaking people, the majority of which are in the Eastern Cape.

For Horowitz, ethnicity exerts a strong direct impact on electoral behaviour in ethnically-segmented societies through generating a long-term psychological sense of party loyalty anchoring citizens to parties, where casting a vote becomes

² Southall, R. & Daniel, J. 2004: State of Parties Post-Election 2004: ANC Dominance and Opposition Enfeeblement" in *State of the Nation*

³ *ibid*

⁴ Pippa, N & Mattes, R. 2004: Does Ethnicity Determine Support for the Governing Party?, in *CSSR Working Paper*, No.36

⁵ <http://www.ifp.org.za>

an expression of group identity⁶. These two parties were established in the run-up to the 1999 election and their first performance in the electoral contest was satisfactory though not enough to offer a convincing explanation of the ethnicity argument. The UCDP garnered 0.78% of the national vote, while the UDM only received 3.42% of the national vote. The UDM still draws support from some surviving Eastern Cape Bantustan networks to keep it alive⁷.

The ethnic argument *vis-à-vis* the voting patterns of South Africans is not necessarily isolated to these parties. In the 1994 and 1999 elections, the Vryheidsfront/Freedom Front (VF/FF) which has always been on the forefront in the quest of the Afrikaners to have their own *volkstad*, attained 2.17% and 0.80% of the national vote respectively. With the exception of the IFP whose ethnic support is beyond doubt, the above clearly reveals the weakness of the ethnicity argument in explaining the voting behaviour of South Africa in the 1994 and 1999 elections. The ANC is intentionally left out of the discussion, as the party rightly refutes the claim that it is an ethnic party.

The Race Explanation and the South African Elections

It is also often argued that race determines the electoral outcome without any consideration to other factors such as party policies. It has been commonly accepted that the voting behaviour of South Africans signifies exactly that. One argument put forward is that the 1994 election was no normal ballot exercise. The election was purely an event in which it was the oppressor, in this case the National Party, versus all the liberation movements. This election was about ending minority white rule, bringing political stability, peace and

creating conditions for national reconciliation, and improving the quality of life of the majority⁸. In essence, much of this explanation ignores other factors that could have contributed to the electoral outcome to such a degree that the very same account is further used to explain the outcome of 1999 elections. Among the political parties that have always been perceived to be racially exclusive are the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), Azania People's Organisation (AZAPO), the Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA), the VF/FF (which, as earlier noted, can also be regarded as an ethnic party); and the Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging (AEB).

In terms of its perception about South Africa, the PAC made clear its belief on racial issues. Its lapses into rhetoric of the "one bullet" and "whites must leave" variety, and historically based claims of legitimacy, were the most common features of its campaigning in the run-up to the election⁹. Although AZAPO decided to boycott the 1994 election, there really was very little difference between the organisation and the PAC in terms of policies.

The reason for the boycott is largely attributed to the fact that AZAPO believed that the 1994 election would be flawed. It came as no surprise when the organisation decided, just prior to the election, against taking part in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). There is also profound overlap in the policies of both the VF/FF and AEB. Table 1 below is the national election outcome of 1994 and 1999 for all these racially exclusive parties.

In the 1994 and 1999 elections, the PAC obtained 1.25% and 0.71% of the votes cast respectively. The figures clearly indicate a sharp decrease in terms of electoral support for the party. Furthermore, the same is noted for the

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Booyesen, S. 2004: "Two Years of Democracy and the State of Opposition Politics in South Africa", *Election Update*, No.8

⁸ Cooper, S. 1994: "The PAC and AZAPO", in *Election '94: South Africa*, (ed) Reynold, A

⁹ *ibid*

VF/FF whose figures of electoral support decrease between 1994 and 1999. After obtaining 2.17 % in the 1994

election, the percentage subsequently decreased in 1999 with only 0.8%.

Table 1: Election results for the “racially exclusive” parties

Party	1994 Election No. of Cast Votes	1994 Election % of Cast Votes	1994 Election No. of Seats	1999 Election No. of Cast Votes	1999 Election % of Cast Votes	1999 Election No. of Seats
PAC	243 478	1.25	5	113 125	0.71	3
SOPA	-	-	-	9062	0.06	0
AZAPO	-	-	-	27257	0.17	1
VF/FF	424, 555	2.17	9	127217	0.8	3
AEB	-	-	-	46292	0.29	1

Source: <http://www.elections.org.za/results>

The reason why SOPA, AZAPO and the AEB were not considered for the 1994 election is either because they decided to boycott the election or they had not as yet been established. However, having said that, the participation in the 1999 election did not bear much fruit as their electoral performance was not at all convincing. SOPA, AZAPO and the AEB managed to accumulate 0.06%, 0.17% and 0.29% respectively. Indeed the race argument raises many questions regarding its accuracy in trying to explain the electoral preferences of South Africans. Democracy requires political preference to be based on choice after a consideration of policy alternatives, as opposed to automatic choices based on strong group-based or symbolic sentiments that have little direct bearing on good government¹⁰.

Trying to Make Sense of the ANC’s Electoral Feat

“The ANC shall, in its composition and functioning, be non-racial, anti-racist and anti-sexist and against any form of tribal exclusivity or ethnic chauvinism”¹¹.

The historic 1994 elections were not only significant in terms of launching democracy in post-apartheid South

Africa, but they also had profound effects on the conceptualisation of voter behaviour and the reconstitution of the state¹². In 1994, the ANC gained power with a convincing percentage (62.65%). This essentially qualified the party to occupy a total of 252 of 400 national parliamentary seats¹³. The liberation struggle credentials of the ANC are unquestionable. It is logical that the majority of the people who, through the system of apartheid, were disenfranchised by the minority would ultimately vote for the party that brought about a change in their lives. This does not necessarily imply that the ANC was the only party that spearheaded the liberation of South Africa. AZAPO and PAC are also credited for the birth of the new South Africa. However, it was the intra-party problems of both these parties that legitimised the assertion of the ANC as the real champion of liberation. As noted earlier, the anti-white sentiments promoted by the PAC and the boycotting of the 1994 elections by AZAPO, worked heavily to the advantage of the ANC. Furthermore, the majority of the people identify themselves so closely with the ANC despite the fact that a closer scrutiny at the election manifestos reveals that they

¹² Ramutsindela, M. 2002. “Identity and Voting Trends in South Africa”, in *Public Attitudes in Contemporary South Africa*, HSRC

¹³ Matlosa, K & Karume, S. 2004: “Ten Years of Democracy & the Dominant Party System in South Africa”, *Election Update*, No. 5

¹⁰ Mattes, R. 1994. Paper Presented to the Research Colloquium of the South African Political Sciences Association, North-West, 6-7 October

¹¹ ANC Constitution, Rule 3 (3.3)

address the same issues: HIV/AIDS, crime, health and unemployment. The concept of party identification denotes the long-term feelings of positive attachment which many electors develop for a political party¹⁴. If ANC voters feel deeply dissatisfied with the ANC's performance they tend to stay at home rather than transferring their support to another party¹⁵.

Voters Identifying with Party Leadership

Issues of leadership are crucial in determining the voting patterns of any given society. The impact of Nelson Mandela is beyond doubt. Having spent twenty seven years in prison for his political beliefs was enough to convince the majority of the electorate to vote for the ANC. After his release in 1990, he plunged himself wholeheartedly into his life's work, striving to attain the goals he and others had set out almost four decades earlier¹⁶. As if this was not enough, the cherry on top occurred when he, together with the then President of the country, F.W de Klerk, were co-recipients of the acclaimed Nobel Peace in 1993. The impact of Thabo Mbeki is no less noteworthy. Son of Govan Mbeki, Mbeki is profoundly renowned for his charisma and his ability to quell internal dissent. As the then deputy president of the country, Mbeki once remarked: "We therefore make bold to say that South Africa is a country of two nations. One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographical dispersal...The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled"¹⁷. These two post-

apartheid leaders of the ANC have the confidence of the electorate despite government's failure to achieve most of its objectives such as the eradication of corruption and rife unemployment.

The same, however, cannot be said about the opposition parties. Much as the leaders of the DA, Independent Democrats (ID) and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) are relatively popular, their charisma has done little in shifting the voting patterns. 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. This is especially true with regard to economic policy, arguably the most important policy terrain, which opposition parties are failing to exploit in challenging the ANC¹⁸

Since 1994 to 2004, the campaign strategy of the ANC has been crucial. However, in comparison with both the 1994 and the 1999 elections, the 2004 election campaign strategy was different. While most emphasis in the initial elections was heavily focused on campaign rallies, the strategy for 2004 brought with it a totally new approach. In its 2004 campaign strategy, one that would eventually work in its favour, the ANC deployed its high ranking officials in a door-to-door campaign.

The ANC began its campaign from a strong base - as the historic standard bearer of democracy, the party of the racially-oppressed black majority, of the working class and the wider poor¹⁹. Although its broadcasting live on television became cumbersome, the ANC tactically launched its campaign in the "enemy territory". The ANC took the

¹⁴ <http://www.rdg.ac.uk/AcaDepts>

¹⁵ Lodge, T. 2004: "The Context: How the System Works", in *Election Update, No.1*

¹⁶ <http://www.nobelprize.org>

¹⁷ Speaking at the opening of the national debate in the National Assembly, on reconciliation and national unity, Cape Town, 29 May 1998.

¹⁸ Hoeane, T, 2004: "Under Strain: The Racial/Ethnic Interpretation of South Africa's 2004 Election", *Journal of African Elections*, Vol.3, No.2

¹⁹ Southall, R & Daniel, J. 2005: "The State of Parties Post-Election 2004: ANC Dominance and Opposition Enfeeblement", in *State of the Nation*.

fight to the IFP by launching its manifesto in Pietermaritzburg. Several months before South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, ANC insisted that the government set up the Independent Media Commission (IMC) to monitor the conduct of the state broadcaster and the civil service to ensure the equitable treatment of contending political parties. Predictably, and perhaps understandably, the opposition parties were enraged and outraged by the coverage given to the ANC at the launch of its manifesto, charging that the public broadcaster was exhibiting political bias. Opposition parties' complaints to the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA) were dismissed on the grounds that the event fell outside the "election period"²⁰. The public broadcaster argued that it was simply televising the "first important presidential speech" of the year. Unconvinced by this assertion, the opposition parties unsuccessfully demanded that they receive the same privilege as the ruling party. As Mbaya aptly opines, ICASA's explanation did not necessarily quell criticism "regarding the SABC's role of serving the African National Congress (ANC) government which, in this case, seemed to have flouted its own house rule of not taking cognisance of the SABC's editorial code which enjoins fairness in the conduct of its news and current affairs programme".

In the 1999 elections, the ANC strategically campaigned with its alliance partners comprising the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). However, it is important to note that the relationship between the Tripartite Alliance goes beyond post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, it should also be noted that relations have not always been rosy. COSATU and the SACP, are often at loggerheads with the ruling party over certain policies and issues, efforts are

made to improve these, especially prior to election time. One such example concerning a dispute between the ANC and its alliance partners dates back to 1996. It was in that year the government adopted the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). The unions, led by COSATU were totally opposed to this policy thus souring the relations within the Alliance. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, before each election attempts were made to repair strained relations. This strategic partnership has seen many members of the trade unions affiliated to COSATU and many communists within the SACP being given mandates by their respective leadership to vote for the ANC. The interests of the working class mainly shape the nature of this alliance. Its members commonly believe that only the ANC has the workers' interests at heart and the ANC-led government alone, has the true ability to improve the working conditions of the working class.

The fragmentation and the intra-party politics of the opposition parties have both contributed to the electoral conquest of the ANC. In an effort to woo electoral support, opposition parties divert from pertinent issues that concern the well-being of the country. The opposition, mainly the DA, adopted "scare politics" in both the 1999 and 2004 election campaign. Its "Fight Back" slogan in the 1999 election was perceived to be meaning fighting back the country's transformation and, in addition, the campaign was perceived to have a hidden racial meaning. Some analysts went to the extent of interpreting the campaign as meaning "fight black".

The ANC manipulated its dominant position to intentionally organise political discourse aimed at demonising the opposition as racist and to reinforce the social cleavage between blacks and whites into a political white-black opposition that has prevented the successful politicisation of competing lines of division, be these based on

²⁰ Louw. R. 2004. *Election Update, No.1*

interest groups, ethnic identities, or class²¹.

In the 2004 elections, the DA followed the same pattern. This time around, there were various issues raised by the DA, including that of race. On the other hand, the DA also had to assure the electorate that the party was open to membership by all South Africans. However, constant reference to Zimbabwe, corruption, ruling party non-delivery and the “whiteness” of their party leadership makes it difficult not to perceive it as playing the race card or as subtly appealing to race sentiment²². The issue here is not so much that there is a deliberate process of exclusion driven by the ANC but that some political forces feel relatively meaningless because they are positioned outside the sphere of this dominance²³. It is also perceived that parties, especially those in the opposition ranks, use the issue of race as a token for electoral support.

The ANC reproduced its political hegemony during the second democratic election of 1999 by snatching 66.35 % of the total valid votes and 266 parliamentary seats, while the second best party namely the Democratic Party (the current Democratic Alliance - DA) attained a paltry 8.56 % of the votes and occupied a mere 38 parliamentary seats²⁴. Compared to the 1994 elections, the DA increased its election results in the 1999 elections. This turnout was a loss for the ANC’s hope of a two-thirds majority. Apart from the ANC’s return to power, the most notable development was that the DA became the country’s main official opposition party. The DA had surpassed the NNP.

²¹ Taylor, R & Hoeane, T, 1999: “Interpreting the South African Election of June 1999”, *Politikon*, Vol.26, No.1

²² Hendricks, C. 2004: “On the Campaign Trail in the Western Cape”, *Election Update*, No.6

²³ Matlosa, K & Karume, S. 2004: “Ten Years of Democracy & the Dominant Party System in South Africa”, in *Election Update*, No.5

²⁴ *ibid*

Regarding the electoral target, the ANC does not have a support base that is exclusively black. There is substantial evidence that many Indian voters cast their ballot for the ANC, thereby identifying themselves with a non-racial majority and not the “Indian vote”²⁵. There is firm evidence that levels of participation among racial minorities were lower than among the majority voters: on the contrary. Indian voters, who in survey evidence, are said to feel most alienated by the post-apartheid polity, are said to have turned out in particularly large numbers²⁶. Many black voters would support the ANC even if they lacked a job because they believe it expresses their demand for dignity and freedom²⁷. This further shows the extent to which many voters still identify themselves with the ruling party.

The Economic Factor

In an effort to best explain the voting behaviour of South Africans, it is imperative to look at the impact of economic factors. The 2004 electoral feat of the ANC can be attributed the party’s economic policies. Much as it is a fact that unemployment still continues to grapple with the majority of the population, the electorate still believe that the ANC best represents their economic interests. 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 rather than to the “liberation party” interpretation that has been used in the past to explain its success²⁸. Furthermore, the party’s

²⁵ Taylor, R. & Hoeane, T. 1999: “Interpreting the South African Election of June 1999”, in *Politikon*, Vol.26, No.1

²⁶ Friedman, S. 1999, “Who are we: voter participation, rationality and the 1999 election”, *Politikon*, Vol 26, No. 2

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ Hoeane, T, 2004: Under Strain: The Racial/Ethnic Interpretation of South Africa’s 2004 Election”, *Journal of African Elections*, Vol.3, No.2.

strategic alliance with the COSATU and SACP has meant there is a consistent support base from the working class. On the other hand, political commentators assert that the economic policies of the opposition parties are preponderantly less appealing. Hoeane further asserts that 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 interests of the largest segment of the South African electorate, the black voters. Both parties propose a free market economic policy, a system about which that most of the electorate is sceptical.

Campaign Strategies in Kwazulu-Natal, Western Cape and Other Provinces

Despite the remarkable performance of the ANC in the 1999 elections, Kwazulu-Natal (KZN) and the Western Cape once again proved to be elusive to the ruling party. Analysts have come up with various reasons to explain this phenomenon. These are the only two provinces where the ruling party could not convincingly stamp its authority. At the time, academics viewed this as a blessing in disguise as they believed that South Africa could not afford to be a one-party state. However, fears about a one-party state should be addressed with an open mind. It is one thing for the ruling party to ensure and reproduce its dominance through the ballot or via authoritarian means as was situation during the heyday of apartheid, it is quite another for a ruling party to ensure and sustain its political hegemony through the ballot as has been the case since 1994²⁹.

The issue concerning the Western Cape was believed to be caused by the constant formation of alliances in the province. The political landscape in the

Western Cape has been characterised by continual change, informed by party squabbles, leadership changes and coalition formations³⁰. The very same occurred in the province in the run-up to the 1999 elections. Attaining only 42.07 %, the ANC succumbed to a coalition of the NNP/DP/ACDP that garnered 38.39 %, 11.91 % and 2.79 % respectively. After their unimpressive election results, the NNP had to come up with a new game plan in order to avoid extinction. In order to survive as a political force, the party's leadership was pressurised by its public representatives and the Afrikaans press to negotiate a merger with the DP leadership³¹. Together, the parties were to form the DA and jointly campaigned in the local government elections in 2000. However, due to internal problems within the new alliance, the "marriage" did not last long.

Political commentators have also suggested different possibilities for the ANC's failure to win the KZN. Chief of these reasons and perhaps more convincing is that attributed to poor electioneering and weak leadership. Compared to the IFP's 41.90%, the ANC managed to scrape home with just 39.38%. However, it is commonly believed that there was vote rigging in the province, especially in 1994 election. The KZN is well known for its potential towards political violence as was the case during the National Party government.

Analysts assert that the ANC did not take up the matter with IEC concerning allegations of vote rigging in the 1994 election because it simply wanted to avoid a reoccurrence of political instability and violence in the province. What is remarkable, however, is that the level of political violence has decreased drastically. Indeed, an improved level of political maturity is gradually taking place. However, the issue of political

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http://www.sabccnews.com/features/elections_2004

³¹ <http://www.strauss.za.com>

²⁹ Matlosa, K & Karume, S, 2004. "Ten Years of Democracy and the Dominant Party System in South Africa", *Election Update*, No.5

tolerance between both supporters of the ANC and IFP needs improvement as some areas in the KZN are still no-go areas.

The shift in voting behaviour in both these provinces and others where the ANC had either solidified or increased its support base has to do with electioneering tactics. The various presidential machinations worked in uniting the party during an energetic drive for votes which saw ministers, Members of Parliament (MPs) and provincial legislators all deployed alongside ordinary “cadres” in a house-to-house campaigns which reached deep into the townships and countryside³². The electioneering was so intense such that even the State President was not spared involvement. Among the various activities in which the President was engaged were presidential *imbizos* (gatherings) and even the house-to-house electioneering.

Western Cape & Kwazulu-Natal: An end to Crisis?

Earlier on, the article intimated that since 1994 both the Western Cape and the KZN had been elusive to ANC control. As a result of the 2004 elections, however, the ANC now has total control of all the country's provinces. In the 2004 election, the voter turnout was 71.72 % in Western Cape. Although the ANC had managed to accumulate more votes than any party in the 1999 election, the alliance between the DP, NNP and ACDP meant that the province was co-governed. Even though, the contest in the province was always going to be close, somehow it was expected that the ANC and its junior partner, the NNP, would eventually win the province. The ANC's success with the NNP in the province during the 2004 elections has been regarded by political analysts as the

beginning of a new dawn. The ANC appointed Ebrahim Rasool as the new premier of the province.

However, many within the ANC were not entirely happy with their party's alliance with the NNP. As is the case, it was believed that the ANC could win the Western Cape without the NNP. 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 percent in 1994, 42 percent in 1999 and jumped to 45 percent in 2004³³. What this reveals is the significant change - with each election - in the voting patterns of the electorate in this province.

Arguably, most eyes were on the KZN where predictions were the order of the day. As in previous elections, the contest in the province was always going to be a closely contested one. Despite fears of political violence, voting took place in an orderly fashion with no serious incidents reported. It is a fact that the IFP is truly a regional party with the majority of its members based in the KZN.

To show its high profile in the province, the leader of the IFP Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, mentioned long before the election that should the IFP lose the province to the ANC, the outcome would not be accepted. It is surprising, however, to note that, if the IFP was confident enough to win the province, why they formed the “Coalition for Change” alliance with the DA in the first place. Clearly the writing was on the wall and the IFP knew that sooner or later the ANC would eventually win the province with an outright majority. Below, Table 2 shows the results of the election in the province where voter turnout was reported to be 72.84 %.

³² Southall, R. & Daniel, J. 2004. “State of Parties Post-Election 2004: ANC Dominance and Opposition Enfeeblement” in *State of the Nation*.

³³ Hoeane, T, 2004: “Under Strain: The Racial/Ethnic Interpretation of South Africa's 2004 Election”, in *Journal of African Elections, Vol. 3, No.2*

Table 2 (Kwazulu-Natal: 2004 Election Results)

KZN	No. of Votes Cast	% of Votes Cast
ANC	1287823	46.98
IFP	1009267	36.82
DA	228857	8.35
UDM	20546	0.75
NNP	14218	0.52

Source: <http://www.elections.org.za/results>

Despite the attempt of the “Coalition for Change” to keep the ANC out of power in the province, Table 2 above clearly shows that both the IFP and DA’s combined tally was not enough to sideline the ANC. However, it took ten years and five elections (three national/provincial and two local government elections) for the ANC to attain a majority in Kwazulu-Natal³⁴.

As predicted, it came as no surprise at all when the IFP lodged a complaint with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) believing that there were some irregularities in the counting. The party argued that approximately 367, 000 votes had been tampered with, exactly enough to overturn the ANC’s plurality in the provincial poll³⁵.

On the other hand, speculation was rife in the province as to whom the ANC would name as the new premier of the province. It was rumoured that it was going to be either Deputy President Jacob Zuma or the MEC for Transport Sibusiso Ndebele. The latter was named as the new premier. A day before the inauguration of Mbeki, the IFP withdrew its vote rigging allegations on the grounds of “interests of national unity”. The ANC increased its support in the province between 1994 and 1999 with

32.2 % of the vote and 26 seats and 39.4 % of the vote and 32 seats respectively³⁶.

The main contest between parties campaigning in the KZN played heavily on the “Indian vote” factor. Analysts such as Adam Habib assert that in the 2004 national elections, especially in the KZN, the ANC began to treat the Indian community as “citizens rather than as a cultural group”. In its traditional Indian stronghold of Reservoir Hills and environs, the ANC improved its position, winning 15 of 18 voting districts, while in nearby Newlands it captured all eight districts³⁷. There are various reasons to explain this phenomenon. The ANC made tactical inroads into the Muslim constituencies. To many Indian voters, especially the Muslim community, the ANC presented itself as sympathetic to Muslims. A case in point is the ANC’s stance on the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Furthermore, the ANC made skilful inroads into the Tamil constituency. Its (ANC) hosting of a delegation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelan (LTTE) early in the year and the presence of Thabo Mbeki at the Tamil’s New Year’s celebration only four days before the election paid off handsomely³⁸.

Support for the ANC in the province also came from the unlikely source. It is believed that a significant proportion of conservative whites in the province voted the ANC. According to *The Witness* dated 18 April 2004, there was also another source of new ANC supporters in the form of largely white voters in Pietermaritzburg who switched from the DA to the ANC as a protest at the DA’s support for Ulundi as the region’s capital³⁹. As a matter of fact the issue concerning Ulundi was initially raised by the IFP. Since the two, IFP and

³⁴ Daniel, J. 2004: “Third Time Lucky: the ANC’s Victory in Kwazulu-Natal”, *Election Synopsis*, Vol.1, No.4

³⁵ <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil>

³⁶ Mottiar, S. 2004: “A Growing Commitment to Democracy: KZN in Focus”, *Election Update*, No. 1

³⁷ Daniel, J. 2004: “Third Time Lucky: the ANC’s Victory in Kwazulu-Natal”, *Election Synopsis*, Vol.1, No.4

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ *ibid*

DA, had formed an alliance, the latter had to agree for the place change of the capital. Unfortunately, this worked against the DA.

The 2004 Election: The Dawn of the Era?

Thabo Mbeki stated as follows: “To celebrate our first decade of liberation, the majority of our people voted against the perpetuation of the racial and ethnic division of the past. Through the ballot box, they spoken out loudly against all attempts to persuade them that they belong to separate compartments, with competing interests⁴⁰”

The formation of party alliances in the run-up to the elections is noteworthy. Some, if not all, of these alliances involved parties that did even share any common political ideologies, such as the ANC-NNP, and the DA-IFP alliances. The April 2004 elections reinforced two defining trends in South Africa’s ten year old democracy: the ANC extended its wide electoral lead over other political parties, and the institutional foundations of democratic contestation and constitutional government continued to strengthen⁴¹.

Table 3: The ANC’s Electoral Might

Year	No. of Cast Votes for the ANC	% of Cast Votes for the ANC	No. of Seats for the ANC
1994	12, 237, 655	62.65	252
1999	10, 601, 330	66.35	266
2004	10, 878, 251	69.68	279

Source: <http://www.elections.org.za/results>
<http://www.eisa.org.za/results>

⁴⁰ <http://www.anc.org/ancoday>

⁴¹ Alence, R. 2004: “The 2004 Elections & Democratic Governance in South Africa”, *Election Update*, No. 7

Table 3 above clearly illustrates the electoral feat of the ANC since in the period 1994-2004. The ANC has managed to increase its electoral percentage with each election. As is the norm, with each election, social scientists conduct surveys that attempt to predict the outcome of elections. This was no exception in the 2004 elections. The HSRC; and the SABC/Makinor survey aimed at predicting the electoral outcome of the 2004 election and to serve as a comparison to the outcome of the 1999 election as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: HSRC & SABC/Markinor Surveys

Party	HSRC Poll 2004	SABC/Markinor Poll 2004	1999 Result % of Votes
ANC	67 %	64 %	66.35
DA	10.5 %	11 %	9.56
NNP	8.7 %	4 %	6.87
IFP	7.1 %	4 %	8.58

Source: Matlosa, K & Karume, S, 2004. “Ten Years of Democracy and the Dominant Party System in South Africa”, *Election Update*, No.5

Table 5: 2004 National Election Results for the Main Parties

Party	No. of votes cast	% of votes cast	No. of Seats
ANC	10, 880, 915	69.69 %	279
DA	1, 931, 201	12.37 %	50
NNP	257, 824	1.65 %	7
IFP	1, 088, 664	6.97 %	28
UDM	355, 717	2.28 %	9

Source: <http://www.elections.org.za/results>

As predicted by the survey, the official results show the level of support enjoyed by the ANC. The one prediction that is worthy of mention, is the performance of the DA. Although there is a huge gap between the ANC and DA in terms of national results, the latter solidified its position as the main opposition party. What needs to be understood, however, is that the increased percentage of the DA’s support in the 2004 elections had nothing to do with its “Coalition for Change” alliance with the IFP. The DA profited from the demise of NNP.

However the rate at which politicians defected to the ANC is noteworthy. Many within the NNP, PAC, UDM; IFP and notably from the DA moved to the ANC. Floor-crossing caused a huge controversy with leaders of affected political parties crying foul. Arguably, those politicians who crossed the floor brought with them sizeable amount of support to the ANC. It was in this context that the ANC, sensing immediate political return, had introduced bills (on national and provincial, as well as local government level) which would enable floor-crossing, albeit at pre-ordained windows of opportunity, so long as those crossing the floor constituted ten per cent or more of a political party's representation in the given forum⁴².

Floor crossing alone is not an adequate enough explanation of the ANC's convincing performance in 2004 elections. The track record of the ANC-led government since it has been in power is impressive. While it is a fact that unemployment, poverty, HIV/AIDS and crime are a problem in the country, the results of the 2004 general election reveal the level of loyalty, confidence and hope that South Africans have in the ANC. Once again, the Tripartite Alliance played a role in influencing the outcome of the election. As predicted, COSATU and the SACP encouraged the electorate to vote for the party whose objective was to spearhead "a people's contract".

As expected, manifestos of the contesting parties addressed the same issues as in the 1999 election. The DA's campaign strategy was once again subject to public outcry. The party slogan "South Africa Deserves Better" was interpreted by many analysts as attempts to ridicule the efforts of the ANC-led government in the past ten years to better the lives of South Africans. Furthermore, and perhaps not surprisingly, the Zimbabwean issue was

once again dominant in the DA campaign. Political commentators have asserted that the South African electorate has over the years moved away from using race to determine voting intentions.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the leadership of the ANC is able to manipulate the political environment to its own benefit. In each election, the ANC has refused to nominate candidates for provincial premierships. This tactic both defused factionalism within the provinces, while also reinforcing the party's control over its members⁴³. The leadership knew fully well that factionalism within the party could cause a great amount of damage especially in the run-up to the elections. Mbeki is well known for his tough stance on dissent, especially within the ANC itself. Such leadership is critical in influencing the voting patterns of the electorate especially to those who either did not intend to vote or intended to vote for any of the opposition parties.

It was expected that at some point, especially after its dismal performance in the 2004 elections, the NNP would eventually cease to exist. The death of the NNP signalled a crucial turning point in the voting preferences of its supporters. Analysts believe that the decision by the party to be co-opted by the ANC could have had a major impact in shifting the electoral preference. It must be said, however, that this decision came as a surprise. With the former perpetrators of apartheid being absorbed into the organisation they fought so long to destroy, it is testament to the ANC's long history of co-option and reward when dealing with political opponents⁴⁴.

As if this was not enough, PAC stalwart, Maxwell Nmadzivhanani, decided that he had had enough of the PAC's leadership problems and joined the

⁴² Southall, R. 2004: "Containing Accountability" *Election Synopsis*, Vol. 1, No. 1

⁴³ <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil>

⁴⁴ Claasen, L. 2004: "Kortbroek Loses Pants", *Sowetan*, 16 August

ANC. However, the ANC has steadfastly emphasised that people who defect to the ANC need to first prove their loyalty to the organisation at the grassroots level before being considered for higher positions.

Conclusion

The paper has argued against the notion that race and ethnicity have had a major impact on the electoral preference of the electorate. Rather it has been argued that politics of identity, economic factors and campaign strategies of the ANC have guaranteed the party consistent support and thus have enormously contributed towards determining the voting behaviour of South Africans. The

outcome of the 2004 election was significant in solidifying the ANC's position as the dominant party, while on the other hand, the outcome has seen the further fragmentation of the opposition parties in South Africa. If opposition parties do not campaign with a ruling party mentality rather than participating in the scramble for second best positions, then the ANC's political hegemony is likely to continue for some time.

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