

**A DEMOCRATISING SOUTH AFRICA?
AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2004 NATIONAL
ELECTION**

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By

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ABSTRACT

Two of the post apartheid elections held in South Africa (1994, 1999) have been used as mechanisms to analyse and assess the extent to which the country's transition from apartheid to a democratic dispensation is succeeding or not. The primary analytical focus of the 1994 and 1999 elections has revolved around the nature of the party system and voting behaviour. Basically, contestation has arisen over two primary and related issues: the dominance of the African National Congress (ANC) weighed against the weakness of opposition parties and the implications that this development has for effective democratic consolidation. Also, whether voting decisions based on divisive racial and ethnic identities that underlie electoral contests are pervasive enough to derail the process of democratisation. Generally, the primary conclusion has been that the unfolding pattern of South African electoral politics indicates sufficient grounds on which to doubt the prospects for effective democratic consolidation. This dissertation engages these debates with particular reference to the 2004 elections. In contrast to this pessimistic view of the prospects of successful democratisation in South Africa it upholds - through an analysis of the 2004 elections- the view that there is insufficient empirical evidence, to conclude that South Africa's democratisation process is imperiled. It maintains that-although there are problems related to the to the nature of the party system and some elements of voting behaviour- there is enough countervailing evidence revealed by the 2004 election results that this does not present a substantially serious threat to the prospects of South Africa attaining a democratic society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
List of Tables.....	iv
Acronyms.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
<i>1.1 Overview.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1.2 Research Context.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1.3 Methodology.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.4 Chapter Outline.....</i>	<i>6</i>
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND	
.....	7
<i>2.1 Introduction.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>2.2 Democratic Consolidation and Elections.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>2.3 Electoral Contests in a Democratic South Africa.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>2.4 The 1994 Election.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>2.5 The 1999 Election.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>2.6 The 2004 Election.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>2.7 Conclusion.....</i>	<i>23</i>
CHAPTER 3: THE ANC AND ONE PARTY DOMINANCE IN THE 2004 ELECTIONS.....	24
<i>3.1 Introduction.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>3.2 The Utility of Political Parties.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>3.3 One Party Dominance and its Consequences.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>3.4 Contesting the ANC's Dominance as Threat to Democracy.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>3.5 Conclusion.....</i>	<i>38</i>
CHAPTER 4: OPPOSITION PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY.....	39
<i>4.1 Introduction.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>4.2 The Status of Opposition Parties.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>4.3 The Nature of the Weakness.....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>4.4 Conclusion.....</i>	<i>51</i>
CHAPTER 5: VOTING BEHAVIOUR AND DEMOCRACY.....	52
<i>5.1 Introduction.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>5.2 The Racial/Ethnic View.....</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>5.3 Race and Ethnicity in the 2004 Elections.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>5.4 Declining Trends in Race and Ethnicity.....</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>5.5 Voter Apathy in 2004.....</i>	<i>62</i>

<i>5.6 Conclusion</i>	65
Chapter 6: CONCLUSION	67
APPENDIX	74
Interviewees	74
Political Party Documents	75
Newspapers	76
REFERENCES	77

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
Table 1	Election Results 1994	13
Table 2	Election Results 1999	17
Table 3	Election Results 2004	21

ACRONYMS

AA	Affirmative Action
ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
AEB	Afrikaner Unity Movement
ANC	African National Congress
AWB	Afrikaner Resistance Movement
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CP	Conservative Party
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
DA	Democratic Alliance
DP	Democratic Party
EISA	Electoral Institute of Southern Africa
FA	Federal Alliance
FF	Freedom Front
GEAR	Growth, Employment And Redistribution
GNU	Government of National Unity
HRC	Human Rights Commission
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ID	Independent Democrats
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
MF	Minority Front
NA	National Assembly
NA	National Action Party
NNP	New National Party
NP	National Party (before 1997)
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PR	Proportional Representation
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACP	South African Communist Party
SOPA	Socialist Party of Azania
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
UCDP	United Christian Democratic Party
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDM	United Democratic Movement

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*Chapter 1***INTRODUCTION****1.1 Overview**

This introductory chapter outlines how this dissertation is structured, explaining how the research was pursued and the central debates, which it engages. First, it discusses the context of the research, followed by an explanation of the methodology utilised and lastly, ends with a summary, which presents the main issues discussed in each chapter.

1.2 Research Context

South Africa has been undergoing a process of transition from apartheid to a more open society since the early 1990's. That is, the quest to move from a discriminatory policy that was based on racial exclusion to a more open and representative dispensation. This development has elicited various interpretations and contestation in the literature around electoral behaviour and democratisation, essentially whether the country is realising a democratic society or not.

Elections are a central and important feature of a country undergoing a democratic transition as they afford the electorate an opportunity to effectively participate in the process, in terms of choosing public representatives, which is a basic requirement of a democratic society. Thus, elections have been identified and utilised as one of the critical

mechanisms used to assess the extent to which the country is democratising, or not.¹

South Africa has held three post-apartheid elections (1994, 1999 and 2004). Academic analysis of the 1994 and 1999 elections have arrived at differing perspectives on the prospects for South Africa's democratic consolidation- both positive and negative.²

The main contestation around the 1994 and 1999 elections has been around the following two primary and related issues and their impact and influence on democratic consolidation: the nature of the party system and voting behaviour. The primary debate has been to assess to what extent these factors assist or impede effective democratic consolidation in South Africa. This dissertation uses the 2004 election as a prism to engage these debates. It does so by analysing the nature of one-party dominance, the role of opposition parties in democratic consolidation and engages voting behaviour and its impact on this process. This is done through an analysis of election results, political party campaigns and competition as well as interpreting voter behaviour.

From the perspective of political parties, a multi-party system, which allows competitive electoral competition between political parties, underlines a successful transition to a

¹ See, Diamond, Larry, Juan Linz, and Robert M. Lipset, Martin Eymour (eds.), (1995), *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, 2nd Edition: Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

² These include, for example, Johnson, Richard William (1996), "How Free, How Fair?", in Johnson and Schlemmer, (eds.) *Launching Democracy in South Africa: The First Open Election, April 1994*, New Haven: Yale University Press: 1-15; see also, Schlemmer, Lawrence (1994b), 'Birth of Democracy', *Indicator SA*, 11 (3); Giliomee, Hermann (1995), "Democratisation in South Africa", *Political Science Quarterly*, pp. 83-104; Lodge, Tom (1999), *Consolidating Democracy: South Africa's Second Popular Election*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press; Seekings, Jeremy (1997), "From Ballot Box to the Bookshelf: Studies of the 1994 South African General Election", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 15(2): 287-309; Habib, Adam and Rupert Taylor (1999), "Parliamentary Opposition and Democratic Consolidation in South Africa", *Review of African Political Economy*, June 1999, 26 (80): 261-267.

democratic order.³ South Africa has however witnessed the emergence of a one-party dominant system with the African National Congress (ANC) registering a huge and incremental margin of victory in the three post-apartheid elections.⁴ This has elicited interpretations in the literature that this factor is inimical to the deepening of democracy as it has the potential to lead to an undemocratic one-party state.⁵ Thus, the critical question to address is: is the ANC's continuing dominance indicative of the erosion of democracy, especially given the party's attainment of a two-thirds majority in the 2004 elections? The answer to this question will be pursued through an analysis of the ANC's electoral campaign in 2004, its goals and objectives to assess whether this contention is viable, that indeed the electoral power of the ANC presents a danger to democratic consolidation. In essence, the debate will be engaged from the following perspective: what leads to the ANC's dominance within the electorate and is it accurate to posit that power emanating from legitimate electoral support is detrimental to the success of democracy? In addition, the dissertation is concerned with pursuing the debate to test the assertion that there is sufficient empirical evidence-revealed through an analysis of election results –to warrant these fears.

Regarding political behaviour, South Africa has been characterised as a society that is underlined by serious racial and ethnic divisions that are said to influence the political choices of voters and political party programmes to the detriment of democratic

³ Huntington, Samuel, P. (1992), "How Countries Democratize", *Political Science Quarterly*, 106 (4): 576-515.

⁴ Brooks, Heidi (2004), "The Dominant Party System: Challenges for South Africa's Second Decade of Democracy", EISA Occasional Paper no. 25, October 2004, *Electoral Institute of South Africa*, p. 1-18.

⁵ Giliomee, Hermann and Charles Simkins (eds.) (1999), *The Awkward Embrace: One-party Domination and Democracy*, Cape Town: Tafelberg.

consolidation. This state of affairs—it is argued— militates against forging a united nation, one of the essential elements of a successful democracy. Thus, these perceived racial and ethnic cleavages are taken to be a serious challenge to overcome in the process of democratisation. In this regard, through an interpretation of the election results, the patterns of voter behaviour and political party competition and campaigns, the research will investigate what impact these factors have on the democratisation process. That is, to what extent were these analytical variables influential in the 2004 election? This angle is pursued against the background that race and ethnicity are viewed as pervasive in South African electoral behaviour and political party platforms to the detriment of democratisation.⁶ This will be assessed, for example, against the emerging evidence that alliances between political parties in the 2004 election—especially between the main ones—indicate a move away from divisive identity based political practice, to a much more materially informed, interest-based politics that revolves around choices made on the basis of socio-economic disparities that characterise South African society.

Another dimension to consider in assessing the efficacy of the 2004 election as a mechanism to measure the extent of democratic consolidation is to engage voter participation. The 2004 election has indicated high levels of non-participation of voters in the process, with half of the eligible voters having not taken part in the process⁷—a development, which has serious implications for democratic consolidation. The aim of the research is to investigate the causes, and effects of a disengaged electorate on the

⁶ Giliomee, Hermann, James Myburgh and Lawrence Schlemmer (2001), “Dominant Party Rule, Opposition and Minorities in South Africa”, *Konrad Adenauer Seminar Report no. 2*, pp. 37-50.

⁷ Kotze, Dirk (2004), “Post Election Phase: Election Results and Post Election”, *Election Update 2004: South Africa*, 8 (3): 2-7.

prospects for democratic consolidation. A critical perspective to focus on is the view that voter apathy is necessarily indicative of the lack of faith in the democratic prospects—to assess it against the counterview that asserts that apathy may be more concretely addressed as it might indicate a maturing democracy. Again, to what extent are these racial and ethnic cleavages responsible for voter apathy such that it can be concluded that their presence is likely to derail the democratisation process?

1.3 Methodology

The thesis followed a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, drawing on primary and secondary resources. To source the primary data, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with academics, electoral analysts and politicians. The academics and analysts were selected on the basis of their contribution to the field of South African electoral studies and were particularly asked to respond to questions related to the 2004 elections and its impact on the democratisation process, with specific reference to the issue mentioned above in the research context. The politicians were approached for their insights as political practitioners. On average each interview lasted forty minutes and in all nine were conducted, (3 academics, 3 policy analysts, and 3 politicians) in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

To supplement the interviews, the secondary literature consulted included the following sources- especially where they discussed the 2004 elections: newspaper articles (from major South African newspapers), electoral surveys, journal articles and reports sourced

mainly from publications of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the Electoral Institute of Southern African (EISA), and the Helen Suzman Foundation (HSF).

1.4 Chapter Outline

The second chapter presents the theoretical and empirical background to the process of democratic consolidation. It focuses on establishing a link between electoral contests and democratic consolidation and discusses the results of the 1994, 1999 and 2004 elections, to reveal the main trends brought up by these contests. Thus, it serves a basis on which the issues in the analytical chapters (3, 4 and 5) are discussed. Chapter 3 discusses the African National Congress (ANC) dominance and its implications for democratisation. Chapter 4 focuses on the role of opposition parties in this process of democratic consolidation. Chapter 5 engages voting behaviour focusing on identity politics (the racial/ethnic view) and voter apathy. Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of this research.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the central debates that will be addressed in the analytical chapters (3, 4 and 5) by presenting a theoretical and empirical framework through which this thesis is pursued. It does so by first establishing the link between democratic consolidation and elections, drawing out the basis on which elections are regarded as an important mechanism for realising a democratic society.⁸ Secondly, it discusses the three post apartheid elections of 1994, 1999, and 2004 focusing on a discussion of the results to reveal the main trends around party performance, and voting behaviour.

2.2 Democratic Consolidation and Elections

South Africa has been undergoing a process of transition away from apartheid since the early 1990's, which has been approximated, with the consolidation of democracy. Democratic consolidation is, in concrete terms, the strengthening and deepening of

⁸ Davids, Yul Derek, Linz, Juan and Lipset, Martin Seymour (1995), 'Introduction: What Makes For Democracy?', in *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, (ed.) Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Martin Seymour Lipset, Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, pp. 1-33.

democracy in a country that is moving away from an authoritarian system to a much more open society.

There are different views and interpretations of the nature of democratic consolidation—essentially, when the process can be said to have been achieved. Indeed, there is basic disagreement on whether the process of democratisation is a linear process⁹ with set outcome or whether it is an idealised state of society¹⁰ that should be constantly strived for.¹¹ Steven Friedman argues that democratic consolidation is not an end goal, but rather an objective statement about a given state or society, noting that:

“To me democracy is an attempt. There is no perfect democracy, so an attempt to establish a democracy is a continuum that doesn’t end. One is asking: ‘how does one deepen and strengthen democracy in this society?’”(Interview with author)¹²

There are two broad perspectives on how a democracy can be said to be consolidated: the substantive and procedural understandings of democratic consolidation. Substantive democracy, takes a long-term view that emphasises the assessment of broad political, economic and social facets of a society in transition.¹³ This view takes cognisance of issues like ‘prerequisites of democracy,’ based on what Hermann

⁹ Schedler, Andreas (2001), “Measuring Democratic Consolidation”, *Comparative International Development*, Spring 2001, 36 (1): 66-92.

¹⁰ Liebenberg, Paul (1999), ‘Democracy in South Africa, With Special References to the Concept of Self Determination,’ in “Consolidating Democracy in South Africa” in *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Seminar Papers*.

¹¹ See: Habib, Adam (1997), “South Africa-The Rainbow Nation and Prospects for Consolidating Democracy”, *African Association of Political Science*, 2 (2): 15-37; Horowitz, Donald A. (1991), *A Democratic South Africa?: Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1991.

¹² Friedman, Steven Interview 2004.

¹³ Carothers, Timothy (2002), ‘The End of the Transition Paradigm’ *Journal of Democracy*, 13: 5-21.

Giliomee has for example noted as: “the social requisites for change” such as, the correlation between the wealth of a nation and the prospects of realising a democratic society.¹⁴

The procedural view, adopts a narrower perspective that posits that democratic consolidation can be effectively assessed by considering technocratic and institutional aspects of a society. Thus, this perspective lays emphasis on factors such as: elections, constitutions, parliaments and so on.¹⁵ For the purpose of this thesis, the latter perspective is adopted to address the prospects of democracy in South Africa through electoral contests, specifically delimiting itself to an assessment of the 2004 elections.

Thus, instead of focusing on a long-term view of assessing democratic consolidation in South Africa (substantive view), this research engages this debate from the perspectives of a minimalist view of democracy (procedural). And it should be noted that the procedural aspects of a democracy are not being privileged as being much more forceful as a unit of analysis than the substantive view. It is fully appreciated that both are equally crucial in adopting as frameworks for assessing the process of democratic consolidation. Thus, the thrust of this research does not question the efficacy of the substantive view.

Linz and Stepan in their consideration of democratic consolidation have asserted amongst other factors that that the process of democratic consolidation is deepened

¹⁴ Giliomee, Hermann 1995, “Democratisation in South Africa...”;

¹⁵ Stepan, Alfred (1997), “Democratic Opposition and Democratisation Theory”, *Government and Opposition*, 32 (4): 657.

when the attitudinal view to the process is heightened.¹⁶ That is, society is successfully realising a democratic setting when it affirms and recognises that procedures such as successful elections are critical to the attainment of democracy.

With respect to political parties the specific issues that indicate successful electoral contests are the level and quality of party competition,¹⁷ the nature and strength of opposition parties,¹⁸ and the possibility of alternation of power between political parties.¹⁹ That is, to what extent is competition present between parties that occurred in the transition? As a basic tenet of democracy, party competition is vital for effective opposition, oversight and needed alternation between political parties. It is necessary for democratic consolidation as it provides voters with various political choices.

Linked to this debate is the extent to which one-party dominance within society is healthy or not for democracy-for in the South African case it has been argued that the dominance of the ANC is threat to the effective entrenchment of democracy.²⁰

The above arguments are directly related to the status of opposition parties: their weakness and strength influence the prospects for democratic consolidation; because if marginalised, weak and disjointed for example, opposition parties do not offer

¹⁶ Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan (1996), "Towards Consolidated Democracies", *Journal of Democracy*, 7 (2), April 1996.

¹⁷ Brooks, Heidi 2004, "The Dominant Party System..."

¹⁸ Friedman, Steven (1995), 'South Africa: Divided in a Special Way' in Larry Diamond "No Easy Stroll to Dominance: Party Dominance in Selected Developing Countries: South Africa", Paper presented to the conference of *One-Party Dominance in Selected Developing Countries: South Africa, Malaysia, Mexico and Taiwan*. Cape Town/Arniston: November 1995.

¹⁹ Habib, Adam and Rupert Taylor 1999, "Parliamentary Opposition..."

²⁰ Friedman, Steven (1999), 'No easy stroll to Dominance: Party Dominance, Opposition and Civil Society in South Africa' in Giliomee, H and Simkins, C. (eds.), *The Awkward Embrace; One-party Domination and Democracy*, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

viable and effective competition to the ruling dominant party, which is negative for effective democratisation.²¹

Voter behaviour in elections is crucial in assessing to what extent the process of elections in a given society is indicative of consolidating democracy or not. In this sense, the motivations of voters—on the basis they make their choices; whether on concrete issues which material define their interests or whether they act on emotive identities (such as race or ethnicity)—is critical.²² Hence, if voting behaviour is issue driven, the prospects of consolidation are enhanced,²³ as this will reflect genuine interests based voting rather than emotive voting which is divisive as it is underlined by factors such as race and ethnicity—especially, in “societies, which are deeply divided along these lines.”²⁴

Another dimension that is important to consider regarding the link between democratic consolidation and elections is the level of voter participation in electoral contests: is it high or not? High levels of political participation, reflects an engaged citizenry that will serve to shape public debates around what type of society should be realized. Lodge has argued that:

“electoral behaviour arises from the attitudes of the citizens... their participation in elections can be a vigorous

²¹ Matlosa, Khabele and Karume, Shumbana (2004), ‘Ten years of Democracy and the Dominant Party System in South Africa’, *Election Update 2004: South Africa*, no. 5, 30 March, EISA; Also see, Pempel, TJ (ed.) (1990), *Uncommon Democracies: The One-Party Dominant Regimes*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990; Olaleye, Wole (2003), “Political Parties and Multi-party Elections in Southern Africa”, *SADC Insight IV 2003*, EISA: 1-5.

²² Taylor, Rupert and Thabisi Hoeane (1999), “Interpreting the South African Election of June 1999”, *Politikon*, 26 (2): 133-144.

²³ Brynin, Malcolm and David Sanders (1997), “Party Identification, Political Preferences, and Material Conditions”, *Party Politics*, 3 (1): 53-77.

²⁴ Friedman, Steven Interview 2004.

set of criteria for evaluating the achievements of democratic consolidation.”²⁵

An alienated electorate that exhibits high levels of apathy leads to a lowering of the quality of democracy, because: the fewer citizens participate in processes that are important in a country undergoing a democratic transition-such as elections- the likely the chances are that democracy will be imperilled.²⁶

Thus, it is in the light of the above formulation that this research addresses the process of democratic consolidation in South Africa through elections, with special reference to the 2004 elections. It engages the elections from the perspective of assessing the role of political parties and voters to find out what trends are being revealed and to what extent they depict a process of democratic consolidation or erosion.

2.3 Electoral Contests in a Democratic South Africa

This section discusses electoral contests since 1994 to provide a basis on which to engage the points elucidated above (which will be discussed extensively in chapters 3, 4 and 5) with a specific focus on an interpretation of the results. That is, explaining what has transpired empirically in electoral contests since 1994 around the contention that political parties and voters are central in assessing the efficacy of elections in our understanding of democratic consolidation. The specific trends engaged are the evaluation of the main political parties’ percentage gains and losses (or performance in the election) and voting patterns.

²⁵ Lodge, Tom 1999, ‘Consolidating Democracy...’ p. 3.

²⁶ Lodge, Tom (2003), “Voting Abstention in the South African General Election of 1999”, *Representation*, 39 (2): 105-118.

2.4 The 1994 Election

The first democratic election that heralded the end of apartheid and the onset of a democratic order was held in April 1994, following the transition negotiations that lasted from 1990-1994. For the first time in the country's history, voters participated in an open electoral process without restrictions such as race, ethnicity or gender.

Table 1: Election Results 1994*

Party	Percentage of vote	Votes	Seats (National Assembly)
ANC	62.65	12 237 655	252
NP	20.39	3 983 690	82
IFP	10.54	2 058 294	43
FF	2.17	424 555	9
DP	1.73	338 426	7
PAC	1.25	243 478	5
ACDP	0.45	88 104	2
Others	0.82	159 296	0
Total	100	19 533 498	400

* Figures from Independent Electoral Commission webpage: www.elections.org.za

Close to twenty million (19,533,498) South Africans participated in the poll with the voter turnout at 86 percent. The election was successful with most local and international observers concurring that they were “free and fair.”²⁷ The ANC won the election with a 62.65 percent majority (12,237,655 votes), translating into 252 seats in the 400 member National Assembly (NA). It also controlled seven of the nine provincial legislatures—with KwaZulu Natal being ruled by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the Western Cape by the National Party (NP). This victory asserted the ANC’s position as a major liberation movement and its critical role as one of the main players in the unfolding dispensation.²⁸ One explanation of the ANC’s win was that the black majority voted for the party, as it was perceived to have been instrumental in bringing apartheid to an end.²⁹ This victory induced hope from its supporters, that the party will eradicate the unequal and racial legacy of apartheid, as Khabele Matlosa, has observed: “expectations rose sky high for the new democracy.”³⁰

The former ruling party—National Party (NP) came second with 20.39 percent (3,983,690 votes) and 82 seats. Thus for the first time since 1948 when the NP came into power and instituted the policy of apartheid, it was defeated at the polls. As the official opposition, the NP’s strength was around one third the power of the ANC.

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) came in third with 10.54 percent share of the national vote (2,058,294 votes) securing 43 seats. This was a good showing by the party given that the IFP joined the election just days before the poll, after it had

²⁷ See, R.W. Johnson (1996), “How Free? How Fair”, in Johnson and Schlemmer *Launching Democracy in South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven, pp. 326-327.

²⁸ Baregu, Msewiga (2004) ‘From Liberation Movements to Ruling Parties in Southern Africa’, in Landsberg, Chris and Shaun Mackay (eds.), *Southern Africa Post-Apartheid? The Search for Democratic Governance*, IDASA, Cape Town.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Matlosa, Khabele Interview 2004.

walked out of the transition talks over some disagreements, primarily dissatisfaction over the status of the Zulu monarch in the new dispensation.³¹

The Freedom Front (FF), which represented exclusively Afrikaner interests also performed relatively well given that it has been established just two months before the election after it had initially shown ambivalence to joining the transition process. It came fourth with a 2.17 percent share of the national vote (424,555 votes) resulting in 9 seats. The Democratic Party (DP), the traditionally liberal South African party came fifth with 1.73 percent of the vote (338,426 votes) and 7 seats. The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), though part of the liberation movement, surprisingly only managed to attract 1.25 percent of national support (243,478 votes) and 5 seats. The other party represented in the NA was the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), a Christian fundamentalist party formed in late 1993. It won 0.45 percent of the national vote with 88,104 votes and only 2 seats.

Two significant trends that are central to the debates pursued in this research were revealed by the 1994 elections: the dominance of the ANC and weak opposition, as well as its characterisation as the process as a racial/ethnic census.³² The dominance of the ANC and the weakness of the opposition parties were indicated by the fact that the ANC had three times (62.65 percent) the size of support of the official opposition party the NP (20.39 percent).

³¹ See *African Contemporary Record*, 2000, p. B674.

³² See: Johnson, Richard William (1996), "How Free, How Fair?", in Johnson and Schlemmer, (eds.) *Launching Democracy in South Africa: The First Open Election, April 1994*, New Haven: Yale University Press: 1-15; Giliomee, Hermann (1998), "South Africa's Dominant Party Regime", *Journal of Democracy*, 9 (4), October 1998: 128-129; Giliomee, Hermann, James Myburgh and Lawrence Schlemmer (2001), "Dominant Party Rule, Opposition and Minorities in South Africa", *Konrad Adenauer Seminar Report no. 2*, pp. 37-50.

The racial aspects of the election were said to have been indicated by the overwhelming black support base of the ANC and corresponding white support for parties such as the NP and DP, whilst the ethnic dimension was said to have revealed itself in the ethnic basis of parties such as the IFP (Zulu ethnicity) and the FF (Afrikaner identity).³³ This led Lawrence Schlemmer to comment that:

“the first election, while formally an interest-based, non-racial, non-ethnic contest, had sufficient ethnic and racial content to signal a warning for the future.”³⁴

2.5 The 1999 Election

The context of the 1999 election was different from that of 1994. For example, leaders of the transition talks, F. W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela had left the political stage and a new generation of leaders was emerging with Thabo Mbeki as president of the ANC and Marthinus Van Sckalkwyk taking leadership of the New National Party (NNP).³⁵

Around 16 million South African cast their vote, about 3.5 million fewer than those who went to the polls in 1994 although voter interest was still high as the turnout poll increased from 2 percent from 86 percent to 88 percent.³⁶

³³ See, for example, Mare, Gerhard (1994), “The Inkatha Freedom Party”, in Andrew Reynolds (ed.), *Election '94 South Africa: The Campaigns, Results and Future Prospects*, Cape Town: David Philip, pp. 73-87 and in the same work, Andrew Reynolds “The Results”

³⁴ Schlemmer, Lawrence 1994, “South Africa’s First Open Election...,” p.166.

³⁵ The NP changed its name to the New National Party (NNP) in 1997.

³⁶ Mattes, Robert Christian Keulder, Annie B. Chikwana, Cherrel Africa, and Yul Derek Davids, (2003), “Democratic Governance in South Africa: The People’s View”, *AfroBarometer Working Papers no. 24*, AfroBarometer.

Table 2: Election Results 1999*

Party	Percentage of Votes	Votes	Seats (National Assembly)
ANC	66.35	10 601 330	266
DP	9.56	1 527 337	38
IFP	8.58	1 371 477	34
NNP	6.87	1 098 215	28
UDM	3.42	546 790	14
ACDP	1.43	228 975	6
FF	0.80	127 217	3
UCDP	0.78	125 280	3
PAC	0.71	113 125	3
FA	0.54	86 704	2
MF	0.30	48 277	1
AEB	0.29	46 292	1
Azapo	0.17	27 257	1
Others	0.20	28 866	0
Total	100	15 977 142	400

* Figures from Independent Electoral Commission web page: www.elections.org.za

The ANC's dominance was asserted when the party increased its majority by 3.7 percent gaining 66.35 percent of the national vote and 266 seats. The DP displaced the NNP as the official opposition by greatly increasing its support by (338,426 votes) to attain 9.56 percent of the national vote (1,527,337 votes). However, overall the strength of official opposition was reduced drastically, as now the strength of the DP (9.55 percent) as the official opposition, was one sixth that of the ruling ANC (66.36) compared to the NP's one-third in 1994—effectively meaning that the strength of the official opposition had been reduced by half.

The NNP came third, losing nearly 75 percent of its 1994 support base garnering (1,098,215 votes). The IFP attained 8.58 percent of the national vote (1,371,477 votes) and 34 seats. The United Democratic Movement (UDM)—a new party that had

been established in 1997 occupied fifth place with 3.42 percent of the national poll (546,790 votes) and 14 seats. The party was formed by Major General Bantu Holomisa, a former leader of the Transkei Bantustan and later member of the ANC and Roelf Meyer, the former chief negotiator of the NP during the transition talks.³⁷

The ACDP moved from being the party with the least support in the NA to become in 1994 to the sixth largest party in 1999, attracting 228,975 votes and 1.43 percent of the national poll with 6 seats. The FF gained only 127,217 votes translating into 0.80 percent and 3 seats effectively losing 60 percent of its national support. The United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), a reconstituted party led by the former ruler of the Bophuthatswana Bantustan, Lucas Mangope³⁸ won 0.78 percent of the national poll with 124,280 votes gaining 3 seats in parliament. The weakness of the PAC was further indicated by the 113, 125 votes it managed to attract and 0.78 percent of the national poll and 3 seats—down from 5 seats in 1994

Another new party the Federal Alliance (FA) formed in 1988 by Louis Luyt, a former rugby personality and businessman received 0.54 percent of the national vote and 86,704 votes with 2 seats. The Minority Front (MF) led by Amichand Rajbansi, another resurgent leader who had operated under apartheid political structures³⁹ that,

³⁷ Both Bantu Holomisa and Roelf Meyer fell out with their respective parties. Holomisa was expelled from the ANC and relieved of his cabinet post after being found guilty of disciplinary discretions and Meyer left the NP over differences around party policy after the 1994 elections.

³⁸ Lucas Mangope was removed violently from power in the run up to the 1994 election by residents of his nominally independent homeland of Bophuthatswana when he refused to align himself with the unfolding democratic process.

³⁹ Amichand Rajbansi was the leader of the Indian House of Delegates in the failed Tricameral Parliament established by the NP government in the early 1980's to try and reform apartheid.

espoused the protection of Indian minority interests, won 0.30 percent of the national poll with 48,277 votes and 1 seat.⁴⁰

Yet, another new party the AEB (Afrikaner Unity Movement) that had been established in 1998 followed with 0.29 percent 46,292 votes and one seat. It was also ethnically oriented projecting itself as the home of the new Afrikaner appealing mostly to young Afrikaners who rejected both the politics of extremist Afrikaner parties such as the FF and Conservative party (CP), and the Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) and the apartheid legacy of the NNP.⁴¹

The Azania Peoples Organisation (AZAPO) a Black Consciousness (BC) adherent that had boycotted the 1994 poll was last in the list with 0.17 percent (27,257 votes) and one seat. The party espouses the view that the black majority is still excluded from the economic benefits that had been brought by political freedom.⁴²

2.6 The 2004 Election

The third democratic election that also marked ten years of transition to democracy was held in April 2004. A discernible feature of the election was apparent voter abstention. The 15, 863,554 people who voted accounted for 76.7 percent of the

⁴⁰ Habib, Adam and Shaun Naidu (1999), "Election '99: Was There a 'Coloured' and 'Indian' Vote?", *Politikon*, 26 (2): 189-199.

⁴¹ The AEB disappeared from parliament in 2003 during the floor-crossing phase when its sole MP Cassie Aucump defected to form the National Action Party (NAP). Also see, Myburgh, James (2003), "Floor Crossing Adds New Muscle to the ANC", *Focus 30*, June 2003, Helen Suzman Foundation, Johannesburg.

⁴² Azapo's 2004 manifesto available at: www.azapo.org.za.

country's 20.7 million registered voters. That is, 58.7 percent of the estimated 27 million South Africans who were eligible to vote.⁴³

The most significant feature of the election was the ANC's attainment of a two-thirds majority when it won 279 seats with 10,880,915 votes. The party also managed to gain control of the two provinces that had always eluded it since 1994—the Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal—a development that raised concerns of a likelihood of erosion of democracy given that the party was now controlling all provinces and consolidating its power.⁴⁴

The DA⁴⁵—the official opposition, came second with 50 seats and 12.37 percent of the national poll with 1,931,201 votes. The DA's failed to reach its projected pre-election target despite the fact that it changed its 'fight back' strategy of 1999 to try to be inclusive by appealing to black voters.⁴⁶

In third place was the IFP, with a reduced 28 seats in parliament and 6.97 percent of the national poll at 1,088,664 votes. Notably, the IFP's less than impressive performance was indicated by the loss of the KwaZulu Natal province to the ANC; a province the party had ruled since 1994. The DA and IFP had entered into a coalition

⁴⁴ See, Cherry, Janet (2004), "We Shall Never Go Back to Pharaoh: Defending Democracy in the Eastern Cape", in *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (4): 20-23; Cherry, Janet (2004), "Elections 2004: The Party Lists and Issues of Identity" in *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (3): 6-10; Daniel, John (2004), "The South African Elections of 1994, 1999, and 2004: The (Non) Issues Then and Now", *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (3): 12-14.

⁴⁵ The DA was formed out of an alliance of the DP, the NNP and FA in June 2000. However, the NNP withdrew from the alliance a year later.

⁴⁶ Gibson, Douglas Interview 2004.

called, “the ‘Coalition for Change’ to try and win 30 percent of the vote; but only managed to come up with 19.34 percent together.”⁴⁷

Table 3: Election Results 2004*

Party	Percentage of vote	Votes	Seats (National Assembly)
ANC	69.69	10 880 915	279
DA	12.37	1 931 201	50
IFP	6.97	1 088 664	28
UDM	2.28	355 717	9
ID	1.73	269 765	7
NNP	1.65	257 824	7
ACDP	1.60	250 272	6
FF	0.89	139 465	4
UCDP	0.75	117 792	3
PAC	0.73	113 512	3
MF	0.35	55 267	2
Azapo	0.25	39 116	2
Others	0.74	113 161	0
Total	100	15 612 671	400

* Figures from Independent Electoral Commission web page: www.elections.rog.za

⁴⁷ Gibson, Douglas Interview 2004.

The UDM lost 33 percent of its 1999 support coming in fourth at 2.28 percent with 355,717 votes with 9 seats. However, the party showed a lot of resilience as it had lost nearly 70 percent of its MPs in the floor crossing period in March 2003. Yet another new party the Independent Democrats (ID) surprisingly performed well in this election. It was formed by the defection of Patricia De Lille, a PAC MP in the 2003 floor crossing period in the NA. It won 1.73 percent, 269,765 votes and 7 seats. Its message targeted issues such the prevention of HIV/AIDS, reduction of unemployment, accountability in government, protection of abused woman and children and the reduction of crime.⁴⁸

The NNP suffered substantial electoral support achieving only 1.7 percent with 257,824 votes and 7 seats in the NA. Stephen Rule has described its poor performance as follows: “its supporters deserted en masse to the DA, the ANC and the infant ID.”⁴⁹

The ACDP received 6 seats with 1.6 percent of the national poll and 250,277 votes. Following the ACDP was the new styled FF Plus⁵⁰ with 4 seats in parliament, winning 0.89 percent nationally, marginally up from 0.80 percent in 1999 with 139,465 votes. The UCDP did about the same as it did in 1999 and attracted 0.75 percent of the national support (117,792 votes) and 3 seats. The PAC’s poor performance continued in 2004 relatively stagnating with 0.73 percent of national support (113,512 votes) and 3 parliamentary seats. The MF gained 0.35 percent of the

⁴⁸ Independent Democrats (ID) 2004 manifesto available at: www.id.org.za

⁴⁹ Rule, Stephen 2004, “Polls and Predictions: Where the NNP Lost Its Vote”, in *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (4): 12.

⁵⁰ The FF changed its name to the FF Plus in the run up to the 2004 election when it went into alliance with the AEB and the Conservative Party (CP).

national vote (or 55,267 votes) and 2 seats in the NA. The party also performed relatively the same as it did in 1999 with its support mainly concentrated in the KwaZulu Natal province. AZAPO maintained its one MP in the NA although it marginally increased its percentage points from 0.17 percent in 1999 (27,257 votes) to 0.25 percent with (39,116 votes) and 2 seats⁵¹ in parliament.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the theoretical and empirical to background democratic consolidation. The first section established the link between democratic consolidation and electoral processes. The second segment presented the election results of 1994, 1999 and 2004 to reveal the main trends around party performance and electoral trends. It thus serves as a basis on which to consider the central debates of pursued in details in the analytical chapters that follow (3, 4 and 5).

⁵¹ Azapo later lost one seat to the ACDP after the latter mounted a successful protest with the IEC that its seat had been erroneously allocated to Azapo.

*Chapter 3***THE ANC AND ONE-PARTY DOMINANCE IN THE 2004 ELECTIONS****3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the notion of ANC dominance and its implications for democracy—with special reference to the 2004 elections. It firstly addresses the broad role of political parties in democratic consolidation to set a framework in which to engage this debate. It then presents the arguments that assert that the dominance of the ANC is inimical to democratic consolidation. It ends by presenting the argument contest the assertion that the dominance of the ANC is inimical to democratic consolidation.

3.2 The Utility of Political Parties

Political parties have a critical role to play in the realisation or not of a democratic society. Randall and Svasand summarise some of these functions as follows:

“representation and integration of the electorate; aggregating interests and the recruitment of political leaders, accountability—the oversight function—the organising of opposition and dissent related to government.”⁵²

Thus, these institutions play a key role in organising competitive elections and ensuring representation of voters in a multi-party democracy. They do so, through

⁵² Randal, Vicky and Lars Svasand “Introduction: the Contribution...”

conveying the interests of their constituents, by serving as a channel for the expression of their political preferences; in a sense: “giving voice to the people.”⁵³

To this end, there is general consensus among political analysts that democratic consolidation would be impossible without the effective participation of political parties.⁵⁴ They are also important in translating electoral outcomes into effective action—that is actualising the interests of the electorate into reality.⁵⁵ Their other function is to serve as a recruitment and training ground for future political leaders and from the perspective of opposition parties they serve as a representative mechanism to articulate alternative views to those of the government and the ruling party.⁵⁶

3.3 One-Party Dominance and its Consequences

This section discusses the discernible pattern that has characterised South African politics in the post-apartheid era: the dominance of the ANC, which is pertinent because concerns have been raised that this feature imperils effective consolidation.⁵⁷ To illustrate the dominance of the ANC in the three post-apartheid elections: it won 63 percent of the poll in 1994, increasing this to 66 percent in 1999 and 70 percent in 2004. This section of the dissertation will engage this debate by presenting the

⁵³ Friedman, Steven Interview 2004.

⁵⁴ Van de Walle, Nicolas and Kimberley S. Butler (1999), “Political Parties and Party Systems in Africa’s Illiberal Democracies”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 3 (1) 1999: 1.

⁵⁵ Giliomee and Simkins 1999, “*The Awkward Embrace...*”; Southall, Roger 2001, “*Opposition and Democracy...*”

⁵⁶ Libset, Martin Seymour (2000), “The Indispensability of Parties”, *Journal of Democracy*, 11 (1): 45-55.

⁵⁷ See, Herzenberg, Colette (2004), “Party Support in South Africa’s Third Democratic Election: Set in Stone or Up for Grabs?”, in *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (3): 15-18; Lawrence, Patrick (2004), “A Critical Moment in Our Political History”, *Focus* 33, Helen Suzman Foundation.

arguments, which have been advanced to support the characterisation that this development is a threat to democratisation.

The ANC's dominance has been described as being too 'too strong'⁵⁸ and that this is likely to turn South African into an authoritarian state.⁵⁹ The implication of this view is that this is likely to happen, "because power always corrupts."⁶⁰ For example, one perception of is that the ANC is showing signs of, "intolerance towards internal dissent or criticism in government."⁶¹ Thus, it has been asserted that the ANC is showing signs of being very sensitive to criticism of its policies, both from its allies and other opposition voices with Southall arguing that, "... healthy debate with the ANC is stifled, and critical voices have come to be portrayed by the party leadership as enemies of the movement."⁶²

One of the most serious effects of this intolerance of criticism is the assertion that the ANC is using its power to push through policies, without regard to alternative voices in such institutions as parliament-effectively undermining democratic institutions.⁶³

The ANC government is seen to be using its overwhelming power to enact, for example, legislation without taking into consideration the views of alternative viewpoints.

With regard to this domination of the ANC and its impact on government institutions

⁵⁸ Matlosa and Karume 2004, "Ten Years of Democracy..."; Mattes, Robert (2003), "The Changing Public Agenda: South African's Assessments of the Country's Most Pressing Problems", *AfroBarometer Briefing Paper* no. 5, July 2003: 1-4.

⁵⁹ Giliomee, and Simkins 1999, "The Awkward Embrace..."; Mattes, Robert, Yul Derek Davids, Cherrel Africa and Michael Bratton, (2000), "Public Opinion and the Consolidation of Democracy in Southern Africa," *AfroBarometer Working Papers* no. 7, *AfroBarometer*.

⁶⁰ Lodge, Tom Interview 2004.

⁶¹ Gibson, Douglass Interview 2004 and see Brooks, Heidi 2004, "The Dominant Party System..."

⁶² Southall, Roger (2004), "Containing Accountability", *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (1): 6-8.

⁶³ Southall Roger, 2004 "Goliath's Victory..."

Douglass Gibson, Chief Whip of the DA, has noted that:

“The government is too large. It has a party, which has 70 percent in parliament—it is bound to abuse its majority in time, any party will do that... “(Interview with author)⁶⁴

The implication of this development is that it is seen to weaken democratic structures such as parliament as other relevant voices are not heard.⁶⁵ This is despite the presence of other parties in parliament.⁶⁶

Regarding the negative nature of this feature of South Africa’s democracy and its impact on opposition outside formal structures of the state, Chris Landsberg has commented that:

“there is a disconnect between the government and civil society—the ANC does not listen to the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)—this is the biggest threat to consolidation.”⁶⁷

Thus the ANC’s dominance is seen to be having a negative impact at two levels: within official state structures and in civil society. This is indeed an unhealthy development for democracy because it means that the ANC dominance is effectively sidelining other voices in society—both official opposition parties and organisations of civil society.

⁶⁴ Gibson, Douglas Interview 2004.

⁶⁵ Schlemmer, Lawrence (2004b), ‘Whatever Happened to the Opposition?’ *Focus* 34, June 2004, Helen Suzman Foundation, Johannesburg; Schrire, Roger (2001), ‘The Realities of Opposition in South Africa: Legitimacy, Strategies and Consequences’ in Southall, Roger (ed.), *Democratisation, Special Issue: Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, 8 (1).

⁶⁶ Daniel, John 2004, “The South African Elections...”

⁶⁷ Landsberg, Chris Interview 2004.

Critics of the ANC's dominance are also bothered about the manner in which the ANC acquires this dominance⁶⁸ and the perceived negative implications it embodies for democracy. They argue that the ANC practises double standards in that; although it declares itself as subscribing to a non-racial agenda, it pursues a racist black oriented policy through policies such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Affirmative Action (AA)—which are dividing South African society.⁶⁹ In essence, consequently, the dominance of the ANC is gained by default as it appeals to the emotions of black people—not their material claims as its non-racial policies purport.

Therefore, by emphasising the centrality of black people to the exclusion of other racial groups in South Africa's transition to democracy, it is argued that the efforts to realise a democratic society is endangered as this further inculcates divisions within society.

One of the other problems about the dominance of the ANC is the fear that has been expressed that the party will end up engendering a mood of 'Afro-pessimism.'⁷⁰ Accordingly, it is said South Africa "will land up looking like every other African case: a failure."⁷¹ This indeed, will be a serious state of affairs given the stature of South African internationally; given that: it is a country that was riddled with serious racial tensions under apartheid, but managed to transcend those problems through a peaceful transition. This has earned the country respect; for an example, as a successful African country undergoing a viable democratic transition. Consequently, if South Africa would regress into an authoritarian state this would send a very

⁶⁸ Daniel, John 2004, "The South African Elections..."

⁶⁹ Davids, Yul Derek 2004, "The People's Agenda..." Also see 2004 manifestos of the NNP, DA, FF at their respective website.

⁷⁰ Rieff, David (1999), "In Defence of Afro-Pessimism", *World Policy Journal*, 15(4), Winter 1998/99.

⁷¹ Friedman, Steven Interview 2004.

negative message to the continent and globally about the ability of Africa to solve its problems.

In sum, the dominance of the ANC in South Africa's transition to democracy is seen to have negative consequences both from an internal point of view within the country and externally. However, how viable and accurate are these arguments? This is the concern that is addressed in the following section.

3.4 Contesting the ANC's Dominance as a Threat to Democracy

The view that the dominance of the ANC is a threat to democratic consolidation has been challenged on various grounds on the basis that the argument is flawed and does not concretely represent reality about the prospects of South Africa's transition to a democratic order.⁷²

The first basis, on which this argument is refuted, is that under conditions of a free and fair democratic environment where electoral processes are deemed to be legitimate; there are no material grounds on which to question the dominance of the ANC. For example, Larry Diamond has noted that, all that is required for a democracy to be legitimate is a 'multi-party democracy with consecutive election and free voter choice.'⁷³ Hence, the supporters of the ANC's dominant position argue that it is misplaced and an untenable view to argue that the ANC dominance is a threat as it is legitimately acquired. They point to the fact that, South Africa has held three

⁷² See Heidi Brooks, "The Dominant Party System..." and Booysen, Susan (2004), "Colossus in a Multiparty System", *This Day*, Monday August 2nd, 2004: 11.

⁷³ Diamond, Larry, Juan Linz and Martin Seymour Libset, (eds.) (1995) *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, 2nd Edition Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

relatively successful elections which the ANC has won legitimately.⁷⁴ It is argued, therefore that, it is unfair to blame the ANC for being dominant when it does so through fair and free elections in a democratic dispensation.⁷⁵ The contention is accordingly that, the ANC's dominance is not inimical to democratic consolidation for it is legitimate.

Another dimension to this debate is that the ANC's electoral dominance is not the same thing as being authoritarian;⁷⁶ as it achieves electoral victories based on a voting consensus.⁷⁷ The basis for this argument is that the ANC is in power through its ability to convince the majority of the electorate to vote for it, for example, by articulating messages that emphasise social delivery, the provision of welfare assistance, housing, and health services, and so on.⁷⁸ With regard to the 2004 elections it has been noted that the ANC shift of focus in adopting its 'social contract with the people' and the highly visible campaign efforts of President Mbeki to go on a 'meet the people campaign' led to its victory.⁷⁹ What this effectively asserts is that the ANC, because of its policies (which resonate with those of the majority of South Africans), is able to win elections as its ideas converge with those of the electorate. And for this reason, it cannot be blamed for having policies that the electorate identifies with. Significantly, the ANC advocates policies that are pro-poor people—

⁷⁴ Matlosa, Khabele and Karume, Shumbana (2004), 'Ten years of Democracy and the Dominant Party System in South Africa', *Election Update 2004: South Africa*, no. 5, 30 March, *EISA*.

⁷⁵ Myburgh, James (2004), 'Ideological Battle Over Meaning of Democracy', *Focus 34*, June 2004, Helen Suzman Foundation, Johannesburg.

⁷⁶ Butler, Anthony Interview 2004.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*; Heidi Brooks 2004, "The Dominant Party System..."

⁷⁸ Landsberg, Chris (2004), "South Africa's Decade of Democracy, Inequality and Impoverishment", in *Election Synopsis 2004 1 (1): 3-5*; Davids, Yul Derek 2004, "The People's Agenda..."

⁷⁹ Landsberg, Chris 2004, "The Socio-Political Implications..."

who happen to be mostly black voters and constitute the majority electoral bloc—in its quest to address the legacy of apartheid.⁸⁰

Thus, the position that the ANC attains its majority through a racist black agenda is not appropriate as it emphasises the true needs of a substantial segments of South African voters. Stephen Rule for example notes, “participation of the rural poor was evident in the 2004 election... the ANC was elected on its social-democratic campaign agenda.”⁸¹ The reasons for this are based more on ANC policies that are focused on delivery of services to the most disadvantaged South African rather than arguments based on continuing to interpret election results as a racial /ethnic census.⁸²

Another angle from which the threat of dominance is challenged is on the basis, which asserts that the ANC betrays its principles of non-racialism⁸³ for a black orientation that ends up dividing society. For its is argued that black voters choose the ANC out of free will rather than an emotive racial appeal as Lodge has noted with respect to the 2004 elections: “citizens voted in 2004 freely with passion in a fair election.”⁸⁴

An additional, reason that refutes the basis of this argument is that: there are various modes of opposition within South African society outside the formal state structures

⁸⁰ For ‘Legacy of apartheid’ see: Giliomee, Hermann (1990), *South Africa, under the Curse of Apartheid*. London 1990.

⁸¹ Rule, Stephen 2004, “Motivations Behind Voting Behaviour in South Africa”, in *Election Synopsis* 2004, 1 (2): 7-12.

⁸² Habib, Adam (2004), “Are South Africa’s Elections a Racial Census?”, in *Election Synopsis* 2004: 1 (2): 4-7.

⁸³ Ndebele, Nhlanhla (2002), “The African National Congress and the policy of Non-Racialism: A Study of the Membership Issue”, *Politikon*, 29 (2): 133-146, p. 145.

⁸⁴ Lodge, Tom Interview 2004.

that presents alternative views to that of the government, thus serving as opposition.⁸⁵ For example, it is argued that there is effective opposition within the Tripartite Alliance composed of the ANC, the Congress of South Africans Trade Unions (COSATU) and South African Communist Party (SACP).⁸⁶ These alliance partners of the ANC alliance continue to openly demonstrate their refusal to conform to the about turn in the ANC's neo-liberal economic policy since 1996⁸⁷ and this is an indication of the role that they have a role to play in ensuring accountability.⁸⁸ Consequentially so, ensuring that the alliance is able to articulate views which are in opposition to some government policies.⁸⁹ COSATU and the SACP, although they are in alliance with the ANC, still serve as channels to articulate alternative viewpoints to that of the ANC government. In this sense then, internal opposition within the broad alliance does create political space for dissenting voices to government policies.

Another dimension to this argument is that there is sufficiently strong civil society voices in South Africa, that are effective in presenting views other than those of the government. For example, the development of new social movements such as the

⁸⁵See, Booysen, Susan (1999), "Election 1999 and Scenarios for Opposition Politics in South Africa", *Politikon*, 26 (2): 249-258; Nijzink, Lia (2001), 'Opposition in the New South African Parliament' in Southall, Roger (ed.), *Democratisation Special Issue: Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, 8 (1); Doherty, Ivan (2001), "Democracy Out of Balance: Civil Society Can't Replace Political Parties", *Policy Review*, April/May 2001: 25-35.

⁸⁶ Webster, Eddie (2001), 'The Alliance Under Stress: Governing in a Globalizing World' in Southall, Roger (ed), *Democratisation, Special Issue: Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, 8(1).

⁸⁷ Brooks, Heidi 2004, "The Dominant Party System..." p. 19; Lodge, Tom (1999a), "Policy Within the African National Congress and the Tripartite Alliance", *Politikon*, 26 (1): 5-32.

⁸⁸ Southall, Roger (2004), "Containing Accountability", *Election Synopsis 2004* 1 (1): 6-8.

⁸⁹ Barker, Rodney (1971), 'Introduction' in Rodney Barker (ed.) *Studies in Opposition*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 1-3; Blondel, Jean (1997), "Political Opposition in the Contemporary World", *Government and Opposition*, 32 (4): 462, 464.

Landless Peoples Movement (LPM),⁹⁰ the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC),⁹¹ and various other NGOs. Steven Friedman has argued that these organisations, “in civil society act as an alternative form of opposition” providing “oversight at the state society relations level.”⁹² Therefore, contrary to the view that the ANC ignores civil society groups, there are strong views that indeed these social movements have an impact on public debate in South Africa which the government and ANC take cognisance of.

The very dominance of the ANC has been regarded as being positive because its incremental support in electoral contests since 1994 indicates that there is “massive consensus over ANC support.”⁹³ That is, the ANC is seen as the best candidate amongst all parties that would be able to successfully entrench democracy as, in a seriously fragile society as South Africa’s, transition will be largely assured if there is a strong party that will be able to hold society together.⁹⁴ Moreover, this huge consensus amongst the electorate is regarded as internalisation of democratic choice, which is good for the ‘quality of democracy.’⁹⁵

The ANC dominance has been interpreted as positive in that it is an indication that South Africans citizens are actively engaged in politics and are not alienated from critical democratic processes. The fact that the ANC continues to be voted into power by voters emphasises that this interest is not waning. This is especially so, for the

⁹⁰ The Landless Peoples Movement (LPM) is an organisation which fights for the rights of South Africans who were disposed of their land by past government policies.

⁹¹ The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) is a lobby group that represents people affected by HIV Aids.

⁹² Friedman, Steven Interview 2004.

⁹³ Matlosa, Khabele Interview 2004; Kotze, Dirk 2004, “Post-Election Phase...”

⁹⁴ Matlosa, Khabele Interview 2004; Also see Davids, Yul Derek 2004, “The People’s Agenda...”

⁹⁵ Lodge, Tom 1999, *Consolidating Democracy...*

black majority that was excluded from political participation before 1994. In the ANC, they see an organisation that embodies their views. And hence, heighten their interest and participation in societal affairs. Tom Lodge has asserted, for example, that:

“...comparatively, since apartheid, the majority of citizens are much more involved now than ever.... Comparatively, again, citizenry participation is low in civil society for example, but electoral support is relatively a sign of support for the ANC—support for a strong government to act on their behalf.” (Interview with the author)⁹⁶

The allegation is that the ANC’s popularity in a democratic South Africa has led to the entrenchment and strengthening of a participatory democracy; which is in contrast, to the situation under apartheid—when the bulk of the electorate was legally excluded from political participation. Thus, the strength of the ANC (which is derived from its resonance with the majority views of the electorate), is positive for the country—as it will enable the party to pull the country through its transition phase to a consolidated democracy.

In supporting this argument Brooks has observed that:

“South Africa’s unique political history has inevitably shaped its current politics and formation of a dominant system. Indeed, it would not be overstating the case to argue that only a movement with the historic role, moral authority and hegemony possessed by the ANC could hope to lead South Africa out of the dire circumstances of pre 1994, to a new democratic dispensation. The unifying effects of the

⁹⁶ Lodge, Tom Interview 2004.

‘catch-all’ dominant party doubtlessly have helped to mediate conflicts and contributed to a peaceful and smooth transition.”⁹⁷

This argument is supported by the thrust of the ANC’s campaigning strategies in 2004, which were engineered towards: ‘going out and meeting the people’⁹⁸ by President Thabo Mbeki. And the ANC slogan promise of: “Government’s Contract with the People—to fight poverty, combat HIV/AIDS, provide jobs and services—ANC delivery.”⁹⁹ Thus, the majority of blacks who were marginalised under apartheid voted for the ANC in the 2004 elections; as they identified with the ANC as the best option to realise a successful transition towards a democratic dispensation—in other words, to overcome the legacy of apartheid.¹⁰⁰

The accusation that: the ANC is likely to abuse its immense power, thus, eroding democracy has also been contested. For despite the fears generated by opposition parties about such dangerous consequences of an ANC two-thirds majority, the ANC has acted responsibly and rather not as a despot.¹⁰¹ That is, although the ANC has incrementally come to dominate South African electoral contests since 1994, there is no sufficient evidence that it has abused its power. One case, for example, would be to change the constitution; which it has not. Susan Booysen contests the perceived authoritarianism of the ANC and suggests that: rather, the party is a ‘colossus in a

⁹⁷ Brooks, Heidi 2004, “The Dominant Party System...” p. 19.

⁹⁸ Rapoo, Thabo (2004), “Election 2004: Party Campaign Strategies and Tactics”, in *Election Synopsis* 2004 1(3): 18-20; Faull, Jonathan (2004), “What Is a Manifesto and What Does it Mean?”, in *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (3): 10-15.

⁹⁹ ANC manifesto at: www.anc.gov.za.

¹⁰⁰ See Rule 2004, “Motivations Behind Voting ...” pp. 7-12.

¹⁰¹ Landsberg, Chris (2004), “National Perspectives, Campaign 2004”, *Election Update 2004: South Africa*, no. 6, EISA 12 April 2004: 2-4.

multiparty system.”¹⁰² Basically, she argues that the ANC’s dominance has not been translated into abuse of power...even if it is strong; the legitimacy of democratic institutions has not been eroded or threatened by this dominance.

At another level of argument, it is posited that the ANC dominance is in effect a result of the serious weakness of opposition parties that have failed substantially to fashion policies that resonate with the view of the majority of South African citizens. Tom Lodge has pointed out this limitation of opposition parties in their inability to present alternative policies to those of the ANC in the 2004 election. For example, “the electorate voted, without real, “free choice”—there is ‘no choice’ as such; because there is not alternative to choose.”¹⁰³ That is, instead of looking for threats to democracy in ANC dominance, it is rather that the opposition parties themselves are contributing to their own weakness; because of their policy limitations that are in divergence with those of the majority of voters. Also, ‘this ANC majority/dominance is not matched by unquestionable voter satisfaction and contentment with the current government.’¹⁰⁴ Although the ANC is strong there are still voters who hold alternative views to its policies but do not vote for the opposition parties. Thus, opposition parties have failed to exploit this chance to attract dissatisfied voters.

The perceived erosion of parliamentary democracy by the ANC has also been challenged on the basis that, it is for those parties in parliament, no matter how weak they are to exploit the opportunities offered by the system to make their voices heard. In this regard, Françoise Beukman of the NNP has different view from the assertions that parliamentary democracy is eroded by the dominance of the ANC:

¹⁰² Booysen, Susan (2004), “Colossus in a Multiparty System...” p. 11.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Brooks, Heidi 2004, “The Dominant Party System...”

“I don’t think it’s a problem that there is a strong majority party; but I think what is important is that there are support systems available to opposition—the MPs must be of such nature that they can be competitive.”(Interview with author)¹⁰⁵

Beukman, argues that, given the weakness of opposition parties, one way that they can “continue to contribute effectively to democratic consolidation would be to work closely with the ANC,” like his party is doing; rather than be isolationist and combative.¹⁰⁶ The NNP sees itself as being a more effective opposition from “inside the ANC government” and feel “[they] will be listened to more” —despite their different vantage points.¹⁰⁷

As for the long term scenario that the ANC is going to lead South Africa down the ‘African path’ which is embodied in Afro-pessimistic thinking, it has been characterised rightly as within the realms of conjecture with no material basis and as Brooks has argued that; this is quite an unlikely scenario.¹⁰⁸ She refutes this argument by ascribing such fears as being generated by opposition parties to gain votes. Moreover, that the risk of abusing power has been there since 1994 but the ANC has protected democratic institutions, has recognised civil liberties, adhered to the terms of the constitution, and the rule of law.¹⁰⁹

In addition, the ANC’s dominance can be explained in that it has adopted middle-ground positions, collaborated with some opposition parties to target specific issues

¹⁰⁵ Beukman, Françoise Interview 2004.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Brooks, Heidi 2004, “The Dominant Party System...”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 19-20; see further: Daniel, John (2004), “Third Time Lucky: The ANC’s Victory in KwaZulu Natal”, in *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (1): 18-20.

and made inroads into some minority ‘White, Coloured, Indian’ communities; as it substantially shed its past image as a liberation party—that was seen mainly to represent black people.¹¹⁰

For Ben Turok—a senior ANC Member of Parliament (MP), his party has the middle ground in politics; which gives the ANC the advantage as he notes:

“the ANC is the centre of politics in that it has adopted many social democratic movements and institutions creating a consensual middle ground... the anger and noise that is raised in parliament [from the opposition] is by the far leftists and the conservative right.”(Interview with author)¹¹¹

He responds with suspicion to the notion of the ANC’s dominance as a threat in that he “does not see the corresponding argument” that states: “South Africa would then have a so called, “one-party state” because there are many institutions, a multi-party state¹¹² that, emphasises representation and legislation protecting minorities within a democratic setting.”¹¹³

3.5 Conclusion

In sum, the view that one-party dominance is inimical to democratic consolidation, appears to be strengthened by the empirical evidence of the 2004 election results,

¹¹⁰ Booysen, Susan. 2004. ‘Unfolding Trends in Opposition Politics Over the Last Ten Years in South Africa’, presentation given as part of the *Democracy Seminar Series* at the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA), April 1, 2004.

¹¹¹ Turok, Ben Interview 2004.

¹¹² See: Libset, Martin Seymour (2000), ‘The Indispensability of Parties’, *Journal of Democracy*, 11 (1): 48-55; Clapham, Christopher (1993), “Democratization in Africa: Obstacles and Prospects”, *Third World Quarterly*, 4 (3): 1; Dahl, Robert A. (1971), *Polyarchy: Participation and opposition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press quoted in Rustow, Dean (1970), “Transitions to democracy”, *Comparative Politics*, 2, 1970:337-363, p. 339.

¹¹³ Ibid.

where, the ANC increased its majority to 70 percent. But, there is evidence that this development can be regarded at best as ‘a potential threat.’ As, there are other countervailing factors that inhibit the ANC from undermining democracy. Its mere strength is counterbalanced by many other factors such as: its internal pluralism within the Tripartite Alliance, its respect for democratic institutions, the existence of alternatives forms of opposition and the basic fact that it attains this dominance in a legitimate manner.

*Chapter 4***OPPOSITION PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY****4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the role of opposition parties in South Africa's democratic consolidation with a special focus on the 2004 elections. Its primary aim is to assess the extent to which they contribute or impede this process. It starts by outlining the status of opposition parties, presents the nature of their weaknesses and its implications for democratisation.

4.2 The Status of Opposition Parties

Effective and viable opposition parties are important for any country undergoing a democratic transition. Amongst their crucial functions is to present alternative views to that of the ruling party and government, legitimising the political process and providing the electorate with various choices to articulate their political views.¹¹⁴

However, in the context of South African politics these institutions have been found to be weak since the first democratic election in 1994, through the 1999 elections and in the 2004 elections. This shortcoming, has been identified as a serious flaw in South

¹¹⁴ See Habib and Taylor (1999), 'Parliamentary Opposition and Democratic Consolidation...'

Africa's transition towards: a democratic dispensation.¹¹⁵ Namely, these opposition parties are not providing effective competition to the ANC, decreasing the avenues through which the electorate can express alternatives to those of the government.

To illustrate the weakness of these parties, after the 1994 election parties represented in the NA had a combined strength of 47 percent. In 1999, this fell to 34 percent and in 2004 it is under 30 percent. More seriously, the status of the official opposition—the second largest party in the NA—has also been declining from 20 percent in 1994 (NP), to 10 percent in 1999 (DP); before rallying marginally to 12 percent in 2004 (DA).

The remainder of this chapter will discuss the origins of this weakness and its implications; so as to understand the role opposition parties play in the country's democratic transition.

4.3 The Nature of the Weakness

Adam Habib has noted that one of the most serious problems, that has been identified as being responsible for the weakness of South African political parties, is: 'their inability to carve for themselves messages that resonates effectively with the majority of South African voters—the black majority.'¹¹⁶ This occurs at two levels. Firstly, these parties have very similar messages to the ANC to the extent that voters do not see a difference—a situation Tom Lodge has noted in indicating the

¹¹⁵ See: Habib and Taylor, 2001, "Political Alliances and Parliamentary ..." pp. 207-226; Habib, Adam and Nadvi, Lubna (2002), "Party Disintegration Re-alignments in Post-Apartheid South Africa", *Review of African Political Economy*, 92: 331-338.

¹¹⁶ *ThisDay*, 13 August 2004, p.11.

“congruency of all party platforms.”¹¹⁷ The effect of this is that since they do not offer alternative policies that are fundamentally different positions to that of the ANC, voters are reluctant to vote for them. And secondly, these parties have views, which are directly antagonistic, hostile and thus, divergent to the interests of the majority of voters who are black people.

With respect to this congruency of party platforms, especially with regard to the most contentious issue, which is economic policy, parties that fall in this category are: the UDM and ID. These parties’ manifestoes indicate consensus with the ANC’s macro-economic policy. For example, such that that they are unable to: “... launch a convincing attack on the government’s policies”—simply reducing the opposition to slogans that, ‘we can do better.’¹¹⁸

For instance, the UDM has been characterised in this regard as follows: the party’s main policy platform is based on a focus to rectify the policy deficiencies of the ANC;¹¹⁹ a trait that has also been identified as one of its weaknesses.¹²⁰ That is, it sanctions the ANC macro-economic policy introduced in 1996 (GEAR), with objections only to the free-market canon of the policy.¹²¹ This does not mean that these parties’ economic policies are a carbon copy of the ANC; but, in many ways their message in this regard cannot be distinguished from that of the ANC. And so, as a consequence, failing to provide that critical elements that renders political parties

¹¹⁷ Lodge, Tom Interview 2004.

¹¹⁸ Southall, Roger 2004, “Goliath’s Victory...” p. 4; Southall, Roger (1999), “The Struggle for a Place Called Home: The ANC versus the UDM in the Eastern Cape”, *Politikon*, 26 (2).

¹¹⁹ Ndletyana, Mcebisi (1999), “The United Democratic Movement: A Critical Assessment”, *Politikon*, 26 (2).

¹²⁰ Southall Roger 1999, “The Struggle for...”

¹²¹ Vukani, Mde (2003), “Small Fry Parties Face Uphill Battle to Survive”, *This Day* [Johannesburg] 26 November 2003, p. 6.

viable in a democracy—an ability to offer voters choice. Richard Calland has summarised this feature of South politics, thus:

“South Africa has a sort of ‘centrifugal effect’; where policy directions tend to rotate around the central pivot in the political spectrum and you get a thin range of options for the elections...there is not a huge difference in policy-ideas across the parties—the opposition. They all have a great deal of difficulty in distinguishing themselves from the ANC—that is part of their difficulty, when they talk about subjects [campaigns], they don’t sound much different to the ANC and they are not, therefore, offering a major substantial different alternative to the ANC.”(Interview with author)¹²²

This weakness of the parties is a very detrimental to democratic consolidation such that it has been argued that their policies and ideological differences need to be strengthened to create a ‘real alternative to the ANC.’¹²³

Regarding the advocacy of policies of policies that are divergent to those of the majority of voters, the DA and IFP can be identified as the parties that expressly indicate this view. For instance, the two parties went into coalition in the 2004 election—the ‘Coalition for Change’—with the aim of ‘providing an effective opposition voice to the ANC.’¹²⁴

However, a careful analysis of the basis of this coalition is that it espouses largely a conservative economic policy that to the right of the ANC such as greater privatisation and strident criticism against policies such as Affirmative Action (AA)

¹²² Calland, Richard Interview 2004.

¹²³ Lodge, Tom 1999, “*Consolidating Democracy...*”

¹²⁴ See IFP website at: www.ifp.org.za and DA websites at: www.da.org.za

and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) strategies.¹²⁵ This kind of message has the effect of alienating these parties from the majority of black votes because the demands for greater privatisation, for example, leads to more jobs losses—which affects the majority of black workers, one of the largest segment of the electorate. Also these parties resolute opposition to policies like AA—when arguing that it only serves a black elite—pits them against the black middle class, which is an emergent and very influential voting, and political force in a democratic South Africa.¹²⁶ Explaining the DA’s inability to attract black voters, Adam Habib has observed that;

“The DA’s problem is that its policy choices preclude it from becoming viable. This is not because of the racialised pattern of voting in our society, as its leaders believe. Rather it is because its policy package does not speak to the interests of the majority of black people.”¹²⁷

In contrast, the ANC has managed to project policy objectives that largely reflect the interests of the majority of the black electorate especially the vulnerable section of this segment: the poor. And, this coupled with effective campaigning—as demonstrated in the 2004 election—enables the party to be successful.

According to Southall, this is because: the ANC is able to do this; as it is seen to be “the historic standard-bearer of democracy, and as the party of the racially oppressed black majority—of the working class and of the wider poor.”¹²⁸ Moreover, the ANC

¹²⁵ *Sowetan*, 11 November 2003, p. 15.

¹²⁶ *The Sunday Times* [Johannesburg] 24 April 2004, p. 21.

¹²⁷ *This Day*, 13 August 2004, p. 11.

¹²⁸ Southall, Roger 2004, “Goliath’s Victory...” p. 3.

was able to successfully exploit this image as a party devoted to the interests of the poor in the 2004 election.

This centrist focus of the ANC has thus positioned it to be a very strong party that represents cross cutting alliances and viewpoints—forging working relationships in government with parties, such as: Azapo, UDM and most significantly the NNP. As a result, Lodge has noted that the ANC has been able to, “absorb most of the competition parties’ campaign policy objectives.”¹²⁹ And, Calland concurs in saying: “the ANC has an agenda to incorporate opposition parties.”¹³⁰

The other major problem of South African opposition has been their inclination to operate within the racial census view of South African politics¹³¹ (to be discussed in detail in the next chapter); which has inhibited their capacity to move out of their racial and ethnic enclaves.¹³² Essentially, what these parties do is to target small segments of the electorate by defining themselves as representing racial or ethnic communities—a limited strategy that marginalises the majority of the electorate. The parties that have largely utilised this racialised approach to South politics are mainly: the MF, PAC, UCPD, FF and Azapo.

The MF has expressly noted that its serves Indian minority interests in a democratic South Africa. Attesting to the to the limitations of this ethnic based politics is that, in

¹²⁹ Lodge, Tom Interview 2004.

¹³⁰ Calland, Richard Interview 2004.

¹³¹ See Giliomee, Hermann, James Myburgh and Lawrence Schlemmer (2001), “Dominant Party Rule, Opposition and Minorities in South Africa”, *Konrad Adenauer Seminar Report no. 2*, pp. 37-50; Giliomee, Hermann, Lawrence Schlemmer with Sarita Hauptfleisch (1994), *The Bold Experiment: South Africa’s New Democracy*, Southern Book Publishers, Halfway House, 1994.

¹³² See Hoeane, Thabisi 2001, “A Re-interpretation of South African Electoral Studies...”; Suttner, Raymond (2004), ‘Liberation Movements, Democratic Transitions and Consolidation in South Africa: Advise from ‘the Expert’” in Landsberg, Chris and Mackay, Shaun (eds.), *Southern African Post Apartheid? The Search for Democratic Governance*, Idasa, Cape Town.

the 1999 election, the MF won 0.30 percent of the vote and 1 seat in the NA. In 2004, the MF tenuously retained its seat in the NA with 0.31 percent of the national vote and remains a weak party. Its strength is provincially located in KwaZulu Natal where the bulk of its support base is located.

The party that is mainly associated with advocating a black perspective of South African politics is the PAC. Its central electoral message in 2004 (like in the past two contests) targeted black people arguing that they are still marginalised in a democratic South Africa.¹³³ However, the party's explicit policy focus on the black community has failed to make an effective presence on the South African political scene. It is instructive to note that quite significantly—given the PAC liberation credentials—in the three elections held since 1994, it has consistently had less than two-percent national support. That is, 1.25 percent in 1994 and 0.17 percent in 1999. The PAC's weak national standing declined further when it lost 43 percent of its 1999 and when it registered 0.73 percent in the 2004 election. This is empathic evidence that the party's message, which is exclusively focused on attracting black votes, is failing.¹³⁴

The other major black party in Azapo, which like the PAC's approach, has failed to have a significant impact on South African electoral politics. Also, because: its ideology of Black Consciousness (BC) is exclusivist and does not apply to a broad cross section of South African voters. The party boycotted the 1994 elections, attained 0.17 percent in 1999 and 0.27 percent in 2004—providing another persuasive example

¹³³ PAC manifesto at: www.pac.org.za

¹³⁴ Sam Mkokeli, "Current Opposition Ineffective", *The Herald*, 9 January 2004, p. 2; Sipho Maseko, "The PAC, Azapo and UDM", in *Election 1999 South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*, in Andrew Reynolds (ed.) Cape Town: David Phillip, pp. 125-132.

that political party's that operate within this racial framework of understanding South African politics: are not successful.¹³⁵

With respect to ethnicity, the FF is one the significant opposition parties that espouses an adherence to the protection of minority Afrikaner interests. Although it has moderated its extremist view that were largely based on a demand for a *volkstaat*—a separate homeland for Afrikaners— adopting what current leader Pieter Mulder describes as the “Third Way”¹³⁶—the party remains on the fringes of South African politics. In the aftermath of the 1999 election (a contest in which the party lost heavily) Adrian Hadland noted that, the party ignored following an issued based politics and is fixated on sectional minority Afrikaner interests ignoring ‘real issues such as unemployment, and high crime rates which are also pressing issues for that community.’¹³⁷

Therefore, the FF is preoccupied with emotive identity based politics which it is convinced that the Afrikaner community is mainly concerned with despite abundant evidence that this is not wholly so. What significantly attests to the flaw in this approach is that despite the revamped FF+ being a coalition of three “Afrikaner” parties (the original FF, CP and AEB) it only managed to increase its percentage of the national poll from 0.80 percent in 1999 to 0.89percent in 2004, indicating that this

¹³⁵ Cherry, Janet (2004), “Elections 2004: The Party Lists and Issues of Identity”, in *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (3): 6; SABC/Markinor, Opinion 2004, “Party Performance”, p. 4; Kingdom Mabuza, “PAC's Pheko Refuses to Accept Other Leaders”, *Citizen*, 23 December 2002, p. 7.

¹³⁶ Speech delivered to FF Youth Congress 26 July 2002 available at: <http://www.vryheidsfront.co.za>

¹³⁷ Adrian Hadland, ‘Dreams of a volkstaat die in election dust’, *Sunday Tribune*, 6 June 1999, p. 6.

narrow emphasis of ‘protecting Afrikaner minority rights’¹³⁸ is a misguided option for the party.¹³⁹

Another party that worked within this protection of Afrikaner minority interests the National Action (NA) party of Cassie Aucamp has also failed in South African politics, and has no representation in the parliament after 2004. It was formed by the defection of Aucamp from the AEB in the floor crossing period in March 2003; but it is effectively dead.

The UCDP is a black party that espouses this ethnic understanding and approach to South African politics. Its campaigns messages have harped on stressing the ‘successes’ of the party in administering the Bantustan territory of Bophuthatswana that was a Homeland for Batswana people under apartheid policies.¹⁴⁰ However, this emphasis of a Tswana ethnic identity has failed to work for the party because it has had a very marginal presence in democratic politics in the new dispensation.¹⁴¹ It is one of those parties, which have failed to breach the one percent mark in electoral contests-achieving 0.78 percent in 1999 and sliding to 0.75 percent in 2004. Because of its narrow appeal to Tswana ethnic sentiment, the party’s support is restricted to the former areas of the Bophuthatswana homeland than now form part of the North West province and instructively this is where it drew close to 95 percent of its support in the 2004 election.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ *Mail and Guardian* 12-18 March 2004, p. 8.

¹³⁹ Booysen, Susan 2004, “Ten Years of Democracy and the State of Opposition Parties in South Africa”, *Election Update: South Africa*, 8 (3) EISA, May 2004; Edighehi, Omano 2004, “Fear Versus Freedom...”

¹⁴⁰ UCDP manifesto at: www.ucdp.org.za. Also see Taylor and Hoeane 1999, “Interpreting the South...” p. 139.

¹⁴¹ Edigheji, Omano 2004, “Fear Versus Freedom...”; Lawrence, Patrick 2004, “A Critical Moment in...”

¹⁴² Kotze, Dirk 2004, “Post Election Phase...”

The negative consequence of these continued racially/ethnically defined political parties is that, they are increasingly becoming regionally based in their support bases these correspond to their target voters. As Horowitz has noted,

“Parties and politicians concerned solely with parochial ethnic conflicts find themselves unable to expand beyond their locality.”¹⁴³

That is, instead of these parties having wide support across the country enabling them to have a strong presence on the national stage they are confined to restricted geographical regions. Thus their capacity to provide effective opposition to the ANC is further undermined. This is clearly seen in an interpretation of the 2004 elections. For example, the UCDP, which espouses Tswana racial sentiments, is largely confined to the North West Province, especially in the former areas of the Bophuthatswana Bantustan, where most of its Tswana supporters reside, having drawn 93 percent of its national support from areas in this province. Similarly, the IFP drew 93 percent of its national support from the KwaZulu Natal province where it targets the Zulu vote. Thus, very few opposition parties are left to make an impact on the national stage because these parties are unable to transcend their racial/ethnic enclaves to appeal to a broad cross-section of South African voters.

¹⁴³ Horowitz, D, (1985), *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p.38

In contrast to these opposition parties that espouse racial and ethnic viewpoints, there are opposition parties that indicate that an issue-based politics has relevance to South African politics.

A pertinent example in this regard, is in the ID—a new party that was formed by the defection of Patricia De Lille from the PAC in March 2003 to form the party.¹⁴⁴ The party has attributed its impressive performance in the 2004 election to the fact that; it carved a niche for itself avoiding either a racially or ethnically-based approach to South African politics and focusing on strong policy driven issues such as: corruption, HIV/AIDS, crime, rights for vulnerable women and children, unemployment and accountability in government.¹⁴⁵ The party sees itself as a party prepared to competitively challenge the ANC constructively, not destructively—a situation described by De Lille herself as on “constitutionalism.”¹⁴⁶

The ID did well in the 2004 election given that it was a year old by becoming the fourth largest party in parliament. It is important to note that what underlines the ID’s success is its issues-based approach. For example, it polled double the support of De Lille’s former party, the PAC—which still appealed to racial backgrounds of black people.¹⁴⁷

However the ID’s performance is still far from challenging the might of the ANC for it has been pointed out that fundamentally the policies of the party are in a broad sense

¹⁴⁴ Caiphus Kgosana, “ID Could Get 10% of the Vote-Poll”, *Cape Times*, 8 April 2004, p. 6; Rapule Tabane, “Suzman Versus De Lille”, *Mail and Guardian*, 26-1 April-May 2004, p. 15.

¹⁴⁵ See Cherry, Janet 2004, “Election 2004: The Party Lists...”; ID manifesto at: www.id.org.za and Hoeane, Thabisi 2004, “Searching for an Alternative...”

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p.10.

¹⁴⁷ See *ID Manifesto National Election 2004* at: www.id.org.za

not diametrically different from those of the ANC.¹⁴⁸ The party's 2004 electoral campaign identified issues and policies such as HIV/AIDS the abolition of corruption in government, strengthening governmental accountability and the defence of vulnerable groups such as women and children from physical abuse.¹⁴⁹ This policy promised to address those issues on which it perceived the ANC to have failed to implement—effectively in exploiting the notion of being a “patriotic opposition”¹⁵⁰—rather than a combative and aggressive stance like the DA, for example. This is significant, as Susan Booysen has argued that ‘South African voters are inclined to favour this kind of opposition’—that is, ‘constructive and cooperation and not oppositionist.’¹⁵¹

The ACDP is another example of a party that strongly eschews politics based on identity.¹⁵² This is such that its performance cannot be accounted for in terms of the evocative framework that centres on the force of race and ethnicity as it advocates a strong Christian fundamentalist worldview. The party's main political platform is based on pursuing Christian conservative views in stressing strong family values, stringent anti-crime measures, anti-abortion pro-life views, and the support for the reintroduction of the death penalty.¹⁵³ It did well in 1994 election winning 0.45 percent of the national vote, with 2 seats in the NA. In 1999, it increased its majority to win 6 seats in the NA garnering 1.43 percent of the national vote—managing to be the sixth largest party in the NA. In 2004, the ACDP's political prowess waned a

¹⁴⁸ Cherry, Janet 2004, “Election 2004: The Party Lists...”; Eric Naki, “Across the Racial Divide”, *Daily Dispatch*, 05 February 2004, p. 1; Rapule Tabane, “Suzman Versus De Lille”, *Mail and Guardian*, 26-1 April-May 2004, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ See ID manifesto at: www.id.org.za.

¹⁵⁰ Staff Reporter, “De Lille to Set Example”, *The Star* [Johannesburg], 05 April 2004, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ Booysen, Susan 2004, “Unfolding Trends in Opposition....”

¹⁵² Lodge, Tom 1999, “*Consolidating Democracy...*”

¹⁵³ Piombo, Jessica (1999), “The UCDP, Minority Front, ACDP and Federal Alliance”, in Andrew Reynolds (ed.), *Election '99 South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*, Cape Town: David Phillip.

little, maintaining its 6 seats in parliament but its national support falling to 1.30 percent nationally.

4.4 Conclusion

South African opposition parties are weak and there are many reasons that account for this state of affairs. These include their inability to carve for themselves message that are fundamentally distinct from the ANC thus denying voters a choice. On the other hand, some of them advocate policies that do not converge with the aspirations and views of the majority of the electorate—or, commonly known as, the black majority. The other serious shortcoming of opposition parties in South Africa is: their emphasis of limited racial/ethnic political practice; that have failed them to appeal to a cross cutting section of the electorate. To the extent that the weakness of opposition will lead to an erosion of democracy; the opposition parties themselves are to largely blame, because of the policies that they espouse (which are not in line with the aspirations of the majority of South African voters). Thus, instead of playing an effective role in the entrenchment of democracy; South African opposition parties are at the political fringes—weakening the prospects of successful democratic consolidation of the country.

*Chapter 5***VOTING BEHAVIOUR AND DEMOCRACY****5.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses how voting behaviour influences and impacts on the process of democratic consolidation in South Africa. It specifically engages two aspects of this issue: the motivations that underpin the choice of voters in elections—the racial/ethnic view—which is taken to be prevalent in South African electoral contests; subsequently leading to the detriment of effective democratisation. It also addresses the notion of voter apathy and its consequences for democratic consolidation. It, thus, presents the other major perspective of this research: to what extent can electoral processes be used to assess democratic consolidation? This is done so by engaging the debate from the angle of voters and their behaviour, which is contrasted to chapter 4 that considered this debate from the institutional perspective of political parties.

It initially outlines the racial/ ethnic view and examines the arguments that assert that, this perspective is pervasive in voter's intention and hence, imperils democracy—using the 2004 elections, because of its propensity to be divisive in society. It then proceeds to discuss voter apathy in the 2004 elections, so as to interrogate its significance in assessing South Africa's democratic process.

5.2 The Racial/Ethnic View

South Africa's electoral contests since 1994 have been interpreted as largely being underlined by voter's intentions that are largely based on race and ethnicity.¹⁵⁴ This outlook maintains that: race and ethnicity pervade the behaviour of voters and political party programmes leading to the undermining of effective democratic consolidation.¹⁵⁵ That is, when voters make their choices at the ballot box they are primarily motivated by their racial or ethnic backgrounds. Thus, instead of voting on the basis of other factors that influence voting behaviour such as class, religion, age, gender and regionalism these are the views uppermost in their minds. They are, therefore, said to be inclined to choose parties that represent their particular racial or ethnic backgrounds. In this interpretation, what is likely to happen is that a black voter will vote for a 'black' party and a white voter is likely to vote for a 'white' party.

In addition, if a voter belongs to the Zulu ethnic group, they are most likely to vote for a 'Zulu' party and this would apply to other ethnic groups such as Basotho, Afrikaners, Bapedi, Batswana and so on. This type of voting behaviour is said to be to the detriment of democratic consolidation as it continues to engender divisions in

¹⁵⁴ See: Schlemmer, Lawrence (1994a), 'South Africa's First Open Election and the Futures of its Democracy', in Hermann Giliomee, Lawrence Schlemmer, and Sarita Hauptfleisch (eds.), *The Bold Experiment...*'; Welsh, David (1994), 'The Democratic Party', in Andrew Reynolds (ed.) *Election 1994 South Africa: The Campaigns, Results and Future Prospects*, Cape Town: David Philip.

¹⁵⁵ Norris, Pippa and Robert Mattes (2003), "Does Ethnicity Determine Support for the Governing Party?" *Afrobarometer Paper no. 26*, in *Afrobarometer March 2003*: 1-23, p. 16; Roefs, Mariene (2004), "One-party Dominance, Racial Cleavages and Decreasing Voter Turnout", in *Election Synopsis 2004* 1 (3): 17-19; Mattes, Robert and Amanda Gouws (1999), 'Race, Ethnicity and Voting Behaviour Lessons from South Africa.' In *Electoral Systems and Conflict in Divided Societies*. (ed.) Andrew Reynolds and Ben Reilly, Washington DC: National Academic Press.

South African society rather than forging consensus based on a common identity of one united nation.

The distinction between race and ethnicity is made on the basis of skin colour and language. Skin colour defines a racial group while learned and behaviour such as language and culture define an ethnic group. It is posited that voters seldom therefore vote for parties other than those that represent their racial or ethnic group. For example, with respect to black voters (which can be applied to any other group under this racial/ethnic understanding). Landsberg, Mackay and Moore have argued that:

“...it may prove difficult for them... of actually changing to an opposition party especially if that opposition is associated in their minds with promoting or protecting white privilege.”¹⁵⁶

The main problem of South African voters according to Butler is their, “inability to escape racial identifications of the past and ethnic understandings of party politics.”¹⁵⁷

The imputation is that, because South Africa was a country riddled with racial and ethnic problems under apartheid; these sentiments are resilient and still manifest them in a democratic South Africa.

Political parties are also not immune to this racial/ethnic concretisation of politics with, for example, the IFP primarily focused on policies that espouse Zulu ethnicity, the FF Afrikaner ethnicity, and the UCDP Tswana ethnicity. Racially, the PAC and Azapo have explicit policies that espouse the exclusive interests of black people.

¹⁵⁶ Landsberg, Chris, Shaun Mackay and Candice Moore (2004), “Foreign Policy, Identity and the 2004 Elections”, *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (2): 19-20, p. 19.

¹⁵⁷ Butler, Anthony 2003, “South Africa’s Political Futures...”;

5.3 Race and Ethnicity in the 2004 Election Results

The 2004 election has continued to elicit interpretations that avow that South African politics are grounded on racial and ethnic categories-to the detriment of democratic consolidation. For example, South Africa's last apartheid president, the retired F.W. De Klerk declared in a post-election media commentary that, "...the political scene will continue to be characterised by ethnic rather than policy driven politics."¹⁵⁸ Thus, voters and political parties are still seen to be failing to move away from this divisive interpretation of South African politics in narrow groups identities towards an interest based politics that is more rational and would be positive for democratic consolidation.

This kind of reasoning appears to be supported by some surveys. For example, the South Africa Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) conducted in 2003 by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) accounts for the racial support bases of political parties.¹⁵⁹ The survey notes that the support bases of the ANC, IFP and UDM is overwhelmingly black at over 90 percent. The DA's racial support base is recorded at approximately 77 percent white. The NNP was the only anomaly in this regard, in that it had a blend of (racial) supporters with slightly lower than 30 percent of white support.¹⁶⁰

Regarding ethnicity, such patterns seem to have been affirmed by a reading of the 2004 election. For example, the bulk of the IFP's electoral support is from KwaZulu Natal (93 percent) reinforcing the 'Zulu' basis of this party as stressed within this

¹⁵⁸ *The Star* [Johannesburg], 21 April 2004.

¹⁵⁹ "South African Social Attitudes Survey 19 November 2003 available at: www.hsrc.ac.za

¹⁶⁰ See, Rule, Stephen (2004), "Polls and Predictions: Where the NNP Lost Its Votes", In *Election Synopsis* 2004 1 (3): 12-15.

framework.¹⁶¹ UCPD leader Lucas Mangope's 'Tswana' support-base, it was still concentrated in the North West Province (93 percent)—in those areas that constituted the Bophuthatswana Bantustan¹⁶²--where the majority members of the ethnic group (Tswana) live. The 'Indian' MF demonstrated this characteristic emphatically in that its provincial support in KwaZulu Natal, which surpassed its national support by 29 percent; indicating its firm roots in this province—which has the largest community of people of Indian descent in South Africa.¹⁶³

As a result, taking into account the above evidence, South African voters and political parties are perceived to be still trapped in these racial/ethnic cleavages—a situation which has serious implications for democracy; as this would imply that the move away from apartheid has not been qualitative. However, to what extent is this position valid? The following section engages this question.

5.4 Declining Trends in Race and Ethnicity

Counter arguments have been advanced that question this racial/ethnic interpretation with respect to the 2004 election and its presumed efficacy in providing plausible explanations for the prospects of the achievements of an effective democratic society in South Africa.¹⁶⁴ That is, this racial/ethnic view is refuted on the basis that it is not pervasive as it is concretised under this view and hence its ability to derail the democratic process is somewhat exaggerated. For there are other factors on which South African voters make their choices and indeed some political parties—

¹⁶¹ See Human Sciences Research Council Web page at: www.hsrc.org.za

¹⁶² Piper, Laurence (2004), "KwaZulu Natal: Voting with Their Feet, from the Mass Meeting to the Media in KZN Politics", *Election Update 2004: South Africa*, no. 3, 17-20.

¹⁶³ Sachs, Michael 2004, "Voting Patterns in the 1999 and 2004 ..."

¹⁶⁴ See for example, Hoeane, Thabisi 2004, "Searching for an Alternative..."; Habib, Adam 2004, "Are South Africa's Elections a Racial Census?", in *Election Synopsis 2004*: 1 (2): 4-7.

especially, the major ones who eschew these restrictive identity-based politics. As Khabele Matlosa has pointed out these variables include: “age, gender, religion, regionalism, education, socio-economic status/background, policy preference, etc...”¹⁶⁵ So, there is no sufficient basis on which to argue that, South African voters are primarily moved by race and ethnicity, because these factors also play a role in assisting them to make their choices.

For instance, in the run-up to the 2004 election, the IEC saw robust competition...that was not based on these identities but policy issues—among political parties during campaigning.¹⁶⁶ And in this regard Robert Mattes has commented that:

“this time, the campaigns waged were issue-driven and the parties were no longer relying on the roles they played in the past during anti-apartheid struggle years.”¹⁶⁷

Thus the 2004 election indicates a maturing in South African electoral behaviour with policy issues coming to the fore at the expense of identity-based considerations. Significantly, the election was notable for the receding explicit racial and ethnic undertones in political party campaigning from such major parties as the ANC and DA. For example, the DA launched its election campaign in Soweto—the largest black township in South Africa—and the ANC held numerous rallies led by its president Thabo Mbeki in white residential areas.¹⁶⁸ This was in direct contrast to the

¹⁶⁵ Matlosa, Khabele Interview 2004.

¹⁶⁶ Bam Brigalia, Media Release 17 April 2004, IEC at: www.elections.org.za

¹⁶⁷ Mattes, Robert (2004), “Trends in Political Party Support in South Africa”, *AfroBarometer Briefing Paper no. 6*, AfroBarometer 2004: 1-6.

¹⁶⁸ *The Sunday Times* [Johannesburg] 14 March, 2004, p. 1.

1999 election campaign, which was riddled with racial controversy over the then DP slogan of ‘fight back’¹⁶⁹ which was turned into ‘fight blacks’ by the ANC.

In this election campaign these two parties were clearly targeting those constituencies, which had in previous elections (1994 and 1999) seen to be outside their traditional racial support bases. Accordingly, the two main parties in South African politics led elections campaigns relatively bereft of racial and ethnic arguments as were apparent in 1999—and were genuinely trying to woo non-traditional support bases. Therefore, the mere racialised bases of these parties should not be assumed to govern the behaviour of voters and political parties. This is evidence that questions the perceived pervasive racial and ethnic orientations in South African politics, in general, and electoral contests in particular.

Quite significantly, the emergence of political party coalitions in the 2004 election; once again between the main political parties, provides further challenges to the racial/ ethnic view. This is because these coalitions directly challenged this formulation of South African politics as being driven by identity-based politics fashioned around race and ethnicity. These were the coalitions between major parties (ANC + NNP and DA+IFP). They indicated in 2004, the significance of alliances and cogently presents an alternative to the racial/ethnic view.¹⁷⁰

The most notable alliance was between the ANC and the NNP that was described as the “Cooperative Alliance.”¹⁷¹ As under the racial/ethnic view, the ANC is considered to be a ‘black’ party and the NNP is seen as a ‘white’ party the basis of this alliance

¹⁶⁹ See DP election Manifesto 1999.

¹⁷⁰ Hoeane, Thabisi 2004, “Searching for an Alternative...”

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

clearly has to be sought in a different set of reasons and motivations. That is, the efficacy of so-called ‘black’ and ‘white’ parties becomes difficult to sustain; as clearly here were two parties that are said to be on the opposite end of the racial divide but however, were cooperating.

What can be read from this alliance is that: these parties are aligning on other bases rather than the racial/ethnic view. Similarly, the alliance between the DA and the IFP should be sought in a different set of reasons; as these parties represent diverse racial bases of support according to the racial/ethnic view. The DA—which is generally considered a ‘white’ party came together with the IFP—a party that has a racial/ethnic ‘black/Zulu’ background. Thus, raising a pertinent question: what drives the cohesion between these parties?

The answer with respect to both alliances can be sought in their ideological positions. That is, the basis of these coalitions should rather be sought in explanations that there is convergence in their policy outlooks not identity based considerations. The ANC, as it has been pointed out earlier, has largely adopted a centrist position being neither to the right or the left of the political spectrum and pursuing policies that are meant to appeal to a wide cross-section of South Africans (based on its policy of non-racialism).

This has attracted parties such as the NNP to the ANC. As a senior MP of the NNP Francois Beukman noted, there are common grounds on which the ANC and NNP share the same vision (economic policy, for example) and hence, the party’s decision

to work closely with the ANC in the 2004 election.¹⁷² Indeed, after the election the NNP decided to formalise its relationship with the ANC and it will disband in 2005 to join the ANC.

Similarly, this argument can be extended to explain the DA/IFP coalition. That is, there is economic congruency between the parties' policies that are based on conservative, ideological position. For example, this position posits being radically in favour of some elements of GEAR; especially, extensive privatisation of the economy; which they accuse the ANC of not following diligently.¹⁷³ Basically, their contention is that: the ANC is overly beholden to its left-wing allies the SACP and Cosatu and is not implementing GEAR effectively; choosing instead to carry out piecemeal privatisation of the economy, which these ANC allies are opposed to. Commenting on this coalition between the DA and IPF Douglas Gibson, Chief Whip of the DA put it this way:

“... There is very good contact at leadership level[s]... it certainly hasn't terminated after the [2004] election.”(Interview with author)¹⁷⁴

It is also significant to note, in this regard that, the two South African political parties that were largely successful in attracting votes in the 2004 election (bar the new ID), were the ANC and the DA, which implies that their policy thrusts—that are based on these ideological positions--appeal to the electorate¹⁷⁵ The ANC was able to achieved

¹⁷² Interview with François Beukman.

¹⁷³ They both have unfettered free market policies and construe AA as actions biased to elites; see manifestos of each party for further reference.

¹⁷⁴ Douglas, Gibson Interview 2004.

¹⁷⁵ Hoene, Thabisi 2004, “Searching for an Alternative...”

a two-thirds majority which had eluded it in 1999, whereas, the DA was able to increase its electoral power from: 9.55 percent in 1999 to 12.37 percent

At another level of argument, there is evidence to indicate that: it is difficult to sustain the racial/ethnic view in interpreting the 2004 elections. Those parties that continued to espouse racially and ethnically defined positions did not perform well. Racial parties such as the PAC /Azapo which espoused politics based on an exclusive black perspective have stagnated in their support. For example, this was clearly illustrated with regard to the performance of the PAC. The party managed to move from 1.71 percent in 1999 to 0.73 percent in 2004 and in actual national votes it, managed to only gain 387 additional votes. Similarly, parties such as the ‘Indian’ MF did not perform any better—with the party managing to retain its only one MP in the NA. Ethnic parties such as the UCDP, FF+, AEB, which have continued to have very negligent electoral support based around a minority of their target ethnic constituencies.¹⁷⁶

The UCDP is still largely confined to the North West Province, the FF+ Plus despite being a coalition of three parties managed to just increase its support from 0.80 to 0.89 percent.

In juxtaposition to these above mentioned parties that have used racial/ethnic cleavages to gain support with voters; the ACDP, the UDM and the ID—which profess issue-oriented policies based on policy preference— performed far better than

¹⁷⁶ Edighedi, Omanu 2004, “Fear Versus Freedom...”; Mattes, Robert 2004, “Trends in Political Party...”.

these racially and ethnically inclined parties.¹⁷⁷ This was particularly so with regard to the ID – a new party which was just one year old during the election but managing to become the fourth largest party in parliament coming ahead of such established parties such as the NNP, FF and UCDP.

Therefore, it can be surmised that the racial and ethnic support bases of political parties does not in itself explain the motivations behind voters' choices and political party programmes. That, the support bases of political parties corresponds to racial and ethnic groups; does not in itself adequately explain voting behaviour. There are other considerations such as ideological positions based on factors such as economic outlooks, that should also be taken into consideration to explain voting behaviour and the programmes of political parties.¹⁷⁸

5.5 Voter Apathy in 2004

One glaring trend revealed by the 2004 election that has serious and negative consequences for South Africa's democratisation process – is high voter abstention¹⁷⁹. In 1999 the voter turnout was 89.30 percent in 2004 it slumped to 76.73 percent. This difference of 12.27 percent of eligible voters not participating in the 2004 elections is quite serious. In addition, it is estimated that, '7 million voters did not bother to

¹⁷⁷ Eric Naki, "Across the Racial Divide", *Daily Dispatch*, 05 February 2004, p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ See, Seekings (1997), "From the Ballot Box to the Bookshelf..." and Hoeane (2002), "A Re-Interpretation of South African Electoral Studies..."

¹⁷⁹ Lodge, Tom 2003, "Voter Abstention..." pp. 106; Southall, Roger 2004, "Containing Accountability..." pp. 6-8; Daniels, John (2004), "The South African Elections ..." pp. 12-14; Faull, Jonathan (2004), "How the ..." pp. 15-18.

register for the election.’¹⁸⁰ This state of affairs is serious because in a country undergoing a democratic transition such as South Africa, it is important that voters stay engaged in political processes to determine the direction of the country. There has not been an extensive study done on this issue to find out why South African voters stayed away from the election- and thus only measured speculation can be used to try and understand this phenomenon.

There are two broad perspectives that may explain this apathetic behaviour of voters: that South African democracy is entering a mature stage where generally voters are satisfied with the political environment and are not animated by political participation like it happens in most mature democracies and the contrary view the voters are actually disenchanted with the direction the country is taking. Commenting on this optimistic view Friedman has noted that:

“ One way our country gets to look like other democracies [older ones] is to have a rather apathetic voting public...a couple of percentage points are lost of people opting out of elections. South Africa’s democracy is just proving it is no longer an infantile democracy and you can see this in the 2004 election results-people understand South Africa as a democracy, despite their choosing to vote or not.” (Interview with author)¹⁸¹

However on the balance of probabilities-given the serious and many socio-economic problems that underline South Africa’s transition to democracy—it is possible that the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Steven Friedman Interview 2004.

latter view is much more plausible as an explanation for the high incidence of voter apathy in the 2004 election—that voters are dissatisfied. Therefore, the disinterest of voters is potentially a destructive element to the entrenchment of democracy in South Africa.

The reasons voter apathy in 2004 have been preliminarily examined by academics such as, Tom Lodge who surmises that there a “silent dissent from the voting public.”¹⁸² One of the reasons for this is that is no real alternative presented by opposition parties to the ANC’s policies with Lodge asserting that, “there may not be sufficient strength in their ideologies or policy to warrant a vote.”¹⁸³ That is those voters who are not attracted by the ANC's policies have no political home, as they are also not convinced by the positions of the opposition parties. And the reasons for this can be directly related to the continued operation of these parties in racially and ethnically defined frameworks, which do not offer viable alternative to the electorate.

One of the dangers inherent in voter apathy is the possibility that some sectors of society will feel that they are being excluded from the political process-especially if these are articulated on a racial or ethnic basis. For example, according to Schlemmer most of the voters who absented themselves from the poll were white voters: “among whites, the largest minority, disinterest and indecision has reached nearly 40 percent” adding that:

“...their hopes raised by the prospect of a united and effective opposition and then dashed, they are now more alienated from party politics than they have ever been in their entire political history. The

¹⁸² Lodge, Tom Interview 2004.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

estrangement from party politics has also occurred among other groups but to a lesser extent.”¹⁸⁴

This is a very unwelcome trend as it will weaken South Africa’s democracy because the more citizens are alienated from formal political process the more democratic foundations of society are eroded.. As Lodge has observed:

“If left unchecked over time, dissatisfied voters with no place to turn to may become apathetic, may not care about the survival of democracy, and may become increasingly more discontented.”¹⁸⁵

What can be even more threatening to the democratisation process is if this apathy spirals into violence with potential dire consequences for democracy. And this is not a far-fetched postulation as the Boeremag Treason trial has indicated. This Afrikaner right wing group felt so alienated from the political process that it tried to overthrow the state violently in 2003 by exploding bombs in black residential areas—resulting in the first treason trial (based on political grievances) in a post-apartheid South Africa.

5.6 Conclusion

The continued consideration of South African politics in racial and ethnic views- although these sentiments are clearly present in some political parties and the behaviour of some voters- is not as pervasive as this view contends. There is emerging evidence from the 2004 elections that political parties- especially the major ones- are

¹⁸⁴ Lawrence Schlemmer, (2004), “ ANC Dominance Not Written In Stone”, *Focus*, 33, June 2004, Helen Suzman Foundation: Johannesburg, p.20.

¹⁸⁵ Lodge, Tom (2003), “Voter Abstention...” pp. 105-118, pp. 106.

eschewing racial and ethnic views and are inclined towards articulating materially defined political practice- to the advantage of forging a strong democracy.

The parties that continue to operate in these restricted racial and ethnic confines are not making headway in being significant parties in South Africa's transition. This leads to serious problems within the electorate, which gets disengaged from the electoral process because these parties are unable to offer them a choice different from that articulated by the ANC.

The consequences of an apathetic electorate are serious because a disengaged electorate weakens democracy as few citizens will participate in this process and in extreme cases these disenchanted groups may engage in violent acts which will destabilise the country's democratisation process

Thus the challenge for political parties especially the opposition parties—given their acute weakness—is to refashion their policies to engage this electorate that is increasingly being alienated from politics and the way to do this would be to move away from a narrow interpretation of South African politics along racial and ethnic lines towards issue based policies that concretely define the interests of the electorate.

*Chapter 6***CONCLUSION**

This research set out to assess the importance of elections as a mechanism to achieve or hinder democratic consolidation in South Africa; using the 2004 election as a specific focus.

The research question was pursued using the background of previous analysis of this topic (1994 and 1999 elections) that has addressed the prospects for a successful transition to democracy in South Africa—by engaging the various debates over the nature of the party system and voting behaviour.

It focused on an assessment of the ANC's continued dominance of South African electoral contests and implications which this development has for democratic consolidation, the nature of the weakness of opposition parties and the impact this has on the process, how voting intentions and the attitude of voters to elections influence the process of democratic consolidation.

With respect to the nature of the party system it is clear that the continued dominance of the ANC as revealed by its attainment of a two thirds majority in the 2004 elections continues to elicit debates that this feature is inimical to the effective democratisation of the country. These fears maintain that this enormous power of the ANC has the potential of eroding democratic principles as the ANC will become too strong, turning the South African state into an autocracy to the detriment of democracy. Indeed this is

a valid point to make, as a domineering system works against effective democratisation.

However, there are sufficient grounds on which to challenge the basis of this assertion as revealed by the 2004 election results. This includes the fact that the ANC continues to win power as its views largely converge with those of the majority of the electorate—racially based voters. And this happens in an environment of a free and fair elections; that is unimpeded by irregularities thus lending credence to the view that the ANC dominance is not necessarily retrogressive because it acquires it through legitimate means.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, empirical evidence since 1994 has not indicated in any substantial manner that the ANC has deviated from the democratic path illustrated by its continued adherence and respect for democratic institutions such as the constitution, the rule of law, the respect of civil liberties and so on.

The other factors that refutes this view that the ANC's dominance will erode South Africa's democratic process is the fact that there is emergent social movements as well as existing civil society organisations that provide an alternative voice in society in the light of the weakness of opposition parties. Such movements as, the Landless Peoples Movement (LPM) and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) present alternative mechanisms through which society can make its positions to the government and ANC.

In addition, the ANC's dominance does not threaten democracy because these voices of civil society are supported by internal mechanism within the Tripartite Alliance in

¹⁸⁶ Reddy, Thiven (2002), '*The Dominant Party and Democratic Consolidation: South Africa's ANC and India's Congress Party Compared*', Seminar paper presented at the University of Cape Town, 23 April, 2002.

the form of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) which have indicated the capacity to present views other than those of the government and the ANC, especially with regard to, for example, economic policies.

The other factor that detracts from these arguments of the ANC as a threat to democracy is that to the extent that the opposition parties are weak in South Africa, they should be much more worried about the policy options, which they offer the electorate. The 2004 elections have indicated that contrary to the common interpretation that the ANC is using identity politics to garner support of the majority blacks it is in fact articulating policies that resonate with this segments of the electorate—a glaring failure of opposition parties. And in this regard, it should be noted that, the ANC, although, it has a two-thirds majority vote, it has acquired this with decreased participation of voters in the 2004 elections. This attests to the fact that there are a sizeable number of South African voters who do not support the ANC.

On the other hand, precisely because opposition parties fail to come up with policies that would attract voters to exploit this political space; they either articulates policies that are too close to that of the ANC (such as the ID, UDM), or those that are antagonistic to the majority of voters (such as the DA, IFP).

As for the potential that the ANC would lead South Africa down the path of other African countries, or that: democracy will fail in South Africa (as it has substantially done in other African states), at this point, this is mere conjecture—that has no material basis. And this postulation is indeed weakened by the reality that, the ANC's

dominance is legitimate as it is recognised by the majority of the electorate. Bringing forth the question, then, of: how realistically will a party that has so much consensus in society turn around and become authoritarian against the very people that put it in power? It is not beyond the realm of reason to speculate (as this Afro-pessimistic argument does that) if, indeed, the ANC will turn against democracy in South Africa; then the voters will abandon it and thwart its plans.

Viable and strong opposition parties (especially in countries undergoing transition like South Africa), which are faced with serious socio-economic and developmental challenge are imperative to exist. That is, in order to strength society in serving as checks on the government and providing alternative voices to those of the ruling party. However, post-apartheid South Africa has been characterised by the weakness of opposition parties and this has been emphatically indicated in the 2004 election by the surge in power of the ANC to attain a two-thirds majority.

In addition to the reason mentioned above, the bane of opposition parties in South African politics is their failure to carve for themselves fundamental policies different to those of the ANC and/or articulate positions that are unconnected from the majority of voters which is the fact that most of them continue to act within the restricted racial and ethnic interpretation of South African politics. That is, instead of focusing on an issue-based politics; most of these parties continue to target restricted minority niches that are racially and ethnically based...and so accordingly, are alienating themselves from the mainstream of politics.

The 2004 elections have revealed that these racially and ethnically based parties have clearly failed. Parties such as: the PAC, SOPA, UCDP, FF, are basically stagnant in that: they are failing to make headway as they are constrained by these racially and ethnic strictures through when they have decided to operate. The emergence of issue-oriented parties such as: the ID and ACDP—which did well in the 2004 elections—indicate that this racialised and ethicised concretisation of politics in South Africa is misguided and does not serve democracy.

Therefore, for South African opposition to effectively contribute to the entrenchment of democratic society it is imperative for them to change their policies to move them away from these identity based politics and address the material interests of the electorate. The opposition parties must also fashion policies that effectively communicate to the core of the South African electoral—mainly, black voters.

Indeed, the 2004 elections indicate a gradual shift towards abandoning identity politics as exemplified by the political alliances that were former between the major parties: the ANC/NNP and DA/IFP. The significance of these alliances is that they underline emerging trends that South African politics are maturing towards a pre-occupation with issues rather than identities; as the ANC/NNP alliance was based on common grounds of articulating a centralist position in South African politics whilst the DA/IFP alliance leans more towards the conservative spectrum of South African politics.

The high demographics of non-participation of eligible voters in the 2004 election, is a negative and worrisome element; which does not bode well for democratic

consolidation. In a country like South Africa, that is undergoing a difficult transition from apartheid to a democratic order, it is important that its citizens are engaged in the political process to enrich the quality of democracy. Voter apathy has serious consequences that imperil democratic consolidation as this may lead to serious alienation within the electorate leaving the political space to be determined by a minority of politically inclined citizens, which would detract from a strong democracy.

Thus, it is important for all political parties—including the ANC but especially the opposition, to realign themselves with the interest of these voters and to pull them back into the political process. For the opposition parties, this is critical because they, more than the ANC, need to do so, given their dire weakness in the past elections. Hence, in this regard, it can be surmised that instead of focusing on the ANC domination and its perceived one-party dominance—how this will erode democratic principles—opposition parties should concentrate on strengthening South Africa's society. This can be done by the opposition parties tuning into the needs of these alienated voters—as they can potentially make them viable and strong parties with issues-based platforms—and further needed effective competition within the opposition of South African politics. This will not only help them to be strong opposition institutions but has the potential of growing their power to the extent that they can challenge the ANC.

In sum, the procedural aspects of South African democratisation process as envisioned through elections (which was the main focus of this research) indicates through an analysis of the 2004 elections that: South Africa is succeeding in this

process. It has held three post-apartheid elections: 1994, 1999, and 2004. Although one strong and dominant party—the ANC—has underlined the transition; there is no tangible and or material evidence that the ANC is inclined to use this power to undermine democracy. The weakness of opposition parties weighed against this dominance of the ANC is, in fact, a very serious flaw of the process, as any democratising state needs a strong and a viable opposition to entrench democracy. The challenge of South Africa's democracy should not be the preoccupation of the likelihood of the ANC eroding democracy; because there is sufficient empirical evidence that this assertion has no basis in concrete material reality. It should rather be on: how opposition can strengthen by growing the power of opposition parties through an emphasis of an issue-based politics that would attract the core of the electorate—black voters. So that, the consequences of an alienated electorate, in the example of increased voter apathy revealed by the 2004 election, may be avoided.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEWS

These are recorded, semi-structured, transcribed, one-on-one interviews with politicians, academics and policy analysts. Generally, an interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. Copies are available from the author.

Butler, Anthony. Professor, Department of Political Studies, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa, 28 June 2004.

Calland, Richard. Policy Analyst, Director of Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), Cape Town, South Africa, 28 June, 2004.

Françoise, Buekman. Politician, New National Party (NNP), Member of Parliament (MP), Cape Town, South Africa, 28 June, 2004.

Friedman, Steven. Policy Analyst, Deputy Director, Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg, South Africa, 23 June 2004.

Gibson, Douglas. Politician, Democratic Alliance (DA), Chief Whip and Member of Parliament (MP), Cape Town, South Africa, 25 June, 2004.

Landsberg, Chris. Policy Analyst, Director of Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg, South Africa, 23 June, 2004.

Lodge, Tom. Professor and Head of Department, Department of Political Studies, Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, South Africa, 21 June 2004.

Matlosa, Khabele. Policy Analyst, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA), Johannesburg, South Africa, 22 June, 2004.

Turok, Ben. Politician, African National Congress (ANC) Member of Parliament (MP), Cape Town, South Africa, 25 June, 2004.

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