

20 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY AND THE FIFTH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Holger Dix

The ruling African National Congress (ANC) was once again able to defend its dominant position during the parliamentary elections of 7 May 2014. However, it also saw a reduction in its vote and was unable to achieve the two-thirds majority that had been targeted by Party and State President Jacob Zuma. The high turnout once again demonstrated the importance to the South African people of the democracy they have enjoyed for the last 20 years. But there are growing concerns about the country's future. The new government will have to work hard during the next legislative period to ensure that the country's economic and social situation does not worsen and that the acceptance of democracy becomes firmly entrenched.



Dr. Holger Dix is Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Johannesburg.

20 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY – PRIDE AND BITTERNESS

The death of Nelson Mandela in December 2013 served to remind the country of the political upheavals of 1994 and the outstanding contributions made by political leaders at that time. In April 2014, South Africa celebrated the 20th anniversary of the birth of its democracy. The celebrations were used as an opportunity to look back on what had been achieved to date. It was then up to the parliamentary elections to demonstrate that democracy is firmly established and that the country is well-equipped to face the future. However, as the elections took place in parallel, the analysis of the success of the first two decades of representative democracy was somewhat mixed. There was a unanimous feeling that a great deal has been achieved since 1994 and that South Africa has been successful in many respects. The political stability of the country has been maintained, no

mean achievement in light of the deep divisions in society. The constitution and the democratic institutions that were established have stood the test of time, and millions of disadvantaged people now have access to healthcare, electricity, water and education. Economic growth has been consistently positive and a new black middle class has emerged.

Where there is disagreement, however, is over the question of whether the country is still heading down the right path. Large sections of the population are justifiably concerned that this success story is unlikely to continue. South Africa's economic growth has declined steadily over the last three years, from 3.6 per cent in 2011 to 2.5 per cent in 2012 and just 1.9 per cent in 2013. The government's 2012 National Development Plan assumes an annual growth of five per cent in order to achieve its goals of reducing poverty and creating employment.¹ 16 million South Africans currently receive social security benefits, something which the government considers to be a success, as this means many people have been lifted out of absolute poverty. However, the number of people receiving benefits is actu-

Out of a potential labor market of 31 million, only 13 million South Africans currently have jobs. Many of those who are unemployed have few prospects of getting a job and have already given up looking.

ally more than twice as high as those who pay taxes, leading many to question how sustainable the government's current policy really is. 20 years after the end of apartheid, South Africa still remains a country where people have very different prospects and opportunities. According to the GINI index, South Africa is one of the countries with the greatest income inequality. Out of a potential labor market of 31 million, only 13 million South Africans currently have jobs. Many of those who are unemployed have few prospects of getting a job and have already given up looking. Youth unemployment figures are some of the highest in the world, as young people tend to be badly prepared for the labour market when they leave school. One reason for this is the education system, which, while it currently enjoys a school enrolment rate of nearly 100 per cent, also produces a significant number of school dropouts and in terms of quality it is considered to lag behind many other African countries.

1 | Cf. Ntsakisi Maswanganyi, "Sluggish SA economy 'demands bold reform'", *Business Day*, 26 Feb 2014, <http://bdlive.co.za/economy/2014/02/26/sluggish-sa-economy-demands-bold-reform> (accessed 22 May 2014).

More and more people are taking their dissatisfaction to the streets. The number of public, often violent protests against the lack of public services has dramatically increased in recent times. Almost every day the media reports on accusations of corruption against leading politicians. There is a feeling the political elite is out to fill their own pockets, which has been confirmed by reports from Transparency International. Even the country's hard-fought democracy is no longer above criticism. Surveys suggest that while South Africans support democracy in principle, many people are unhappy with the version of democracy that is currently being practised in their country. Trust in political parties and parliament is at a low level and continuing to decline. The ANC has won every democratic election since 1994 with well over 60 per cent of the vote, so it has been able to establish one-party dominance. While there is no doubt that this has contributed to the country's stability, this development also carries certain risks. There is a lack of political competition, which not only reduces the incentive for good governance, but can also result in insufficient care being taken by the ruling party when it comes to recruiting its political elite. The ANC are open to the criticism that they are no longer fully exploiting the potential of gifted and highly motivated politicians. Other risks inherent within one-party dominance include a blurring of the dividing lines between party and state, inadequate checks and balances in parliament because of the government's significant majority and a tendency towards patronage.

SCANDAL AND DISCONTENT IN THE ANC GOVERNMENT CAMP

Many European observers believed these developments would put the government under significant pressure, and indeed polls carried out at the end of 2013 suggested that the ANC was likely to lose large numbers of votes. In the run-up to the elections, these warning signs were accompanied by a number of serious scandals, including the shooting by police of 34 protesting mineworkers in August 2012.² This event shook the South African people's trust in state institutions to the very core. The slow pace

2 | Cf. Kristina Lunn, "Gewalttätige Streiks und Repressionen", Country Report, KAS South Africa, <http://kas.de/suedafrika/de/publications/32413> (accessed 22 May 2014).

A scandal that made waves during the election campaign was the taxpayer-funded modernisation of President Jacob Zuma's residence.

of the investigation into this incident and what the families of the victims considered to be insufficient compensation turned the Marikana massacre into a major election campaign issue. Another scandal that made waves during the election campaign was the taxpayer-funded modernisation of President Jacob Zuma's residence in Nkandla (KwaZulu-Natal province), which threatened to cause a collapse in support for the ANC. Building projects, including a swimming pool and amphitheatre, were carried out on Zuma's private property, with the claim that they were necessary for security reasons and paid for using 246 million rand of taxpayers' money. The South African ombuds-woman published an inquiry report entitled "Secure in Comfort" a few days before the election, in which she called on the President to repay some of the money that had been spent.

As the election drew nearer, "Nkandla Gate" triggered debate within Zuma's own party about whether he was actually the right candidate. Polls suggested that more than half of ANC members believed Zuma should resign before the election.³ Former leading ANC members publicly called on the electorate to spoil their votes as a means of registering their discontent with the ANC. A few days before the election, Jay Naidoo, the founding General Secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and a former minister in Nelson Mandela's cabinet, summarised this internal party dispute in dramatic fashion: "South Africa burns while our politicians tune out in a daze."⁴ During the election campaign, the ruling coalition made up of communists, unions and the ANC struggled to maintain their unity. Just a few months before the election, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), (the largest member of the trade union federation COSATU), withdrew its support for COSATU and hence the government. Relations were patched up temporarily, but the breakaway still had an impact on the election results. The ANC Youth League had significant debts and

3 | Allister Sparks, "At home and abroad: ANC has to live with tainted Zuma", *Business Day*, 15 Jan 2014, <http://bdlive.co.za/opinion/columnists/2014/01/15/at-home-and-abroad-anc-has-to-live-with-tainted-zuma> (accessed 22 May 2014).

4 | Jay Naidoo, "South Africa Burns While Our Politicians Tune Out in a Daze", *Sunday Times*, 20 Apr 2014, 21.

was close to bankruptcy and so, like COSATU, could only make a limited contribution to the election campaign.

However, in spite of earlier polls suggesting that the ANC would win significantly less than 60 per cent of the vote, and in the face of criticism from all sides, including from within the party itself, in the end the people were in no real mood for change. The reasons for this were explained by an ANC supporter in a newspaper article. He claimed the assumption that the ANC would lose votes at the election was based on a false, Western understanding of voter intentions. Youth unemployment, for example, was unlikely to have a significant effect on the election results, as the voters were much more concerned with finally doing away with the apartheid that still haunts South Africa. The majority of people had an emotional connection to the ANC and would continue to love the party for their actions in liberating the country. In contrast, the writer asserted that the largest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), is a white people's party that has tried to strengthen its position with a few token blacks. The voters were not blind and would recognise the attempts by the West to undermine South African democracy in order to pursue its own interests in the country. He concluded that only a party that was involved in the struggle for freedom was capable of governing a liberating and changing South Africa.⁵

According to an ANC supporter, youth unemployment was unlikely to have a significant effect on the election results, as the voters were more concerned with finally doing away with the apartheid.

If, on this basis, the ANC had no cause to be concerned about whether they could hold on to power, the same could not be said for South Africa's president. In contrast to his predecessors, Jacob Zuma embodies many of the characteristics of a traditional African leader and so succeeded in dividing not only the South African people, but also his own party. He likes to present himself sometimes as a statesman, sometimes as a traditional leader, and has been accused of profiting from the financial resources available to him in his position to an extent far in excess of his salary. He has repeatedly been the focus of scandals and accusations – at various different times there have been

5 | Cf. Thami Mazwai, "Struggle will not be forgotten come the election", *Business Day*, 22 Jan 2014, <http://bdlive.co.za/opinion/columnists/2014/01/22/struggle-will-not-be-forgotten-come-the-election> (accessed 22 May 2014).

more than 700 charges brought against him for fraud, corruption, money laundering and other offences. The ANC therefore had to ensure that the growing public criticism of the president did not adversely affect the party's chances of success in the elections. This resulted in many party members attempting to claim during the election campaign that Zuma was not the ANC.



The legacy of an icon: Nelson Mandela's death in December 2013 was a chance for President Jacob Zuma to emphasize on the ANC's achievements. | Source: Siyabulela Duda, GCIS, flickr ©©©.

THE PARTY-POLITICAL SPECTRUM

A total of 29 political parties stood for election in May 2014, 14 of them for the very first time.⁶ The African National Congress, whose candidate lists included members of the

6 | For more on the impact of the ANC-dominated party system on the political, social and economic development of South Africa, see also Nicola de Jager, "South Africa: A Democracy in the Balance", in: idem, Pierre du Toit (ed.), *Friend or Foe? Dominant Party Systems in Southern Africa: Insights from the Developing World*, New York and Tokyo, 2012, 149-170.

South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), went into the elections as clear favourites. President Zuma had targeted a two-thirds majority during the election campaign, which would give him a mandate to change the constitution. In addition to the ANC, other proven political parties with prospects of winning seats in parliament included the liberal Democratic Alliance, the Congress of the People (COPE), which was formed in 2009 by ANC dissidents, and the conservative Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The run-up to this year's elections also saw the formation of new parties, as was the case in 2009. The most significant of the new parties were Agang SA, founded by civil rights activist Mamphele Ramphele, and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by the former leader of the ANC Youth League Julius Malema. Other new parties standing for the National Assembly for the first time included South Africa First (SAF), set up by veterans of the ANC's former military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe, the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) and the National Freedom Party (NFP), formed in 2011 after a split from the IFP.

Table 1

The parties in the 25th South African National Assembly and new parties

Party	Party leader	Founded	Political orientation ⁷
African National Congress (ANC)	Jacob Zuma	1912 (African Native National Congress)	Center-left to left
Democratic Alliance (DA)	Helen Zille	2000 (merger between the Democratic Party, New National Party and Federal Alliance)	Liberal, to an extent social democratic
Congress of the People (COPE)	Mosiuoa Lekota	2008 by former ANC members	Social democratic to left-liberal
Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)	Mangosuthu Buthelezi	1975 (Inkatha National Cultural Liberation Movement (INCLM))	Liberal-conservative, traditionalist
Independent Democrats (ID) ⁸	Patricia de Lille	2003 (by former PAC member Patricia de Lille)	Left-liberal

7 | The political orientation of the parties is only described in general terms.

8 | In 2010 the ID announced it was merging with the DA. There was a joint list for the 2014 elections (DA).

Party	Party leader	Founded	Political orientation
United Democratic Movement (UDM)	Bantu Holomisa	1997 (Roelf Meyer (NP), B. Holomisa (ANC) and Tom Taylor (ANC))	Center-left, social democratic
Freedom Front Plus (FF+)	Pieter Mulder	1994 FF; 2004 merger with the Conservative Party & Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging	Conservative, Afrikaans-nationalistic
African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)	Kenneth Meshoe	1993	Conservative, Christian democratic
United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP)	Isaac Siphon Mfundisi	1997	Christian democratic
Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC)	Letlapa Mphahlele	1959 (split from the ANC)	Pan-African, Africanist, socialist
Azania People's Organisation (AZAPO)	Jacob Dikobo	1978 (formed out of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM))	Black Consciousness Movement (BCM); socialist
Minority Front (MF)	Shameen Thakur Rajbansi	1993	Interests of the ethnic minorities (esp. the ethnic Indian population)
African People's Convention	Themba Godi	2007 (split from the ANC)	Africanist, pan-African, socialist

Major new parties

Agang SA	Mamphela Ramphela	2013	Left-liberal, ANC-critical, combating corruption
Economic Freedom Fighters	Julius Malema	2013 (Malema was President of the ANC Youth League until his expulsion in 2012)	Left-radical, anti-capitalist, nationalist

Source: Table "Politische Parteien der Nationalversammlung", KAS Country Profile South Africa, Feb 2014, 7-8, http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_35105-1522-1-30.pdf (accessed 22 May 2014).

ANC supporter profile: over forty per cent of supporters are unemployed

The election showed that the ANC clearly has more financial opportunities and better organisational capabilities. The public funding of 68 million rand that the party received

for the budget year 2012/2013 was in itself enough to ensure that it had four times more money in its coffers than the second-largest party, the DA (28 million rand). The system of private political party funding in South Africa is not transparent, but it can be assumed the ANC had a significant advantage here too and used the money for its election campaign. The financial dominance of the ANC was demonstrated by the party's final election rally in the FNB football stadium, which was attended by more than 90,000 supporters.

The governing coalition used every possible political strategy and tactic during the election campaign. In the end, their election victory was down to their focus on the historic contribution the party had made to the country's progress and the 20th anniversary of the dismantling of apartheid, both of which effectively distracted people's attention away from the country's ongoing social and economic problems. The death of Nelson Mandela in December 2013 and the celebrations surrounding the 20th anniversary of the new South Africa were cleverly exploited to remind the people of the historic contributions made by the ruling party. The ANC managed to drown out those voices that wanted to relativise the movement's past achievements in freeing South Africa from apartheid. Even on the Sunday before the election, a ceremony was organised in KwaZulu-Natal to reinter ANC heroes who had been the victims of political murders in 1993 and 1994.

During the elections themselves, the opposition did not always succeed in presenting a credible alternative to the government. The leading opposition party, the DA, tried but failed to rid itself of its image as a white party by signing an agreement with the black African leader of the Agang SA party, Mamphela Ramphele, with a view to her becoming the DA's presidential candidate. The alliance only lasted a week before publicly imploding, giving the ruling party an ideal opportunity to use the debacle to its advantage in its own campaign. Efforts by the DA's leader Helen Zille to gain support from the growing black middle classes caused unrest amongst the party's traditional supporters, who accused the liberal DA of a growing tendency towards social democracy. For its part, the COPE party, which had burst onto the political scene in 2009, was the victim of an

internal dispute over the leadership of the party, which only the courts could resolve. Johann Abrie, the party's head of communications, addressed the electorate in January 2014 with the following words: "We are going on our knees in front of the South African public, asking them to forgive us. We are asking forgiveness from 1.3 million people who voted for us in 2009."⁹

The Inkatha Freedom Party, still led by 85-year-old Mangosuthu Buthelezi, also suffered significant losses. The IFP had been steadily losing votes since the 1994 elections – a decline made worse by a split in the party that resulted in the founding of the NFP by former IFP members. The Economic Freedom Fighters, whose leader adopts the title of Commander in Chief and wears a red beret in the style of Hugo Chávez, appealed not only to less educated members of society but also many students with their manifesto. This promised higher taxes for private businesses, a significant increase in the minimum wage for mineworkers and domestic staff, the nationalisation of mines and banks and the repossession of land without compensation.

GOVERNMENTAL AND ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

The South African electoral system is based on proportional representation with closed party lists and no electoral threshold. The distribution of seats is based on national and regional party lists, which is meant to ensure a regional weighting of the votes. Candidates are elected to

In 2014, South Africans living abroad were allowed to vote in the parliamentary elections for the first time due to changes in the 2013 Election Amendment Act.

the lower house of the bicameral parliament, the National Assembly in Cape Town, which has 400 members. The National Assembly elects the President, who acts as both head of state and head of government. All South African citizens who are 18 or over and who had registered to take part in the elections are entitled to vote. In 2014, South Africans living abroad were allowed to vote in the parliamentary elections for the first time due to changes in the 2013 Election Amendment Act.

9 | Olebogeng Molatlhwa and Phetane Rapetswane, "Chaotic COPE Says it Will Mend its Way", *Times Live*, 9 Jan 2014, <http://timeslive.co.za/thetimes/2014/01/09/chaotic-cope-says-it-will-mend-its-ways> (accessed 22 May 2014).



Call for registration: Eligible to vote are only those South African citizens older than 18 years who registered as voters beforehand. | Source: Niko Knigge, flickr ©.

The electoral system is meant to reflect the special circumstances affecting elections in deeply divided societies and to embody the principles of simplicity, inclusion and fairness.¹⁰ The lack of an electoral threshold is designed to encourage the widest possible representation of the interests of different social groups. 13 parties were represented in parliament during the last legislative period, of which four held just one seat. One of these was the African People's Convention, which was able to secure a mandate with 35,867 votes, or 0.2 per cent of the overall vote.¹¹ This system of proportional representation is not without controversy and reforms have frequently been mooted. The biggest criticism is that the voters are not involved in the selection of party candidates and can only vote for party lists over which they have no influence. These closed lists ensure that members of the National Assembly are extremely dependent on their parties but have little relationship with or responsibility towards the voters. The influence of the parties over elected members is further

10 | Cf. Judith February, "The Electoral System and Electoral Administration", in: Roger Southall and John Daniel (eds.), *Zunam: The 2009 South African Elections*, Johannesburg, 2009, 48.

11 | Results of the 2009 parliamentary elections: Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), "2009 Election Report", 104, <http://www.elections.org.za/content/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=1287> (accessed 22 May 2014).

strengthened by the fact that expulsion from a party results in members losing their seat. Parliamentary practices and the country's political culture allow the exercise of this party influence over members of parliament.

ELECTION RESULTS FROM 7 MAY

As was the case in 2009, 13 of the 29 parties that stood in the election won at least one seat in parliament.¹² The ruling coalition won 62 per cent of the vote, almost four per cent less than in 2009, giving it 249 members in the National Assembly (2009: 264). So the ANC failed to reach its target of a two-thirds majority, but still remains by far the largest national party. With the exception of the Western Cape, the ANC also managed to achieve a majority in the provincial parliamentary elections that were held at the same time in the country's nine provinces. In Gauteng, the province with the strongest economy and home to the capital, Pretoria, and the country's biggest city, Johannesburg, the ANC lost more than ten per cent of the vote compared to the provincial elections of 2009 and received only 53.6 per cent of the overall total. However, the ANC once again enjoyed very comfortable victories in the other provinces.



The government coalition received 62 per cent of the votes which means 249 out of 400 seats in the National Assembly. Although a two-thirds majority was missed, the ANC remains the strongest party. | Source: Siyabulela Duda, GCIS, flickr ©©©.

12 | Results of the 2014 parliamentary elections: IEC, "2014 National and Provincial Elections. Results", <http://www.elections.org.za/resultsNPE2014> (accessed 22 May 2014).

The strongest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance led by Helen Zille, can also be considered one of the winners in the election. The DA improved its results from 16.7 to 22.2 per cent, giving it 89 members in the new National Assembly (2009: 67). It not only defended the slim majority won in the Western Cape five years previously but managed to significantly increase it. There was also success for the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which was only established as a party last year under the leadership of the former president of the ANC Youth League Julius Malema. With 6.35 per cent of the vote and 25 seats in parliament, it is now the third largest party. It also became the biggest opposition party at the first attempt in the Limpopo and North West provinces.

Table 2

Results of the 2009 and 2014 general elections

Party	2009 election		2014 election		Change from 2009 in percentage points
	Share of the vote in per cent	Seats	Share of the vote in per cent	Seats	
African National Congress (ANC)	65.90	264	62.15	49	-3.53
Democratic Alliance (DA)	16.66	67	22.23	89	5.37
Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)	—	—	6.35	25	6.23
Congress of the People (COPE)	7.42	30	0.67	3	-6.74
Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)	4.55	18	2.40	10	-2.13
Independent Democrats (ID)	0.92	4	0	0	-0.92
United Democratic Movement (UDM)	0.85	4	1.00	4	0.18
Freedom Front Plus (FF+)	0.85	4	0.90	4	0.07
United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP)	0.37	2	0.12	0	-0.25
Pan African Congress (PAC)	0.27	1	0.21	1	-0.27

Minority Front (MF)	0.25	1	0.12	0	-0.13
Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO)	0.22	1	0.11	0	-0.11
African People's Convention (APC)	0.20	1	0.17	1	-0.03
National Freedom Party (NFP)	—	—	1.57	6	1.59
African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)	0.81	3	0.57	3	0.24
African Independent Congress (AIC)	—	0	0.53	3	0.53
Agang SA	—	0	0.28	2	0.28

Sources: 2009: n. 11; 2014: n. 12.

In accordance with the electoral rules described above, 0.21 per cent of the vote (almost 38,000 votes) was sufficient to win a seat in parliament at this year's elections. Of the 13 parties now represented in parliament, six won three or less than three mandates. The Congress of the People (COPE) party did very badly this time round, winning less than one per cent of the vote and only three seats in the national parliament (2009: 30). The Inkatha Freedom Party also lost further ground, gaining only 2.4 per cent of the vote (2009: 4.6 per cent). Even in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, its former electoral stronghold, the IFP was only able to achieve an overall majority in two of the municipalities and ended up third behind the ANC and the DA with 11.5 per cent of the vote.

The result achieved by the Agang SA party was particularly remarkable. It was founded earlier this year, accompanied by a great deal of media hubbub. The party's leader Mamphele Ramphele had hoped to use her popularity as a former Black Consciousness movement activist and partner of Steve Biko, her status as a former director of the World Bank and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town and the financial support of South African businessmen to win between five and ten per cent of the vote. However, her hopes of getting off to a fast start were dashed when the party won only 0.28 per cent of the vote and two seats in parliament.

South African voters turned out in impressive numbers for the election, demonstrating once again their support for the country's democratic process. The fact that they often had to wait several hours to cast their vote did not deter people from participating. The atmosphere at the polling stations clearly demonstrated that voters were not just carrying out their civic duty, but saw their participation in the elections as a right that had been fought for in South Africa for many years. The number of registered voters (80 per cent, 25.4 million people) was, however, lower than in 2009 (84 per cent). Of these registered voters, 18.7 million actually voted (73 per cent), so the turnout represented approximately 60 per cent of the population of voting age. The turnout amongst young people was particularly disappointing, especially amongst first-time voters who were born and became politically active after the end of apartheid. Only a third of the potential voters in this group registered to vote. Opposition parties had hoped to gain support amongst the "born free" generation, believing that they would be less swayed by the ANC's role in the country's liberation.

Table 3

The strongest parties in the 2009 and 2014 provincial elections

Province	Votes in 2009 in per cent		Votes in 2014 in per cent	
Eastern Cape	ANC	68.20	ANC	70.09
	COPE	13.67	DA	16.20
	DA	9.99	UDM	6.16
Free State	ANC	71.10	ANC	69.85
	COPE	11.61	DA	16.23
	DA	11.6	EFF	8.15
Gauteng	ANC	64.04	ANC	53.59
	DA	21.66	DA	30.78
	COPE	7.78	EFF	10.30
KwaZulu-Natal	ANC	62.95	ANC	64.52
	IFP	22.40	DA	12.76
	DA	9.15	IFP	10.86

Province	Votes in 2009 in per cent		Votes in 2014 in per cent	
Limpopo	ANC	84.88	ANC	78.60
	COPE	7.53	EFF	10.74
	DA	3.48	DA	6.48
Mpumalanga	ANC	85.55	ANC	78.23
	DA	7.49	DA	10.40
	COPE	2.91	EFF	6.26
North West	ANC	72.89	ANC	67.39
	COPE	8.33	EFF	13.21
	DA	8.15	DA	12.73
Northern Cape	ANC	60.75	ANC	64.40
	COPE	16.67	DA	23.89
	DA	12.57	EFF	4.96
Western Cape	DA	51.46	DA	59.38
	ANC	31.55	ANC	32.89
	COPE	7.74	EFF	2.11

Sources: 2009: n. 11; 2014: n. 12.

The call by a group of former leading ANC members for people to spoil their votes as a protest against the current government fell on deaf ears. The number of spoiled ballot papers remained at the same level as in 2009. What is interesting is the fact that eight of the 13 parties elected to parliament actually received fewer votes than the number of spoiled ballot papers (252,000 votes or 1.3 per cent).



Waiting line at a polling station in the township Alexandra: Even waiting in line for several hours could not stop the people from voting. | Source: © KAS South Africa.

A PATCHY UNDERSTANDING OF DEMOCRACY

The parliamentary elections were generally free and fair. At the same time, they provided interesting insight into the country's democratic development, which still shows signs of weakness. A good example of this are the attempts made by those close to the government to illegally influence public media reporting on the elections. The majority of the private print media were very critical of the government and the weekend newspaper *Mail and Guardian* even went so far as to publish an editorial a few days before the election calling on people not to vote for the ANC in order to weaken their grip on power.¹³ During the election campaign, government representatives publicly warned people against voting for the opposition as they might lose their social security benefits, or, as the President threatened, attract the wrath of their ancestors.

Undemocratic attempts to influence the vote, such as threats of violence and the use of violence against political opponents; event spaces not being made available for party events; electoral bribes in the shape of food and blankets; and the exclusion of opposition supporters from jobs, contracts and services are all part of the country's political

13 | Cf. "Vote tactically to dilute ANC power", *Mail and Guardian*, 2 May 2014, 26, <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-05-01-editorial-vote-tactically-to-dilute-anc-power> (accessed 22 May 2014).

culture. In a country such as South Africa, playing the ethnic card was a risky way of trying to mobilise voters. For example, the deputy leader of the ANC, Cyril Ramaphosa, suggested that people had to vote, otherwise the Boers would return. There were some problems on Election Day itself, such as polling stations opening late, a lack of ballot papers and parties illegally canvassing in the immediate vicinity of the polling stations. After the elections, bags of ballot papers were found, which must have gone missing between the polling station and the electoral commission. Representatives from the African Union, the Southern African Development Community SADC and the Commonwealth attended the elections as international observers. Local election observers were also allowed, but it was not possible to achieve full coverage by observers. In any event, it seems that there was no intention to allow such coverage, as many applications for accreditation by local organisations and embassies were rejected.



Election observers in action: numerous local organisations and especially Embassies applied in vain for an authorization to monitor the elections. | Source: © KAS South Africa.

TRENDS AND OPEN QUESTIONS

With the ANC winning well over 60 per cent of the vote and gaining overwhelming victories in the provinces (with the exception of Western Cape and Gauteng), President Zuma has created some breathing space in the party leadership race. He was elected by the national parliament to his

second presidential term, which in accordance with the terms of the constitution will be his last. He is likely to use the election results to keep many critics within the ANC in check.

President Zuma is likely to use the election results with over 60 per cent of the votes to keep many critics within the ANC in check.

The South African voters have clearly decided not to punish Zuma politically for the many charges levelled against him, not least the scandal surrounding his property in Nkandla, which has been modernised using taxpayers' money. Zuma will still need to answer some of these charges in the wake of the elections, and it can be assumed that the South African legal system will be less forgiving than the electorate. As a result, it remains unclear as to whether he will be the first South African President since 1994 to actually serve two full terms in office. Prior to the election, the ANC made a clear decision to protect the President from criticism in order to avoid damage to the party, but that may now change. Immediately after the election, some voices within the party were claiming that the ANC had won in spite of Zuma, not because of him.

This election brought with it further changes to the country's party system. The gains made by the DA ensured that there is now a trend away from one-party dominance to a system with two potentially strong parties. Meanwhile, the smaller parties will still need to fight to survive. The system of public funding distributes 90 per cent of funds in proportion to the number of seats parties hold in the National Assembly and provincial parliaments, with the remaining ten per cent being distributed evenly amongst all parties represented in parliament. This will only serve to reinforce the dominance of the two main parties. In the new parliament, six parties have only three or less than three seats. From the point of view of the country's democratic development, there is now a need for debate on the benefits of achieving the most inclusive representation possible weighed against the possibility of an extremely divided parliamentary landscape and the resulting limitations on the ability of certain parts of the legislature to function effectively. Consideration should be given to introducing a low electoral threshold, which would encourage smaller parties to join forces prior to the elections. South African democracy is now sufficiently well established that such a threshold would not pose a threat to social cohesion.

Reform of the electoral system could also be used to create closer ties between voters and their elected representatives, along with enhanced accountability on the part of members of parliament towards the electorate. The current system of closed party lists serves to promote MPs' loyalty to their parties – originally intended as a means of maintaining political stability in the country – but this effectively leads to an imperative mandate and, in light of the majority structure, weakens the system of checks and balances. Private funding of parties also needs to be urgently reviewed. The concerns expressed by some parties that a transparent recording of donations might make some private donors less willing to provide financial support are justified to some extent. However, these concerns need to be weighed against the dangers for democracy and the country's future development, especially if private party funding can result in preferential treatment for donors when it comes to the awarding of government contracts.

The ruling coalition of the ANC, SACP and COSATU may have been the victors in these elections, but they have emerged in a weakened state. For tactical reasons, disagreements within the trade union association were partially and incompletely patched up during the elections, but they soon broke out again afterwards. Even now, there is an expectation within South Africa that a new political force will emerge to the left of the ANC and the current government, which will either take in scattered members of the trade union association or will be formed by them. 20 years after the country's political transformation, it is becoming increasingly clear that the governing coalition represents too many different political interests and directions to be able to achieve the goals set out in the National Development Plan. The coalition noted with concern how their support in the major cities threatened to desert them during the parliamentary elections of 7 May. In Pretoria the coalition failed to win a majority, while their majority in Johannesburg and Port Elisabeth was very slim. Cape Town remains in the hands of the DA. The 2016 local elections may well demonstrate this increasing sense of dissatisfaction with the government.