

Challenges to Democracy by One-Party Dominance: A Comparative Assessment

10 October 2005
Vineyard Hotel, Cape Town
South Africa

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ISBN: 0-620-37570-1

Published by:
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Editing, DTP and production: Tyrus Text and Design

Reproduction: Rapid Repro

Printing: Stups Printing

Foreword

IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN A DECADE SINCE THE ‘THIRD WAVE OF DEMOCRATISATION’ REACHED the shores of African countries, but a characteristic common of many Southern African countries today is the dominance of one political party. This dominance is becoming the main obstacle to the consolidation of democracy in these countries. Furthermore, the weakness of opposition parties in these countries results in the attrition of parliament’s checks-and-balances and weakens further an already fragile pillar of democracy.

Arguing that one-party dominance is an obstacle to democratic consolidation does not necessarily imply that it always results in an autocratic system or a one-party state. However, one-party dominance in some instances does bear features of, and prepares a fertile ground for, certain non-democratic attitudes and actions by the ruling party. This is particularly so when it comes to a democratic political culture and the promotion of an electoral democracy, which are integral prerequisites for the consolidation of democracy.

Consequently, any critical analyses and debates on the state of political culture in the context of one-party dominance have been rejected repeatedly by ruling parties. In South Africa, critical analysis of political culture and the highlighting of any weaknesses are perceived as ‘African National Congress (ANC)-bashing’ and as an attempt by conservatives and minorities to taint the achievements of the ruling party and label the organisation as undemocratic.

Some features of South Africa’s one-party dominance can be explained by the ruling party’s history as a liberation movement and its almost exclusive post-apartheid legitimacy; the conception of the nation in South Africa, as in many other countries in the region, is embodied in the national liberation movement, and the movement (in this case the ANC) is strongly identified as the party that brought democracy to the people. However, the ruling party should be careful not to use or misuse this contextual interpretation to disqualify any critical voice or to thwart any opposition.

Democratic consolidation requires a move away from a dichotomised perception of ‘we and they’, which can result in the conviction that if you are not with the liberator, you are considered the enemy – an enemy to the people and to the national interest. It is of concern if even ANC members have to state that: “Many of my former comrades have become loyal to a party rather than to principles of justice.”¹

One-party dominance brings with it other negative features, such as the blurring of boundaries of state and party, and the ambition to extend increasing control over state and society by further centralisation. But an additional concern is that one-party dominance has significant consequences for the development of democracy and its acceptance in society: the fact that 6.76 million voters failed to register for the 2004 elections in South Africa has to be interpreted in the context of striking ANC dominance.

Increasing distrust for politicians and an opting out of the political process by a significant number of young people also have to be seen in the light of a lack of alternatives. In the shadow of all-encompassing ANC dominance, opposition voters feel they cannot possibly impact or influence government; and opposition parties face challenges in developing their own profiles and agendas. This often leads to reactive instead of proactive behaviour on the part of the opposition.

Considering the precarious state of the political opposition in South Africa, highlighted during the recent floor-crossing periods in Parliament, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in South Africa found it apposite to analyse the phenomenon of one-party dominance after a decade of multiparty democracy, and to compare the South African situation with other countries that have experienced one-party dominance over decades. The examples of India and Mexico, in particular, offer some important lessons that could, and should, be examined by South Africa's opposition. A direct comparative analysis between Malaysia and South Africa outlines the commonalities, but also the distinctive features, of Malaysia's one-party dominance.

This publication is based on a conference held by KAS in Cape Town in October 2005. The aim of the conference, and of this publication, was and is to open up constructive debate and to bring to the forefront critical points that continue to undermine the consolidation of democracy in South Africa.

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NOTES

- 1 Anonymous ANC party member cited in: Melber H, From liberation movement to governments: On political culture in Southern Africa, *African Sociological Review* 6(1), 2002.
- 2 Former KAS resident representative South Africa, and coordinator of the KAS research project on selected transition processes in sub-Saharan Africa (2003–2004).

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List of abbreviations

AIADMK	All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AICC	All India Congress Committee
ANC	African National Congress
Azapo	Azanian People's Organisation
BDP	Botswana Democratic Party
BEE	Black economic empowerment
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BN	Barisan Nasional
CIU	Coordination and Implementation Unit
Cosatu	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSO	Civil society organisation
DA	Democratic Alliance
DC	Christian Democratic Party
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
DP	Democratic Party
ENEP	Effective Number of Electoral Parties
ENLP	Effective Number of Legislative Parties
Gear	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
Idasa	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
INC	Indian National Congress
IT	information technology
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
LSQ	Least Squares Index of Disproportionality
Mapai	Mifleget Poalei Eretz Israel
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MEC	Minerals-energy complex
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MNP	Malay Nationalist Party
MP	Member of Parliament
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEP	New Economic Policy
Nepad	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation

NNP	New National Party
NP	National Party
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PAN	National Action Party
PAS	Islamic Party of Malaysia
PCAS	Policy Coordination and Advisory Service
PR	Proportional representation
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PS	<i>Parti Socialiste</i>
R	Relative Reduction of Parties
SACP	South African Communist Party
SDP	Social Democratic Party
sf-ratio	Second-to-First-Ratio
Swapo	South West African People's Organisation
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
TRS	Telangana Rashtriya Samiti
UDF	United Democratic Front
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UCT	University of Cape Town
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
US	United States

Understanding party dominance in Africa¹

SHAHEEN MOZAFFAR

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a systematic understanding of the nature of party dominance in Africa by presenting data on variations in the structure of African party systems and on patterns of electoral and legislative volatility, as well as by advancing a number of explanations to account for these variations and patterns. The structure of a party system refers to the degree to which it is fragmented into many parties or concentrated around a small number of parties, or around a single dominant party. Electoral volatility refers to the net change in the distribution of votes, and legislative volatility refers to net change in the distribution of seats, between political parties from one election to the next. A large net change indicates high volatility and a small net change indicates low volatility.

The data shows that African party systems are typically concentrated around a small numbers of parties, and often around a single dominant party surrounded by many small parties. The data also shows that concentrated party systems persist in the face of high levels of electoral and legislative volatility. This is puzzling because in most regions of the world, high levels of volatility typically coincide with fragmented party systems.

The explanations advanced to account for both the variations in party system structure and the puzzling coincidence of party system concentration and high levels of electoral and legislative volatility emphasise the combined influence of historical legacies, social context and institutional variables on the strategic choices politicians make about forming political parties, mobilising electoral support, forging pre-electoral and post-electoral alliances, and establishing governing coalitions.

The historical legacies include the limited experience with democracy under authoritarian rule and the social and political polarisation produced by national liberation struggles. The social context includes the structure of ethno-political cleavages that shape strategies of electoral mobilisation and coalition formation. The institutional variables include two key features of electoral systems adopted for electing presidents in virtually all emerging democracies in Africa: the two-round majority formula; and whether presidential and legislative elections are held concurrently or separately.

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The data and explanations presented in this paper suggest a need to go beyond conventional wisdom about one-party dominance and its deleterious consequences for democracy in African countries. This conventional wisdom – premised on the naïve notion that political leaders should be motivated by the higher goal of advancing the public interest rather than self-interest² – ascribes to political leaders too much prescience in correctly anticipating political outcomes, as well as exaggerated political capacities to take actions that consistently produce those outcomes. Consequently, it fails to recognise that while political leadership is extremely important in the formation and development of political parties, it is a strategic activity constrained by both the social context of politics and the actions of other political leaders.

Political parties, in other words, are not formed in a vacuum by the unfettered actions of disembodied political actors; nor do party systems evolve inexorably from pre-existing social structures. Pre-existing – that is, historically mediated – social structures define the nature, number and type of social cleavages (class, region, religion, ethnicity) that form the potential (and not the inevitable) basis for defining political interest, organising collective political action and mobilising electoral support.

Which of these social cleavages will be politicised, and how (among the almost infinite possibilities) those politicised will be bundled into coherently articulated political interests for party formation and electoral mobilisation, depends on the intrinsic characteristics of these cleavages, the institutional framework of politics that privileges one cleavage over another, and the entrepreneurial, organisational and rhetorical skills of political leaders.

The data and explanations presented in this paper thus emphasise the need for a more nuanced approach that draws attention to the contingencies which shape the choices and behaviour of rational and self-interested political actors, and how these choices and behaviours impact the formation of political parties and the development of party systems.

Such an approach also helps to derive a better understanding of the relationship between party system dominance and democracy than that found in conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom treats this relationship as inevitably deleterious – a treatment that is premised on an undifferentiated conception of dominant party systems. However, dominant party systems are not all alike.

That a dominant party system, and especially one dominated by a single party, poses a serious challenge to democracy cannot be gainsaid; but an assessment of the exact nature of this challenge – and especially the putative deleterious consequences of dominant party systems for democracy – requires an approach that helps to distinguish among dominant party systems. The data and explanations presented in this paper help to make this distinction. The implications of this distinction for understanding the more general relationship between dominant party systems and democracy will be discussed at length in the conclusion of the paper.

THE DATA

Tables 1 and 2 present the mean values for ten indices that measure variations in the structure and volatility of African party systems. Table 1 presents the mean values for eight

indices of party system structure, while Table 2 (*see page 7*) presents the mean values for six of these eight indices as well as for two indices that measure patterns of electoral and legislative volatility. The indices are calculated from the results of elections to the lower chamber of national legislatures. These elections are therefore the units of analysis (or cases).

The indices – all of which are now widely used in the comparative literature on party systems – are calculated from the results of 101 elections in 36 African countries.³ For purposes of comparison, Table 1 reports the mean values for the ten indices for all 101 elections, for 79 elections held in 34 countries that underwent democratic transitions in the third wave of democratisation in Africa, for 22 elections held in three long-standing African democracies (that is, Botswana, Mauritius and The Gambia between 1965–94), and for the 34 transitional elections held in the same number of third wave African democracies.

<i>Indices</i>	<i>All elections (N=101)</i>	<i>Elections in third wave democracies (N=79)</i>	<i>Elections in established democracies (N=22)</i>	<i>Transitional elections in third wave democracies (N=34)</i>
Percent Votes Won by Largest Party	57.00	55.65	61.86	54.13
Percent Seats Won by Largest Party	69.43	66.48	80.03	64.70
Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP)	2.88	3.09	2.11	3.22
Effective Number of Legislative Parties (ENLP)	2.06	2.21	1.51	2.32
Relative Reduction of Parties (R)	0.26	0.25	0.30	0.24
Index of Disproportionality (LSQ)	12.14	10.88	16.66	11.01
Second-to-First Ratio (votes)* (sf-ratio)	0.37 (N=42)	0.36 (N=27)	0.42 (N=14)	0.35 (N=10)
Second-to-First Ratio (seats)*	0.28 (N=42)	0.29 (N=27)	0.27 (N=14)	0.39 (N=10)

*The numbers in parentheses below the Second-to-First Ratio indices are the number of elections in single-member districts held under the plurality formula that is used for calculating those indices. See text for explanation.

The mean values for the eight indices in Table 1 are calculated from first elections for which no volatility indices can be calculated. These first elections are therefore excluded in calculating the indices of party system structure and volatility in Table 2, which is why the numbers of cases in the two tables are different. Table 2 thus reports the mean values for six indices of party system structure and two indices of electoral and legislative volatility for 91 successive multiple elections covering 63 election periods in 28 third wave and established democracies, 69 successive multiple elections covering 44 election periods in 25 third wave democracies, and 22 successive multiple elections covering 19 election periods in three established democracies.

THE STRUCTURE OF AFRICAN PARTY SYSTEMS

The data in Table 1 shows that, on average, African party systems are dominant party systems with low levels of electoral and legislative competitiveness, low levels of fragmentation and high degrees of disproportionality between votes and seats. These striking features persist across multiple elections in established democracies and in single transitional elections, as well as multiple elections in third wave democracies.

The first two indices, Percent Votes Won by Largest Party and Percent Seats Won by Largest Party, measure the degree of competition in party systems: that is, the higher the percentage of votes and seats won by the largest party, the lower the competition. The average vote percentage of the largest party is 57% across all 101 elections in both third wave and established democracies, with corresponding figures of 56% in 79 third wave elections, and 54% in 34 transitional elections in third wave democracies.

In the 22 elections in the three established democracies, the average winning margin of the largest party is 62%. This figure summarises not only the winning margins of the dominant parties in Botswana and The Gambia that won every post-independence election, but also the winning margin of the different parties that won elections and formed governments in Mauritius. In other words, democratic consolidation accompanied by party system institutionalisation tends to produce dominant parties that are able to win elections with overwhelming majorities. Thus, in the 22 elections in established democracies the largest parties won an average of 80% of the seats. Corresponding figures for the other elections also attest to the high winning percentage of seats by the largest parties. These largely uniform figures range from 69% across all 101 elections, to 66% in the 79 third wave elections, to 65% in the 34 transitional elections.

Two indices, the Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) and the Effective Number of Legislative Parties (ENLP), measure the degree of fragmentation or concentration of party systems.⁴ Higher ENEP and ENLP values indicate fragmented party systems, and lower values indicate concentrated party systems.

The relatively low mean ENEP and ENLP values in Table 1 indicate the presence of dominant party systems, reflecting the generally low levels of electoral and legislative competition captured by the first two indices. However, within this general pattern, party systems emerging out of transitional elections and out of multiple elections in third wave democracies tend to be slightly more competitive than those in established democracies.

For example, the average winning vote margins are lower in multiple elections (56%) and in transitional elections (54%) in third wave democracies than in established democracies (62%). This corresponds to the slightly higher mean ENEP values for multiple elections (3.09) and transitional elections (3.22) in third wave democracies than the corresponding values (2.11) for established democracies. Moreover, a quick comparison of the difference between the average vote and seat percentages won by the largest parties reveals a larger difference in established democracies (18%) than in third wave democracies (10% multiple elections and 11% in only transitional elections).

This greater electoral competitiveness of third wave party systems, however, does not translate into legislative competitiveness. For instance, the party systems emerging out of both the 79 multiple third wave elections and the 34 transitional third wave elections are virtually similar in their low levels of fragmentation, with ENLP indices of 2.21 and 2.32, respectively. Party systems in all 101 elections are also concentrated systems with an average ENLP index of 2.06. The established democracies feature the lowest amount of fragmentation with an average ENLP index of 1.51.

These low levels of electoral and legislative competitiveness and the resulting concentration of party systems are also reflected in the two indices measuring the degree of disproportionality (proportionality) in the party system – that is, the amount of difference (correspondence) between the percentage of votes and seats won by political parties. In principle, the smaller the difference (higher the correspondence) between the percentage of votes and seats won by political parties, the more proportional the party system; the higher the difference (lower the correspondence), the greater the disproportionality in the party system.

The index Relative Reduction of Parties (R) measures the percentage reduction in the number of parties after the votes are converted into seats:⁵ the higher the value of R, the higher the percentage of parties that win votes without winning seats. The Least Squares Index of Disproportionality (LSQ index) measures the degree of deviation between votes and seats:⁶ the lower the value of the LSQ index, the more proportional the party system – which is reflected in parties winning seats in roughly the same proportion as their votes.

The values of both indices reinforce the declining legislative competitiveness measured by the previous four indices. Thus, the relative reduction of the effective number of parties obtained in the translation of votes into seats is high across all four types of elections: 26% in the 101 elections in both new and established democracies; 25% in the 79 third wave elections; 30% in 22 elections in established democracies; and 23% in the 34 transitional third wave elections.

Similarly, these high rates of reduction are reflected in the correspondingly high mean values for the LSQ index for all four types of elections: 12.14; 10.88; 16.66; and 11.01 respectively. What is striking about the values of these disproportionality indices is that they obtain in majoritarian as well as in proportional electoral systems.

While the first two indices in Table 1 measure degree of competitiveness in the party system based on the votes and seats percentages won by the largest party, the last two indices measure party system competitiveness based on the votes and seats won by the first and second runners-up in the election. The index Second-to-First-Ratio (sf-ratio)

measures the ratio of votes and seats between the second and the first runners-up: that is, the percentage of votes and seats won by the second largest party relative to the third. The *sf*-ratio thus measures the degree of competitiveness of party systems beyond the largest winning party, with lower values indicating low levels of competitiveness among the second-tier parties. The *sf*-ratio is therefore a useful indicator of the extent to which party systems are dominated by one, two or more parties.

Owing to complex theoretical reasons that are elaborated elsewhere,⁷ the index applies only to elections held in single-member districts under the plurality allocation formula. Therefore, the number of elections whose results are used to derive the mean values of the *sf*-ratios in Table 1 are lower than that used to derive the mean values of the other six indices; these numbers are listed in parentheses under the mean values of the *sf*-ratios.

The mean values for *sf*-ratios also point to low levels of competitiveness in the party systems beyond the largest winning parties. The mean values for 79 multiple elections (0.37) and 34 transitional elections (0.35) in third wave democracies are almost identical, and only slightly lower than the mean values (0.37) for all 101 elections. Only the mean *sf*-ratio values (0.42) for established democracies reflect some moderate levels of competition among the second-tier parties. However, the mean *sf*-ratio values for seats indicate that only the 34 transitional elections produce a moderate increase in the level of competitiveness among the second-tier parties (0.39). Across the other three types of elections, the level of competitiveness with respect to seats declines relative to the competitiveness of votes.

THE STRUCTURE AND VOLATILITY OF AFRICAN PARTY SYSTEMS

Table 2 reports data on the structure and volatility of African party systems.⁸ As noted above, first elections for which volatility indices cannot be calculated are excluded from this table. The data in this table largely reinforces the central features of dominant party systems revealed by the data in Table 1. The largest parties win by substantially large average vote margins and by even larger average seat margins. Across all 91 elections and 63 election periods, their average vote and seat margins are 58% and 70% respectively. Across 69 elections and 44 election periods in third wave elections, the corresponding figures are 56% and 67% respectively. And across 22 elections and 19 election periods in established democracies, the corresponding figures are 61% and 81%, respectively.

The ENEP indices of 2.74 in all elections and 2.94 in third wave elections reveal slightly greater electoral competitiveness in the third wave democracies, but the ENLP indices of 2.02 for all elections and 2.19 for third wave elections show that this does not translate into legislative competitiveness. The relative reduction indices of 26% for all elections and 25% for third wave elections, with corresponding LSQ indices of 12.16% for all elections and 10.73% for third wave elections, offer additional evidence of the inability of smaller parties to make inroads into the electoral and legislative dominance of larger parties. All the corresponding figures for the 22 elections and 19 elections periods in established democracies underscore the incidence of party system dominance in African countries.

The most significant results in Table 2, however, concern the high scores on the electoral and legislative volatility indices. The average electoral volatility is 30.07 across all

<i>Indices</i>	<i>All elections (91 elections and 63 election periods)</i>	<i>Elections in third wave democracies (69 elections and 44 election periods)</i>	<i>Elections in established democracies (22 elections and 19 election periods)</i>
Percent Votes Won by Largest Party	57.69	56.36	61.08
Percent Seats Won by Largest Party	70.47	67.43	80.65
Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP)	2.74	2.94	2.16
Effective Number of Legislative Parties (ENLP)	2.02	2.19	1.50
Relative Reduction of Parties (R)	0.26	0.25	0.30
Index of Disproportionality (LSQ)	12.16	10.73	17.98
Electoral Volatility	30.07	31.45	26.86
Legislative Volatility	26.99	27.71	25.32

91 successive multiple elections and 63 election periods in both new and established democracies, 31.45 across 69 successive multiple elections and 44 election periods in third wave democracies, and 26.86 across 22 successive multiple elections and 19 election periods in established democracies. The corresponding scores for legislative volatility are 26.99, 27.71, and 25.32.

In comparative terms, these indices are lower than those reported for new democracies in post-Second World War Western Europe and in Southern Europe in the 1970s, but they are roughly comparable to those reported for the new democracies in Latin America in the 1980s and in the former communist states in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Moreover, in all these new democracies, high electoral volatility coincides with high degrees of electoral and legislative competitiveness and high party system fragmentation.⁹ In Africa, however, high electoral and legislative volatility coincides with low levels of electoral and legislative competitiveness and high party system concentration. The next section presents a number of explanations to account for this anomaly.

EXPLANATIONS

These explanations reflect the combined influence of four sets of variables, namely the:

- historical legacies of authoritarian rule and national liberation struggles;
- patterns of ethno-political cleavages that comprise the social context for the articulation of political interests and the mobilisation of the vote;
- institutional variables related to the use of two-round majority formulae for electing presidents and whether presidential and legislative elections are held simultaneously or separately; and
- political skills and strategies of politicians in democratic election campaigns.¹⁰

The historical legacies of authoritarian rule and national liberation struggles help to foster the anomalous persistence of high electoral and legislative volatility with high party system concentration in African democracies by limiting the amount of information available to politicians regarding the extent of their political support and the policy preferences of voters. This information deficit imposes high costs on the creation of viable new political parties, thus attenuating the development of competitive party systems. However, the processes by which the information deficit produces this outcome differ between democracies emerging out of authoritarian rule and democracies emerging out of national liberation struggles.

In the former, the source of the information deficit is the restrictions on political competition, which tend to fragment the political space in which electoral competition takes place after democratic transition. Fragmentation of political space in democracies with authoritarian legacies opens up opportunities for the formation of many political parties. However, lacking adequate information about the extent of their political support and the requisite financial resources and organisational skills to launch sustained electoral campaigns, most of these parties typically fail to win sufficient votes to remain viable after one or two elections. As a result, a few large and well-organised parties come to monopolise the political space, included among which is usually the organisationally and financially well-endowed party of the erstwhile authoritarian incumbent who can use the advantages of incumbency to win overwhelming electoral and legislative majorities. Thus, democratic opening expands the political space for electoral competition, but the lingering effect of decades of authoritarian rule limits the competition to a small number of large parties.

In democracies emerging out of national liberation struggles, the source of the information deficit is the political monopoly exercised by national liberation movements during the liberation struggle, which continues after the democratic transition and tends to constrict the political space for electoral competition. The constricted political space also reflects the lingering legacy of social and political polarisation during those struggles.

National liberation struggles are fought by two implacably opposed groups that are not monolithic entities but coalitions of conflicting factions united by opposition to a common enemy, and held together by the use of both coercion and accommodation to suppress otherwise debilitating internal divisions. Democratic transition opens up the political space, but new parties – if and when they are formed – confront the standard

start-up costs of launching viable organisations. They are either quickly eliminated from the political scene or forced to merge with the erstwhile national liberation movements that now dominate the political space as large umbrella political parties encompassing a wide array of groups and interests and thus are able to win elections by huge majorities.

Namibia and South Africa provide good examples of this logic. Both have the lowest indices of disproportionality in Africa, consistent with their use of two of the purest proportional representation (PR) formulae: the Hare formula for Namibia and the Droop for South Africa. Over three elections, their LSQ indices are 0.77 and 0.30, respectively. Yet, the average winning vote and seat margins of the largest party in Namibia are 69.33% and 68.98% respectively. The corresponding figures for South Africa are 66.23% and 66.42% respectively. Similarly, the ENEP and ENLP scores for Namibia are 1.92 and 1.92 respectively, with the corresponding scores of 2.12 and 2.11 respectively for South Africa. Both countries therefore feature dominant party systems despite their adoption of PR rules.

However, beyond the dominance of the ruling South West African People's Organisation (Swapo) Party in Namibia and of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, a limited degree of competitiveness exists among a small group of second-tier parties, especially in South Africa. But these second-tier parties often become victims of declining vote shares, as attested to by the disbanding of the New National Party in July 2004.

Beyond these second tier parties, a large number of smaller third-tier parties compete in national elections in both countries. Virtually none exhibit any prospect of electoral success and all have proven to be short-lived, as reflected in the high electoral volatility index of 16.05 and legislative volatility index of 10.65 for Namibia. These inconsequential parties are even more pervasive in South Africa, as reflected in the even higher electoral volatility (25.80) and legislative volatility (25.63) indices. Whether their competitiveness will continue to hamper the chances of second tier parties to launch a concerted challenge to the dominance of the ruling parties in both countries will depend on the extent to which party leaders are able to form and sustain electoral coalitions. To date, however, they have not manifested any inclination, ability or willingness to do so.¹¹

African leaders compensate for the historical legacy of severe information deficit that threatens their political survival by relying on ethno-political cleavages which define the social context of politics in African countries. Specifically, African leaders rely on ethno-political groups as a cost-effective strategy to articulate political interests, organise political action and mobilise electoral support. But how this strategy leads to both dominant party systems and high levels of electoral and legislative volatility depends on two dimensions of ethno-political cleavages: fragmentation; and spatial concentration of ethno-political groups.¹²

Conventional accounts¹³ claim a reflexive impact of ethnicity on parties and party systems: that is, each ethnic group represents a cleavage, is totally separate from others, is unified by the homogeneous preferences of its members, and is also sufficiently large enough to support a party by itself. Thus, *ceteris paribus*, large numbers of ethnic groups and cleavages exemplifying high social fragmentation increase (and small numbers of groups and cleavages exemplifying low social fragmentation reduce) the number of parties

competing for votes and winning seats in democratic elections. However, the nature of constructed ethno-political groups and the resulting cleavages in Africa reveal complex group morphology¹⁴ that seriously militates against the reflexive relationship between ethno-political cleavages and political parties described in conventional accounts.

Specifically, African ethno-political demography features politically salient differences within, as well as among, groups. The resulting high ethno-political fragmentation, *ceteris paribus*, either produces such a high degree of vote dispersion among large numbers of small parties that most do not secure enough votes to win seats, or produces small numbers of large multi-ethnic parties by encouraging them to campaign for votes across both inter-group and intra-group cleavages. Either way, high ethno-political fragmentation tends to reduce the number of parties, especially the number of parties winning seats.

African ethno-political groups, however, also exhibit the highest levels of geographic concentration in the world.¹⁵ Such concentrations, especially when they exist “in above-plurality proportions in particular constituencies and geographical pockets”,¹⁶ help to counteract the reductive effect of ethno-political fragmentation on the number of parties. However, geographic concentration – while it helps to solve the collective action problem associated with the dispersion of ethno-political groups – by itself does not overcome the reductive effect of high fragmentation due to the presence of large numbers of small ethno-political groups.

Moreover, countries with low fragmentation feature a small number of large ethno-political groups that also tend to have dispersed populations and therefore do not need concentrated voters to sustain a small number of parties. These variations in the configurations of ethno-political cleavages suggest the likelihood of an interactive effect of ethno-political group fragmentation and concentration. This interaction tends to reduce the number parties that are able to win votes and seats.

This relationship between ethno-political cleavages and party systems takes on heightened significance in presidential elections in Africa where all new democracies, except Lesotho and South Africa, have adopted presidential systems. Presidential elections in African countries are important for four reasons, all of which tend to foster dominant party systems.

First, because the presidency is the top prize in the political game, presidential elections attract a large number of candidates, few of whom have any realistic chance of winning. Characteristic problems of post-authoritarian democracies – such as limited experience with competitive elections, information deficit about the extent of electoral support, plus personal ambition – prevent opposition candidates from coalescing around a single candidate to oppose incumbents armed with the standard advantages of incumbency.

Second, an important strategic reason for the entry of large numbers of contenders in presidential elections is that African presidents possess substantial resources for patronage. Presidential contenders with weak winning potential often expect to demonstrate sufficient electoral support to bargain entry into post-election coalitions and secure state resources for their constituencies in return for political support of the winners.

Third, for leading presidential candidates the electoral base and bargaining resources possessed by weaker candidates are also strategically important due to the salience of ethno-political groups for electoral support. Just as it constrains political parties in

legislative elections, the combination of ethno-political fragmentation and concentration also constrains leading presidential candidates from securing outright electoral majorities. And since the weaker candidates often control small but cohesive blocks of votes, leading presidential contenders have strong incentives to form minimum winning coalitions with them to ensure an electoral victory and a governing majority.

Finally, two institutional features of electoral systems adopted in most African countries for electing presidents encourage these strategic considerations by both leading and weaker presidential contenders. The first feature concerns whether the presidential and legislative elections are held concurrently or separately. Concurrent elections produce the standard coat-tail effects of presidential elections that militate against smaller parties winning votes and seats, leading to the formation of dominant party systems, which in Africa typically represent pre-electoral multi-ethnic coalitions based on the strategic bargaining between the leading and weaker presidential contenders.

Separate elections typically reduce the winning vote and seat margins of the parties of leading presidential contenders, thus enabling smaller parties to win legislative seats as, for example, in Benin and Madagascar. But separate elections also tend to throw presidential elections into a second round, encouraging the strategic bargaining between leading and weaker presidential contenders noted above, and thereby fostering multi-ethnic and multiparty coalitions that encourage the persistence of dominant party systems. Since these bargains and coalitions shift from election to election, they also tend to foster high levels of electoral and legislative volatility.

CONCLUSION

The central findings of this paper are the following:

- African party systems are dominant party systems that feature both one dominant party and a few large parties surrounded by many small parties.
- These dominant party systems exist together with high levels of electoral and legislative volatility.
- The existence of this puzzling combination can be explained by the combined influence of history, social context, and institutions on the strategic calculations and actions of political leaders with respect to interest definition, electoral mobilisation, and the use of multi-ethnic coalitions in the formation of political parties and governing majorities.

In contrast to conventional wisdom about the reflexive formation of dominant party systems and their inevitably negative consequences for democracy in Africa, the analysis presented in this paper suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role of the contingencies surrounding the strategic choices and actions of political leaders that foster dominant party systems and their persistence in the face of high levels of electoral

and legislative volatility. This analysis has three implications clarifying the nature of dominant party systems and their relationship to democracy in Africa.

The first implication is that African dominant party systems do not comprise monolithic parties. All African political parties – including, perhaps especially, those in one-party dominant systems, such as the ANC in South Africa and Swapo in Namibia – are multi-ethnic coalitions. But South Africa and Namibia also powerfully demonstrate the combined influence of history, context and institutions on the strategic calculations and behaviour of political leaders with respect to both the success in creating and sustaining party dominance, and the failure of smaller parties to form and sustain viable opposition coalitions. This failure of smaller parties, which is widespread across Africa, is particularly debilitating because the multi-ethnic coalitions that underpin all dominant parties are themselves quite unstable. They have to be renegotiated at every election and the groups comprising the coalitions change from election to election. The high levels of electoral and legislative volatility attest to this instability, yet smaller parties seem unable or unwilling to take advantage of this instability to form alternative coalitions to counter the hegemonic, but temporary, coalitions of dominant parties.

In other words, dominant parties persist not only because of the successful strategies and political skills of the leaders of these parties, but also because of the poor political skills of the leaders of smaller parties and their associated failures to exploit creatively the opportunities to form alternative majority coalitions.

The second implication is that precisely because dominant parties in Africa are loose multi-ethnic coalitions, they contain the seeds of their own transformation. This transformation occurs due to the steady erosion of support for the dominant party by coalition partners who no longer receive the material benefits that motivated them to join the coalition in the first place.

This process was the key to the defeat in 2000 of the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), the dominant party which had been in power for three decades in Senegal, by an opposition coalition formed between the long-time opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade and disenchanted members of the PS, including the former interior and foreign ministers in the PS government.¹⁷

Senegal, as well as Mexico, Taiwan and South Korea, also point to another source of the transformation of dominant party systems to more competitive party systems: namely, the number of institutional opportunities available for electoral competition. Beyond national elections, regional and local elections also provide opportunities for smaller parties to challenge the hegemony of dominant parties. The policy trade-offs inherent in the process of governance render incumbent dominant parties vulnerable to challenge from smaller parties at regional and local levels where the uneven distribution of burden and benefits resulting from the trade-offs are felt most directly. Since regional and local elections present lower barriers to entry for smaller parties – which are otherwise organisationally weak to surmount the high barriers to entry in national elections – they create opportunities for smaller parties to establish their electoral credentials. These credentials can then be converted into political capital to form opposing coalitions to challenge the incumbent party in national elections.¹⁸

The key lesson of the preceding two implications of the analysis presented in this paper is the important role of elections as mechanisms of political learning. This lesson points to the third, and counter-intuitive, implication that the puzzling features of African party systems highlighted in the analysis may be conducive to democratic consolidation. High electoral volatility can be viewed as a system-clearing device that eliminates inefficient parties, leaving a small number of parties to compete for votes and form governments.

Owing to the political salience of ethnicity as an important source of strategic coordination – and because no African ethno-political group is numerically large enough to form either a political party or a government on its own – multi-ethnic coalitions tend to be the norm in the formation of political parties as well as in the formation of governing coalitions. And to the extent that elections remain the principal legitimate source of forming and changing governments, increasing information about the effects of electoral institutions and the extent of electoral support engender a learning process for both voters and candidates that could improve the prospect of coalition formation among competing ethno-political groups over a small number of winning parties. This process, which was evident in Ghana, Mali, Mozambique and Senegal – and more recently in Kenya and Zambia – will also help to lower the current high rate of electoral volatility and the associated cost of forming political coalitions in each election. Stable party systems could thereby ensue and become the basis for stable democracies.

NOTES

- 1 I thank the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in South Africa for inviting me to present an earlier draft of this paper at its 'Challenge to Democracy by One-Party Dominance: A Comparative Assessment' conference held in Cape Town on 10 October 2005, and the conference participants for helpful comments on that draft. I also thank the National Science Foundation for financial support of the larger project from which the data presented in this paper is drawn, and the Boston University African Studies Centre for continued research support. Final responsibility for the paper rests with me.
- 2 This naïve notion is also fundamentally flawed in its view of self-interest and public interest as mutually exclusive and inherently irreconcilable, and also in its rejection of the possibility that behaviour motivated by self-interest can, and does, advance the public interest.
- 3 These elections were used due to the availability of reliable and complete data on them. For detailed information on the methodology employed to collect the data, see Mozaffar S & Scarritt JR, The puzzle of African party systems, *Party Politics*, special issue on 'Political parties, party systems and democracy in Africa' 11, 2005, pp 399-421.
- 4 The ENEP index is a measure of the electoral party system based only on the number of parties actually winning votes, not on the number of parties running in the election, since not every party running in an election wins votes. Similarly, the ENLP index is a measure of the legislative party system based on the number of parties winning seats, since not every party that wins votes wins seats. Laakso M & Taagepera R, 'Effective' number of parties: A measure with application to Western Europe, *Comparative Political Studies* 12, April 1979, pp 3-27; Lijphart A, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994; Taagepera R & Shugart MS, *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- 5 Taagepera & Shugart, *ibid*, p 209.
- 6 Gallagher M, Proportionality, disproportionality, and electoral systems, *Electoral Studies* 10, 1991, pp 333-51.

- 7 Cox GW, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp 85-89.
- 8 The volatility indices – following Pedersen MN, Changing patterns of electoral volatility in European party systems, 1948-1977: Explorations in explanations, in Daalder H & Mair P (eds), *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983, pp 29-66 – are calculated by adding the net percentage change in the votes (or seats) won by each party from one election to the next and dividing the sum by two.
- 9 Bielsiak J, The institutionalization of electoral and party systems in postcommunist states, *Comparative Politics* 34, 2002, pp 189-210; Coppedge M, The dynamic diversity of Latin American party systems, *Party Politics* 4, 1998, pp 547-68; Mainwaring S, Electoral volatility in Brazil, *Party Politics* 4, 1998, pp 523-545.
- 10 The discussion of these variables and the explanations associated with them are necessarily brief due to space limitations. More detailed discussions are available in Mozaffar S, *How Context Mediates the Effects of Electoral Institutions on the Structure of Party Systems in Africa's Emerging Democracies*, Working Paper No. 72, Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town, August 2004; Mozaffar S, *Ethnicity and Democracy*. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, Washington DC, 1-4 September 2005; Mozaffar S, Party, ethnicity and democratization in Africa, in Katz R & Crotty W (eds), *Handbook of Political Parties*. London: Sage Publications, 2006, pp 239-247; Mozaffar & Scarritt, The puzzle of African party systems, op cit; Mozaffar S, Scarritt JR & Galaich G, Electoral institutions, ethnopolitical cleavages, and party systems in Africa's emerging democracies, *American Political Science Review* 97, 2003, pp 379-390.
- 11 Piombo J, Party politics, social demographics and the decline of ethnic mobilization in South Africa, 1994-1999, *Party Politics*, special issue on 'Political parties, party systems and democracy in Africa', 11, 2005, pp 447-470 correctly points out that given the institutional and social structural incentives in South Africa, these second-tier parties have opted for different electoral strategies that preclude coalition formation.
- 12 For the conceptual and theoretical foundations of this explanation of how ethnicity shapes the electoral strategies of African politicians to help foster dominant party systems in the face of high electoral and legislative volatility, see Scarritt JR & Mozaffar S, The specification of ethnic cleavages and ethnopolitical groups for the analysis of democratic competition in contemporary Africa, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 5, 1999, pp 82-117, and also the works cited in note 10.
- 13 For example, Horowitz D L, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- 14 Mozaffar S & Scarritt JR, Why Are There So Few Ethnic Parties in Africa? Paper presented at the 18th World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Quebec City, 1-5 August 2000; Scarritt & Mozaffar, op cit.
- 15 Gurr TR, *Minorities at Risk*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1993.
- 16 Sartori G, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives, and Outcomes*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p 40.
- 17 Mozaffar S & Vengroff R, A 'whole system' approach to the choice of electoral rules in democratizing countries: Senegal in comparative perspective, *Electoral Studies* 21, 2002, pp 601-616, show that this process was not unique to Senegal, but also led to the defeat of incumbent dominant parties in Mexico, Taiwan and South Korea.
- 18 The unexpected victory of opposition parties in several areas of the country in South Africa's February 2006 municipal local elections demonstrates the availability of this opportunity for smaller parties. But whether these opposition parties will take advantage of the opportunities to position themselves to challenge the ANC at national level remains to be seen. Mozaffar & Vengroff, *ibid*.

The ANC government, co-optive power and the perpetuation of party dominance¹

NICOLA DE JAGER

INTRODUCTION

Political analysts have begun to observe two trends within South Africa's democracy. The first, political centralisation, is evident in a centralising South African government, with some pointing to the restructured presidency and some to South Africa's dominant party system.² The second trend is a weakening of agents of accountability: political and civil society. Analysts have investigated the relationship between the state and civil society, highlighting that the government appears to be constraining the operating space of civil society organisations (CSOs) as agents of accountability, or so-called 'watch-dogs', while others point to the decreasing effective competition from opposition parties.³

The question that must follow, is why these trends? That the above trends are evident is not disputed. At issue, however, is the apparent surprise with which they are addressed and the seeming call to the government to curb these developments as they may prove detrimental to South Africa's democracy. The paper argues that these trends are the result of the South African government's use of co-optive power. It is then asserted that the evidence of these centralising trends is not primarily the result of 'Mbekism'⁴ or the culmination of haphazard policies and events, but rather planned steps towards the fulfilment of the African National Congress's (ANC) aims and objectives as embodied in the call for a National Democratic Revolution (NDR), and thus its ideology. The paper therefore seeks to show that the above trends are the manifestations of a *deliberate process* of centralising power.

South Africa's first democratically elected government was handed a massive challenge: undividing the divided. The question of how to overcome differences in order to build a united nation is a complex one. On the one side it is evident that through its policies and legislation the government is acknowledging and encouraging the ethnic and cultural plurality of its citizens, but so long as these differences are not mounted to contend with the government.

The ANC-led government considers itself to be the only leader of the people by virtue of democratic elections, and therefore the only legitimate voice representing the views of the people. In addition, the government appears to be attempting to create unity via

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centralisation and promoting conformity, as evidenced in the centralisation of the governmental structure and, in particular, the increasing control of the presidency. Plurality – as demonstrated in and expressed through political parties and the multiplicity of CSOs – is being restrained, with attempts to institutionalise the role of CSOs and to delegitimise political society.

Since it is argued that South Africa is in a *deliberate* process of centralising power, the concept *power* will be addressed as a theoretical foundation. In particular, an explanation for *co-optive power* will be given. Second, the paper will turn to investigate the changes in South Africa's governmental structure as evidence of institutional centralisation. Third, the roles of civil society and political society will be assessed as instruments of democracy and agents of accountability. The current state–society relationships will then be analysed as examples of dispositional centralisation. Finally, it will be shown through excerpts from ANC documents that the fruits of centralisation are the manifestation of deliberate plans and strategies, the roots thus being the ideology of the ANC.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: POWER

THE CHANGING RESOURCES AND FACES OF POWER

In politics, the concept of power is usually conceived as a relationship: the ability of actor A to get actor B to do or not do something. Nye⁵ defines power as the “ability to achieve one's purposes”. Heywood⁶ recognises that there are many faces of power, listing three: power as decision-making; power as agenda setting; and power as thought control. Placed within the third face of power is Lukes's⁷ understanding of power as the ability to influence another by shaping what the person thinks, wants and needs. This power is exercised through propaganda or the impact of ideology. Very basically, ideology is a set of ideas that forms the foundation of political organisation: it determines what the ‘good life’ should look like and how it can be achieved.

Nye⁸ distinguishes between hard power and soft power. Hard power rests on the ability to use the inducements (‘carrots’) and threats (‘sticks’) of economic and military might to make others follow your will. In contrast, soft power is a more indirect method of exercising power; it is the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your objectives and values. Although Nye largely uses these distinctions to investigate power in international relations and, in particular, foreign policy, the terms can be equally instructive in the study of politics. The paper argues for a derivative of soft power – co-optive power. Similar to Lukes's third face of power, co-optive power is setting the agenda, holding power over the institutions that determine *the rules of the game* and, through ideology, establishing the *us* and the *them*.

Important resources of co-optive power include: having the means to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others, through making one's objectives attractive and by determining the discourse or the framework of the debate;⁹ or, as in Lukes's third face of power, through the impact of ideology. Muchie¹⁰ notes that “[d]iscourse has an intrinsic power to frame, set parameters, suggest agenda [and] help select policy options”, and is thus an important tool for those who are in a position to

manufacture, name and control the discourse. Those who control the discourse are able, through rhetoric, to determine the ‘us’ and the ‘them’; and thus by the promotion of an ideology as the ‘right’ and ‘only’ way, to effectively alienate and discredit critical elements.

Co-optive power is becoming increasingly important to recognise as actors and institutions move away from the use of overt hard power towards a subtler and less identifiable counterpart. This paper recognises two forms of co-optive power: institutional centralisation; and dispositional centralisation. Institutional centralisation ensures that decision making and policy making are centrally coordinated from where the ‘rules of the game’ and thus ideologies emanate. Dispositional centralisation is achieved with the undermining of alternative views by setting the discourse and defining the functions that institutions besides the state can fulfil. Dispositional centralisation is essentially the determining of the rules of the game based on an agreed ideology and the silencing of opposition or alternatives to those ‘rules’.

PARTY DOMINANT SYSTEMS

Co-optive power provides the necessary means to maintain party dominance in a democratic system. According to Friedman,¹¹ a party dominant system is a democracy in which regular elections take place, opposition parties are free to organise and express themselves, and where civil liberties are, for the most part, respected. What distinguishes a party dominant system from other democracies is the monopoly of power by one party. The party wins its position through democratic elections; its dominance cannot be attained through force or deceit.

Duverger¹² defines such dominance as “a question of influence rather than strength”. Since the dominant party holds power within a democracy, its dominance is not a given and must therefore be continually maintained. Methods used to ensure dominance include:¹³

- delegitimising the opposition;
- relying on and emphasising ‘kinship’ contacts between the citizens and government, for example through continually highlighting a shared past;
- the monopoly or near-monopoly of the public policy agenda; and
- creating or perpetuating an enemy to unite against, whether the enemy is real or not.

A party dominant system would fit in to what Southall¹⁴ recognises as ‘low intensity’ democracy – the road, he believes, South Africa is on. This implies that the formal requirements for democracy are met, yet “under conditions of decreasing competition and declining popular participation” where dissent and critical thought are steadily being overwhelmed through the processes of centralisation. Friedman¹⁵ similarly recognises that to best ensure its control, a dominant party will need to dominate the formal polity as well as civil society. For Heywood,¹⁶ common consequences of the dominant party system are as follows:

- The erosion of the distinction between the state and the ruling political party. With the continuation of the same party in power, a ‘process of politicisation’ occurs as state officials and institutions adopt the ideological and political priorities of the ruling party.
- Due to a lack of ‘fear of the ballot’ the dominant party may begin to display complacency and arrogance, and possibly corruption.
- This system is also often characterised by weak and ineffective opposition, especially where the dominant party feels no obligation to take their criticism into account.

It is thus necessary to assess the relevance of the above theoretical understandings of power in the case of South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT: CO-OPTIVE POWER AND PARTY DOMINANCE

With its wide support base due to its history as the victorious liberation movement, the initial party dominance of the South African government system by the ANC was a given. The ANC’s dominance has been confirmed by its attainment of an overwhelming majority in the 1994, 1999 and 2004 elections. Academic commentators, including Giliomee, Myburgh and Schlemmer,¹⁷ have applied the concept of ‘party dominance’ to South Africa, while Southall¹⁸ cautions that although there is evidence of a dominant party system, the ANC’s dominance is limited by constitutional counterweights, its inability to impose itself on society, and evidence of vigorous internal debate. Thus, Southall¹⁹ argues for a ‘weak’ version of the dominant system. Nevertheless, due to the very nature of a democratic system, regardless of party dominance being strong or weak, such dominance requires maintenance and strategy without the use of force or fraud. In other words, hard power is not an option for the ANC-led government. The paper therefore turns to investigate the use of instruments of co-optive power in South Africa.

Emanating from and within the South African government, two manifestations of co-optive power are apparent; that is, institutional centralisation and dispositional centralisation. The methods used to ensure party dominance, as identified by Friedman,²⁰ are evident in the processes of institutional and dispositional centralisation. The former can be seen in the governmental structure via the strengthening of centralised control by an expanded presidential office. The latter, dispositional centralisation, is less obvious, but is found when one unravels the power of discourse. It is asserted that the political space of South Africa’s political and civil society is being contended, and thereby severely restrained, using the realm of discourse.

INSTITUTIONAL CENTRALISATION: THE STATE APPARATUS

The process of decentralisation was accepted by the ANC as the conclusion of constitutional negotiations.²¹ The ANC was pressurised into conceding on its pledge to

unitary government by accommodating the interests of minority groups, and thus it accepted a more federalised form of government. For example, during the Multi-Party Negotiating Forum in 1993, greater levels of authority and responsibility to lower levels of government were agreed to. A system of proportional representation was also agreed to. Yet, in spite of the rhetorical assurance of decentralisation in policy papers and legislation, centripetal tendencies are undermining the implementation of these policies. Galvin and Habib²² point out that “although the new South African government has adopted a range of policies that promote decentralisation, competing tendencies toward centralisation have become increasingly evident”.

There are four possible explanations for this centralising tendency and the move towards a more unitary system. First, the apartheid system was based on a federal and supposedly decentralised, albeit warped, form of government; thus there is an understandable aversion to a federal system. It also explains why our system of government, even though it has a federal form, is never referred to as such by the government. Second, although national leaders may make eloquent statements in praise of decentralisation, in reality they tend to perceive it as undermining their capacity to administer development and to control the processes and resources thereof. Instead, they consider that centralisation enables better coordination. Third, there is a growing worldwide tendency towards centralisation, a wave that South Africa appears determined to ride. And last, President Thabo Mbeki and many in the ANC government leadership have been trained within the radical Leninist school of thought. This gives pre-eminence to the role of the ‘vanguard party’,²³ thereby underpinning their understanding of a hierarchical relationship between rulers and ruled. This last explanation will be revisited in the last section as it alludes to the ideology that underlines the ANC government’s policies and actions.

RESTRUCTURING THE GOVERNMENT

During Mandela’s tenure as president, a Presidential Review Commission was set up to review the functions and structure of the presidential office. It insisted that the presidency should form the core of the system of governance, emphasising that the centralising of power was a growing trend among governments around the world. The report rationalised that the purpose of centralisation was to enable the heads of government to play a strong coordinating role towards the attainment of election promises. One recommendation was to merge the offices of the President and Deputy President due to overlapping support structures and functions that were excessively costly. Of interest is the outcome of the merge: whereas the total staff complement of the former offices of the President and Deputy President was 296, the restructured presidency has a staff complement of 341.²⁴

In June 1997, Cabinet approved the establishment of an important new unit in the President’s Office: the Coordination and Implementation Unit (CIU). The CIU was designed to “equip government with the strategic planning and management capacity it required”.²⁵ This unit has evolved into the Policy Coordination and Advisory Service

(PCAS). When asked during an interview with the *Financial Mail* what the CIU was, Mbeki answered:

It's an economic, a socio-economic coordinating unit. There has been a difficulty in the separation of departments, with each doing its own thing. When people think about foreign affairs, they normally think of the department of foreign affairs. But trade and industry is in foreign affairs, finance is in foreign affairs, defence is in foreign affairs, safety and security are in foreign affairs – a whole number of departments. You could have a situation where each one is pulling in different directions. So you need a coordinating unit, particularly with regard to economic questions. It is a unit of coordination.²⁶

The PCAS, comprising five units, vets new policy and drafts legislation for tabling at Cabinet meetings. The units are not accountable to any legislative body and it is mandatory for the ministries to refer all new policy documents and draft legislation to the presidency for examination by the PCAS. The five units – namely, economic sector, intergovernmental coordination, social sector, criminal justice system and international relations – are headed by chief directors. The chief directors are at least as powerful as the Cabinet ministers, but with a salient difference: whereas the latter are accountable to Parliament, the chief directors are not – they are accountable to Mbeki alone. A possible result may be that decisions would be made behind the scenes by the PCAS, while the ministers may be reduced to managers and marketers of the new policies.²⁷

Further changes resulting from the reorganisation of the presidency include the alteration of the relationship between the different levels of government – as the centre is strengthened so the provinces are weakened. It is, however, questionable whether the provincial governments could ever have seriously been autonomous what with 95% of their funding emanating from the national government and their budget being determined by the national Ministry of Finance. This serves to highlight finance as a further mode of institutional centralisation. Furthermore, the powers of national government have been extended at provincial and local levels – a central committee has replaced provincial and local branches nominating candidates for provincial premierships and local mayoralties.²⁸

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND THE LEGISLATURE

A further area of growing concern and another example of institutional centralisation is found within the legislature. First, the mandate of Parliament is severely limited as it does not have access to PCAS decisions.²⁹ Second, there is an accountability deficit as the electorate is no longer represented in constituencies. Mattes³⁰ points out that despite the apparent high degree of representation, the system “has created no direct link between legislators and voters”. The closed party list system used by South Africa means that voters have no choice over candidates and simply vote for a party. Third, the representativeness of members of Parliament (MPs) has come into question with the passing of the Constitution Amendment Act, 2003 (Act 2 of 2003).

The proportional representation (PR) electoral system used since 1994 has been widely assumed to have been positive for nation building as smaller ethnic, regional and minority parties gained representation in Parliament. This inclusivity stands in stark contrast to the exclusivity of the previous system of white minority rule and has made the composition of the legislature, with its low cut-off threshold, highly representative (it was initially one of the most representative systems in the world). However, the recent floor-crossing act allows elected representatives to change their political affiliations without losing their seats at national, provincial and local levels. Requirements for this floor-crossing legislation include that the:

- defector must be a member of the national, provincial or local government legislature; and
- defection must represent not less than 10% of the total number of seats held by the party from which the defector is leaving.

As a result the seat held by the defector is considered to be that of the party to which it is defecting, meaning that PR in terms of the initial allocation of seats (as determined by the number of votes) is distorted. In addition, the 10% threshold protects larger parties such as the ANC, as a much larger number of representatives need to abscond before defection can occur. Thus the floor-crossing legislation has become a further mechanism in strengthening the ANC.

The above serves to show evidence of institutional centralisation in the executive and the legislature, and across the three levels of government – national, provincial and local. On the one hand the evidence of centralisation appears to indicate the government's intention to improve the coordination of its programmes, but on the other hand it raises the question of whether Parliament, Cabinet ministries, and provincial and local governments are being sidelined. The restructuring has raised much concern, with the central question posed by Chothia and Jacobs:³¹ How much of the restructuring is about improved coordination, and how much about power? The concern is regardless of whether the intentions are benign: centralisation and thus consolidation of party dominance paves the way for the possibility of an imperial government.

DISPOSITIONAL CENTRALISATION: AGENTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

There are two primary spheres from where democratic accountability towards constraining the power of the state can emanate: political society; and civil society. It is noted at the outset that recognising the need for agents of accountability by no means asserts that these agents are above the state. Rather, there is agreement with Johnson³² that civil society cannot be assumed to be “positive, homogenous, and coherent” and that the state is necessarily “inherently authoritarian and bureaucratic”.

It is asserted that all institutions – states, CSOs or political parties – are guided and controlled by individuals who are capable of mismanagement, corruption and pursuing

self-interest, thus the need for autonomous political operating space for agents of accountability.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society is an umbrella term, and exactly which groupings of actors it covers is debatable. Taking a broad understanding, civil society comprises a multiplicity of actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, churches, the media, research institutions and think-tanks, social movements, women's groups, environmental groups and human rights organisations. The contention over which roles civil society is expected to fulfil is evident in its numerous and diverging definitions. In Ikelegbe's words:

A central hypothesis of the civil society paradigm is that it is the force for societal resistance to state excesses and the centerpiece organizationally, materially and ideologically of the social movements and protests for reform and change.³³

This definition is largely derived from the understanding of civil society as developed by thinkers such as John Locke and Adam Ferguson – that of a counteractive force to the centralising tendencies of the state.

Muchie,³⁴ however, questions the validity of the above definition by arguing strongly that the strength of civil society and the state is not to be found in an adversarial relationship, but instead in partnership and cooperative arrangements. Habib³⁵ takes the middle ground in recognising the plurality of civil society's social and political agendas, which in turn will be reflected in state–society relations.

By implication, it is only natural that some relationships between the state and civil society will be characterised by cooperation, while others will be characterised by conflict. Habib and Kotze³⁶ go on to define civil society as “the organised expression of various interests and values operating in the triangular space between family, state and the market”. This final definition reflects a more accurate description of civil society and its diversity of functions, one of which may be maintaining state accountability. Civil society is thus an avenue for articulating the concerns and issues of a diverse population. It celebrates plurality and diversity, and this is considered to be a healthy state of affairs.

SILENCING CIVIL SOCIETY

In rhetoric the plurality of civil society is acknowledged by South African politicians and government officials, yet there exists an expectation for a “single homogenous set of relations between the state and civil society”.³⁷ In an ANC discussion paper, *The State, Property Relations and Social Transformation*, it is asserted that: “[I]deally, a developmental state and civil society should co-exist in a broad *partnership* of nation-building, reconstruction and development” [emphasis added].

While it is agreed that civil society need not be in opposition to the state, what is paramount and should not be negotiable is that it maintains its autonomy vis-à-vis the

state. With South Africa's promotion of state–civil society partnerships characterised by the state setting the policy and determining the objectives, civil society is reduced to implementer of state policy. The lines of separation are thus becoming indistinct and blurred.

Civil society derives its very legitimacy from its ability to act and then to act independently. It is becoming clear that in South Africa this mandate of civil society is being strongly challenged by the government. The development of more formal and regulated civil society–state relations may subvert the character of civil society and compromise its role in enhancing democracy.

Mbeki clearly finds fault with the counter-hegemonic role of civil society.³⁸ His reaction to this role of civil society is instructive and is to be found in the ANC discussion document *The State and Social Transformation*, drafted in 1996 by then Deputy President Mbeki:

[...] the democratic movement must resist the liberal concept of 'less government', which, while being presented as a philosophical approach towards the state in general, is in fact, aimed specifically at the weakening of the democratic state. The purpose of this offensive is precisely to deny the people the possibility to use the collective strength and means concentrated in the democratic state to bring about the transformation of society.³⁹

Former President Nelson Mandela had earlier assumed an equally dim view of organisations of civil society that sought to adopt the role of critical overseer of the ANC government and who served as channels for grass-root grievances.⁴⁰ Mandela is quoted at the National Civil Society Conference in April 2001 as saying:

We cannot approach the subject of civil society from the point of view that government represents an inherent negative force in society; and that civil society is needed to curb government. Such an approach runs the risk of projecting civil society as adjunct to the organised political opposition [...] We cannot in the long term afford a situation where the majority of the population perceives civil society as something oppositional to their needs, wishes and interests because it is seen to instinctively oppose the government they voted into office.

At the same conference Mandela asserted that the challenge for society:

[...] is how various organs of civil society can cooperate to advance overall national goals of transformation [...] and trust that these efforts at cooperative partnerships will bear fruit for our society. [...] In that manner we can ensure that the energies of civil society are harnessed for the progress and unity rather than for division and dissipation of efforts.

In *The State and Social Transformation* it is stated that the government is "the only vehicle which possess(es) the capacity to act as the leader of the people in their struggle to

establish a truly democratic state”.⁴¹ The document goes on to point out “the importance of community-based and non-governmental organisations in the system of governance of the democratic state”.⁴² Thus, civil society must fit in with and advance the national goals as set by the state.

Muchie⁴³ makes a poignant statement when he says concerning the concept civil society: “It matters how the concept is appropriated and for whom and by whom?” In terms of civil society–state relations, it appears that the state is assigned the role of knowledge producer, policy developer, decision maker and writer of the agenda for social transformation, whereas civil society should support government through the mobilisation and implementation of governmental directives. Thus, according to the state, civil society must fulfil a unitary role – one that is in agreement with the goals set by the state, and if it enters a conflictual role with the state it is branded as contrary to the needs of the people.

In any normal, healthy relationship there will be a certain amount of conflict and disagreement: to negate this as a possibility is to promote an unhealthy relationship where inevitably one party must have their goals and values suppressed and subverted to that of the other. Such conflictual engagement – often done with a desire for the best possible solution – is the positive result of allowing one’s self to be accountable to another. Thus, perhaps the problem lies with the term *counterhegemonic* function as it has immediate negative connotations. An alternative could be *state accountability*. Some CSOs could thus fulfil the role of keeping the state accountable to its promises and to ensuring a democratic South Africa.

POLITICAL SOCIETY

Next to elections, the presence of a vibrant and viable political society in the form of political parties has become another yardstick of the health of a democracy. The occurrence of political parties is not a sufficient measure of democracy, but it is a necessary indication of democracy.

It is again acknowledged that political parties may become tools of tyranny and repression, especially where the party system moves to a one-party state: thus, the need for strong opposition parties to counter such a progression. For the purposes of this paper a political party will be defined as “a group of people that is organised for the purpose of winning government”⁴⁴ ideally through electoral means.

DELEGITIMISING THE COMPETITORS

The ANC’s *National General Council Report* from its 11–15 July 2000 meeting provides an indication of the ANC’s approach towards other political parties. It states: “While the elections demonstrated a *reduction in support for the forces opposed to transformation* [...]” [emphasis added]. By implication, opposition parties are ‘forces opposed to transformation’ and the ANC considers itself, as was previously quoted, as the only legitimate leader of the people. Mbeki states at the ANC’s 51st National Conference held in 2002 that:

The Democratic Party/Democratic Alliance has continued to position itself as the most determined opponent of our movement and our perspective of the fundamental transformation of our country. In the period since our last National Conference, the DP/DA has indeed done everything it could to oppose our transformation effort.

Thus, if you are critical of the ANC-led government or its officials then you will be branded as disloyal to South Africa and the future of South Africa. This is especially evident when even the previous party of apartheid sings the same tune. On 7 August 2004 the New National Party's (previously the National Party) leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk announced that he would be joining the ANC and called his members to join him. One of the party's members went on to say to other members that they would have to decide whether to "help build South Africa or criticise from the sidelines".⁴⁵ Again, if you do not join the ranks of the ANC-led government then you are not helping to build South Africa.

President Mbeki's address at the 51st ANC National Congress further reiterates this point: "From its foundation, the African National Congress has served as the parliament of our people and an agent of unity of the African people". It appears, therefore, that there is only political space for the ANC within Parliament and that the government is the only 'unifier' of the people.

Consequently, there is little room for the voices of opposition parties, since they are portrayed as 'forces opposed to transformation'. Opposition is further constrained by the very real threat of being branded as disloyal to South Africa if one is critical of the ANC-led government.

ANC IDEOLOGY AND THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

The academic inquiry should, however, not stop at recognising manifestations of centralisation. The *why* needs to be answered. Why is there evidence of institutional and dispositional centralisation? Some have argued that it is the result of the technocratic tendencies of the leadership, namely President Thabo Mbeki. However, this paper asserts that the pervasiveness of centralisation attributes too much to the ability of one man; rather, the answer is to be found within the worldview or ideology of the ANC.

The *Consolidated Report on Sectoral Strategies of the ANC General Council* of 2005 asserts that in the context of a unipolar world dominated by capitalism, "the ANC needs to *engage and assert its worldview, values and character*" [emphasis added]. The consequences of the assertion of this worldview are more understandable when the following questions are answered: What is the worldview of the ANC? How does this worldview translate into how the ANC sees itself? What objectives does it seek to fulfil? And, how does it aim to fulfil these objectives?

A worldview refers to an interpretative framework – the values and beliefs that determine overall policies and actions. The ANC's worldview is to be found in its core documents and policy statements. At its 2005 National General Council, the ANC once again affirmed its ideological orientation as "a disciplined force of the *left*" [emphasis added]. The ANC clearly sees itself "as a movement that organises and leads the people

in the task of social transformation”.⁴⁶ The ANC is a leftist party, movement and government, and its policies and actions are reflective of this ideology.

The ANC considers itself to be a movement. In a report from the 2000 ANC National General Council, Mbeki states: “As an agent of change, the ANC needs to discharge its responsibilities both as a *movement* for national liberation and a governing party [...]” [emphasis added]. In the 2005 *Consolidated Report on Sectoral Strategies of the ANC General Council*, it is asserted that the ANC needs to strengthen “as a movement that leads society in social transformation”. In *The State and Social Transformation*,⁴⁷ it is emphasised that the ANC is “the *only* vehicle which possess the capacity to act as the leader of the people” [emphasis added].

The ANC therefore considers itself to be a movement, the leader in the attainment of social transformation and the *only* leader of the people. Its claims of position and power fit within Leninist vanguardism. This is where the party provides ideological leadership for the masses towards the attainment of their revolutionary destiny. Johnson rightly cautions:

The result of this vanguardist approach that privileges coordinated and centralised leadership over decentralised mass action is a governing strategy that – despite the continued official rhetoric of participatory democracy and people-driven development – systematically limits the public spaces for people to participate outside the highly regulated and institutionalised settings defined by the state.⁴⁸

Besides the implications of vanguardism, the ANC’s reference to itself as a movement also needs scrutiny. Heywood⁴⁹ defines a social movement as a “particular form of collective behaviour in which the motive to act springs largely from the attitudes and aspirations of members”. They typically focus on a single issue and tend to emerge from society to challenge and change the political establishment. During apartheid the ANC was a liberation movement – the society challenging a repressive and undemocratic system. In 2005, 11 years after South Africa’s democratic elections, the ANC still maintains this title.

The implications of maintaining the title include, first, the blurring of the distinguishing line between government and society, thereby encroaching upon the political space and autonomy of society in general, and civil society in particular. Second, if the movement is for and of the people, why would the people oppose it? Thus, opposition would necessarily translate into being non-transformative. Third, it has implications regarding accountability. To whom and what institution is a movement accountable? Unlike a political party accountable to its electorate and a government accountable to its citizens at large, a movement has no accountability counterpart, especially if it is the government as well.

The ANC, as a movement, is mounted towards the aim of achieving a National Democratic Revolution (NDR). The strategic objective of the movement is:

The creation of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. This in essence means the liberation of Africans in particular and black people in general from political and economic bondage. It means uplifting the quality of life of all South Africans, especially the poor, the majority of whom are African and female.⁵⁰

Joel Netshitenzhe stated in 1996 that the NDR is a “process of struggle that seeks the transfer of power to the people. When we talk of power we mean political, social and economic control”. The change will “come about as a result of consistent effort on our [the ANC] part, which will entail a complex ideological, political and organisational struggle”.⁵¹

The creation of a democratic society is a necessary and noble task; but the rhetoric and actions appear far removed, especially when the fulfilment of the revolution means a transfer of power to one political party through the silencing of alternative voices and through the imposition of ideological hegemony. It is an elitist approach, which assumes the ANC speaks on behalf of society and that society, through civil and political society, is not capable of articulating its own voice.

In his address at the 51st National Conference of the ANC (2002), Mbeki argued that “the objective of reconstruction and development cannot be achieved unless the ANC and the rest of the progressive movement are *strong and united* around the realisation of clear policy objectives which actually result in reconstruction and development”. Accordingly, the NDR will be realised through, first, “[t]he application of the principles of *democratic centralisation*” [emphasis added],⁵² and by “strengthening the hold of the democratic government on state power, and transforming the state machinery to serve the cause of social change”.⁵³ Read: institutional centralisation.

Second, the NDR is to be achieved through its Cadre Development and Deployment Strategy⁵⁴ in the attainment of ideological hegemony. The term *cadre* denotes party members trained and disciplined in the ideology of the party who are “expected to exhibit a high level of political commitment and doctrinal discipline”.⁵⁵ A feature of the cadre party is reliance on a political elite to offer ideological leadership to the masses.

In the aforementioned ANC policy document, under the heading ‘Winning hegemony’, it asserts that the “responsibility of [their] cadres (e.g. those located within the state) [...] [is] to use whatever power they have to ensure that transformation policies are accepted and implemented”. The policy document also calls for the

deployment of cadres for effective intervention on all fronts, including the governmental, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, with proper coordination amongst all these levels, to ensure that we act as one movement, united around a common policy and bound by a common programme of action.

Parliamentary implies the political society and extra-parliamentary implies civil society. The ANC therefore intends for all spheres of political and civil society to be influenced and penetrated by its ideology.

At the ANC’s recent 2005 National General Council meeting it again reasserted the importance of the “ideological struggle and cadre development”, where the relevant commission recommends the necessity of paying “close attention to issues pertaining to the socialisation of new generations in institutions such as the family, schools and higher education institutions”. Thus, this ideological hegemony is to include the political socialisation of all South African citizens in the worldview of the ANC. Read: dispositional centralisation.

Institutional and dispositional centralisations are therefore manifestations of the fulfilment of the ANC's NDR. Pleas directed at the ANC to restrict its power and to refrain from infiltrating all spheres of the state and society would therefore be tantamount to requesting it not to fulfil its aims and objectives, as stated in its policy and discussion documents.

CONCLUSION

An increasing intolerance of dissent and alternative views is apparent in South Africa's fledgling democracy. In addition, the enactment of processes to centralise government structures and social discourse is closing avenues for autonomous and independent thought. The ANC contends for a unified approach to the NDR, thereby justifying the need for institutional and dispositional centralisation.

The ANC government, party and movement is clearly using the 'tools' of co-optive power through the pervasion of ideological hegemony. In true vanguard, leftist style, the room for independent, critical thought is diminishing as the ANC asserts itself as the only leader and voice of the people.

NOTES

- 1 This paper is based on an article that is being published in *Acta Academica*.
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- 3 Habib A, State-civil society relations in post-apartheid South Africa, in Daniel J, Habib A & Southall R (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa 2003-2004*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2003; Johnson K, State and civil society in contemporary South Africa: Redefining the rules of the game, in Jacobs & Calland, op cit; and Southall R, The state of party politics: Struggles within the Tripartite Alliance and the decline of opposition, in Daniel J, Habib A & Southall R (eds), op cit.
- 4 See Ryklief (2002) in *Thabo Mbeki's World*, op cit, where she alludes to the predominance of Mbeki and his supposed neoliberal ideology, which pervades the ANC. She refers to this as 'Mbekism'.
- 5 Nye JS Jnr, *Understanding International Conflicts*, 2nd edition. New York: Longman, 1997, p 51.
- 6 Heywood A, *Politics*, 2nd edition. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002, p 11.
- 7 Lukes S, *Power: A radical view*. London: Macmillan and Atlantic Highlands; NJ: Humanities Press, 1974.
- 8 Nye JS. Jnr, *Understanding International Conflicts*, 3rd edition. New York: Longman, 2003, p 57.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Muchie M, *Africa Integration in and for Civil Society*, Bulletin 3, <<http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/default.asp?5,50,5,321>> (17 March 2004), 2004, p 7.
- 11 Friedman, op cit, p 99.
- 12 Duverger, in Friedman, ibid, p 100.
- 13 Ibid, p. 101

- 14 Southall, The state of party politics: Struggles within the Tripartite Alliance and the decline of opposition, op cit, pp 74-75.
- 15 Friedman, op cit, p 116.
- 16 Heywood, op cit, p 263.
- 17 Giliomee, Myburgh & Schlemmer, op cit.
- 18 Southall R, The 'Dominant Party Debate' in South Africa, *Afrika Spectrum* 39(1), 2005.
- 19 Ibid, p 64.
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- 21 Niksic G, Difficult but not impossible: The ANC's decentralization strategy in South Africa, *Development and Change* 35(2), 2004.
- 22 Galvin & Habib, op cit, p 865.
- 23 Johnson, op cit, p 222.
- 24 The Presidency 2000/2001, pp 3-7.
- 25 Davis G, *The Shaping of Governance: The Deputy President*. Research Report, Centre for Development and Enterprise, 1999, p 6.
- 26 Quoted in Bruce P & Laurence P, The rational heir, *Financial Mail*, 3 October 1997.
- 27 Chothia & Jacobs, op cit, pp 151-153.
- 28 Mattes, op cit, p 25.
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- 32 Johnson, op cit, p 223.
- 33 Ikelegbe A, The perverse manifestation of civil society: Evidence from Nigeria, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 39(1), 2001, pp 2-3.
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- 35 Habib, op cit, p 228.
- 36 Habib A & Kotze H, *Civil Society, Governance and Development in an Era of Globalisation*. Unpublished manuscript, 2002, p 3.
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- 39 ANC, *The State and Social Transformation*. Discussion Document, November 1996.
- 40 Johnson, op cit, p 231.
- 41 *The State and Social Transformation*, op cit, p 1.
- 42 Ibid, p 6.
- 43 Muchie, op cit, p 4.
- 44 Heywood, op cit, p 248.
- 45 Quoted in Msomi S & Ndlangisa S, Kortbroek joins ANC, *Sunday Times*, 8 August 2004, p 1.
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- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Heywood, op cit, p 249.

The ANC, party dominance and social reproduction

ROGER SOUTHALL

INTRODUCTION

In a recent overview of the dominant party debate in South Africa,¹ I suggested that the polarisation between those liberal critics of the African National Congress (ANC) as a dominant party² and the ANC itself (which has repudiated the dominant party label as racist)³ obscures as much as it illuminates. Both sides tend to overstate their case: the former projecting the ANC as dictatorial if not actually totalitarian; the latter preferring to pillory their critics rather than dealing with the substance of their arguments. In short, I argue that this important debate has become unduly pejorative. In contrast, drawing from both sides of the argument, I have proposed the following:

- A ‘weak’ version of the dominant party thesis, which takes on board much that the rival commentaries are saying, is more productive and multidimensional than theorists like Giliomee et al allow.
- This recognises that the ANC has a ‘natural’ majority among the electorate. In the present era, this guarantees the ANC perpetual re-election and provides it the basis to dominate state institutions in all three spheres of government (national, provincial and local).
- It acknowledges that the ANC has embarked upon a considerable centralisation of power and has blurred boundaries between the party and the state. However, it simultaneously argues that in so doing the ANC has encountered significant limits, with important institutions and organs of state (such as the judiciary, the Auditor General, universities, research councils, etc.) retaining considerable degrees of independence (albeit somewhat unevenly).
- The drive to centralise power flows in part from the commendable desire for imposing fiscal discipline, driving development and curbing corruption – this flowing from the

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ANC's vision of itself as the vanguard force for modernising the state, both economically and politically.

- The ANC is a broad church and as such is the site of struggle between a variety of ideological persuasions and political practices. Consequently, countercurrents of democratic centralism (this Leninist tendency highlighted by its liberal critics) and participatory democracy (claimed by ANC ideologues) coexist and contest.
- Finally, even if the ANC has the *intention* to dominate the state, in practice it does not have the *capacity* to impose itself absolutely upon society. Even the apartheid state failed to do this and to contain mass discontent, and recent indications are that the ANC would fair little better if faced by waves of protest.

As I have pursued these arguments in considerable detail elsewhere,⁴ I prefer to use this opportunity to explore a further dimension of the ANC as a dominant party which is often overlooked: how it has used its dominance as the now ruling party as an instrument of 'social reproduction' – that is, how it is using its control of the state to reshape and 'transform' the country's ruling class.

THE ANC, STATE TRANSFORMATION AND CLASS

The ANC views its historic mission as being to liberate South Africa's black majority, who were historically racially oppressed under colonialism and apartheid, from political subjection and economic exploitation. This is theorised as the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), which envisages the ANC using state power under democracy to promote a 'transformation' whereby racial imbalances (of wealth, power, status and opportunity) throughout the entire political economy will be overcome.

Practically, this has come to mean, in particular: the ANC's determination to capture control of the state and its institutions. Hence it is that since 1994 we have seen dramatic changes in the demographic composition of the state at national, provincial and local levels in order to render them 'representative' – that is, to correct racial imbalances, the broad thrust being the justice and necessity of overcoming the apartheid legacy of white 'overrepresentation' through the appointment of blacks.

Such a racial transformation is, inevitably, often messy, clumsy and crude, not least due to the enormous backlogs of education and skills among black South Africans; a factor which results in much inefficiency within 'transforming' institutions.

Liberal critics regularly deplore such change. While they acknowledge the urgent necessity of overcoming racial imbalances in society, on the whole they argue that rather than the state pursuing 'affirmative action' in the appointments of blacks to positions for which they may not be adequately qualified, necessary change would be better brought about through longer term policies (notably through improved education and skills training for blacks). Within not too much time, they argue, if pursued vigorously, this would render South Africa a truly non-racial meritocracy.

In contrast, they argue, the ANC is today using instruments such as ‘affirmative action’ and ‘black empowerment’ not merely to correct racial imbalances but to entrench itself in power. The ANC, they say, is in practice seeking to erect a ‘party-state’ by ‘deploying’ its supporters to all levels of the state, diverse constitutional organisations, and also, importantly, throughout business and the private sector. In short, they propose that the ANC is engaging in a fundamental blurring of party/state boundaries and systematically undermining constitutional and civil society bodies and institutions which might contain it. At the end of the day the ANC ‘party-state’ constitutes a threat to political liberty.

I agree with many of these criticisms, although I think they need to be put forward in a much more nuanced fashion than is usually the case. For a start, I am deeply suspicious of them if they are uncritically founded upon a liberal paradigm which posits a sharp divide between state and party as the basis of the good society in the contemporary world. One objection is that this exists only very imperfectly even in those advanced liberal capitalist states such as the United Kingdom and the United States (US), which provide the basis for the model. Another is that there is a strong argument that such a sharp divide is wholly unrealistic in post-colonial states which are seeking to overcome marked racial and social deficits left behind by racist or colonial regimes to obstruct, slow or control black advance: on the one hand, the number of blacks with the necessary skills and education to fill high positions in the state and economy is relatively small, with the result that they tend to be deployed to multiple positions; on the other, the political pressures from below to appoint blacks to positions of power, income and opportunity are inevitably considerable, and not to accommodate may be dangerous to the prospects for democracy.

My concern here, however, is to place this aspect of class production and reproduction in the context of South African history. Let me outline this within a few short paragraphs:

- South African political economy from Union in 1910 was largely determined by the country’s role as a minerals producer, associated with which from early on were allied industries that together constituted a ‘minerals-energy complex’ (MEC).⁵ It was the discovery of minerals that had led to imperial domination and the South African War; and after 1910 politics was largely shaped by Afrikaner attempts to use the state to make inroads into English/Imperial dominance of the MEC. This was implemented through the ‘civilised labour policy’ of the 1920s National and Labour parties’ Pact Government and through the adoption of policies favourable to ‘national capital’ (much of it developing under Afrikaner auspices) under the successor National and United party governments of the 1930s.
- This reached its apogee in the political and industrial strategies adopted by the apartheid National Party (NP) government after 1948. Certainly, we need to be very cautious in viewing everything the NP did as opposed to and deplored by ‘English capital’, for there is a significant body of literature interpreting this relationship as ‘symbiotic’ rather than hostile, and as embodying as much compromise as conflict.⁶ Indeed, Giliomee⁷ himself has deplored the failure of business under apartheid to stand up to the state. Nonetheless, it remains the case that the post-1948 period was

characterised by: the systematic appointment of Afrikaners to high and middle positions in the state and parastatals; and the direction of state industrial policies and resources to advance the cause of Afrikaner business. It was Afrikaner capital, concludes Dan O'Meara,⁸ that was “the major beneficiary of NP rule”.

- In this context, in the post-apartheid situation it was inevitable that the ANC should construe liberation as the capture of the state in order to use it to overturn apartheid ethnic and racial imbalances throughout society.
- Thus it is that today's overwhelming electoral dominance of the political arena and control of Parliament by the ANC has been transformed into:
 - the rapid establishment of control of the public service and parastatals by the appointment of blacks to the most senior positions (this backed up by rapid affirmative action at middle and lower levels);
 - the elaboration and promotion of black economic empowerment to spearhead black penetration of the private sector;
 - early deal making with large-scale capital to extend black control and ownership of strategic sectors of the economy and of major conglomerates; and
 - the increasingly extensive use of procurement to boost black business at multiple levels.

Elsewhere I have characterised the dilemma of black empowerment as being that black capitalists do not have capital.⁹ But the ANC does have political power, which it is now using with increasing confidence and authority to shape corporate strategies and deal making.

- Thus it is that we have the making of an African/black bourgeoisie and middle class as the overwhelming project of today's ANC. To be fair, there are some strong indications that the Mbeki government considers the creation of this bourgeoisie to be a major dimension of a ‘developmental state’, which through its modernising and growth potential will bring substantial benefits to the majority of South Africans and serve to lift them out of poverty. Even so, the ANC's class project is a contentious one which, if spelled out explicitly, would cause massive tensions between the party and its sister organisations (the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party) within the Tripartite Alliance. Hence it is that even today, when the ANC is a party that has openly embraced capitalism and the liberalisation of the economy, it continues to debate with its allies in the language of liberation, notably through the (highly flexible) theory of the NDR. This, of course, celebrates black and African upward mobility and the formation of a black bourgeoisie and middle class, but requires them to adhere to a code of behaviour whereby, first, they use their new power and wealth for the advantage of oppressed segments of society as a whole; and second, they continue to acknowledge the ANC as constituting the vanguard of the revolution.

The drawbacks of such a trajectory are easily highlighted, again in summary form:

- In post-colonial societies, rapid class formation centred on control of the state breeds corruption. It is usually ugly, as greed comes to the fore, and it is often associated with wasteful, extravagant and opulent consumption – for such new capitalists are rarely Weberian-style entrepreneurs.
- Rapid class formation is also based on primitive accumulation. Nineteenth century US capitalism was based on appropriation of land from native Indians and their significant extermination, just as rapid capitalist growth in South Africa was based upon white seizure and monopolisation of resources and the transformation of the black population into a massive supply of cheap labour. However, the greater tragedy of post-colonial Africa has been that the creation of new ruling and capitalist classes has not, on the whole, been associated with autonomous capitalist growth but with the perpetuation of colonial-style dependence upon the extraction and export of resources (minerals and agriculture) to a global economy, within which the odds remain stacked against African economic development. As a result, the state has remained the principal fount of wealth in African societies; the outcome being that in most African countries, politics constitutes little more than a crude battle by elites to capture or retain control of government. Hence, for instance, as the recent *Ndungu Report* illustrates, Kenya's post-independence politics has virtually systematised private appropriation of state and public land.¹⁰ Meanwhile, in contemporary Zimbabwe we have only one of the more spectacular instances of appropriation of private property (notably white farms) and public resources by a party-bureaucratic bourgeoisie at the expense of the mass of society, although inevitably this is dressed up in the language of African liberation.
- From a South African perspective, it is necessary to acknowledge that ANC policy is hitherto more structured and more contained by the rule of law than in either Kenya or Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, it is also the case that the present phase of using the state to provide black capitalists with capital can be viewed, at one level, through the prism of a (perhaps inevitable and necessary) phase of primitive accumulation by an emergent black capitalism. Thus while some¹¹ may see black economic empowerment as providing the basis for a vibrant and independent class of black capitalists, an alternative perspective stresses the danger of the present growth pattern of black capitalism developing as 'crony capitalism': that is, a capitalism that is fed and developed by political influence rather than by self-generating innovation and investment.
- Finally, the transformation that post-apartheid South Africa is going through is often said to be reproducing and reshaping the racial segmentation of our society. The most common complaint is that the commitment to non-racialism of the ANC's own historic programme and of the Constitution is being overwhelmed by an effective re-racialisation of society. This can easily be exaggerated, especially if life chances are

weighed up by race, for whites are still heavily advantaged in terms of educational opportunity and location within the economy and so on. Nonetheless, the current trajectory presents a growing danger of the public service and local government becoming no-go areas for racial minorities, and that carries with it the risks of increasing racial stereotyping (whether this is fair or not): that, for instance, black control of the public service and local government breeds inefficiency, while white dominance of the private sector preserves efficiency and provides the goods that keep the state going.

PARTY DOMINANCE, SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE ANC'S PARTY-STATE

If, as I argue, the ANC's use of its dominance for purposes of social reproduction is an inevitable outcome of South Africa's history, does this lead inexorably to the consolidation of an ANC party-state?

I would argue that it does not, for at the heart of this historical trajectory is a paradox, and I think it flows in part from my thesis of the ANC's 'weak dominance', that is: the more the ANC's mission succeeds, the more its dominance is likely to be weakened.

The *Financial Mail*¹² argued some time back that we are likely to see an increasing separation of business from politics over the coming years as a black capitalist class becomes increasingly incorporated into the corporate sector, and as it becomes less rather than more dependent upon political influence. In other words, it was suggesting that in contrast to other Africa countries, there is enough dynamism within South African capitalism (the continent's most advanced industrial economy) for it to absorb or overcome the dangers of crony capitalism.

I think there is some substance in this thesis (although I think such a development will be highly uneven) and that a separation of politics and economics is far less likely to take place at local government level, especially within impoverished communities. I would also urge that, together with Fine and Rustomjee, we view South African political economy as one in which the state bases its industrial policy around the servicing of the MEC, and hence the notion of a separation of 'politics' from 'economics' always needs to be examined cautiously. Furthermore, there is the danger that a black bourgeoisie which has a significant base in the capitalist sector is as likely to be self-serving as it will be patriotic, and that it may well move its resources beyond South Africa's borders as globalisation strengthens its grip.

CONCLUSION

What is the way forward to better understand, contain and shape these and related developments? I argue the following:

- First, we need to move beyond the present limits of the dominant party theory as it is presented by its most strident proponents to adopt a more realistic appreciation of South Africa's development dynamics.

- But having said that, we should, secondly, continue to endorse strongly the emphasis placed by dominant party theory upon the importance of a critical and vibrant civil society that is able to counter the dominant party's erosion of the independence of constitutional bodies like the courts and Chapter Nine institutions, civil society and the media. From this perspective, of course, the present expansion of a black middle class can bode well in the long term for the health of South Africa's democracy.
- Third, we need to place much greater emphasis upon good corporate governance to accompany the present concentration upon good political governance. We need to note, in passing, that political analysts tend to have only the most hazy conception of what constitutes 'good corporate governance', and that it is therefore incumbent upon the specialists within this at times abstruse field to project the basic concepts of their discipline into the public discourse.

Meanwhile, it is vital that we remember that while the theory of party dominance deplores many aspects of what the ANC sees as its historic mission, the consequences of its *failure* to attain its objectives – of 'transformation' of South African political economy towards a more socially just and racially equal society – are more likely than its success to see the collapse of party/state distinctions. Or to put it another way, one of the most optimistic features about today's South Africa is precisely that it is not Zimbabwe!

NOTES

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- 3 For example, Suttner R, The great 'one-party state' debate: Point, *ThisDay*, 26 March 2004.
- 4 Southall R, Conclusion: Emergent perspectives on opposition in South Africa, in Southall, *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, op cit, pp 275-284; Southall, The 'dominant party debate' in South Africa, op cit.
- 5 Fine B & Rustomjee Z, *The Political Economy of South Africa: From Minerals-Energy Complex to Industrialisation*. London: Hurst and Company, 1996.
- 6 For example, Fine & Rustomjee, *ibid*; O'Meara D, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*. Randburg and Athens: Ravan Press and Ohio University Press, 1996.
- 7 Giliomee H, An untested democracy, *ThisDay*, 24 May 2004.
- 8 O'Meara, op cit, p 80.
- 9 Southall R, The ANC and black capitalism in South Africa, *Review of African Political Economy* 31(100), 2004, pp 313-328.
- 10 Southall R, The Ndungu Report: Land and graft in Kenya, *Review of African Political Economy* 32(103), 2005, pp 142-151.
- 11 For example, Randall D, Prospects for the development of a black business class in South Africa, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34(4), 1996, pp 661-686; Iheduru O, Black economic power and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 42(1), 2004, pp 1-30.
- 12 *Financial Mail*, 9 December 2003.

The Indian National Congress: Decline and revival?

ZOYA HASAN

INDIA'S CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE SINCE 1989

The 2004 elections held in April–May produced a dramatic political upset, the greatest in Indian politics and perhaps anywhere in the world: very few could have foreseen that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) would win 30 plus seats more than the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Most commentators had predicted the comfortable re-election of the NDA, while few expected the Congress to emerge as the single largest party ahead of the BJP.¹

What made the rejection of the BJP-led regime in this election a landmark event was that it signified a repudiation of the BJP's socially and politically insensitive pro-rich policies and the bruising impact of the majoritarian Hindutva campaign. But more important than this symbolic reaffirmation of secular nationalism is the evidence that the Congress party – which until very recently seemed to be a party in terminal decline – has suddenly returned to centre-stage as a revitalised political force and the discernible readiness of voters to give it yet another chance.

As mentioned, the dismissal performance of the BJP-led regime in this election was a rejection of the NDA government's pro-rich and communal politics.² Consequently, these two issues dominated the elections. The historical significance of this election – the 14th after independence – was the promise of the revival and restoration of India's democratic agenda and of the Congress party.

Adding to the sense of anticipation was that this prospect of a revival of the democratic agenda was in the context of the growing economic divide and the unequal distribution of opportunities and wealth. The recasting of the Indian National Congress (INC) as the party of *aam admi* (the common people) in the run-up to the 2004 elections was a sign that the Congress was at last serious about addressing three key issues.

- The first was a more general one relating to the disjunction between political inclusion and economic exclusion.

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- The second was the divergence within the Congress between its policies and programmes, on the one hand, and its social base, on the other.
- The third issue – somewhat of a contradiction – was between its largely middle-class leadership and the capacity of this leadership to deliver on the socially oriented programmes and initiatives.

The conscious shift in approach was an important factor in arresting the slow but steady decline of the party since Rajiv Gandhi's time. The larger question, however, is whether the Congress can sustain this change of direction and whether this signals the arrival of more inclusive development and politics. To consider this question further, this paper looks at the role of the Congress party in shaping the political and policy orientation of the UPA government and the democratic agenda.

Since 1989 the leadership, constituencies, issues and electoral strategies of India's political parties, including the Congress party, have undergone significant changes. Two interrelated developments are at stake: one in the country's party system; and the other in the Congress itself and in its commitment to the broader democratic agenda, which is the focus of this paper.

The party system has been witness to the long-term decline of the Congress, the rise of regional parties and the emergence of the BJP as a major national party. The verdict of the 2004 election has arrested the steady decline of the Congress. As will be detailed below, the lack of ideological clarity and political purpose – especially in relation to the challenge of the Hindutva forces – had, along with the sense of a dwindling organisational base, left the Congress party with an image of ambiguity and confusion; but more disturbingly, an impression that it lacked political direction.³ The capacity of the Congress to become an effective vehicle that could address the needs of a large section of the people alienated from the NDA's policies therefore depended critically on its ability to sharpen its own focus on economic and political inclusion, and thereby to increase its relevance in the rapidly changing circumstances.

The fact that the Congress did succeed this time reflects the conscious efforts made by its leadership towards a stronger integration of the party's organisational and social base with its programmes and policies. This was the key to its relative success in the 2004 elections. It also indicates a summoning of a greater ideological purpose and political clarity in terms of its approach to the democratic agenda. It was this two-pronged approach – emphasising organisational and political cohesion, and ideological clarity – which ultimately served to persuade the voters that the Congress could continue to represent a more inclusive approach to governance.

This paper explores how the decline and current revival of the Congress party is closely tied to the decision of its leadership to infuse a sense of social purpose into the Congress party's approach to the challenge posed by the BJP and other such forces to the post-independence governing project of the Indian state.

Over the years the party reached out to critical social constituencies by performing the role of a broad-based party aggregating interests and enabling citizens to exercise control

over their lives, and the party trying to exert some control over the state. The Congress began losing this support when it initiated a paradigm shift and sought to give priority to the idea of liberalisation and economic growth as a core value of the state, and Indian capitalism as the chief ally of the state.

The second process has to do with the growth of communal and communitarian movements and the response of the state elite to this development. This is apparent in the attempt to move away from inclusive notions of nationhood in order to accommodate so-called 'majority sentiment'. The two shifts went hand in hand and appeared to be dialectically interlinked. Both developments taken together overwhelmed the Congress.

THE DOMINANT AND DECLINING YEARS OF THE CONGRESS PARTY

For more than four decades after independence, the Congress party occupied a pivotal position in Indian politics. Led by Cambridge-educated Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress reaped the rewards of its role during the anti-colonial movement against the British. It won nearly three-quarters of the seats in Parliament in the national elections held in 1952, 1957 and 1962. The Congress ruled every state until 1967.

However, the interesting feature of Congress dominance was the large degree of autonomy that provincial units were able to assert in relation to the central party leadership. Their recommendations for candidates for parliamentary or assembly seats or for chief minister were almost always accepted by the central leadership. Powerful chief ministers dominated Congress politics in the Nehru era. Although led by upper-caste-class leadership, Muslims, scheduled castes and various regional and linguistic groups were represented in its higher echelons.

An important feature of the framework was the developmental state intervening in the economy and trying to promote the welfare of the population. The Congress enjoyed enormous prestige with the rural and urban masses. Its hegemony was based on a concrete set of achievements, including:

- an independent model of industrial growth;
- a considerable reduction in large-scale feudal landholdings, which benefited the upper peasantry;
- growth in infrastructure; and
- expansion of educational facilities and technical personnel.

A noteworthy feature of this project was a national definition of the polity with an emphasis on the state's responsibility towards society. It did deliver some tangible benefits to the broad mass of the population through various kinds of development projects, the initiation and construction of the public sector, and the provision of public services such as health, education and transport.

This political system worked until the split in the party in 1969, which was a landmark in India's political history. It transformed the Congress party from a loose coalition of ideologically diverse groups – which stretched from the right to the left – to a populist

party in which the supremacy of the parliamentary wing over the organisational wing was once and for all established. The consequence was the radicalisation of the Congress party and the centralisation of power, which manifested itself in complete control over the Cabinet and the party. Political rule was entirely dominated by central command and control and, in Congress party affairs, by the central high command. In government, emphasis was on the centralisation of powers in the hands of the central executive, with key bureaucrats often playing a more important role than ministers.

By the early 1980s, the Congress found itself at variance with the contradictory changes its own control over the state had brought about. Within the Congress itself, multiple sources of power had developed in line with the formation of linguistic states and the emergence of regional elites. In later years, these regional satraps challenged the hegemony of the centre as well as the domination of the upper castes and state-led industrialisation. They favoured rural interests, especially agriculture, and preferred to stress caste rather than class issues.⁴ Three decades of economic growth had created opportunities, jobs and public employment for the educated upper-caste-class English-speaking elite, and left behind the educated sections of the backward and lower castes. The Congress was unable to satisfy the growing aspirations of the lower castes that had been excluded from leadership positions. Even though the upper castes dominated the party, the Congress was projecting itself as a party of the disadvantaged, poor and landless.⁵

The breakdown of the Congress system was starkly evident after Indira Gandhi's disastrous Emergency experiment, which resulted in a sharp and substantial drop in the voter base. It was clear that Indira Gandhi's lurch towards authoritarian rule had cost the party heavily in terms of its popular credibility in the north, which had suffered the worst excesses of the Emergency. It was a blow from which the Congress party never really recovered. Its three-decades-long control of the national government was broken when the 1977 elections brought the Janata Party to power.

After the defeat of the Congress in the 1977 election and the formation of the first non-Congress national government led by the Janata Party – which was a conglomeration of four parties: Jana Sangh, Bhartiya Lok Dal, Congress (O) and the Socialist Party – the backward classes emerged as a major force in national politics.

As late as the 1980s, however, the decline of the Congress party was far from definite. But again the disenchantment with the Janata Party's uninspiring leadership and its internecine squabbling brought Indira Gandhi back to power in 1980. In the 1984 election, held after her assassination, the Congress polled the highest vote and seat tally ever as a sympathy vote swept the country and brought Gandhi's young son, Rajiv, to power. But the underlying trends signified the collapse of one-party dominance and the end of the Congress epoch in Indian politics. Troubles in the Punjab, Kashmir and Assam had mounted. The trouble in the Punjab had been building up since 1977 when the Congress lost all its seats there to the Akali Dal.

Much of the responsibility for the weakened party and weakened governmental and administrative institutions was attributed to Indira Gandhi's personal ambition and dynastic proclivities as she went about fashioning a new Congress in her own image.

There is no doubt that Indira Gandhi wished to concentrate power in her own person, in addition to the centralisation of power in the party and the state driven, by the narrow purpose of “government and politics for oneself”.⁶ But neither the need to reshape the Congress nor her capacity to do so would have been conceivable if the party had not already been in serious and growing disarray.

The decline itself was not due to factors that were altogether internal to the Congress; it was very much the result of paradigm shifts in the polity, economy and society, which the Congress had helped to bring about. Huge changes in the state, the economy and the rise of the middle classes as a major force in the economy and of the lower castes in politics influenced these shifts. In the new context the gap between image and reality was glaring. It was clear that elections could not be won by slogans alone.

During this period the Congress party was confronted with politics of segmentation arising out of identity conflicts in the political process.⁷ Before the early 1980s the political impact of religion was limited and communal parties won few seats. Even in the face of pressures from Hindu communalists, Nehru never countenanced a political role for religion, as that would have endangered India’s national integrity. While Indira Gandhi retained a strong commitment to India as a secular state, her definition of secularism was premised on the equality of all religions, and not the rejection of religion or the complete separation of religion and politics.⁸

The clear separation between politics and religion that was required to maintain the secularist polity became blurred. Most damaging was the fallout from the Punjab, where the Congress had a secessionist challenge on its hands. From 1981 to 1982 the Congress played the ‘Hindu card’ by refusing to take stern action against Bhindranwale, thereby allowing him to run amuck. This was done to keep the Akali Dal divided, and also to earn support among the Hindu majority in the rest of the country.

In 1986, the Rajiv Gandhi government slammed legislation declaring that Muslim women would not have access to civil law in matters of marriage and divorce. This opened up opportunities to breathe life into the ideology of the Hindu nationalists who condemned the Congress for its appeasement of Muslims through this legislation. The most dramatic event in this competitive process was the decision to allow Hindu worship inside the disputed mosque in Ayodhya, thereby legitimising the mobilisation to seize control over the mosque by the BJP-RSS combine and the eventual demolition of the mosque on 6 December 1992.

The consequences of the prolonged Ramjanmabhoomi movement leading to the destruction of the mosque in 1992 were several waves of violence that left thousands dead across northern and western India, as well as the idea that the Congress party could provide protection to Muslims and the secular principles that had kept Hindu nationalism and its organisations at bay for three decades after independence. These policies inflicted severe damage on the Congress party and its political base, particularly in the Hindi heartland, and this created space for new political contenders.⁹

In this context it is important to recognise that the real failure of Rajiv Gandhi and his successors, Narasimha Rao and Sitaram Kesri, lay in their unwillingness or inability to comprehend the seriousness of the challenge of communal politics to the structure of the

national framework. From the debate over Ayodhya to Shah Bano, the Congress leaders had failed to draw the lesson that the state in a multi-religious, plural and diverse society must not get entangled in religion. The strategy of the Congress was alternately to support majority and minority interests. It undermined its secular credentials by giving one concession to a particular community and then offsetting it by granting concessions to other communities in a process that left both Hindu and Muslim communities feeling they had lost something. Even as it pulled back from “riding the tiger of Hindu fundamentalism”,¹⁰ religion was used instrumentally, which transformed the political discourse, opening the way for legitimatising religious politics by the actions of the Congress regime. In this way, the use of religion by political elites made possible a redefinition of the ideological basis of political life and contributed to the resurgence of ethnic interpretations of national identity.

THE IDEOLOGICAL SHIFT OF THE 1990S

A major ideological shift took place in the Congress in the early 1990s. Although economic liberalisation is usually taken as dating from 1991, the rudiments of the policy were put in place in the early 1980s.¹¹ Economic growth and improving production were given top priority as the Congress party embarked on a liberalisation programme to unshackle market forces. Emphasis shifted from distributive justice to growth as a state goal, encouraging private investment to achieve this goal and to control labour.¹²

These changes were quite significant as they involved a shift from a multi-class state committed to pro-poor measures to a narrow conception of the state more closely aligned with business, capital and middle classes openly committed to a capitalist path of development.¹³ These changes were prompted by the realisation that the politics of *garibi hatao* was running out of steam, with anti-poverty policies, and especially land reform, proving difficult to implement.

In the 1970s the slogan of *garibi hatao* had a mesmerising effect on the popular imagination but its implementation required a change in the instruments of the state. However, Indira Gandhi did not harness her popularity to institutionalise the necessary change in the state; instead, *garibi hatao* changed the relationship of the leader and the party, with the Congress party becoming subservient to the leader. Nonetheless, at no time in the course of this reordering of the state’s priorities did the Congress government consider cutbacks in public expenditure. Overall, the state policy during this period was mostly pro-business, and especially pro-big-business, and it has remained so since then.

The details of the economic policies that came to be adopted in India since 1991 are well known and need not be repeated here.¹⁴ Essentially what this paradigm shift meant was the end of an autonomous trajectory of development and the eagerness of domestic business and middle classes to integrate them with globalisation. But what also happened was a widening of the gap between these classes and the bulk of people who had not gained significantly from the economic reforms of the past decade or so.

The Congress has traditionally drawn upon the support of the poor and the marginalised. Their access to power depends largely on the capacity of the Congress to

continue to draw from this support. The Congress, more than any other party, has had to deal with this hiatus in its support. Today the party is caught in a cleft stick between the aspirations of the middle classes – which it wants to court for the sake of political legitimacy and which control leadership positions within the party as well as vantage positions in the media – and the reality on the ground, which is that the preponderance of the support for the Congress is from the poor.

During the past decade-and-a-half, India's impressive growth has captured international attention. India's gross domestic product has grown steadily over the past two decades, with the past three years having seen the growth rate exceeding 7%. During this period the middle class has grown rapidly. Defined in the broadest sense, the middle classes now, according to one estimate, constitute roughly 26% of the population, or 248 million people.¹⁵ More realistic though still imprecise estimates suggest that the middle classes are more likely to total some 150 million people, primarily based in urban areas but including prosperous commercial farmers. Whatever the estimates, the fact remains that the middle classes are large in absolute terms and are expanding rapidly.

But equally significant is the polarisation of the economy and society as a result of this generation of wealth among an economic minority in the midst of a sea of deprived and dispossessed. Highly educated Indians have benefited from opportunities arising from the opening up of the economy and from globalisation. This has especially included the restructuring of industries as well as the new growth areas of information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services.

By the very nature of changes required to become competitive in the global market, companies eliminated the jobs of thousands of low-skilled workers in favour of fewer highly skilled employees. The significant gains in employment were concentrated in export-oriented enterprises such as garments, chemicals, plastics and software development. The increased employment opportunities and incomes have mostly benefited the better-educated classes belonging to the upper rungs of society.

The period of high growth has also been one of sharpening income inequality. While a minority of the population (around 20%) has indeed benefited greatly from the economic policies and processes of the last decade, things have got worse for the majority of the rural population and a significant part of the urban population. The most dramatic and remarkable improvement in consumption has been of those who were already the richest people in India – that is, the top 20% of the urban population.¹⁶ The other group that seems to have done rather well is the top 20% of the rural population – the rural rich – whose per capita consumption has increased by more than 20% since 1989–90. This was similar to the increase in consumption among the next 40% of the urban population. By contrast, the bottom 40% of the urban population has enjoyed a relatively small increase in per capita consumption compared to these other groups, at around only 14% since 1989–90.¹⁷ For nearly 600 million, or more than half of India's total population, per capita consumption has actually declined after a decade when national income was supposed to be growing at around 6% a year.¹⁸

The important point is that the tilt in the policy process in favour of the elite and the corporate sector, and the preoccupation with placating powerful interests has led to the

creation of two economies across the social and regional landscape of India. The vast majority of Indians are poor and still cut off from the world of mobile phones and shopping malls, but they live within a close distance of the now very visible rich. Despite the improvements of the past decade or so, even a cursory look at the human development indices will also bring home the stark divide built into India's political economy, which is unable to address the educational and employment needs of the majority of the population in the rural sector.

According to official data, a large proportion – 26%, or about 260 million people – still live below the poverty line. The main issue seems to be the persistence of social and economic inequity and the high rates of unemployment, which have increased sharply over the decade from 1993/94 to 2003/04 in the villages and towns, and among men and women.¹⁹ These imbalances threaten to cleave India into two separate spheres, invoking what Amartya Sen recently called a California and a sub-Saharan Africa.

During this period the Congress suffered a significant decline in political support. In 1997 it gained some respite from Sonia Gandhi's campaign on its behalf – which pulled it from the brink of a split. As the effects of the liberalising economy began to be felt, however, the discontent of social groups became palpable.²⁰ The irony was that, despite suffering the most, the poor continued to repose faith in the Congress, while the middle classes – who had been the main gainers from the economic reforms ushered in by Manmohan Singh – did not fully trust the Congress. The 1990s witnessed the rise of the BJP with considerable support from the middle classes. The central problem confronting the Congress was the disjunction between the reality of the concentration of its social support among the disadvantaged sections and its desperate search for middle-class approval.

In the circumstances, the resort to ethnic sentiment and sensibilities in politics was deeply related to the changes in India's political economy and the transformation of the role of the state, which was more explicitly pro-business rather than anything else. Congress's flirtations with ethnic politics in the Punjab or with interfering in communal politics in the Ayodhya and Shah Bano controversies were not just a coincidence. They were a response to the shifts in policy pattern of the state, which was now under the control of the business classes. Ethnic mobilisation was a substitute for pro-poor policies.

The principal problem was the growth and utilisation of ethnic nationalism as a tool of political mobilisation and the consequent rapid turnover in ruling government. Even though the Congress resorted to ethnic appeals and flirted sporadically with religious politics, it eventually became its principal victim. The 1990s saw massive convulsions in the sphere of identity politics and, buffeted as it was between contending passions, the Congress was unable to take clear-cut positions on important questions, such as the communal divide and reservations for the backward castes. The most striking part of the story has been the transformation of the Congress party.

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CONGRESS PARTY

The economic consequences and political implications of the reoriented development strategy surfaced at the same time as the assertiveness of lower castes and the caste and

class clusters that were once part of the Congress coalition and that were now clamouring for a voice and for representation in state power. This process was advanced by the implementation of the Mandal Commission, recommending quotas for backward castes in public employment and state institutions – an issue on which the regional parties made their debut on the national stage in 1989. These parties, representing the backward and scheduled castes, were regionally concentrated and strengthened their position at the expense of the Congress.²¹

The heightened caste and communal competition, which was provoked by the combined effect of Hindutva and Mandal, has radically changed the social map of politics. All this undermined the Congress in two ways: directly, by challenging its secular pluralist foundations; and, indirectly, by shifting the political discourse away from development to identity.

For the first time in 1989, both trends had caught up with the Congress decline. The Congress popular vote declined to 40% and its share of seats fell to 197 (of 529). The Congress lost the election on issues of corruption and communal conflict that had no direct connection with the economic reform agenda. However, the 1989 election was the turning point which saw the rise of the BJP and regional parties.

The BJP emerged as the single largest party in Parliament in 1996, 1998 and 1999, whereas at no point before 1989 did the party receive even one-tenth of the national vote. In 1996, its vote share increased to 20.3%, in 1998 to 25.8% and in 1999 to 23.8%. This period witnessed the emergence of regional parties at the national level, a fragmentation of the electorate and the arrival of coalitions, which these parties have deftly used for expanding their presence in both national and state elections.

As it happened, the Congress was no longer attractive to the marginalised groups in society, especially the minorities and dalits in the Hindi heartland.²² This is in part because the Congress was not able to come up with ideas, policy packages or strategies that would overwhelmingly appeal at regional and ethnic levels. The Congress could not capture the mood of people who were frustrated and hoping for something better. People are attracted to parties by ideas and policies, and not just by clever stratagems and caste calculations at the time of elections.

Leaders like Indira and Rajiv Gandhi were able to contain the decline by building coalitions around their own personalities. In the process, the Congress became a leader-dominated force that depended mainly on the charismatic appeal of the Nehru-Gandhi family.²³ This worked as long as the other ingredients of success were in place: its social base in the countryside, its mobilisation through pro-poor policies, and a well-oiled party machine.

The problems became more acute as the massive countryside organisation of the Congress – which used to coordinate transactional negotiations among different groups and leaders in different parts of the country – fell into disarray.

One reason for this was the erosion of the mechanisms of intra-party democracy since the 1970s, as a result of which the organisational channels of articulation and conflict resolution became clogged. Various ‘committees on introspection’ were expected to herald changes in the All India Congress Committee (AICC) set up to inject new life into the moribund organisation. However, organisational changes alone were not the answer to the

Congress's problems. Fresh strategies and a reworking of its ideology were equally important, if not more so.

The Congress now has only a marginal presence in much of the Gangetic basin, which accounts for a disproportionate share of the country's population. Neither is it strong in the states of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which account for as many as 168 Lok Sabha seats. In the west, even in a state like Maharashtra where the Congress once had a stable base of support among the peasantry, it has had to work in tandem with a breakaway Congress group. In Gujarat, it has not won a state election since two decades ago, when Rajiv was prime minister.

The decline of the Congress has thus been marked in very contrasting regions: parts of the populous north and in much of the economically affluent west. In the four states of the south, on the other hand, Congress's success has depended to a varying extent on allies in three of the four states. It last won a state election in Tamil Nadu in 1962, when Nehru was still prime minister. But in Tamil Nadu the important point was that it retained its critical 20% vote base, which made it a very important force in electoral politics especially after the split in the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the birth of the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), with both parties needing alliances with the Congress in order to win elections.

In 1980, Congress's alliance with the DMK helped Indira Gandhi to turn around the post-Emergency Congress fortunes. Ever since, the Congress in Tamil Nadu has settled into an alliance mode, which had the debilitating effect of making the Congress a second-rank player in the state, even if the alliances were used to fortify the Congress nationally. Thus Tamil Nadu has been a traditional bastion of Lok Sabha seats for the Congress. In 1989, when Congress suffered a humiliating defeat in the north, it picked up seats in Tamil Nadu and other southern states.

But the contradiction remains that as long as the state units of Congress – as exemplified in the south but equally evident in other areas – remain anchored to fulfilling the larger objectives of the Congress's emphasis on parliamentary elections, the organisational base of the Congress in the states remains shallow and prevents the spread of the Congress as a political force with deep roots. In the long run, this does not augur well for the Congress party as a national political force.

In Andhra, too, the Congress has done well in the company of the Telangana Rashtriya Samiti (TRS), a regional party calling for a Telengana state. Thanks to the Telugu Desam's current decline and the anti-incumbency mood, the Congress has revived as a political player in this state. But as in Tamil Nadu, confronted with a powerful local movement like the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which will not remain in its present state of decline for too long, the Congress's lack of a strong local flavour and base – and lack of an anchorage in the local and state context – could render it vulnerable to another round of marginalisation, should the current anti-TDP feeling subside. As in Tamil Nadu, the peculiar conundrum seems to obtain. This is that the party's goals remain subservient to the larger national compulsion of winning parliamentary seats, thus restricting its spread and permeation as a local political force.

It does seem that until the Congress revives effectively in the north, the over-

dependence on the south to pick up Lok Sabha seats has put undue pressure on the imperative of sustaining the Congress as the powerful local political force that it was in the early decades after independence and until the 1980s or so. In the formation of the UPA, dependence on the DMK, and to a lesser extent on the TRS, highlights this dilemma for the Congress. By depending on these forces for support at national level – especially the DMK, which historically emerged as a counter to the Congress in the 1960s, and its cadre, reared by persons like C.N. Annadurai on strong anti-Congress rhetoric and propaganda – the Congress lost its chance in the state arena to invent itself as a political force with a distinct identity, and thereby to be entitled to a major share of the political space. Thus, the Congress, which has pulled off a significant success in the national arena, faces the irony of its traditional dilemmas resurfacing as political challenges that cannot be ignored in the flush of national victory.

CONSOLIDATING TRANSFORMATION OF THE CONGRESS PARTY

Historically, the success of the Congress was built not just on its professed commitment to inclusive development but on political mobilisation operations, which drew together a wide spectrum of social groups across the country under its broad umbrella. The most notable trait in the building of its support base has been its famous ability to draw support from across regions, classes, castes and communities.²⁴ This support was recruited by regional and local leaders through a skillful balancing of local demands with wider national concerns. An intricate system of representation was worked out by what was probably the most organisationally complex party in the world.

In the past the Congress strength lay in its ability to reach out to the Rainbow Coalition and, above all, to reach down to the bottom of the social heap. This consistency and spread of support helped the party to occupy the dominant space in the political spectrum for close to four decades. But this picture has changed significantly. For instance, the Congress vote in 1991 shows the fairly even spread that one would expect from a centrist party. Between then and 1996 the Congress voter profile underwent a sharp erosion among the middle class, while the poor, slum dwellers, unemployed and minorities continued to swell the ranks of the party. During this period the upper and middle classes as well as the upper castes shifted away from the Congress and towards the BJP.²⁵

The 2004 elections reinforced this trend: the higher the class, the greater the vote for the NDA, with the class slope reversed in case of the UPA and the Congress.²⁶ The new Congress voters are now more likely to be socially marginalised citizens – that is, those who suffer from social inequities of different kinds. In other words, Congress is by and large the ‘party of the underdog’, especially when it faces the BJP.²⁷ But it has to compete for this support when it is contesting against the left, Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Bahujan Samaj party and the Samajwadi party, which get greater support than the Congress from the poor. In caste and community terms, the UPA vote is strong among Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and Christians, while the NDA has a decisive lead among caste Hindus. In other words, the voting pattern in 2004 confirmed the picture of the BJP representing the confluence of social and economic privilege, while the UPA and the Congress drew

support from the underprivileged. The point to note is that the Congress base in 2004 was largely among the poor – even more so than before – while its policies are oddly enough less pro-poor. When its support was more evenly distributed, it was more centrist than it is at present.

Even though the Congress and the UPA did not succeed in creating a counter social bloc of the underprivileged, the most striking feature of the 2004 general election was the shift in its strategy. The India Shining slogan, agrarian distress, and rising unemployment forced the Congress party to challenge the cynical way in which the NDA was seeking to win another term in office by manipulating indices of economic performance and celebrating the gains that a small upper crust had derived from the liberalisation process.

The Congress-led alliance worked well precisely because it happened to synchronise with and articulate effectively the popular mood within the political system. It addressed the popular perception that there was an urgent need to create an alternative to the BJP's package of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation that was tilted heavily in favour of big business, the thriving corporate sector and middle-class professionals.

In 2004 the Congress made an attempt to reinvent itself by restating Nehru's vision of India, namely:

- reversing the attack on secularism;
- renewing the emphasis on pluralism and composite nationhood; and
- expanding the democratic centre by enhancing the well-being of all sections of society.

What appeared to be tripping up the Congress in the recent past was its failure to demarcate itself sharply in opposition to the BJP's communal stance or its pro-rich policies. The Gujarat elections of December 2002 were a stark demonstration of the Congress's strategic failure. Following the horrific pogroms against minorities in 2002, the Congress party's response was surprisingly muted. By June 2003, however, after its defeat in the Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh state elections, the party recognised the radical need to recast its political and strategic approach. The Congress leadership understood that to reclaim the centre stage from the BJP, it was important to confront directly the myths that the BJP was propagating with regard to the wide acceptance of its ideology of cultural nationalism and economic reforms.²⁸

It was to the credit of Sonia Gandhi and her colleagues that they decided to adopt a sharply oppositional stance in respect of both these premises. An important indication that the Congress was taking a step forward in this direction was its adoption of a new charter of its political objectives at a three-day meeting in Shimla in July 2003. Called the *Shimla Sankalp*, this 14-point political charter pointedly highlighted the party's new willingness to confront the BJP's communal campaign head-on. The Congress re-emphasised its commitment to fight religious fundamentalism of all kinds and its resolve to combat the cynical attempts being made by the BJP and its affiliates to distort and destroy the liberal and tolerant essence of Hinduism.²⁹

More significantly, the Congress's charter also committed the party to the task of "strengthening the forces of nationalism that celebrate India's multiple diversities and nurture its many unities". In an indication that it had shed its reservations on the issue of political alliances, the resolution invited "all progressive-thinking men and women, institutions and political movements who share our understanding of India's past, our concerns with India's present and our vision of India's future to join [in this] historic endeavour".³⁰

The real transformation of the political approach of the Congress party was revealed in the campaign for the 2004 elections. The Congress strategists positioned the party as the champion of *aam aadmi* against the pro-rich policies of the NDA. A striking aspect of the election campaign was the manner in which Sonia Gandhi took the message of *aam aadmi* across the length and breadth of India. This was in pointed contrast to the insensitive India Shining campaign of the NDA that dominated the cities and metropolitan centres. Packaged in this powerful message was Sonia Gandhi's highly visible *Jan Sampark* programme, which generated large-scale voter support for the Congress. It was clear that the Congress president had her finger on the pulse of the national electorate, particularly the rural poor.

Three decades before, the Congress under Indira Gandhi had been able to fend off powerful challenges from the left through the nationalisation of banks and the abolition of privy purses, and later through the *garibi hatao* slogan. In 2004, on several issues ranging from 'employment guarantee' to undertakings to disinvest in the public sector, as well as social sector expenditure, the Congress party's manifesto had a thrust very different from that of the liberalisation agenda it had initiated in the early 1990s.³¹ Perceiving the popular mood, it envisaged a more active role for the state in promoting employment and welfare.

This shift suggested the success of the conscious decision taken by the leadership of the Congress party to challenge head-on and unambiguously the fundamental premises of the BJP's governance of India. It also reflected the failure of the earlier political approaches of the Congress party, which had fearfully refrained from challenging the BJP's political and economic policies and which had exhibited an inexplicable hesitation even at the lowest points in recent Indian political history, such as in Gujarat after the anti-minority pogroms. The Congress lost more ground and suffered further political marginalisation in the respective state assembly elections. In other words, Election 2004's very clear message was that the Congress party's true appeal to the Indian electorate lay in its return to its original moorings in social democracy and secularism.

In another break with its past, a member of the Nehru-Gandhi clan opted to stay out of office, instead securing the post of prime minister for the widely regarded economist Dr Manmohan Singh. Sonia Gandhi's decision to decline the post of prime minister created a new situation in which different persons headed the party and government. For the first time in India's history – and unusually for any democracy – the head of a party was seen as far more influential than the head of government. The viability of this arrangement is not yet clear as the situation itself is too new and unusual for us to be able to anticipate its consequences for the government and party.

Be that as it may, Sonia Gandhi's decision to maintain the Congress party's organisational integrity will be significant if it can revive the 1950's 'model of mutuality' that existed between the party and the government. The challenge will be to rejuvenate the Congress and once again make it a two-way channel of communication between the people and the state. The task in hand is to look beyond winning and losing elections and to ensure the continual organisational renewal necessary for mobilising public support and the endorsement of government policies.³²

CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE

Even the cursory reading of Congress history in the 1980s and 1990s attempted in this paper will have clarified its central theme. While our objective has been to explain the transformation of the Congress party, the continued political relevance and popular appeal of the Congress (as demonstrated in its recent revival) will depend on its ability to successfully reposition itself in the political landscape as the primary defender of the fundamental values that are critical ingredients for the success of the Indian nation-state – equity and justice. It must also be recognised that the turnaround in Congress fortunes did not come overnight. Just as the decline of the Congress party was a long process – manifesting in organisational weakness, ideological stagnation and a shrinking political base – its revival has been the result of a recognition of a more active role for the state in promoting employment and welfare. This was reflected in the introduction of the historic and landmark National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, which promises as a right 100 days of employment for the rural poor.

Also contributing to the revival was the work undertaken over the past few years to rebuild the party's organisational base and to try to put together some of the fragmented pieces of the Congress's earlier organisational structure. Only this can explain the comparative success of the Congress in shaping a new centre-left governing entity (the UPA) that reflects to some extent the political impulses and popular aspirations that went into the rejection of the NDA in the recent election.

This new approach will require the Congress to espouse a centre-left orientation that will involve a reworking of its understanding of economic reforms in order to achieve greater rapport with its electoral support base, which is primarily the less well off. Or at least it needs to find a workable middle way between its electoral base among the poor and its desire for the approbation of the upper and middle classes and business groups.³³

There are two issues here: one has been an explanation for the crisis and revival of the Congress party; and the other has been the question of whether the changes are fair and just. The problem posed by India's current model of the state and development raises the bigger question of why the common people in a democracy should accept a ruling alliance that does not guarantee their basic entitlements.

Unless the present government breaks away from neo-liberal economic policies, we are likely to be stuck with a two-track economy and democracy – one that offers economic and political benefits to the elite, and the other that gives voice to the common people, which is something that seems to come to the fore only during elections.

NOTES

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INC and ANC: A comparative analysis

THIVEN REDDY

INTRODUCTION

My modest contribution is based on a paper I wrote in 2000 entitled ‘The Dominant Party System: The African National Congress and Indian National Congress Compared’. This paper was initially inspired as a critical response to the Giliomee and Simkins book, *The Awkward Embrace*.¹ In this piece the authors adopt what I believe to be an alarmist position arguing on the basis of largely anecdotal evidence that South Africa is moving towards an ‘illiberal democracy’ and the formation of an authoritarian political regime. I queried their work and challenged their arguments that rather than ANC dominance being entirely negative for democratic consolidation, it could play a positive role in enhancing the key institutions that constitute the country’s democratic dispensation. At the time, there was no academic counter to the Giliomee and Simkins position, and only recently – and particularly in the context of this forum – have my comparisons begun to attract attention.

FEELING AWKWARD

I was uncomfortable with *The Awkward Embrace* and found Giliomee and Simkins’s arguments unconvincing. My discomfort came from two quarters. First, it seemed to me that the comparative aspects of the book were not systematic and rigorous enough, particularly in the sense that, for me, the most rewarding comparison would have been to compare the African National Congress (ANC) with the Indian National Congress (INC) party.

The book mentions the INC in passing and provides some reasons for not pursuing the comparison, including that much has already been written on the INC; that the Congress dominance period was already over; and that the ANC has already embarked on a non-democratic path. The latter point was clearly the motivating factor for writing the book – that the ANC was centralising power and was electorally authoritarian, displaying “mere majoritarianism and electoralism.” No doubt such tendencies do exist but their argument, as mentioned, seemed exaggerated.

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The second reason for writing the paper was that the Giliomee and Simkins book launched a series of debates, borrowed from American literature, concerning the role of the ANC, party dominance and democratic consolidation – which raise many interesting questions but which in application to particular case studies requires some degree of caution. In this literature there is emphasis on the term *democratic consolidation*; a term whose meaning is widely debated with little consensus on what it actually means, and to a large degree the meaning utilised depends on which values of democratic discourse one emphasises. A sensitivity to the critical use of these concepts is hardly picked up in the Giliomee and Simkins book.

For me, the dominant view pointed to a general belief that ANC dominance was bad for South Africa's democracy. I disagree. I argued in the paper that ANC dominance, given the deeply divided history and nature of South African society, may actually enhance the possibility of consolidating whatever democracy we have, particularly the key institutions holding elected officials accountable to the citizenry.

I arrived at this conclusion by studying literature on the INC, and as far as I am aware no analyst has criticised the INC's dominance as being bad for India's democracy. In fact the opposite view seems to prevail – that India's democracy would not have survived without such dominance – and there is widespread consensus on this point. So why should South Africa be different, with arguably less formidable challenges than those faced by India at its independence?

SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

There is sizeable literature on what makes democracies sustainable. The general opinion is that the richer the country, the greater the middle class; and the more homogenous the nation, the more likely it is that democracy would survive.² But that argument, it seems, does not apply to India. The population is largely poor and at independence most were illiterate. Additionally, Indian society is highly divided along caste, class, gender, ethnic, language and regional lines. In this context, India's democratic exercise seemed doomed to fail, but scholars are still trying to understand why and how it has survived for so long.

REVISITING THE COMPARISON

South Africa's ANC and India's INC have consciously indicated the parallels that exist between the two organisations, borrowing from each other's strategies of resistance and history.

On comparing these two organisations and the relationship between party dominance and democratic consolidation, it was not a major move for me to conclude that something is amiss if one (the INC) is given a positive rendering vis-à-vis party dominance and democratic consolidation, and the other (the ANC) is given a negative one.

In short, I stated in my 2000 paper that there is an anomaly in terms of the comparison between India and South Africa, and suggested that the first two decades of post-independence India (1948–67) show remarkable similarities with that displayed by the

ANC in South Africa today. I studied the literature on the Indian Congress model³ and its internal dynamics and then applied the model to the ANC, which, in my opinion, seemed to conform. My thesis, therefore, was that the contradiction in the conclusions based on a comparative study of these two countries cannot hold.

In the light of this, I believe that the similarities between the ANC and INC warrant a re-questioning of the dominant trend in our literature. This trend suggests that the ANC's political dominance has only negative consequences for democratic consolidation, while the Congress party and the Congress system is widely praised for developing India's democratic political system: that is, a positive correlation is drawn between the Indian dominant party system and the consolidation of democracy in that country, while in South Africa the received view on post-apartheid politics criticises the ANC as genuinely harmful for the long-term consolidation of democracy here.

DOMINANCE

We do, however, need to be clear on what we mean by dominance. It is not simply electoral dominance or dominance based on the size of a particular party's popular support. In Maurice Duverger's 1954 book entitled *Political Parties*, he emphasises that a party is dominant because its "doctrines, ideas, methods and style coincide with those of the epoch [...] Domination is a question of influence rather than specific strength." A dominant party is that which public opinion *believes* is dominant: that is, "even the enemies of the dominant party and citizens who refuse to give it their vote acknowledge its superior status and influence; they may deplore it, but they have to admit it".⁴

When we look at dominance in terms of electoral parties only, we miss the symbolic meaning that people associate with any party. It is clear to me – and I think that Giliomee and Simkins do not emphasise this much – that both the ANC and INC are associated with post-authoritarian regimes. The ANC's deep association with the struggle against apartheid constitutes more than a mere instrumentalist relationship between voters and the ANC.

I suggest in my paper, therefore, that there are particular reasons why the ANC and not, for example, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) or the Democratic Alliance (DA), was the chosen candidate to lead the post-1994 government and be associated with the post-liberation phase. The ANC's mechanisms – and this I get from the INC example – are that of a broad-based movement. That is: the ANC means different things to different people; it is factionalised (although it does not admit this); and it takes internal conflict management seriously and is more successful at managing these conflicts than its rivals.

On this last point, we are all aware of the internal party trouble that has plagued the ANC over the past two years vis-à-vis the Zuma corruption and rape charges. Compared to other organisations in our political spectrum, however, the ANC has stood out in terms of the way in which it has managed its conflicts historically. I would suggest that by comparison, rival but legitimate struggle organisations such as Azapo and the PAC have failed miserably to remain institutionally coherent and united.

KEY FEATURES OF THE CONGRESS PARTY MODEL

Having outlined the basis of my comparison between the ANC and INC, I want to elaborate on the key features of the Congress party model as outlined by Kothari and Morris-Jones. In essence, they say that to rely on the narrow Westminster two-party model in which there is a regular alternation of power between two competing parties does not accurately reflect politics in societies such as South Africa and India. This model, they believe, does not describe the empirical features of, in this case, the Indian system, especially during the period of one-party dominance. The Indian party system was not a competitive multiparty system where ruling party alternation was conceivable, nor was it a one-party system like China or the Soviet Union where no other parties competed in regular elections.⁵

Although the Indian political party system displayed the monopolistic dominance of one party it also retained the value of party competition characteristic of a democratic political system. Morris-Jones describes the Indian political party system as dominance co-existing with competition, but without a trace of alternation. The chief features are the:

- existence of one dominant party;
- presence of party competition; and
- absence of alternation or the likelihood that the opposition will control government.⁶

The structure and composition of the dominant party helps to explain the party's dominant position and the role of the opposition parties in the system. Kothari, the main theorist of the model, divides the Indian party system into two parts:

- a dominant party, which he calls a *party of consensus*; and
- sites of opposition external to the dominant party. These represent the diverse interests of opposition parties, civil society organisations and even important individuals.⁷

The dominant party itself comprises various factions of diversely organised interests. Since the Congress' strategy was to absorb groups it could not defeat in elections, the number of factions tended to increase. The Congress, and similarly we have seen with the ANC, would demand that rival organisations disband (as with the New National Party – NNP) in exchange for membership. Although the Congress tolerated factions, it prohibited independent organisations.

Similarly, the ANC in its constitution does not allow factions. In fact, there has never been a party in the world that admits to having factions because these are seen as being divisive. But competing factions in, I would argue, the ANC or INC contribute to their electoral dominance. Factions allow for the recruitment of new leadership and keep the party relatively open. In addition, the competing factions offset the development of a

tight-knit vanguardist Leninist organisation (even though, in the name of efficiency and unity, party elites the world over do have sympathies with authoritarian structures and centralised organisation).

In this sense, therefore, although the INC and ANC are dominant parties, they are not the communist parties of China or the former Soviet Union precisely due to the diversity of factions within the organisation, and a greater tolerance and appreciation by party elites to maintain as broad a base of support as possible.

THE PARTY OF CONSENSUS AND THE PARTY OF PRESSURE

What then is the relationship between the party of consensus and the party of pressure? In Kothari's opinion,⁸ these parties are relatively open; they are not genuinely adversarial but tend to be more cooperative. Quite distinctive of this type of system, the party of consensus and the party of pressure assume similar functions to that found in a typical multiparty system – to rule and oppose respectively – but they perform these roles differently.

The dominant party is the arena that really counts; all policy action takes place within it. The opposition parties are not governments in waiting since they do not constitute realistic alternatives to the dominant party. Instead they apply pressure on and within the dominant party. That is, opposition parties will find one or more factions within the dominant party that are sympathetic with it.

Kothari's model postulates that the divisions between opposition parties (say the DA and the PAC) are much more vibrant, deep and intensive than the relationship between an opposition party and a possible faction within the dominant party, and it is actually easier for an opposition party to work with an ideologically like-minded faction in the dominant party than with another opposition party.

In applying this to South Africa one would, for example, find a so-called Africanist tendency within the ANC. In this respect, if I am a card-carrying member of the PAC I probably have clear-cut historical differences with the ANC, but I would find certain speeches made by Mbeki that endorse the tradition to which I espouse. Similarly, if I was a DA member valuing the role of the market there would be certain speeches and positions within the ANC that I would find sympathy with. Every party therefore has this ambiguous relationship with the dominant party – they are not completely against all of the ANC, only those factions representing ideologies that they totally disagree with.

MAKING THE COMPARISON

If, to repeat, the key features of the INC model are the existence of one dominant party, the presence of party competition, and the absence of alternation or the likelihood that the opposition will control government, how does this model compare with the ANC's current position in the South African context?

First, if we accept that the Congress system in India was the dominant party because it was the lead organisation in the resistance movement, the same was surely the case in terms of the ANC's position in South Africa in 1990. The PAC, the Black Consciousness

movement and even the United Democratic Front (if it remained independent of the ANC after 1990) did not seem to have the same capacity for mass mobilisation that we attribute to the ANC.

Second, although the ANC would deny it, there is no denying empirically that the party is made up of different factions. It is well known that there are tensions between different traditions that make up the Congress movement, as well as institutional differences that are seen between the Youth League, the Women's League, the National Executive Committee (NEC) and the Alliance partners. Tensions are also seen within the structures of the organisation between, for example, the National Working Committee, the NEC, the branches and the regions. The political battles currently taking place in the Free State and Western Province, for instance, indicate that there are groupings (factions) fighting for governing positions.

Third, the ANC is not as close knit or as negative towards the opposition as the Giliomee and Simkins book would suggest. Certainly, the ANC does vilify the opposition (primarily the DA, but less so the ID, PAC and Azapo). It accuses the DA of unpatriotic behaviour, but that immature stance is not unique to the ANC and South Africa; politicians and politics involve all kinds of strategies, and this is one of many democratic tactics to undermine the opposition in the South African context, given its history and divisions. But despite the political language sometimes used there is clearly a great degree of cooperation, particularly in Parliament at the portfolio committee level. In addition, opposition party positions do get channelled through the ANC and sometimes emerge in legislation.

The tension, however, is that South Africa's opposition parties are not all of one tradition, so one would have to clarify which relations to the ANC one is emphasising. On one side, Azapo and the NNP have taken up posts in the ANC Cabinet, and so you would have the Azapo and NNP positions reflected in overall government policy. Somewhere in the middle then is the PAC, which refuses to take up positions in an ANC Cabinet or to cooperate with the ANC structures controlling the state at other levels. However, many PAC members have done this on an individual basis and they have not been excommunicated from the party – this is not seen as collaboration in the same manner as existed during the apartheid regime.

On the other extreme, however, is the issue regarding relations between the DA and the ANC, with the DA accused of going against transformation, and so on. But I would be cautious to conclude that the association is totally adversarial and that there is no relationship between the DA and the dominant party, even if it is indirect. The DA has had to construct its agenda as opposing that of the ANC – that is, the DA's agenda is still being determined and driven largely by the dominance of the ANC.

CONCLUSION

If we view the developing party system in South Africa using the Westminster model as the standard, or where alternation of government is the main value, and then condemn the party system as undemocratic (as do Giliomee and Simkins), we will miss the finer points of politics.

The dominance of the ANC does not mean that the system is becoming more undemocratic; it merely means that the system is working differently, yet democratically. The dominance of the ANC does not need to mean that democracy is threatened; in fact ANC dominance, it can be argued, creates the conditions under which our key institutions can entrench themselves in the short term (given past historical injustice and division), and this is in interests of all citizens: those voting for the ANC and those supporting opposition parties.

NOTES

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The impact of one-party dominance on democracy in multicultural societies: A comparison between Malaysia and South Africa

MALTE KASSNER

INTRODUCTION: THE CREATION AND STATUS OF THE TWO DEMOCRACIES¹

South Africa has developed a remarkable democratic system in the past 11 years, particularly when this is seen against the background of long-lasting apartheid. But since this democracy is still young and many of the political institutions have been built only recently, the democratic system is not yet well entrenched. Thus the question of how democracy in South Africa will develop is crucial. Comparisons with other countries that have similar conditions and have already undergone certain stages of development can often help to illuminate the question of future development. For an assessment of the South African democratic development, an analysis of Malaysian democratic development can deliver important insights.

Applying the criterion of political mobilisation of the entire society, the point of departure in Malaysia as well as in South Africa was their first general and nationwide elections. In Malaysia's case, this election took place in 1955. At this time the country was characterised by coinciding cleavages of ethnic fragmentation and economic stratification, very much as in South Africa almost 40 years later, in 1994, when *its* first free and fair election took place, marking the end of the apartheid era.

In 1955, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), together with its alliance partners, won the first nationwide Malaysian election, and it subsequently became the dominant party in the Malaysian party system. Such a dominant party system is characterised by one party that firstly dominates electorally for an uninterrupted and prolonged period, that secondly dominates in the formation of governments, and that thirdly dominates governmentally in determining the public agenda.²

Only two years later, in 1957, Malaysia became independent and its Constitution was implemented. Since that time, UMNO has uninterruptedly governed Malaysia and provided all Malaysian prime ministers. And in the most recent general election, in 2004, UMNO, under the umbrella of the coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) and with a new prime minister, Abdullah Badawi, received 64% of the votes and eventually more than 90% of the seats in Parliament, which was its best result in 20 years.

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Similarly, the African National Congress (the ANC) together with its allies – the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) – won the first South African general election in 1994 and became the dominant party. In South Africa's most recent general election in 2004, the ANC managed to achieve its best result in this young democracy, with almost 70% of the votes – that is, more than a two-thirds majority.

The recent outstanding successes of UMNO and the ANC demonstrate clearly the strength and dominance of both parties in their respective countries, and fuel the assessment that their dominance will most likely continue for a long time.

After its first nationwide election, Malaysia developed a good quality and stable democracy; one of the most democratic systems in Southeast Asia in the 1960s.³ However, after the national election in 1969 – in which the UMNO alliance lost its two-thirds majority in Parliament – ethnic riots broke out between Malay and Chinese communities on 13 May of that year.

The Malaysian government reacted by declaring a state of emergency, suspending Parliament and placing power in the hands of a newly created National Operations Council, which was headed by the UMNO politician and later Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak. This council reconfigured the political landscape by containing opposition forces. On the one hand, the ruling alliance was extended to many more parties which were also incorporated into the government, while, on the other hand, political rights and civil liberties in the Malaysian democracy were suppressed. Since then Malaysia has been characterised as a 'semi-democracy'⁴ or a 'diminished democracy'.⁵ A comparison of democratic development in Malaysia and South Africa may include the question of whether the South African democracy will regress in a similar way to that of Malaysia.

Since Malaysia and South Africa are both characterised by a very multicultural society, our research will focus on how both democracies deal with the multicultural composition of their populations and on the implications of their respective approaches.

Democracies have dealt with this diversity differently and have thus created very different types of democracies that are positioned in the spectrum between a civic democracy based on individual rights and an ethnic democracy based on collective rights.⁶ This issue will be analysed by applying the categories of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Furthermore, the strong dominance of one party in the political system makes it easier for such a party to modify its political environment according to its needs. Only relatively few institutions can keep the partisan government in check and can limit the reach of partisanship within state structures.⁷ It makes sense in an analysis of the path the South African democracy will most likely follow to investigate the dominant parties and ask how they deal with multiculturalism, rather than to analyse the political institutions of democracy.

The comparison between Malaysia and South Africa will be introduced by highlighting the more important structural preconditions in both countries. Regarding the common initial conditions, the structure of the society in terms of ethnic fragmentation and economic stratification as well as British colonialism will be looked at. Thereafter the different preconditions in the spheres of culture, political demography and religion will

be described briefly. As dominant parties exercise the major influence on the way that democracy deals with multicultural populations, the study will look at the dominant parties themselves and how they manage diversity. More precisely, the analysis will focus first on the organisational features of the dominant parties and secondly on their central ideological concepts, particularly whether they promote inclusiveness or exclusiveness. In a next step, the type and quality of democracies that have been produced by the dominant parties will be discussed and located in Smooha's typology of democracies, while the conclusion discusses South Africa's future democratic development.

THE INITIAL CONDITIONS OF DOMINANT PARTY REGIMES

Malaysia advanced as one of the Asian Tigers in the 1980s and is thus seen as an economic success story where different ethnic groups live together peacefully. Although located on another continent, South African observers like to look at aspects of Malaysia's similar socio-economic conditions in order to explore new ideas and concepts about the successful management of a multicultural and economically divided society.

Economically, both countries belong to upper-middle and high-income developing countries with a US\$10,070 per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in South Africa and a US\$9,120 per capita GDP in Malaysia.^{8,9} However, due to widespread inequality in the societies, the GDP per capita has only limited significance. Moreover, Malaysia and South Africa are both examples of societies that are extremely polarised along ethnic lines,¹⁰ with ethnic fragmentation indices of 0.873 for South Africa and 0.694 for Malaysia. The countries fall into the category of upper-middle and high-income developing countries on the first and the third position respectively.¹¹ Besides ethnic fragmentation, both societies are marked by economic stratification. The Gini-coefficient in both countries is still far above average, being 0.492 in Malaysia and 0.593 in South Africa.^{12,13} The ethnic fragmentation index and the Gini-coefficient already indicate similar basic conditions in the respective societies. Additionally, the coincidence of ethnic fragmentation and economic stratification characterises both South Africa and Malaysia.

At the time of their first general elections, the economic power in both countries was concentrated in the hands of minorities – that is, whites in South Africa and the Chinese and British in Malaysia – whereas the biggest population groups in the respective countries (80% Africans, 50% Malays) lived in poverty. Therefore, socio-economic inequality used to be an inter-ethnic phenomenon. This constellation of cleavages even enhances the similarity of the basic conditions in Malaysia and South Africa.

Furthermore, both countries experienced British colonialism, causing further immigration of population groups especially for economic motives. In Malaysia, primarily Chinese and Indians came to trade and work under the British colonial regime. South Africa witnessed immigration mainly from British settlers as well as Indians and so-called Cape Malays, who mostly came from Indonesia. In particular, British colonialism structured ethnicity in both countries in a similar fashion. Finally, both countries are characterised by a dominant party. UMNO as well as the ANC gained considerable legitimacy among the population because of their historic roles in their respective

countries. While UMNO was one of the main actors in Malaysia's struggle for independence, the ANC was a liberation movement under whose umbrella many different organisations successfully coordinated their fight against apartheid. Additionally, both UMNO and the ANC have had to overcome similar challenges concerning the state. These included the transformation of ethnic imbalances within the bureaucracy as well as the entrenchment of a central state upon provincial autonomy.¹⁴

When comparing two countries, there are always differences that have to be revealed and that can have an influence on the outcome of the research. In the first place, the countries are in different world regions and thus may have had very different pre-colonial power structures and different cultures that are still influencing the political process and thus complicate the comparison. However, this diversity of world regions can also be seen as advantageous because the inferences of the research will not be biased towards a characteristic geographical region.¹⁵

Second, the political demography is very different. At Malaysia's independence, the ethnic Malays constituted only half of the population (now about 55%) and the economically dominant Chinese just over a third. In South Africa, blacks account for more than three-quarters of the population and whites just one-eighth. Southall claims that "the logic of ethnic mathematics is fundamental to an understanding of how the dynamics of party competition in each case has developed".¹⁶ Different patterns of party politics between South Africa and Malaysia may therefore have developed.

Religions also mark important differences between South Africa and Malaysia. In both countries religion is widespread and quite vivid. In South Africa religion does not play a significant political role; there is no support for polarising along religious lines and most people belong to the Christian faith anyway. In Malaysia, however, the ethnic groups are separated by religion. While Malays are Muslim – something even acknowledged in the Constitution – most Indians are Hindu and most Chinese are Buddhist or Taoist or follow Confucianism.

This paper examines the question of how the young South African democracy may develop. This question is first tackled by means of an in-depth analysis of the ANC and how it deals with the multicultural composition of the population. Second, there is a comparison between the South African type of democracy and another democracy that has already undergone certain stages of development and that has similar basic conditions in its society.

Malaysia was chosen because its first general election was some 40 years before South Africa's, with, in Malaysia's case, the dominant party (UMNO) gaining power. Moreover, the analysis of the initial conditions reveals that the situations which the dominant parties had to deal with when they first came to power were quite similar. But besides many similarities, some deviating trajectories have also to be recognised. These might be caused by the different conditions of political demography and religion, which will be referred to later. Nonetheless, Malaysia's democratic development can deliver important insights for the South African democracy and thus a comparison between their dominant parties, their organisational features, and their ideological concepts (and the resulting types of democracies) promises to be enlightening.

ORGANISATIONAL FEATURES

In order to characterise the dominant parties in Malaysia and South Africa and to assess their inclusive or exclusive characters, one important field to look at is their organisational features. In the following a brief review of the histories of the dominant parties, an analysis of the type and extension of the parties' constituencies, and major characteristics of their respective alliances will serve as the main criteria for their respective organisational features.

MALAYSIA – UMNO'S ETHNIC IDENTITY AND COOPERATIVE STYLE

UMNO'S HISTORY IN BRIEF

In the immediate period after the Second World War, when the British colonial regime had replaced the Japanese occupiers, the structure of the party system was all but clear. The Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) was founded in October 1945. This party was "a radical, Indonesian-influenced body with a base of support among Malay-educated schoolteachers".¹⁷ In 1947 the MNP turned into the United Front, which comprised two wings – the Putera (Malays) and the AMCJA (various minorities); this front fought for the independence of Malaya.¹⁸

In May 1946, or only about half a year after the formation of the MNP, a pro-British conservative Malay elite founded the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Many leaders of this party were members of the English-educated administrative elite. The party was established in response to a British plan to create a Malayan Union in the peninsula, under which the Malays would lose their special status as the indigenous community and non-Malays would acquire the same citizenship rights as Malays.¹⁹

While the MNP fought for independence and thus was clearly challenging British colonial rule, UMNO's deviation from British policy proved only temporary. In 1948 the federation of Malaya was established, under which the Malays retained their special position. In the same year the British colonial regime proclaimed a state of emergency in order to fight communist insurgencies more efficiently. Shortly after this proclamation the MNP was banned, leaving UMNO as the only major Malay political organisation and thus giving it all the space it needed to prosper.

UMNO'S MEMBERSHIP

This founding history of UMNO continues to determine its character. Basic features of this character are the composition of the membership and the size. UMNO's membership is mainly confined to Malays and thus has an ethnic character. However, the issue of membership has always been handled pragmatically: for example, in Sabah membership opportunities have been extended to all Bumiputera (indigenous groups) since there are not enough Malays to form a majority. Nonetheless, Malays constitute the overwhelming majority of the members, and thus UMNO can be described as ethnically exclusive. But within this ethnic constituency there is a huge diversity of people.

At the outset, UMNO was mainly the advocate of the rural Malays. But with time, the

preferential economic treatment facilitated the development of a Malay urban middle class and a Malay urban business elite. With this structural change in Malaysian society, UMNO also shifted the focus of its party base from the rural areas – which were sometimes even taken over by the opposition party, the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) – to the new urban Malays.

This structural change in membership can also be observed in the leadership of the party. In 1970 Malay schoolteachers made up around 40% of the delegates to the annual assembly at the national level, with other local leaders being another influential group. In the 1980s, however, these schoolteachers and local leaders were pushed aside by urban businessmen and professionals, such as lawyers, doctors and engineers, who were all products of UMNO's programme for the advancement of Malays. Therefore, UMNO developed a very inclusive character within the Malay universe. This becomes clear by looking at the size of UMNO's membership. Despite limited outreach to the Malays, it has developed a large mass-membership that stands at about 3.25 million people nationwide.²⁰ And just recently the prime minister launched an UMNO membership drive to increase membership by at least 10%, with particularly young people being targeted to become new UMNO members.

FROM ALLIANCE TO BARISAN NASIONAL

Although UMNO was established to favour Malay interests and up to now Malays have always made up the overwhelming majority of the party, the leaders soon realised that there were two reasons why it was necessary to work with political parties of the minorities.

The first of these was the political demography of the federation of Malaya, which was almost evenly divided between the so-called indigenous inhabitants (Malays and aborigines) and immigrant communities (Chinese and Indians). In order to get a clear majority in the country, political parties of the different ethnic groups had to work together. Second, the British colonial regime made it clear that it would only grant independence to the federation if the political parties of the different ethnic groups worked together. Thus it was imperative for UMNO to come to some understanding with moderate non-Malay leaders.

The cooperation in the so-called Alliance started between UMNO and the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) – an exclusive Chinese party founded in 1949 in the Kuala Lumpur municipal election in 1952. In 1954 the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), an exclusive Indian party, joined the Alliance. This alliance of UMNO, the MCA and the MIC managed to win every national election between 1955 and 1969. The electoral success demonstrated to the party elite that:

an inter-communal coalition of organisationally distinct ethnic parties offering a common slate of candidates, and fully endorsed by the UMNO leadership, could be electorally successful through the mobilisation of Malay ethnic loyalties and votes for non-Malay candidates.²¹

Thus, different exclusive ethnic parties cooperated in a coalition with weak Malay dominance and created relatively inclusive policies.

After the ethnic riots in 1969, UMNO's leadership modified the consociational strategy in order to prevent another ethnic clash and to better contain opposition. First, the Alliance was extended through the inclusion of a variety of opposition parties, for example, Gerakan and in 1973 also PAS (before it was ejected in 1977). These members were by and large non-communal although they appealed to a specific ethnic group – Gerakan to Chinese and PAS to Malays. However, the character of the Alliance, in which only one party represented each major racial community, was replaced by a structure which saw cooperation between communal and non-communal parties. Second, the power balance also changed considerably. The Alliance reflected Malay dominance but still maintained the notion of nearly equal ethnic partners through the relative symmetry of party representation in Alliance councils, and the distribution of electoral seats, Cabinet positions and patronage appointments.

When the Barisan Nasional (BN) replaced the Alliance, however, the BN was a very unequal partnership from the beginning, with the weight of UMNO increasing strongly.²² In the first place, the incoming parties joined the BN on UMNO's terms. Second, whereas the MCA and MIC had substantial bargaining power in the Alliance as the sole representatives of their respective community, their influence in the BN was watered down through the recruitment of opposition parties, especially in the case of the MCA through the Chinese-based Gerakan. Third, despite the formal equality of party representation in the BN organisational structure (for example, the Supreme Council consists of three representatives of each member party), there was no question of non-UMNO parties ganging up against the dominant party.²³ Finally, UMNO always had the largest share of BN seats in Parliament, ranging from 64–74% of the BN's peninsular seats, to 53–56% of its total number of seats.²⁴

It was this substantial change that caused observers to find more adequate terms to describe the new power configuration. These included “hegemonic exchange”,²⁵ “coercive consociationalism”²⁶ and “the BN as a façade for UMNO rule”.²⁷ Therefore, although the BN was extended to non-ethnic parties and thus the rigid ethnic character was softened, the new power relations with UMNO hegemony led to more exclusive policies in favour of the Malays.

SOUTH AFRICA – ANC'S NON-RACIALISM

ANC'S HISTORY IN BRIEF

The forerunner of the African National Congress (ANC) was the South African Native Congress, which was founded in 1912 and renamed the ANC in 1923. During this time the ANC was primarily representative of a mission-educated, small black middle-class with connections to chiefs in order to keep links with the rural areas.

In the beginning this elitist character isolated it from labour and radical protest.²⁸ Nonetheless, its task has always been to fight racial discrimination and, after 1948, the apartheid regime.

The ANC fought at first peacefully but, from the beginning of the 1960s, also violently through its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. After the destruction of ANC structures in South Africa, the organisation went into exile in 1963. On 25 April 1969, during the ANC conference in Morogoro, Tanzania, the doors of the ANC were opened to non-African members. While the ANC was basically a black party before this conference, it has since been marked by a non-racial character: "Whoever is in the ANC must espouse the non-racial character of the ANC."²⁹

However, the issue of non-racialism became a major component of the ANC identity only in the 1980s when opposition to the apartheid regime inside South Africa took the form of a broad alliance of very diverse organisations. This opposition culminated in the foundation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1985, whose membership included some 600 different civil organisations. The UDF as well as another important civil society player, Cosatu, accepted the leadership of the ANC in the liberation struggle and prepared for the return of the ANC to South Africa after its unbanning in 1990.

But whereas Cosatu decided to stay independent of the liberation movement organisationally and politically, the UDF dissolved and was incorporated into the ANC. That is why there are two main traditions within the ANC: one is the tradition of the former exiles and the former military wing, which is often described as being more authoritarian due to the command and conspiratorial internal structures; and the second is the tradition of former anti-apartheid activists in the country, particularly members of the former UDF and Cosatu, which is said to be more participatory and democratic.

THE ANC'S MEMBERSHIP

The ANC is a medium-sized party with about 417,000 paying members – according to a statement made by ANC general-secretary, Kgalema Motlanthe, at the 51st ANC conference in 2002;³⁰ but many more people call themselves ANC members even though they do not, or cannot, afford to pay the annual contribution of R15.³¹ In 1994, when membership exceeded 500,000 people for the first time, the ANC was particularly strong in urban areas due to the support of organised labour. This has changed with the ANC now being stronger in rural areas and weaker in urban areas. This tendency was confirmed in its electoral performance, which was most solid in poor, rural wards.³²

One of the reasons for this change can be seen in delivery aspects. While the ANC has not delivered sufficiently in terms of quality housing, clean water and affordable power in urban areas, people in rural areas especially have benefited from the rather extensive (for developing countries) social system, with pensions and the expansion of social grants, such as the child grant and the disability grant. They see these grants as achievements of the ANC.³³ Members of the ANC Youth League – about 100,000 in 2001 – who represent a larger proportion of the ANC's total active membership, live predominantly in small towns and rural villages.³⁴

Regarding the issue of race and ethnicity, membership is open to all people subscribing to the Constitution and principles of the ANC. Nonetheless, the vast majority are black due to the historical roots of the party. By selecting and placing candidates for party

positions, Cabinet seats and public service posts, the ANC effectively controls the procedure and thus manages to provide an ethnic balance. This is why racial minorities have usually been over-represented, for example, on the ANC list for Parliament.

Nonetheless, some observers claim an ethnically unbalanced selection among the blacks and suspect that ethnic politics are at work as, proportionally, people belonging to the Xhosa ethnic group (which is also the president's ethnic origin) occupy many high-ranking positions in administration and politics, including director-general and deputy minister positions.^{35, 36}

At the same time, however, the New National Party (NNP) – the former apartheid party and successor to the previous ruling National Party with mostly coloured and few white Afrikaner supporters – chose to subsume itself into the ANC because it saw more opportunities for political participation within the ANC than outside.

The ANC is therefore characterised by two main features: it is, first of all, a 'broad church' that provides space for different individuals and groups, irrespective of their ethnic or racial origin and their specific interests, as long as they subscribe to the constitution and principles of the ANC. This extreme inclusiveness is typical of liberation movements in Africa, and this is how the ANC sees itself and how it still wants to be seen. Hence, secondly, the ANC struggles to remain a mass-based party. Like most other mass-based parties, the ANC also faces a decline in membership and the tendency to become an electoralist party. It has so far prevented this development by reasserting the importance of the branch level in the ANC's ideological structure, for example, stressing the ideal of an active and broad membership; and on the practical level by, for example, introducing the year of the volunteer to the branches and by viewing door-to-door canvassing as pivotal to campaigning in black townships.³⁷

THE TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE

Soon after the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC and the SACP, both parties formed an alliance with Cosatu. This is the so-called Tripartite Alliance. The ANC leads this alliance and the SACP and Cosatu acknowledge the ANC's leadership because they still regard the ANC as a liberation movement rather than a political party.³⁸

It is the characteristics of a liberation movement – such as being multi-class, very broad-based and with its focus on the entire nation – that gives the ANC legitimacy to head the alliance. The SACP, by contrast, is a political party with a membership of about 35,000. Characterised by its long domination by whites, Indians and coloureds, it served as an entry gate for whites into black resistance.³⁹ The SACP has always contributed significantly to the political discourse within the ANC. Although it still comes up with socialist rhetoric, its political issues and decisions reveal left-wing social democratic pragmatism.

Cosatu as the third partner in this alliance is the strongest trade union federation in South Africa and one of the largest labour federations in the world. It is a federation of 19 individual unions and represents about 1.8 million members.⁴⁰ Owing to its large membership and good infrastructure, Cosatu is able to mobilise considerable support and

to mount protests at short notice. Cosatu used this mobilising potential to support the ANC in all three of the general elections held so far in South Africa.

The alliance of the three partners is based mainly on two pillars: the organisational and the political-ideological. The organisational link is best shown with the overlapping memberships between the three partners. Almost all SACP members are also ANC members and the SACP expects its members to engage actively in ANC structures.⁴¹ Similarly, most of the Cosatu leadership and activists are also members of the ANC and partly also of the SACP. Owing to these double and triple memberships, there is no sharp organisational distinction among the alliance partners.⁴² This is also the reason why the SACP and Cosatu do not have their own structures within the ANC. Thus the alliance is hardly institutionalised; rather it is an informal structure of an alliance. Members of the SACP and Cosatu who are also members of the ANC do not engage inside the ANC as SACP or Cosatu members but as individual ANC members. Of course, there are different networks of people within the ANC but the principle of engagement is the individual, and fixed factions inside the ANC would hardly be tolerated, either by the members or by the leadership.

The political-ideological link between the partners has seen major challenges. While this link was the basis for the formation of the transition and the new Constitution, it was challenged significantly with the implementation of the neo-liberal macroeconomic strategy called GEAR (for growth, employment and redistribution). Since then there have been major political and ideological controversies between the partners. These controversies, and especially the implementation of neo-liberal policies, showed also the shift in power relations within the alliance. Suddenly Cosatu and the SACP seemed only to be junior partners of the ANC without much power to influence politics. And this notion – although slightly weakened – has persisted.

The lack of institutionalisation and the policies of the ANC in the last years show the limited significance of the Tripartite Alliance. Although the ANC fosters the racial inclusiveness in South African politics (as witnessed by its partnership with the formerly minority-based SACP), the non-racial approach of the ANC and the collapse of the NNP into the ANC, show that this racial integration does not need any alliance. And although the Tripartite Alliance promotes the inclusion of organised labour as a corporate partner, institutions such as Nedlac provide much space for other corporate actors, for example organised business, as well as civil society actors, for example civic associations. Thus the Tripartite Alliance has always had inclusive but limited effects on politics in South Africa.

A COMPARISON OF THE ORGANISATIONAL FEATURES OF THE ANC AND UMNO

A comparison between the ANC and UMNO reveals some striking differences. The history of both parties shows that UMNO was founded as a Malay interest group to retain Malay preferential rights and positive discrimination. The ANC, however, was founded as a political party to fight racial discrimination. The founding cause of UMNO is therefore much more exclusive than the one of the ANC. In fact they stand diametrically opposite to each other and argue from different perspectives of their societies.

Furthermore, their histories show that the ANC changed its character fundamentally by opening up party membership to all South Africans and could thus evolve into a broad-based liberation movement, whereas UMNO extended its membership invitation only to Bumiputeras but not to all Malaysians. Thus the ANC's previous understanding of itself made a remarkable shift towards inclusiveness, while UMNO's character as an exclusive Malay party even increased after the ethnic riots in 1969.

A comparison of their memberships reveals some other deep insights into the characters of the parties. While both have members in very different social positions from very poor to very rich, they differ in number and location of members. Interestingly, UMNO's membership is about seven times larger than the ANC's, although Malaysia's population is only half the size of South Africa's. What are the reasons for this?

One reason of course could be that the official membership numbers of UMNO are dressed up. Another might be that many people in South Africa see themselves as members of the ANC but do not or cannot pay the annual fee and thus are not counted as official members. Yet another reason may lie in the different benefits of being a member of the dominant parties. During its 50 years in power, UMNO has developed such a broad-based influence in society that it is more or less necessary for Malays to be members of UMNO in order to benefit from Malay preferential policies. And these policies radically increase the usefulness of being an UMNO member.⁴³

The ANC, by contrast, has just started to develop this kind of dependency or patronage during its ten years in power. There are reports of people claiming they needed an ANC card to qualify for a Reconstruction and Development Programme house,⁴⁴ but this dependency is not nearly as broad-based as it is in Malaysia.

Furthermore, the strongholds of both parties are in different locations. While most of UMNO's supporters were originally drawn from the rural areas, this changed with the implementation of the Malay preferential economic policies which promoted urbanisation. Nowadays UMNO receives most of its support from urban areas. In South Africa, however, support for the ANC has shifted from the townships in urban areas to the rural areas.

The different founding causes and membership regulations manifest in the types of alliances that have been created. The BN in Malaysia is based on communal and non-communal parties. Although the different parties negotiate within the coalition and this purports to be multicultural politics, they always fall back on ethnic politics due to the dominance of the ethnic party that is UMNO. Thus the BN disguises ethnic politics without changing it; it weakens exclusive ethnic politics without giving up the category of ethnicity as a fundamental organising principle.

In South Africa, however, the different political actors of the liberation struggle adopted a non-racial ideology. While the SACP has always pursued a non-racial alignment due to its socialist ideology, the ANC adopted non-racialism in the 1960s, and the UDF and Cosatu carried non-racialism into the South African society in the 1980s. Although racial categories must still play an important role in South Africa in order to address the historical inequalities – and the main constituency of the Tripartite Alliance partners is the long-time underprivileged black population – the historical project has been the

deracialisation of society, and the fundamental and underlying ideology of the alliance partners has been non-racialism. This non-racial shape of the ANC and its partners has had very inclusive implications; for example, it pushed the other political parties to be (or at least to pretend to be) non-racial.

Apart from the race issue, the link between the liberation movement ANC, the political party SACP and the trade union federation Cosatu is a political-ideological one, although this point has been severely challenged in the past few years. So the main cleavage of the Tripartite Alliance is not ethnicity, as in the case of the BN, but ideology.

Furthermore, both alliances are characterised by asymmetric relationships between the partners due to UMNO and ANC dominance. However, while the ethnically exclusive UMNO needs its BN partners in order to be able to govern all the people of Malaysia with some legitimacy, the inclusive ANC – which itself is a ‘broad church’ and a platform for all races and many different interests – does not need any alliance partners and could govern on its own without losing much legitimacy.

Finally, the BN is very different from the Tripartite Alliance in terms of organisational features. The BN consists of different component parties that are clearly distinguished from one another and there is no overlapping membership. In addition, the BN is well institutionalised: the Supreme Council as a major part of the formal organisational structure determines the selection of the candidates at national level. The system of vote-pooling asks the supporters to vote for whichever BN candidate is nominated for the district. The BN formula has always allowed UMNO to win the largest share of BN seats in Parliament. Thus the BN – and within the BN, the UMNO hegemony – has been well institutionalised in the Malaysian political system.

In South Africa’s Tripartite Alliance, however, the three partners are not clearly distinguishable due to the overlapping memberships, and the Tripartite Alliance is not highly institutionalised. This becomes clear by looking at the non-commitment of the partners. For example:

there are alliance summits, which involve a large gathering of pretty much the executives of all organisations. But sometimes summits that are supposed to happen every year don’t happen for a couple of years. It is not a tightly structured and well-functioning alliance in that respect. In reality, the government’s relationship to business has been much closer, with much more consultation and interaction on issues.⁴⁵

The different meanings of the two alliances are illuminated by looking at a recently published party typology.⁴⁶ The authors locate the BN as a political party (sic) in their typology, as an example of a congress party; whereas another observer in a reply to the typology asks where the ANC (and not the Tripartite Alliance) could be placed.⁴⁷

CHARACTER AND IMPACTS OF IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

In multicultural democracies, the legitimacy of the state is often rather weak. The identity

dimension of legitimacy is particularly problematical because the different groups within the population have strong ethnic or racial identities, but only – if at all – a weak national identity. Filling this ideological vacuum with appropriate concepts that promote a national identity may significantly enhance the legitimacy of the state among the whole population.

Since this study deals with countries whose political systems are characterised by dominant political parties, it makes sense to analyse in particular the attempts at promoting national identity of the dominant parties and the governments, because their concepts are of direct relevance to the societies.⁴⁸ Since at the time of the first general election Malaysia and South Africa were both marked by a socio-economically advanced minority and an underprivileged majority, the question is whether the ideological concepts of the dominant parties and the governments intend to foster a national identity and are thus inclusive, or whether they promote the interests of a specific group and are thus exclusive.

IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN MALAYSIA

BANGSA MELAYU

The initial ideology of UMNO was the direct result of the British colonial regime's intention after the Second World War to form a Malayan Union with citizenship and equal rights for all the people living under its rule – Malays, Chinese, Indians and others. The founding rationale of UMNO was to challenge this British plan for such a Malayan Union in order to preserve preferential rights for the Malays.

Out of this struggle, UMNO developed its first and still central ideology, *Bangsa Melayu* (Malay Nation). This concept refers exclusively to the Malay community on Peninsular Malaysia, a community with the Malay language, Islamic faith and loyalty to their rajas.⁴⁹ Since UMNO advanced to the position of the most important political actor in Malaysia even before independence, it was able to form the Constitution accordingly. For example, UMNO insisted on provisions which symbolised the Malay nature of the state by integrating the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (king), by confirming Islam as the state religion and Malay as the national language, and by guaranteeing the preponderance of Malays in the civil service.⁵⁰

Besides these special and exclusive rights in the cultural and political realms there was a need for a certain tolerance towards non-Malays due to the electoral strategy of forming an alliance with the MCA and MIC. Politics in the alliance was determined by the cultural and political dominance of the Malays. Economics, however, was hardly addressed, as a result of which the huge interracial socio-economic inequalities in the society were continued.⁵¹

NEW ECONOMIC POLICY (NEP)

This configuration changed substantially in 1969 when ethnic riots broke out and some Chinese were killed by a Malay mob after the BN had lost its two-thirds majority in the general election a few days before. Officially, the reason for these ethnic riots was the

enduring socio-economic inequality in the society. While this might have been one reason, another factor was a leadership struggle within UMNO between the prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, who was weakened considerably due to the bad election result, and more radical young politicians within UMNO, for example, Mahathir Mohamed.⁵²

After Tun Razak succeeded Tunku Abdul Rahman, the ideology of the dominant party was extended by adding to the cultural and political special rights of the Malays exclusive economic advantages in the form of the New Economic Policy (NEP). This new policy was supposed to alleviate poverty and redistribute the productive assets according to the composition of the population.

The second objective, however – that is, the restructuring of society – was unquestionably the main emphasis of the policy, and it was quite successful. In 1969 the Malay-dominated Bumiputera share of corporate wealth amounted to a meagre 2.4%, the Chinese equity ownership stood at 27.2%, while more than 60% was under foreign ownership. In 1995, however, the Bumiputera share stood at 20.6%, the Chinese equity had increased to 40.9% and the foreign ownership had decreased to 27.7%.⁵³

This restructuring was achieved by using the state to fund a growing number of government-owned enterprises that were privatised in favour of Malay businessmen under the New Development Policy in the 1990s. Moreover, the state has treated Malays preferentially *vis-à-vis* admission to universities, the state civil service and certain economic ventures.⁵⁴

BUMIPUTERA

Besides this extension into the economic field, the NEP broadened the preferential group by introducing the category of *Bumiputera* ('sons of the soil'), which not only comprised the Malays but other 'indigenous' populations as well, such as the non-Muslim Iban in Sarawak and the Christian Kadazan in Sabah, eastern Malaysia. The *Bumiputera* concept claimed special rights for the indigenous population and thus served to justify the NEP ideologically. Formally, this ideology abandoned the pure ethnic division by introducing the separation of Bumiputera versus non-Bumiputera.⁵⁵ However, this new category was mainly introduced due to the political demography: that is, Malays made up less than 50% of the population whereas all Bumiputera came to about 55%. UMNO thus broadened its constituency and considerably strengthened its power base in Malaysian society. In terms of economic benefits, however, indigenous groups other than the Malays have hardly received any profits.

WAWASAN 2020 AND BANGSA MALAYSIA

With his Wawasan 2020 vision, Prime Minister Mahathir in 1991 added a third ideology to the above-mentioned two.⁵⁶ The Wawasan vision defines the goal that Malaysia should be a modern society and a developed, industrialised nation by 2020. A deeper look into the vision shows that it comprises two important elements. One implies that Malaysia is ready to respond to the globalisation process and thus is able to react to international

challenges. The other attempts to initiate the new concept of an inclusive national identity – *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation) – to which all members of the Malaysian society belong.⁵⁷

This was the first time that a vision of de-ethnicisation had occurred in Malaysia. However, *Bangsa Malaysia* is not an independent ideological concept and should be seen in the framework of well-established Malay hegemony. Malay primacy is the context within which Malaysian multiculturalism occurs in the form of *Bangsa Malaysia*.⁵⁸ The moderate influence of *Bangsa Malaysia* as an ideological concept depends entirely on the recognition of Malay primacy and would never survive on its own.

ISLAMISATION

Prime Minister Mahathir also attempted to influence norms and values in society with the help of religion. When Islam witnessed its revival in the 1980s in Malaysia, as in many other Islamic countries, Mahathir recognised the opportunities that Islamisation presented and combined Islamisation with the issues of Malay development, modernisation and national sovereignty in what has been called ‘Mahathirism’.⁵⁹

Since the different ethnic groups in Malaysia are separated by religion and thus only Malays and a few Indians are Muslim, Islamisation had a very exclusive character. In order to promote Islamisation, Mahathir co-opted Anwar Ibrahim, leader of a social Islamic movement in Malaysia, to UMNO. And Anwar accomplished his function brilliantly.

In his book, *Asian Renaissance*, Anwar wrote about the awakening of the Asian continent.⁶⁰ He said that the economic upturn was only one element of this awakening, alongside the cultural reawakening of arts and science, which must be based on strong moral and religious foundations.⁶¹ Thus the leadership attempted to make use of Islamisation in order to provide Malay people with a coherent value system for cultural empowerment, which in turn was supposed to support economic modernisation. With this successful combination of cultural and economic empowerment, Malaysia has been sold as the prime example for Islamic modernity, or likewise an example of modernist Islam.⁶²

However, ongoing corruption, particularly within UMNO and the BN, resulted in an increase in Islamisation because people were disappointed and looked for orientation;⁶³ Islamisation thus gathered momentum and increasingly defied the control of the leadership. It increased even more after Deputy Prime Minister Ibrahim lost a power struggle against Mahathir and was sacked and eventually imprisoned under obscure allegations.

Anwar’s dismissal left a vacuum in the concept of Mahathirism. Facing large-scale corruption and nepotism within the party and the BN, and having lost its Islamic credentials through the sacking of Anwar, UMNO was on the defensive and lost virtually all credibility and power to influence the Islamic discourse. It was only after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 that the government went on the offensive again by connecting the PAS and its concept of an Islamic state with terrorism. This reproach drove many moderate Muslims away from the PAS, which oriented itself again towards fundamentalist Islam in order to keep its original support, the traditional rural Malays.⁶⁴

ISLAM HADHARI

It was only the new prime minister Abdullah Badawi who – with his religious family, educational background and his reputation as ‘Mr Clean’ (*vis-à-vis* corruption) – had the credentials to create and push forward a new concept of moderate Islam, *Islam Hadhari* (civil or civilised Islam).

The concept of *Islam Hadhari* is supposed to tackle the Islamic vacuum at the national level as well as the problematic reputation of Islam internationally (fundamentalism and terrorism) by emphasising the tradition of moderate Islam practiced through mildly formulated principles. In this concept, the renaissance of Islam is portrayed as knowledge-seeking civilisation rather than the introduction of *Hudud* and *Sharia* law, and is thus regarded as more suitable for a multicultural country such as Malaysia.⁶⁵

IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

For South Africa, a country strongly divided along racial and ethnic identities due to the apartheid era, the development of ideologies that forge national unity and create a common and inclusive South African identity was an urgent priority.

RAINBOW NATION

One of the first and most influential concepts in this context was the ‘rainbow nation’. This metaphor was first used by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1991⁶⁶ and subsequently popularised, especially by Nelson Mandela. It excludes overtones of race and ethnicity, and it does not promote only one identity. It rather describes the peaceful coexistence of culturally different communities with equal rights for all citizens and a common loyalty to a shared state. This context was summed up by the slogan ‘One nation, many cultures’.⁶⁷

The different colours of the rainbow therefore symbolise the different cultures that keep their peculiarities but nonetheless belong together.⁶⁸ This inclusive ideological concept heavily influenced the inception of the new South Africa in constitutional terms (e.g., there are 11 official languages with English as the language of record), as well as in symbolic terms (e.g., the motto under the National Coat of Arms is: ‘Diverse people unite’).⁶⁹

The concept of the rainbow nation is seen to have provided the real miracle for the South African transition: that is, the “transformation of the political discourse from one based on race and ethnicity to one founded on a common national identity based on important diversities”.⁷⁰

The reason for the strength of the rainbow nation concept lies in “the perverted type of multiculturalism” under apartheid.⁷¹ Assigned identities caused so much bitterness among the people in South Africa that after 1994 any kind of social engineering – apart from black economic empowerment (BEE) and affirmative action – on the socio-economic level would have been regarded as totally unacceptable.⁷² Thus the reconstruction of South African society according to the inclusive rainbow nation concept seemed to be the only legitimate option, and influenced both the negotiation process and the construction of the Constitution.

AFRICAN RENAISSANCE – NEPAD AND UBUNTU

Whereas the concept of the rainbow nation was mainly disseminated by the first South African president after apartheid, Nelson Mandela, the succeeding president, Thabo Mbeki, developed his own conceptual approach – the African Renaissance.

This concept was first introduced in his parliamentary address on 10 June 1997 and might be traced back to his visit in Malaysia, where the late prime minister, Mahathir Mohamed, had referred to an ‘Asian Renaissance’ shortly before Mbeki’s visit.⁷³

The concept of African Renaissance is based on two main ideas: one is that the word *renaissance* stands for a new start but with reference to old traditions; the other is that the renaissance is an African one and thus “implies a process of political, economic and cultural re-engagement of South Africa with the rest of the continent and the recognition of South Africa’s identity as African”.⁷⁴

But what does it mean to be African? Even more important is: Who is African? In order to clarify this issue, Mbeki repeatedly maintained that “all who live in South Africa have a claim to being Africans”.⁷⁵ Thus being African is not defined by ethnic or racial criteria but by attachment to the South African community, which according to Mbeki is defined by values such as human rights, democracy and social justice.

Due to this integrative definition of being an African, the character of the African Renaissance is inclusive.⁷⁶ In public discourse, however, being African is contested and often defined by cultural factors, which are even accompanied by a racial emphasis. Political observers therefore warn that the concept of African Renaissance could become “the founding myth for a new imagined community in which racial sentiment rather than political principle is the animating idea”.⁷⁷ That is why the African Renaissance opens up the space for more exclusive interpretations. So while the African Renaissance is officially still explained to be an inclusive concept, it bears considerable exclusive potential.

Similar to the model of Asian Renaissance that was constructed on the foundations of information and technology as well as on Islamic principles,⁷⁸ the concept of African Renaissance contains two visions: the idea of modernity; and the notion of heritage and legacy.⁷⁹ The modernist vision of the African Renaissance assumed a strategic dimension with the formation of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (Nepad).

Nepad is firstly supposed to find a common African continental position on economic issues before coordinating the economic relations between African states and the developed world. Second, Nepad is informed by “respect for an open society and for democracy”.⁸⁰ The willingness of an African state to comply with these principles is to be controlled via the African Peer Review Mechanism. Covering both economic and political governance, Nepad argues that the behaviour of Africa’s governing class will determine whether the continent will benefit from global capital flows or not.⁸¹

However, since Nepad refers to the whole of Africa, it is questionable whether other African leaders share Mbeki’s vision of a democratising continent; and Mbeki himself has done more to undermine the programme’s credibility than anyone else by his bizarre support for the autocratic and corrupt regime in Zimbabwe.

The case of Zimbabwe has become a touchstone of how Nepad has come to be judged politically – and “Nepad has failed”.⁸² That is why the future of Nepad is seen mainly in

the economic field as an agency through which international and regional trade negotiations will be conducted, and as a mechanism for the coordination of cross-country infrastructural and other investment projects.⁸³ As there is only limited support for Nepad within Africa as well as on the international stage, the second vision of the African Renaissance – the national reinvention of tradition – may receive more attention.⁸⁴

This second vision of the African Renaissance concept refers to African heritage and legacy and has the intention to humanise “the impersonal forces of modern bureaucracies, international markets and electronic technology” and to adapt them to African needs.⁸⁵ Thus it is supposed to supplement the aspiration to modernity and progress by referring to a traditional African value system, *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is the idea of “people realising their humanity through their interaction with others”.⁸⁶ Due to this very social definition of humanity, *Ubuntu* mainly promotes such values as collectivity, unity and group solidarity. The implications of promoting such a traditional value system might have disadvantages as well as advantages.

On the one hand, a revived traditional concept of identity is mostly exclusive because it stems from a tradition of a specific ethnic group.⁸⁷ Furthermore, it is questionable how far the principles of *Ubuntu* may be compatible with modern democracy based on civil and political liberties. Finally, the invocation to a traditional value concept ignores the extent to which Africa has changed because half of the continent’s population now live in towns rather than in rural areas.⁸⁸

On the other hand, the reference to a traditional value system might have emancipatory effects on the formerly underprivileged African population, because with *Ubuntu* their traditions are valued to serve the whole of South Africa. Moreover, *Ubuntu* principles can serve to fill the vacuum of moral guidance at a time when this is characterised by individualism and the crumbling of cohesion and solidarity. In any case, the concept of *Ubuntu* must be adapted to democratic principles, to the multicultural composition of the population and to modern times if it is to unfold its inclusive and guiding effects for all South Africans.

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AND BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

While the concepts of rainbow nation and African Renaissance attempt to forge a new common and inclusive identity for all South Africans on the cultural level, neither addresses the historical socio-economic inequalities in South Africa, which were characterised by a racial segregation due to apartheid.⁸⁹

In order to diminish the interracial socio-economic inequalities, the ANC decided to create racialised economic policies, for example, employment equity legislation and BEE. The aim of the employment equity legislation is to transform the common workplace in the formal economy by promoting black people. In order to achieve a workforce that reflects the composition of the whole population in racial terms, the legislation requires employers to devise equity strategies and to report on them annually to the Department of Labour.⁹⁰

Regarding the aim of BEE, Mbeki stated:

As part of the realisation of the aim of eradicating racism in our country, we must strive to create and strengthen a black capitalist class. A critical part of creating a non-racial society is the deracialisation of the ownership of productive property.⁹¹

The success of BEE has mainly been measured in terms of the size of black holdings in blue-chip companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) – the ‘black-chip’ shares. But by end-February 2001 black companies accounted for only 4.9% of the JSE’s total market capitalisation. So “if measured by how many blacks own shares in blue-chip companies, the BEE experiment so far must rank as a great let-down”.⁹² Politically, the ANC is accused of re-racialising society and instituting reverse discrimination due to the racial character of these policies. In response, the ANC argues that a society that has never been deracialised cannot be re-racialised.⁹³

THE IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN COMPARISON

In Malaysia, the different presidents of UMNO, all of whom were also their country’s prime ministers, have created a broad range of ideological concepts. There has been a mix of exclusive and inclusive concepts on both cultural and economic levels. Exclusive concepts have been *Bangsa Melayu*, *Bumiputera* and islamisation on the cultural level, and the NEP on the economic level. Inclusive concepts have been *Bangsa Malaysia* on the cultural level, and Vision 2020 on the economic level. These different concepts have not replaced one another but have been added to the already existing ones in order to react to new challenges within Malaysian society.

The diversity of concepts means that Malaysians can pick whichever ideology or ideologies they need. The Malay people, for example, often claim their protection as indigenous inhabitants by means of special rights as the most important facet of nation-building and thus favour the exclusive ideology of *Bangsa Melayu*. The non-Muslim minorities, however, either favour the inclusive *Bangsa Malaysia* due to the provision of full integration into Malaysian society, or their exclusive collective rights – such as primary education in their mother tongue – as their central image of nation-building in Malaysia. Nonetheless, the overall result of this conglomeration of nation-building concepts is that, compared with the position 15 years ago, more people today identify with the Malaysian nation.⁹⁴

In South Africa the rainbow nation concept – which strongly influenced the Constitution with the core message of ‘one South African nation, many diverse cultures’ – operates mainly on the cultural level. Similarly, the special strength of the African Renaissance concept is its reference to the traditional value system, *Ubuntu*, in the cultural realm. But while the rainbow nation metaphor is fully inclusive and thus serves the ideal of colour-blindness or non-racism, the inclusiveness of the generally non-racial African Renaissance is constantly threatened by the debate on who is an African. While both concepts can be evaluated as mainly inclusive and non-racial on the cultural level, the approach on the socio-economic level is a racial one. This racialisation is reflected in the policies of equity employment and BEE.

However, the rationale of a non-racist society is the guiding principle for both the cultural and economic concepts, but the way to achieve this principle is different. On the cultural level both South African presidents promoted inclusive concepts such as rainbow nation and African Renaissance. On the socio-economic level the ANC chose to racialise policies and thus to address the interracial inequalities in order to deracialise society. Consequently, employment equity and BEE are of a temporary character and must be finalised after the goal of socio-economic deracialisation has been achieved. Thus it will be a test for the ANC's ideological consistency and credibility whether its racial policies will ever be discarded.

The comparison between the most popular concepts of the dominant parties in Malaysia and South Africa shows similarities on the economic level. Both presidents and their confidants operate with an inclusive development vision: Vision 2020 in the case of Malaysia and Nepad in the case of South Africa and, indeed, the whole continent of Africa. However, they attempt to address historical inequalities by racial policies, such as the NEP in Malaysia and BEE and employment equity in South Africa.

On the cultural level, however, both countries differ significantly in their concepts. In Malaysia, exclusive concepts such as *Bangsa Melayu*, *Bumiputera* and Islamisation are predominant, while the inclusive concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* only came up in the 1990s. Especially the concepts of *Bumiputera* and the drive of Islamisation are very different to concepts in South Africa because they are based on conditions that are fundamentally different to those in South Africa.

The drive of Islamisation in a country where ethnic groups are separated by different religions, automatically entails an emphasis on the separation of ethnic groups. And the creation of the *Bumiputera* concept introduced a new category of 'indigenous population' in a country where no ethnic group has a clear majority but the Malays want to secure their preferential policies.

Owing to the differences in religion and political demography it is unlikely that South Africa will experience these kinds of political and religious concepts. In contrast, the inclusive concept of rainbow nation in South Africa considerably influenced the inception of the post-apartheid time. The concepts of African Renaissance and *Ubuntu* do not celebrate the diversity of the population (for which, read: inclusiveness) in the same way as the rainbow nation does.

There have even been irritations about who is included in the concept; but Mbeki's explanatory remarks suggest that both concepts can be assessed as rather inclusive. Since the decay of Zulu and Afrikaner nationalism, post-apartheid South Africa has had no popular exclusive concepts within the cultural dimension.

Although concepts within the cultural dimension function as guidelines for the shape of the society, and although differences precipitate a different shape of political institutions, they do not necessarily have strong implications for political actors. In Malaysia, UMNO politicians can either play the ethnic card to maintain coercive domination by pushing an exclusive ideology or they can stress a more consensual form of hegemonic support, which involves developmentalist strategies around Vision 2020.⁹⁵ Thus their tools for maintaining UMNO's power and dominance are diverse.

The instrumentalisation of these different ideologies was again shown at the 2005 general assembly, which was the second for Abdullah Badawi as prime minister. In his speech, Badawi pleaded for more meritocracy in Malaysian society. This is an issue that addresses the competitiveness of Malaysia and thus belongs to the inclusive Vision 2020. The leaders of UMNO's youth wing – for example, Badawi's son-in-law, Khairy Jamaluddin – have, however, demanded a revival of the exclusive NEP, which means more affirmative action and the reintroduction of quotas favouring the Bumiputera. Eventually, both these elements were integrated into Badawi's New National Agenda.⁹⁶

Although the ANC's core ideology is non-racism, the category of race plays an important role in South African politics. This is not so much due to the use of racist arguments but because of accusations of people being racist. Hence the non-racist ideology allows ANC politicians to argue from a moral high ground and to delegitimise opponents. Such accusations of being a racist continue to be used, especially in situations where politicians and political activists run out of rational arguments to defend their positions.

A good example of this reflex is given in the recent Shabir Shaik corruption case. In the judgement the relationship between Shaik and Jacob Zuma, the ANC's deputy president and the former deputy president in the South African government, was evaluated as generally corrupt. Thereupon SACP and Cosatu members, as well as members of the SACP and ANC youth leagues who were disappointed at losing their candidate for the next presidential election, accused the judge and the whole court of being racists.⁹⁷ This example shows that despite the formal non-racial ideology of the ANC, the instrumentalisation of race is still prevalent in South African politics.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DEMOCRACIES IN THE TWO COUNTRIES

Our comparison of organisational features and ideological concepts has identified major differences between the dominant parties in Malaysia and South Africa. But what types of democracy have the different dominant parties produced in their countries?

In order to differentiate the types of democracy in Malaysia and South Africa, these will be analysed according to Smooha's typology of democracies.⁹⁸ Since this typology focuses on the management of culturally diverse countries, it is particularly suitable for the comparison of these countries. Smooha locates the different types of democracies on a continuum between civic democracies – whose cornerstone is the citizen or the citizenry irrespective of ethnic descent or religion – and ethnic democracies in which the ethnic nation is the centrepiece.⁹⁹

MALAYSIA – FROM CONSOCIATIONAL TO ETHNIC DEMOCRACY

From independence in 1957 through to 1969 Malaysia was considered a successful consociational democracy, with the Malay majority holding the political power and the Chinese and Indian minorities as well as international capital retaining the economic power. The coalition government included all major ethnic groups; group autonomy was

respected, and the situation was characterised by politics of compromise.¹⁰⁰ But the situation changed significantly after the general election in 1969, in which UMNO's predominance was severely threatened. The subsequent ethnic riots led to the declaration of a state of emergency and resulted in the reorganisation and reorientation of the political system, and eventually in UMNO's firmer grip on power.

Since this time, Malaysia has become an ethnic democracy, even if a weak and restricted one.¹⁰¹ An ethnic democracy is characterised by two basic features: in the same way as a consociational democracy, it identifies different ethnic groups in the population and is built upon this recognition so that the organising principle of society is a group rather than the individual. But unlike a consociational democracy, an ethnic democracy is characterised by inequality between the different ethnic groups.

Although the Malaysian ethnic democracy guarantees basic democratic rights, such as civil and political rights, for all permanent residents, the Malay group holds a number of special rights in economic, political and cultural affairs. So this type of democracy is based on two different principles that contradict each other: the democratic principle and the ethnic principle.¹⁰²

The ethnic principle produces inequality between the different ethnic groups: that is, the 'structural subordination' of the minority groups to the majority group.¹⁰³ In view of this, the Malaysian regime type has been labelled a 'diminished democracy'¹⁰⁴ or 'semi-democracy'.¹⁰⁵ The low quality of democracy in Malaysia becomes even clearer by looking at the ratings of the Freedom House Institute. Due to the lack of civil and political equality between the majority group and the minority groups, Malaysia was graded four in terms of political rights and civil liberties in 2005, and was labelled only 'partly free' in the overall assessment.¹⁰⁶

SOUTH AFRICA – A MULTICULTURAL DEMOCRACY

The South African democracy is characterised by its position between liberal and consociational democracies. On the one hand, it has much in common with liberal democracy: for example, the organising principle of society is the individual rather than an ethnic or racial group and thus full membership in the state is based on legal citizenship irrespective of ethnic descent. On the other hand, it contains features of consociational democracy.

A South African argument is that equality between individuals in a multicultural society cannot be achieved without recognising and granting certain collective rights. In order to provide a high degree of equality between individuals, the South African democracy grants minimal collective rights. These rights are supposed to preserve the heritage and languages of the various cultural groups. For example, officially the South African state is multilingual, which means that there is an opportunity for cultural groups to use their languages in school.¹⁰⁷ Thus the state acknowledges the cultural diversity of the population.

However, in contrast to a consociational system the South African democracy does not provide binding consociational mechanisms, such as proportional racial or ethnic

representation. The inclusion of minority members is not a legal requirement but only a legitimate option. This eclectic type of democracy is called ‘multicultural democracy’, according to Smootha’s typology.¹⁰⁸ Due to the civil and political equality between individuals, the Freedom House Institute rated South Africa’s political rights as grade one and civil liberties as grade two in 2005, which leads to a ‘free’ status in the overall assessment.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE DOMINANT POLITICAL PARTY ON EACH COUNTRY’S DEMOCRACY

The analysis of the different types of democracies makes clear the substantial influence that dominant parties have exerted on their democratic systems. In Malaysia, UMNO’s exclusive Malay membership, its hegemonic power within the BN and the Malay preferential ideological concepts led to an ethnic democracy characterised by the distinction of ethnic groups and an extensive inequality between these groups. Due to this inequality, the democratic system is marked by a low quality of democracy.

In South Africa, however, the ANC understands itself as a liberation movement which is open to all South Africans. It does not allow factions representing ethnic or communal groups to organise themselves, and it operates according to the principle of non-racialism.¹⁰⁹ These ANC standards regard the individual as the organising principle of the South African society. However, the different ideological concepts – that is, inclusive and individually based concepts with minimal collective rights on the cultural level; and predominantly exclusive concepts on the economic level, instituting preferential black policies to decrease the historical imbalances – depict the balancing act between individual and collective rights and the importance of equality.

By pursuing these principles, South Africa altogether qualifies for a multicultural democracy. Unlike Malaysia, the democratic system in South Africa is not characterised by an inherently low quality of democracy; and unlike UMNO, the ANC is not based on ethnic or racial politics. Thus, if the ANC’s electoral majority were threatened, it could not racialise politics to retain power. By doing so, it would abandon its central formal principle of non-racialism, and ANC politicians would lose their credibility and legitimacy within the movement itself and within large parts of the South African population.

South Africa will therefore not follow the (un-)democratic route towards an ethnic democracy, as Malaysia did after 1969. This is not to say, however, that the South African democracy might not regress in the coming years. Instead of institutionalised racial politics, other influences such as democratic centralism (which is a vivid part of the socialist ideology still widespread in the ANC) or increasing political corruption (which often results in non-transparent governance and financial dependencies), could severely damage the young democracy. The critical juncture for the future development of democracy will most likely be the situation in which the ANC is challenged in its power over the state.¹¹⁰ We can therefore ask the question: How might the ANC deal with such a threat?

NOTES

- 1 The author thanks Roger Southall for his valuable and precise feedback, Claudia Derichs for her useful comments and Max Schlüter for his linguistic revision.
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- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Smootha S, *The Model of Ethnic Democracy*. Working Paper 13, European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg, 2001, <www.ecmi.de>, (30 November 2005).
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- 8 Figures for 2002. *The CIA World Factbook* estimated the GDP per capita in 2004 at \$11,100 for South Africa, and at \$9,700 for Malaysia. The increase of GDP per capita in both countries illustrates the stable growth of the respective economies in the last years. *CIA World Factbook*, 2004, <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/my.html>> for Malaysia; <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sf.html>> for South Africa, (29 November 2005).
- 9 UNDP, *United Nations Human Development Report*, 2004, <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/pdf/hdr04_HDI.pdf>, (29 November 2005).
- 10 Behr H & Schmidt S, *Einleitung zu Multikulturelle Demokratien im Vergleich*. Wiesbaden: Institutionen als Regulativ kultureller Vielfalt, 2001, pp 12-13.
- 11 This index takes into account three main non-class cleavages, the racial (phenotypical), linguistic and religious cleavages. The most significant of these three markers is taken as a unit of measurement for the ethnic fragmentation index. So the index does not take into account cross-cutting and reinforcing cleavages. The index varies from 0 to 1. The value is zero for a completely homogeneous country (the probability of belonging to different groups is nil). The value 1 occurs in a hypothetical society where each individual belongs to a different group. Yeoh KK, *Towards an Index of Ethnic Fractionalisation*. Working Paper 2001-3, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, Malaysia, 2001, p 23.
- 12 The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality developed by the Italian statistician Corrado Gini. It is usually used to measure income inequality, but can be used to measure any form of uneven distribution. The Gini coefficient is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds with perfect equality (where everyone has the same income) and 1 corresponds with perfect inequality (where one person has all the income, and everyone else has zero income).
- 13 *UN Human Development Report*, op cit.
- 14 Southall R, Party dominance and development. South Africa’s prospects in the light of Malaysia’s experience, *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 35(2), 1997, pp 2-3.
- 15 Geddes B, *Paradigms and Sand Castles*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003, p 105.
- 16 Southall, Party dominance and development, op cit.
- 17 Crouch H, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, Singapore, 1996, p 17.
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- 25 Chee, op cit.

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- 105 Case, op cit.
- 106 The worldwide ranking grades of the Freedom House Institute range from one to seven with one being the best grade for the quality of democracy and seven the worst, see <www.freedomhouse.org>. Interestingly, the grades for Malaysia have gone up from five to four since the new prime minister Abdullah Badawi took over from Mahathir in 2003.
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The rise and fall of Mexico's PRI

BENITO NACIF

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical discussion of transitions from tyrannies to democracy presents the democratisation process as a comprehensive change involving several stages. The first stage is when the reformist faction within the authoritarian regime opens up the system to limited political participation – a stage known as liberalisation. As the political opposition takes advantage of the new liberties, the authoritarian regime becomes unstable. Faced with ensuing political mobilisation against the regime, the authoritarian elite have two options: a regression to authoritarianism; or democratisation, which involves the collapse of the authoritarian regime. Once democratisation truly begins, the next two stages in the transition process begin. These are the removal from power of the authoritarian elites – a stage known also as ‘extirpation’ – and finally the adoption of new democratic institutions.¹

The Mexican transition to democracy is, however, an odd case because its completion took more than two decades. Middlebrook traced the beginning of the liberalisation process to the 1977 political reform.² Given the slow pace at which it proceeded, Lawrence Withead has referred to the democratisation of Mexico as a case of “transition by stealth”.³ But the significant aspect of regime change in Mexico is the complex process of institutional reform that took place within the authoritarian system as part of the transition to democracy; this is why Mexico's democratisation can best be characterised as a case of transition through liberalisation.

TRANSITION THROUGH LIBERALISATION

The Mexican transition to democracy was finally completed in 2000, after 70 years of uninterrupted rule by a single-hegemonic political party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). However, regime change in Mexico has involved a significant amount of continuity. Five years after the PRI lost the republican presidency – the most important political position in the system – this party is still the largest political force in both houses

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of the national legislature – the Mexican Congress. In addition, the PRI still has control of 18 of the 31 federal states.

Continuity is not restricted to the fact that the old hegemonic party remains a significant political actor; the constitutional framework is still very much the same even after transition. The Constitution was first enacted in 1917, two decades before the formation of the hegemonic party system, but it prevailed throughout the long period of PRI rule and is still the law of the land. The PRI made hundreds of constitutional amendments before the transition to democracy was completed, while changes introduced to the Constitution after the PRI lost its first national election have been few and perhaps insignificant.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

The path that Mexico followed in its transition from authoritarianism to democracy raises two questions. First, why did the PRI not collapse? In fact, the PRI has turned out to be a very competitive party within the democratic context, especially in local elections. And second, what explains the remarkable degree of continuity?

The answers to these questions have to do with the institutional reforms that the PRI negotiated with the opposition parties throughout the protracted transition to democracy. These reforms dispersed power away from the ruling party, forcing the PRI to share power with the opposition. The goals that the PRI pursued in these negotiations were twofold: in the short term, the PRI wanted to channel the emerging opposition movements through the existing institutional framework; and in the long term, the PRI sought to lower the stakes of political competition, thereby reducing the chances of turning a bad electoral result into an absolute loss of power. In a nutshell, the power-sharing institutional reforms allowed the PRI to have a ‘soft democratic landing’.

POINT OF DEPARTURE

The theoretical accounts of transitions from authoritarianism to democracy tend to view the departure point as irrelevant. But authoritarian regimes are not all born equal. According to Barbara Geddes,⁴ authoritarian regimes differ among themselves as much as they differ from democracy. Her typology of authoritarian regimes distinguishes three ‘ideal types’ of authoritarianism – personal dictatorships, military regimes and single party regimes. Geddes also argues that the ability to survive in time varies significantly depending on the type of authoritarianism, with single-hegemonic party regimes having the longest life expectancy.

The Mexican case belongs to the third category. Single-party regimes are authoritarian because they sustain their monopoly of power through barriers of entry to new competitors. This is the key feature that distinguishes single-hegemonic party systems, such as Mexico, from dominant-party systems in democratic polities, such as South Africa – the institutional barriers of entry that prevent the opposition from launching a successful electoral challenge to the ruling party.

But single-hegemonic party systems also differ from other authoritarian regimes in at least three respects. First, what sets them apart from personal dictatorship is the institutionalisation of succession of power. In fact, some single-hegemonic party systems, such as Taiwan, began as personal dictatorships but eventually the dictator through the creation of a political party managed to institutionalise the renewal of the authoritarian elite. The second distinguishing feature is that single-hegemonic party systems tend to have a real base of social support. In fact, some single-hegemonic parties, such as Mexico's PRI and Taiwan's KMT, were able to compete and retain power in relatively competitive elections conducted under the supervision of international observers. Finally, these systems have the ability to co-opt emerging political movements and co-exist with some form of opposition.

The point of departure in the transition to democracy of the Mexican authoritarian model had two defining characteristics: the hegemony of a single party; and concentration of power in the presidency of republic.⁵

PRI hegemony involved control of access to all relevant political opportunities, including elective offices and appointed positions in the federal, state and municipal administrations. In short, during the heydays of the PRI there was no way of making a long and successful career in politics except through this party. Opposition politicians were denied any hold of power and very few of them succeeded in achieving office. Given the prohibition of consecutive re-election – a constitutional provision adopted in 1993 – opposition politicians could only aspire to a short spell as municipal presidents or federal deputies (members of the lower house in the national legislature). The career prospects of opposition politicians were dull, and they faced either unemployment or a return to private life after their term in office expired. Forceful rotation of office made their political survival incredibly difficult.

The second characteristic of the Mexican authoritarian model was concentration of power in the presidency of the republic. Although Mexico has a presidential constitution and an institutional arrangement based on a strict separation of powers, the hegemony of a single party reduced separation of powers to a mere formality.

As de facto leader of the PRI – a highly disciplined political machinery – the president controlled the decision-making process in the federal Congress.⁶ In fact, the president was at once chief executive and chief legislator. The role of the Congress during this period was therefore reduced to revising and approving the president's legislative programme.⁷ As for the judiciary, it had neither the authority nor the independence to check presidential power effectively.

Not only within the federal government, but also in the relationship between the national chief executive and the federal states was the hegemony of a single political party a formidable instrument of concentration of power.⁸ According to the written Constitution, Mexico is a federal state. In practice, however, through the PRI, the president controlled access to the office of state governor and had the ability to remove local chief executives from office at will. In fact, state governors acted as agents of the president, who delegated on them absolute powers over municipal presidents and state legislators. The same degree of centralisation that prevailed in the federal government was

reproduced at state level. Municipal governments and state legislatures were subordinated to state governors, who were the *de facto* leaders of the PRI state organisations.

UNDERMINING THE OPPOSITION

The PRI managed to extend its hegemony for 70 years by preventing the development of a strong opposition. A series of factors – such as majoritarian electoral institutions, a vast clientelistic network and rampant ballot fraud – were instrumental in keeping the opposition weak and incapable of launching a significant challenge to the ascendancy of the PRI. Up until 1964, all members of the Congress were elected in single-member districts by plurality rule. This system kept opposition parties heavily underrepresented: their electoral base grew slowly, but their share of seats in the national legislature remained the same. It was only when the PRI agreed to introduce proportional representation (PR) seats partially and slowly from 1964 to 1988 that opposition parties were able to gain a growing number of seats in the Congress.⁹

The constitutional ban on consecutive re-election (which was prohibited at all levels in 1933, shortly after the formation of the single-hegemonic party) was also instrumental in preventing the development of opposition parties. Through this constitutional amendment, the ruling party introduced by fiat the practice of forceful rotation of office. The PRI had three purposes in mind for doing this: preventing party splits in the nomination of candidates; increasing the ability of the party to co-opt emerging political leaders; and centralising power in the party's national leadership.

With non-consecutive re-election, the national leadership of the ruling party became the central coordinator of a huge system of office rotation, capable of accommodating all ambition-driven and office-seeking politicians. This system set up powerful disincentives to form and sustain opposition parties. Opposition parties were therefore formed either by ruling-party splinters (which usually disappeared after elections) or by ideology-driven political minorities such as the National Action Party-PAN (a group of intellectuals and professionals strongly influenced by the social teachings of the Catholic Church), and the various brands of the socialist left (including the Mexican Communist Party).¹⁰

The political hegemony of the PRI was also based on an extensive clientelistic network. Through the selective allocation of public rents (land reform, loans, concessions, public employment, government provided services, elective office, etc.) the PRI was able to maintain the support of a wide range of organised interest groups. In fact, the PRI adopted a corporatist constitution based on three sectors: the National Workers' Confederation, the National Peasant Confederation, and the National Confederation of Popular Organisations. These were agglomerations of labour unions, peasant groups and a miscellaneous collection of interests groups, including public employees and teachers.

The corporatist structure of the PRI grew out of two practices: the collective affiliation of union members to the party; and the quota system, whereby each sector had a fixed share of the party slate of candidates to elective office.

Finally, if these powerful disincentives failed to prevent the formation of a strong opposition, the PRI still had the ability to manipulate electoral results since there were no

reliable institutions to guarantee clean and fair elections. Basically, the ruling party was in charge of organising the ballots and counting the vote. Allegations of fraud were the rule, especially in those contests where the opposition gathered some strength. Certainly, the PRI was prepared to concede victory to the opposition in a limited number of cases but these were minor positions, such as municipal presidencies and federal deputies.

EXTERNAL SHOCKS

The political practices and institutions on which the PRI based its hegemony turned out to be highly stable, emerging in the 1930s and able to survive unchanged for more than 50 years. During this time, however, the political hegemony of the PRI was subject to external shocks coming from three sources: social modernisation; economic crisis; and changes in the international order.

When the PRI was formed, Mexico was a rural country; the literacy rate was only 20% and most of the population was employed in the agricultural sector. By the 1970s, however, the level of literacy in the country had increased to more than 80%, Mexico had become a predominantly urban society, and the levels of industrialisation were well advanced. Growing levels of social modernisation had at least one important political consequence – the expansion of the electoral base of opposition parties. The slow but steady growth of the PAN was concentrated in the densely populated municipalities and districts with the highest levels of social modernisation. The first significant electoral victories for the PAN took place in the developed north of the country;¹¹ Mexico City was for a long time a stronghold of the opposition, especially the socialist left.¹²

Economic crises also represented a threat to PRI hegemony. The combination of inflation, unemployment, high interest rates and a drop in real wages was a recipe for unpopularity. During the first 40 years of PRI rule the Mexican economy experienced sustained growth. However, due to the mismanagement of public finances and the inability to introduce reforms, economic crisis became recurrent in Mexico after the oil-shock of 1973. The first major economic crisis took place in 1976, putting an end to a long period of stability and growth. Six years later, Mexico went through an even deeper crisis, which led the government to default on its international debt, and this was followed by years of economic stagnation. Finally in 1994 Mexico experienced a huge financial crisis – the Tequila crisis – which resulted in one of the worst recessions in modern Mexican history.

The government's response to the economic stagnation of the 1980s was a series of pro-market reforms (fiscal adjustment, privatisation and deregulation) and the opening up of the economy to foreign trade. Economic liberalisation had important political consequences for it led to a major split within the PRI in 1987. The dissident movement against the neo-liberal policies of the PRI technocracy formed an opposition front in the 1988 elections: the result was a 15% drop in voter support for the PRI and a long post-electoral conflict that was the beginning of Mexico's transition to democracy.

The third challenge to PRI supremacy was the changes in the international order. Mexico's single-hegemonic party regime came into being just at the onset of the Great

Depression of the 1930s. This was a difficult period for democracy and market economies in Europe; fascism and communism were on the rise. Despite the radicalism of its rhetoric, the emerging single party regime in Mexico got on rather well with the United States (US). The major conflict with the US came in 1938 when the Mexican government expropriated the assets of British and American oil companies operating in the country. But the PRI regime sided with the Allies during the Second World War, becoming an important supplier of oil to the US and eventually sending troops to the South Pacific. After the Second World War, the PRI regime was able to find accommodation as a friendly neighbour of the US, maintaining a position of neutrality during the Cold War.

The main external shock during the Cold War came with the Cuban Revolution of 1958. The Fidel Castro dictatorship became a significant source for the spreading of communist influence, and thereby a major destabilising force in Latin America. But the PRI managed to contain communist influence and the proliferation of guerrilla movements in Mexico by establishing a cooperative relationship with the Castro regime, while avoiding confrontation with the US. Internally, the PRI dealt with the rise of the socialist left by introducing proportional representation, and creating incentives for the new movements to participate within the established institutional framework.

However, the major pressure for the PRI regime to democratise came with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the “third wave of democratisation” (to use Samuel Huntington’s term) which was advancing from South America at the end of the 1980s.¹³ The PRI regime – already facing a growing opposition and struggling to come out of a prolonged economic recession – responded to the mounting risk of international isolation by engaging in negotiations with opposition parties to introduce further political reforms. The regime held up, but was forced to intensify the process of political liberalisation, which advanced on three fronts: PR in the federal and state legislatures; independent institutions to organise elections and review their legality; and public funding of electoral campaigns.

CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICAL LIBERALISATION

By the end of the 1980s Mexico had already moved from a purely majoritarian electoral system based on single-member districts and plurality rule, to a mixed-member system combining both single-majority and PR.¹⁴ In the 1990s, the negotiations between the PRI and the opposition parties took this process one step further: the PRI agreed to introduce PR in the Senate (the upper chamber of the federal Congress) and set a cap on overrepresentation of political parties in the Chamber of Deputies. These measures made the whole system more proportional and reduced the chances for a single party, including the PRI, to win the majority of seats in both chambers of the Congress. Actually, in the elections following the introduction of the cap on overrepresentation (the 1997 mid-term elections) the PRI lost its majority in the Chamber of Deputies for the first time.

Opposition parties also sought to remove from the PRI the power to manipulate electoral results. In order to increase the credibility of the electoral process, they agreed to the creation of a new set of independent institutions to organise elections and adjudicate electoral disputes. The Federal Electoral Institute came into being in 1990, and six years

later it achieved total independence from government. The Federal Electoral Tribunal – a special court in charge of revising the legality of electoral processes – was set up in 1990 and through a series of reforms became the ultimate electoral authority with the power to review to review challenges, make the final vote count and determine the winner of elections. Finally, negotiations between the PRI and the opposition parties addressed the issue of electoral fairness. According to international observers, the 1994 presidential election was clean, but hardly fair. Not only did the PRI outspend the opposition by a huge margin during the campaign, but media coverage was strongly biased in favour of the ruling party. Accordingly, in the following round of negotiations the opposition parties extracted two important concessions from the PRI: regulations on campaign expenditures; and strict limits to the private funding of party activities. In order to level the ground of electoral competition, parties were to depend primarily on public funding.

What were the consequences of political liberalisation? First was the development of stable opposition parties. Before the introduction of PR, political parties (with the exception of the PAN) were rather transient movements that appeared and disappeared with the elections. PR seats provided regular access to office to opposition parties, allowing their leaders to reward the organisational effort displayed by the rank and file during the elections. As PR extended from the Congress to state legislatures and local councils in 1980s, this institution allowed opposition politicians to survive politically and pursue political careers outside the ruling PRI. And as democratisation progressed, opposition politicians had the opportunity to develop long and successful political careers.

Another important consequence of political liberalisation was dispersion of power away from the single hegemonic party. Dispersion of power took two forms. On the one hand it was the direct consequence of institutional reforms that granted autonomy to some state organs such as the Bank of Mexico, the Supreme Court, the Electoral Tribunal and the Federal Electoral Institute, among others. On the other hand, dispersion of power was the indirect effect of increasing levels of electoral competition.

In 1997, for instance, the PRI lost its majority in the Chamber of Deputies, with far reaching consequences in terms of the relationship between the president and the Congress. Basically, divided government put an end to the dominant role of the president in the policy-making process, removing the partisan controls that kept the Congress subordinated to the chief executive.¹⁵ Increasing levels of electoral competitiveness not only activated checks and balances to presidential authority in the federal government but also had an enormous impact on intergovernmental relations. State and municipal governments, once they were captured by the opposition, gained an independence they had never seen before. Federalism – a mere formality during decades of single-party hegemony – became a political reality.

Finally, the most important consequence of political liberalisation was the increasing levels of competitiveness in federal, state and municipal elections. Even before the 2000 elections, when the PRI lost the presidency of the republic, the opposition parties were able to win most of the largest 100 municipalities in the country. In 1989 the PRI acknowledged defeat to the PAN in a gubernatorial race for the first time, and by 2000, 14 out of 32 state governorships were in the hands of the opposition.

CONCLUSION

In sum, single party hegemony in Mexico was grounded on institutional barriers of entry to new competitors. The institution and practices sustained during the single hegemony party system were highly stable and became part of the Mexican political culture but they were also open to external shocks, to which the PRI responded by introducing power-sharing reforms. Political liberalisation allowed the opposition to grow and eventually win a national election in 2000; however, political liberalisation also helped the PRI to remain in power, and in the end created the conditions for its soft landing on competitive democratic politics.

NOTES

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One-party dominance: Lessons to be learned for South Africa

PHILLIP MTIMKULU

INTRODUCTION

Debates on one-party dominance have existed within the field of political science for quite some time, but before Pempel¹ wrote his book in 1990, not much work had been done on the phenomenon. Scholars such as Duverger,² Sartori³ and Blondel⁴ made passing references to one-party dominance, and in their 1974 article, Arian and Barnes⁵ said that one-party dominance was a neglected model. However, from 1994 onwards we have been inundated with literature, arguments and discussions on one-party dominance and a controversial book has been written on the subject.⁶

My contribution is based on research undertaken for my doctoral thesis entitled 'The key to one-party dominance: A comparative analysis of selected states', which examines how one-party dominance was achieved and maintained in five selected states. In the context of our forum, though, I would like to extrapolate my findings and lessons learnt to South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) party.

COMPARATIVE MODEL

My research explored the evolution and implementation of one-party dominance by Sweden's Social Democratic Party (SDP), Israel's Mifleget Poalei Eretz Israel (Mapai), Italy's Christian Democratic (DC) party, India's Congress party and Botswana's Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). The BDP is the only party out of the five that is still in power in the respective countries.

One commonality among these political parties is that highly unusual circumstances prevailed in the respective countries prior to the parties' accession to power. Furthermore, these political parties and their leaders were directly involved in resolving the crises, the end result of which saw them accede to power. To elaborate: Botswana achieved independence at the leadership of the BDP; Congress led by Mahatma Ghandi and Nerhu was at the forefront of the liberation struggle in India; in Israel, Mapai led by David Ben Gurion fought for the formation of the new state; the crisis in Italy involved the

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overthrow of Mussolini and fascism after the Second World War, although De Gasperi's DC was not the only party involved in this struggle; and although there was no liberation struggle in Sweden, that country was facing an economic crisis with unemployment at its peak, at which time the SDP came up with a blueprint on how to end unemployment. One can, of course, see a commonality between these five political parties and the ANC, which too was involved in a liberation struggle at the helm of which was Nelson Mandela.

But over and above the unusual circumstances that prevailed in the countries under review, strong socio-economic blocs also played a crucial part in delivering support to these political parties: the BDP in Botswana had the support of the Bamangwato tribe; in India no particular 'tribe' was in a leadership position and support for Congress was from across all religions and languages; in Israel, labour controlled the country's economy; in Italy the DC was strongly supported by the Catholic Church; while in Sweden the SDP was supported by the giant labour federation, the LO.

CONSOLIDATING DOMINANCE

Despite this assured support, the political parties in these five countries could not rely solely on the factors that led to their accession to power; they had to actively consolidate their positions. Among other factors used to buttress support, the parties employed:

- the penetration of society;
- pragmatism and; and
- patronage.

Obviously the opposition factor also needs to be taken into consideration because if the opposition in these countries was at all strong it would not have been easy for these parties to be re-elected into power. Another factor is the ruling parties' delegitimisation of the opposition. For example, in Italy, which is a Christian country, it was easy for the DC to delegitimise the Communist Party and play the 'communist bogey' card, while in Israel Mapai accused Menachem Begin's right wing Herut party of undermining the new state of Israel.

PENETRATION OF SOCIETY

In terms of penetration of society, in order to remain strong a dominant political party cannot simply rest on its laurels; it must actually increase its support and make inroads into the opposition's support. In India, for example, after coming to power in July 1952 the mass-based nationalist Congress led by Nehru went into the interior to broaden its support – and similar steps were taken by the other parties under review.

What then has the ANC done to penetrate society? To begin with, the ANC took over the structures of the United Democratic Front, the civics, and also formed its own structures and institutions. After 1990 numerous informal settlements began mushrooming, particularly on the edge of industrial areas in such places as Cape Town,

Johannesburg and Durban. The ANC was quick to realise this potential membership: not only did it work closely with these informal settlements but it actually formed more of these. Names such as Tamboville, Slovoview, Winnie Mandela, Mbeki and Sisulu attest to the ANC's strong foothold in these informal settlements.

PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism is another weapon used by dominant parties to gain support. For a party to retain and also expand its electoral support it needs to adapt to the environment. The parties under discussion used pragmatism to good effect in order to attract new support. They tempered their policies in order to suit the constituency that they wanted to attract.

The ANC had also watered down some of its policies and became pragmatic following its un-banning. During its time in exile when it was involved in the liberation struggle, the ANC was opposed to people who served in apartheid-sponsored independent Bantu homelands, and went out of its way to make these areas ungovernable. However, once the ANC was un-banned it extended a hand of friendship to homeland leaders and urged them to forget the past and to work for a common South Africa. The result was a rush of former homeland leaders, who had tremendous support, joining the ANC. The list includes such people as General Bantu Holomisa, Stella Sigcau and General Gabriel Ramoshwana.

The ANC's pragmatism extended to white business people, entertainers and educationalists who were encouraged to join the party and bring on board their supporters. Examples in this regard include the internationally acclaimed singers Miriam Makeba and Jennifer Ferguson.

The ANC therefore adapted its policies to suit the exigencies of the moment. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in terms of its economic policy. While in exile the ANC had one variant or another of socialism and was viewed, particularly by white South Africans, as basically Soviet inclined, striking up fears of a communist economy in the new South Africa.

Once the ANC was un-banned there was therefore much concern regarding its economic policies. But Nelson Mandela quelled many fears by stating in 1993 that:

the fundamental framework of our economic policy is that of a mixed economy – based on the principles of democracy, participation and development. The ANC is committed to the creation of a democratic mixed economy. Such a system will best function within the environment of democracy and accountability.

Through this statement the ANC dispelled the notion that it was wedded to nationalisation, with Mandela explaining further that the party was “flexible on the economy”. He said the party had no ideological commitment to the policy of nationalisation and would be prepared to consider other alternatives. Five years down the line, the ANC surprised its communist and trade union allies in the Tripartite Alliance by shelving the Reconstruction and Development Programme as its macroeconomic policy and adopting the more capitalist oriented Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme. One can see again how the ANC shifted from one extreme to the other to suit changing

circumstance, while at the same time neutralising opposition parties such as the Democratic Alliance (DA), which were attempting to label it as Marxist orientated.

PATRONAGE

The BDP, Congress, Mapai, DC and the SDP all used patronage to varying degrees to garner support. This was made possible by the fact that they were in control of state resources. Patronage is a very sensitive issue since there is a blurred division between patronage and a sincere distribution of resources for the benefit of society. Is patronage vote-buying through the back door or is it a genuine way of transforming South Africa by redistributing wealth in order to redress the imbalances of the past? The answer, of course, depends on which side of the fence one sits.

Once the ANC had control of state resources it made notice of its intention to redress the imbalances of the past that were created by the policies of the previous governments. It would use state resources and institutions to dispense patronage not only to its members and sympathisers but to the black community at large.

We are all familiar with the Sunset Clause agreed upon at the Kempton Park negotiations, whereby the ANC accepted the need for continuation in the civil service and said that whites working in the civil service would not be dismissed from their posts. However, by its second term in office the public service at national, provincial and local level had been taken over by ANC appointees. ANC patronage went further to include appointments at tertiary institutions, and ambassadorships were granted to people in parties opposed to the ANC, such as the National Party, Conservative Party and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), in order to neutralise them.

A case in point is IFP member Dr Ben Ngubane who was Minister of Arts and Culture and Premier of Kwa-Zulu Natal at one time. Since Ngubane's appointment as ambassador to Japan we have not seen him involved much in IFP activities, which means that he has effectively been removed from active local political participation. He may still be sympathetic towards the IFP, but his influence within the party has waned.

On the point of patronage, and relating to black economic empowerment and affirmative action, in a 2004 article in *Focus*, Lawrence Schlemmer asserted that the ANC has black voters captive simply by virtue of the fact that its employment, equity and empowerment policies make it unthinkable for middle-class blacks to defect to any opposition party.

LEADERSHIP

In Israel, when new immigrants arrived at the airport they were greeted by a huge billboard bearing a picture of Ben-Gurion. As they did not know which party to vote for, they were shown the picture of Ben-Gurion and told to vote for the 'old man'.

In the South African context, Nelson Mandela is a revered icon; and as long as he is alive the ANC is assured of the vote of the majority of African people – as a vote against the ANC is tantamount to voting against Mandela.

OPPOSITION PARTIES

The argument here is that as much as dominant parties won elections through their own efforts, the weakness of the opposition was a contributory factor to their unusually lengthy stay in power: opposition to the dominant parties in the countries reviewed was weak and almost ineffective. It needs to be mentioned that the opposition in South Africa is also weak, which promotes the occurrence of one-party dominance in this country. In addition, the opposition has experienced factionalism, which further weakens the parties. Another factor worth mentioning is that National Party's association with the oppressive apartheid system made it impossible for it to campaign in the black townships.

CONCLUSION

The BDP, Congress, DC, Mapai and SDP were faced with the task of intervening in the unusual circumstances that prevailed in their countries, and their successful involvement subsequently led to political stability in these countries. The ANC's ascendancy to power could also be ascribed to the role played by the organisation in the resolution of unusual circumstances in South Africa. At the forefront of these efforts was Nelson Mandela, who played a pivotal role in ushering in a new political system in the country. Similar to the five political parties under review, the ANC has used penetration of society, pragmatism and patronage to good effect to retain its support, which in any effect is assured from the large black constituency.

NOTES

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Voter behaviour and party dominance in South Africa: Another view

ROBERT MATTES

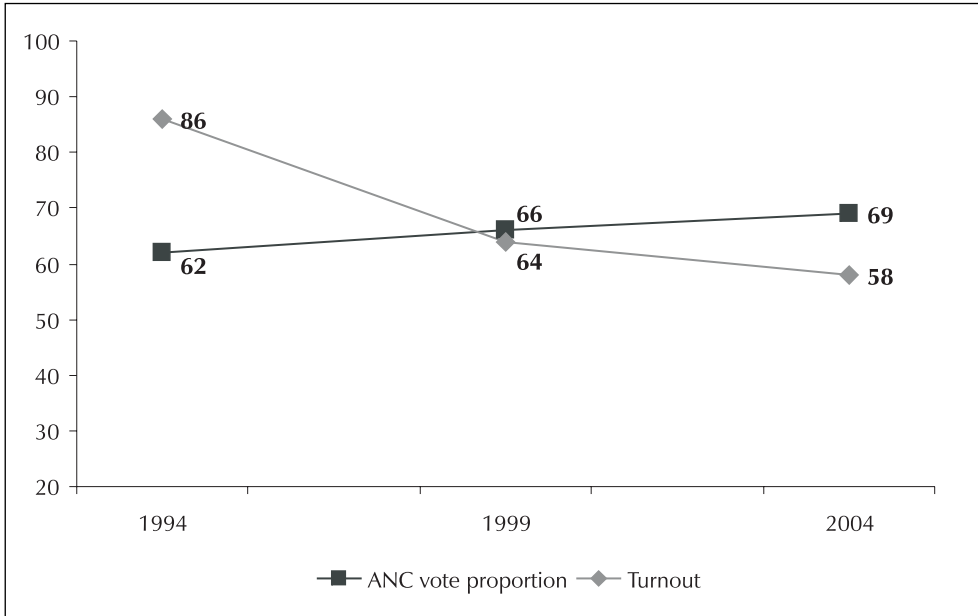
INTRODUCTION

One-party dominance in Africa is commonly seen as a ‘demand side’ problem with its roots in voter attitudes; however, analysts rarely consider that the real problem may lie on the ‘supply side’ – in the capacities and skills of party elites and the alternatives they offer voters. This is no less true in South Africa.

According to the common view, the African National Congress (ANC) built its 1994 election victory on a base of very high levels of intensely emotional voter commitment, on top of which it has since added new, formerly opposition, voters in 1999 and 2004 who jumped onto the ANC bandwagon either due to a psychological need to be part of the majority, or who wanted to get in line for state controlled patronage, or who were ‘duped’ into doing so by the ANC-controlled state media. However, in this paper I present a range of evidence about elections and voter attitudes that strongly suggest that, at least in South Africa, one-party dominance is as much a problem of elite behaviour (especially of opposition party leaders) as it is of any mass resistance to competitive politics.

I will present several different sets of evidence for such an alternative view. First, the apparent increases in popular support for the ANC suggested by its increasing share of the vote across South Africa’s first three elections have also been accompanied by sharp declines in voter turnout. Second, the ANC has indeed maintained a decisive advantage over the opposition parties in terms of voter identification. However, the absolute level of voter identification with the ANC has not been overwhelming. Indeed there has been at any given time a substantial share of the electorate with no strong ties to any political party. But this bloc of ‘independent’ voters has been increasingly less likely to vote; and of those who do turn out to vote, the ANC has been able to win a disproportionately large share. Third, the reasons for this can be seen in the attitudes of independent voters. While they have been relatively dissatisfied with the performance of the ruling ANC, opposition parties have been unable to convince them that they are legitimate and viable alternatives to the government. Thus, a large share of these voters face the choice of either not voting, or voting for the ANC as the least bad option.

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Figure 1: Voter turnout and ANC election support, 1994–2004

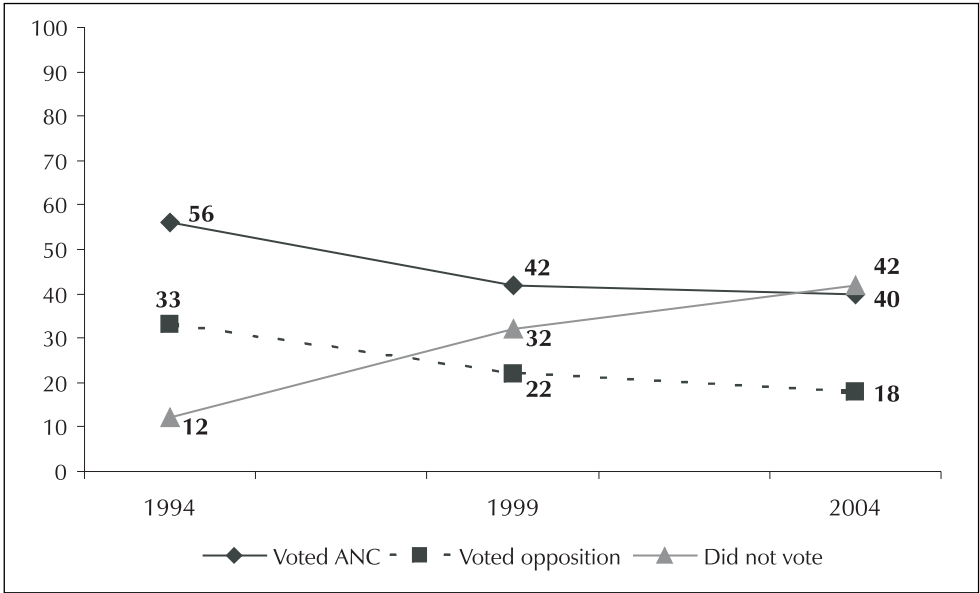
INCREASING DOMINANCE OF A DIMINISHING ELECTORATE

Everyone knows, of course, that the ANC steadily increased its proportion of the popular vote over South Africa's first three general elections from 62% in 1994, to 66% in 1999, and to 69% in 2004. Few people, however, have noticed that this trend has occurred alongside a simultaneous counter trend of rapidly declining voter turnout. Looking at the proportion of the eligible voting age population that actually casts a vote (the internationally accepted standard), voter turnout plunged from 88% in 1994 (conservatively estimated), to 64% in 1999, and still further to 58% in 2004 (see Figure 1).¹ This 30 percentage point fall took South Africa from one of the highest levels of voter turnout in the world to a point comparable to voter turnout in the United States (55% in the 2004 Bush-Kerry presidential contest).²

These two trends are not unrelated. If we decompose the total voting age South African electorate, we find that in 1994 more than half of all adults (56%) physically cast a vote for the ANC, one-third (33%) cast a vote for an opposition party, and one in ten (12%) stayed at home. By 2004, however, just 40% of all eligible South African voters actually cast a vote for the ANC. Viewed from this perspective, this constituted a 39% *decline* in the size of the ANC vote bloc, which stands in sharp contrast to its ability to point to an eight point increase and nearly a 70% popular vote by 2004 as evidence of an overwhelming popular mandate for its policies and performance.

Just as importantly, only 18% of all voters cast a vote for opposition parties, which constitutes an even larger 45% decrease in their combined vote bloc. By 2004, 42% of all voters stayed home – slightly more than the number of people who actually voted for the ANC (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Decomposing the South African electorate, 1994–2004



Why has this occurred? Many observers have looked to the decreases in voter turnout (though their size has usually been portrayed as much smaller as most South African analysts have insisted on using the proportion of registered voters as the denominator in their estimate of turnout), and concluded either that it was an inevitable consequence of the normalisation of democracy, and/or that turnout was bound to decline from the unrealistically high, *uhuru* driven levels of 1994.

But the comparative evidence does not support such a conclusion. First, declines in turnout were not inevitable. Michael Bratton’s³ study of second elections in Africa’s new democracies found that turnout *increased* in as many cases as it decreased. Second, there is nothing ‘normal’ about South Africa’s current level of voter turnout.

Pippa Norris’s⁴ analysis of voter turnout around the world demonstrates that, holding all other things equal, a country with South Africa’s list proportional representation (PR)-type of electoral system should have levels of voter turnout at around 70%; countries at South Africa’s age of democracy in 2004 should have turnout levels at around 69%; and countries with South Africa’s level of economic development should produce turnout at around 64%.

Thus, neither South Africa’s choice of electoral system, its experience with democracy, nor its level of development help account for the country’s current level of voter participation. So what does?

Norris also found that, holding other things constant, countries with predominant party systems – defined as those where the winning party receives over 60% of the vote and in at least two consecutive elections, as in South Africa – have an average voter turnout of 56%, which predicts almost exactly the level to which South Africa’s voter turnout has fallen.

ASYMMETRICAL DEMOBILISATION

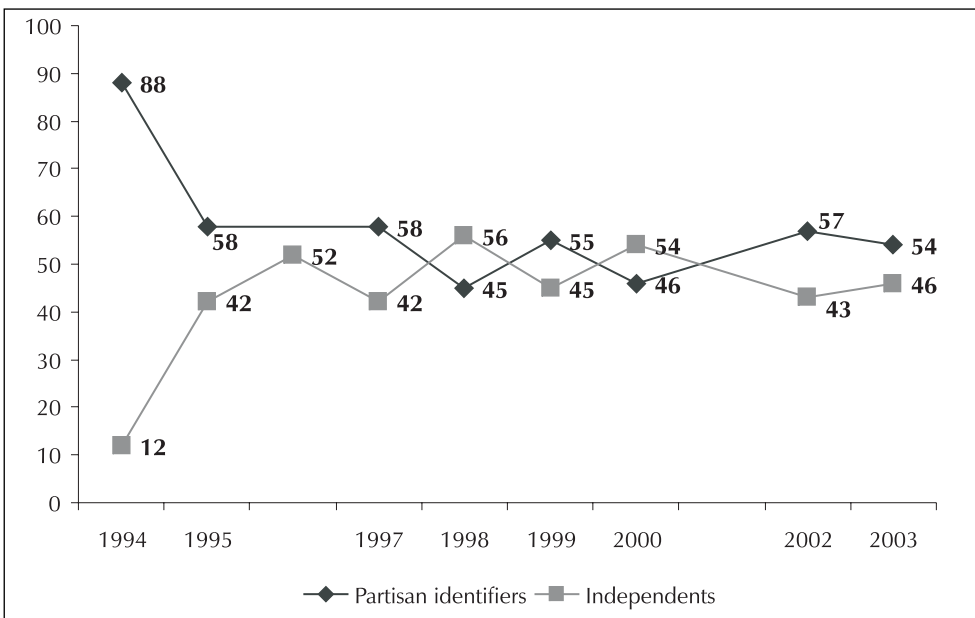
Thus, when voters see declining levels of competition, they become less likely to deem it worth their time and effort to learn anything about candidates and parties and cast a vote.⁵ But not all voters will react equally. Opposition supporters and undecided voters should be more likely to see declining utility in bearing the costs of registering, gathering information and voting than supporters of the winning party (for whom the act of voting for a winner is likely to provide some psychological benefits that compensate for the costs of voting). Thus, over time, the ranks of the abstainers are likely to consist of disproportionately larger shares of opposition supporters and undecided voters. If unchecked, this dynamic can produce smaller and smaller electorates at each succeeding election that are increasingly predisposed to support the governing party, *creating the appearance of increasing popular support for the governing party, even as its actual active support across the population may be declining.*

TRENDS IN PARTISAN IDENTIFICATION

But besides aggregate election results, what other evidence do we have of this dynamic? We first look to responses to a question asked in Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) and Afrobarometer surveys since 1994 that measures the concept of partisan identification (*see Figure 3*).

Partisan identification is best thought of as a ‘standing choice’,⁶ which is distinct from and prior to the actual voting decision. Just as few consumers begin anew each week the

Figure 3: Partisanship in South Africa, 1994–2003



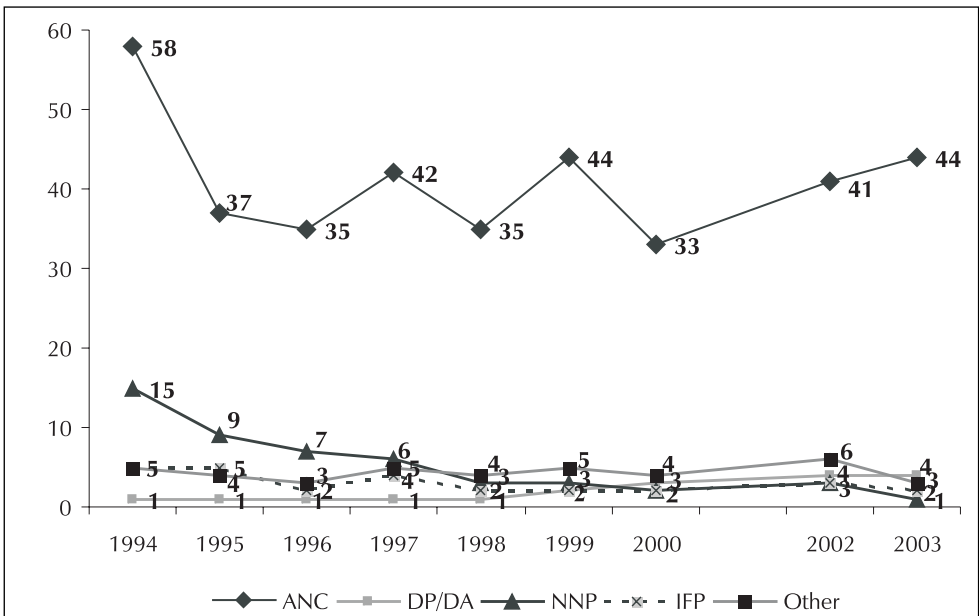
Survey sources: Idasa, Afrobarometer and Washington Post/Henry Kaiser Foundation

process of deciding whether to buy Omo or Surf, or start every few years from scratch in deciding between Nissan and Toyota, voters tend to have standing preferences that help them sort through the myriad of information presented to them on an ongoing basis. Those voters who identify with a political party are generally more likely to vote, and very likely to vote for that party. But some voters begin an election campaign without any strong partisan predispositions. These ‘independent’ voters are potentially more likely to be persuaded to change their vote from the last election. But they are also less likely to vote.

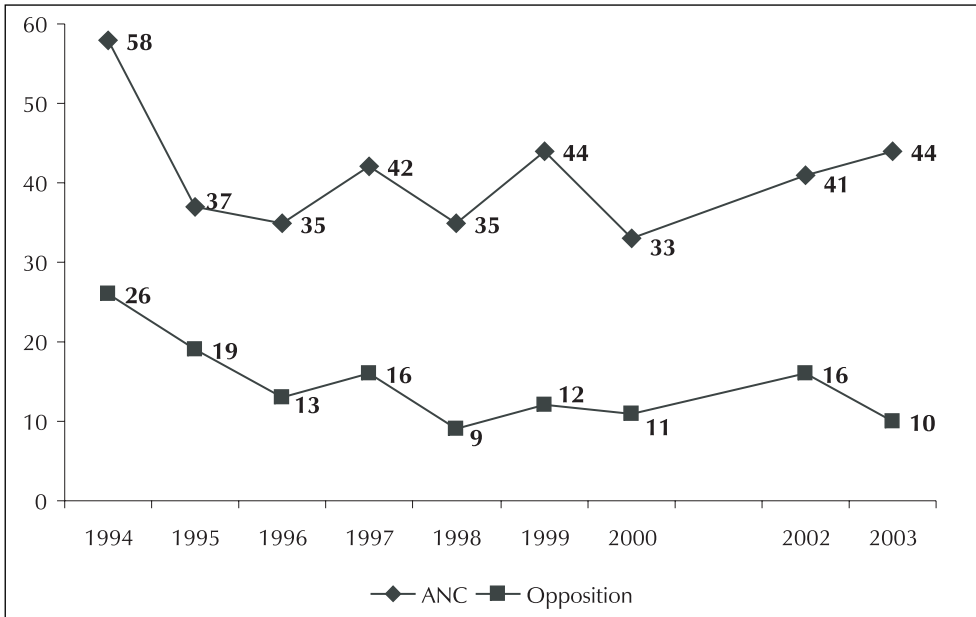
What the data shows is that between 1995 and 2003, the proportions who say they felt close to no political party – or whom we may call non-partisans or ‘independents’ – never constituted less than 40% of all eligible voters, and often well over half. These are not figures that, *prima facie*, would lead one to predict the ANC election margins of 66% and 69% in 1999 and 2004 respectively.

And once we examine the partisan preferences of these people who felt close to a party, we find that the absolute level of ANC support has never been overwhelming. While the 58% identification for the ANC registered in Idasa’s 1994 National Election Study (conducted five months after the country’s first election) is probably closer to the common view of the driving force of ANC dominance, popular identification with the ANC has since that point varied from as low as just one-third (33%) of the total electorate to 44%. Notably, one of the two high points was registered in April 1999, reflecting the effectiveness of the ANC’s election campaign. The other was measured in late 2003, which predates the actual campaign, but which may reflect the government’s ability to ratchet up its economic performance and welfare delivery to fit the electoral cycle.

Figure 4: Partisan identification in South Africa, 1994–2003



Survey sources: Idasa, Afrobarometer and Washington Post/Henry Kaiser Foundation

Figure 5: Partisan identification in South Africa, 1994–2003

Survey sources: *Idasa, Afrobarometer and Washington Post/Henry Kaiser Foundation*

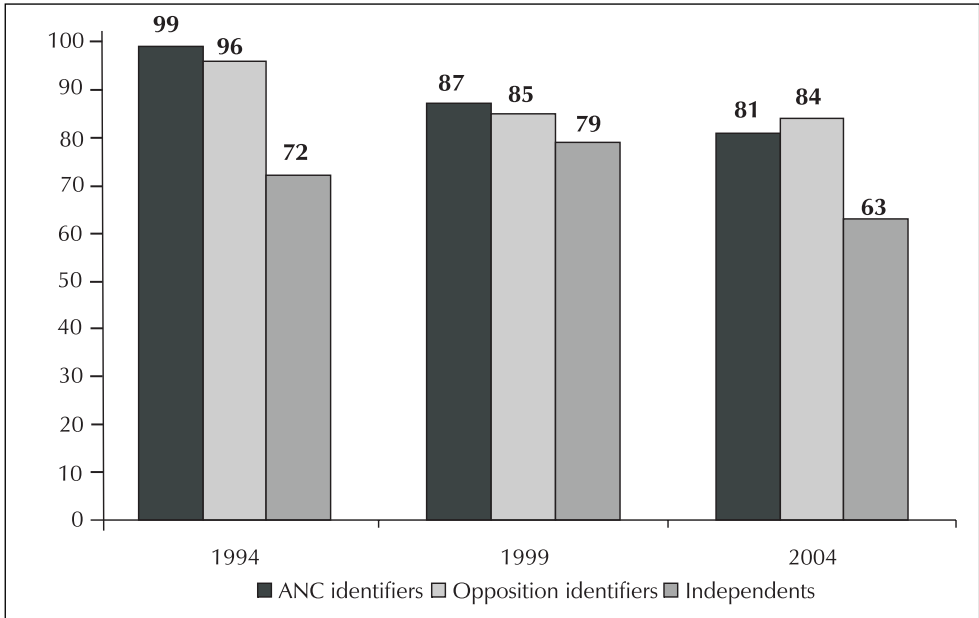
At the same time, the data in Figure 4 also demonstrates that the ANC held a very clear lead over the opposition parties in partisan identification during South Africa's first decade of democracy. Voter identification with the ANC's main opposition, the National Party (NP), plunged five fold (from 15% to 3%) between late 1994 and the end of the 1999 election campaign – a drop that coincided with the NP's decision to leave the Government of National Unity, FW De Klerk's divorce and departure from active politics, and steadily increasing levels of negative publicity emanating from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It also shows that no other party ever stepped up to take its place in the eyes of the ordinary voters, with just 4% identifying with the Democratic Alliance (DA) by the start of the 2004 election campaign.

But while there is no evidence of any secular increase in identification with the ANC, there seems to have been – with some fluctuation – a steady, over time decrease in identification with opposition parties. This suggests that as voters moved away from opposition parties such as the NP, they moved into the independent column rather than to the ANC (see *Figure 5*).

PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND VOTER TURNOUT

The movement of voters away from identifying with political parties – especially opposition parties – and into the 'independent' column helps explain declining levels of voter turnout between 1994 and 2004. Figure 6 displays voter turnout by party

Figure 6: Partisan identification and self-reported voter turnout, 1994–2004



Survey sources: *Idasa, Afrobarometer and University of Cape Town*

identification across the three elections. In contrast to the expectations state earlier, we find that opposition party identifiers did not become less likely to voter, but turned out at roughly equal levels as ANC identifiers. Independents, however – of which there were increasingly larger proportions – have indeed been significantly less likely to vote.

In the *Idasa* 1994 National Post-Election Survey, virtually all partisans told interviewers they voted, regardless of the party they supported. However, just seven in ten of the 12% of the sample that was independent said they voted. In a 2000 *Afrobarometer* survey, eight in ten independents told interviewers that they had voted in 1999. But the 20% who abstained constituted a far larger absolute number of voters than in 1994 since it constituted 20% of the now 54% of all voters who were independents at that point. And in the University of Cape Town (UCT) 2004 National Post-Election Study, just 63% of all independents said they voted, which meant that 37% of the 47% who were independent stayed home on election day. While opposition parties were able to get their voters out at an even higher rate than the ANC, by 2004 there were simply far fewer of them to get to the polls.

A third piece of the puzzle of ANC dominance can be found in the fact that not only have independents been less likely to vote, but among those who have voted, the ANC receives a far larger share than the opposition parties. The 2004 post-election survey found that three-quarters (74%) of those independents who actually had voted made their mark next to the ANC and just one-quarter (26%) voted for an opposition party.

One might expect a far more even division of the vote among independents if only

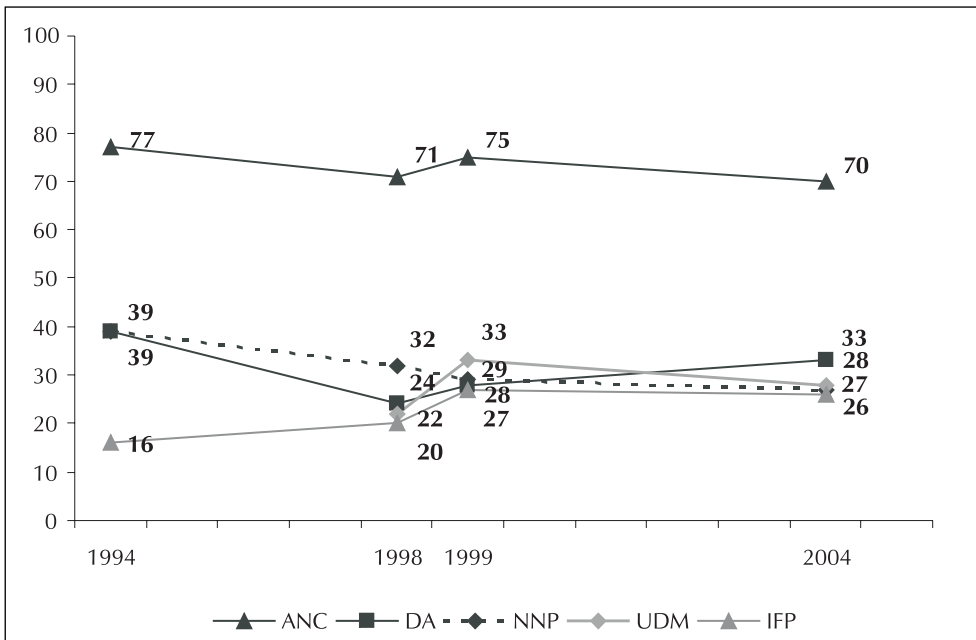
because independent voters should be relatively dissatisfied with government performance – otherwise, they would be expected to declare themselves as ANC identifiers. Indeed, the 2004 survey found that independents had very mixed views of the performance of the ANC government across many issues, and quite negative views on some of the most salient issues like crime and job creation. However, it also revealed that independents hardly held any better views of the opposition than government supporters. Only small minorities of independents see opposition parties as inclusive, feel they can trust them, or think they provide any real alternatives to the ANC.

VIEWS OF INCLUSIVENESS/EXCLUSIVENESS

Previous statistical analyses of the factors affecting South Africans’ voting choices have consistently identified the crucial role of voters’ images of whether a given party is inclusive (representing all South Africans) or exclusive (representing one group to the exclusion of others).⁷ In contrast to the usual expectations advanced by analysts of elections in divided societies,⁸ few voters are attracted to a party because they see it as representing their group to the exclusion of others. On the contrary, most voters are repelled away from parties with such an image.

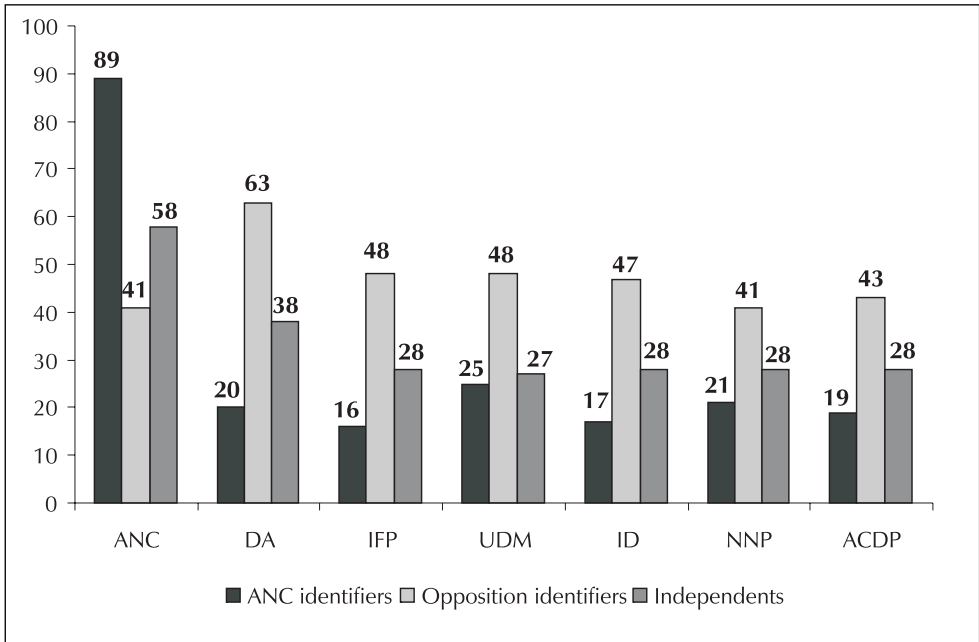
Thus, for most voters, an image of inclusiveness is a necessary – though not sufficient – condition for a voter to ultimately vote for it. This is not good news for South Africa’s opposition parties because, as can be seen in Figure 7, no opposition party has ever been

Figure 7: Perceived inclusiveness of political parties, 1994-2004



Survey sources: Idasa, University of Cape Town

Figure 8: Perceived inclusiveness by partisan identification, 2004



Survey source: *Idasa, University of Cape Town*

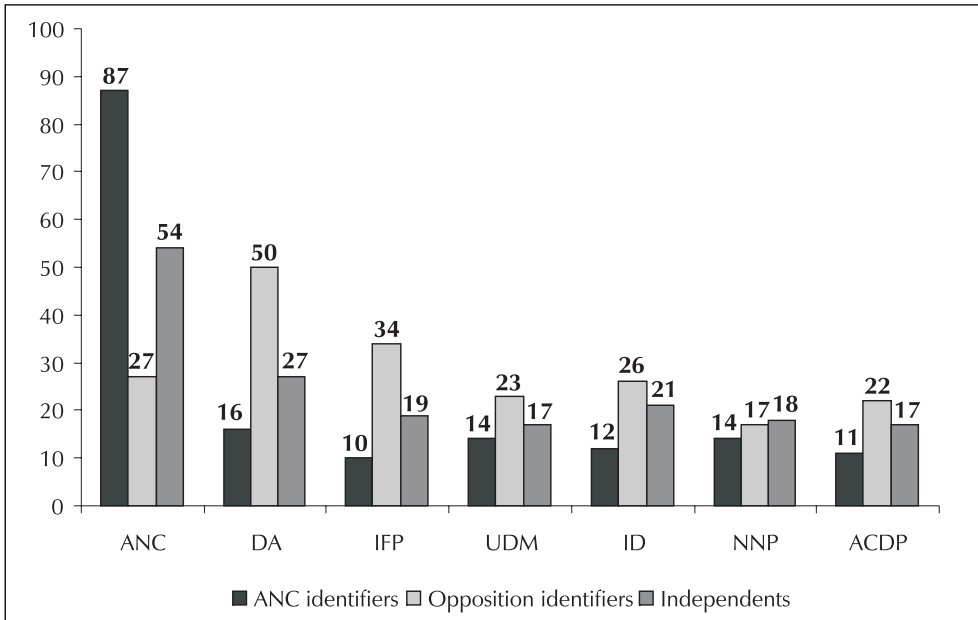
able to convince a majority, or even a substantial minority, of voters that they are inclusive and represent the interests of all. By 2004, 70% felt that the ANC was inclusive, but just one-third (33%) saw the DA as such, and around one-quarter for the rest of the opposition parties.

It should be noted, however, that these numbers do not necessarily mean that voters see opposition parties as exclusive. For example, in contrast to the typical criticism of the DA and its aggressive, anti-ANC style of opposition and election campaigning, just one in ten voters in 2004 saw the DA as exclusive. Rather, six in ten (57%) said they simply did not know enough about the DA to say one way or the other. Even larger proportions said the same thing about the rest of the opposition. Moreover, these results were roundly similar to those produced by surveys during the 1999 campaign.

With the exception of a new party like the Independent Democrats (ID), these results constitute a damning indictment of opposition strategists' failure to use the resources available to them to implant a clearer image in the minds of voters about who they are and what they stand for. More importantly, however, opposition parties have failed to project appreciably better images of themselves among the independent voters than the overall public.

TRUST IN POLITICAL PARTIES

In the UCT 2004 post-election survey, two-thirds of all eligible voters told interviewers that they had a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of trust in the ANC. At best, just one-quarter

Figure 9: Trust in political parties, 2004

Survey sources: *Idasa, University of Cape Town*

said they trusted any opposition party (24% for the DA, and less than 20% for all others). Again, opposition parties have not been able to build any appreciably higher levels of trust among independents.

ALTERNATIVES?

After asking respondents about what they felt were the most important issues, and then asking them to rate how well the government was handling those issues, we then asked them whether they felt any other party could do a better job. Just 17% of all eligible voters said yes, and another 27% said they did not know.

Yet again, the most damning result lies in the fact that while nearly half of the sample in the 2004 survey said they were independents – most of whom were relatively dissatisfied with all or various elements of the government’s performance – just 18% of independent voters felt that any opposition party was able to do a better job handling their most important issue. Those who are dissatisfied with the governing party will not necessarily switch their votes. Vote switching also requires that dissatisfied voters see that there is some other party which they can support. If not, they are faced with the choice of voting for the governing party as the ‘least bad’ option, or simply abstaining.

CONCLUSIONS

There is little evidence that the increasing ANC election margins witnessed in 1999 and

2000 were based on a groundswell of growing voter attachment to the ruling party, and voters switching from opposition parties to the ANC. Rather, it stems from a loss of supporters over the past decade from all parties to the independent category, but disproportionately so from the opposition. These people then become less likely to turn out to vote. It also stems from the failure of opposition parties to project a clear and positive image of themselves as a legitimate alternative to voters, especially to independent voters. Thus, not only are election day electorates increasingly likely to consist of larger shares of ANC identifiers, but the ANC is also able to win large shares of those independent voters who do turn out.

Developing a more competitive party system in South Africa does not need to wait on voters ‘maturing’ and becoming more open to political diversity. Rather it requires the rapid development of skills among opposition party strategists and capacity in opposition party organisations.

Only once South Africans are presented with real alternatives from legitimate, inclusive opposition parties will the governing party have incentives to listen more closely and seriously to the opinions of ordinary people on such issues as job creation, crime and HIV/AIDS, and see themselves as the temporary incumbents of the country’s political institutions rather than as the permanent owners of the state.

NOTES

- 1 All voter turnout figures presented in this paper are taken from International IDEA, <www.idea.int>.
- 2 While one would think that such a precipitous decline would set off alarm bells in a society governed by a political party that has been committed to broadening participatory democracy, there has been very little debate about this. One main reason is that few South Africans have used the correct statistics, measuring voter turnout only as the percentage of registered voters, spurred on in no small part by the fact that South Africa’s Independent Electoral Commission reports voter turnout only in these terms.
- 3 Bratton M, Second elections in Africa, *Journal of Democracy* 9(3), 1998.
- 4 Norris P, *The Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Democratic Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- 5 This inference gains further support from Norris’s finding that voter turnout also decreases in countries where ‘winning’ parties consistently receive less than 40% of the vote, and thus the same predictable coalitions of three or four political parties tend to govern the country regardless of the election result.
- 6 Key VO, *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936-1960*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- 7 Mattes R, *The Election Book: Judgment and Choice in the 1994 South African Election*. Cape Town: Idasa, 1995; Mattes R & Piombo J, Opposition parties and the voters in South Africa’s 1999 election, *Democratization* 8(13), Autumn, 2001, pp 101-128, 2001; Ferree K, The micro foundations of ethnic voting: Evidence from South Africa, *Journal of Politics*, forthcoming.
- 8 For example, Horowitz D, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Deformations of political culture by one-party dominance

LAWRENCE SCHLEMMER

INTRODUCTION

One of the supreme ironies of democracy is that the keynote reward for its active participants, namely electoral triumph, can so often produce exactly the opposite of democracy's core mission. One-party dominance is that irony, and it produces its effects by paralysing the political culture that should sustain democracy. Since my topic does not direct me to concentrate on any particular country, I will in general terms review the major impacts of one-party dominance on political culture and on governance.

At the outset, and as raised in earlier contributions and discussions today, we need to be cautious in condemning single-party dominance without qualification wherever it occurs. One cannot leap to the conclusion that a large majority for a specific party in a particular phase in a country's politics necessarily leads to an ongoing single-party dominant system. Furthermore, as one speaker reminded us earlier, all parties have to try to become dominant parties: if they do not attempt this they would not be fulfilling their competitive role in a democracy. We have a similarly ironic situation in business – a small business that tries to grow to become a monopoly is in fact a healthy phenomenon, notwithstanding the fact that the trashing of market competition has to be curbed.

This review will exclude situations that are of little relevance to Southern Africa. For example, some Arab states have potentially powerful but utterly non-democratic Muslim fundamentalist opposition parties, and governing parties are almost forced to co-opt moderate opposition parties to stave off religiously based totalitarianism. They typically become dominant party systems in the process. This particular complexity is of less relevance in our region, however.

DEFINING DOMINANT PARTIES

Before proceeding to the impact of one-party dominance on political culture, one has to first make the obvious distinction between dominant parties based on absolute majorities

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and those based on pluralities. There is a large difference in the implications for democracy because a plurality-based government will always have to contend with significant political competition, which is the lifeblood of democracy. As Adam Habib¹ observes, democracy needs uncertainty in order to foster accountability. A party may be dominant for many decades, but if based on a plurality will always have to be concerned with accommodating public concerns to maintain electoral support, like the Indian Congress Party in its heyday of political dominance.

Samuel Huntington² famously proposed the “two-turnover” test in terms of which, he argued, a country could not count itself as being a legitimate democracy unless it had undergone two cycles of party alternation in power. This argument is persuasive although perhaps a little ungenerous.

There are certain circumstances in which a mass-based and popular dominant party can run a country for a period without acquiring all the negative features associated with electoral dominance. Particularly after wars or other major disruptions of national life, or perhaps after liberation from foreign or minority rule, there can for a while be genuine, un-manipulated and completely legitimate majority support for a party. The question, however, is for how long? Inevitably habits of dominance cause eventual mutations in governing parties, and they acquire entrenched anti-democratic features. Even a temporary dominance based on a national consensus always contains the virus of political pathology, and therefore the shorter it is the better.

THE IMPACT OF ONE-PARTY DOMINANCE ON POLITICAL CULTURE

One has to be fairly empirical when deciding how dangerous for democracy a particular dominant party system is. If one-party domination is accompanied by the use of power or electoral manipulation to exclude alternative political choices – or by the use of state propaganda to undermine the legitimacy of alternative choices – then obviously it becomes corrosive and destroys or inhibits the kind of political culture that any democracy requires.

Similarly, where a dominant party uses the resources and leverage of being in government to co-opt opposition parties, taking them out of the competition, it will also weaken the vitality of opposition and with that erode a democratic political culture. These negative effects have to be observable, however. As already said, the pattern of election outcomes alone cannot tell us whether or not a problem exists or how serious it might be.

Political coercion and/or exclusion are very obvious dangers, but they tend to advertise themselves as threats to democracy. There are more subtle threats that can, however, only be identified after a closer examination of the texture of a country’s democratic processes. The following is a brief discussion of some of these threats.

THE REINFORCEMENT OF ORIGINAL ELECTORAL ADVANTAGES

A dominant party can use its control over power to reinforce the original conditions or basis of its electoral success. This can be done in the following ways:

- A party that came to power on the basis of racial, confessional, ethnic or regional solidarity in the electorate can use its position to deepen or intensify the particular polarisation in the society. This can take the form of legalised preferences or superior access to social, occupational and material opportunities for the categories in the population that supported the party at the outset. This tends to trap the beneficiaries in a situation in which they cannot afford to even consider supporting alternative parties for fear of losing their special advantages. A political party in this situation will often pretend innocence, arguing that it is doing no more than its democratic duty in addressing the needs and preferences of its core supporters.
- A party that rose to dominance because civil society and voluntary organisation in the electorate was weak to start with, can use its position to further weaken independent civil society by scrupulously ignoring advocacy from any sources other than those sanctioned by the government. The incentive for any independent articulation of interests among the population will then become systematically weakened.
- Variations in ideology and interests are invariably correlated with the spatial, social and economic circumstances of groups in the population. If a party achieved its original majority in part because the demarcation of electoral districts neutralised such political variation by lumping classes and other categories of people together, it will obviously use its power to reinforce the same overall uniformity within electoral districts thereafter. This type of ‘gerrymandering’ will not work in a system of proportional representation but can effectively weaken opposition in a first-past-the-post constituency-based system. Population minorities (minority interest groups or minority parties) will then never get the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity or the viability of their policies.
- If a weakness in constitutional checks and balances existed at the time of a party’s early victories, a dominant party of the kind we are thinking of will surely try to weaken these checks and balances yet further. A familiar feature of dominant party systems is some degree of sanction, surveillance or influence over the watchdog functions in society, whether these are constitutional or informal.
- If a dominant party came to power because of a tendency to political conformity in a population, the dominant party is obviously going to do its best to maintain that conformity or ‘political correctness’. One of the major features of dominant party systems is the use of large state programmes and propaganda to try to link a certain kind of conformity with patriotic virtue and loyalty, and to penalise expressions of dissent. Such techniques need only be based on the probability of rewards for political correctness and therefore are often not overtly coercive. A dominant party in power inevitably has a large array of rewards that can be used to secure conformity, ranging from state contracts and appointments to the rewarding of entire constituencies through the selective deployment of fiscal resources.

DISCOURAGING COMPETITIVE PARTICIPATION

A second major effect of one-party dominance is that it can discourage participation and commitment to democracy. Using the Afrobarometer database, Michael Bratton³ looked at ten cases in Africa and came to the conclusion that in those societies where governments were replaced after elections there was an invigoration of the electorate – a renewed interest in and commitment to democracy. A major consequence of domination, therefore, is that it can hollow out political culture simply by reducing interest in politics and voting. Political apathy is a powerful ally of dominant parties. Incidentally, in considering apathy one must bear in mind that there are various qualities and kinds of apathy. Not all apathy is a bad mark for government. Apathy in some highly developed democracies may very well be a consequence of pervasive satisfaction with the socio-economic and political system. Voters may lose interest in politics because they may think that government is in good hands no matter which party wins an election.

THE BLURRING OF BOUNDARIES BETWEEN A POLITICAL PARTY AND GOVERNMENT

A third main problem of one-party dominance is that it can obscure the distinction between the dominant party and the state. This is certainly a variable factor and one cannot be categorical about it because it occurs in all societies to some extent, more so, for example, in the United States than in most of Europe. However, there is certainly a serious problem where this blurring of boundaries starts off as unadorned political patronage and gradually becomes sanitised by formalised bureaucratic rules and appointment procedures.

A criterion in this regard that I have noticed in various parts of Africa and the Middle East, but which occurs elsewhere as well, is the use of the so-called security clearance as a biasing device. For example, one may need a ‘security clearance’ before tendering for a state contract, applying for a government position or even sometimes before opening a factory or a grocery shop. Security clearances are more difficult to get by people who are known to oppose the government. The world is awash with these types of mechanisms used by powerful parties to ensure that their cronies get all the opportunities. The mechanisms are often so complex and variable, and so infrequently recorded, that they are impossible to demonstrate. The overall effect, however, is to create a continuity between a dominant political party and a government administration.

CHANGING A SOCIETY'S VALUES

But the greatest and most dangerous effects of one-party dominance can occur where party-political criteria invade the core principles and moral codes in a society; where party ideology begins to usurp what should be an independent core of social values beyond politics. A logical example of this occurs in respect of constitutions.

As written, a constitution can never provide all the guarantees that it purports to give. There is far too much slippage and far too many technicalities. It is too difficult for ordinary people to access the constitution and to get lawyers to take issues to constitutional courts.

A constitution works to the extent that people and parties, in roughly similar ways, honour the spirit of a constitution – in other words its values. Dominant parties can do their greatest damage when they get their claws into the spirit of a constitution and try to shape, reshape or change it in such a way so as to suit their party ideology. This aspect is very subtle and has not been examined particularly well by constitutional lawyers.

To the extent that Marxists have been correct in saying that capitalist interests are capable of shaping the superstructure, cultural values and communication codes in a society, then we certainly have to allow for the fact that dominant party interests can do at least as much. In other words, attacks on the cultural and moral superstructure of a country are not the prerogative only of big business. Big power can do the same. I believe, therefore, that if entrenched for long enough, a dominant party can change the values of society to suit itself. Van Zyl Slabbert has observed a tendency on the part of the African National Congress government in South Africa to, as he put it, “co-opt the constitution” and integrate interpretations of it into the governing party programme.⁴

DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR

Ali Mazrui⁵ wrote an article over 30 years ago in which he described what he termed the “monarchical tradition” in post-independent African society. He noted at that time a tendency among leaders to assume the status and rights of paramount chiefs and kings. I am sure that Mazrui would agree that he need not have limited his comment to Africa because it is not only in Africa that leaders of dominant parties see themselves as somehow anointed by public popularity and begin to develop delusions of being natural, if not divine, leaders. They can creep ever closer to self-conceptions approximating those of royalty in feudal times. The more that symbolism of exalted status of this kind is exhibited in public events, such as large motorcades, traditional praise singers, the use of honorific titles, etc., the more leaders of dominant parties re-emphasise and underscore their image of having special status akin to that of ‘royalty’.

DEGRADING DEMOCRACY

At the very least, a hegemony of power based on persisting mass electoral appeal – whether contrived or manipulated or not – can promote a one-sided concept of what democracy is all about in society. Academic expositions of democracy have for long tended to favour either the ‘representative’ (people’s democracy) aspect or a more ‘pluralistic’ emphasis on rights, checks, balances and political diversity.⁶ There is usually a division in society between people who think that democracy is about representing people (a numbers game) and those who think that democracy is about general rights and freedoms – including the right to be diverse and to express particular identities and interests.

Many academics like Chantal Mouffe,⁷ for example, are somewhat more in sympathy with the moral claims made on behalf of representative democracies than with traditions of respect for diversity. Mouffe goes as far as suggesting an alternative to competitive opposition, namely a more respectful ‘agonistic’ opposition. Leaders of ‘representative’

dominant parties are often unhesitant in claiming moral legitimacy for anti-democratic policies because they are, by electoral definition, based on the 'will of the masses'.

In most successful democracies, however, there is in fact a reconciliation of these two viewpoints. The compromise thus achieved implies that no effective democracy can be purely a numbers game, just as it cannot simply be concerned with extending rights and freedoms to minorities with no reference to the relative size of the interests behind them.

However, the more leaders of parties enjoy the benefits of untrammelled power based on claims of popular mass support, the more easily they will ride roughshod over minority interests and rights. The concept of democracy can thereby become distorted to negate the universal liberal democratic imperative that all people in a democracy, not only majorities, are entitled to enjoy significant socio-economic and cultural rights and freedoms. In this way dominant party democracies can hollow out the most basic concepts of democracy itself.

THREATENING PEACE AND STABILITY

Finally, the greatest danger in one-party dominant systems is that by taking opposition parties out of the power equation – or by reducing the influence or competitive ability of opposition parties – safety valves in the society are removed. It is not impossible to conceive of a dominant party continuing to enjoy high levels of mass support – perhaps due to increasing voter boycotts – as it moves steadily towards the brink of attempted coups and public disorder. A point is reached where, in the absence of effective opposition, patience runs out and people take to the streets. The maximisation of power by big men and big parties the world over has been the greatest single source of collapses in political stability.

CONCLUSION

Let me end with a last thought in a more positive vein. The fairly recent histories of one-party dominant systems as diverse as Mexico, India, Taiwan and apartheid South Africa itself demonstrate that many entrenched dominant party systems are not as permanent as they appear to be in their heydays. Let's hope that this is the case with all of them.

NOTES

- 1 Habib A, Five steps to a better democracy, *Mail & Guardian*, 7 October 2005.
- 2 Huntington S, *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- 3 Bratton M, The 'alternation effect' in Africa, *Journal of Democracy* 15, October 2004.
- 4 Van Zyl Slabbert F, Threats and challenges to South Africa becoming a more open democracy, in Shain M (ed), *Opposing Voices: Liberalism and Opposition in South Africa Today*. Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2006.
- 5 Mazrui A, The monarchical tendency in African political culture, in Doro M & Stultz N (eds), *Governing in Black Africa*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970.
- 6 Mouffe C, *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso, 2000.
- 7 Ibid.

Questions and answers

SELECTED AND EDITED

QUESTIONS TO SHAHEEN MOZAFFAR

Question: In Prof. Mozaffar's statistical analysis of 101 electoral outcomes suggested in what are termed 'established democracies' in Africa, 80% of the seats are won by the largest party and the index of loss of parties is greatest at 30% in this category of countries. Is this a case of nascent one-party domination? Is there a tendency in these countries for the larger parties to be consolidating their power dominance or is that something which runs completely independent of the particular variability that I think your very interesting data shows? By nascent, I mean is there a danger here of one-party domination? I think one must be careful to distinguish between potential for and actual one-party dominance. It would be tragic if in a set of countries classified as 'established democracies', there was simultaneously a tendency to one-party domination.

Response: If an incumbent party does not exhibit and practice the tendency to centralise, I would consider that party and its leader to be incompetent. But having a tendency or a desire to centralise does not automatically mean that it will. So, yes, there are these tendencies. However, in, for example, Senegal, Mali and Benin, we are also witnessing a situation where the vote margin has steadily declined. But a number of things have to happen before those vote margins can be translated into seats. We need to look at, for example, how the votes are distributed and the institutional design. Once those elements are added to the mix then, yes, it is becoming extremely difficult in a democratic context for parties to carry out their centralisation tendencies.

Question: We have seen in Africa that after liberation, dominant parties seem to remain in power for a long time, sometimes indefinitely, and that they remain in power even in the face of non-delivery, corruption, and so on. There is almost a blind loyalty to the governing party because it was the movement/party that brought liberation. How long does it take for people to begin to realise that democracy is not about being blindly loyal? Are there any recent examples that we can look at?

Response: Some recent success stories include Mexico and India, and perhaps Senegal. National liberation strugglers have to reorganise themselves organisationally and

dispositionally; and where you see success, those two things have happened. The third thing that must happen in post-liberation societies is that smaller parties must either coalesce against the dominant movement/party or provide viable alternatives to the people so they shift their support to them. In South Africa and Namibia, the smaller parties have simply failed to do this. It is also not fair to blame the people, because people will vote for those parties which they believe will respond to their needs and interests.

QUESTION TO NICOLA DE JAGER

Question: I think De Jager's quotes make it clear that hegemonic tendencies exist within the ANC and that there is a highly intellectualised semi- or pseudo-Leninist ambition to dominate the agenda. In other words, there is a disposition towards domination or there is soft domination. I agree with that, but I have come to a somewhat different conclusion. This ambition certainly existed up to 2001, but after 2002 when it was clear that the governing body was losing support – and indeed a range of polls were showing a lapse in new memberships to the party, among other indices – the ANC became apologetic about this mode and started to play to delivery. But this is a worse trap. The trap in the first mode, the one you describe and argue for, is a trap of obscurity: there is obviously an intellectual layer in the party that understands it perfectly well, but the ordinary people on the ground do not understand. But having moved away from that, and particularly with the expansion of state grants (even though the rhetoric may remain), the actual struggle within the party is how to deliver. And here the trap is very deep indeed. There are all sorts of capacity problems as well as the huge problem of an unravelling of the social fabric. This is a very difficult society to govern and I would say that, on balance, having moved to the delivery mode and the defence of delivery and a better life for the people, the governing party is actually in a worse position.

Response: We need to distinguish between what is rhetoric and what is reality. From the beginning we have seen the rhetoric that centralisation will necessarily bring about service and development delivery, so I don't necessarily see the change over. I believe that the promise of delivery always existed for the ANC and that centralisation is the mechanism that they have used. The National General Council meeting of 2005 confirms the ANC's tendency towards centralisation and it once again re-affirmed the cadre development and deployment strategy.

QUESTION TO ROGER SOUTHALL

Question: Dr Southall's point regarding black economic empowerment (BEE) as being an initial phase of accumulation is very interesting. The ANC has clearly emphasised BEE. Has there been a similar emphasis within the ANC on addressing workers' issues, and on the unions in particular? It seems to me that the Mbeki ideology enhances this emerging black capitalist class, but where do the unions and labour fit in? Also, this situation seems to be similar to that which existed in South Africa during the 1980s when the National

Party (NP) tried to lock-in English capital as a support base for the NP. Is BEE meant only to empower black South Africans or is it also to make capital – English or Afrikaans capital – supportive of a more pragmatic or centralist ANC, especially considering any potential future threat by a left wing or unionist breakaway from the ANC?

Response: There has clearly been a shift away from workers' issues since 1994, but I think it is too easy to say there has been a straightforward 'cosying up' to capital at the expense of labour because the ANC is much more complicated than that.

Within the Tripartite Alliance, Cosatu retains a degree of veto power, but that is probably eroding. The recent discussion paper issued by the ANC on 'Development and Under-development' punts the idea of the dual market and greater labour flexibility, and we also see that various elements of black-empowered capital are lining up differentially within the political party. We see this, for example, in the Zuma–Mbeki standoff and in the controversy around the murder of Brett Kebble.

Another issue to look at is whether there is a difference between workers' interests and those of the poor. I don't think that the ANC has forgotten the poor – the expansion of the pension and state grants is impressive for an emerging country, even with its flaws and problems. The position of the some of the poor has been significantly improved from 1994 to 2000, but it is the people at the very, very bottom who are still suffering. I think it is important not to equate workers with the poor, and I think that perhaps the ANC is paying more attention to the poor, if you like, than to workers.

QUESTIONS TO ZOYA HASAN

Question: The 1977 coalition hastened the decline of Congress because the opposition for the first time came together. What scenario do you envisage in South Africa when the ANC has outlived its usefulness?

Response: What scenario would exist without the ANC? I should think the situation would be pretty bad, although I don't really know enough about South Africa. But what I think is attractive from what I have heard today is the character and politics of the ANC, which in some respects is similar to the Congress party in India. Despite its limitations and weaknesses, there is something about the ANC which I find significant, which might well account for its strength and also its weakness. This is its emphasis on inclusiveness and accommodation, and its focus on empowerment. This combination of inclusion, accommodation and empowerment, given the experience of the Congress, is very important for diverse multicultural societies – and in this case a multiracial society. It would, therefore, be a pity if a party such as this were to decline and disappear from the scene.

I get a sense, however, that there is a great deal of concern not so much regarding a possible decline, but the concern has to do with the ANC itself and with the character of its domination. The point that has been made by several people is that the existence of the ANC is not really standing in the way of democracy, but that there are other issues of governance, corruption and so forth that need to be taken on board and frontally addressed.

Question: Professor Hasan is suggesting that the way forward for the Indian National Congress is to follow a centre-left orientation. Earlier you said that the Indian National Congress project seemed to be based around the idea of a plural India and a developmental state. We are currently going through a developmental state phase in South Africa, which is based on the reassertion of state power in the economy. On what would you base a centre-left project in India at the moment?

Response: What would a centre-left orientation look like? In the past, Congress hegemony and domination was based on a developmental state. This is still relevant and of course there would be some new elements to a centre-left coalition at the present juncture. In my own understanding, I should think it would be something like a secular social state that would focus clearly on pluralism, secularism, and on issues of employment and livelihood. That is the thrust of the Common Minimum Programme of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government.

I think that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme that has been introduced by this government – which goes against the grain of current economic thinking anywhere, not just in India – signals the kind of direction that a centre-left coalition led by the Congress will have to take.

But the difficulty with the Congress is that it is strongly divided on the new orientation that it needs to take, as it was divided earlier on the question of neo-liberal economic policies. Despite this division, then and now, it has been able to revive a centre-left thrust largely because of the pressure from left parties which are supporting this government from outside. In the 2004 election the left parties were the third largest political formation behind the Congress and BJP respectively, winning 62 seats. The support and pressure from the left has gone a long way in ensuring a modicum of centre-left policies. It has given some push to this overall pro-people, democratic orientation.

QUESTIONS TO THIVEN REDDY

Question: We are saying that there is no likelihood of the ANC becoming authoritarian and many, including me, believe that Giliomee and Simkins are off the mark. But is it possible that what happened in India when Gandhi imposed a state of emergency can actually happen in South Africa?

Response: For me, the question would be why Mrs Gandhi utilised a state of emergency. What was the purpose and what was the context and whether, in a similar context, a South African leader would utilise a state of emergency? I think the fact that Mrs Gandhi came from a family of leaders may play a role. Another crucial fact is the tension between the centre party and the provincial party structures. So it is really an empirical question. If the ANC central leadership were faced with rebellious provincial ANC structures, and they found that the fragmentation of the party was going against the coherence of the organisation at the centre, then the possibility of some kind of internal repression is great, but not unique to the ANC; all parties would weigh their options.

I agree that there are authoritarian traditions in all parties, but there are also democratic traditions in the Congress Party and in the ANC, and a state of emergency goes against these democratic traditions. Hypothetically, there would be activists within the ANC, like in Congress, who would fight this and who would probably leave if they found themselves on the negative side of party repression. Clearly, there are social and political factors that we cannot predict, such as a major economic recession, major strike waves and divisions within the ruling party – when countries go through that, a state of emergency is a possibility. At the moment, however, such a possibility is unlikely, but you have to weigh the empirical evidence on comparative grounds.

Question: My query relates to knowledge production in South African academia, specifically political science. Who sets the discourse, for what purpose, and what are the strengths and limitations of this?

Response: Knowledge production is related to power and in South Africa, as in most other developing countries, power is contested, transferred and appropriated. I do not think that power in South Africa has shifted dramatically. Knowledge is in the hands of the traditional elite in academia, and that relates further to conferences and journals. In terms of black academics and black alternative knowledge, that is a struggle which will not end 10 years after our liberation.

In answer to the query, therefore, the agenda is set. Giliomee and Simkins are traditional intellectuals in South Africa who published a book. Many things have to change in order to level the playing field and, importantly, different ideas need to take centre stage. If those ideas had shifted to the centre we would have reams of studies on the ANC, PAC and other organisations. We don't.

Question: I would like Professor Reddy to comment on the interest of Western countries and multinational corporations and their massive funding of the ANC. What would you say about the PAC being considered radical and the ANC being considered moderate, and that in fact the 1994 elections were influenced by this factor, with the PAC being regarded as a spoiler? Also, do you think the ANC can consolidate democracy in this country without resolving the land question? From the perspective of the PAC, land is economy and economy is land; and for as long as we have inequitable redistribution of land there will be perpetual inequalities in the country. I am not sure how long the poor will stand back and do nothing about that.

Response: If you compare the ANC and PAC in 1994 and their traditions of struggle, the ANC was considered to be more moderate than the PAC. In terms of the debate at the time, the strategies of the struggle, the demands and what was considered to be liberation, the PAC wanted more. It also tapped more into people's oppression, frustrations and anger. It is debatable whether that was the best strategy, but in terms of the Western

lending countries and multinationals, the ANC seemed to be preferable to the PAC as the new party controlling the South African government, given their investments in the society. They would obviously have tried to favour the ANC or, at least in terms of ideology, present a picture that is more favourable to the ANC than the PAC. Outside funding is political and organisations have to plan for this. The PAC should also take responsibility: by holding particular positions it could not expect sponsorship from certain dominant foreign countries and large multinationals.

The land question consists of both political and symbolic aspects of the liberation struggle; it deals with the dispossession that we associate with colonialism. I think there are two answers to whether the land question can be resolved without undermining democracy. The key point of departure is that it does not bode well for democracy if people who were dispossessed of land continue to remain poor and without access to land. However, when people who were dispossessed from land as a consequence of colonial conquest have their material conditions improved through greater dependence on wage labour and less on access to land to satisfy their means of subsistence, then the social issues around the land question are partially resolved.

When we come to the symbolic, ideological issue around land – that is, colonial dispossession – in a situation where the majority of landless remain landless, and life under democracy does not translate into any political and material gains, then the ANC government has to respond to this situation fundamentally. The land question then will always be available to political actors who would draw attention to it, and this will bring democratic and political instability, as allegiance to our democratic system will decline.

QUESTIONS TO MALTE KASSNER

Question: One of the differences which I think could be explored in Malaysia is the conservative aura, whereby UMNO came from the conservative reaction to the communist insurgency in the early 1950s. The ANC, by contrast, has a substantial working class base. Could you explore some of the differential relationships between the parties and their relationship to, if you like, the working class?

Response: The organised working class is, of course, the other major difference in the comparison between Malaysia and South Africa. I left it out because of time considerations and because my paper does not address the economic dimensions, but let me say this. Trade unions in Malaysia are not really significant. After the Second World War many trade unions were quite well established, but after the declaration of emergency in 1948 they were prohibited by the British colonial regime due to their communist leadership. The colonial regime then decided to create some trade unions that did not stand in a communist tradition but were more open minded to consensus. This, of course, was a very difficult time for trade unions. Most of the traditional trade unions collapsed. Some new trade unions, such as the Malaysian Trade Union Congress, were established and these unions made a point by negotiating with the government. Even now in Malaysia's semi-democracy, trade unions still face many legal restrictions. For example,

they have to be registered and this is always very difficult. In addition, trade unions in Malaysia are not important because their ability to mobilise people is very poor. And trade unions in Malaysia have never been part of the ruling coalition. This is in contrast to South Africa where Cosatu has made some major contributions, especially in terms of social economic strategy, which is the most important field for trade unions to act upon. Cosatu has, for example, always contested the GEAR programme. And Cosatu, so far, has always been an integral part of the Tripartite Alliance.

Question: I thought the way in which Kassner used the exclusive/inclusive levers as a way of sustaining hegemony is very interesting. What I am more interested in is money politics in Malaysia and whether it is reconfiguring traditional conceptions of political identity. Does it have any impact or does the Malay culture of obedience succeed in keeping the lid on. I think money politics is interesting for South Africa and was wondering whether it has any impact where people vote very much along ethnic lines?

Response: Money politics in Malaysia is a very interesting point and led to two major implications. The first was the formation of the social movement at the end of the 1990s which fought against corruption, nepotism and cronyism. This movement was especially supported by the new urban Malay middle class. This was an interesting development because UMNO accused the movement's followers of not being grateful for the support that they had been given to become middle class in the first place.

Although the Malay middle class and this social movement were quite strong, the government was initially not really responsive to their demands. But since coming to power in 2003 Badawi has taken up the demands of the social movement, especially regarding money politics and corruption at lower levels (Badawi does not yet have a strong enough position within UMNO to take up issues at higher levels) and tries to address the issues openly. In addition, an anti-corruption agency has been established, whose abilities have widened and strengthened considerably.

The second point is that many say that Islamisation is a result of people's disappointment with the extent of corruption in the country. People generally look for a value system and therefore tended to agree and engage with Islam much more than before. Interestingly, since Badawi began addressing the issues of corruption and nepotism, and with the concept of *Islam Hadhari*, of civilised Islam, the strong religious tendencies within the Malay community have lost power. The disappointment of South Africans seems to be articulated in the fact that many people have simply opted out of the political system and are not registering to vote. This is one strategy to cope with disappointment, and others may come up in the future.

QUESTIONS TO BENITO NACIF

Question: I am very interested in the role of the media in assisting the quality of democracy. None of the presentations so far have made any reference to freedom of the

media, and particularly the electronic media – radio and television. I have been to India and was very impressed with the free debate on Indian television, but the question really in Mexico is the decline of the PRI. Was that associated at all with any freeing up of the media and what is the basis of media ownership and representation in Mexico? Furthermore, is it possible for newspapers to endorse opposition parties when it comes to an election? Was that always the case? Has there been any change in the structure of media ownership in Mexico and did that contribute at all to the decline of the PRI?

Response: From a historical perspective it is difficult to tell whether the media was an active player in the process of transition, or whether what happened to the media was a reflection of what was happening to the political system as a whole. Newspapers have always had little influence in a country where the readership of national newspapers is very low. However, I think that a major change took place in the role of television in politics with the privatisation of public television.

Since the main public broadcasting corporations are now privately owned, their interest in politics is mainly pecuniary. There is a huge market (around US1 million) for political advertisements around national elections that the public funding of political parties brought about. The owners of television broadcasting corporations try to be careful, but also they take advantage of this; it is big business. What is making a difference, however, is that opposition parties now have money to pay for access to television.

With regard to radio, there are many radio stations. This part of media had a degree of freedom, especially since the 1980s, because competition within the market for radio broadcasters was, and continues to be, very high.

Also, Mexico has experienced the globalisation of media, with regard to television, radio and, more recently, the internet. The media has been out of the government's control since the 1990s. For example, CNN has been available in Spanish since the 1990s and it is a regular source of news, at least for the middle classes. Even if a regular Mexican is not regularly exposed to CNN, CNN news can reach the regular Mexican through other news sources. It is difficult to say what impact the opening up of the media has had on the quality of democracy in Mexico because this country's experience with competitive politics is still relatively new. There is, however, corruption in the media and a tendency for the media to serve the purposes of those parties who have the money to pay for advertisements. There are worrying signals, but at the same time there is hope that competition in the media market will counter-balance tendencies to support only one party or to be biased in favour of a specific party. The positive trend, therefore, is the growing level of competitiveness in the sources of news and in the news market in general.

Question: What was the system of party political funding before the PRI decided to extend political funding to opposition parties?

Response: Under PRI rule, and before 1977, the funding of political parties was exclusively private. This gave the PRI an enormous advantage because the ruling party

found ways to channel public money to the electoral campaigns of PRI candidates. The opposition was therefore at a terrible disadvantage, which is why in 1977 the opposition demanded the introduction of some form of public funding.

But the main reform took place in 1996. According to this reform, around 85% of the funding of political parties has to come from public sources – from the public treasury. That means that there is a limit of 15% for private funds going into political parties and political campaigns. The 1996 electoral reforms also established upper limits for campaign expenses for all parties. These limits are, however, very difficult to enforce; but some progress has been made over the last three elections in terms of setting good precedents and sanctioning parties when the electoral authorities can prove that they have exceeded the upper limit. But this is still a major subject of debate, because political parties and candidates always find ways around the limitations on campaign expenditure and private contributions. For instance, the legal limits are valid from the moment the campaigning officially begins. The law is silent with respect to the period before that date. Politicians take advantage of this opportunity to spend as much as they can before they become accountable to electoral authorities as official candidates. There is now a debate about regulating the fund-raising and the campaign expenditures of unofficial candidates in the period before political parties register their candidates for office. This discussion will remain unsettled for a long time because every democratic country is struggling to find a way to solve these kinds of problems.

Question: I would like to understand better how it was possible for the change to occur in Mexico. What was the role of the military at that moment of change? Was there much uncertainty among the population and civil society?

Response: One of the silent changes of the Mexican political system was the removal of the military from politics. The professionalisation of the armed forces was a process that advanced slowly, beginning in the 1940s, and eventually removed the military from politics, making it a very institutionalised force.

Regarding uncertainty, I think there was uncertainty in 2000 but it was a different kind of uncertainty than that which existed before we had competitive elections. Looking at one's currency is a good indicator of the level of uncertainty, and the value of the Mexican peso against the US dollar and other currencies did not move that much in 2000, and has remained relatively stable since then.

Question: Has the population's perception of the PRI changed and, if so, in what direction?

Response: The image of the PRI is not very good among young voters, but among the middle classes the PRI is doing rather well. One can make an analogy between the PRI and a popular football team in any country. This team will be hated by a segment of football fans, but there will be a core of supporters. The PRI is still the largest party and

its support is constant across the country, giving it an electoral base that makes it very competitive. The PRI is working on a new image and it is trying to convince the public that it is emerging out of the ashes. I do not know how successful the PRI will be in the end, but it is winning in many state races and is well positioned to mount a successful campaign to recover the presidency in 2006. The PRI is still very much alive. Its main problem was to remain united. There are many factions within the party but so far it has managed to hold together, and seems to have a clear place in the new competitive political environment.

QUESTION TO ROBERT MATTES

Question: Mattes's view of oppositions as failing because of a lack of efficacy, suggests that it is their fault. Certainly I think if you look at the squabbling that goes on among opposition parties, one is tempted to endorse that at one level. Then the phrase that I think has a lot of common sense, is that opposition parties do not win elections, governments lose them. What I am trying to get at is the dialectical relationship between them. If the government is performing okay, or is dominant, then the opposition parties may well appear to be inefficacious. Could you comment on that?

Response: In terms of your first comment, that we are saying that it is the opposition's fault, I would support that position: I think the opposition is not playing its part or its role. Any governing party worth its salt simply does what it can to get more votes. That is what any firm should do and what any governing political party does.

The problem in South Africa lies in the lack of alternatives for those voters who are dissatisfied with the performance of the governing party; it lies in the lack of opposition. At the same time, we need also to realise that there are a series of structural disadvantages to opposition parties in South Africa as I outlined in the presentation, particularly in the area of campaign funding.

QUESTIONS TO LAWRENCE SCHLEMMER

Question: Are opposition parties doing enough to win votes?

Response: I do not think that opposition parties in South Africa are doing enough. I do not think that they are good at looking at the problems that affect ordinary voters and conceptualising or designing alternative models or solutions and offering these to voters in an attractive, compelling way.

In South Africa at the moment, the present government has regarded itself as having a foremost responsibility for development, so everybody is geared to development and delivery, and people can talk about little else. I know this both from surveys and personal experience from various development projects that I have been involved in. And yet opposition parties have not sat together, or singly, and thought up alternative models, found support for them, got a model up and running, taken people from various

communities through to see it working and say 'look this is an alternative. This is the reason why government cannot offer you a solution to all your problems'. The reason why opposition parties have not been able to do this is because they are overstressed, overburdened, short of money and short of time – there is simply too much to do. But in a sense, in politics you are expected to do the impossible and to go the extra mile. I don't think that they are doing enough.

Question: I was interested in Prof. Schlemmer's comment about dominant parties feeling constrained by the spirit of the Constitution. To what extent do you think the ANC has departed from or used the Constitution?

Response: The spirit of the South African Constitution was defined by the circumstances under which the interim Constitution was drawn up: multiparty negotiations led to a transitional settlement and a transition to democracy, and there was a constitution for that purpose. Van Zyl Slabbert has accused the ANC of co-opting the Constitution by applying it selectively; that is, applying it or taking it seriously with respect to some rights but not to others. Some rights that are regarded as being taken lightly by the ANC are, among others, language and cultural rights. In addition, floor-crossing raises the issue of whether the rights of parties or the rights of the people to proportional representation are being honoured. I think we have a problem in South Africa, and it is a problem that we have to debate and where civil society has to make its voice heard.

Question: How long does it take, and is it possible, to rebuild political culture after it has been damaged by a one-party dominant system? To what extent are patronage, nepotism and clientalism influenced by a country's culture and traditions? Is there a direct link? If culture or tradition do not come into the equation, to what extent would you say it is more about power?

Response: Can democracy be rebuilt? I have been amazed in doing surveys in Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Botswana and Lesotho, among others, how alert ordinary people are to the requirements of democratic accountability even after living under imperfectly functioning democracies for a long time. There is absolutely no failure of imagination among these people. What does take time is the rebuilding of community structures, of civil society organisations. You can't achieve results simply on the basis of ideas; you actually need arms and legs, and that requires voluntary organisation. However, there are very few voluntary organisations in South Africa of a kind that assist the democratic process. I appreciate that we have many special interest-type voluntary organisations helping various categories of people or special interests. But generalised community-based organisations are lacking, especially after the collapse of the South African National Civics Organisation. This takes much time and energy to rebuild, and an added problem is that politics has taken the personnel who would normally be involved in this kind of activity

out of the communities and put them into the civil service, into Parliament and elsewhere, such as provincial legislatures.

There are certain traditions in Africa that we perhaps need to be concerned about. I am not that worried about nepotism, about family, because that is universal. But what we have in many parts of Southern Africa is an age-old tradition of tributes to a chief/traditional leader, where the traditional leader will do things on your behalf if you, for example, buy him a case of whisky, pay his transport and give him an honorarium for his effort. Now this is entirely functional in the traditional system and, in fact, since there was no central fiscus and organised bureaucracy, it was necessary – it wasn't corruption. But in our democracy today, where this occurs and where it is extended beyond the realm of traditional leadership, it undermines both democratic principles and effectiveness. I have found that low-level corruption has tended to become normalised in our society and it is through nobody's fault but it is rapidly eroding principles of good governance.

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Conference programme

- 09.00: **Welcome from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung**
Andrea E. Ostheimer, Resident Representative
- 09.10: **The Puzzle of African Party Systems**
Shaheen Mozaffar, Bridgewater State College
- 09.40: **The ANC-government, co-optive power and ideological hegemony**
Nicola de Jager, University of Pretoria
- 10.00: **The ANC's embrace**
Roger Southall, Human Science Research Council
- 10.20: **Discussion** (moderated by *Tim Hughes*)
- 10.45: Tea
- 11.00: **The Indian National Congress: Decline and reinvention**
Zoya Hasan, India
- 11.30: **INC and ANC: A comparative analysis**
Thiven Reddy, University of Cape Town
- 12.00: **The impact of one-party dominance in fragmented societies:
Malaysia and South Africa**
Malte Kassner, University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany
- 12.30: **Discussion** (moderated by *Tim Hughes*)
- 13.00: Lunch
- 14.00: **Rise and Fall of PRI in Mexico**
Benito Nacif, Mexico

- 14.30: **The re-emerging dominance of Frelimo in Mozambique?**
Luis de Brito, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, Mozambique
- 15.00: **Lessons to be learned for South Africa**
Phillip Mtimkulu, University of South Africa
- 16.00: Tea
- 16.30: **The impact of one-party dominance on voting behaviour in South Africa**
Robert Mattes, University of Cape Town
- 17.00: **Deformations of political culture by one-party dominance**
Lawrence Schlemmer, political analyst
- 17.30: **Discussion** (moderated by **Tim Hughes**)
- 18.00: **Closure**

Participants' list

Lara Anthony <i>Human Rights Commission</i>	Luis De Brito <i>EISA</i>	Rhoda Kadalie <i>Impumelelo Innovations Award Trust</i>
Florence Batyi <i>Independent Democrats</i>	Nicola de Jager <i>University of Pretoria</i>	Ayesha Kajee <i>SAIIA</i>
Kristina Bentley <i>HSRC</i>	Patricia de Lille <i>Independent Democrats</i>	Malte Kassner <i>University of Koblenz- Landau</i>
Dirk Brand <i>Western Cape Provincial Government</i>	Jonathan Faull <i>Idasa</i>	Helen Macdonald <i>University of Stellenbosch</i>
Martha Bridgman <i>SAIIA</i>	Amanda Gouws <i>University of Stellenbosch</i>	Mthuthuzeli Mama <i>PAC</i>
Anthony Butler <i>University of Cape Town</i>	Avril Harding <i>Independent Democrats</i>	Robert Mattes <i>University of Cape Town</i>
Sheila Camerer <i>Democratic Alliance</i>	Zoya Hasan <i>Jawal Nehru University</i>	Shaheen Mozaffar <i>Bridgewater State College</i>
Michael Cardo <i>Democratic Alliance</i>	Cherryl Hendricks <i>ISS</i>	Sipho Mfundisi <i>UCDP</i>
Evan Chapman <i>Congress Rental</i>	Fozia Hoosain <i>Federation of Democrats</i>	Phillip Mtimkulu <i>University of South Africa</i>
Zohra Dawood <i>Open Society Foundation for South Africa</i>	Tim Hughes <i>SAIIA</i>	Pieter Mulder <i>Freedom Front</i>
	Zwelethu Jolobe <i>University of Cape Town</i>	

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Political analyst

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